

## Intercommunalism (1974)

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Intercommunalism (1974) Huey P. Newton June 11, 2018

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On September 5, 1970, Huey P. Newton, co-founder of the Black Panther Party (BPP), introduced his theory of intercommunalism at the Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia.<sup>1</sup> He later expanded on this theory before an audience at Boston College in November of that year, and then again in February 1971 during a joint talk he gave with psychologist [Erik Erikson](#) across several days at Yale University and later in Oakland.<sup>2</sup> Newton's opening remarks at Yale lasted over an hour but were reduced to about ten pages in the subsequently published *In Search of Common Ground*.<sup>3</sup> As a philosophical foundation for his remarks on intercommunalism, that introductory speech included an engagement with the work of Hegel, Marx, Freud, Jung, Kant, Pierce, and James, among others.<sup>4</sup> Portions of the material of this main speech, the subsequent Q&A, and other writings of Newton's were later combined, recomposed, and expanded upon under the title of "Intercommunalism" in 1974, the same year that he completed his bachelor's degree and fled temporarily to Cuba. This text had until now been available only through access to the Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation Inc. Collection (1968-1994), held in archive in Stanford University's Special Collections.<sup>5</sup> It is now reproduced here, available to the public at large for the first time, accompanied by [this introduction](#).

– Delio Vásquez

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The logic of the thesis of intercommunalism is: imperialism leads to "reactionary intercommunalism" to "revolutionary intercommunalism" to pure communism and anarchy. Each of the concepts is in need of definition and redefinition.

"The imperialist war is ushering in the era of social revolution," said Lenin in 1915. The scholar David Horowitz, finds, as we do, imperialism and revolution to be functions of each other:

[Editor's Note: In the original text, Newton here features a 16-page quotation from David Horowitz's *Empire and Revolution* (1969/1970), pp. 29-45. We have left out this portion of the text for copyright reasons.]

Following World War II and the exponential technological increase in weapons systems and communications, the concept of "one world" and the "Global Village" began to be offered as bourgeois metaphors to complete with the socialist image of "The New Man" and international proletarianism. The technological network emanating from America was the spine of the "Free World" image that was to roll back socialism.

Who makes U.S. foreign policy? The question is by no means academic, for the historical record shows that over the last fifty years and more, U.S. policy has consistently run in channels which are antagonistic to the most publicized ideals of the American Republic, issuing finally in the conflicts which we associate with the Cold War. Those ideals—enshrined in the Declaration of Independence—recognize the right of nations to self-determination, and of any oppressed people to overthrow by force the institutions of their oppressors in order to secure for themselves the rights to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Yet the record shows that as the United States has assumed the role of a great and then dominant world power, it has more and more consistently opposed the major social revolutions of our time, and in violation of the principle of self-determination, it has intervened militarily, diplomatically, and economically to crush or to cause grave setbacks to these revolutions, whether in Russia, Mexico, China, Cuba, Greece, or Vietnam.

Nowhere has this pattern of policy been more evident, certainly, than with the American intervention in Vietnam. In 1945, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was proclaimed in a document modeled on the American Declaration of Independence and at first recognized by the former colonial power, France. Yet when that power sought to reassert control of its former colonial territory, establishing a puppet régime in Saigon for this purpose, it found support in U.S. policy. Not only did Washington back France's illegitimate war of conquest with economic and military aid, but when the French failed, Washington itself took over the struggle to defeat the Vietnamese Republic through the quisling government in Saigon. Indeed, more than twenty years after the proclamation of Vietnam's Declaration of Independence, the Vietnamese peasants are still being assaulted by the U.S. armed forces in what will undoubtedly become the most ruthless and destructive intervention on historical record.

Nor is this counterrevolutionary expedition exceptional as U.S. Cold War policy, despite the unprecedented ferocity and unparalleled savagery of this execution. As already noted, it forms rather a consistent pattern with other U.S. interventions in Santo Domingo, Cuba, Guatemala, the Congo, the Middle East, China, Greece, and elsewhere during the Cold War years, and in Russia, Mexico, Cuba, China, and other countries earlier in the century. Indeed, counterrevolutionary intervention, which is at the heart of the Cold War and its conflicts, has been a characteristic of U.S. foreign policy ever since the United States embarked on a course of overseas economic expansion following the closing of the geographical frontier more than seventy years ago.

How is this counterrevolutionary policy, which runs directly counter to the high ideals of the American republic, to be explained? How is it to be explained that the largest "defense" program of any nation in history (and of the United States in particular, which, prior to the postwar decades, never maintained a peacetime conscription army) is organized around the unprecedented concept of *counterinsurgency*?

These paradoxes can only be answered if it can be shown that there is a group wielding predominant power in the American polity whose interests run counter to America's high ideals and which can impose its own interpretation of the American tradition onto the framework of policy-making in the state. If it can be shown that there is a *class* among the plurality of competing interest groups which enjoys a predominance of power and can establish its own outlook as a prevailing ideology and if it can be shown that these interests are expansionist, anti-revolutionary, and tending to be militarist by nature, then an explanation of the paradoxical character of American policy will have been found and, beyond that, the sources of the Cold War conflicts and their permanence.

Such a "ruling class" can, in fact, be readily shown to exist. Its locus of power and interest is in the giant corporations and financial institutions which dominate the American economy, and moreover, the economy of the entire Western world. "In terms of power," writes one authority on the corporations (himself a corporate executive and former U.S. policy-maker) "without regard to asset positions, not only do five hundred corporations control, not only do five hundred corporations control two-thirds of the non-farm economy, but within each of that five hundred a still smaller group has the ultimate decision-making power. This is, I think, the highest concentration of economic power in recorded history."<sup>6</sup> Moreover, "since the United States carries on not quite half of the manufacturing production of the entire world today, these five hundred groupings—each with its own little dominating pyramid within it—represent a concentration of power over economies which makes the medieval feudal system look like a Sunday school party."

As this observer points out, many of these corporations have budgets, and some of them have payrolls which, with their customers, affect a greater number of people than most of the hundred-odd sovereign countries of the world. Indeed, the fifty largest corporations employ almost three times as many people as the five largest U.S. states, while their combined sales are over five times greater than the taxes the states collect.

In the last analysis, it is the dependence of men individually and collectively on the corporately organized and controlled economy that provides the basis for the corporate domination of U.S. policy, especially U.S. foreign policy. The basic fulcrum of this corporate power is the investment decision, which is effectively made by a small group of men relative to the economy as a whole. This decision includes how much the corporations spend, what they produce, where the products are to be manufactured, and who is to participate in the process of production.

But this is not the whole extent of the power of the corporate investment decision. In the national economy, the small oligarchy of corporate and financial rulers, who are responsible to no one, determine through their investment outlays the level of output and employment for the economy as a whole. As Keynes observed, the national prosperity is excessively dependent on the confidence of the business community. This confidence can be irreparably injured by a government which pursues a course of policy inimical to business interests. In other words, basic to the political success at the polls for any government, as to the success of its specific programs, will be the way the government's policies affect the system of incentives on which the economy runs—a system of incentives that is also the basis of the privileges of the social upper classes.

This does not mean, of course, that the business community as such must prefer a particular candidate or party for that candidate or party to be victorious. It means, much more fundamentally, that short of committing political suicide, no party or government can step outside the framework of the corporate system and its politics, and embark on a course which consistently threatens the power and privileges of the giant corporations. Either a government must seize the commanding heights of the economy at once, i.e., initiate a course of social revolution, or run things more or less in the normal way, that is, according to the priorities and channels determined by the system of incentive payments to the corporate controllers of the means of production. This is an unspoken but well understood fact conditioning politics in capitalist countries, which explains why the pattern of resource allocation—the priority of guns over butter, of highway construction over schools and hospitals—is so similar in all of them. It also explains why, despite the congressional and parliamentary enactment of progressive tax laws in all these countries, the spirit of the law has been thwarted, and nowhere has the significant redistribution of income promised by these democratically ratified statutes taken place.

The sheer economic pressure that the corporations can exert over the policies of democratically elected governments is lucidly manifest in the experience of the Wilson Labour government in England. For while owing its office to labor votes and labor money, this government was forced by “the economic situation,” i.e., by domestic and international capital, to pursue precisely the policies that it had condemned as *anti-labor* while in opposition.

Of course, under normal conditions, and particularly in the United States, where no labor party exists, the corporations have less subtle means at their disposal for ensuring policies conducive to their continued vigor and growth.

The means by which the upper classes maintain their privileged position and vested interests in countries where universal suffrage prevails vary with the differing traditions, social institutions, and class structures of the countries involved. They vary also with their historical roles. Thus, in the twentieth century, as the United States has replaced Britain as the guardian power and policeman of the international system of property and privilege, the corporate ruling class, with its equally expanding overseas interests, has less and less been able to entrust policy to indirectly controlled representatives and has more and more had to enter directly the seats of government itself.

In the postwar period, the strategic agencies of foreign policy—the State Department, the CIA, the Pentagon, and the Treasury, as well as the key ambassadorial posts—have all been dominated by representatives and rulers of America’s principal corporate financial empires. In addition, all the special committees and task forces on foreign policy guidelines have been presided over by the men of this business élite, so that on all important levels of foreign policymaking, “business serves as the fount of critical assumptions or goals and strategically placed personnel.”

While the corporate-based upper class in general occupies a prodigious number of positions in the highest reaches of the “democratic” state, it need not strive to occupy all the top places to impose its own interpretation of the national interest on American policy. Precisely because the prevailing ideology of U.S. politics in general, and of the federal government in particular, is corporate ideology, reflecting the corporate outlook and interests, and because, therefore, the framework of articulated policy choices lies well within the horizon of this outlook, political outsiders may be tolerated and even highly effective in serving the corporate system and its programs.

There are two principal ways (in addition to those already discussed) by which corporate ideology comes to prevail in the larger political realm. In the first place, it does so through the corporate (and upper-class) control of the means of communication and the means of production of ideas and ideology (the mass media, the foundations, universities, etc.). However, even this control, which is vast but not ubiquitous in ensuring the general predominance of the ideas of the dominant class, is not left to work at random. Thus, in Professor Domhoff’s investigation of the American ruling class, he found that “in most instances” non-upper-class political leaders “were selected trained and employed in [special] institutions which function to the benefit of members of the upper class.” Such leaders, Professor Domhoff concluded, “are selected for advancement in terms of the interest of the members of the upper class.”

The second basic way in which corporate ideology comes to prevail, particularly at the foreign policy level, is by the very fact that the dominant reality of society is corporate, and therefore political “realism” dictates for any statesman or politician that he work within its framework and accept its assumptions. If the horizon of political choice is limited to an area in which the corporate interests is not directly challenged, because it would be both imprudent and impractical (utopian) to do so, if the framework of private property in the means of production is accepted as not realistically subject to change, then the “national” interest, which is the concept under which politicians and statesmen tend to operate (particularly in foreign policy), necessarily coincides with the interests of the corporations, the repositories of the nation’s wealth, the organizers of its productive power, and hence the guardians of the material basis of its strength. In a class-divided society under normal (i.e., non-revolutionary) conditions, the national interest vis-à-vis external interests inevitably is interpreted as the interest of the dominant or ruling class. Thus, in a corporate capitalist society, the corporate outlook as a matter of course becomes the dominant outlook of the state in foreign affairs.

This is not to say that there is never a conflict over foreign policy that expresses a conflict between corporations and the state. Just as there are differences among the corporate interests themselves, within a general framework of interests, so there are differences between the corporate community and the state and the corporate representatives and their agents in the state,

resulting from the difference in vantage and the wider and narrower interests that each group must take into account. But here, too, the horizon of choice, the framework of decisive interests, is defined by the necessity of preserving and strengthening the status quo order of corporate capitalism and consequently the interests of the social classes most benefited by it.

What, then, is the nature of corporate ideology as it dominates U.S. foreign policy and what is its role in the development of the Cold War? As a result of the pioneering work of Professor William Appleman Williams and his students, these questions can be answered precisely and succinctly. The chief function of corporate ideology is, of course, to make an explicit identification of the national tradition and interest—the American Way of Life—with its own particular interest. This identification is accomplished by means of an economic determinism, which takes as its cardinal principle the proposition that political freedom is inseparably bound up with corporate property: that a “free enterprise” economy is the indispensable foundation of a free polity (where free enterprise is defined to coincide with the status quo order of corporate capitalism, not with an outdated system of independent farmers and traders).

Starting from this root premise, the ideology, as articulated by American policymakers since the nineteenth century, maintains that an expanding frontier of ever new and accessible markets is absolutely essential for capitalist America’s domestic prosperity and hence, that the extension of the American system and its institutions abroad is a necessity for the preservation of the American, democratic, free-enterprise order at home. Originally formulated as an “Open Door” policy, to prevent the closing of the external frontier by European colonialism, and to ensure American access to, and eventual domination of, global markets, this policy has become in the postwar period a policy of preserving and extending American hegemony and the free enterprise system throughout the external frontier, or, as it is now called, the “free world.” From Woodrow Wilson’s First World War cry that the world must be made safe for democracy, it was but a logical historical step to Secretary of State Byrnes’s remark at the close of the Second World War that the world must be made safe for the United States. This is the core of America’s messianic crusade: that the world must be made over in the American image (read: subjected to the American corporate system) if the American Way of Life (read: the corporate economy) is to survive at home.

If expansion (and militarism) had held the key not only to American prosperity, but to American security as well, the postwar period would undoubtedly have realized Secretary of State Byrnes’ ambitious goal. In the last stages of the war and the first of the peace, the United States successfully penetrated the old European empires (mainly those of France, Great Britain, and the Netherlands), assumed control of Japan and its former dependencies, and extended its own power globally to an unprecedented degree. By 1949, the United States had liens on some four hundred military bases, while the expansion of direct overseas investments was taking place at a phenomenal rate. Thus, while between between 1929 and 1946 U.S. foreign investments had actually declined from \$7.9 to \$7.2 billion, between 1946 and 1967 they increased an incredible eightfold to more than \$60 billion. It is this global stake in the wealth and resources of the external frontier that forms the basis of the U.S. commitment to the worldwide status quo (though it may not always provide the whole explanation for particular commitments or engagements). It is this commitment to the internal status quo in other countries (the State Department actually runs a course for foreign service officers and ambassadors called “Overseas Internal Defense”) that renders Washington’s expansionist program not the key to security but the very source of Cold War conflict, with its permanent menace to mankind’s survival.

For the expansion of corporate overseas investment has to an overwhelming degree not produced beneficial results on the whole, and the status, of which the corporations inevitably constitute a dominating part, is almost everywhere a status quo of human misery and suffering:

No one acquainted with the behavior of western corporations on their pilgrimages for profit during the last fifty years can really be surprised that the ... explosions now taking place (in the underdeveloped world) are doing so in an anti-American, anti-capitalist, anti-western context. For many years these continents have been happy hunting grounds for corporate adventurers, who have taken out great resources and great profits and left behind great poverty, great expectations and great resentments. Gunnar Myrdal points out that capitalist intervention in underdeveloped countries thus far has almost uniformly had the result of making the rich richer and the poor poorer....<sup>7</sup>

This has indeed been the undeniable historical consequence of capitalist corporate expansion, although this is not what one is led to believe by the orthodox theorists and academic model builders who function so frequently as the sophisticated apologists of the American Empire and the policy of counterrevolutionary intervention necessary to maintain it.

In the writings of such theorists, the expansion of America’s monopolistic giants and their control of the markets and resources of the poverty-stricken regions is presented as entailing the *net* export of capital to these capital-starved areas, the transfer of industrial technologies and skills, and the flow of wealth generally from the rich world to the poor. From this point of view, revolutions which challenge the presence and domination of foreign corporations and their states are either misguided or sinister in intent, and contrary to the real needs and interests of the countries involved. Indeed, for those who maintain this view, revolutions are regarded as alien-inspired efforts aimed at subverting and seizing control of the countries in question during periods of great difficulty and instability prior to the so-called takeoff into self-sustaining growth. This is the argument advanced by W. W. Rostow, former director of the State Department’s Policy Planning Staff and the chief rationalizer of America’s expansionist counterrevolutionary crusade.

In fact, this view rests neither on historical experience, which shows the presence of foreign capital and power to have had a profoundly adverse effect on the development potential of the penetrated regions, nor on a sound empirical basis. Far from resulting in a transfer of wealth from richer to poorer regions, the penetration of the underdeveloped world by the imperialist and neo-imperialist systems of the developed states has had the opposite effect. As a result of direct U.S. overseas investments between 1950 and 1965, for example, there was a *net* capital flow of \$16 billion to *the United States*, and this was just a part of the negative transfer. Similarly, when looked at in their political and economic settings, the much-heralded benefits of the advanced technologies transplanted into these areas, but under the control of international corporations, also tend to be circumscribed and even adverse in their effects. Indeed, regarded in terms of its impact on total societies rather than on particular economic sectors, the operation of opening the backward and weak areas to the competitive penetration of the advanced and powerful capitalist states has been nothing short of a catastrophe. For as Paul Baran showed in his pioneering work *The Political Economy of Growth*, it is precisely the penetration of the underdeveloped world by advanced capitalism that has in the past obstructed its development and continues in the present to prevent it. Conversely, it has been primarily their ability to escape from the net of foreign investment and domination that has made a chosen few among these countries, like Japan, exceptions to the rule. Professor Gunder Frank and others have continued the work that Baran initiated, showing how foreign capitalist investment produces the pattern of underdevelopment (or "growth without development," as it is sometimes called) that is the permanent nightmare of these regions.

The crisis of reactionary intercommunalism has now, inevitably, given rise to the concept of "revolutionary intercommunalism."

We believe that everything is in a constant state of change, so we employ a framework of thinking that can put us in touch with the process of change. That is, we believe that the conclusions at which we arrive will always change, but the fundamentals of the method by which we arrive at our conclusions will remain constant. Our ideology, therefore, is the most important part of our thinking.

There are many different ideologies or schools of thought, and all of them start with an *a priori* set of assumptions. This is because mankind is still limited in its knowledge and finds it hard, at this historical stage, to talk about the very beginning of things and the very end of things without starting from premises that cannot yet be proved.

This is true of both general schools of thought—the idealistic and the materialist. The idealists base their thinking on certain presumptions about things of which they have very little knowledge; the materialists like to believe that they are very much in contact with reality, or the real material world, disregarding the fact that they only assume there *is* a material world.

The Black Panther Party has chosen materialist assumptions on which to ground its ideology. This is a purely arbitrary choice. Idealism might be the real happening; we might not be here at all. We don't really know whether we are in Connecticut or in San Francisco, whether we are dreaming and in a dream state, or whether we are awake and in a dream state. Perhaps we are just somewhere in a void; we simply can't be sure. But because the members of the Black Panther Party are materialists, we believe that some day scientists will be able to deliver the information that will give us not only the evidence but the proof that there is a material world and that its genesis was material—motion and matter—not spiritual.

Until that time, however, and for the purposes of discussion, I merely ask that we agree on the stipulation that a material world exists and develops externally and independently of us all. With this stipulation, we have the foundation for an intelligent dialogue. We *assume* that there is a material world and that it exists and develops independently of us; and we assume that the human organism, through its sensory system, has the ability to observe and analyze that material world.

Now the dialectical materialist believes that everything in existence has fundamental internal contradictions. For example, the African gods south of the Sahara always had at least two heads, one for evil and one for good. Now people create God in their own image, what they think He—for God is always a "He" in patriarchal societies—what He is like or should be. So the African said, in effect: I am both good and evil; good and evil are the two parts of the thing that is me. This is an example of an internal contradiction.

Western Societies, though, split up good and evil, placing God up in heaven and the Devil down in hell. Good and evil fight for control over people in Western religions, but they are two entirely different entities. This is an example of an external contradiction.

This struggle of mutually exclusive opposing tendencies within everything that exists explains the observable fact that all things have motion and are in a constant state of transformation. Things transform themselves because while one tendency or force is more dominating than another, change is nonetheless a constant, and at some point the balance will alter and there will be a new qualitative development. New properties will come into existence, qualities that did not altogether exist before. Such qualities cannot be analyzed without understanding the forces struggling within the object in the first place, yet the limitations and determinations of these new qualities are not defined by the forces that created them.

Class conflict develops by the same principles that govern all other phenomena in the material world. In contemporary society, a class that owns property dominates a class that does not own property. There is a class of workers and class of owners, and because there exists a basic contradiction in the interests of these two classes, they are constantly struggling with one another. Now, because things do not stay the same we can be sure of one thing: the owner will not stay the owner, and the people who

are dominated will not stay dominated. We don't know exactly how this will happen, but after we analyze all the other elements of the situation, we can make a few predictions. We can be sure that if we increase the intensity of the struggle, we will reach a point where the equilibrium of forces will change and there will be a qualitative leap into a new situation with a new social equilibrium. I say "leap" because we know from our experience of the physical world that when transformations of this kind occur they do so with great force.

These principles of dialectical development do not represent an iron law that can be applied mechanically to the social process. There are exceptions to those laws of development and transformation, which is why, as dialectical materialists, we emphasize that we must analyze each set of conditions separately and make concrete conditions in each instance. One cannot always predict the outcome, but one can for the most part gain enough insight to manage the process.

The dialectical method is essentially an ideology, yet we believe that it is superior to other ideologies because it puts us more in contact with what we believe to be the real world; it increases our ability to deal with that world and shape its development and change.

You could easily say, "This method may be successfully applied in one particular instance, but how do you know that it is an infallible guide in all cases?" The answer is that we don't know. We don't say "all cases" or "infallible guide" because we try not to speak in such absolute and inclusive terms. We only say that we have to analyze each instance, that we have found this method the best available in the course of our analyses, and that we think the method will continue to prove itself in the future.

We sometimes have a problem because people do not understand the ideology that Marx and Engels began to develop. People say, "You claim to be Marxists, but did you know that Marx was a racist?" We say, "He probably was a racist: he made a statement once about the marriage of a white woman and a black man, and he called the black man a gorilla or something like that." The Marxists claim he was only kidding and that the statement shows Marx's closeness to the man, but of course that is nonsense. So it does seem that Marx was a racist.

Now if you are a Marxist, then Marx's racism affects your own judgment because a Marxist is someone who worships Marx and the thought of Marx. Remember, though, that Marx himself said, "I am not a Marxist." Such Marxists cherish the conclusions which Marx arrived at through his method, but they throw away the method itself—leaving themselves in a totally static posture. That is why most Marxists really are historical materialists: they look to the past to get answers for the future, and that does not work.

If you are a *dialectical materialist*, however, Marx's racism does not matter. You do not believe in the conclusions of one person but in the validity of a mode of thought; and we in the Party, as dialectical materialists, recognize Karl Marx as one of the great contributors to that mode of thought. Whether or not Marx was a racist is irrelevant and immaterial to whether or not the system of thinking he helped to develop delivers truths about processes in the material world. And this is true in all disciplines. In every discipline you find people who have distorted visions and are at a low state of consciousness who nonetheless have flashes of insight and produce ideas worth considering. For instance, John B. Watson once stated that his favorite pastime was hunting and hanging niggers, yet he made great forward strides in the analysis and investigations of conditioned responses.

Now that I have said a word about the ideology of the Party, I am going to describe the history of the Party and how we have changed our understanding of the world.

When we started in October 1966, we were what one would call black nationalists. We realized the contradictions in society, the pressure on black people in particular, and we saw that most people in the past had solved some of their problems by forming into nations. We therefore argued that it was rational and logical for us to believe that our sufferings as a people would end when we established a nation of our own, composed of our own people.

But after a while we saw that something was wrong with this resolution of the problem. In the past, nationhood was a fairly easy thing to accomplish. If we look around now, though, we see that the world—the land space, the livable parts as we know them—is pretty well settled. So we realized that to create a new nation we would have to become a dominant faction in this one, and yet the fact that we did not have power was the contradiction that drove us to seek nationhood in the first place. It is an endless circle, you see: to achieve nationhood, we needed to become a dominant force; but to become a dominant force, we needed to be a nation.

So we made a further analysis and found that in order for us to be a dominant force we would at least have to be great in number. We developed from just plain nationalists or separatist nationalists into revolutionary nationalists. We said that we joined with all the other people in the world struggling for decolonization and nationhood, and called ourselves a "dispersed colony" because we did not have the geographical concentration that other so-called colonies had. But we did have black communities throughout the country—San Francisco, Los Angeles, New Haven—and there are many similarities between these communities and the traditional kind of colony. We also thought that if we allied with those other colonies we would have a great number, a greater chance, a greater force; and that is what we needed of course, because only force kept us a colonized people.

We saw that it was not only beneficial for us to be revolutionary nationalists but to express our solidarity with those friends who suffered many of the same kind of pressures we suffered. Therefore we changed our self-definitions. We said that we are not only revolutionary nationalists—that is, nationalists who want revolutionary changes in everything, including the economic system the oppressor inflicts upon us—but we are also individuals deeply concerned with the other people of the world and their desires for revolution. In order to show this solidarity, we decided to call ourselves internationalists.

Originally, as I said, we assumed that people could solve a number of their problems by becoming nations, but this conclusion showed our lack of understanding of the world's dialectical development. Our mistake was to assume that the conditions under which people had become nations in the past still existed. To be a nation, one must satisfy certain essential conditions, and if these things did not exist or cannot be created, then it is not possible to be a nation.

In the past, nation-states were usually inhabited by people of a certain ethnic and religious background. They were divided from other people either by a partition of water or a great unoccupied land space. This natural partition gave the nation's dominant class, and the people generally, a certain amount of control over the kinds of political, economic, and social institutions they established. It gave them a certain amount of control over their destiny and their territory. They were secure at least to the extent that they would not be attacked or violated by another nation ten thousand miles away, simply because the means to transport troops that far did not exist. This situation, however, could not last. Technology developed until there was a definite qualitative transformation in the relationships within and between nations.

We know that you cannot change a part of the whole without changing the whole, and vice versa. As technology developed and there was an increase in military capabilities and means of travel and communication, nations began to control other territories, distant from their own. Usually they controlled these other lands by sending administrators and settlers, who would extract labor from the people or resources from the earth—or both. This is the phenomenon we know as colonialism.

The settlers' control over the seized land and people grew to such an extent that it wasn't even necessary for the settler to be present to maintain the system. He went back home. The people were so integrated with the aggressor that their land didn't look like a colony any longer. But because their land didn't look like a free state either, some theorists started to call these lands "neocolonies." Arguments about the precise definition of these entities developed. Are they colonies or not? If they aren't, what are they? The theorists knew that something had happened, but they did not know what it was.

Using the dialectical materialist method, we in the Black Panther Party saw that the United States was no longer a nation. It was something else; it was more than a nation. It had not only expanded its territorial boundaries, but it had expanded all of its controls as well. We called it an empire. Now at one time the world had an empire in which the conditions of rule were different—the Roman Empire. The difference between the Roman and the American empires is that other nations were able to exist external to and independent of the Roman Empire because their means of explorations, conquest, and control were all relatively limited.

But when we say "empire" today, we mean precisely what we say. An empire is a nation-state that has transformed itself into a power controlling *all* of the world's lands and people.

We believe that there are no more colonies or neocolonies. If a people is colonized, it must be possible for them to decolonize and become what they formerly were. But what happens when the raw materials are extracted and labor is exploited within a territory dispersed over the entire globe? When the riches of the whole earth are depleted and used to feed a gigantic industrial machine in the imperialist's home? Then the people and the economy are so integrated into the imperialist empire that it is impossible to "decolonize," to return to the former conditions of existence.

If colonies cannot "decolonize" and return to their original existence as nations, then nations no longer exist. And since there must be nations for revolutionary nationalism or internationalism to make sense, we decided that we would have to call ourselves something new.

We say that the world today is a dispersed collection of communities. A community is different from a nation. A community is a small unit with a comprehensive collection of institutions that serve to exist a small group of people. And we say further that the struggle in the world today is between the small circle that administers and profits from the empire of the United States, and the peoples of the world who want to determine their own destinies.

We call this situation intercommunalism. We are now in the age of reactionary intercommunalism, in which a ruling circle, a small group of people, control all other people by using their technology.

At the same time, we say that this technology can solve most of the material contradictions people face, that the material conditions exist that would allow the people of the world to develop a culture that is essentially human and would nurture those things that would allow people to resolve contradictions in a way that would not cause the mutual slaughter of all of us. The development of such a culture would be revolutionary intercommunalism.

Some communities have begun doing this. They have liberated their territories and have established provisional governments. We recognize them, and say that these governments represent the people of China, North Korea, and the people in the liberated zones of South Vietnam, and the people of North Vietnam.

We believe their examples should be followed so that the order of the day would not be reactionary intercommunalism (empire) but revolutionary intercommunalism. The people of the world, that is, must seize power from the small ruling circle and expropriate the expropriators, pull them down from their pinnacle and make them equals, and distribute the fruits of our labor that have been denied us in some equitable way. We know that the machinery to accomplish these tasks exists and we want access to it.

Imperialism has laid the foundation for world communism, and imperialism itself has grown to the point of reactionary intercommunalism because the world is now integrated into one community. The communications revolution, combined with the expansive domination of the American empire, has created the "global village." The peoples of all cultures are under siege by the same forces and they all have access to the same technologies.

There are only differences in degree between what is happening to the blacks here and what is happening to all of the people in the world, including Africans. Their needs are the same and their energy is the same. And the contradictions they suffer will only be resolved when the people establish a revolutionary intercommunalism where they share all the wealth that they produce and live in one world.

The stage of history is set for such a transformation: the technological and administrative base of socialism exists. When the people seize the means of production and all social institutions, then there will be a qualitative leap and change in the organization of society. It will take time to resolve the contradictions of racism and all kinds of chauvinism; but because the people will control their own social institutions, they will be free to re-create themselves and to establish communism, a stage of human development in which human values will shape the structure of society. At this time, the world will be ready for a still higher level, of which we can now know nothing.

We can be sure that there will be contradictions after revolutionary intercommunalism is the order of the day, and we can even be sure that there will be contradictions after communism, which is an even higher stage than revolutionary intercommunalism. There will always be contradictions or else everything would stop. It is not a question of "when the revolution comes": the revolution is always going on. It is not a question of "when the revolution is going to be": the revolution is going on every day, every minute, because the new is always struggling against the old for dominance.

We also say that every determination is a limitation, and every limitation is a determination. This is the struggle of the old and new again, where a thing seems to negate itself. For instance, imperialism negates itself after laying the foundation for communism, and communism will eventually negate itself because of its internal contradictions, and then we will move to an even higher state.

So of course there will be contradictions in the future. But some contradictions are antagonistic and some contradictions are not antagonistic. Usually when we speak of antagonistic contradictions, we are talking about contradictions that develop from conflicts of economic interest, and we assume that in the future, when the people have power, these antagonistic contradictions will occur less and less.

The expropriators will be expropriated. All things carry a negative sign as well as a positive sign. That is why we say every determination has a limitation and every limitation has a determination. For example, one's organism carries internal contradictions from the moment of birth and the beginning of deterioration. First you are an infant, then a small child, then an adolescent, and so on until you are old. We keep developing and burning ourselves out at the same time; we are negating ourselves. And this is just how imperialism is negating itself now. It has moved into a phase we call reactionary intercommunalism and has thus laid the foundation for revolutionary intercommunalism, because as the enemy disperses its troops and controls more and more space, it becomes weaker and weaker, the people become stronger and stronger.

The primary concern of the Black Panther Party is to lift the level of consciousness of the people through theory and practice to the point where they will see exactly what is controlling them and what is oppressing them, and therefore see exactly what has to be done—or at least what the first step is. One of the greatest contributions of Freud was to make people aware that they are controlled much of their lives by their unconscious. He attempted to strip away the veil from the unconscious and make it conscious: that is the first step in feeling free, the first step in exerting control. It seems to be natural for people not to like being controlled. Marx made a similar contribution to human freedom, only he pointed out the *external* things that control people. In order for people to liberate themselves from external controls, they have to know about these controls. Consciousness of the expropriator is necessary for expropriating the expropriator, for throwing off external controls.

Dialectics would make it necessary to have a universal identity. If we do not have universal identity, then we will have cultural, racial, and religious chauvinism, the kind of ethnocentrism we have now. Even if in the future there will be some small differences in behavior patterns, different environments would all be a secondary thing. And we struggle for a future in which we will realize that we are all *Homo sapiens* and have more in common than not. We will be closer together than we are now.



The mass media have, in a sense, psychologized many of the people in our country, so that they come to *desire* the controls that are imposed upon them by the capitalist system, so that they are psychologically, at least, part of the ruling class. We have to understand that everything has a material basis, and that our personalities would not exist, what others call our spirit or our mind would not exist, if we were not material organisms. So to understand why some of the victims of the ruling class might identify with the ruling circle, we must look at their material lives; and if we do, we will realize that the same people who identify with the ruling circle are also very unhappy. Their feelings can be compared to those of a child: a child desires to mature so that he can control himself, but he believes he needs the protection of his father to do so. He has conflicting drives. Psychologists would call this conflict neurotic if the child were unable to resolve it. First, people have to be conscious of the ways they are controlled, then we have to understand the scientific laws involved, and once that is accomplished, we can begin to do what we want—to manipulate phenomena.

The revolutionary thrust will come from the growing number of what we call “unemployables” in this society. We call blacks and third world people in particular, and poor people in general, “unemployables” because they do not have the skills needed to work in a highly developed technological society. As every society, like every age, contains its opposite: feudalism produced capitalism, which wiped out feudalism, and capitalism produced socialism, which will wipe out capitalism; the same is true of reactionary intercommunalism. Technological development creates a large middle class, and the number of workers increases also. The workers are paid a good deal and get many comforts. But the ruling class is still only interested in itself. They might make certain compromises and give a little—as a matter of fact, the ruling circle has even developed something of a social structure or welfare state to keep the opposition down—but as technology develops, the need for workers decreases. It has been estimated that ten years from now only a small percentage of the present workforce will be necessary to run the industries. Then what will happen to your worker who is now making four dollars an hour? The working class will be narrowed down, the class of unemployables will grow because it will take more and more skills to operate those machines and fewer people. And as these people become unemployables, they will become more and more alienated; even socialist compromises will not be enough. You will then find an integration between the black unemployable and the white racist hard hat who is not regularly employed and mad at the blacks who he thinks threaten his job. We hope that he will join forces with those people who are already unemployable, but whether he does or not, his material existence will have changed. The proletarian will become the lumpen proletarian. It is this future change—the increase of the lumpen proletariat and the decrease of the proletariat—which makes us say that the lumpen proletariat is the majority and carries the revolutionary banner.

We say that black people are the vanguard of the revolution in this country, and, since no one will be free until the people of America are free, that black people are the vanguard of world revolution. We inherit this legacy primarily because we are the last, and as the saying goes, “The last will be the first.” We believe that black Americans are the first real internationalists; not just the Black Panther Party, but black people who live in America. We are internationalists because we have been internationally dispersed by slavery, and we can easily identify with other people in other cultures. Because of slavery, we never really felt attached to the nation in the same way that the peasant was attached to the soil in Russia. We are always a long way from home.

And, finally, the historical condition of black Americans has led us to be progressive. We have always talked equality, you see, instead of believing that other people must equal us. What we want is not dominance, but for the yoke to be released. We want to live with other people, we don’t want to say that we are better: in fact, if we suffer a fault, it is that we tend to feel we are worse than other people because we have been brainwashed to think that way. So these subjective factors, based on the material existence of black people in America, contribute to our vanguard position.

As far as the Party is concerned, it has been exclusively black so far. We are thinking about how to deal with the racist situation in America and the reaction black people in America have to racism. We have to get to the black people first because they were carrying the banner first, and we try to do everything possible to get them to relate to us.

Our big burden is trying to simplify our ideology for the masses. So far I haven’t been able to do it well enough to keep from being booed off the stage, but we are learning. I think one way to show how dialectics works is to use practical example after practical example but I am sometimes afraid to do that because people will take each example and think, “If this is true in one case, then it must be true in all other cases.” If they do that, then they become historical materialists like most Marxist scholars and most Marxist parties. These scholars and parties don’t really deal in dialectics at all, or else they would know that at this time the revolutionary banner will not be carried by the proletarian class but by the lumpen proletariat.

The concept of the black bourgeoisie is something of an illusion. It is a fantasy bourgeoisie, and this is true of most of the white bourgeoisie as well. There are very few controllers even in the white middle class. They can barely keep their heads above water, they are paying all the bills, living hand-to-mouth, and they have the extra expense of refusing to live like black people. So they are not really controlling anything; they are controlled. In the same way, I do not recognize the black bourgeoisie as different from any other exploited people. They are living in a fantasy world, and the main thing is to instill consciousness, to point out their real interests, their objective and true interests, just as our white progressive and radical friends have to do in the white community.

We saw a need to formalize education in the black community because we did not believe that a haphazard kind of learning would necessarily bring about the best results. We also saw that the so-called halls of learning did nothing but miseducate us; they either drove us out or kicked us out. What we are trying to do is structure an educational institution of our own.

Our first attempt along these lines is that we call our Ideological Institute. So far we have about one hundred students and these hundred students are very unique students, because all of them are brothers and sisters off the block. What I mean is that they are lumpen proletarians. Most of them are kickouts and dropouts; most of them left school in the eighth, ninth or tenth grade and those few who stayed all the way did not learn how to read or write, just as I did not learn until I was about sixteen. They are now dealing with dialectics and they are dealing with science—they study physics and mathematics so that they can understand the universe—and they are learning because they think it is relevant to them now. They will relate this learning back to the community and the community will in turn see the need for our program. It is very practical and relates to the needs of the people in a way that makes them receptive to our teaching and helps open their eyes to the fact that the people are the real power. They are the ones who will bring about change, not us alone. A vanguard is like the head of a spear, the thing that goes first. But what really hurts is the butt of the spear, because even though the head makes the necessary entrance, the back part is what penetrates. Without the butt, a spear is nothing but a toothpick. We, the Black Panther Party control our Ideological Institute. If the people—the oppressed people—do not control their schools, without reservation, and without having to answer for what is done there or who speaks there, then it is not a progressive institution.

The qualitative leap from reactionary intercommunalism to revolutionary intercommunalism will not be the millennium. It will not immediately bring into being either a universal identity or a culture that is essentially human. It will only provide the material base for the development of those tendencies.

When the people seize the means of production, when they seize the mass media and so forth, you will still have racism, you will still have ethnocentrism, you will still have contradictions. But the fact that the people will be in control of all the productive and institutional units of society—not only factories, but the media too—will enable them to start solving these contradictions. It will produce new values, new identities; it will mold a new and essentially human culture as the people resolve old conflicts based on cultural and economic conditions. At some point, there will be a qualitative change and the people will have transformed revolutionary intercommunalism into communism. We call it “communism” because at this point in history people will not only control the productive and institutional units of society, but they will also have seized possession of their own subconscious attitudes toward these things; and for the first time in history they will have a more rather than less conscious relationship to the material world—people, plants, books, machines, media, everything—in which they live. They will have power, that is, they will control the phenomena around them and make it act in some desired manner, and they will know their own real desires. The first step in this process is the seizure by the people of their own communities.

I would like to see the kind of communism I just described come into being, and I think it will come into being. But the concept is so far from my comprehension that I could not possibly name the contradictions that will exist, although I am sure that the dialectics will go on. Only the basis for the contradictions exists now. Many of our relationships with other groups, such as the white radicals with whom we have formed coalitions, have been criticized by the very people we are trying to help. For example, our offer of troops to the Vietnamese received negative reaction from the people, truly oppressed people. Welfare recipients wrote letters saying, “I thought the Party was for us; why do you want to give those dirty Vietnamese our life blood?” I would call this a contradiction, one we are trying to solve. We are trying to give some therapy, you might say, to our community and lift their consciousness but first we have to be accepted. If the therapist is not accepted, then he cannot deliver the message. We try to do whatever is possible to meet the patient on the grounds that he or she can best relate to, because, after all, they are the issue. I would say that we are being pragmatic in order to do the job that has to be done, and then, when that job is done, the Black Panther Party will no longer be the *Black Panther Party*.

In a paper of this length the balance between philosophy or ideology and material data is difficult. And to look forward to world communism, the withering away of the State, and, then, anarchy can only be done by speaking, here, only in the most general terms.

Ernest Mandel calls the next stage the “end of political economy and commodity production.” In his book, *Marxist Economic Theory, Vol II*, Mandel says:

“It is not only the logic of the new mode of production that will bring about this withering away of commodity production. *Automation* entails the same logical necessity in the sphere of production. The production of an abundance of goods and services is in fact accompanied by the more and more rapid eliminations of all living, direct, human labour from the production process, and even from the distribution process (automatic power stations; goods train driven by remote control; self-service distribution centers; automatic vending machines; mechanized and automatised offices, etc.). But the elimination of living human labour from the cost of production means the elimination of wages from the cost of production! The latter is increasingly reduced to the “costs” of operations between enterprises (purchase of raw materials and depreciation of fixed plant). Once these enterprises have been socialized, this involves much less transfers of real money than simply accounting in monetary units.

As services will continue non-automatised for a longer period than goods, money economy will retreat more and more into the spheres of exchange of services for services, purchase of services by consumers, and purchase of services by the public sector. But in proportion as the principal services become automatised in their turn (eg. public services, automatic machines for providing drinks and standardized articles of current use, laundries, etc.), money economy will become restricted more and more to “personal services” only, the most important of which (medicine and education) will, however, be the first to undergo a radical abolition of money relations for reasons of social priority). In the end, automation will leave to money economy only the periphery of social life: domestic servants and valets, gambling, prostitution, etc. But in a socialist society which ensures a very high standard of living and security to all its citizens, and an all around revaluation of “labour,” which will increasingly become intellectual labour, creative labour, who will want to undertake such forms of work? Socialist automation thus brings commodity economy to the brink of absurdity and will cause it to wither away.

This withering away, begun in the sphere of distribution, will spread gradually into the sphere of production. Already in the era of transition from capitalism to socialism, socialization of the major means of production and planning imply a more and more general substitution of money of account for fiduciary money in the circulation of means of production.

Only the purchase of labour power and the purchase of raw materials from the non-state sector will involve the use of fiduciary money. But when the increase in the standard of living is accompanied by a reduction and no longer by an increase in individual wages, the circulation funds of enterprises also start to wither away. With the ‘industrialisation of agriculture’, with the withering away first of private enterprise and then of co-operative enterprises in agriculture and distribution, this withering away spreads to relations between producing enterprises and owners of labour-power, relations between enterprises and suppliers of raw materials. The withering away of money becomes general. Only ‘units of account’ survive, so that an economy based on accounting in terms of hours of labour may govern the management of enterprises and of the economy taken as a whole.

#### Economic Revolution and Psychological Revolution

So far we have considered only the economic consequences of the new mode of production, the withering-away of commodity economy and of money to which it will lead. We must now consider the social and psychological results, that is, the complete upheaval in relations between men, between individuals and society, as these have developed out of thousands of years of social experience derived from antagonism between classes of exploitation of man by man.

Free distribution of bread, milk and all other basic foodstuffs will bring about a psychological revolution without precedent in the history of mankind. Every human being will henceforth be ensured his subsistence and that of his children, merely by virtue of being a member of human society. For the first time since man’s appearance on earth, *the insecurity and instability of material existence will vanish*, and along with it the *fear* and frustration that this insecurity causes in all individuals, including, indirectly, those who belong to the ruling classes.

It is this uncertainty about the morrow, this need to ‘assert oneself’ in order to ensure one’s survival in a frenzied struggle of all against all, that is at the basis of egoism and the desire for individual enrichment, ever since the beginning of capitalist society and even, to a certain extent, since the development of commodity economy. All the material and moral conditions for the withering away of egoism as a driving force in economic conduct will have vanished. True, individual ownership of consumer goods will doubtless expand to an unheard-of degree. But in face of the abundance of these goods, and the freedom of access to them, the *attachment* of men to ownership will likewise wither away. It is the adaptation of man to these new conditions of life that will create the basis for the ‘new man’, socialist man, for whom human solidarity and co-operation will be as ‘natural’ as is today the effort to succeed individually, at the expense of others. The brotherhood of man will cease to be a pious hope or a hypocritical slogan, to become a natural and everyday reality, upon which all social relations will increasingly be based.

Will an evolution along these lines be ‘contrary to human nature’? This is the argument invoked as a last resort against Marxism, against the prospect of classless society. It is regularly put forward by those who do not know this human nature, who base themselves on crude prejudices or suspicions in order to identify morals and customs *derived from a certain socio-economic context* with biological or anthropological characteristics alleged to be ‘unchangeable’ in man. It is also invoked by those who endeavor to preserve at all costs a conception of man which is based on the idea of original sin and the impossibility of ‘redemption’ on this earth.

But anthropology starts from the idea that that which is distinctive of man is precisely his *capacity for adaption*, his capacity to create a second nature in the culture which forms the only framework in which we can live, as Professor A. Gehlen puts it.

These practically unlimited possibilities of adaptation and apprenticeship are the essential anthropological feature. Human ‘nature’ is what precisely enables man continually to rise above what is merely biological, to continually surpass himself.

The tendency to competition, to the struggle of all against all, to the assertion of the individual by crushing other individuals, is not at all something innate in man; it is itself the product of an 'acculturation', of an inheritance which is not biological but social, the product of particular social conditions. Competition is a tendency which is not 'innate' but socially acquired. Similarly, co-operation and solidarity can be systematically acquired and transmitted as a social heritage, as soon as the social milieu has been radically changed in this direction.

More than that—a disposition to co-operation, to solidarity, to love of one's neighbor corresponds far better to specific biological needs and basic anthropological features than a tendency to competition, conflict or oppression of others. Man is a social being not only in the socio-economic sense but also in the biological sense. Of all the higher mammals he is the one who is born in the weakest state, least protected and least capable of self-defence. Anthro-biology regards man as an embryo prematurely born, who thereby possesses a physiological organization making him capable of a much longer period of apprenticeship and practically unlimited adaptability—thanks to *activity and socialization* during a year of existence as an extra-uterine embryo. Phylogeny here confirms ontogeny, since today it is generally agreed that these very processes of activation (the beginning of deliberate *praxis*) and *socialization* are at the origin of the human species."

Marx shows that "alienation appears not only in the result, but also in the *process* of production..."<sup>8</sup> He contrasts the type of production before extensive division and fragmentation of labor with modern production:

In handicraft...the workman makes use of a tool; in the factory the machine makes use of him. There the movements of the instruments of labor proceed from him; here it is the movement of the machines that he must follow.<sup>9</sup>

What did Marx see in his later works as possibilities for the future? He believed that a necessary precondition for the eventual cure of alienation is reorganization of society, in such a way that the means of production are owned by the public at large, the product being created and distributed solely according to human need. In such a society, man consciously would take himself as the subject of history. He would experience himself as the source and control of his powers, and use them to release himself from dependence upon things and external circumstances. He saw the objective as the full development of the individual person's potentialities, stifled now by the techniques employed to make production more efficient.

Modern industry... compels society,... to replace the detail-worker of today, *crippled* by lifelong repetition of one and the same trivial operation, and thus reduced to the mere *fragment* of a man, by the fully developed individual... to whom the different social functions he performs are but so many *modes of giving free scope to his own natural and acquired powers*.<sup>10</sup>

He expected a flowering of freedom in such changed conditions not only for the individual but for the entire human community.

In fact, the realm of freedom does not commence until the point is passed where labor under the compulsion of necessity and of external utility is required.<sup>11</sup>

There is an old African saying, "I am we." If you met an African in ancient times and asked him who he was, he would reply, "I am we." This is revolutionary suicide: I, we, all of us are the one and the multitude.

The difference lies in hope and desire. By hoping and desiring, the revolutionary suicide chooses life; he is, in the words of Nietzsche, "an arrow of longing for another shore." Both suicides despise tyranny, but the revolutionary is both a great despiser and a great adorer who longs for another shore. The reactionary suicide must learn, as his brother the revolutionary has learned, that the desert is not a circle. It is a spiral. When we have passed through the desert, nothing will be the same.

The preacher said that the wise man and the fool have the same end; they go to the grave as a dog. Who sends us to the grave? The unknowable, the force that dictates to all classes, all territories, all ideologies; he is death, the Big Boss. An ambitious man seeks to dethrone the Big Boss, to free himself, to control when and how he will go to the grave.

There is another illuminating story of the wise man and the fool, found in Mao's *Little Red Book*: A foolish old man went to North Mountain and began to dig; a wise old man passed by and said, "Why do you dig, foolish old man? Do you not know that you cannot move the mountain with a little shovel?" But the foolish old man answered resolutely, "While the mountain cannot get any higher, it will get lower with each shovelful. When I pass on, my sons and his sons and his son's sons will go on making the mountain lower. Why can't we move the mountain?" And the foolish old man kept digging, and the generations that followed after him, and the wise old man looked on in disgust. But the resoluteness and the spirit of the generations that followed the foolish old man touched God's heart, and God sent two angels who put the mountain on their backs and moved the mountain.

This is the story Mao told. When he spoke of God he meant the six hundred million who had helped him to move imperialism and bourgeois thinking, the two great mountains.

The reactionary suicide is "wise," and the revolutionary suicide is a "fool," a fool for the revolution in the way that Paul meant when he spoke of being "a fool for Christ." What foolishness can move the mountain of oppression; it is our great leap and our commitment to the dead and the unborn.

We will touch God's heart; we will touch the people's heart, and together we will move the mountain.

