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A Year, A Decade of Historic Importance

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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 ruling class of this country is thinking about, no matter how much they try to hide it, for who can deny the deepening crisis and the drive toward war?

And faced as they are with these developments, our rulers, like scorcerers—these mummified merlins—are driven to conjure up forces they cannot control, including and most fundamentally, the force that they

most hate and fear. They must drag the *masses of people* into political life. Of course, they aim to do this under *their* banner—to whip up a reactionary and flag kissing hysteria against their own enemies—whether they are reactionary rivals like the Soviet Union or revolutionary peoples around the world. But once this “genie,” the masses of people, and most especially the working class, is roused up, *everything* can be thrown up for grabs—including just who is going to stuff who into what bottle.

The rulers plan for this “genie” of the masses is to be battalions for the capitalist masters, but it's not as simple as that. Once on the loose, this mighty force can become the gravedigger of this capitalist system. And the chance of this is all the greater because of the position of U.S. imperialism in today's world. This crumbling colossus is not in the same position as before and so it does not have the same strength it had in situations leading up to previous periods of war and crisis. And in this situation, their great difficulties put great opportunities, and great tasks, before all those who dream of being out from under the oppressive, bone crushing weight of this system.

Not only this 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. Seizing 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 decade. And it will be taking place at the same time as the bourgeois election campaign 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 hat platitudes and focus on some political questions, questions of world affairs, and reveal some

Continued on page 3

1980

A Year, A Decade of Historic Importance

Continued from page 1

things, expose each other, even expose their system in part. All this, too, makes May Day, together with other revolutionary political work, all the more necessary and all the more possible.

II. Events Right Now Confirm This Analysis

Events are already confirming this basic analysis. As concentrated right now around Iran, these events show not only that these developments are indeed taking place, but that they are *accelerating*—showing further the urgency of the situation and the tasks ahead for the working class and all other oppressed people.

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 are driven to a new frenzy as they are forced face to face with the reality of yet another people, in another part of the world, rising up to smack their imperialist tormentors in the teeth.

And right along with this are the moves, the preparations of the imperialists, in response to the crisis in moving toward World War 3. They have their plans to use the situation around Iran. They are whipping up reactionary hysteria, racist and chauvinist frenzy 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 people up for the next imperialist world war, by fanning blind reaction, by getting the people in this country to blame their deteriorating conditions and increasing suffering conditions on other working people in other countries, and by trying to divert people away from the *real source* of all this misery—the imperialist ruling class that feeds on the blood of people in this country, in Iran, and around the world.

They are callously, cynically, and more and more openly using the situation around Iran as preparation in all spheres—politically and ideologically as well as militarily for World War 3. Politicians and military spokesmen each outdo the other in efforts to use Iran as an “example” of their need for a greater so-called “defense” budget. And just in case you didn't get the message that the American people are supposed to be getting ready for World War 3, they constantly repeat the refrain around Iran that “the American people have never been so united since the days of Pearl Harbor.” Get it—Pearl Harbor—world war.

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, idiotic 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 soon we'll draw the line.” These biggest gangsters, the most monstrous oppressors in world history, have the nerve to cry about how they've been “pushed around,” and there is nothing too low or shameless enough for them when it comes to stirring up a swarm of reaction. But still all this is secondary, and it is their weakness, both material and, reflecting that, ideological, that stands out. Even the fact that the U.S. imperialists have to protect the likes of the Shah (and other hated tyrants like him) is a glaring exposure not only of U.S. imperialism's reactionary nature, but also of their weakened and vulnerable position. No longer, as after World War 2, are they able to parade around the world as some kind of “democratic” or progressive power working to “free the world from tyranny”—that is to replace the tyranny of other imperialist powers with the tyranny of U.S. imperialism. Now, exposed to the people of the world, they are the naked defenders of murdering reaction, and they grow more isolated daily.

Of course, the U.S. imperialists are not alone as top-rank world reactionary powers, they are in neck-and-neck competition with their Soviet act-alike rivals. The Russian social-imperialists are finding themselves in a

similar situation in various parts of the world (stemming from their same fundamental nature as imperialists and as a superpower heading up the other imperialist bloc); they are not only face to face with the U.S. imperialists in areas all over the world, but are also finding themselves the direct and indirect target of mass uprisings. Right now, copying the U.S. imperialists' performance in Vietnam, the Russians are facing popular uprising in Afghanistan (a country which, not irrelevantly, borders on Iran).

III. Step Onto the Political Stage

The urgent need for the working class—most specifically in this country—in particular the politically aware, class-conscious workers, to step onto the political stage under its revolutionary banner, to take what the Russian revolutionary leader Lenin called “independent historical action”—this is dramatically and powerfully demonstrated in the events around Iran. What a significant blow, what a jolting effect, for the working class, as embodied in these class-conscious workers, to take the field in this way, starting right now around this issue. No other force in society can or will play this role in the same way and with the same impact. This urgent need is all the more urgent because today, around Iran, the imperialists are being forced in their own perverted way to “involve the masses in politics.” And as reactionary as these imperialist politics are, as contradictory as are the views of the people from all strata of society who are being tossed into motion—this political turmoil is a good thing—a greater necessity *and* opportunity for the class-conscious workers.

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, motley and historically out-of-tune chorus about how the revolutionary struggle of the Iranian people, together with all revolutionary struggle, is “condemned by the ‘civilized world’”; they parade around as though the world belongs to them, bellowing in anger that the people of the world are not allowing this bullying and see that they no longer need be cowed or enslaved by these dinosaurs and historically mummified tyrants. These imperialists are like the wicked witch in the “Snow White” fairy tale who kept anxiously and insistently demanding of the mirror, “Who is the fairest of them all”—and they got infuriated by the answer.

The fact is that, as opposed to the reactionary governments and ruling classes, the *people* of the world have their fundamental interests in unity with and are more and more standing with the people of Iran and the overall fight against imperialism and reaction.

It's time (and past time) for the working class in the U.S. to take its stand with and join the surging and resurgent movement of the working class and oppressed peoples of the world, break decisively with the imperialist rulers—and their desperate, chauvinist lashing out and bellowings—join the struggle and play a key role in helping to bury them and their system—not acting blindly and against their own class interests in a miserable attempt at clinging to and going to the historical grave with the imperialists, but recognizing and acting upon their real interests and role and part of the international proletariat to be the gravediggers of imperialism and all forms of exploitation.

These are the two roads, the two camps shaping up and stretching out before the working class and the masses in this country. As we said in the *Revolutionary Worker* editorial on November 16, these two roads, two camps, will be shaping up, mustering forces in the period ahead as the crisis of this imperialist system deepens. Some will choose to cling to crumbs tossed them from the rich table of the imperialists who gorged themselves on the blood and bones of the masses of the world. These are like people who live in an outhouse with a little pretty wallpaper on it, who live dripping with the filth piled on them by the imperialist system, but who screech at the masses of people of the

world, “You fools, who says this country stinks.” But then there are those, still a comparatively small number but ultimately the decisive force, who say, “To hell with all this scandalous stuff, we throw our lot with the people of the world and with revolution here to end all this.”

All this, in particular right now events in Iran, shows the *acceleration* of events, the *urgency* for the working class, especially its revolutionary, politically aware, class-conscious section to step ahead, to step forward and take action starting now.

IV. The Great Importance of Preparation The Tremendous Impact of the Actions of the Advanced

“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,” wrote Lenin in *What Is To Be Done?*, making a statement which is full of meaning for us today. The work we do now, the battles, especially the major political battles, we wage now can be crucial not only at hitting back, politically, at the enemy, and not simply as general preparation, but beyond that perhaps in deciding the outcome whenever the conditions for revolution do ripen.

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 finally triumph. And that time will surely come! But to bring this about, we have work to do and struggle to carry out. Not just in the future, but in an on-going way—and from today forward. Work and struggle to bring closer and to prepare the revolutionary ranks and the broadest numbers of people for that day of reckoning.”

Or again, in the call issued this fall for May Day 1980, “We must come from behind, catch up to the gathering momentum and march to the head of it, enabling the revolutionary movement and the conscious understanding of millions of people to take a leap forward, to keep pace with the rapidly changing times. And we must do this now, for if we do not we may very well miss the tremendous possibilities that lie ahead.”

This emphasizes, again, that all we are doing now is or must be, precisely preparation for when the conditions do ripen, *and* that (in line with the statement by Lenin referred to just above) they are, in another sense, a *part*, a very important part, of the whole process of revolution and have a great deal to do with victory or defeat when there is a qualitative leap in the situation.

In no way should the taking of “independent historical action” by the advanced section of workers in this country, even if it is relatively small at this time, be underestimated or downgraded. Nor should we be taken in by the lying, even desperate, propaganda of the imperialists that everybody is “united” behind them (under their boot, or parallel to it, with their tongue out); events more and more show how desperate they are and this is precisely why they devote so much effort to spreading such propaganda for it is not only aimed at unleashing and mobilizing their backward social base, but also at intimidating and paralyzing those who see through them, know them for what they are and want to fight back.

And in this light, and in relation to the role of the action taken by advanced, class-conscious workers, it is important to take note of the advances now possible, of the opportunities and necessities in the period ahead to unite broadly with other strata, other social forces in U.S. society. And there will not only be the opportunity and necessity to unite, but also, and in order to do so more deeply and fully and toward the goal of revolution, to carry out struggle with the forces for the correct road ahead. This, too, requires the leadership of a Party and the material force of the actions of the advanced.

The recently published Central Committee report of our Party refers to the impact of these actions both on other, broader, strata in society and on the wider ranks of the working class, saying this “shows in practice the revolutionary character of the proletariat and its class interests and its tremendous potential to unite the people to seize control of and remake society.” And as for the impact of this action internationally, the May Day call puts it right, “The giant heart of the international proletariat will skip a beat as thousands of their own thunder through the streets of America, ushering in a new decade.”

To *move thousands* (and to strongly and directly influence tens or sometimes hundreds of thousands) now is *very significant*. In his “Lecture on the 1905 Revolution” Lenin points out that before that revolution the Bolsheviks were “derisively called a sect” since they were hundreds leading thousands. But then, “within a few months,” “The hundreds of revolutionary Social-Democrats [communists] ‘suddenly’ grew into thousands; the thousands became the leaders of between two and three million proletarians,” and these workers influenced still more forces—peasants and soldiers. “In this manner a colossal country, with a population of 130,000,000 went into the revolution...” (Lenin, Vol. 23) And in another work Lenin sums up how there are “masses” and then there are “masses.” “In the history of our movement... you will find many examples where several thousand non-party workers, who usually live a philistine life and drag out a miserable existence, and who have never

Continued on page 16

1980—A Year, A Decade of Historic Importance

Continued from page 3

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 awakened 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—and 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 the 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 in such circumstances—and the thousands and tens of thousands who have been trained in "normal" times can become the leaders of millions and tens of millions.

V. Concrete, Immediate Tasks

In the coming year, in the coming decade we've got real work to do:

● Around Iran, in the teeth of this reactionary blitz, we have to bring forward new forces. Ever more strongly, we have to hold up the stand of the international proletariat and rally increasing numbers of people being awakened to political life to wake up and take that stand and to rally around the proletariat's

revolutionary banner.

● We must defend, support and build the leadership of the Revolutionary Communist Party in this country. Here is the leadership that can forge the way through the storms of struggle in the decade ahead and forge the way to revolution. Politically, organizationally and ideologically this Party must be still further strengthened and its material force—its numbers and influence—must grow. And its leadership, sure to come under ever more vicious attack as the ruling class lashes out to cripple the force that can lead millions in finishing off this system, this 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 it will put it on with a bang, right off the bat! In this key time on the threshold of this decade whose potential we have analyzed, the advanced must act now, and act in such a way on May Day 1980, International Workers' Day, that breaks sharply with imperialism 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 battlefronts in the class struggle, including May Day itself, though May Day and other battles do have to be built "in their own right."

Through 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 the great goal of revolution. Using this newspaper must become as vital and central as breathing in and out. There is no other way to understand the events of the world and begin to shape them other than through the regular work of a newspaper. There is no other way to build the organization, consistent in principle and flexible in tactics, that will be up to the task of revolution. So today this conspiracy has to spread, and in particular a successful conclusion must now be

reached in the campaign to boost the sales of the *Revolutionary Worker* to 40,000 as a takeoff point to higher levels still in the year ahead, with networks of distribution of this paper sinking deep roots among the oppressed so that they may never be pulled up, no matter what attacks the bourgeoisie may launch.

● At the same time as all this, we must contribute great efforts to building the unity of the communist movement and revolutionary forces internationally, in the struggle against imperialism and reaction, and against revisionism and opportunism of all kinds and from whatever quarter within the international communist movement. We must defend, apply and strengthen proletarian internationalism in theory and practice—so as, in the stormy period ahead, full of dangers and difficulties but also great opportunities, to actually and concretely advance the struggle toward the defeat of imperialism and all reaction and toward the victory of proletarian revolution throughout the world.

Conclusion

As the decade opens, the future, the possibilities of war and revolution open before us. Now so too does the press of immediate tasks in the present, which become all the more important, which reach their full significance when viewed in light of the future and the long term goals we cherish. We see the outlines of the period before us—right before us and the stormy, tumultuous decade of "The '80s"—and we see clearly that, as the Central Committee report of our Party put it, "The question is not whether heavy things are going to be happening, the question is whether they're going to be one-sided or two-sided in a basic sense."

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 increasingly will be drawn into political life; training class conscious forces among the ranks of the proletariat and others awakening to political life and struggle, developing them into (and as) revolutionary communists, armed with the science of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought and to the greatest degree at each point, through the upheavals of the period ahead and pointing always and clearly toward the final goal. And in doing all this we will be laying the strongest possible basis to seize the time when the times do become ripe...