

CWP: Opportunism "Beyond the Point of No Return"

In addition to this article, readers are encouraged to read the latest issue of Revolution magazine, which has just published a major article on the Communist Workers Party, and the philosophical basis for its opportunism. The Revolution article is called, "There Will Be Revolution, But Wishing Won't Make It So. Voluntarism, Metaphysics and the Communist Workers Party."

On November 3, the KKK and the Nazis, in close collaboration with police, murdered five people and wounded nine others in an anti-Klan rally in Greensboro, N.C. Several of those killed or wounded were members of the Communist Workers Party (formerly the Workers Viewpoint Organization—WVO) which had organized the rally.

Our Party, the RCP, made it very clear at the time where it stood on these attacks. In a press release and an article immediately afterwards, we said, "The Revolutionary Communist Party once again firmly condemns these brazen, brutal murders by the Klan and the Nazis, and the obvious role of the police and their bosses. The RCP, as has been stated before, has serious, deep disagreements with the Communist Workers Party, who called the demonstration, over many major political questions. These differences have been and will continue to be made clear in our Party's press..." That is the purpose of this article.

Neither the line of the CWP, nor that of its WVO predecessor, has ever had anything to do with genuine Marxism. Historically, this sect has been characterized by an exotic combination of pseudo-revolutionary, dogmatic and phoney "left" posturing and the most slavishly rightist and economist practice.

Since the formation of the Communist Workers Party three months ago, it is this ultra-"left" current which has come sharply to the fore and tended to characterize the CWP, though their open rightism, particularly economism, has remained intact as well. In fact, WVO historically has combined and pitched back and forth between "left" and right—always carefully avoiding a genuine revolutionary communist stand. This phony "leftism" is not just a matter of mistakes and deviations from a genuinely revolutionary line; in fact, it is the opposite of genuine leftism.

But the CWP seems to at least talk about revolution, even at last claiming to uphold Mao and the Four and opposing the current revisionist treason in China, while much of the rest of the Left in the U.S. has at this point given up even doing that. Precisely for this reason the potential exists for some revolutionary-minded people to be attracted to the CWP in the short run.

More important, CWP raises to a principle a deviation that Comrade Bob Avakian pinpointed in the Central Committee report, "The Prospects for Revolution and the Urgent Tasks in the Decade Ahead"—a deviation that fails to see "the real contradictions and the way things are moving and developing" and instead views revolutionary work as "just gritting our teeth and doing all this because it's the right thing to do, even though it has no real relationship to the actual situation and its development... another form of utopian socialism, idealism, moralism." While this may assume ultra-"left" forms, this outlook will ultimately give way to rightism, to capitulationism. By studying this deviation in its fully flowered form of the CWP line, revolutionaries can better understand and combat the nature, danger and source of this kind of thinking in the present period, and grasp the correct line better in opposition.

First, a brief note on the fact that some of the confusion over the difference between CWP and genuine revolutionaries seems to have been rather consciously created by the CWP itself. While the CWP makes no secret of its hostility to the RCP, they never-

theless consistently attempt a shallow mimicry of certain aspects of the RCP's line and work.

Two instances should give an idea. Following the Mao Memorial Meetings held by the Party in September 1978, which climaxed unprecedented mass campaigns to defend and uphold the revolutionary line of Mao in the face of the revisionist coup in China, the RCP announced the Mao Tsetung Enrollment—a call on revolutionary fighters, who through the campaign had been armed to see more clearly the goal of the working class and the need to pick up the banner and stand with Mao Tsetung, to step forward to join the Party. At the time WVO publicly and virulently condemned the RCP for exposing the revisionist leaders in China, who they continued to defend for some months. But then, after some time passed, the WVO announced its own... Mao Tsetung Enrollment!

Likewise, during the recent campaign to Stop the Railroad of Bob Avakian and Free the Mao Tsetung Defendants, the Party popularized on a national level the militant slogan "Turn D.C. Upside Down!"—a call for 200 volunteers to come to Washington, D.C., the site of the trials, and turn it into a major political arena of struggle against the bourgeoisie's attempts to destroy our revolutionary leadership. A short while later, up went CWP's posters: "Turn the Country Upside Down!"

Is CWP's imagination really so barren that they can develop no slogans of their own? Not likely. As our examination of their line will show, their imagination is quite active indeed, though a bit on the bizarre side. No, these cases of petty political pickpocketry are typical of CWP's method of borrowing the superficial trappings of a revolutionary line to conceal their own dangerously opportunist essence.

Subjective Idealism of the CWP

This essence, boiled down, is *subjective idealism* in the form of *voluntarism*—the view that the world can be reshaped, and revolution accomplished, through a sheer act of revolutionary will and *without applying* revolutionary science to understand the world. To the CWP, revolution is a matter of getting your nerve up and not "punking out," to use a favorite phrase of theirs.

True, CWP calls on its followers to study—but what their *line* betrays is a

total failure to *apply* that study to reality, to understand reality in order to change it. Instead, CWP has invented its own reality, spun from their urgent desires to see change soon, and in so doing has negated the very real elements *leading* to revolutionary change. In fact, for all their talk of the weakness of the bourgeoisie, their line ends up far over-estimating the strength of the bourgeoisie, and totally leaving out the role of the masses.

Let us look to CWP's summation of its own history in the Nov. 5, 1979 newspaper, *Workers Viewpoint*:

"Revolutionary Situations Frequent Under Imperialism" they say very early on, and then, incredibly, claim that such a situation existed in the U.S. immediately following World War 2! Now a revolutionary situation demands not only that there be a revolutionary party, but that the ruling class can no longer rule in the old ways (its institutions are breaking down, there is open war between various groups, they can't even unite their own ranks, let alone maintain hegemony over the masses) and the working class and masses cannot live in the old way, is drawn into action by the millions, and is willing to not only die but to kill in order to change it. The most recent striking example of a real revolutionary situation has been the revolution in Iran.

Can anyone conceivably think that the U.S. was in anything approximating such a situation in 1946? Their position in the world had been greatly strengthened, with a vast new empire and a position of undisputed hegemony in the capitalist world. This, and the expansion that resulted, in turn allowed them in the years ahead to throw a few crumbs to the masses and cool out the struggles that had in fact raged during the Great Depression of the 1930s. This thesis of CWP's puts you in mind of a remark Stalin once made in a different context, to the effect that to say such a thing one must have either taken total leave of his senses or be an opportunist.

CWP claims that "in this excellent situation, the Communist Party (USA)...lost (its) nerve..." What was one of the best opportunities for proletarian revolution in the U.S., these revisionists now speak of as the "horrors of the McCarthy era."

Well, there was a revisionist betrayal by the CPUSA, and it was sickening indeed, constituting a severe setback to the U.S. working class—but not

because somehow they blew their "big chance" for revolution right then, but because had the CP stayed on the revolutionary road in what was admittedly a period of defense, it would have kept the spark of revolution and science of Marxism-Leninism alive, and this in turn would have immeasurably strengthened the next wave of mass struggle—that of the 1960s, when the *objective position* of the imperialists had grown far weaker. This is the lesson of that period, not some stupid fantasy of automatic revolution if only revolutionaries don't lose their nerve.

Travelling into the metaphysical realms of CWP for just a moment, though, let us suppose the CPUSA had called for a revolutionary onslaught at the time. Such a move, while "showin' guts," would do nothing for revolution but set it back by setting up the most class-conscious to be killed and demoralizing the masses. This would have been putschism, a desire for quick and easy victory carried out by a handful, a deviation that Mao Tsetung—who CWP claims to uphold but in fact doesn't even begin to understand—condemned and had to fight in China for years. "Going out in a blaze of glory" may be the only alternative to selling out that CWP can conceive of—but revolutionaries dedicate themselves to preparing, in the words of Lenin, to "solve those practical tasks on those great days... in which 20 years development is determined in a single day."

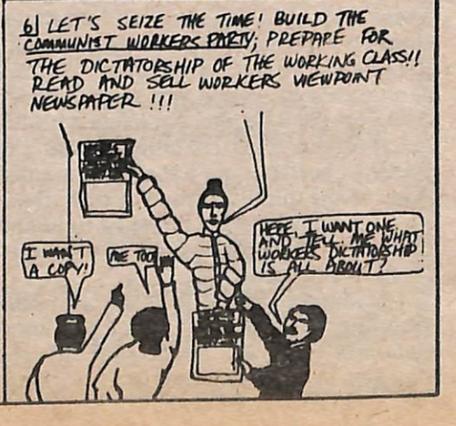
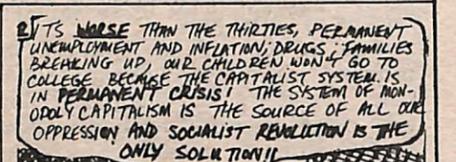
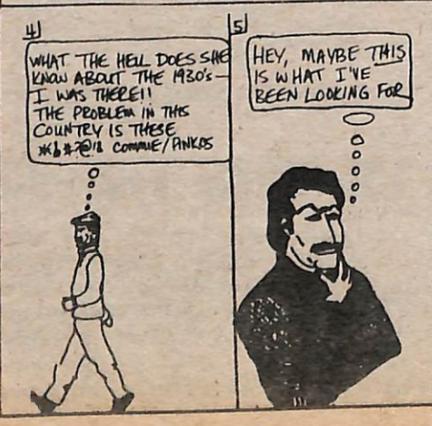
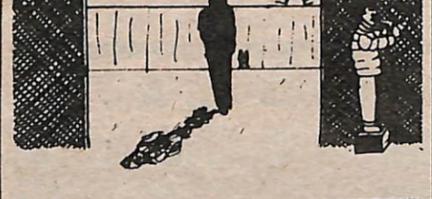
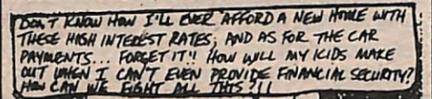
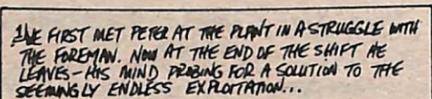
As for today's conditions, while not coming fully out and saying just yet that the U.S. today is in a revolutionary situation, you're certainly left with the feeling that such a statement is on the tip of their tongue.

"The bourgeoisie increasingly cannot rule in the same way... The masses are increasingly not willing to live in the same way... But most important of all, the proletariat now has its Party, the Communist Workers Party (sic), to organize it, make it conscious and lead it in such a way that U.S. imperialism will never find a way out of this crisis!"

While the bourgeoisie is definitely in a bad way and getting worse, and while the masses are again beginning to stir, CWP's deliberate echoing of Lenin's terms is designed to imply that a revolutionary situation is just about here. Two things are revealed here: the first, a lack of respect for reality, is not new.

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Despite having all the appearances of a parody, this is an actual CWP comic strip. It illustrates their "leftism"—lots of militance and talk about the "dictatorship of the working class." But also obvious is CWP's economism, with Peter being "revolutionized" by economic crisis, and the "communist's" role being reduced to saying, in effect: "The economic crisis shows we need revolution; follow the CWP!" This is a long way from revolutionary agitation. Note also CWP's "scientific" analysis of the present economic situation—"worse than the thirties." And note how zombie-like artistic form faithfully follows content.



CWP:

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But the second is more revealing: the CWP's apparent view that capitalism really won't be getting too much worse. This comes through in their almost complete failure to even mention the prospect of world war in their analysis of the developing crisis. Their article "30s Depression Haunts Bourgeoisie, But Fear of 80s Freaks Them Out!" (WV, 11-5-79) omits any mention of war at all!—while instead offering the theory that "whether the capitalists will be able to 'do what FDR did' in the next five years is a matter of life and death for them." In fact the CWP pictures itself in a race against the bourgeoisie's supposed ability to recover in "the next five years." The spiralling defense budgets are analyzed in the same article by the CWP as merely an economic gimmick to alleviate the crisis!

Clearly the CWP believes that the imperialists can extricate themselves from their problems without war, despite their talk about how with the CWP on the scene the bourgeoisie will never "find a way out." CWP indeed is awed by the apparent stability of the U.S., by their remaining reserves, and simply cannot conceive of, where in fact this system is going no matter how blatant the signs of that direction are becoming. Perhaps they sense the approaching war, and in real "freaked-out" fashion, try to pretend it won't come if CWP doesn't recognize it.

The CWP has clearly substituted its own fantasy world for an analysis of the objective situation. They seem motivated to make only the most superficial analysis of this situation, and even most of that is wrong. When they are not creating their own fantasies they are busy swallowing down others'. They completely accept the illusion that the bourgeoisie is out to "re-industrialize America"—never mind the "little fact" that the bourgeoisie is gearing most all their moves, including economic ones, to preparation of themselves and their imperialist bloc for war. They also continue to cling to the Chinese revisionists' Three Worlds Theory and use it as a further justification for ignoring war with such gems as: "the struggles of the third world have pushed back the danger of world war..." (WV, Nov. 5), and that this Three Worlds analysis "gives us time" (same issue).

What Does It Mean to Prepare?

This subjective idealism carries over into their view of the Party and the masses. The CWP, in their imagination, is the center of everything, and the masses nothing at all.

They speak of "forging the Communist Workers Party, USA beyond the possibility of defeat in the coming period" as "the most crucial part of the preparatory work to seize the country in the bloodbath." "The act of building up the Party of the U.S. working class is the act of the awakening of the U.S. working class itself," and throughout there is a constant refrain of the party needing to "steel itself."

Must the party of the proletariat be prepared for the revolutionary situation? Absolutely! But this preparation goes on in dialectical relation to constantly raising the consciousness of the masses through agitation and propaganda, a newspaper in particular, and through leading them in the crucial battles of the day. For instance, isn't it exactly through practice like agitation and struggle against the reactionary offensive of the bourgeoisie around Iran that revolutionaries will, as a by-product, be "steeled"? Apparently not for CWP, as they've been virtually absent from this battlefield in any significant way. But genuine revolutionaries must grasp that it is precisely crises like the one around Iran that disclose rudiments of what a real revolutionary situation will be like, complete with the tremendous political turmoil and the need to both put out a sharp communist line while uniting broadly with those who have not only a desire to fight and learn but also possess their own class interests and ideas, etc.

Rejoining the CWP in its self-steeling, we find their view of how communists will win leadership of the masses in the storm and swirl of strug-

gle: "The Party members and advanced elements of the proletariat must seize the time, actively learning to assume leadership by actually assuming leadership in all spheres of life without exception. Kick out the hacks and misleaders of all shades and colors." This is a standard "militant" economist recipe for "seizing leadership." It shows that, for all their "leftism", CWP has by no means abandoned their rightism and economism. It is the standard "fire yours, hire ours" appeal to the workers to select communists as their leaders not because of their overall program, but because they are better day to day fighters. In the particular form the CWP is practicing it now, this amounts to "left" economism—that is tacking on revolutionary sounding rhetoric about revolution and socialism onto essentially trade unionist practice.

Unfortunately for the CWP this is no better than plain old rightist economism, which they also practice, and is something that the U.S. working class historically has had more than its share of dead-end experience with. The CPUSA, which they insult but never really scientifically analyze, practiced something like this in the late 1920s and early 1930s before they made their total leap into rightist abandonment of revolution. This "left economism", however, was one factor which helped set them up for this leap. It amounts to a total abandonment of the all-around revolutionary role of communists, particularly the role of broad political agitation and propaganda exposing capitalism in an all-around way.

Let us look at exactly how the CWP envisions its role in revolution and how it is steeling its membership.

CWP concludes its statement on its founding with the following: "Comrades, seize the time, build the Communist Workers Party, Prepare for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat! We must steel ourselves, perfect our organization, and deepen our perspective and vigilance, by grasping the correct line, in the course of actually assuming leadership of the working class. Only then will we be able to seize the time, fight, fail, fight again, fail again and fight until we reach the point of no return, where all turning back is impossible, until final victory."

This "point of no return" idea is based on—and designed to encourage—the idea that since the objective world is not knowable and can't be scientifically analyzed (and nor does it *have* to be), then all that revolutionaries must do is to get to the showdown "where no turning back is possible" and somehow—through their steeling—survive the storm and awake, like Dorothy and Toto, in the Land of Oz after the cyclone.

Anyone can achieve the sublime state sought for by the CWP, where no turning back is possible, by just marching off a cliff. But the result could not be described as "final victory", at least by those who uphold Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought and the proletariat represented by that ideology.

Need for Genuine Revolutionary Science

This cynical hype job by the CWP leaders, these hot-air exhortations to "steel yourself", turns out to be the assurance that to make revolution all you must do is hate the bourgeoisie, love the masses and blindly follow the CWP.

This is clearly illustrated in the poem written to commemorate the founding of the CWP. Note, in the following passage, how "study analysis and sum-up" dissolve into the virtue of hate, which is then elaborated on in depth:

*We have not forgotten
because we have studied*

*and we have analyzed
and we have summed-up
and we have fought
and we have killed
and we have hated.*

*Yes,
we have hated,
because we must hate them
we must hate the bourgeoisie
with a hatred so clean and pure
that it steadies our trigger fingers
sharpens our eyes
makes our tongues into knives
that pierce their shriveled hearts
makes our existence
the instruments of their deaths
you see, the monopoly capitalists
do not have a monopoly
on hatred
and we know that they do not have
a monopoly on dealing death.*

It is certainly true that a working class not yet filled with the deepest hatred for the bourgeoisie, its rule, and the wage-slave system of exploitation it represents can never make a revolution. But neither can these subjective qualities alone bring about a revolution when the situation is not ripe—nor can a revolutionary party give real leadership based solely on a claim that they hate the bourgeoisie more profoundly than anyone else.

Comrade Bob Avakian, Chairman of the RCP, addressed this question in his talk greeting the volunteers who came to D.C. this fall:

"...If we didn't have a hatred for this system, if we weren't fired with that kind of hatred, if we didn't have a burning desire to get rid of and bury it once and for all, we would have no right to call ourselves revolutionaries. Lenin once said, very clearly, in fact, without this kind of spirit you can't have a revolution..."

"But that spirit, he says, will also never make a revolution by itself. It has to be tempered with revolutionary theory and the scientific understanding to deal with the complexities of what a revolution is about and being able to bring forth the forces that can actually make revolution—and that's the masses of people in their millions and tens of millions."

Or, as the late Comrade Gert Alexander once put it in a struggle with another group of opportunists: "Some people want revolution so bad they are willing to be ruthlessly scientific about it."

The CWP uses the word "science" (it comes up once in the poem, for example) and even sometimes poses as very scientific. But what comes through more and more—and in fact is an expression of the dilemma of dogmatism desperately trying to make the leap into some practice—is the feeling that "Well, we've got our analysis down and behind us, now it's time to 'steel ourselves' and leap into the real fray." This leaves out the real dynamic role of revolutionary theory in analyzing the world and guiding practice in changing it.

The point here is that the conscious element—the Party, in this case—can only transform the world *consciously* through grasping the laws governing the world and the contradictions determining its development—not only in general, but at each particular stage. The revolutionary theory of the proletariat is *scientific* because it is materialist—that is, it proceeds from recognizing and studying the objective world (i.e. matter) that exists outside and independent of the consciousness of man; and dialectical in that it recognizes that matter is in motion and that both the world and society ceaselessly change and develop as a result of the struggle and resolution of contradictions inherent in matter itself.

Because matter and consciousness themselves form a contradiction—with

consciousness arising from matter and in turn reacting back on the world and changing it through man's practice—man's role in society is a conscious and dynamic one. By grasping the laws governing reality, man can use those laws to change reality.

Not so for CWP. They have read a few phrases in some Marxist works, and they truly hate the position they are in and so they have constructed their own world.

The CWP, basing itself on the general and true statement that imperialism is the era of proletarian revolution, draws therefore the conclusion that the U.S. is in a revolutionary situation right now. They refuse to study the *real* stage of the current imperialist crisis, and miss that not only is the U.S. not in a revolutionary situation now, but that—more importantly—there are elements and there is motion within the current still relatively stable situation that will lead to one quite a bit more challenging (and filled with *real* opportunity) than the narrow-minded theorists of the CWP dare imagine.

Likewise, CWP once read that the masses make revolution—and so they have concluded that whatever the masses are doing now must be "revolutionary." Thus, in their article on the funeral march following the Greensboro massacre, CWP describes an "elderly woman (sitting) on her front porch, sweaterless on that cold rainy day and watched without saying a word. But she didn't have to, because the marchers knew where her heart was. They knew that sitting out front was her way of showing her hatred of capitalist oppression and defying the bourgeoisie."

So *that's* the role of the masses—to sit and watch as the real heroes (the CWP) march by! The masses don't "have to" do much at all in the CWP world, since whatever they do is already right on. And this makes it much easier for CWP, for instead of arming the masses with a correct line—which does involve *struggling* with them—and on that basis *unleashing* their initiative, all CWP must do is hoist their flag on their way to the point of no return and "know" that the masses will rally to it—"in their own way."

But more to the point—CWP's view of what constitutes advanced activity for the masses today again misses what's really going on: the contradictory character of the real mood of the masses, where, despite the overall low level of class consciousness among the American working class and masses broadly, revolutionary sentiment is on the upswing. There already exists a small but significant section, numbering perhaps in the tens of thousands, who can and *must* be mobilized into a revolutionary material force that in turn will influence millions. It is *this* understanding that has led the RCP to undertake the work of spreading *Revolutionary Worker* distribution networks and, further, to the call for Revolutionary May Day 1980.

Here is illustrated the *real* role of the subjective factor—not empty calls to "steel yourself" and "assume leadership", but an actual line that can grasp the motion and development of the objective world and on that basis formulate policies and plans that the masses will take up as their own to change the world and actually move the class struggle forward.

This is the task that the proletariat demands of its party: leadership in the tortuous, complex and protracted class struggle which exists in the real world—leadership with the science of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought.

The CWP line is a reflection of the class position and sentiments of the "outraged petty-bourgeois intellectual". Ground down by monopoly capital and hating it, they are in fact awed by its apparent strength. Convinced of their superiority to and right to lead the masses, they are blind to (and fearful of) the huge potential power the masses really possess, and consequently provide no leadership at all! Thus they retreat to a world of dreams and dogma, eventually standing in the way of the real advances that the proletariat has to make. It will lead no one anywhere—unless it is to the "point of no return."

IN THE NEWS...

ABC's TV news recently reported that the State Department has kept a record of the attacks on American embassies during the decade of the '70s. They said that during that time, there were 655 explosive bombs in U.S. embassies abroad, 266 incendiary bombs, and 95 kidnap attempts.