

STUDENTS AND THE FIGHT FOR SOCIALISM

Speech Given By ABDUL

February First Movement Conference

Boston College
Boston, Massachusetts

January 31, 1975

Comrades!

Fellow Students and Friends of the February First Movement!

This occasion is an important historical event in the historical development of the revolutionary struggle in our country, and the Black liberation struggle in particular. But "this is the best of times and the worst of times." It is the worst because the crisis of Imperialism is heightening, the attacks on the living standards of the masses of people are intensifying, and the ruling class is increasing its efforts to disunite the working class with demonic schemes that make the people fight each other and subvert the development of revolutionary class consciousness that will unite the masses in a common struggle. On the other hand, where there is exploitation and oppression there will be resistance and struggle. This is the best of times because the masses of the world are hip to the exploitative character of imperialism and are struggling in their own interest "to win or safeguard national independence, defend their state sovereignty, protect their national resources and develop their national economy." And here in the United States the people are rising up to fight. Our movement is small, and our forces are young but the spirit of revolution guided by the science of Marxism-Leninism will lead us to triumph over all enemies and prosper. We must grasp the logic of the laws of social development and know that the few will become the many, the weak will become the strong, and in the end we will "unite to win still greater victories." The February First Movement is a significant development in this context, because it is the latest step in a long history of revolutionary struggle by Black students. Moreover, it is in keeping with the heroic way students all over the world have contributed to the revolutionary struggles in their countries. I urge all Black students here tonight to seek FFM out, to study its documents, and to join in the movement.

Now, the subject of my brief remarks is "Students and the Fight for Socialism" As a former activist in and current supporter of the student movement, and as a communist fighting for socialism, I speak for our collective, not FFM, not ALSC.

I will take up three questions:

1. What is the situation in the USA today?
2. How is the revolution possible in the USA?
3. What is the revolutionary role of students?

Situation in the USA Today

Not since the Great Depression has the crisis of imperialism been so sharp and in need of a "new economic theory of recovery". The use of ruling class guru John Maynard Keynes' theory of priming the pump whereby government investment is used to stimulate economic activity when private investment has declined, has proven not to lead to recovery, but temporary relief that leads into even greater crisis. Keynes was an idealist of sorts who argued for government spending on social services and income redistribution. But as Lenin has pointed out the very nature of imperialism leads to the constant threat of war because of the need to struggle for greater access to raw materials and markets. So, since the Great Depression, defense spending has been vital to the U.S. economy. This means war has become as American as apple pie. Generals become presidents, cabinet members and high government officials, board members of large corporations, high administration officials in universities, generally linking up all aspects of life in this society to war.

In an economic sense, the basic crisis of capitalism results from the anarchy of overproduction. The capitalists in their avaricious greedy pursuit of profit increase production as much as possible. Of course, for the working class this means speed up of the assembly line, forced overtime, multiple shifts, and resultant rise in industrial accidents. This leads to a build up of goods in warehouses that exceeds the demand for those goods in the stores, that in turn forces the factories to slow production down. This production slowdown results in unemployment. But all the while the capitalists try to raise prices as much as possible because after all, profit is realized in the market place. When the crisis heightens, unemployment goes up, wages are kept down, credit gets tight, production continues to decrease, and many small businesses are destroyed. All of this reflects a fundamental contradiction

of capitalist society--the contradiction between the social character of production and the private capitalist ownership of the means of production. A fundamental contradiction is what defines the life of a particular society, so when there is a revolution of the relations of production, when there is social production and social ownership as well, capitalism as we know it in the USA will no longer exist.

But our analysis must deal with the particularity of this current period so that we can grasp the principal contradiction and move the society forward, As Mao Tse-tung has written:

"There are many contradictions in the process of development of a complex thing, and one of them is necessarily the principal contradiction whose existence and development determine or influence the existence and development of the other contradictions."

In the end we will overcome the fundamental contradictions in this society, but to move forward now we must focus on each principal contradiction we face, one by one. In times of crisis the situation can change rapidly, in times of revolutionary movement the focus of revolution must change its analysis to correctly sum up changes in the objective situation. Not to change is to be a diehard sticking to old views, to stubbornly and single-mindedly stick to only the fundamental contradiction is to be a left phrase-monger.

During the high tide of the Civil Rights period in the USA the principal contradiction was national liberation struggles versus imperialism, particularly the Black liberation movement versus monopoly capital.

Now the principal contradiction is the class contradiction, the proletariat against the monopoly capitalist class. The strike movement, the struggles of rank and file workers against the sell-out trade union bureaucrats, the fight of unorganized workers to unionize (particular in California, Texas, North and South Carolina), and the fight of the unemployed for a job and a right to live all reflect this.

But we should not see this in contradiction to the Black liberation struggle. As Mao has written:

"The struggle of the Black people in the United States is bound to merge

with the American workers movement, and this will eventually end the criminal rule of the US monopoly capitalist class."

In fact, it is precisely the proletarian character of Black people that provides the objective basis for this merger, and it is our task to fight against those things that prevent it, and fight for those things that help bring it about. Since the question of national oppression of Black people is in essence a class contradiction we must not play down the particular national oppression of Black people but draw out the class essence of the contradiction between the Black masses and the US ruling class. What this means is (1) that we must identify the bourgeois forces and their petty bourgeois servants that struggle to achieve hegemony over the Black liberation movement and lead it down the road to pacificism, electoral politics, and struggling for "silver rights"; (2) that our focus must be on the objective interests of the vast majority of Black people who are solidly a section of the proletariat and (3) that we must fight white chauvinism among white workers who are duped by racism (a bourgeois tool) as well as what it creates--bourgeois nationalism. We must fight for proletarian internationalism and against all forms of national privilege.

In general, the crisis in this country is intensifying--as it is throughout the entire imperialist bloc of countries. The situation is excellent for the revolutionary movement to make a giant leap forward in this period. But danger is everywhere, because the wounded paper tiger of US imperialism can be a treacherous beast. The road ahead will be torturous. Police repression, political surveillance and government-backed slander, Boston busing crisis, and overt fascist ideologues like Louise Day Hicks, David Duke of the Ku Klux Klan and scientific racists of the Jensen and Shockley type will be multiplied 10 or more times all over this country. But as Fred Hampton put it: "You can kill a revolutionary but you can't kill the revolution." We are here to hail the founding of the February First Movement. And by so doing we reflect the spirit of every act of slave resistance, every underground railroad run of Harriet Tubman, every revolutionary action by the Southern Negro Youth Congress in the 1930's and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee

in the 1960's, and we continue to develop the recent motion of the African Liberation Support Committee.

In times such as these, How is Revolution Possible in the USA?

This question is the most serious strategic question that faces the masses of people in the USA and in every country in which exploitation reigns in the world today. And now it is necessary and in fact imperative that we take this question up in every public forum possible because of three important historical facts:

1. The crisis--in the economy a full scale depression is in the making and in the government corruption on all levels exists;
2. The rising tide of resistance by the masses of people--most importantly the working class and the national liberation struggles, but also other classes, strata, and social groups concerned with the liberation of women, the fight against fascist police terror, the struggle for prison reform, adequate public welfare, decent housing, adequate health care, consumer justice, ecology, quality public education, and against the cutbacks in federal funds for higher education.
3. The obvious fact is that there exists no genuine communist party to give revolutionary proletarian leadership to all struggles so that every act of resistance and fight back can be hooked up in a powerful tidal wave of struggle to smash the capitalist state, institute the dictatorship of the proletariat, liberate all oppressed nations, liberate women, and scientifically build socialism by faithful adherence to the science of Marxism-Leninism. We have two types of pseudo-sham parties in the USA today--one is represented by a multitude of big and little (mainly little) Trotskyite sects that spread like crab grass over the vacillating but fertile soil of mostly students and the petty bourgeoisie. They serve the ruling class by spreading confusion and by trying every possible way to subvert the revolutionary unity of the proletariat. More important, there is the CP(USA). This is the major vehicle for the bourgeois line to appear in Marxist-Leninist garb. As a not too creative front for the social

imperialist Soviet Union, the CP(USA) preaches the peaceful transition to socialism for the world's people, tails the liberal bourgeoisie with its strategy of the anti-monopoly coalition, and preaches the merits of detente between US imperialism and USSR social imperialism. These are the views that Lenin and the Bolsheviks fought against, that Mao and the Chinese Communist Party fought against, and that in building a new genuine communist party, we must fight against.

As Lenin pointed out, the capitalist state cannot be taken over by the peaceful means of the electoral process. Bourgeois rule must be smashed and replaced by proletarian rule, rule of a new type. The petty bourgeoisie abhors violence--and not taking into consideration the daily violence perpetuated against the working class, the petty bourgeoisie holds high its faith in bourgeois democracy. The working class and the oppressed nationalities can't abhor what they face everyday; they must learn how to use violence themselves in a revolutionary way to end it once and for all. This means that we uphold the right to self defense and look forward to revolutionary armed struggle in the future. Compare the experience of Chile with that of the Bolsheviks or the Chinese Communist Party. These are lessons learned in blood by the international communist movement and the working class of the world.

This is what Comrade Enver Hoxa of the Party of Labor of Albania has to say on Chile:

"The Bourgeoisie of this country was not the least restrained by the morale of bourgeois democracy and by its traditions to bring fascism to power, when it saw that its class positions were being endangered. It crushed with iron and fire not only the workers and peasants, but did short work of all those who believed in the 'unshakable foundations' of bourgeois democracy."

Now the anti-monopoly coalition is a fundamentally incorrect strategy for several reasons. Three key ones are:

1. It appears as if the CP(USA) is proposing a coalition against one sector of the bourgeoisie and not the bourgeoisie itself. This reflects a tendency toward either a two-stage revolution (although bourgeois democracy is already

here with all its rotten contradictions, hypocrisy and terror for the people) headed toward socialism, or a liquidation of the strategic goal of socialism altogether.

2. This erroneous line leads to unprincipled alliances with the liberal bourgeoisie. When Gus Hall ran for president, some members of the Central Committee of the CP(USA) voted for McGovern instead. This has been the pattern since FDR and the New Deal--another version of the old raw double deal. The spirit of Earl Browder and Jay Lovestone (proven agents of the bourgeoisie from the old CP) haunt the working class in the revisionist garb of the CP(USA). The same is true with its love of trade union bureaucrats. Rather than take Marxism-Leninism to the working class with a fighting spirit and bold style of integrating with the rank and file, the CP(USA) hugs close to the trade union leadership and relies on its propaganda apparatus, never showing a Leninist face to the masses.

3. It abdicates the responsibility of a genuine party to fight for a correct line to provide leadership for the masses. It tails behind every reformist motion, raising it to a level of principle--an incorrect principle at that! A Leninist approach is to fight for reforms, but in such a way that communist political exposure educates the masses to their class interests and necessary strategic goal of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Lastly, the detente myth is really a scheme to conceal the contention and collusion of the two main enemies of the world's people--US imperialism and USSR social imperialism. Everywhere the threat of a world war is eminent because of this super power drive toward hegemony--the question is who is going to control a particular country's natural resources, government policies, and market for the export of manufactured goods, the USA or the USSR. Just check out issues like Cyprus, the Middle East, the UN struggles, (off shore limits to national territorial rights, food, natural resources, etc.) Is "detente" with imperialism possible? Isn't war a normal expression of imperialism? Shouldn't the masses prepare for war and not be lulled

to sleep by sermons on the mount of the Soviet revisionist dung heap?

However, the revisionist distortions cannot change the objective forces at work. History develops in struggle, and the world advances amidst turbulence. The imperialists, and the super powers in particular, are beset with troubles and are on the decline. "Countries want independence, nations want liberation, people want revolution. This is the irresistible trend of history."

From this, the central task of class conscious proletarian revolutionaries becomes crystal clear. Our task is to build a new communist party, and to make significant steps toward accomplishing this, we must fight for a correct application of Marxism-Leninism to the objective conditions in this country, and sum up the historical particulars of the current stage of history based on the laws of capitalist social development.

Communists must be clear on the strategic goal of socialism. This is our maximum program. But no one familiar with the last 30 years of intense anti-communist propaganda put out by the ruling class will expect the masses to grasp the aim of socialism overnight. It will take a long struggle of fighting and failing until we fight on to victory. Therefore we have a minimum program that reflects the general strategy for how the revolution in this country will happen. This is the United Front Against Imperialism composed of all anti-imperialist forces with its center being a fighting proletariat and the national liberation struggles. The key thrust of the United Front Against Imperialism is based on the revolutionary strategy to "unite the many to defeat the few", "to concentrate a superior force and destroy our enemies one by one."

The United Front must be led by the party of the proletariat if it is to realize its necessary strategic task of defeating imperialism and leading to socialism. If it is led by any other force it will be side-tracked and go into a tailspin leading to the swamp of reform led by the vacillating moralist leadership of the petty bourgeoisie.

This danger has been developing recently as the third trend, the raising to the level of principle an anti-imperialist ideology. This is a mask for petty bourgeois ideology that in the end results in holding up the bourgeois line (albeit in a liberal guise). This is not to underestimate the positive contribution middle forces can make to our revolution, but to point out the necessary conditions for that contribution to be made. No united front can be truly revolutionary and carry struggle to the end unless it is led by a Marxist-Leninist proletarian party. When this happens we will have the necessary weapon to link reform to revolution in a consistent scientific manner.

Now a vital force within the United Front Against Imperialism is the student movement. Almost without exception, every successful revolutionary struggle has had a revolutionary student sector. This is because you are young, a group in transition, you are open to new ideas, you are full of energy, and you have not yet been tainted into total submission by the seductive propaganda of the ruling class. So we come to our third question: what is the revolutionary role of students?

There are incorrect ideas about the student movement that you must guard against.

1. Students will lead the struggle. This position is dangerous because it liquidates the necessary leadership of the workers and liberation forces in order to carry revolution through to the end led by a revolutionary party. An example of this reactionary line appeared in an editorial in the December 27th issue of the Militant newspaper. In dealing with the student call for a conference to deal with the crisis in Boston they write:

"Students have taken the lead, as they did in the earlier civil rights movement, by setting the next step in the campaign. They are urging supporters of civil rights to come to Boston again Feb. 14-15 for a conference to plan further action. This conference can be a powerful boost toward developing an ongoing movement that can defeat the racist offensive."

The correct communist position is to encourage the students calling the conference (1) to ensure that a full and decisive ideological struggle occur so that a clear choice can be made on a program and course of action; (2) to ensure to fully represent the interest of the Afro-American people and the proletariat in all planning,

and actions undertaken. The trotskyite newspaper doesn't mention the working class once, and they seem to shy away from ideological struggle. They have moved in like this before and brought havoc every time.

A new communist party is necessary in order to have correct leadership for the multi-national proletariat and the national liberation struggles, and the entire United Front Against Imperialism--including the student movement. Where does this party come from? It comes from all revolutionary sectors of society, most importantly the proletariat--but student revolutionaries are also a vital source of members for the party. So as your struggles develop, as you study the science of revolution, when you grasp Marxism-Leninism, you will increasingly lose your identity as a student, and take on a new one as a revolutionary who goes to school. So students don't lead, the proletariat and the national liberation struggles do, with their revolutionary party as their general staff.

But remember that you have two strategic responsibilities as you develop: on the one hand to raise your level of theoretical and practical work and transform yourselves into professional revolutionaries, on the other to maintain a good mass style so that the broad united front character of the anti-imperialist student movement is not sacrificed for the development of a politically advanced few.

2. Students are more knowledgeable than the people. This ill-fated arrogant elitism will lead to no movement at all. Knowledge is grounded in practice, especially revolutionary knowledge which is grounded in the practice of class struggle. This includes anti-imperialist student struggle. What students and intellectuals can have is a grasp of theory, and this only by serious systematic study of materials that sum up the lived experience of the masses. And the task is to go to the masses--the masses of students, the masses of workers, the masses of Black people and learn first hand of the particular details of oppression and exploitation--then your limited experience will be made rich by the storehouse of knowledge contained in the masses' experience. And you then will be able to arm the masses with your now firmer grasp of theory in order that they might find a clearer path of struggle. But we must

never believe the imperialist lie--the fact is that the people are wise, and we must learn from them.

These are aspects of revolutionary work on all levels--in the student movement and in more advanced organizational forms.

3. Students are not revolutionary and will not join in the struggle, or cannot.

This is a leftist position that negates the history of world revolution. One manifestation of this regards students as petty bourgeois and focuses only on workers. Not mainly or most importantly on the proletariat, but only. This leftism isolates one from mass struggles which will be supported or even in some cases initiated by students. A variant of this position occurs when students are turned on to Marxism-Leninism, negate their revolutionary role in the anti-imperialist student movement, and abandon the campus and student work. This is an infantile purist position that burns bridges connecting the student movement to the communist movement, and leads to a rejection of the advanced elements by the masses of students. What must be done is to link the student movement to the communist movement for a new party. This is the correct revolutionary task of the politically advanced students. Also, this leftist position fails to recognize the difference between the objective conditions of students, and the subjective false consciousness of many students. Objectively the masses of students are in contradiction with imperialism, of course, there is a significant sector that is not--but its significance is more qualitative than quantitative since it is a small part of the 10,000,000 or so college students in the United States. And our grasp of the crisis of imperialism helps us to understand that the objective material conditions that students have with imperialism are heightening. The ruling class moves to camouflage this or dull it with drugs, sexual fantasy and perversion, popular culture, religious cults and all forms of mysticism. But the masses of students aren't going for it or can be won away from it. We must move correctly or we will be isolated from the masses. Our approach must be to practice "unity--struggle--unity" with the masses of students. Unite with them on issues they are concerned about, issues they understand, and build

tight bonds of unity. Then there is a basis to raise the political level of the unity by increasing study and principled discussion on the conditions of exploitation and oppression, and on how to build a movement to defeat imperialism. If our movement is to be successful we must not be negative in our thinking, and reject our fellow students for being temporary victims of imperialism.

This brings us to a major question--what steps must be taken to place the February First Movement on a solid anti-imperialist footing? I'd like to suggest five (5) principles for your consideration:

1. An anti-imperialist student movement must be based on scientific consciousness of current patterns of oppression and exploitation and a grasp of the historical role students have played in revolutionary struggle. This means that you must study, not just with books, though this is absolutely essential, but with the newspapers, the mass media in general, and most important of all--make direct investigation among the masses of students, workers, and throughout the Black community. Learn how to listen to people, learn how to learn from the people's experience. And be objective, be systematic, and be thorough.

One more point on study. Our main task is to combine the advanced learners with the average learners by having a clear understanding of what one's objectives are, what problems need solving. This will help us when we develop our approach to study. Remember that the same books can be read by people on different theoretical levels and much be gained by it, and remember that theory is good only as a guide to action. The task is not merely to understand the world, but to change it.

2. An anti-imperialist student movement must make creative use of propaganda and cultural activity to raise the general consciousness of the masses. This points to leaflets, forums, and small discussions in which we try to state as clearly as possible in a way that the masses will readily grasp what is happening in the world, in the community, on the campus, the problems of imperialism and the solution--struggle. We must let the masses use these instruments to speak for themselves. Also, we must use the African World as our major voice. We must write for it, we must

support it financially, we must distribute it widely, and we must organize the consistent systematic study of it. In addition, no student movement can make an all-sided statement without use of cultural activities like songs, poems, plays, paintings and parties. We must use these forms to educate, we must make anti-imperialist consciousness appealing and enjoyable--the choice cannot be having fun versus the movement. A student must be able to have fun that has anti-imperialist content.

3. An anti-imperialist student movement must have a consistent committment and discipline to revolutionary change. This has a dual character. Objectively we can measure our committment and discipline by how we spend our money, and how we allocate our time. We must find time everyday to struggle, and make it as regular as sleeping, eating, going to the bathroom, putting our clothes on. We do those things everyday and we must make the struggle as regular. Subjectively, in everything we do, not just on those things that pertain directly to the struggle, we must ask ourselves two questions: What role does imperialism play in this? How can this help the struggle? These questions will become a new set of glasses for you to look through and interpret the world, and strengthen your committment to struggle. One last point concerns organization. Our committment and discipline must not be merely viewed as individual tasks but must be viewed and carried out in the organizational life of the February First Movement. As the crisis of imperialism breaks down organizational efficiency around us in the society, the February First Movement must be a model of responsibility and follow-through, organizational accountability to the masses (like being able to account for all funds raised), and simply, always be on the scene of struggle and creatively involved in it.

4. An anti-imperialist student movement must have a positive attitude and ability to integrate well with the masses of students, workers, and people throughout the community. If we place our faith in the masses, and know that while the struggle will be long and hard, we will win. Then let us go to the masses with a smile on our face and warmth in our hearts. People like to be liked. And after all,

don't we love the people. So loosen up your style, and flow among the masses like a fish in water with no real fear since they are our real friends. As we raise high the banner of the February First Movement the masses will come to love us. And their love will not be based simply on emotions, though it's necessary for that to be there, they will love us because we represent an end to suffering and oppression, we stand for the truth, and we are consistent in our willingness to fight in their interests to smash our common enemy, imperialism. All this is possible because we know the laws of history:

"While massacring the people in other countries, U.S. imperialism is slaughtering the white and Black people in its own country. The danger of a new world war still exists, and the people of all countries must get prepared. But revolution is the main trend in the world today."

We will win, there is no doubt!

5. An anti-imperialist student movement must be bold in its action to support and spearhead the mass student struggles. Bold action, guided by all that we have just discussed, is one sure way to overcome fear, break down inertia, and spark the flames of struggle. No injustice can be allowed to go unchallenged, no righteous struggle, no matter how small, can go unsupported. Remember that a single spark can start a prairie fire. Four freshmen students in 1960 led to 50,000 students in the sit-in movement. That is the legacy of the sit-ins. To go to that counter and sit in was bold. When the students of San Francisco State struck, the students of Howard University seized the campus and the students of Southern went to the docks at Burnside to fight the importation of Rhodesian Chrome, all these were bold. The February First Movement must raise this tradition high. "Be resolute! Fear no sacrifices! Dare to Struggle, Dare to Win."

In sum, the principles are simple but far-reaching. An anti-imperialist student movement must have:

1. scientific consciousness
2. creative use of propaganda and culture
3. consistent commitment and discipline
4. positive attitude
5. be bold in its action.

the

Yours is a necessary historical task in struggle to liberate Black people and bring an end to imperialism. What I have tried to do is share with you a few thoughts to contribute to your success. I welcome criticism and discussion so that our knowledge may be deepened and our movement set on a correct path.

DEATH TO IMPERIALISM AND ALL FORMS OF OPPRESSION!

FORWARD TOWARD BUILDING A NEW GENUINE MARXIST-LENINIST COMMUNIST PARTY!

BUILD THE UNITED FRONT AGAINST IMPERIALISM!

BUILD THE ANTI-IMPERIALIST STUDENT MOVEMENT!

HOLD HIGH THE BANNER OF THE FEBRUARY FIRST MOVEMENT!