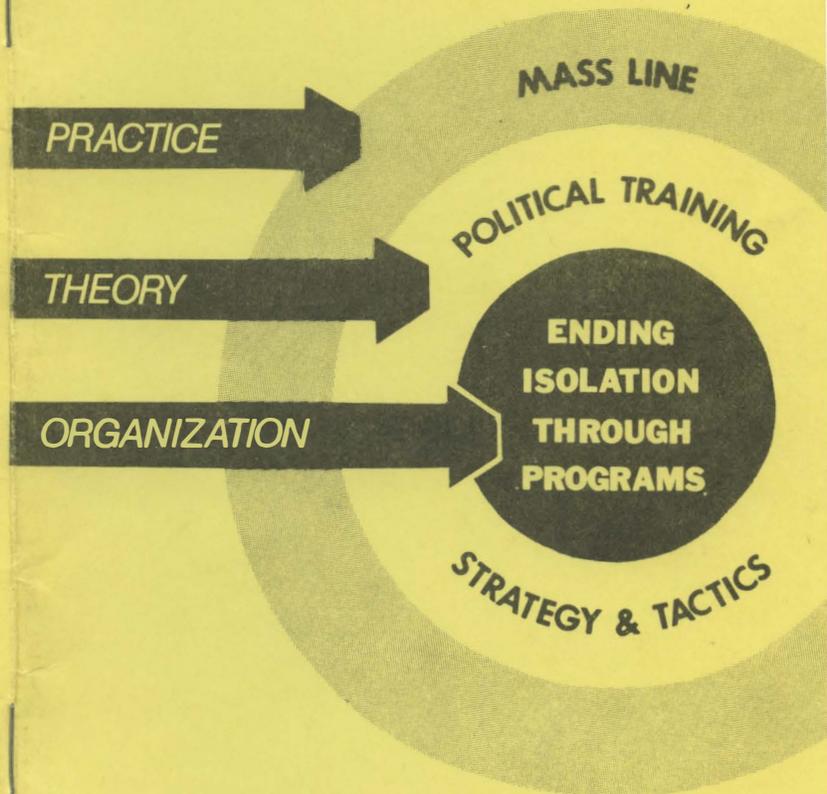


THREE TACTICS



by James Forman

INTRODUCTION

Many of us have been engaging in practice to overcome our economic exploitation and social oppression and see the source of our oppression and exploitation as being the capitalist system. Working people have been struggling in many ways: in strikes, in union drives, in the mines, in trying to get daycare, in trying to make decisions about what affects us in our neighborhoods, in fighting racism and sexism, in struggles to form systems of mutual cooperation and many other ways.

The thrust of many of these struggles has been progressive: people got together to do something about the conditions they found themselves in; some people learned new skills; valuable lessons were learned about the nature of our system. But each of these struggles in turn has come to a point where it can go no further—where those in leadership run into these problems:

- 1) Confusion about the primary contradiction in the situation. How do you know what is the most important thing at a particular time to move on? Is your organization constantly reacting to some new crisis or issue?
- 2) Lack of organization, or uncertainty about where to take the people you pick up on. An organization might pick up on someone and then not be able to provide a clear direction for that person so that they can see

changes in themselves or evidence that their situation can change. The result is to remain small in number and never to develop new leadership.

- 3) Not being material, but moralistic. Does your organization come across as asking people to join a good cause or to do something related to their own material needs? Are the steps to be taken concrete ones, or are solutions to problems general, not getting any clear results? There are many forms of moralism. It can take the form of putting people down for what they are doing to survive under capitalism—for example, the way they make a living within the working class or the way they dress. Moralism holds back the movement, because it keeps people from being in touch with their material condition.
- 4) Separation of theory from practice. This problem shows up in many forms. One way it comes out is talking a good line but never taking action, or waiting until the "perfect" line is there before acting for fear of making mistakes. On the other hand, being put off by theory can lead to making the same mistakes over and over. Some people have developed some theory, but their practice is not related to it. All forms of separation of theory from practice hold the people back from developing the struggle to a new level.
- 5) An organization can't live up to its promises. Can your organization actually provide what the people need? Or do they get discouraged and turn away, some turning cynical about the people's ability to change their condition? When people come forward to struggle, they want something to happen. They don't want promises that can't be fulfilled.

An organization encountering these obstacles needs to ask the question: **Who does it want to lead the revolution?** The choices are to recognize the need to develop working

class leadership and move to a new level, or to stagnate and become reactionary. Stagnation and reaction leaves an organization vulnerable to cooptation, causing it to become an obstacle in the path of working class struggle.

We need to have a clear understanding of what it takes to advance the struggle to new levels. In order to accomplish this, we need to grasp the importance of the cycle of knowledge (practice—theory—practice).

In terms of developing working class leadership needed to take the struggle forward, the cycle of knowledge can be stated as practice, theory, organization.

"**Three Tactics**" provides a basis for understanding how to develop leadership capable of correctly organizing working class struggle. In looking at "**Three Tactics**": (1) mass line can be seen as practice, (2) correct political training as theory and, (3) ending of isolation as organization.

I. Practice. We need to develop an understanding of what is meant by the concept that people make the revolution. If people make the revolution, it is people that must be developed. No one can hang onto skills for themselves, but must teach others; no one can hang onto leadership for themselves, but must develop leadership in others. To do this, one must understand the revolutionary potential of masses of people and know how to develop that potential in a step by step way. The ultimate aims of revolutionary practice are to overthrow the dictatorship of the capitalist class and to institute socialism under the dictatorship of the working class, the proletariat.

II. Theory. In order to fully develop the revolutionary potential of the masses, we need to be able to correctly interpret our own experience—to draw upon the experience recorded from other struggles, apply that ex-

perience to particular, concrete situations we find ourselves in, and develop that theory and experience to a higher level, based on an understanding of mistakes and successes. Furthermore, our political experience cannot be brought to a higher level without a scientific aid—the dialectical method and an understanding of historical materialism, that is, the development of capitalist production in the United States.

III. Organization. Finally, we need to be aware that people in society interact in literally thousands of different ways. The only way revolution by and for the working class, can succeed is through working people moving together in an integrated, united force. We need to recognize that people will act according to their particular situations (according to their material condition). Our task as organizers is to develop the means by which these many particular struggles can be joined together to form a larger, unified struggle by the class as a whole.

Only by building proletarian organizations can this be accomplished, out of which a Communist Party will emerge.

THREE TACTICS **by James Forman**

Letter to Some Organizing Friends in California **January 16, 1971**

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

I write you with extreme joy in my heart for I am still thinking of all the productive work that we accomplished together. I learned a great deal from my visit with you, especially about Chicanos and three tactics: the implications of the mass line, correct political training and the ending of isolation. Since I have longed to write you, let me share with you a few thoughts on these subjects.

I. The Mass Line

The mass line fundamentally means that we only have **people** to work with, and only **people** will make the revolution. Small numbers of people will never make a revolution. Revolution is the work of millions of people who are determined that they will no longer suffer brutality, injustice, cruelty, pain, suffering, misery, poverty, the theft of their labor by a rich gang of thugs who care nothing for the misery of the poor and working class.

Revolution is the work of millions of people who know that they must engage the repressive forces of any state in all types of political and military struggle, repressive forces that maintain the rule of the few over the many, repressive forces that help in one way or another the system of imperialism and imperialism itself in the United States.

Revolution is the work of the masses of the people who long for a new world, a world without poverty, a world full of love and enough food for all people, a world free of racism and sexism, a world that will no longer kill babies for lack of milk. Revolution implies a burning desire for a new type of society, and we call that society a **socialist society**.

But obviously, revolutions are not made just by themselves. It is the work of the people, the masses, the toiling millions. Yet, there is a positive and absolutely necessary role for the political organizer, the revolutionary activist, the guerrilla, advanced political cadres. That role is fundamentally to take passion for justice, love for humanity, and hatred for injustice among the people and to infuse them with commitment, a desire for revolution.

The revolutionary organizer must absolutely master the art of education. People must be educated through rational arguments and exemplary behavior that the life of a revolutionary is a life worthy of living. The masses must understand that the revolutionary is not a madman or a woman who has gone berserk, but revolutionaries are people who live because they want to make a revolution that will usher in a new day for all humanity. To educate people that there is a need for more revolutionaries is a goal that we must always strive for.

To educate means to convince others that our cause is just, that we are correct, that we have a vision of a new world, that we are serious people, capable, hard working, dedicated, a people who know the science and art of making a revolution; and that we are a determined people who want to ignite the revolutionary spark in all poor and oppressed people, and in the working class.

To educate means to be convinced ourselves, to be absolutely sure that we are right, convinced to the point where there is no doubt in our mind that we have chosen the correct path, the path of revolutionary struggle, a path that we want all others to follow, a path that we know we cannot travel alone if we are serious and truly dedicated.

Education is an art that we can master only if we go among the people each day and try to recruit them for our cause, to recruit them into the swelling ranks of revolutionary people around the world and inside the United States. We will never master the art of education, nor will we make the revolution, if we do not consciously adopt the mass line, the line which says that the people will make the revolution, the people will protect the revolutionary, the revolutionary forces for the people will protect themselves, the revolutionary is of the people and serves the people, and **the people will judge all those who say they are revolutionary.**

II. Correct Political Training of the Revolutionary

We can educate much more effectively when we have studied the science and art of making a revolution—Marxism-Leninism. Our skill in persuading people will grow in proportion to our serious study of all revolutionary thinkers, and learning to apply revolutionary thought to our concrete realities.

We must work, and we must study. We must go among the people in order to learn, and we must study our own experiences and the wisdom of all revolutionary thinkers to help guide our work as we are learning from and organizing people.

The works of Mao Tse-Tung, Samora Machel, Ho Chi Minh, Le Duan, General Giap, Karl Marx, V.I. Lenin, Kwame Nkrumah, Frantz Fanon, Fidel Castro, Che Guevarra, the Tupamaros, the Palestinian guerrillas—the wisdom of all these thinkers and many others who are revolutionary must be studied and applied to the concrete realities of the United States. All revolutionary theory can be applied in one form or another to some of the problems that we face in the United States.

We have to constantly ask ourselves as we read about the revolutionary experiences of others: what is applicable to making a revolution in the United States? What must be modified and discarded? It is absurd and self-defeating if we think that we can make a revolution in the United States without utilizing the collective wisdom of all revolutionary thinkers, without studying how they applied revolutionary theory to their concrete realities. We study, therefore, to learn how to do our revolutionary work in the most efficient manner.

Quite often there is a tendency to belittle or not to realize the importance of study. But this is a dangerous tendency that must be combatted, for only the working class revolutionary theory of Marxism-Leninism will correctly guide our thinking in these difficult times and enable us to act correctly in the mounting crisis of United States imperialism.

To insure that we have a correct political viewpoint, we must test all our ideas in practice. We must never become armchair revolutionaries like so many people in the United States and around the world. There are many people who strut about with pride because they have read all the classics of Marxism, who quote Mao by the page—but in the crucial test of what they do each day, in the concrete work of arousing the masses and organizing them for revolutionary work—many, all too many, fall short and slump in their armchairs.

Correct political training will come only with a study of all revolutionary thinkers and a conscious will to impart our wisdom to all those who are willing to learn, to persuade millions that we all learn from studying revolutionary theory and trying to apply it to our daily realities.

Correct political training is fundamental and without it, nothing else will work in the revolutionary process. Many people stress military actions. Military actions are important, and without them no revolution would ever succeed, but if the military specialist is not extremely political, then a dangerous situation is created, a situation that will lead to the retarding of the revolutionary struggle. **If we stress political training in our work among the people, we will be surprised at how much military information we will learn from the people and how much they are already prepared for armed struggle.**

There are many military specialists in this world, but not all of them are convinced that we must make a social revolution. In fact, most of them are ready to defend

imperialism, but we must educate many people who are armed militarily, that they must become political, that they must truly work with us in trying to understand the science and art of making a revolution.

Correct political training is very important, because people must know why we are fighting and why they must fight. For what goals are we asking people to lay down their lives? What will the new world look like, or what do we think it should look like? Suppose we fight just because we feel we should fight, but do not understand why we are fighting; in such a situation, what is to prevent our struggle, our military actions, our martyrs, our dreams, our energies, and our sacrifices from being co-opted by some opportunists or a gang of military plunderers seeking their own gratification? It has happened in the United States. Therefore, it is imperative for working people to fully understand the science and art of making a revolution (Marxism-Leninism), and to fully understand why they are fighting.

Revolution is an awesome responsibility, and we must not play at it, for too many lives are at stake. Too many people will be hurt if we are not serious and not politically and militarily prepared. To say that one is a revolutionary and strives to be a revolutionary imposes the greatest trust that is known to humanity, and we must not violate the trust of the people. We must never abuse the people, for the people will judge in the final analysis, and quicker than most of us think.

III. The Ending of Isolation

Isolation is a major mistake for a revolutionary. An isolated person will be destroyed quicker than one who understands the mass line and strives to immerse himself in the sea of the people. An isolated militant is one who does not understand that the people will protect us and provide for us, if we serve the people and are ready to let the people judge, for they will judge with or without our consent.

Isolated revolutionaries are those who do not understand that education based on revolutionary principles must lead to organization. All of us interact with many people each day, but we fail to organize that interaction. We must always strive to recruit and to organize into a revolutionary framework all sectors of the population, especially workers. More people than we realize are willing to make contributions to the revolutionary struggle. We must find forms of struggle for all the people, realizing at all times that every person cannot perform all the deeds of the revolutionary organizer. However, if more people do not begin to contribute in some small way to the revolutionary process, then the revolutionary organizer will not only be isolated, but people themselves will not begin the thousand mile journey with the first step.

We are not born revolutionaries. We become revolutionary only through a series of small acts that lead to greater and greater actions and finally to the implementation of political and military struggles against the state. We must realize that we all began our revolutionary efforts with a series of small actions, many of which we cannot remember, but there was a series of incidents that forced

all of us to realize that we had to strive to do something about the injustices we faced. And as we acted in this way or that way, we began to learn more about the state and how it oppresses people. In the United States we began to discover imperialism as the principal enemy of the people of the world, only through some concrete actions for change in the human situation. Many times we simply ignore that all of us must go through a long series of day to day struggles to change our existence and to destroy injustices before we finally become revolutionary. It is, therefore, absolutely necessary that we realize that when we talk to people about our work we try to turn every conversation into a political discussion and a basis for recruiting for the revolutionary process.

To end isolation we must devise many types of organizational forms through which people can participate in the revolutionary process. The revolution will not be made by a single form of organization. All types of struggle and organization will be needed. There are many forms of women's organizations, student organizations, worker's organizations, prison organizations, welfare, church, GI and veterans—the list is endless. And we must struggle to create as many forms as possible so that the widest number of people will strive to struggle in a coordinated fashion, using various forms.

To end isolation we must expand our thoughts to think in terms of organizing sixty and seventy and eighty million people into a concentrated army that is called the communist party, that will fight racism, sexism, capitalism, and imperialism and build the socialist society. We must realize that the millions of workers who run this country must be organized into revolutionary organizations if we are to make a revolution, for we cannot make a revolution if the people who produce the surplus, who work the factories, the mines, the plants and who run the services of the society are not part of the revolutionary class struggle

to destroy all forms of injustices, such as social oppression and class economic exploitation. When we expand our minds to realize that we will need nearly a hundred million people to make a revolution in the United States, we will automatically understand that we must begin the process of intensely working with others. As we study revolutionary theory and **objectively** look at the realities of history and our own situation we will surely realize that workers produce the wealth that makes this country operate and workers must control the wealth of the land, of all lands.

Reclaim our Friends and Associates

We can begin to end isolation by reclaiming our friends and associates, people we have known for a long period of time. Sometimes we fail to recruit our friends and former associates, because we do not consider them at our level of development. This is an elitist concept that we must struggle against, not only because it leads to isolation, but it stifles the growth of potential revolutionaries.

As we begin to struggle in the seventies, one of the most crucial tests for all of us is the question of trust. Do we trust a person? If we can trust a person, then the information that we can impart and the things that we can learn together are endless. But if we do not trust a person, then there is very little that we can do together. All of us know many people that we can trust; friends and associates of long years of acquaintance. We must begin our process of political training with many of those we trust. We will need their support, and even if we simply inform them of our actions and seek their support, we are implementing the mass line.

Our relatives in many cases are sources to recruit that we ignore. All colonized people and the working class usually have large families and we must strengthen those

family ties, for they are sources of support and revolutionary actions. If we consistently put our minds to organizing our families and our friends—we have taken some first steps to end isolation.

Reaching Out

But we cannot just stop with our families and our friends—although this is basic. We must reach out for people and get to know them and work with them, study with them, share experiences. The sharing of experiences is key. We must discuss the lives of people and draw from them valuable lessons for the revolutionary movement, struggling to see how all of our lives have been fucked up by the system of sexism, racism, capitalism, and imperialism.

As we meet people, we must not take an elitist concept and rule them out of the revolution because of the way in which they dress or live. Many potential revolutionaries exist among all income groups in this country, and most people sell their labor in one form or the other. True, we will have to struggle harder with some of those who identify their interests with the system of capitalism, but to assume that among workers in this country we will not have to fight the effects of capitalistic controls on the mind and actions of people is a serious mistake. Because workers are key and essential, we must fight all anti-working class attitudes that manifest themselves in various ways. For instance, when we hear people talk of revolution, we must ask them which class of people do they want to control state power. This is a fundamental question and will shoot holes through much of the bullshit that is parading about in the United States in the name of revolution.

Our struggle has not reached the level where we have revolutionary forces inside enemy organizations giving us

information on the plans of the government, and this will not come about just through writing about it. But we will never be successful unless we realize and raise to a high point of consciousness that the United States government and all oppressive states have extensive spy networks that control the people. All jobs and plants in this country have their own labor spies. Each city has its red squad and spy network on the colonized and white population. Every state in the United States has its own internal security apparatus and above them all stands the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Central Intelligence Agency, the National Security Council, and the system of imperialism.

Yet many of us who claim we are revolutionary fail to understand that the total population must be organized. We must strike fear in the hearts of the imperialists by going everywhere among the population and organizing people to serve the revolutionary struggle. It is impossible for the United States government to stop the revolutionary process and to watch all the actions of all of us. It is impossible for the few rich hogs—the capitalists—and their military apparatus to be all over the world and everywhere in the United States. But if we remain isolated and do not educate millions of people that our cause is just, correct, and that all of us must participate, including working in enemy organizations—then we will never succeed. We must remember that although revolution in the United States is inevitable—the question for us is how much can we do to accelerate the process.

Speeding up the revolutionary process involves ending our isolation by going among all sectors of the population and organizing people into the ranks of revolutionary organizations. As we organize people we must constantly study revolutionary theory and educate ourselves about the realities of revolution in other places, the dynamics of United States imperialism, its many sides and component parts, racism, capitalism, the special oppression of women,

sexism, male and white chauvinism, and reactionary nationalism.

Chauvinism

Many revolutionaries are isolated because of chauvinism or nationalism. Chauvinism implies the domination of one person or group of people by another because of some inherent traits that the dominating person or group assumes that has that the other doesn't. Usually we think of male chauvinism when we think of chauvinism, and male revolutionaries must be willing to begin the process of realizing that there is a special oppression of women in the home, the work situation, and within the revolutionary movement. It is not just the duty of revolutionary women to raise the issue of male chauvinism; revolutionary men must accelerate this process and struggle with ourselves and with our brothers, for this is a major problem and leads to isolation—for women will rebel against exploitation by men, and many men simply do not consider women as forces for the revolutionary struggle. Every effort must be made to enlist as many women as possible into the revolutionary struggle, for they are indeed ready, capable and willing to teach many men some facts about the revolutionary struggle. Fighting male chauvinism is indeed a complex problem requiring much strength and determination, but it is a fight that we must all wage in the interest of the revolution. Moreover, without women struggling against male chauvinism in men, it is very doubtful that men will overcome their male chauvinism.

While we are struggling against male chauvinism, we must also struggle against female chauvinism, a tendency that usually expresses itself in the theory that men are the principal enemy of women and the principal contradiction in the world. This tendency takes away the proletarian focus of the struggle against racism, sexism, capitalism,

and imperialism, and is ideologically incorrect. Just as we had to fight the tendency in the black struggle to view whites as the principal contradiction rather than the system of imperialism—we must also fight this tendency to talk about men as the principal contradiction and the embodiment of all things evil. At the same time we must realize that the extensive amount of oppression of women under capitalism drives people to take this position, just as the widespread sick racism of western civilization and white people drives many colonized people to view white people as the enemy, rather than the system of governments controlled and manipulated by rich white people, the capitalist class.

Women and men must struggle principledly and ideologically in our organizations as one united force against the capitalist class. At the same time, we must recognize the correct ideological struggle that women are waging around their special oppression in this society and support all women's organizations that are struggling against imperialism or evolving in that direction. We have a long road ahead; for many colonized men, and men in general try to ignore the fact that women face a special oppression. We as men erect all sorts of barriers against women when they cry out about oppression. Among those of us who are black, we sometimes hear the statement that women's liberation is a white thing, as if a black woman does not suffer oppression in a capitalist society or from the hands of black men. We can cite chapter and verse of black men taking a feudalistic attitude toward women, relegating them to household and movement slavery, refusing to recognize their political development or sharing some of the tedious work of the household by rationalizing that a woman's place is in the home, cooking food, while the black man performs the warrior role. (And we have yet to see many pigs killed by these heroic black warriors who physically beat some women while they issue so-

called revolutionary mandates.)

The special oppression of women is not limited to the household. In her article, **Double Jeopardy, To Be Black and Female**, Fran Beal writes: "Women also represent a surplus labor supply, the control of which is absolutely necessary to the profitable functioning of capitalism. Women are systematically exploited by the system. They are paid less for the same work that men do, and jobs that are specifically relegated to women are low-paying and without the possibility of advancement."

Nationalism

In addition to chauvinism, certain aspects of nationalism lead to isolation, especially the aspect of nationalism that places a single ethnic group's interest, or the interest of a race or a country above the interest of all the toiling masses of the world, the working class. Where we find Chicanos, Asians, Indians, Puerto Ricans, we must reach out to them and educate them that we are all victims of racism and colonialism and economic exploitation, and that we must unite around our common exploitation, that is, common economic exploitation as being workers.

Nationalism is a feeling that will exist among people, and no words will destroy nationalistic feelings, but our job as revolutionaries is to take nationalistic feelings and turn them into revolutionary positives, and use them to educate the masses of people about the fight against imperialism. Nationalism among colonized people is the first stage of revolutionary thinking, and it must not stop there. It must evolve quickly into an anti-imperialist form or it will turn into a reactionary and debilitating negative, stifling the growth and development of revolutionary forces.

Nationalism will be exploited by the middle classes of all colonized people, serving the interest of the imperi-

alists, if we do not stress the Marxist-Leninist theory of class struggle and the study of all revolutionary thinkers and the need for all people to join in the anti-imperialist struggle and to hasten the death of the giant octopus that threatens all the people of the world—the octopus of United States imperialism.

The black struggle in the United States passed through an intense stage of nationalism, and is quickly evolving into an anti-imperialist struggle. Among Chicanos, especially, there is a growing sense of nationalism that is positive in one form and negative in another. Many Chicanos are not willing to cooperate with black people in common forms of struggle, due to Chicano nationalism, and bad experiences with black people. Just as we recognize that there is reactionary and revolutionary nationalism among black people, we must also be aware that these same aspects are developing among Chicanos. But we can be of help in trying to overcome much of the hostility that Chicanos have for black people by reaching out and pointing out to Chicanos that they cannot judge all black people by the reactionary, cultural nationalist or the reactionary Pan-Africanist who does not understand the common struggle that Chicanos, African people, Asians, Puerto Ricans and Indians must wage as the victims of colonization.

Developing trust and friendship among colonized people is going to require the utmost skill in education and hard work, but we can begin the process by trying to study the history of all colonized people. We must learn about Indian history, the history of all Puerto Ricans, the Chicanos, the Asians. We must try to learn Spanish as a second language, a language that will prove to be very functional to the third world revolutionary. By trying to learn Spanish, we will indicate in a concrete way that we are struggling to communicate with our Chicano and Puerto Rican brothers and sisters. By investigating the history of all

colonized people, in addition to African history, we will take the first step in solving a problem—the investigation of facts.

The Role of Whites

At the same time that we are struggling to organize the working class and colonized people of the United States, we must also realize that we cannot make a successful revolution without the aid of white revolutionaries. This is a point that will be long debated among colonized people due to racism that we have all suffered from white racists in this country. But we are a people struggling to master dialectics, and we know that things are constantly changing, and just as some of us can master our own chauvinism—male or female—it is also true that some whites can reject their own racism and work in a revolutionary fashion to end racism, sexism, capitalism, and imperialism.

Fundamentally, the task of combatting racism in the white community and among white workers is the task of those whites who want to join the revolutionary struggle. Prior to 1968 there was beginning a mass movement among many whites that they had to go among whites and fight racism as an instrument for fighting imperialism. We must strive to accelerate this process in the future.

Many whites still resist the need to go into the factories and plants where whites are located and raise high the revolutionary banner—including and primarily raising the issues of racism and sexism, white skin privilege and male privilege—among white workers. The longer whites refuse to do this type of organizing, the longer the revolutionary struggle in the United States will be retarded.

In our interaction with whites—and few of us are able to avoid some interaction with whites in this society—we must constantly stress that the role of whites is to fight sexism, racism and imperialism among the white popula-

tion. It is not enough for whites to think that raising money for defense of this or that third world person is sufficient revolutionary work in the seventies.

And there are many armchair revolutionaries among the white population, people with an "analysis," people who talk about workers but fail to organize workers, people who can write long articles on imperialism, but fail to train and organize people to implement the mass line. **It is still easier to write, to discuss, to randomly "do your thing"—rather than making a serious study of the science and art of making revolutions and to realize that people—all people—become revolutionary through mass action and political and military struggles against an oppressing state.**

Without a doubt, United States imperialism will fall. Victory for the people is certain. But we must all strive to implement the mass line, study correct political theory and never allow ourselves to be isolated. In this manner, we will all do our part in helping to destroy the most vicious form of government known in the annals of history. It is impossible to make a socialist revolution in the United States, if we ignore these three tactics.

CONCLUSION

The political movement of the people has reached a point in its development where it can stagnate or move forward. To move forward is to side with the working class by developing masses of people prepared to carry on the struggle (through **practice**), summarizing experience and bringing it to a new level (**theory**), united in every struggle with proletarian leadership (**organization**).

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Refer to:

Twenty Enemies

**Political Lesson One: Get Acquainted
Control, Conflict and Change**

also by James Forman