

Walter Mead

The following two speakers spoke at Illinois State University on December 5, 1973. They are spokesmen for the Revolutionary Union. The first is Tim Devine, the second, Shelly Bogen. Tim is a college graduate now working in Chicago. Shelly Bogen is a senior at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, active in the Attica Brigade, an organization separate from the Revolutionary Union and concerned with "sensitizing university students to the threat of imperialism."

Tim Devine:

Mao Tse Tung thought is to distinguish it among other things is to distinguish ourselves from the organizations and groups, which put forward ideology that basically emanates from out of, like the Soviet Union. Such things as, that it's possible to transform society in a peaceful, non-violent kind of manner that – that after a revolution the conflicts within society will totally cease. And basically, is an ideology, which takes the living soul and revolutionary spirit out of Marxism /Leninism and leads into a path of just reformism, pure and simple.

To be clear what the essence of what we stand for is – is for the revolutionary violent overthrow of the capitalist system in any institution of a socialist society that is a society in which producers control the efforts of their labor. We think that in order to accomplish this, that what's necessary is that – that the present political structure, which we have, which is Marxist called, the dictatorship of the Bourgeoisie. Bourgeoisie, everybody I guess knows that that's a French word meaning the Capitalists. That we believe that that system which we have now, in other words, dictatorship, the rule of a handful of people over a majority of people has to be replaced by another dictatorship, a dictatorship of the proletariat; Proletariat of course being industrial workers. And this is pretty classic Marxism/Leninism that I understand in the course that some of you are part of you probably studied what a lot of this means. Maybe if I could just explain, because I understand that there's been quite a few questions have come up around this in the past. A little bit here and then maybe we can go more into it in the question period, what the idea of dictatorship means. Basically, all dictatorship means is that there's a body of people, which is ruling society by force unrestricted by any law. In other words, if – if in present day society you have a particular grievance, oppose a war, an imperialist war, something like this and go out and fight against that, you're liable when you first begin, until you win a lot of people to your side, you're liable to get your head beat in, even though it may be your democratic right. But the ruling class in the United States has shown itself pretty capable of when there's a conflict between its real interest and what the scrap of paper called the Constitution says, when there's a conflict between those two things it's very clear which side they come down – come down on in that.

In order to achieve Socialism, I said that we believe that it is a necessity for violent, mass revolution. Let me explain these things because it's on these questions that a lot of people get very confused about what Communists really stand for and the ruling class spends a lot of time trying to tell people the conflict, that what Communists really say is not what they really mean. But we really mean that, yes it will take violence, not because we're particularly enamored to violence, not because anybody likes to go out and shoot nobody else. The point is that any time the status quo is challenged, any time in which you attempt to make some kind of fundamental social change; the powers that be have a basic interest in opposing that change. And use all the forces at their disposal in order to – in order to hold back that change from taking place. The United States is pretty clear. It means the Army, it means the police forces, it means the judicial system, whatever it can.

The second part of this, and this is very important to understand is that a basic law that Marxist/Leninists hold to is that the masses of people, the vast majority of people are the ones that make history. Not a

handful of revolutionaries that get caught up in some tenement some place with a bunch of guns planning and plotting revolution. It's the masses of people and their millions, who are the ones who can really change and mold history, can really bring about a revolution. The revolutionaries, the Marxist/Leninists, what they can do is to work with the people, patiently point - pointing out lessons showing, summing up experiences. In a strike in which we were recently participating, some of the members of our organization were - worked in the shop and others of us came down to the picket line to help support, there was a - a company was trying to run production even though there was a strike going on. But they were running out of one of the basic chemicals that they were using, so they tried to get a truck to come in, but the Teamster wouldn't cross the picket line. So they sent the truck back and then the company sent one of their own people to go get the truck and drive it across. Well, now the workers of course didn't appreciate that. So they said, "No go, we're staying here, you'll have to run us down to get through." So they called in the Chicago police, busted them, and took them off. Some very important lessons were summed up out of that. The workers got much better grasp of what the Chicago Police Department actually represented. That these, what we call them are scabs in blue, that they were - that while a lot of them would hang around with you and joke with you on the picket line. But when the crunch came down and the orders came in, the job to do is get the picketers out of the way and help that company keep production up, to break the strike, to break the union. And through small lessons like that, small - small lessons, which people learn in small numbers at first increasingly in larger numbers. The working class in this country is beginning to gain a consciousness of its own self and of its own power if it's organized and has a consciousness about what its historic role is.

Another point that we believe is necessary in order to have a revolution in this country is that there must be the formation of a new communist party, which to this point doesn't exist. There is an organization, which calls itself the Communist Party, but for a whole lot of reasons, which take too long right now, if people have questions maybe we can talk about it later. We don't feel that that organization called the Communist Party is an organization which can actually lead the masses to revolution in this country. That even though at one time in the 1930's and early 40's it did represent a truly mass revolutionary party. But today it is totally degenerated into - into - well, it's actually is the left wing of the Democratic Party if you want to get right down to it. That their interest is not in revolution, but is in cutting out little missions for themselves and whatever bureaucracy they can work their way into. We feel that the formation of this Party is developing now in the course of the struggle of the masses of people that are going on. As com - there's - there's what Marxist call a dialectical process, in other words, there's process going on that involves a contradiction. On the one hand, Marxist, most of us today are very young, not all of us of course, but most of us are and very inexperienced in the real struggles of the people and the history of our people and the lessons that we have to learn to make a revolution in this country. And so on the one hand, through participation in these struggles, we're learning a great deal, gaining experience all the time, accumulating it more, and more. On the other hand, through the process of our doing this, more and more people are joining our ranks. Especially, it's very encouraging whenever some of the older workers who have been through and experienced and struggled back in the CIO drives and through the McCarthy period during the 50's who have a real rich store of revolutionary experience, come back into the movement and become active. This is a - this is a phenomenon which is beginning to happen more and more. It's very important for the development of the Party in this country.

If I could just make one point about why we feel that the, what we call the industrial proletariat, that is workers concentrated in heavy scale industry, are what we consider the leading force for the revolution. And that is because by their place in the - by their place in the productive - production of society, they have the - they're uniquely placed to be able to grasp the laws of the development of the capitalist society. In other words, they're right down in the material guts of what makes America or any capitalist society go. They're in the production, they're where commodities are made. It's through their labor that

all wealth grows out of the – in this country. And without their labor, everything would stop. They have a very basic grasp of this. Another thing that industrial workers have is that because it's highly concentrated, it means it's a very high division of labor. In other words in an auto shop, I guess everybody's at least seen a picture, if not, have been in an auto shop to see how a production line works, where each worker performs perhaps only a particular task. Maybe spot welds, maybe 5 spots on a door or puts in a window or throws in the ashtray, something like that. It's very basic things. And workers come to see that through this experience that by yourself there's very little that you can accomplish. But combined with the efforts of hundreds of thousands of other people, there's very little that you cannot accomplish. And it's through this experience that they get the best of what we believe has the best basis to grasp basic Marxist/Leninist ideology.

I'll move along, I'm taking too long here. In addition to that, though, we don't believe that just – just the workers are a revolutionary force in society or a potential revolutionary force, we believe that in this society that the broadest majority of people, the 80 to 90 percent of the people objectively suffer in various ways because of the imperialist system, which we have. And that the basis exists for forming a united front, a unity of all these groups and forces to fight back against the imperialist system into a socialist revolution. We believe that the workers will be the center, the core of this. At the same time we can see over the last 10, 15, 20 years the emergence of various revolutionary forces. For instance the struggle of the black people, the struggle of Chicano people, the struggle of students, increasingly the struggle of women. We can see all of these, all of these movements and currents and trends developing. And what we believe is necessary, is to unite all of these, to point out that the enemy of each and every one of these groups that's fighting, even though they don't see the unity all the time between their fights that the enemy that they're fighting is essentially the same and that there is a basis of unity in that. To unite all of those who can be united. To struggle to deal a deathblow to the capitalist system.

Okay, now just a few things about the crisis that the imperialist system is in at this point. Maybe I should just clear up a couple things. When Marxist talk, they always talk about capitalism, imperialism, and stuff like that and don't often explain what they mean, so maybe if I could just clarify that imperialism is capitalism, but a particular stage of it that is a monopoly stage. The monopoly's in the economy acquired a basic strangle hold over the economy and competition essentially has been eliminated. Not that there isn't a competition on a very small level, but in terms of basic agreements like what is going to be the price of steel, the price of an automobile, the price of gasoline, the price of electricity. All these kinds of things are determined essentially by a handful of people. It's been monopolized.

It's also a time in which the export of capital and the control of foreign markets and foreign countries achieves a pronounced importance much greater than it did at an earlier time when capitalism was competitive and basically trying to develop. For instance, until the end of the last century, the United States had very little interest in running around the world and trying to take up colonies and things because basically it was still expanding here at home. In this century, however, we've seen, especially since World War II, a big change in this. The United States feels it has to run each and every other spot in the world to maintain its control, it's cheap labor there and the cheap raw materials and those markets - to keep those markets open for goods. At this point it seems like it's getting very desperate around those things.

It's clear that for instance, the moves towards – the moves toward - that have been made toward China to try and say that what they call have been breaking down the barriers that have been established. They see that as an 800 billion people market. Zhou Enlai said in his speech a few weeks ago that the imperialists see us as a choice bit of meat. He said that they will find that we are a very tough bit of meat to try to bite into. So that we can see that around the world that the imperialist system has encountered crisis after crisis. Most clearly since World War II was first China, there was Korea, liberation struggles in

many other places, most importantly in Viet Nam and all of Indochina. What's happened there has been a tremendous set back both economically, but also - and especially politically to the US imperialists and their ability to run around the world and use the threat of their force. That's no longer enough and that all over the world in various forms, people in countries are rising up to demand a piece of their own.

For in instance in the Middle East there's an organization called OPEC, it's not just in the Middle East, it's an organization, it's called the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, which gets together periodically and sets the price which they're going to charge the major oil buying companies. These are countries like Venezuela, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, so forth. You have other organizations like the Conference of Non Aligned Nations, which recently had a meeting in Algiers, in which some real important strides were made towards unity. And we're beginning to see some of the results of that now with China raising in the UN just yesterday that Sihanouk's government should be admitted to the UN in opposition to the Lon Nol government that is presently there. There are such things as the Organization of African Unity, so on and so forth.

Of course the US government doesn't take all this lying down as we can see in recent events in Chili, that they suffer setbacks but they never give up and it's because they never give up that we can see is that war is going to be something which is going to be with us until this imperial system is done away with. Because the more the people of other countries want to control their own country and fight for it, the more the US imperialists are going have to go and say, "No, you're not going to control your own country, we're going to do it." For instance, it's very interesting that now, whereas 10 years ago if you were in the army and having special training you would be training for jungle warfare they'd probably have you in Panama parachuting into the jungles and things like that because Indochina was clearly the thing. Now a days what they're - the basic training is in desert conditions. The reason for this is the Middle East is clearly the next major area of contention.

Also, you have around the world are increasingly contradictions between two different forces. One is the capitalist countries which have been crushed since World War II, namely Japan and West Germany. And the increasingly the European economic community which are just now since World War II are really beginning to feel their oats and feel like they can get back out in that big wide world of exploitation again and have a hay day and challenge the United States on a few places. Knowing that they have to if they're going to grow and expand. On the other hand is the Soviet Union, which we believe is a social imperialist country, it is no longer a country in which there is socialism. And this is kind of important to understand because a lot of people say, "Well, you say you're for socialism, but it's no good, look what they're doing to the people in Russia. And look what the foreign policy of

Russia is, it's just the same as the United States." We say, "Yes, that's right, it is just the same as the United States. There's a good reason. The system there is the same as the United States, has a few different forms, a few different wrinkles because it developed a little bit differently. But essentially the same thing." That's another thing that maybe if people have questions about we can go more into a little bit later. Real briefly, here in the United States, it'd be redundant to run down to everybody, you can just look around any day pick up the newspaper and see the kind of crisis that's going on. One thing that is very interesting though in the most recent developments, is the struggle that's beginning to occur between various sectors and forces within the ruling class itself, within the top financial centers. And this comes out through things like the Watergate is one example in which, Nixon cries about a conspiracy of the press. Well, it was a conspiracy of the press, the people of the press want to get rid of Nixon. They had financial interests and opposition to the interest that he represents. You see, a big squabble brewing right now about whether or not to give the steel industry a special allotment of fuel this winter or whether or not to hold back. Nixon feeling that it would be politically impossible for him to give any special benefits to the steel industry. The steel industry on the other hand saying it's impossible for him not to.

The other side of all this crisis is that the people of the United States are increasingly rising up and fighting back. I can describe in some of the things that we're involved in, and that we participate in, and those are in struggles within trade unions and strikes within shops, the formation of workers organizations city wide level. It's a struggle against not only economic – for economic gain but also for broader political issues. We work in an organization called the Farah Strike Support Committee. We've helped establish these around the country. It's around a strike that's going on mainly – the main plant is in El Paso, Texas. I guess everybody's heard of Farah Plant's advertise in the World

Series and sporting events and football games on Sunday and stuff. There's 3,000, mainly Chicano women out on strike in El Paso and have been out for about a year, a year and three months – about a year and three months and they're making some impressive gains in their struggle. And this port has been build up and just last Friday night we had a – the Farah Strike Support Committee had a program to support them to raise funds for the strike and there was about 300 people came. And when you think about it, that's pretty small. But when you think about it that it only started about a month ago that the whole Farah Strike Support within the Chicago area when nobody had even heard of the Farah Strike you can see that there's a real sense of solidarity that people feel, that it only started about a month ago, that the whole Farah Strike Support within the Chicago area and nobody had even heard of the Farah Strike, you can see that there's a real sense of solidarity that a lot of people feel which will grow very quickly.

On many other levels we can see people beginning to fight back. There's an organization called the Unemployed Workers Organizing Committee, which is forming now in various parts of the country, which is rising up. Increasingly, student struggles are developing. Shelly will talk about in a few minutes. We can see an embryonic form out of the struggle of these people that are developing as well as we can see on the other hand, the crises and the contradictions that are developing within the capitalist system. It gives us a great amount of faith and encouragement to continue the struggle and to advance. And as the struggle of the people advances every day so does our confidence advance that ultimately that the masses of people will make a revolution that the imperialist system will be overthrown and that exploitation will for all time will be eliminated.