

a progressive labor party periodical • fall 2007

# THE **COMMUNIST**

## **FIGHT BACK!**

**AGAINST IMPERIALISM**

**SEXISM & RACISM**

**NATIONALISM**

**CAPITALISM!!**





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## what we fight for

- ✦ PLP fights to smash capitalism—wage slavery. While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim “communism is dead,” capitalism is the real failure for billions all over the world. The Soviet Union and China returned to capitalism because socialism maintained too many aspects of the profit system, like wages and divisions of labor.
- ✦ Capitalism inevitably leads to wars. PLP organizes workers, students and soldiers to turn these wars into a revolution for communism. This fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat requires a mass Red Army led by the communist PLP.
- ✦ Communism means working collectively to build a society where sharing is based on need. We will abolish work for wages, money and profit. Everyone will share society’s benefits and burdens.
- ✦ Communism means the party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers – eventually everyone – must become communist organizers.
- ✦ Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of race.
- ✦ Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women workers.
- ✦ Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism.  
One international working class, one world, one party.

**JOIN US!**



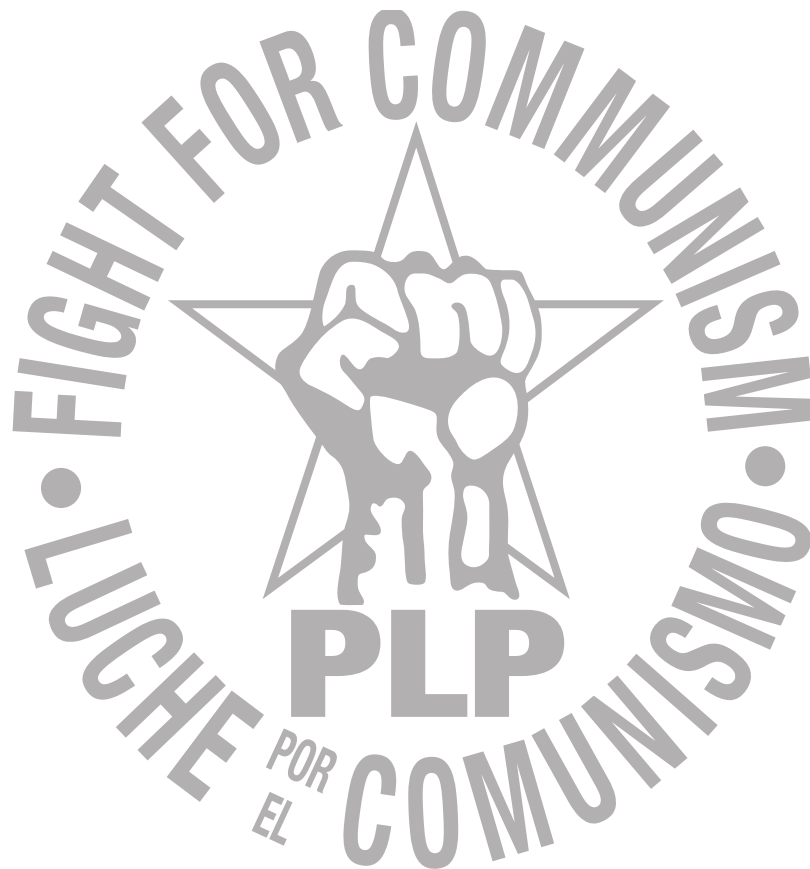
## NEW TIMES FOR THE COMMUNIST MAGAZINE

In this time of sharpening imperialist rivalry, where rival ruling classes around the world are clashing over markets, profits and the world's reserves of energy supplies, Progressive Labor Party needs to step-up its analysis of the world and up the ante of revolutionary communist politics.

THE COMMUNIST is an important tool for building and sharpening the politics of Party members as well as those in the Party's base. A new magazine editorial board was assembled hopefully to meet the needs of our class and to add light to darkness caused by capitalism all over the world.

All articles will be edited by a committee to ensure that they contain the Party's line and are relevant to current Party struggle. Each magazine will have a theme and articles will be solicited in advance in order to create a cohesive magazine that will be both correct in line and be a useful tool amongst Party members and their base.

We encourage our base and our comrades to write for The Communist. Just like CHALLENGE, our newspaper, the magazine is only as strong as the workers, students, teachers and soldiers who write for it.



## LETTER TO THE EDITORIAL COLLECTIVE

# Article on Drugs in the Communist is Dangerous

When our club first received *The COMMUNIST* (Summer 2006) I immediately flipped to the article "War on Drugs Equals a War on the Working-Class." I was hoping to find a good article to introduce to friends still caught in the trap of drug use on how the bosses use drugs as a method of control and persecution; I was disappointed to find an article that seemed to make the argument that drug use was somehow okay.

The article contained some good information about how the War on Drugs has been used to justify a police state, build a slave labor army in US prisons, and brutalize working class people who have the most to gain by dropping capitalism, but it quickly loses validity when it begins to argue that street drugs are in fact harmless. The article gives us silly nuggets of information like the fact that "Marijuana... has at least 60 compounds of therapeutic value." While this is interesting I am more interested in the one compound that it has that the bosses' love, its ability to lure workers into passivity and away from organizing against their oppressors. While marijuana may not be chemically lethal the escapism that it provides is lethal to the creation of a strong working class movement against capitalism. The drug's prevalence also gives the bosses the ability to make arrests and gain convictions with ease. This combination of factors makes the seemingly harmless marijuana deadly to working class movements.

The articles portrayal of cocaine and heroine as non-dangerous and non-addictive drugs represents a serious miscalculation by the author that can be potentially very dangerous to new people just learning about the Party. As I am sure everyone who organizes youth to join the Party can attest drug use is a serious impediment to winning people over. Just as anyone who has experience dealing with drug users understands that the author's conclusions about the harmlessness of cocaine and heroine are laughable. These drugs are most certainly addictive and they are most certainly deadly as most people's personal experience confirms.

In order to understand the dangers of these drugs it might be instructive to look at the history of cocaine and heroin. After World War II the world opium trade was at an all time low. The CIA aided the Kuomintang (anti-Communist forces in China) in the construction of the Golden Triangle, an enormous heroin production and smuggling ring, in the 1950's in order to fund anti-Communist insurgencies in South-East Asia. During the 60's the CIA funded the construction of a massive heroin network in Laos in order to fund anti-Communist groups in Laos and Cambodia. The CIA even organized a system of transporting the drug called Air America. During the final years of the Vietnam War when US soldiers began openly rebelling against the imperialist occupation of South Vietnam the heroin being produced in Laos managed to find its way into US military camps. The drug was used as a sedative to keep rebellious soldiers in line and prevent a full scale uprising among enlisted men. This drug that worked so well against rebellious soldiers in Vietnam was then shipped to the US where it was pushed heavily by the police in order to kill worker's

movements and for the most part it worked. The counter-culture through half-retarded gurus like Timothy Leary and idiotic artists like Jim Morrison urged kids to drop and get high in order to change the world. Police looked the other way as drugs flooded into rebellious working class neighborhoods and college campuses where students were most active against the war. We might take a second to reflect on a particularly clever line from an old PLP song that asks, "Ain't it strange how all the grass and skank, they push hardest where there's workers fighting back and GI's too? Oh it don't make sense, must be a coincidence."

In the late 70's and early 80's the story remained the same although a few details changed. The geography of the Cold War had shifted and the CIA found itself trying to stem the tide of workers' movements throughout Central America. Resorting to their old tactics the CIA created a drug running network that would funnel cocaine from CIA backed producers in Colombia and Bolivia through Central America and into the US. The gangs used to run this drug operation became the CIA's chief anti-Communist forces in the region and used money from the drug trade to terrorize workers in places like Nicaragua, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, and others. The cocaine that was being moved through these groups magically found its way into working class, primarily black, neighborhoods where at one time groups like the Black Panther Party had once thrived and thus began the crack epidemic. That PLP song concludes with the line "When you're flying high, don't you know you can't organize, you can't fight their racist lies, and the cops they know its true." Heroin and cocaine sales helped to fund the massacre of hundreds of thousands of workers by anti-Communist thugs in South-East Asia and Latin America while it poisoned the working class in the US contributing to the destruction of the Old Left and ruining hundreds of thousands of lives. Narcotics were a powerful weapon in the capitalists' arsenal as they did battle with the working class all over the world.

Reflecting on this history, this article represents two steps back for anybody who accidentally gave it to a member of their base. It seemingly approves of drug use by claiming it is non-addictive and non-lethal. It uses comparisons to alcohol and tobacco to justify these claims. These arguments are moot because they pre-suppose that alcohol and tobacco are not also substances used to control and oppress working class people. The reality is that they are all chemically deadly and they allow for escapism which is deadly for the Party. Comparing these substances is the equivalent of debating whether you would rather be shot or stabbed! The PLP argues that drugs and alcohol are used as weapons against the working class. They are instruments of control that allow for capitalism to brutalize the working class another day. Luckily the members of our club discovered this article before the magazine could be distributed to any of our base members, but I fear that others might not have been so fortunate.

## State of the World

*Delivered at Central Committee in May 2007*

A century ago, the major imperialist powers were on a path towards World War. They were creating alliances, building up their military, and promoting nationalism to convince millions of workers to die in their quest for power. Today we appear to be on a similar trajectory towards war. The world is divided and the imperialists are fighting over areas of influence. While we cannot predict the future, it appears that the contradictions are beginning to sharpen and world war is not an unimaginable future.

Since 1945, it has been clear who the dominant superpower in the world was. The US bosses came out of World War 2 yielding considerable influence in Europe and around the world, although they were still limited in their actions. The Soviet Union (which by the late 1950s had finally turned into its opposite and gave rise to a new bourgeoisie), the growth of Communist China, and the international communist movement challenged US imperialism on many fronts, most notably in Vietnam. It was in Vietnam that the weaknesses of the US ruling class were exposed to its enemies. However, it was the internal weaknesses of the international communist movement that allowed the US bosses to come out of the 20th century wielding its power. By the 1990s, the Soviet Union had broken up, China had returned to a full blown capitalist state. The international communist movement had collapsed due to its internal weaknesses.

The US recognized this and tried to take advantage. The US-led multilateral invasion of Iraq in 1990 and the NATO occupation of the Balkans during the mid-1990s, exemplified both the power and the weakness of the US ruling class. By the end of the 20th century, many inside the dominant wing of the ruling class realized they were facing a troubled future. In 1998-1999 the Hart-Rudman Commission was devised to lay out the vision of the US bosses as they head into the 21st century. The report was a blueprint for war and fascism, which *Challenge-Desafio* has recognized time and again. A more centralized police state under the name of "Homeland Security" and the needed buildup of the US military were two main features of the report. Hart-Rudman foresaw a 9-11-type attack and emphasized the need to use such an attack to build patriotism and support for war. The report also recognized that control over energy resources shapes the politics of the world, particularly as Asian economies become more oil-dependent.

Preceding the First World War, a number of alliances began forming, some as early as 1879 (between Germany and Austria Hungary). Throughout the rest of the 19th century, we saw the buildup of the two major alliances

that would eventually bring the major imperialists and its allies in a head on confrontation. From reading the bourgeois press one can see the current contradictions sharpening. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which originally formed in 2001 with the People's Republic of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, is a clear rival to the US and its allies, especially in the Central Asian region. At the heart of this alliance are two countries looking to rival the powers in the West – Russia and China. They both continue to spread their influence throughout Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Americas at the expense of the US and European bosses.

As the 20th century came to a close, the Russian ruling class was forced to make a strategic retreat by abandoning their client states and looting state-owned property in primitive accumulation. The Russian working class paid for this. Life expectancy fell by 10 years during the 90s, while unemployment, alcoholism, suicide, and murder all increased. Going into the 21st century, Russia's economy stabilized, in large part due to rising energy costs. The Russian ruling class, led by Vladimir Putin, began to take firmer control of the economy, disciplining the bosses that acted too selfishly and made concessions to the west, a hallmark of fascism. The most notable target was Mikhail Khodorkovsky. The richest man in Russia in 2004, Khodorkovsky was owner of Yukos oil, which was one of the largest private-sector oil companies in the world. When Khodorkovsky began negotiating to sell some of its shares to Exxon Mobil and Chevron Texaco, Putin quickly stepped in. Khodorkovsky was eventually imprisoned on counts of fraud and tax evasion, and Yukos came under state control. This was not about tax evasion; capitalists get away with that all the time without punishment. The Russian ruling class sent a signal not only to their domestic capitalists but also to the US and European bosses: stay out of Russia's backyard.

This was seen more clearly during the Sakhalin 2 project. Sakhalin Islands, which are part of Russia located in the Pacific Ocean, were first being developed by Exxon-Mobil. Originally agreed upon under the Yeltsin period, Royal Dutch Shell was working on the Sakhalin II, which is the world's largest combined oil and natural gas development. In late October 2006, Russia once again stepped in. Citing "environmental" violations, Shell was forced to hold off on the project. After accumulating high costs and not being able to develop any of the reserves, they eventually sold 50% + 1 shares to the Russian state owned company Gazprom. Gazprom and Shell also have

agreements on future projects in Russia. Gazprom's rise is significant, not only in the development of Russia, but also in the strategic purpose of Russia's control over oil production and flow. Over the past ten years, Russia has built a number of pipelines extending into Europe and Asia. The Yamal European Pipeline (which runs through Belarus, Poland, and into East Germany), the Northern European Gas Pipeline (which would run from Northern Russia, underneath the Baltic Sea, and into northeast Germany), the East Siberia-Pacific Ocean Pipeline (which runs eastward and will empty out along the Pacific Rim making it easy for major oil exporting countries such as China, Japan, Korea, and the US) and a new pipeline agreed upon between Russia, Greece, and Bulgaria which will transport oil and gas from the Caspian Sea to the EU are all efforts by the Russian government to control the flow of oil to Europe and parts of Asia. Before their deal with Greece and Bulgaria, which took place in March, *New York Times March 16, 2007* reported that Russia already provides other parts of Europe with a third of its oil and 40% of its natural gas.

While the controlling of these energy reserves certainly bothers US bosses, another big problem that they see is Russia's relationship with Iran. According to a Council on Foreign Relations report from February of this year entitled *U.S.-Russia Interests on Collision Course*, a big concern that the US rulers have is the amount of arms that Russia has provided Iran. The value of arms transfer agreements between 1998 and 2001 was \$300 million. From 2002-2005, it was \$1.7 billion. Russia has also upset Washington through their agreements with Venezuela, offering to sell them fighter jets after the US back out of its deal with Venezuela.

But with all the attention that is on the rise of Russia, another member of the SCO, China, seems garner more attention to those in the US. According to the World Bank, China had the highest economic growth rate in the world during the 1990s. China is now seen by many as the number one contender to the US for world dominance. While the U.S. is a waning imperialist giant, China is on the rise and can offer better deals to many of the client states of the U.S just as the U.S. did in the Middle East to undercut Britain around World War II. While the US bosses have been occupied with the Iraq war, China has used the 21st century to build on relationships that the US has let slip away. In 2004, according to the Washington Post, China eclipsed the US as Japan's largest trading partner (out trading the US \$213 million to the US \$197 million). In November 2004, the NY Times ran articles on the growth of China in both Latin America and Southeast Asia. During that time, Hu Jintao, President of China, toured through Latin America, stopping at both Argentina and Brazil. In Argentina, China agreed to invest in over \$20 billion in railways, oil and gas exploration, and construction and communication satellites. In Brazil, China worked on building an already burgeoning

relationship with the South American country. In 1999, Brazilian exports to China were worth \$676 million. In 2004 it was \$5.4 billion. But the real attention is being paid to the oil sector.

Oil is essential to the Chinese ruling class. According to an April 2007 Economist article, in 2005 China produced 3.6 million barrels/day, slightly up from the 2.8m b/d in 1990. It consumed, however, 6.9m b/d in 2005, which was a 100% increase from a decade ago. Of China's oil imports, 40% comes from the Middle East, 23% came from Africa, and 21% came from Asia. But China is now looking towards Latin America for resources as well. One reason for that is that three of China's top five oil suppliers in 2005, Saudi Arabia, Angola, and Iran remain at risk of political upheaval or terrorist attacks. Also, 80% of China's oil imports pass through the unstable Strait of Malacca, where high levels of piracy (239 attacks in 2006) pose a continual threat to maritime traffic.

This is one reason for Hu's November 2004 Latin America trip, where he pledged investing \$100 billion over the next ten years. China has been looking mainly to invest through China's two major oil firms, the China National Petroleum Corp (CNPC) and the China Petroleum and Chemical Corp (Sinopec). Although there is private investment in these two firms, the Chinese government still retains a majority stake in each. 2004-05 were busy years for these two firms:

- Among CNPC's first ventures was a US\$200m purchase of a 45% stake in an Argentinian-owned Peruvian unit, PlusPetrol Norte, in February 2004. PlusPetrol Norte is the main crude oil producer in Peru, and produced approximately 17.8m barrels in 2006.
- In September 2005 a CNPC-Sinopec-led consortium, Andes Petroleum, agreed the US \$1.42bn purchase of the Ecuadorian assets of a Canadian oil firm, Encana. This deal gave Andes Petroleum control of five blocks, producing in total approximately 75,000 b/d, and with proven reserves of 143m barrels. The consortium also acquired a strategic 36% stake in Ecuador's Oleoducto de Crudos Pesados (OCP, the new heavy crude oil pipeline), which pumps 450,000 b/d, and as such CNPC will be able to exert some control over direction of exports through the OCP pipeline.
- A year later, Sinopec formed a consortium with India's ONGC Videsh to spend US\$850m on a 50% stake in Colombia's Ominex de Colombia, a subsidiary of US-based Ominex Resources. Ominex de Colombia's oilfields produce 20,000 b/d and have proven resources of 300m barrels.
- In 2004 Brazil's state-owned oil company, Petróleo Brasileiro (Petrobras), signed a co-operation agreement with Sinopec which will involve China providing technical assistance in the recovery of

mature oil fields, while Brazil will assist with deep sea drilling in the China Sea. They have also signed a memorandum of understanding regarding the proposed US\$1.3bn gas pipeline linking the north-east and the south-east of Brazil--it could in future be linked to the proposed Gasoducto del Sur (Gasur) pipeline which proposes to connect Venezuela, Brazil and Argentina. Future involvement in Gasur could prove beneficial for China should it seek to diversify its energy holdings in Latin America into natural gas, rather than primarily in the oil sector (as it is doing at present).

- But it is China's relationship with Venezuela that is the strongest in the region. In Venezuela CNPC has signed a US\$350m deal to invest in 15 oil fields with proven reserves of 1bn barrels in Anzoategui state, and US\$60m in natural-gas projects. CNPC has also agreed a joint venture with state-owned oil firm Petróleos de Venezuela (PDVSA) to develop fields in the Orinoco river belt. As well as the US\$1.5bn already committed to Venezuela, the Orinoco joint venture could require further investment of US\$3bn-4bn, making Venezuela by far the greatest recipient of Chinese investment in the region. Chavez said that Venezuela's goal is to send China 1 million barrels a day by 2012. At the same time, Venezuela bosses have talked about reducing their oil exports to the US, now around 60% of its oil products.

So what does this mean for China? The results right now are small. China still depends on many Western competitors that it does business with, particularly Exxon Mobil which has projects currently going on in Southern China. Also, in 2005, Latin America sent 47% of its exports to the US, 14% to the EU, and just 4% to China. The US still has much more influence in the region. But China's developments are significant, considering that for most of the 20th century Latin America was controlled solely by the US. Every Chinese gain has come at the expense of the U.S.

But geographically and strategically Latin America presents a problem. Because Latin America and China are so far from each other, it would be difficult for China to defend the supply routes in case of a global conflict. Thus, China enters Africa.

China's growing relationship with Africa can be seen through its economic investments in the continent. China's trade with Africa was \$39.7 billion in 2005 and rose to \$55 billion in 2006, over 5 times its 2000 level. In 2006, Angola replaced Saudi Arabia as China's main supplier of oil. Also in the same year, China and Africa signed more than a dozen trade deals worth \$1.9 billion and announced an \$8 billion contract to build a railway in Nigeria. Nigeria, coincidentally, is a member of OPEC and also the largest oil producer in Africa. It supplies Western

Europe, the United States, and also China. As of January 2006, China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) announced it would buy a 45 percent stake in an offshore oil field in Nigeria for \$2.27 billion. This move, along with China's contracts with countries like the Sudan, where they receive half of Sudan's oil exports, shows China's seriousness towards building a stronghold in Africa. This marks a strategic move by China to depend less on Middle East oil and more on African oil.

But even as we see China begin to challenge the US bosses indirectly, they are not ready for a confrontation in the near future. The example of World War I shows that economic ties do not prevent war; confrontation is delayed because militarily China is a young country. It has only been recently that China began to build up their Navy. In 2005, China received at least seven new submarines and one new missile destroyer from Russia, their ally in the SCO. The newly acquired subs can fire missiles from a submerged position. This not only gives China more influence in the Taiwan Strait against Taiwan and Japan, but also against other Asian powers. But besides the buildup of the Navy, rival capitalists are concerned at China's increased military budget. In 2000 their budget was \$14.6 billion. In 2005 it more than doubled to \$29.9 billion, and in 2007, China announced a military budget just under \$45 billion.

On top of spending more militarily, China and the rest of the SCO have been working closely. Not only has China begun buying arms from Russia's high-tech arsenal, but they are also participating in joint military drills. Called the "Peace Mission of 2005," Russia and China competed in war games, with Russia using its latest technology. This is significant because it is the first time that both Russian and Chinese bosses have worked so closely. It was also during this year that SCO member Uzbekistan evicted the United States from one of their major bases, one that was used in the Afghanistan war. Additionally, Russia has now pulled out of the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty

This has caught the attention of bosses around the world, particularly Iran, who has shown interest in joining the SCO. For now they have only granted Iran observer status (along with India, Iran, Mongolia, and Pakistan), but the relationships between Iran and these countries continue to grow, both economically and politically.

Many Western bosses, particularly the US, are worried about this. Citing the war in Iraq and Afghanistan as two of the main obstacles for the US bosses in treating the rise of the powers, a push to a more multilateral approach is expected with next year's new President. A report issued by the Council on Foreign Relations entitled "The New New World Order" by Daniel Drezner joins the rest of the crowd in citing the neo-cons unilateral policy as a failure and urges to work closer with China and another rising power which this report did not mention much but



probably should have, India. Citing Goldman Sachs' report from 2004 "Dreaming with BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India, and China), Drezner talks about the importance of co-opting these rising economies. By 2010, these economies will be greater than US, Japan, Germany, the UK, and Italy combined and by 2025 it will be twice that of the G-7 (the group of the highly industrialized countries). For now, however, it looks like India is more in line with the SCO, especially since it agreed to a pipeline agreement between Iran and Pakistan called the Dehli Declaration, which will be built by Russian firm Gazprom.

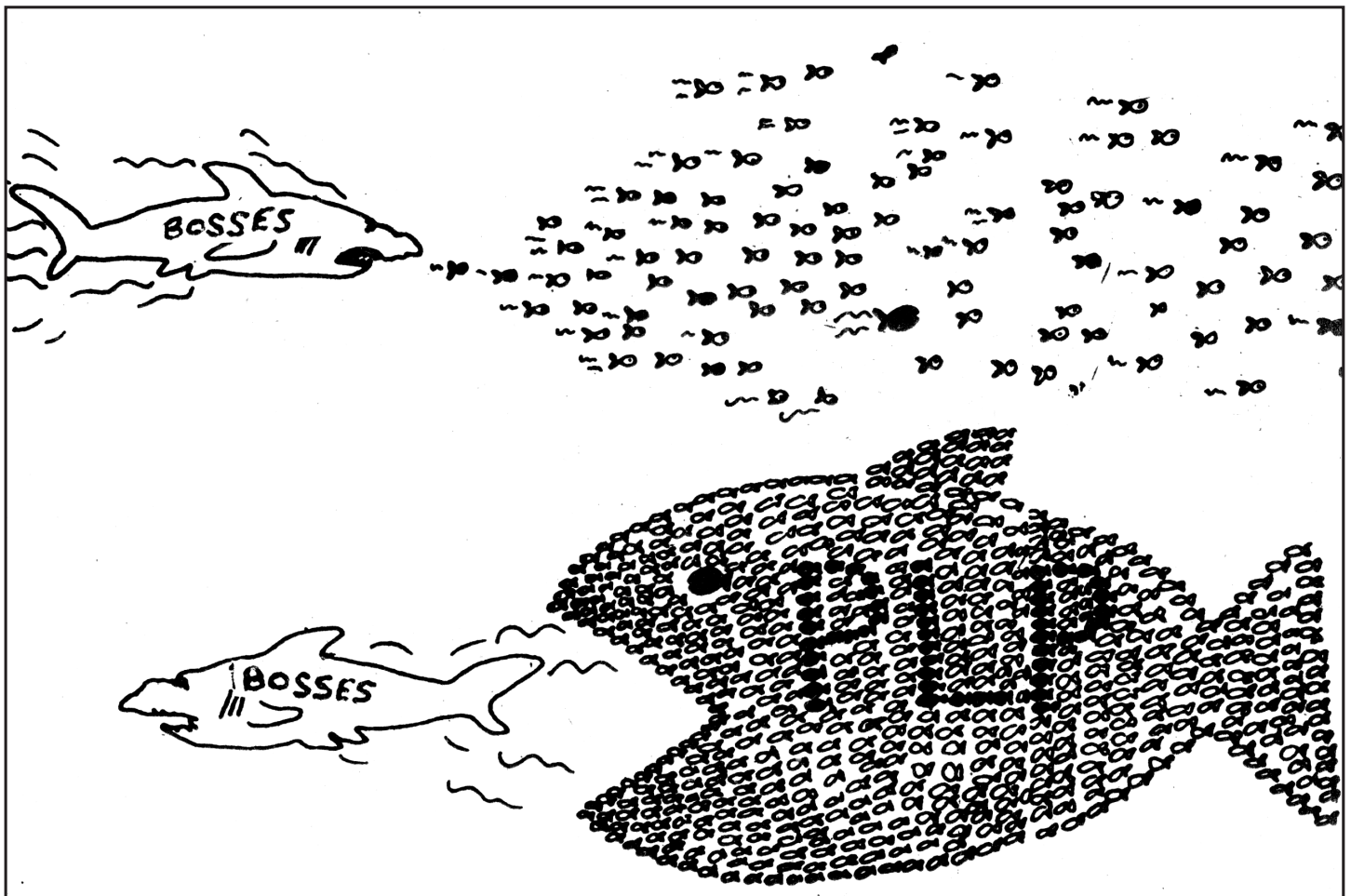
Yuliya Tymoshenko, a member of the opposition party of the Ukraine, gives the same advice to the US ruling class in her recent article in *Foreign Affairs* entitled *Containing Russia*. She urges the US to look at the EU as an ally to break Russia's growing power. It is the EU that will be the Western bosses' answer to a rising Russia & SCO.

Made up of 27 countries, the EU is beginning to grow in size and power. The Euro is gaining value and some of its member-nations, particularly those near Russia's borders (Estonia) are beginning to challenge Russian power. Although the EU does not have a military, US bosses have responded by putting pressure on China's support of the Sudan. The liberal wing of the US ruling class as well as human rights groups around the world are putting

pressure on China to pull out of Darfur. Clearly the Save Darfur movement is an attempt to organize students and workers against Chinese imperialism while trying to give the US military a humanitarian face.

The conflict in Somalia earlier this year was an attempt by US bosses to reclaim the land in which they had contracts for oil exploration before President Mohamed Siad Barre was overthrown. While they were able to drop enough bombs to kill Somali children, US military might is strained because of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars. What was once a world dominated by the US ruling class, is now a world where inter-imperialist rivalry is sharper and growing powers, such as China and Russia, are now contesting the US for world supremacy. A few years ago, the US would not have sat down to talk with Iran, but now they are in a position to do so. Rival ruling classes, particularly Putin, are no longer afraid to confront to the United States.

While the contradictions are certainly getting sharper, many of these rising powers still need more time to develop militarily as well as politically in the different regions before they can openly confront the US. No matter the timetable, however, imperialism will push the bosses into world war. The working class must take advantage of whatever time there is before world war to prepare to turn world war into communist revolution.



## A History of Middle-East Nationalism

Over thirty years ago, Progressive Labor Party criticized nationalism as a dead-end for workers, pointing out that nationalism was the ideology of the bourgeoisie, of the capitalist class, invented in its climb to power over the feudal interests of the past and in its imperialist conquest of the world. Yet prior to that, communists had long considered nationalism a progressive force. This belief grew out the notion that the working class could achieve communism only in stages that accorded with the development of the productive forces in the economy. First workers would rid the nation of outside (imperialist) exploiters by allying with progressive local capitalists then they could move on to socialism, and only later to communism. Writing during the Vietnam War, PLP rejected the idea that nationalism was a progressive force as a result of its own practice and from study of the experience of many of the national liberation struggles of the post World War II era. Despite the bravery and dedication of communist and national liberation fighters, national liberation struggles in country after country proved to be a defeat for the working class as new capitalist forces came to power. Since then, PLP has moved even further in its critique, pointing out in Road to Revolution IV that the working class must fight for communism, not socialism, and organize itself into one communist party not multiple national movements.

Today, as the United States occupies Afghanistan and Iraq in a deadly effort to control the oil at the center of its imperialist power, it is imperative that anti-imperialists understand the role and history of nationalism. Since the final dissolution of the Soviet Union, inter-imperialist

rivalries have intensified, and the world's boundaries are being rewritten as imperialism (globalization) penetrates areas that had previously been outside of its reach. Civil wars between ethnic and religious group and terrorist tactics are on the increase. These conflicts are occurring world-wide, but especially in the Middle East, a region strategically important to all capitalist powers, and are the early stages of world war.

In times of war, nationalism is over and over again offered as the main way workers should identify their interests. In the United States, conservatives and liberals alike appeal to US patriotism to get workers to support its war efforts. They denounce the “tribal” nature of regions in turmoil, and then propose to fix these regions by teaching them a proper nationalism (often called “civil society”) in which workers accept their status and local political leaders and capitalists play by clear rules that welcome US investors (i.e. learn what “freedom” means). Such proposals include the rewriting of history as the US plans to do for Iraq.<sup>1</sup> NGOs and peace groups promote nationalism and “nation-building” as the antidote to imperialist “oppression” and as a way for “the people” to get power. For example they advocate allowing small nations to set wages and to define economic rules that will protect them against imperialist economic penetration. In the Middle East, the resolution of the displacement of the Palestinians by Zionist and Arab elites alike is most often presented as in need of a nationalist resolution—that of giving the Palestinian “nation” its own land and Palestinian elites control of investment opportunities and contracts with US, and perhaps other, capitalist interests.

Yet nationalism can never eliminate the exploitation of working people. It can only guarantee continued exploitation. Nationalism—whether US or French or Iraqi or Zionist or Arab—is a product of imperialism that serves the interests of the capitalist class. While nationalism can wear a “progressive” veneer when it attacks the rule of the most powerful, it is a tool in the imperialist toolkit, a Trojan horse that undermines working-class power as it assists rising imperialists. Nowhere has this been truer than in the Middle East where the very boundaries and identities of nations are the products and the vehicles of inter-imperialist rivalries. In the Middle East, the constant has been the imperialists’ need to control trade routes and resources. The variable has been the multiple contingencies through which imperialists have operated as they invented nations and marshaled nationalisms against both rival imperialists and the working class. The relationship between imperialism and nationalism in the



Middle East falls into three broadly defined periods. The first period, which begins in the early twentieth century and continues through the 1920s, is defined by the British and French contest to take the region from the Ottoman Empire. The second period, roughly from World War II through the 1960s, is defined by the rise of the United States as it replaced Great Britain as the dominant power in the region. The third period begins in the 1970s, when the United States, seemingly at the top of its game and able to eliminate Soviet influence in the region, began to experience limits on its power. In each period, the pattern of inter-imperialist rivalries led to the elevation of particular nationalisms, first the invention of the nations of the region (Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia among others), second the promotion of nationalist leaders and the use of coups and other destabilizing efforts, and then the arming of regional strong men and the creation of Islamic fundamentalism as a tool of US imperialism. These past events live on in the wars of today, as the nationalist and religious divisions invented in earlier inter-imperialist contests become the vehicles through which the US confronts its newest rivals, including the Europeans and China. This manipulation of nationalisms has created a dense tapestry of events, but by identifying the recurring patterns of imperialist and class power underlying these events, workers of the world can turn the present world war that has begun in the Middle East into the war that ends capitalism forever!

### **The Nineteenth Century Origins of Nationalism:**

Middle Eastern nationalisms, both Arab and Zionists, have their intellectual origins in the late 19th century. The consolidation of the nation-states of the West and the beginnings of modern imperialism/colonialism also date from this period. In the United States, the industrial capitalists triumphed over southern planters and then over the remaining Indian tribes, and then embarked on overseas expansion to Hawaii, the Caribbean, and the Philippines. Great Britain laid claim and conquered India, Egypt, and much of eastern Africa. France took control of Indochina (now Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos) and much of North Africa. Germany and Italy were unified in 1880s and each likewise began to seek control of other parts of the world.

By the late nineteenth century, the Middle East was a target of these rival imperialists, especially of France and Great Britain. Much of the Middle East, from Turkey in the west up to the borders of Iran in the east, was part of the Ottoman Empire, an empire that once included within its borders the Balkan region and parts of Eastern Europe. Great Britain, which had gained formal control over India and over Egypt (both important sources of cotton for British manufacturing) wanted to maintain a weak, non-threatening Ottoman empire in order

to protect her trade routes. France, on the other hand, hoped to form an Arab Middle Eastern state, independent of the Ottomans and under French domination to block the expansion of British imperialism.

France began setting up Christian missions in Syria and Lebanon in the 18th century; in the 19th century, American Protestants also set up missionary schools. American Protestants learned Arabic and employed Arab scholars to translate their evangelical Bible. By the late 19th century, these missionary schools and European universities became the centers for a variety of Arab secret societies and nurtured Arab nationalist intellectuals, who often worked as journalists or teachers. Arab nationalists won over many wealthy merchants, landowners, and urbanites as they competed with socialist and religious parties for mass support. Initially Arab nationalists didn't call for independence from the Ottoman Empire. Rather they demanded greater equality within the empire, especially in the form of more administrative positions for Arab-speaking elites and the use of Arabic as well as Turkish as an official language, a movement that intensified in the decade before World War I as the "Young Turk" reformist elements demanded increased use of Turkish within the empire.

Like Arab nationalism, Zionism also emerged in the late nineteenth century and grew out of the philosophical notions of ethnic affinity that lay behind late 19th century German nationalism. At that time many working-class Jews had responded to anti-Semitic oppression by joining internationalist socialist and communist movements. Zionism, however, called on all Jews to reject multi-ethnic, class-based organizations and to unite across class lines to form a new Jewish nation. According to Zionist leader Theodor Herzl, a wealthy journalist, only the formation of a Jewish nation could fight anti-Semitism, which he claimed was inevitable and ineradicable as long as Jews and non-Jews lived together.

At its core, Zionism was a form of nationalism fully compatible with European imperialism. Intellectually, Zionism reflected the racist, proto-fascist ideology that lay behind much of European nationalism of that period. On the one hand it saw Jews as part of a Jewish nation that was defined by culture, religion and race, and thus "organically" separate and distinct from other peoples. On the other, Zionism echoed the call of European imperialists for the establishment of European enclaves to "civilize" (i.e. exploit) the world. Like the British and French imperialists, Zionists saw Palestine as an empty place ("a place without people for a people without a place") since it was not inhabited or developed by Europeans. Zionism fit perfectly with two British imperialist goals, one of using European settler colonies to exploit the resources of other regions, the other of creating multiple small nations to enhance its power in the Middle East. From 1919 until the beginning of World War II, British administrators encouraged Zionist immigration to Palestine.

## Great Britain, France and the creation of the nations of the Middle East

Middle Eastern nationalisms were given a big boost with the outbreak of World War I, which pitted the European imperialist nations of Great Britain, France, and Russia, on one side, against Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire, on the other. Both the French and the British saw World War I as an opportunity to take the Middle East from the Ottomans.

By 1914 the Middle East had become increasingly important to the imperialists. Oil had been discovered in (non-Ottoman) Iran and in Mosul, an Ottoman province now part of Iraq; and as the British navy switched from coal to fuel oil, petroleum emerged as a strategic military asset. In these new circumstances, the British became boosters of Arab nationalism, promising to support Arab independence in return for Arab military aid against the Ottomans. The British were allied with Hussein, the Sharif (governor) of

Mecca, who wanted to restore the supremacy of Mecca and Medina with him as caliph, the spiritual and political leader of Arabia. The British provided Hussein with arms and money and promised to create an independent Arab nation in the former Ottoman Arab provinces. In 1916, Hussein, his sons Faisal and Abdullah (the Hashemites), and their Arab nationalist allies rose up in revolt against the Ottomans. Aided by the British spy T. E. Lawrence ("Lawrence of Arabia"), Faisal led Arab forces to take Damascus in October of 1918, as British troops took Basra and Baghdad.

The British goal in promoting nationalist rebellion against the Ottomans was to establish client regimes and rivalries that would allow them to secure British control of the region. The British and French imperialists had signed a number of conflicting agreements about the control of the region. In 1916, the British and the French signed the Sykes-Picot agreement which divided the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire between the two imperialist powers. In 1917, the British also issued the Balfour Declaration, announcing British support for a Jewish homeland in Palestine, which at the time was 90% Arab. The Balfour Declaration, like the British deals with Arab nationalists, was opportunistic. In the short term, the British hoped that the Balfour Declaration would induce Jews in Russia and the US (which was not yet in the war) to push their governments to support the British during World War I. In the longer range, British anti-Semites hoped the declaration would lead to an exodus of European Jews, and British imperialists imagined that a Jewish Palestine (under British tutelage, of course) would strengthen British power in a post-World War I Middle East by protecting the Suez Canal and extending British control of the eastern Mediterranean.

When World War I ended, the Ottoman Empire had been defeated. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and other former

Ottoman officers led a Turkish nationalist movement against the British, French, Greeks, and Armenians to establish the borders of an independent Turkey. And the British and French were given a mandate from the League of Nations to administer the rest of the Middle East. In this process, the British and French invented new nations—Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Palestine—along lines that the imperialists felt would protect their interests in the region.

The invention of these nations took place through a number of concrete steps. In the first place France and Great Britain redrew the map, creating formal boundaries as they divided the region between them. The French, given the mandate to administer the Ottoman region of greater Syria, proceeded to divide the region into two countries, the nearly land-locked Syria, with its Islamic majority, and the coastal Lebanon, which included a narrow Christian majority and a French-speaking elite. The French division of the region had the goal of maintaining control of the region it thought most important by creating an ethnic/religious unity that it could exploit.

The British, with a League of Nations mandate over the remaining area, declared the Ottoman provinces of Mosul, Baghdad and Basra to be the new nation of Iraq and crowned Faisal, who had been expelled from Syria by the French, as its king. Faisal's brother Abdullah was installed as the king of the newly created Emirate of Transjordan, an area that possessed no earlier independent economic or administrative identity. A separate Palestinian Mandate, the first time that Palestine had been a unified political entity, was defined and administered by the British. Egypt was granted a nominal independence but was ruled as a British protectorate. The British continued to control Egypt's foreign policy, its king, and to maintain troops in both the Suez Canal Zone and Cairo.

In 1924, the holy cities of Medina and Mecca, which were governed by Hussein, the former British client (and father of Faisal and Abdullah) who had become disaffected from the British, were conquered by another British client, Ibn Saud. Ibn Saud, who claimed to be a descendent of a former king of Arabia, waged a war for conquest of the Arabian Peninsula from inside the British protectorate of Kuwait. In 1932, he proclaimed the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia would be bordered on the east and south by a series of small nations and principalities (Kuwait, etc.) whose borders reflected the sheikdoms that the British had sponsored through its earlier trade and transportation networks in the region.

Thus by the mid-1920s, the French and British imperialists had created a series of new, often competing countries in the Arabic-speaking Middle East. In inventing Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Palestine, the French and the British turned old Ottoman provinces into neo-colonial units of rule, organized as nominal republics

by France and as constitutional monarchies by Britain. Once these countries were established the British and French relied on a mix of four tools to rule them: military power, the elevation of elites whose fortunes were tied to the empire, the invention of new national cultures, and divide and conquer techniques. The British and French militaries were of course the ultimate ruling force upholding the pro-imperialist regimes of these new nations. In Iraq, for example, when in the 1920s regional elites led rebellions against the British-imposed king, the British military responded with air power, including the use of poison gas.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time certain local elites gained power at the feet of the imperialists. In general, the British formed local armies and bureaucracies, which were seen as the cheapest way to administer these outposts. Jobs in the British-created bureaucracies became a source of status and wealth for ambitious men. But at the same time, the British (and the French) retained direct control of the top military offices in their client states, a policy that created its own contradictions since it limited the rise of the ambitious Iraqi, Jordanian, and Syrian nationalists they were training. In addition, the British and French changed the rules of property ownership, transforming formerly tribal lands into the private possessions of sheiks. The privatization of land created on the one hand a small, rich landowning class allied with the imperial power and tied into imperial trade networks and on the other, a large impoverished and exploited peasant class nominally connected by religious and tribal bonds to their exploiters.

The British also invented new national “traditions” for these new countries, often in a deliberate effort to defeat the pan-Arab ideology they had exploited in the uprising against the Ottomans. These new national identities were then taught in schools and in the military, where youth were given new maps, new mythologies, and new anthems. In Iraq, for example, the British spy and archaeologist Gertrude Bell helped found the Iraq Museum, which emphasized the region’s ancient pre-Arabic and pre-Muslim civilizations as the source of the historic nation. Other museums such as the Costume Museum, presented “ethnic” dress as a mechanism to teach that the Hashemites were really a natural ruling family, not a foreign one.<sup>3</sup> In the Palestinian Mandate, on the other hand, where a US survey indicated that many elites wanted to join with Syria or the Hashemite kingdoms of Jordan and Iraq, the British insisted that people should identify as Palestinian not Arab.

In Transjordan, John Bagot Glubb, the British general who commanded the Jordanian army, created a military corps out of formerly migratory Bedouins. Glubb then used his Bedouin troops to control the cities and towns, which he feared as potential centers of rebellion against the king and British rule, to define and patrol newly imposed borders on the remaining tribal peoples, and later to

police the Palestinians. Glubb’s elevation of the Bedouins also influenced the invention of a Jordanian nationalism that centered on a Bedouin culture of his imagination. For example, Glubb devised a costume for his Bedouin Desert Patrol that included a red and white checkered head cloth (where previously only white head cloths had been worn). By the 1970s, this shmagh or hatta was being worn by the king (who was pictured in this costume on Jordanian currency) and by youth as the symbol of Jordanian nationalism. Palestinians within Jordan also began adopting a version of this Bedouin military dress as their own, and in the 1970s the black and white haggga became the costume of the Palestinian nationalists. In a similar fashion, Bedouin-inspired commercial music and food came to be redefined as Jordanian culture, adopted by urbanites with no cultural connection to Bedouin life before the invention of Transjordan.<sup>4</sup>

The creation of these multiple nations reflected imperialist efforts to divide and conquer the region. In addition, the imperialists encouraged minority groups, including Jews, Kurds, Berbers, and Armenians, to claim special rights. By funding minority-group nationalisms within the borders of the nations they had only recently defined, the imperialists multiplied the players they might manipulate. In Lebanon, for example, the French enhanced sectarian divisions inside Lebanon by basing the governmental structure on religious differences (Catholic Christian, Orthodox Christian, Druze, Sunni and Shia Muslim, etc). In another example, Kurdish nationalists asked for nationhood at the Versailles negotiations that turned the Middle East over to France and Great Britain. The Kurds’ request was denied. But the British (and later the Americans) periodically funded and armed the Kurds so Kurdish rebellion might put pressure on Iraqi regimes they were at odds with, only to then increase weapons for suppressing the Kurds when an Iraqi regime had regained favor.

The Zionists were the most visible beneficiaries of the British policy toward minority claims. During the 1920s and 1930s, Jewish migration from Europe to Palestine accelerated. Most importantly, using money from wealthy European Zionists, the Jewish National Fund began buying land, often from large, absentee landholders who lived outside new borders of the Mandate. Long-term Palestinian tenants were forced off their land to become rural and urban proletarians. As Jewish and Arab workers cooperated in strikes and labor organizing, Zionist leaders adopted a policy of building Jewish enclaves, hiring only Jewish employees, and setting up Jewish-only labor organizations. The British rewarded Zionist businessmen with key economic concessions to develop electrical networks, mining enterprises, and irrigation and drainage projects, and allowed them to set up separate school systems and to block the establishment of a multi-ethnic Palestinian parliament. In this period British support for Zionist immigration, settlement,

and state-building gave the Zionists essential protection for overcoming opposition to land grabs and laid the foundation for the future state of Israel.<sup>5</sup>

While the details of this history give it an appearance of almost impenetrable complexity, the essence can be easily summarized. The nationalisms of the Middle East are not the products of genetics or local culture or religion. Both the ideas and the events have their origins in the inter-imperialist rivalries and imperialist inventions of the World War I era. The fact that the region's rivalries have an actual, material beginning suggests the possibility of an end. But finding a solution requires an accurate understanding of the contradictions involved, and a clear understanding that to defeat imperialism, the working class must defeat nationalism as well.

### **Enter the United States:**

As the British and French imperialists carved the Middle East into new nations, the United States became increasingly interested in the region. During the 1920s and 1930s, as oil became the key fuel for transportation and military operations, more and more oil was found in the area. Oil was discovered in Kirkuk (northern Iraq) in 1927, in Bahrain in 1932, in Saudi Arabia in 1933, and in Kuwait in 1934. American oil companies began entering the region in the 1920s, and in the 1930s held key contracts to produce oil in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. By 1939, 15% of oil coming out of the Middle East was going into the accounts of US companies.

During World War II, the United States declared the Middle East a strategic concern of its foreign policy, a declaration that placed the US on a permanent collision course with its British and French allies. This declaration reflected the belief of the US ruling class that the United States was the world's rising imperial power, and that World War II was the beginning of what Henry Luce called the "American Century." At the time, the United States didn't need Middle Eastern oil for domestic consumption (that would not occur until the 1970s), but rather saw oil as power over others. With oil replacing European-produced coal as the fuel of industry and military power, European capitalists and governments would increasingly depend on the country that controlled the Middle East. In addition, the Soviet Union shared a long border with the region, and John Foster Dulles worried that the USSR might "take over the area, and... thereby control Europe through the oil on which Europe is dependent."<sup>6</sup>

While the Russians were a potential threat, the British and French were the actual powers that had to be moved out. For imperialists, conflict is absolute, alliance relative and temporary. Thus during the course of World War II, the US treated its formal allies as rivals, demanding that they give up their colonies in exchange for US aid in the war against Germany. In the Middle East, US attention during World War II focused on Saudi Arabia

and Iran, both of which were oil producers, and on Syria and Lebanon, which were crucial to the TAPLINE, a US planned pipeline that would move oil from Saudi Arabia to Europe without transiting either the British-controlled emirates of the Persian Gulf or the British-controlled Suez Canal.

In Saudi Arabia, the US oil consortium ARAMCO paved the way to push out British influence. In 1942-43, ARAMCO convinced the US government to send Lend Lease aid to the British client ibn Saud, even though Saudi Arabia faced no military threat from the Axis powers. This aid included not only military equipment, but 22 million ounces of silver bullion, most of it minted in the US into Saudi riyals, to alleviate a shortage of coins and to prop up ibn Saud's power. To cement the importance of Saudi Arabia to the US, FDR met ibn Saud on his way back from Yalta in 1945. In Iran, Cordell Hull proposed that the US to take "positive action" in order "to avoid British or Russian hegemony." During the war, some 30,000 US troops served in Iran, mostly running railroads and ports. Military advisors were also sent to train the Iranian military and its urban police force, including Colonel Norman Schwarzkopf who would be involved in the 1953 coup and whose son would lead US troops in the first Gulf War against Iraq. In the cases of Syria and Lebanon, the United States demanded that France grant the two countries their independence. When the Free French General (and future French president) Charles De Gaulle balked at the US demands, British troops entered Damascus to ensure a French exit.<sup>7</sup>

At the end of the war, Syria and Lebanon were granted their independence. Britain, facing a serious economic crisis and pressed to repay its war debt to the United States, began extracting itself from Greece and Turkey (whose economic support was turned over to the United States), from India (which was split into two counties) and from the Palestinian Mandate. The British, on the other hand still had troops in Egypt, in Iraq, and in Kuwait and the other emirates of the Persian Gulf, a situation that the US relied on and supported even as it moved to replace the British as the region's hegemonic power. Lurking in the background was the Soviet Union which posed a political more than a military threat by offering itself as a rival model of independent industrial growth and as a potential source of aid and weapons outside of the US-controlled western market. In this contest to replace the British and to keep out the Russians, the United States, like the British and French imperialist before it, wielded nationalism as a key tool of the rising imperialist power.

### **Communism and Nationalism as popular ideologies in the Cold War Middle East:**

As the United States moved into the Middle East, it had to negotiate its way through a region where anti-imperialism and nationalism were popular ideologies

among both the working class and the ambitious Arab bureaucrats and military officers in the British and French administrations.

On the one hand, large communist parties existed in many Middle Eastern countries, especially those which bordered Russia. In 1920-21, workers and peasants in Iran's northern provinces of Azerbaijan and Gilan had established a Soviet Socialist Republic of Iran. In 1945-46, communists in Iran's northern provinces of Azerbaijan and Kurdistan established the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan, which under the protection of the Soviet army instituted a popular front program that redistributed land, extended the vote to women, established protective labor legislation, and set up health clinics, literacy classes, and schools. This republic was crushed by the Shah of Iran after Soviet troops withdrew from the region, but its legacy continued to generate fear among the imperialists.<sup>8</sup>

At the end of World War II, militant trade unions and communist parties existed in Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq and Iran. In Egypt, communists led trade unions among the nation's industrial (textile) workers. In Iran, the Tudeh or Masses Party, a pro-Soviet reform party, had a mass base in the working class and among all the different ethnic groups within Iran. In 1951, when the local bourgeois forces nationalized the British oil concession, the Tudeh mobilized workers and students in strikes and mass protests against imperialism and in favor of nationalization. In 1953 and 1956, the poor, mostly Shiite workers of Saudi Arabia's eastern oil fields held general strikes against ARAMCO and the Saudi ruling class. Led by a coalition of communist and nationalist groups, the oil workers protested low pay, layoffs, discrimination, lack of political suffrage, and US imperialism. In 1958, the Communist Party of Iraq held a May Day demonstration of a million people in the streets of Baghdad.

These parties, though large, shared a common flaw. Following the lead of the Soviet Union and most communists of that period, they saw the path to communism as consisting of stages, the first of which would be national liberation from imperialism. So in country after country, the communists supported bourgeois nationalists, including the Zionists who founded Israel, because they believed these forces were most able to expel the British.<sup>9</sup> As we will see, this belief would lead to their downfall.

The bourgeois nationalist movements were led by intellectuals, many of whom had studied in Europe, and army officers who had been tutored in nationalist ideologies in the barracks. Though these men had served in the administrations of the Ottoman, French and British empires, they wanted to rule on their own. The leading theorist of Arab nationalism, Sati al-Husri, had served as an Ottoman education official, and then became a close adviser to and educational administrator

under Faisal, the British-installed King of Iraq. Al-Husri and his disciple, Michel Aflaq, the founder of the Arab Ba'ath movement and an admirer of European fascism, were inspired by the German philosophers Herder and Fichte who stressed the idea of an organic nation-state grounded in the culture and language of a people. This movement was secular, anti-imperialist (i.e. anti-British), and anti-communist, calling on workers and peasants to adopt patriotism, accept their proper place and status within the nation, and reject proletarian internationalism.<sup>10</sup> During World War II, many anti-British nationalists advocated an alliance with Germany and Italy, even staging a short-lived coup in Iraq, an effort quashed by the actions of British and Russian troops in the region.

### **National Liberation and the Rise of US Dominance**

In the 1950s, when nationalist politicians and parties challenged British and French power in the region, the United States provided them key support, sometimes publicly, more often secretly. Just as the British had used Arab nationalism against the Ottomans, the United States used nationalism against the British and the French. The United States positioned itself as an anti-colonial friend of any and all who sought to expel its imperialist rivals and of all who aided the US in smashing the growth of pro-communist movements. Where the British military had garrisoned troops in the regions since World War I and had placed British officers such as John Glubb as commanders of national armies, the US offered the new nationalists economic and military aid, often in the form of cash that they could dispense on their own. Where the British had owned and managed the oil fields, factories, and transportation networks (including, of course, the Suez Canal), the United States negotiated private contracts with each nation's elite on more generous terms than had existed before. These contracts and the "free market" relationship they entailed was, the US asserted, the essence of "liberty" and national independence. Always painting a stark contrast with the British colonial, occupying presence, the United States insisted to itself and others that it exercised a "benevolent" not an imperial presence.

Benevolence, however, was a tactic that extended only to so far. Those that did as the US wished were favored with money, with arms, and with programs training their police to put down communists and other domestic opponents. Those that acted against US policy might find themselves the targets of coups to install the next guy willing to do US bidding. The relationships between the United States and the nations of the Middle East in the 1950s are complicated, and their history is often obscured by those who stand to benefit from the outcome. But a look at the particulars provides essential

ammunition for understanding the current war against Iraq and, more generally of the necessity for the working class to reject all forms of nationalism and those that claim to lead in its name and to embrace proletarian internationalism.

### **The Iran Coup**

Iran provides the classic example of US action against a nationalist regime which resulted in both the diminution of British influence and the defeat of a working class communist threat. Iran had long been part of the British sphere of influence, and had granted oil concessions to British oil companies as early as 1909. During the 1940s, the US defined Iran, with its long border with the Soviet Union, as a strategic region, and by 1947 the US had a large CIA mission there doing intelligence and propaganda work and organizing cross-border raids into the USSR.

In 1951, mass protest against British influence resulted in the nationalization of the British oil concession under Premier Mossadegh. Initially, the United States ignored British calls to boycott Iran and cooperated with the Mossadegh government. US policy makers hoped that his brand of pro-capitalist nationalism might be an effective antidote to the radical working class Tudeh. But in 1953, as the Tudeh continued to grow and became more critical of Mossadegh, and as the British threatened to invade Iran, the CIA staged a coup that expelled Mossadegh, put a formerly pro-Nazi general into the premiership, and gave new oil concessions to US companies.<sup>11</sup> From 1953 to 1979, Iran, under Shah Reza Pahlavi, was a key recipient of US military aid, serving as a military pillar of the United States in the Middle East, and as a key participant in US anti-communist actions around the world.

The coup in Iran is sharply etched into the history of the Middle East, and is often told as a story illustrating a necessary contradiction between US imperialism and third-world nationalism. This interpretation gets power from two other events of 1954: the CIA overthrow of Jacobo Arbenz Guzman, the reformist president of Guatemala who had tried to nationalize some of the massive landholdings of the United Fruit Company, and the US's creation of the government of "South" Vietnam under Ngo Dinh Diem after the French withdrawal of forces from its former colony of Vietnam. However there is more to the Iran story. The history of the Iran coup is also a story of inter-imperialist rivalries in which the United States, though ruthless, balanced the actual benefits of protecting British claims to oil against the potential benefits of supporting a particular nationalist politician.

In this period US imperialists treated the Middle East's bourgeois nationalists with tactical flexibility, as a contingent and useful tools in their competition with their powerful imperialist rival. Third-world nationalists

were, like all other capitalists, both potential allies and actual competitors in for control of labor and resources. The complex unity between imperialism and nationalism is illuminated by the relationship between the United States and Gamal Abdul Nasser.

### **The US Dance with Nasser**

Nasser is often portrayed as the heroic figure of Arab nationalism. He nationalized the Suez Canal, withstood imperialist attack by the British, French and Israelis, stood up for the Palestinians, and joined the Non-Aligned Movement in defiance of the United States. However these actions need to be more carefully examined. Despite his often public opposition to US initiatives, Nasser's rise to power was assisted by the US, and he continued to consult with the United States before making many of what appeared to be his most independent, pan-Arabic actions. What brought the United States and Nasser together were their anti-British sentiments and their fear of pro-communist sentiments of the Arab working class.

The British had occupied Egypt since the 1880s. Though Egypt had been granted a nominal independence in 1922, British troops continued to occupy parts of the country (particularly the critical Suez Canal zone) into the 1950s as Great Britain strove to keep Egypt in its sphere of influence. However, by 1951, as Egypt's pro-British elites fought with each other over development contracts, the British confronted a rising nationalist movement that included strikes in the British-dominated textile factories and guerilla actions against British military outposts in the Suez Canal zone.

In 1952, Nasser and other military men (the "Free Officers") seized power, eventually deposing the King and forcing British troops out of Cairo. Though some of the details of Nasser's relationship with the US are in dispute, Nasser and the Free Officers met with the CIA (including super agent Kermit Roosevelt, who orchestrated the 1953 Iranian coup) and with US ambassador Jefferson Caffrey before seizing power. To Caffrey, who had been the ambassador to France during the earlier crisis over Syria, Nasser's military rule could be a key force in opening the Egyptian economy to new (i.e. US) investors and in controlling the militant working class.

On taking power, Nasser quickly moved to suppress working-class movements just as Caffrey had hoped. One of Nasser's first actions was to send troops to smash a sit-down strike of textile workers at Misr Fine Spinning and Weaving. Over 500 workers were arrested, and two were executed after military trials.<sup>12</sup> In 1953, following meetings with CIA operative Roosevelt and US envoy John Foster Dulles, Nasser stepped up his arrests of communists, using lists provided by the United States embassy. US advisers were brought in to train Egyptian intelligence forces. In fact, at each stage in the initial development of his program, from abrogating the Egyptian constitution



to instituting land reform, Nasser consulted with and notified the US embassy ahead of time, sometimes even following US advice on whom to appoint to office. In the case of land reform, the US provided advisers and money in hopes that redistributing some land would prevent peasant uprising and increase incomes and thus the market for domestic and foreign industrial goods. The land seizures conveniently targeted only those large landholders (for example the Egyptian royal family) who had been most closely tied to the British.<sup>13</sup>

US policy makers hoped to use Nasser's anti-colonial stance not merely inside Egypt but in the broader Middle East where the US was engaged a quiet competition with the British. By 1953, the US had pushed the British out of Saudi Arabia and Iran, two of the most important oil-producing countries. But the British still controlled Iraq and some of the oil-rich emirates along the Persian Gulf and the British had thousands of troops in the region. The US expected British troops to protect US investments, even as it wanted to restrict the independent actions of the British and to cement its position as the senior, controlling partner in their Cold War alliance.

Thus in 1954-55, when the British initiated an anti-Soviet military alliance with Turkey and Iraq and Pakistan, two of its former colonies, John Foster Dulles dismissed the pact as a mere "instrument of UK-Arab politics" and the US refused to join.<sup>14</sup> Both Saudi Arabia and Egypt denounced the Baghdad Pact as an attempt to re-impose colonialism. Saudi Arabia (and ARAMCO) was also upset with British for recently seizing control of an oasis that both it and the British protectorate of Abu Dhabi claimed. In response, Saudi Arabia increased its funding of anti-British nationalists in the region; and the Egyptians began broadcasting radio propaganda into Iraq, denouncing Iraq's pro-British premier Nuri al Sa'id, and urging the Kurds to demand their independence.<sup>15</sup>

As Nasser rejected joining the British-led Baghdad Pact, he anticipated a \$256 million aid package from the US and the US-controlled World Bank to build the Aswan Dam. The Aswan Dam project, which provoked intense rivalries among Egyptian elites, was designed to control the flooding of the Nile and to provide electricity for industrial development. But after Nasser attended the Bandung Conference of Non-Aligned Nations, and announced plans both to sell Egyptian cotton to China (in competition with US cotton growers and in defiance of the then US policy of isolating China) and to buy weapons from Czechoslovakia, US aid was cut off. Close on the heels of the CIA-sponsored coup in Iran, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles thought he could push Nasser into a more open alliance with the United States. Attuned to US-British-USSR rivalries, Nasser was not easily bullied. Instead of falling into line, he nationalized the French and British-controlled Suez Canal in order to finance the dam project locally. In the fall of 1956, Britain, France,

and their ally Israel attacked Egypt in an attempt to get back the Suez Canal.

Here despite Nasser's defiance and as the USSR denounced France and Britain, the United States refused to support its traditional European allies. Though generally unhappy with the actions of the Egyptians, Eisenhower was particularly determined to show Britain and France who was the boss on the international scene and to cement its claim that it was a reliable anti-colonial ally of the nations of the Middle East. As Britain, France and Israel launched air and land invasions of Egypt, Eisenhower threatened to cut off their oil supplies, forcing Britain and its allies to withdraw within a few weeks of invading. In 1957, the United States promulgated a new policy for the Middle East. According to the "Eisenhower Doctrine," the US would now enter into bilateral agreements with any individual Middle Eastern country faced with a "threat from communism." Neither the French nor the British would be looked to as middle men. By 1958, the Baghdad Pact, the last British attempt to define policy in the Middle East, had collapsed.

One factor in the US's successful use of Nasser against its imperialist rivals was the way the left's line on national liberation gave nationalists like Nasser crucial, if unintended, cover. From the time of the Bolshevik Revolution, communists had struggled with how to interpret nationalism in the colonial world. While international unity of all workers was the general line of the movement, when it came to the particular instance of national liberation in the colonial world, even national liberation movement led by bourgeois forces were seen as essentially progressive. This idea was probably most strongly expressed in Mao's "On New Democracy," where Mao argued that since imperialists depended on their colonies for profits, the loss of any colony was a blow to imperialism and a move on the road toward socialism.

In Egypt and other countries of the Middle East, this line often led communist parties to refuse to oppose nationalists like Nasser even as communists were being jailed and in some cases executed. When Nasser first seized power, many workers and the largest of Egypt's communist parties supported the coup. Then Nasser's repression of strikes and the arrests of radicals caused some communists to change their views and denounce Nasser as an agent of the United States. But after Nasser attended the Bandung Conference and nationalized the Suez Canal, leftists again gave Nasser their support. Believing that nationalism would lead to power for the working class, many Egyptian communists endorsed Nasser, this time from the prison cells in which he had placed them. Yet despite his appearance as an opponent of imperialism, Nasser continued to cooperate with the US. As we will see in the story of Syria, Nasser became a secret but willing player in a US policy of promoting regional rivals and rival nationalists, a policy the US

hoped would allow it to fend off both the USSR and the British and to dominate the region's oil without the investment of US troops.

### **Competing Nationalisms in Syria and Iraq:**

In Syria and Iraq, the Cold War rivalry between the US and Great Britain initially took the form of nationalist coups—some stressing Arab nationalism, others Syrian or Iraqi nationalism—during the 1950s. Syria, which has no oil, was a key route for a planned pipeline from the Saudi oil fields. Syria had been occupied by British troops in 1945 as the US and the British forced the French to grant it independence. Then between 1948 and 1958, the British repeatedly used appeals to pan-Arab nationalism in efforts to merge Syria with Iraq under the leadership of Iraq's pro-British Hashemite monarchy. In this the British had the support of many old Iraqi elites whose economic ties had been disrupted when the imperialists carved the Ottoman Empire into separate countries. The United States, on the other hand, wanted to keep Syria "independent," by promoting Syrian nationalism and elevating army officers beholden to the United States.

In 1949, as the TAPLINE neared completion, Syria was rocked by a series of military coups. While the British and US press used racism to explain this instability as the product of Arab inability to deal with modernity, the coups were the product of inter-imperialist rivalries. In March, 1949, the CIA installed Husni Zaid in power; in October, after a failed Iraqi-British organized assassination attempt, the British sponsored a coup that placed Col. Sami Hinnawi, a supporter of the merger of Syria and Iraq, in power. Then in December 1949, Hinnawi was overthrown by a CIA-sponsored coup that placed Adib Shaishakly in office. Shaishakly instituted land reform and imported arms from the US in an effort to cement support for his rule. Shaishakly himself was deposed in 1954, and in 1957, after discovering another US-sponsored plot the Syrian government signed an economic and military aid deal with the USSR.<sup>16</sup>

At this point, the United States used anti-communism in an effort to get Saudi Arabia to intervene in Syria (so that "the atheistic creed of communism not become entrenched in the Moslem world"). When Saudi Arabia failed to act, the US accepted an offer of aid from Nasser, who was worried about the growth of domestic radicalism in Syria and once again in Egypt. At the request of Syrian anti-communists, Nasser merged Syria and Egypt into the United Arab Republic, a move justified by Nasser in the name of pan-Arab nationalism, and by John Foster Dulles as a means to "impede communist penetration of Syria." The formation of the UAR upset both Saudi Arabia and Iraq, whose local elites saw Nasser (and each other) as a rival for regional influence. The union of Syria and Egypt was short-lived, and in 1961, the UAR was disbanded. But during the period of the UAR's existence, Nasser

continued to consult with the US ambassador about his actions and began an active correspondence with US President Kennedy. As when he came to power in Egypt, in Syria Nasser proceeded to shut down all political parties, especially targeting the Syrian Communist Party. Denouncing communists as "foreign inspired opponents of Arab nationalism," Nasser shut down their newspapers, and with the aid of US-furnished intelligence lists, jailed 1000s more Syrian and Egyptian communists.<sup>17</sup>

When Nasser founded the UAR, the British, fearing the impact of Arab nationalism on their hold over Kuwait and other Gulf states, announced the formation of a rival Arab Union, a merger of Jordan and Iraq (with an invitation to Kuwait to join later).<sup>18</sup> The Arab Union was likewise short lived. But in Iraq this British-sponsored pan-Arab scheme had unintended consequences: it provoked an Iraqi-nationalist military coup that deposed pro-British premier Nuri al Sa'id and King Faisal II, both of whom were killed by the rebels. The leader of the new government, General Abdel al Karim Qasim immediately withdrew from the Baghdad Pact, reestablished diplomatic relations with the USSR, demanded a bigger share of oil revenues from the British-dominated Iraq Petroleum Company<sup>19</sup> and implemented a limited land reform program targeting landlords who had supported the king and the British. Though an anti-communist, Qasim initially sought the support of the Iraqi Communist Party, which it was willing to give since the ICP (like the communist parties in Egypt) saw bourgeois nationalist coups as part of the march toward national liberation. Qasim's solicitation of communist support, however, was merely tactical. With a large base among workers, urban intellectuals, and peasants, the ICP was the only political party that could mobilize people in all parts of the country. But as Qasim consolidated his power and as communist-led peasants began to occupy the property of absentee landlords, Qasim moved against the communists, removing them from the leadership of trade unions and peasant association, closing down their mass organizations and press, and arresting some of the most militant.<sup>20</sup>

Neither Great Britain nor the US was happy with Qasim. The British, who had the most to lose, began negotiations to protect their oil investments from nationalization, reinforced their troops in Kuwait (to which Qasim asserted a claim), and increased funding to Kurdish nationalist groups in an effort to destabilize Qasim's regime. The United States, which in 1958 had much less invested in Iraq, both considered Qasim as a counterweight to Nasser's ambitions and also encouraged Nasser to build an opposition to Qasim within the Iraqi military on the basis of pan-Arabism and anti-communism.

When Syria and Egypt disbanded the UAR, the United States moved against Qasim. The tool in this action was the Iraqi Ba'ath Party, whose links with the CIA had been forged in Egypt with the assistance of the US-trained Egyptian intelligence organization. In

1963, Iraq's nationalist Ba'ath Party came to power "on a CIA train." It quickly moved to round up and execute thousands of Iraqi communists, using lists provided by the US, and to suppress the Kurdish insurrection that the British and the US had sponsored against Qasim, here with the assistance of US weapons. Yet the Ba'ath Party was unable to fully consolidate its hold on the Iraqi government, which in 1966 began to negotiate with the French and the Russians for the more rapid development of its vast oil reserves. In 1968, as the US worried about losing control over Iraq's resources, the CIA sponsored another coup that strengthened Ba'athist rule and ultimately brought Saddam Hussein, a key CIA contact since 1959, to power.<sup>21</sup>

Thus as it consolidated its control over oil and oil transport routes, the United States had repeatedly encouraged local nationalists—using them to push the British out and to crush working-class rebellions—all the while hoping to increase US power by playing one country off another. Yet even at the height of US power, the reliance on local nationalists set limits on US action. Any action favoring a potential ally might meet with disfavor from an actual ally. This was most evident in its dance with Nasser, who as a populist figure posed a constant challenge to the monarchs of Saudi Arabia and the oil companies connected with them. The power of oil, the goal of US involvement in the region, repeatedly restrained US efforts to build links with countries like Egypt or Syria which were rich in people not petroleum.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, the events of the period expose the violent core underlying the American claim that its market-based approach made it a more benevolent power than the British. The violence underlying the imperialist's promotion of nationalism to "divide and conquer" was sharply etched in the 1980s, when the United States encouraged Saddam Hussein to attack Iran and then armed both sides. During this eight-year war, tens of thousands of Iraqi and Iranian workers and peasants died defending not their class but the warring elites of their nations.

### **Divide and Conquer US style: the case of Israel and Islamic fundamentalism**

In 1969, the last British troops left the Middle East, signaling Great Britain's acknowledgement that the United States was the dominant imperial power in the region. At this point the US saw only the USSR as a similar rival, and it expected to be able to marshal anti-communist fears to keep the capitalists of Europe and Asia in its pocket. But this analysis was internally flawed. By 1969, European and Japanese manufacturers were increasingly winning market share from the US; European bankers had forced the US off the gold standard by 1971, beginning a challenge to US financial hegemony that continues to this day. The competition from these imperialist rivals (which now include Russia

and China) negated the contingent unities of the early Cold War. As more players had the money to enter the market-oriented game the US had set up at the end of World War II, oil producing countries felt able to defy US policies as well.

At the same time, the US ruling class faced real internal limits. When the British troops left the Middle East, the US military was bogged down in an unpopular war in Vietnam. Faced with massive GI rebellions, the United States had begun withdrawing ground troops from Vietnam and was politically unable to deploy a large military force in the Middle East to fill the vacuum left by the British. Yet as the United States increased the air war on Vietnam, the massive amounts of jet fuel these raids required made the United States even more dependent on Middle Eastern oil. Since the 1970s, US imperialists have needed Middle Eastern oil for their own domestic and military consumption not just as a tool for dominating its economic rivals.

Given this, the US ruling class intensified its policy of relying on local nationalists. Hoping to transcend the limits set by GI rebellion, the US looked to regional surrogates for the military force necessary to keep its control of the region. This policy (known as the Nixon Doctrine) meant an increasing reliance on the Shah of Iran and the Saudi royal family and a changing relationship with Israel. More importantly for the study of nationalism in the Middle East, the United States intensified its use of religion, especially Islamic fundamentalism, to enhance its power over what were seen as increasingly unreliable secular nationalists. The promotion of local nationalisms (including the Taliban in Afghanistan and Khomeini in Iran) that continued after the negation of British power created new contradictions for US imperialist power. Brought into power by US money, these local nationalists have been willing to ally themselves with new powers against the US, a contradiction forced the United States into a series of ground wars that began with the first Gulf war and continue with the current fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan.

### **The case of Israel:**

The US relationship with Israel needs to be understood in this context of the sponsoring of rival nationalisms. The US and Israel did not become allies as a result of some mystical "natural affinity," but rather when the United States decided that aiding Israel was in its interest. The US and the USSR had both been quick to recognize Israel when it declared its independence in 1948. The USSR at that time promoted Israel as a force against British imperialism, a line that led many pro-Soviet communist and socialist parties to both accept Israel and push for an independent Arab Palestine according to the borders drawn by the UN in 1948. The US recognized Israel for

the same reason. But while the CIA used the Israeli Mossad as a subcontractor,<sup>23</sup> throughout the 1950s US relations with Israel did not go much beyond that. Rather, as has been described earlier, the US focused on Saudi Arabia and other oil producing countries and on winning over Arab nationalists. In this period, Israel was most closely allied with the British and the French, with whom it joined in the 1956 Suez War. The eastern bloc also sold arms to Israel, and Germany was a key source of financial aid.

Israeli nationalism, relying on the Zionist notion of ethnic affinity mentioned earlier, was built through racist violence against the Arab residents of Palestine. In 1947-48 as Britain prepared to withdraw, and as the UN decided to split the Palestinian Mandate in two, the Zionist leadership moved to cement their power by taking over British institutions and expelling Palestinians from the land. Zionist paramilitary forces were given lists of villages deemed economically or politically important. Villages were surrounded, residents driven out or killed, and homes bulldozed. Urban neighborhoods were similarly purged. Villages left standing, now empty of residents, had their names changed in an effort to wipe out the earlier history of the region. As a result of the “Nakbah” (the catastrophe) of 1948 some 750,000 people became refugees, living in UN tent cities along the borders of Israel and their former farmlands. In 1967 a new wave of expulsions began, and by 1972, the UN had registered some 1.5 million refugees. The Palestinians had become a landless proletariat, working (if at all) at low wages in Israel and in other countries throughout the region.

US ties with Israel deepened in this period as the politics of oil undercut the US relationship with Nasser. In 1962, Nasser agreed to assist anti-monarchist rebels in Yemen, eventually sending troops to fight in Yemen’s civil war against monarchist forces armed and funded by Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia and American oil companies demanded that the US force Nasser to withdraw; Kermit Roosevelt, the former CIA operative then an executive of Gulf Oil, traveled to Washington to persuade the National Security Council that Nasser could not be worked with. Unable to control Nasser, whose prestige as a pan-Arab populist was on the line, the US increased military aid to Saudi Arabia; it also approved the sale of Hawk missiles to Israel, a sale the US government had vetoed two years before. In 1966, the US began giving Israel tanks, aircraft and other heavy assault weapons. The growing, but generally secret, relationship between the US and Israel paid off in the June 1967 War (also known as the Six Day War). Having pre-approved Israel’s attack on Egypt as a mechanism of disciplining Nasser, the US provided Israel with crucial military intelligence. US surveillance planes were used to guide Israeli troops in locating and destroying Arab airfield and troops, (a success that was publicly explained as a result of superior Israeli bravery,

training and weapons over primitive Arabs using inferior Russian weapons).<sup>24</sup>

Israel’s quick victory produced a number of changes. On the one hand, Israel found expanded popular support for its actions among new constituents in the US. Religious Jews, who had earlier ignored the Zionist project, saw the quick victory and capture of Jerusalem as a message that God favored Israel. A similar religious approach was adopted by Christian evangelicals, such as Billy Graham and the young Jerry Falwell, who took to the airways to argue that the Israeli struggle against the Palestinians was the fulfillment of Biblical prophesy that foretold the Jewish retaking of Jerusalem as part of the trajectory of Christ’s return, the truth of which, they argued, was demonstrated by the very military success of the Israelis.<sup>25</sup>

On the other hand, the 1967 War cemented the military relationship between the US, Israel, and Iran. The United States increased its sales of sophisticated weapons to Israel; Iran became Israel’s principle source of oil; and Israel became the principle agent for the constructing military and oil facilities in Iran. In addition, both Israel and Iran cooperated with the United States in supporting seemingly pro-US nationalisms aimed at destabilizing the influence of the USSR and other rivals of the US. This included arming and fueling the Kurds in their rebellions in Iraq, sponsoring Islamic fundamentalist incursions into Afghanistan and the Central Asian republics of the Soviet Union, and supporting pro-US authoritarian regimes in Africa and Latin America.

The fall of the Shah in 1979 further cemented the US relationship with Israel, and presidents Carter and Reagan each declared Israel to be a “strategic asset” of the United States whose military superiority would be maintained. The amount of military and economic aid increased, most of it in the form of grants not loans, and Israeli weapons purchases became a key source of profits for the US defense industry. As the US searched for a new client to replace the Shah, it increased its funding of Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and the Egypt. At the same time, Israel continued to develop a relationship with the Islamic Republic of Iran, providing it military funding in the war with Iraq and serving as a conduit for US aid to Iran and other fundamentalist Islamic groups that worked in the anti-communist crusades of the 1980s.<sup>26</sup>

### **Inventing Islamic fundamentalism:**

The United States first began funding Islamic fundamentalist in the 1950s. U.S. capitalists and policy makers viewed religion as an antidote to communism. In the United States, the ruling class subsidized evangelicals like Billy Graham and sent mass subscriptions of his publications to factories with radical trade unions. In post-war Europe, the CIA fed funds into conservative Christian parties in Germany, France, and Italy. In the

Middle East, Kermit Roosevelt, a key CIA operative, hoped to find “a Moslem Billy Graham” to mobilize religious fervor against Communism in that region.

The idea that Islam was an antidote to radicalism was nurtured by leading scholars such as HAR Gibbs (of Oxford and Harvard) and Bernard Lewis (of Oxford and Princeton), whose books still line the shelves of US bookstores. To these scholars, Islam was a monolithic religion that could be manipulated to shape the politics of the Middle East: neither sectarian divisions such as those between Sunni and Shia that date back to the 7th century nor the rival empires that had variously ruled the region nor social class mattered, since in this view religious faith was “the essential defining characteristic of Muslims.” The rebellions that rocked the region were not the result of exploitation, but rather the outgrowth of the West’s disruption of the natural, religious nature of Arab people. Pious Muslims would reject Communism, and thus the promotion of Islam would protect US interests. In the mid-50s, the Eisenhower administration sponsored a conference that brought together these scholars and staffers from the National Security Council, where Bernard Lewis suggested that Islamic groups could be used as a “Fifth Column” within the Soviet Union. The NSC set up a working committee on Islamic organizations and began to compile lists of groups to target for propaganda.<sup>27</sup>

Efforts to find this “Moslem Billy Graham” focused initially on ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia. Ibn Saud, who had come to power in the 1920s with the aid of the Ikhwan, a militarized Wahhabi Muslim group, had taken control of the Muslim holy cities of Mecca and Medina and assumed the title of protector of Islam. As radicalism emerged within the Saudi working class and Arab nationalism among middle class forces in Egypt and Syria, the US emphasized ibn Saud’s role as a religious leader, funded the building of railroads to transport pilgrims to the Islamic holy cities of Medina and Mecca, and supported the growth of the Wahhabi version of Islam (which, of course, is the version of Islam espoused by Osama bin Laden in his challenge to the power of the Saudi ruling family and their ties to the US). Repeatedly, ibn Saud had the Wahhabi religious leaders who supported his regimen denounce strikes, domestic communists, and efforts of rival regimes to set up trade and foreign aid deals with the USSR.

The US flirtation with Islam intensified in the 1960s. The United States began to funnel covert (though modest) aid to the Muslim Brotherhoods of Egypt, who later became key recruiters of Muslim fighters in Afghanistan, and Saudi Arabia’s King Faysal began to experiment with a pan-Islamic ideology meant to block the spread of the radical pan-Arab and Marxist movements among the workers in Saudi oil fields. Claiming that “principles of Islamic solidarity superceded foreign ideologies,” the Saudi regime (in alliance with the Shah of Iran) set up

the World Muslim League in 1962 and established new Islamic universities, which became havens for Muslim fundamentalists clerics expelled from Egypt, Iraq, and Syria. With the blessing and aid of the CIA, Saudi Arabia provided the clerics with teaching positions and with television and radio transmitters to broadcast their message throughout the region.<sup>28</sup>

In the 1970s, the US began to act on Bernard Lewis’s idea that Islam could be used to bring down its Soviet rival. The initial focus was on Afghanistan, where a CIA front group called the Asia Foundation had been promoting Islamist cells since the 1950s. In 1973 when Prince Muhammad Daoud took power in alliance with pro-communist groups, the CIA increased its aid to the Islamists. Then in March 1978, when pro-Soviet reformers deposed Daoud and implemented land reform, the US dispatched increasing numbers of anti-communist Islamic partisans into Afghanistan. These men had been recruited through the Muslim brotherhoods with the aid of the “Safari Club,” a group of pro-US monarchs and intelligence operatives that included the Shah of Iran, King Hassan II of Morocco, Kamal Adnan, head of intelligence in Saudi Arabia, and Anwar Sadat of Egypt.<sup>29</sup>

The National Security Council, under Zbigniew Brzezinski, wanted to provoke a Soviet invasion and a Soviet “Vietnam”<sup>30</sup> that might bring down what was by then its most powerful imperialist rival. Six months later when the USSR sent in its army, the US further intensified its funding of the mujahidin. Egypt became a center for training fighters in US special-forces techniques, including the use of car bombs and other remote control devices; British, Saudi, and Israeli intelligence forces provided weapons that the US could not directly supply; and funds flowed in from the United States and Saudi Arabia, often delivered through non-governmental agents such as Osama bin Laden. By 1984, US was encouraging border raids into the Soviet Union, which the CIA hoped would provoke a Muslim uprising there. When Soviet Union withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989 and Afghanistan descended into civil war, US funding continued. The Taliban (targeted in the current US occupation of Afghanistan) became special favorites because they promised to bring the order and an oil pipeline that US investors wanted.<sup>31</sup>

As the US was sponsoring rebellion in Afghanistan, its erstwhile ally the Shah of Iran was forced into exile. Although the hostage crisis that followed changed the form of US relations with Iran, the success of the Islamists there initially encouraged US sponsorship of Islamic fundamentalism. The 1978-79 Iranian revolution against the Shah had actually begun with strikes of oil, steel, and transportation workers, who espoused the kind of class-based radicalism the US ruling class most feared. It became an Islamic Revolution only after the return of the exiled Ayatollah Khomeini. In fact, the CIA and British Intelligence had worked with Iran’s Islamic

groups in the 1950s; and the Shah had continued to work with them throughout his reign, giving religious leaders easy access to the court.<sup>32</sup> In exile, Khomeini received monetary support from French intelligence and the CIA.<sup>33</sup> Certainly, the Khomeini regime cooperated with the US effort against the USSR, building a training camp for Afghan rebels and distributing Korans printed by the CIA into Central Asia. Likewise Israel continued its special relationship with Iran, serving as the conduit for US weapons to Iran during the Iraq-Iran War, a portion of which were funneled to the rebels in Afghanistan.<sup>34</sup> Beginning in 1986, Israel would assist in the formation of its own Islamist Palestinian group, Hamas, which it hoped to use against the growing resistance to its occupation of Palestine.

In the 1990s the United States took a new step, using Islam to invent a new nationalism and a new country, Bosnia, as it fought with its European allies over control of Yugoslavia. Here, after the Germans encouraged the secession of Croatia from Yugoslavia, the US and international agencies associated with it began to foster Islamic and Albanian separatist movements in the Bosnian region. The US effort was part of a move to create an arc of pro-US Muslim countries from Central Asia, through the Caspian region and into Europe, a region that included both oil reserves and crucial transportation routes. In 1992, as Madeleine Albright denounced those favoring a united Yugoslavia as “extreme” nationalists interfering with the growth of “democracy,” the US, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait recruited fighters from the Afghan war to assist Bosnia’s “independence” movement, and the US-funded National Endowment for Democracy and the Soros Foundation subsidized a separatist press in Kosovo.<sup>35</sup>

Just as had happened after World War I and World War II, rival imperialists continue to invent new countries and manufacture new nationalisms to serve imperialist interests. Yet the world has changed. The rise of the British Empire negated the Ottoman Empire, and US imperialism negated the power of the British Empire. Now the US is the empire on the defensive, challenged by a multitude of rivals, from the Europeans to Russia to the most serious threat China. Since 1989, the policy of buying allegiance and sponsoring rival nationalism has increasingly been a tool of its rivals. Though the US had cemented its ties with Egypt and Israel, other countries, including Iraq, Iran, and even Saudi Arabia seemed to be slipping away. Saddam Hussein had begun to offer oil contracts to French, Russian and Chinese companies, and former agents of the United States such as Osama bin Laden were challenging the reign of the pro-US Saudi monarchs. In order to maintain its hegemony over oil, a cornerstone of its imperialist power, the United States found it could not maintain the façade of being the “benevolent” power. No longer able to command through money and manipulation, it had to send in troops and

begin to impose fascism at home. In Yugoslavia (under the guise of UN peacekeeping), the US military occupies the region it “liberated,” and Camp Bonsteel, the US’s Halliburton-constructed military base, sits astride the crucial transport corridor of the region.<sup>36</sup> And in Afghanistan and Iraq, the US sent in occupying armies. Now US politicians whine about US military failures in these countries, while pledging to maintain the occupying force and preparing to invade more countries in the region. Imperialism is the breeding ground of war.

In the face of the war in Iraq and the increasing threat of world war, workers, students, and soldiers in the Middle East, in Asia, in Europe and in the Americas must consider how to respond. The most typical options we are offered are nationalistic ones. Some people lament the passing of those they claim were honest (genuine) nationalists—Nasser of Egypt or Qasim of Iraq—as opposed to those openly tied to the imperialist powers such as the monarchs of Jordan, Saudi Arabia, or Iran. If only there was another honest nationalist, they cry, he would stand up against US imperialism. Some look to France or other European countries to propose a solution (maybe the old imperialist would be better than the current one). In the US, the Democrats purport to be honest patriots as opposed to the corrupt Bush who failed in properly planning the current war. But all nationalist politicians have worked with the imperialists (who come in both liberal and conservative costumes) time and time again when they need to smash working class movements. Nationalism cannot end imperialism. Nationalism is an ideology of capitalism, and necessarily an ideology of imperialism. The only solution for workers is to organize on the basis of proletarian unity. The divisions between Jews and Arabs, between Sunni and Shia, between Christian, Druze and Muslim, between Iraqi and Irani, between Arab and American—all the nationalist divisions that are created and recreated again and again—are dead ends for worker.

As the US wages war in Iraq, working people need to stand up and turn the war on its head. We must turn this inter-imperialist war about who will exploit the Middle East into an anti-capitalist war, a revolution to build communism. The working class of the world can no longer afford to be fooled by liberal solutions, by proposals to ally with the lesser of two evils, by the incorrect theory of national liberation as a stage toward communism. This is the road to yet one more empire, a road on which too many working-class lives have already been lost over more than a century of warfare. We must remember what the capitalists know and fear: Imperialist war itself creates the possibility of revolution. We must turn this war into its opposite, a revolution to destroy capitalism, to build a society with no borders and no wages, a society in which the unity of our lives as workers, as the creators of life and goods, is the foundation of life without exploitation.

<sup>1</sup> Christina Asquith, "Righting Iraq's Universities," *New York Times*, 3 August 2003, sec. 4A (Education Life), 18-19, 34-35. At least one member of the US team supervising this reform of Iraqi history and education went to Iraq from an appointment on the team creating the test measuring compliance with California's state history standards.

<sup>2</sup> For a description of the British treatment of these rebellions, including its use of poison gas, see Ben Macintyre, "Invasion, Bombs, Gas-We've Been Here Before," *The Times (London)*, 15 February 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Eric Davis, *Memories of State: Politics, History, and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005) pp. 75-76.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Massad, *Colonial Effects: The Making of National Identity in Jordan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

<sup>5</sup> On this see Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two Peoples* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>6</sup> Nathan J. Citino, *From Arab Nationalism to OPEC: Eisenhower, King Sa'ud, and the Making of U.S.-Saudi Relations* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 121. Key policy makers on Middle Eastern affairs in the 1940s and 1950s included Dulles and his brother Allen Dulles who headed the State Department's Division of Near Eastern Affairs and then became the head of the CIA; Teddy Roosevelt's grandsons Kermit (Kim) Roosevelt, who was a key CIA operative in the Middle East and Archie Roosevelt who worked with the CIA and then became the head of Chase National Bank; Robert Anderson, Treasury Secretary for Eisenhower, and Eisenhower himself.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas A. Bryson, *Seeds of Mideast Crisis: The United States Diplomatic Role in the Middle East During World War II* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1981).

<sup>8</sup> On these republics see Cosroe Chaqueri, *The Soviet Socialist Republic of Iran, 1920-21* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995); Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982); and John Foran, ed., *A Century of Revolution: Social Movements in Iran* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

<sup>9</sup> In the case of Palestine/Israel both communist and socialist supporters of the Soviet Union endorsed Zionism over the rule of various British clients. Communists and Socialists served in the various Israeli armies involved in the creation of Israel, and the Soviet Union was the first nation to recognize Israel. These parties at the time included both Jewish and Arab members. Some hoped for a new nation that granted equal rights to both Arab and Jewish residents of Palestine. Others, especially after the division of the region by the United Nations, hoped for the creation of two independent states, one Israeli and

the other Palestinian. However, the reactionary reality of nationalism split and destroyed these parties as viable internationalist movements. In some cases the parties split into Arab and Jewish organizations, later to reform, and split again. The same thing happened to the communist parties of neighboring nations like Egypt and Syria. For a detailed account of these events see Joel Beinin, *Was the Red Flag Flying There? Marxist Politics and the Arab-Israeli Conflict in Egypt and Israel, 1948-1965* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990).

<sup>10</sup> It is relevant to note here that this formulation did not focus on religion. Many of these leading nationalists, including Michel Aflaq, were Christians, and had been first educated in the French and American missionary schools of Lebanon and Syria. Islam was not part of Arab nationalism in this period, and was seen as a force hostile to the kind of nationalism that as-Husri and Aflaq promoted since not all Arabs were Muslims and not all Muslims were Arab. Bassam Tibi, *Arab Nationalism: A Critical Inquiry 2d ed.*, trans. by Marion Farouk Sluglett and Peter Sluglett (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990).

<sup>11</sup> Mark Gasiorowski, "U.S. Foreign Policy toward Iran during the Mussadig Era," in David Lesch, ed., *The Middle East and The United States* (2d ed) Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999), 51-77; Ervand Abrahamian, "The 1953 Coup in Iran," *Science & Society* 65 (2001): 182-215.

<sup>12</sup> Joel Beinin and Zchary Lockman, *Workers on the Nile: Nationalism, Islam, and the Egyptian Working Class, 1882-1954* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 422-24; Selma Botman, *The rise of Egyptian Communism, 1939-1970* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1988), 119-31.

<sup>13</sup> Joel Gordon, *Nasser's Blessed Movement: Egypt's Free Officers and the July Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 166-68.

<sup>14</sup> The Baghdad Pact is often treated by writers on the Middle East as a creation of the United States as acting under cover and through the British. This view is based on assumptions more than evidence and reflects the notion that the West was united against the rest of the world. More recent scholarship indicates that the British acted independently after being dissatisfied with the progress in its negotiations with the United States on Middle East defense. In the earliest discussions within the United States, the military proposed joining the Baghdad Pact. John Foster Dulles and others long associated with the Council on Foreign Relations and long-term US strategies for the Middle East opposed joining the alliance, opting instead to recruit friendly nations into an independent alliance with the US. See Citino, 119-120.

<sup>15</sup> Citino, *From Arab Nationalism to OPEC*, 76-84; James Jankowski, *Nasser's Egypt, Arab Nationalism, and the United Arab Republic* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 69-75.

<sup>16</sup> Said K. Aburish, *Brutal Friendship: the West and the Arab Elite* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 114, 123-28.

<sup>17</sup> James Jankowski, *Nasser's Egypt, Arab Nationalism, and the United Arab Republic* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Pub, 2002), 93, 98, 117-118.

<sup>18</sup> Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 2d ed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 145.

<sup>19</sup> An international agreement negotiated in the late 1920s divided the rights to Iraq's oil. Under this agreement, 23.75% belonged to Royal Dutch/Shell; 23.75% to Anglo Persian (now BP); 23.75% a consortium of French companies; 23.75% to a consortium of American companies; and 5% to Calouste Gulbankian, an Armenian entrepreneur who had negotiated some of the first concessions from the then Ottoman empire for the original European interests. In 1946, Exxon, which was the leading American company in IPC, received only a 9,300 barrels of oil a day from Iraq. See Yergin, *The Prize*, pp.

<sup>20</sup> Qasim even appointed a member of the ICP, Dr. Naziha al-Dulaimi, to his cabinet; she was not only the first communist, but the first woman to serve in an Iraqi cabinet. Tripp, pp. 153-61. On the class nature of Iraq, see Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).

<sup>21</sup> Tripp; Aburish, 141; NYT, "A Tyrant 40 Years in the Making, 3/14/2003.

<sup>22</sup> For an account of this from a ruling-class perspective, see Warren Bass, *Support Any Friend: Kennedy's Middle East and the Making of the US-Israel Alliance* (A CFR Book) (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>23</sup> Jonathan Nitzan and Shimshon Bichler, *The Global Political Economy of Israel* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 241. At the same time, the European Zionists also discriminated against the Arabic-speaking Jews of the Middle East itself. On this see, Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*.

<sup>24</sup> Nitzan and Bichler, *Global Political Economy*, pp. 243-44; John P. Milietta, *American Alliance Policy in the Middle East, 1945-1992* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2002), 134-48.

<sup>25</sup> Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 165-72. This position would be most popularly presented in the book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, which was made into a film narrated by Orson Welles in 1977. In 1979, Israel gave Jerry Falwell a medal of honor.

<sup>26</sup> Miglietta, *American Alliance Policy*, 143-47; Lance Selfa, "Israel: The U.S. Watchdog," *International Socialist Review*; Stephen Zunes, "The Strategic Functions of U.S. Aid to Israel" at [www.mideastfacts.com/zunes.html](http://www.mideastfacts.com/zunes.html).

<sup>27</sup> Citino, *From Arab Nationalism to OPEC*, 95-96.

<sup>28</sup> Mordechai Abir, *Saudi Arabia: Government, Society and the Gulf crisis* (London: Routledge, 1993), 41-43; Nayef H. Samat, "Middle Powers and American Foreign Relations: Lessons from Irano-U.S. Relations, 1962-77," *Policy Studies Journal* 28 (2000); John Cooley, *Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America and International Terrorism* (London: Pluto Press, 1999).

<sup>29</sup> Robert Drefuss, *Devil's Game: How the United States Helped Unleash Fundamentalist Islam* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2005), 257-61; Cooley, *Unholy Wars*, ix.

<sup>30</sup> Selig Harrison, "The Shah not the Kremlin Touched off Afghan Coup," *Washington Post*, 13 May 1979. For more on Brzezinski and the other architects of this strategy, see, Drefuss, *Devil's Game*.

<sup>31</sup> Timothy Mitchell, "McJihad: Islam in the U.S. World Order," *Social Text* 20.4 (2002), 1-18; Cooley, 83.

<sup>32</sup> Abrahamian, "The 1953 Coup," 198-203; Abrahamian, Iran, 421-24; Gasiorowski, 72-74.

<sup>33</sup> Hafizulla Emadi, *Politics of the Dispossessed: Superpowers and Developments in the Middle East* (Westport, CN: Praeger, 2001), 66-67; Ron Jacobs, "A Matter of Perspective: The United States and Iran," *Counterpunch*, 18 February 2002.

<sup>34</sup> Cooley, *Unholy Wars*, 83-84.

<sup>35</sup> Diana Johnstone, *Fool's Crusade: Yugoslavia, NATO and Western Delusions* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2002).

<sup>36</sup> Johnstone, 233.



## A Class Analysis of the Israel-Palestine Conflict

***“The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.”***

This is a brilliant insight, a wonderful analytic tool – yet it is seldom used in analyses of what is commonly referred to as the Israel-Palestine conflict. This conflict is continually discussed within a nationalist framework that hides the class forces behind Israeli and Palestinian nationalism. Ironically, there is plenty of historical evidence regarding the class basis of these competing nationalisms. Examination of the origins and development of this nationalistic conflict indicates that it is based in the upper classes, has anti-working class politics, and relies on imperialism for support.

Palestine before World War I was part of the Ottoman Empire. Its population consisted mainly of Arabs but also included Jews, Ottoman officials and soldiers, European and American merchants, entrepreneurs, missionaries and educators. There was at the time no Israeli-Palestinian conflict because there were no groups with those national identities; before the 1880s there was no Zionist-Palestinian conflict for the same reason. The ethnic groups that did exist, Arabs and Jews, were not in conflict.

The late 1800s and early 1900s, however, saw the emergence of nationalist movements among European Jews and Palestinian Arabs. These movements embraced a central concept of the dominant ideology in the capitalist societies of Western Europe: this is the idea that States are (or should be) composed of ethnic (or “national”) groups each of which has an (alleged) historic claim to some piece of land on the planet. Because this idea linked ethnicity to territory, those people who did not belong to the ethnic or national group claiming a particular piece of land did not really belong there; they belonged in “their own” territory. In other words, the logic of nationalism is one of ethnic exclusion or, at the very least, ethnic domination. Another salient feature of nationalist ideology is that it downplays the central characteristic of modern capitalist societies: the division of the economy into two major groups - a class of families controlling economic production (through ownership of investment capital, factories, farms, resources) and a class of families toiling under the direction of the owners for low wages. Many in this latter class, the working class, were and are aware of the basic fact that they do almost all of the productive work and receive very little in return in the form of wages, benefits and basic economic security. They

are aware that production is for profit rather than human need and that they have no control over the wealth they create through their work. They labor and they lose.

Among ethnic groups that had been dominated by others, nationalism was often proposed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a solution to the problem of subjugation. Those who embraced this thinking created movements of “national liberation”. It was not unusual for people to embrace this position in light of the cultural dominance of nationalism as a modern ideology. Thus, some Jews experiencing anti-Semitism in Europe and some Palestinians experiencing colonial domination under British rule opted for movements of national liberation. Although these movements adopted the fiery language and slogans of “national liberation”, they were not really revolutionary for they embraced the class division and inequality of modern capitalism, enforced ethnic and national separatism among workers, and were generally led and funded by bourgeois elements. When successful in achieving “national liberation”, these movements simply changed the ethnic identity of the class controlling economic production and exploiting workers and peasants.

Much of what passes for the Israel-Palestine conflict has its roots in economic changes affecting the regions of the former Ottoman Empire. The integration of the area into the capitalist world market transformed the forces and relations of production altering the lives of millions as

- fellahin (peasants) were driven into debt, dispossessed of their lands, and transformed into proletarians,
- new ruling classes emerged as landowners, merchants, and bankers in new nations constructed by European imperialists,
- local economies now suffered through the “boom and bust” cycles of capitalism’s alternating periods of prosperity and depression,
- lands were plunged into wars arising out of inter-imperialist rivalries or the competitions of local nationalist rulers for greater power.

To properly understand the Israel-Palestine conflict it is necessary to comprehend the effects of the transition to a modern capitalist economy, the rise of nationalist movements as political forces, and the role of outside imperialist powers, each of which has had their own agenda. This essay opens with a look at the post-WWI politics of three forces: Jewish nationalism, Palestinian

nationalism, and British imperialism, as well as the unification of these forces against the peasant rebellion of the late 1930s. Following this, it considers a forgotten history of Arab-Jewish cooperation during the period of the British Mandate. The essay concludes with comments about nationalism and class struggle in today's conflict.

## PART ONE: JEWISH AND PALESTINIAN NATIONALISMS

### Nationalism in Palestine:

#### The Zionists during the British Mandate

Immigration to Palestine for the purpose of creating a Jewish home came in periodic waves and involved different conceptions of what that home should be. The first wave or *aliya* (a Hebrew word meaning "ascent," thus implying betterment through immigration to Palestine) is dated from 1882 to 1903; the second *aliya* was from 1904 to 1914. Politically, the immigrants were divided into different factions depending on the goals and methods regarding national liberation: "cultural Zionists" and "Labor Zionists," who were primarily concerned with establishing Jewish-controlled economic and political institutions that would eventually facilitate the creation of a Jewish state.

It was the Labor Zionism of the second *aliya* that played a major role in establishing the parameters of the subsequent conflict between Arabs and Jews. Labor Zionism was not only a national liberation movement but, because the national people were not to be liberated where they resided (i.e. Russia, Eastern Europe), it became a colonial movement of settlers. Because it saw anti-Semitism as something that could not be eradicated, the only solution to the problem of anti-Jewish racism was the establishment of a state where Jews would hold power within defensible borders. This line of reasoning led to a colonial project in Palestine.

The Zionist movement was not a revolutionary movement against capitalism although initially the movement was filled with a variety of groups espousing ideas of utopian socialism and attempting, in some cases, to combine Marxist ideas with the nationalist project. The leadership and policies, however, of the Zionist movement were thoroughly bourgeois: *By developing a colonial settler economy in which land and jobs would be for Jews only, by creating ethnically-based political institutions, and by placing itself under the patronage and protection of an imperialist power (Great Britain), the Zionist movement placed itself squarely within capitalist theory and practice.*

In the 1930s the Zionists clearly demonstrated their counterrevolutionary politics in three dramatic ways: (1)

they assisted British imperialism in its repression of the revolt of landless Arab peasants, (2) they effectively broke the Jewish-instigated economic boycott of Nazi Germany, and (3) they began to advocate the transfer of the Arab population out of Palestine.

Counter-insurgency against anti-imperialist rebels: During the Arab Revolt of 1936-39 against British imperialism – a revolt arising mainly from the immiseration of Palestinian peasants and workers – the Zionist leadership, through the Histadrut, worked with the British to sabotage the Arabs' General Strike of 1936; it then aided the British military in its subsequent brutal counterinsurgency operations by supplying the Special Night Squads.

A deal with the Nazis: In April 1933, less than four months after Hitler assumed power, Zionists began exploring methods of securing Jewish immigrants and capital from Germany. At the time Germany's exports were down ten percent because of an international economic boycott organized by Rabbi Stephen Wise (president of the American Jewish Congress) and Jewish War Veterans. In August 1933 a further meeting of Zionists with a German official in the Economic Ministry in Berlin led to the now infamous Transfer Agreement issued as Decree 54/33 by the Reich Economics Ministry on August 10, 1933: "The Transfer Agreement permitted Jews to leave Germany and take some of their assets in the form of new German goods, which the Zionist movement would then sell in Palestine and eventually throughout much of the world. The German goods were purchased with frozen Jewish assets held in Germany... Transfer helped Germany defeat the boycott, create jobs at home, and convert Jewish assets into Reich economic recovery. It helped the Zionists overcome a major obstacle to continued Jewish immigration and expansion in Palestine" (Black, 1999). In a further irony of history, the SS officer who was responsible for assisting the emigration of German Jews was Adolf Eichmann who "dealt cordially and cooperatively with Zionist representatives from Palestine" (Sachar, 2006: 197).

Preference for ethnic cleansing: Another indication of the thoroughly anti-revolutionary character of the Zionist movement was its growing embrace of the nationalist idea of the ethnic "transfer" of all or most of the Arab population from the future Jewish homeland - preferably voluntary but forced if need be. This has been discussed thoroughly by Israeli (and pro-Zionist) historian, Benny Morris, in his book, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (2004: 39-64). As Morris points out, the idea that different ethnic or "national" groups should live apart was part and parcel of nationalist ideology in the twentieth century. Although talk of the desirability of the transfer of Arabs remained private among Zionist leaders (so as not to alarm the British and the Palestinians) until the outbreak of the Arab revolt in 1936, Morris observes that "To be sure, to some degree the praxis of Zionism,

from the first, had been characterized by a succession of microcosmic transfers; the purchase of land and the establishment of almost every settlement (*moshava*, literally colony) had been accompanied by the (legal and usually compensated) displacement or transfer of an original beduin or settled agricultural community.” (Morris, 2004: 42)

When Britain’s Peel Commission in 1937 recommended a partition of Palestine, it gave the notion of transfer “an international moral imprimatur” and set off a debate among the Zionist leadership. But the thinking of the mainstream was expressed by David Ben-Gurion’s argument: “We must look carefully at the question of whether transfer is possible, necessary, moral and useful. We do not want to dispossess... In many parts of the country new settlement will not be possible without transferring the Arab peasantry... It is important that this plan comes from the Commission and not from us... Transfer is what will make possible a comprehensive settlement programme... You must remember, that this system embodies an important humane and Zionist idea, to transfer parts of a people [i.e. Palestine’s Arabs] to their country [i.e. Transjordan and Iraq] and to settle empty lands...” (Morris, 2004:48). This quote from Ben-Gurion illustrates the *logic of nationalism*: nations should be ethnically homogenous (Arabs and Jews should live apart), the Arabs have a homeland (Transjordan and Iraq), transfer will help the Arabs by forcing them into their home where they can “settle empty lands” and it will help the Jews by ridding Palestine of a people whose presence would interfere with the establishment of a Jewish state.

Although Morris does not believe that the extensive talk of transfer among political leaders and other functionaries in the Yishuv constituted pre-planning for a forced expulsion of Arabs in the 1948 war, he does claim that it conditioned the Jewish population to see it as “inevitable and natural” when approximately 700,000 Arabs became refugees in 1948. Another Israeli historian, Ilan Pappé, contests Morris’ claim about actual plans for the forced removal of Arabs in his recent book, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*.

### Nationalism in Palestine: The Arabs

Like Jewish nationalism, Arab and Palestinian nationalisms are modern phenomena scarcely one hundred years old. The very words Arab and Palestinian today have nationalist connotations that they did not have 150 years ago. Consider the word arab: “Before the nineteenth century, the word ‘arab’ did not have the same meaning among Arabic speakers it has today. Instead, the word was commonly used as a term of contempt by town-dwellers when referring to ‘savage’ Bedouin. Only in the nineteenth century did intellectuals begin using the term to refer to their linguistic and cultural community.

Their nationalist descendents then appropriated the term and used it for their own purposes.” (Gelvin, Oxford 2005:202). Similarly, the use of the word ‘Palestinian’ in a nationalist sense did not emerge until 1908 after the Young Turks revolt against Ottoman rulers (Kimmerling and Migdal, 2003: 78).

**Palestinian and Arab nationalism arose from exposure to the ideology of nationalism in Western missionary schools, the advocacy of nationalism by British imperialists to stimulate Arab revolts against the Ottoman Empire, the postwar creation of nation-states by the British and the French, and the confrontation with Zionism.**

The Palestinian national movement was based among the traditional notable families such as the Husseinis, Nashashibis, and Khalidis whose sons learned the ideology of nationalism in the Christian missionary schools operated and staffed by Westerners such as the British, the French, and the Americans. In Jerusalem, for example, these included the Roman Catholic College des Freres established in 1875 and operated by French Jesuits. Arab nationalism was encouraged by British imperialism during WWI. The British promised Arabs (through the Husayn-McMahon correspondence) support for nationhood in return for their military rebellion against Ottoman power; less well known perhaps is the fact that the British army also actively promoted nationalism in the area: “As the British army moved north from Egypt to Damascus, *political officers assigned to the army organized nationalist clubs to enlist the support of local leaders for the Arab Revolt* and, more broadly, the entente campaign against the Ottomans. In the immediate aftermath of the war, these clubs acted as local branches of the Damascus-based Arab Club...” (Gelvin, Cambridge 2005: 97; emphasis mine). The destruction of the empire created a greater opportunity for political initiative on the part of local elites and the educated classes.

The British and the French created new countries from former Ottoman provinces: Iraq, Transjordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine, and occupied them while promising eventual independence. The very creation of these political units set in motion a variety of mechanisms to build Arab nationalism: the cultivation by the British rulers of loyal subjects from the indigenous upper class which would eventually administer these quasi-colonial states on a nationalist basis, the creation of a school system to teach patriotism, support for newspapers and preachers who encouraged nationalist thought and punishment for those who did not, and the establishment of borders with control over entry and exit based on a national passport system.

### Class Politics and Intra-Class Rivalries

The class basis of the Palestinian national leadership was thoroughly elite with no representation from the

urban workers or from the majority of the population, the peasantry or fellahin. The elite consisted of dozens of families based in Palestine's towns: Jerusalem, Hebron, Jaffa, Gaza, Ramle, Nablus, Jenin, Haifa, Acre, Nazareth, Tiberias, and Safad. Like the Jewish nationalists, the Palestinian nationalists were characterized by different ideological outlooks, opportunism, and bourgeois politics. Perhaps the two salient features of Palestinian nationalism were its obvious upper class basis and its internal rivalries. The class position of such families as landholders, bankers, government officials, tax collectors, entrepreneurs and merchants led them to the politics of nationalism as the Ottoman Empire collapsed. (The spread of nationalist ideology to the masses of the Palestinian population - mainly peasants - came later in the 1930s.)

Internal rivalries evolved out of both British policy and the intra-class antagonisms among the elites themselves. The British ruling class saw Palestine as existing primarily for its imperial benefit and applied its traditional divide-and-conquer strategy to the Palestinian leadership class. The British also took advantage of existing intra-class family rivalries. When the British elevated a member of the Husayni family to the leadership of the Supreme Muslim Council, they then turned around and helped a rival family, the Nashashibis, in forming, "as part of a divide and rule policy, an official opposition group, al Mu'arada" (Pappe, 2006: 82).

It was the Husayni family that provided one of the pre-eminent nationalist leaders: Amin al-Husayni. Although this landholding family produced a nationalist, it was the British who provided him with a powerful office from which he could politically organize. He owed much of his initial power to the British who placed him at the head of the Supreme Muslim Council and also made him the *Grand Mufti* of Jerusalem. Husayni's advancement as a nationalist leader from this power base was made possible by British imperialism not simply because the British put him in these offices but also because "*Both the council and the position of grand mufti of Jerusalem were British inventions*" (Gelvin, 2005 Cambridge: 110; emphasis mine). Neither of them had any historical precedent in Palestine or even the religion of Islam (Khalidi, 2006: 55).

As the British saw it, Palestinian Muslims had no leader with whom the British could deal. So they created a "grand mufti" (A mufti is a Muslim 'priest' who renders judgments on the basis of religious knowledge. Palestine had a number of muftis but the British wanted a contact point and so they created a "leader".) The regular British practice of granting various offices to the ayan ("notables") meant that "official" Palestinian national politics would be defined and controlled by the Palestinian upper class. The real political role of the ayan as ostensible representatives of the all Palestinians was to keep the laboring classes in line. "The British in Palestine depended in particular on erstwhile 'radical' Amin al-Husayni to act as such a

mediator. *The Mufti worked hard to prevent outbursts and to pacify the Muslim community, channeling nationalist energies... into legal activities*" (Swedenburg in Pappe, 1999: 142; emphasis mine). The mufti was so valuable to the British that they covertly financed his activities when the need arose. By using the Mufti, the British were able to channel anti-imperialist politics into a conservative direction that was explicitly anti-communist and which blended nationalism with religion. *Today's blend of religion, nationalism, and anti-communism by Hamas has its precedent in the British empowerment of the Mufti.*

The policies pursued by the Palestinian leadership reflected their elite status and bourgeois position. *Whatever criticisms the Palestinian nationalists made of the Zionist project and/or the British Mandate, at no time did they criticize the private property economy and its existing class structure.*

### Imperialism in Palestine: Great Britain

After WWI the British and French imperialists carved up the eastern part of the former Ottoman Empire creating nation states where none had previously existed. The French created modern Syria and Lebanon while the British established Iraq, Transjordan and Palestine. This colonialism was hidden behind the League of Nations mandate system. The British wanted control of Palestine for a number of strategic reasons. First, it would serve as a buffer state against any attacks against Egypt's northeastern flank that might threaten loss of the Suez Canal which was a main shipping artery for British capitalism. Second, it would allow the British a secure territory to build an oil pipeline from Iraq across Transjordan and Palestine to Haifa. Third, it would allow Britain to control air routes from the Middle East to India.

Consequently, the genesis of the Balfour Declaration reflected the political exigencies and imperialist ambitions of World War I - it was very much a wartime declaration. Zionists, it was assumed, would also provide a more reliable political base with a loyalty to Western imperialism: "Britain's Palestine expert, Sir Mark Sykes, saw in Zionism a vehicle for extending British influence in the Middle East" (Quigley, 2005: 8). Sir Ronald Storrs, Britain's military governor of Jerusalem, and later of Palestine, wrote that Zionism would create "for England 'a little loyal Jewish Ulster' in a sea of potentially hostile Arabism" (8; see also Storrs, 1939).

Another consideration for the British was that the Balfour Declaration would hopefully encourage nationalism among the Jews of Europe as alternative to Bolshevism (Allain). The British were aware that Jews were active as both leaders and rank and file cadre in the Russian Communist Party, the Bolsheviks, as well as other European communist parties, and that many other East European and Russian Jews were members

of the socialist Bund. The Balfour Declaration was issued November 2, 1917 just days before the November 7 seizure of power by the Bolsheviks in Russia. The declaration was then used as wartime propaganda encouraging German and Austrian Jews to support the British imperialists: "Leaflets were dropped over German and Austrian troops, urging the Jews to look to the Entente powers because they supported Jewish self-determination" (Smith 2004: 73).

The imperialist opportunism of the British ruling class during WWI produced a messy postwar situation. The problem was that the British made three sets of promises that contradicted each other: the Husayn-McMahon correspondence, the Sykes-Picot Agreement, and the Balfour Declaration. The British imperialists, with their Eurocentric colonial mentality, initially hoped that their support of European settlers (i.e. the Zionists) who were superior to the indigenous people in education, technological expertise, and capital would create an economic expansion providing job opportunities for the Palestinians and a subsequent improvement of their living standards. Thus, from the beginning of the British Mandate in Palestine (September 29, 1923) Britain committed itself to three broad pro-Zionist policies regarding immigration, land, and economic development: the expansion of Zionist immigration, facilitation of land acquisition by settlers, and promotion of Zionist economic development through the award of "monopolistic concessions to exploit natural resources and operate public services and utilities in Palestine" (Smith, 1993: 117). Because British rule more tightly integrated the Palestinian economy into the world market, the approximately 70 percent of the indigenous Arab population involved in agriculture as small landholders and sharecroppers found themselves unable to compete with the lower prices. When the worldwide Great Depression hit in 1929 and farm prices crashed, peasant agriculture "was consequently thrown into acute crisis" (Smith, 1993: 15). The onset of this economic crisis in 1929 provided the context for the Wailing Wall riots of the same year.

The ultimate results of the Mandate government's institutionalization of economic inequality between Zionists and Arabs were the creation of a separate Zionist political-economic enclave within Palestine, the immiseration of the *fellahin*, the transformation of a part of the peasantry into proletarians and semi-proletarians, increasing national antagonisms, and a growing hatred for British imperialism. These factors combined to create the "Great Revolt" of 1936-39.

## Conclusions

The evolution of British imperial policy in Palestine resulted in a situation that favored the Zionists and the Palestinian upper class nationalists but exacerbated the exploitation of the Palestinian fellahin transforming

thousands of them into a landless proletariat. It also weakened the working class because of the policy of separatism and a policy of repression against the communists.

The pattern of nationalists collaborating against workers and peasants continued after the establishment of the state of Israel. Fearing the joint Jewish-Arab Israeli Communist Party (Maki), "the [Israeli] state sponsored public figures such as Archbishop George Hakim as anti-communist leaders. Another sponsored anti-communist was Muhammad Nimr al-Hawari, founder before 1948 of the al-Najjada paramilitary brigades... [which] participated in the fighting against the Zionist militias... Admiring his charisma, Israeli intelligence decided to allow his return to Israel in 1950 as an alternative anti-communist leader. The idea was that Hawari would establish a new Arab popular party." (Yoav Di-Capua, "The Intimate History of Collaboration: Arab Citizens and the State of Israel", MERIP Online, May 2007; see also Hillel Cohen, *Army of Shadows: Palestinian Collaboration with Zionism, 1917-1948*).

This review of the historical record from the beginnings of Palestinian and Jewish nationalism up to the outbreak of the Second World War establishes the following points about both Palestinian and Jewish nationalists:

- Their "national liberation" movements were thoroughly against liberation from capitalist exploitation either because of their economic positions as landowners and commercial agents (the Palestinians) or their dependence upon capitalist investment and imperialist patronage and protection (the Zionists).
- They were anti-working class and sought to weaken the working class at every opportunity through ethno-national division.
- They blended religion with nationalism: the Zionists by redefining believers in Judaism as a national group and the Palestinians by organizing nationalism through mosques controlled by the Grand Mufti or through activist preachers such as al-Qassam.
- They collaborated with fascist Germany: the Zionists through the Transfer Agreement and the Palestinians through the Mufti's wartime services to the Nazis.
- They both actively sought the protection and patronage of an outside imperialist power (Great Britain) thus furthering imperial domination of the labor and resources of the local area.
- They were both anti-communist.

## PART TWO: A FORGOTTEN HISTORY: ARAB-JEWISH COOPERATION DURING THE BRITISH MANDATE

When the British replaced the Ottomans as rulers of Palestine in the years 1920 to 1947, both Jewish and Palestinian nationalists intensified their competition with each other to see which movement would be the dominant power in the creation of a future independent state. The intensification of this competition for power, together with other factors such as the increase of indebtedness and land dispossession among the Arab peasants (stemming from the destruction of pre-capitalist agriculture) and the creation of ethnically-based labor markets, led to the violent conflicts between Arabs and Jews for which the period 1920-1947 is well known. Yet, as the basis for the future Israeli-Palestinian conflict evolved through a process of “cyclical escalation” (Shafir, 1996: 199), another and opposite trend developed: the practice of interethnic cooperation, of bi-national solidarity, and even the advocacy of a-national consciousness.

### The Period of the British Mandate (1920-1947)

After World War I, with the establishment of the British Mandate, the Jewish and Palestinian nationalist movements grew into powerful political forces confronting three enemies: each other, British imperialism, and anti-racist interethnic solidarity. This third nationalist enemy sprang “from below” (to use Ilan Pappé’s phrase). It came from workers, farmers, intellectuals, and consumers who resisted the segregationist politics of the nationalists. According to Israeli historian, Ilan Pappé, “The entire history of Mandate Palestine is dotted with instances of cooperation between workers... it was there during the bloodiest years of the intra-communal strife towards the end of the Mandate. At every escalation of violence - 1920, 1929, 1936, or 1948 - I can find a case study of economic or social cooperation that was strongly opposed and destroyed by the national leaderships, especially the Zionist one” (Pappé, 2006: 110, 111).

As an example of this point, Pappé discusses the case of Haifa. The city of Haifa was the center of working class unity and a-national cooperation in 1920. It had Jewish, Christian, and Muslim populations of similar size. Many of the Jews and Arabs were immigrants; there were also thousands of immigrants from Syria and Egypt. Although these workers were in the most prosperous city of Palestine with its factories, oil refineries, and harbor, they labored long hours at underpaid jobs and lived in destitute conditions. As a consequence, “In 1920, the Palestinians, Jews, and Arabs from Syria and Egypt established the first trade union in Palestine in the

yards and workshops of the railway, telegraphic, and postal services” (Pappé, 2006: 111). The Jewish workers who joined the union were severely criticized by the Histadrut (the Zionist labor organization). Its local chief, David Hacohen, stated, “The railway workers forget that the mission of the Hebrew workers who are part of the movement for settling Palestine, is not to be bothered by mutual assistance to Arab workers, but to assist in the fortification of the Zionist project on the land” (Pappé, 2006: 111). After almost ten years (by 1929), the Histadrut managed to get “most of the Jewish workers in the union to put national interest above class solidarity” (Pappé, 2006: 112). The Histadrut created a Jewish-only labor union and coerced the Jewish workers into joining it. The response of the Arabs was to create their own nationalist union in 1930.

### Working Class Opposition to Nationalism and Ethnic Separation

Many Arab workers in the Haifa railway workshops opposed the creation of separate national unions or even national sections within one union and called upon Jewish workers to reject the separatist Histadrut. The appeal of Ilyas Asad, an Arab worker, presented to Jewish co-workers at a meeting of the Railway Workers’ Association council in March 1924 is striking for its class consciousness:

“I am striving to establish ties between the Jewish and Arab workers because I am certain that if we are connected we will help one another, without regard to religion or nationality. *Many Arab workers do not wish to join nationalist organizations because they understand their purpose and do not wish to abet a lie.* They saw on the membership card [of the railway workers’ union] the words Federation of Jewish Workers [i.e., the Histadrut] and they cannot understand what purpose this serves. I ask all the comrades to remove the word Jewish, and I am sure that if they agree there will be a strong bond between us and all the Arabs will join. I would be the first who would not want to join a nationalist labor organization. There are many Arab nationalist organizations, and we do not want to join them, and they will say we have joined a Jewish nationalist organization.” (Ted Swedenburg, “The role of the Palestinian peasantry in the Great Revolt (1936-39)”, in Ilan Pappé, ed., *The Israel/Palestine Question*, 1999: 110; emphasis mine.)

Three years later in July, 1927, at the third congress of the Histadrut which discussed the matter of joint organization among Arab and Jewish laborers, an Arab worker, Ahmad Hamdi, (whose presence was probably sponsored by the left-wing Jewish group, Po’alei Tziyon Smol) made the following point about nationalist separation:

“Such separate organizations are dangerous. Let not [distinctions between] East and West, Zionism, and Arabism, Torah and Qur’an, cause divisions among us. When the Arab workers approach the Jewish workers, their enemies

say to them, "You are Zionists!" And others say, "You are communists!" And so the Arab worker is confused. We must unite and present common demands to the government, which ignores its obligations to the worker and instead sends in the police and puts him in jail." (Zachary Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies*, 1996: 105).

The response of David Ben-Gurion and other Labor Zionists who dominated the Histadrut was to argue that Jewish workers were (or should be) Zionists and that the development of a separate Zionist economy would eventually lead to the rise of Arab living standards. Arab appeals for worker unity were perceived by Labor Zionists as part of a strategy created by outside agitators – the effendis (wealthy Arab landholders) – who sought to destroy the Zionist movement in Palestine. By the late 1920s the Histadrut had committed itself firmly to separate ethnic unions in those workplaces where Jews and Arabs labored together. And, among the various socialist factions present within the Jewish immigration, the commitment to national liberation led them to put nationalist politics ahead of class politics, thus subverting any unity with the Arab workers. The few anti-Zionist Jewish communists who led the demand for working class unity had been expelled from the Histadrut in 1923 and were, by the mid-1920s, politically outmaneuvered by the Labor Zionists and later repressed by the British authorities (Lockman, 1996: 58-147).

Nevertheless, efforts at worker solidarity persisted. In November, 1931, Palestinian and Jewish truck drivers together organized a strike that lasted eight days, "paralyzed the country", and forced the government to lower the taxes on truck drivers. Although the Histadrut endorsed the strike at first, its support declined when the strikers proposed expanding it to include other groups of workers. On the Palestinian side, "The nationalist notables used the local press to condemn Palestinians collaborating with their Jewish comrades... Both political leaderships, realizing the importance of traffic and roads, over the next few years forced drivers from their communities to take a national rather than a professional position. The result was that, in 1936, the truck drivers stood in the forefront of the clashes between the Zionists and Palestinians" (Pappe, 2006: 113).

Palestinian nationalists confronted an Arab population that saw British imperialism as a primary problem and that was able in a number of cases to distinguish between Zionism as a political force and Jews as co-inhabitants of the land. An example of this consciousness occurred during the Arab "general strikes, political demonstrations, and violent exchanges with the police" against British rule in 1931-32. The Arab organizers of these actions made it clear that "the British, not the Jews, should be the primary targets of action - *in some cases, Palestinians even organized contingents of guards to protect Jews and their property during demonstrations. In fact, during this period, while the British were firing at*

*Arab demonstrators... not a single Jew was attacked in urban protests"* (Kimmerling and Migdal, 2003: 106, 107; emphasis mine). It was this more sophisticated political consciousness, interethnic solidarity, and human decency that had to be destroyed by the nationalists.

To intimidate antiracists both Palestinian and Jewish nationalists resorted to murder:

"When persons such as Fawzi al-Husayni or Fakhri al-Nashashibi joined Arab-Jewish organizations advocating a bi-national political structure, they paid with their lives. In 1937, a leader of the Palestinian labour union was assassinated. In 1947, another union leader named Sami Taha was murdered. *Both were killed for subordinating national solidarity to class awareness. Like other workers, they regarded the national cause as a limited venture run by and for the nationalist notables.* The hand of Amin al-Husayni [Mufti of Palestine] was visible in both assassinations" (Pappe, 2006: 113, 114; emphasis mine).

And Jewish nationalists, particularly those of Menachem Begin's Irgun Zvai Leumi and Yitzhak Shamir's Stern Gang, murdered Jews who stood against nationalism or at least their fascist version of it. According to a letter written and signed by several anti-fascist Jews including Hannah Arendt, Albert Einstein, and Sidney Hook, and published in the New York Times on December 4, 1948:

"During the last years of sporadic anti-British violence, *the IZL [the Irgun] and Stern groups inaugurated a reign of terror in the Palestine Jewish community. Teachers were beaten up for speaking against them, adults were shot for not letting their children join them.* By gangster methods, beatings, window-smashing, and wide-spread robberies, the terrorists intimidated the population and exacted a heavy tribute." (Shatz, 2004: 66; emphasis mine).

Although the nationalist leaderships systematically attacked interethnic solidarity, it kept recurring during the era of the British Mandate. Jews and Arabs worked together in the citrus industry and jointly operated the salt plant of Atlit. Working class Palestinians and Jews also carried out labor strikes together in the following industries and occupations: oil and petroleum, cigarette factories, bakeries, trucking, railways, and government offices (i.e. office clerks). Ilan Pappe notes:

"The pattern of [joint] strikes increased after 1936 [i.e. during and after the Arab Revolt!]. *Between 1938 and 1943 there was an average of two joint strikes a year, mainly in the railway system, the municipalities and the British army camps. Action peaked in 1943... One year later, in February 1944, the Histadrut did not even try to intervene in a joint strike in the railway workshops, where the main strikers were Jews, encouraged by a show of solidarity from Palestinian colleagues, who demonstrated, gave food and provided coats for the cold night spent in the plant"* (Pappe, 2006: 114, 115; emphasis mine).

This strike has been described by Israeli historian Deborah Bernstein: When an Arab worker was severely hurt at work on February 2 and no appropriate medical help was available, the workers in the railway workshops

halted work. “A strike committee of three Arab and two Jewish workers was set up. The workers staged a sit-in and refused to leave the work site... all the workers attended a meeting in the large halls of the mechanical workshops. Workers spoke out in Hebrew and Arabic and others translated... They decided that they would not leave the place until their demands were met” (Bernstein, 2000: 199, 200). She then quotes a labor publication of the period which depicts the anti-racism and unity of the workers:

“The Arab workers treated the Jewish workers with fraternity and solidarity. The PAWS [Palestine Arab Workers Society] sent pitot and olives, and these were distributed among all the workers. Many of the Arab workers approached each and every Jewish worker to ask if he had had enough to eat... Jewish and Arab workers sat around the bonfires and warmed themselves together - singing songs and telling tales...” (Bernstein, 2000: 200).

Ephraim Krisher, who was a secretary of the local guild of the Railway, Post and Telegraph Workers’ Organization and also a member of the *Shomer Hatza’ir* (Hashomer Hatzair), wrote in a report about the strike:

“... it was a moving experience for the workers. They feel that they have done a great thing. There was complete unity and joint action between the workers of both nationalities... *The slogan ‘long live Arab-Jewish unity’ was enthusiastically received...*” (Bernstein, 2000: 200, 201; emphasis mine).

In April 1946 a joint strike stopped postal services and grew into a general strike involving 22,000 Arab and Jewish employees of the Mandate government. In May 1947 telegraph service was disrupted by a strike of Palestinian and Jewish workers. In the same year a joint labor walkout by government clerks disrupted official government work for two weeks: “Their success was so overwhelming that the two segregated national unions, the Histadrut and the Arab Union of Workers, were obliged to join in” (Pappe, 2006: 114). The interethnic solidarity of workers in the cities and towns was also reflected in the countryside. “As the Mandate drew to its end, Jewish settlements provided more organized and structured aid to Palestinian villages, unprecedented joint agricultural cooperatives sprang up in the Marg Ibn ‘Amr in the 1940s between kibbutzim and villages, and in the city new joint commercial boards were established” (Pappe, 2006: 115). *A sense of internationalism and class solidarity arose out of the class struggles and inequality faced by both Jewish and Palestinian workers. It was this solidarity, the potential for more revolutionary and communist growth, that the nationalist ruling classes on all sides organized to destroy.*

## Conclusions

This review of several of the highlights of interethnic and inter-religious unity during the Mandate indicates a number of points worthy of reflection:

First, in spite of recurring interethnic clashes, there were workers who *actively* sought solidarity. They did not passively wait to be told what to do; they tried to make their own antiracist history. Second, they sought this unification as *workers*, not as Jews or Arabs or Muslims or Christians; their class consciousness in several cases was quite outstanding. They saw nationalism as politically suicidal for the working class. They understood that interethnic and inter-religious solidarity was necessary for their collective advancement as workers.

Third, it was *rank-and-file* workers who took the lead in advocating an anti-racist position. “...[interethnic] cooperation was desired, initiated, and/or advanced to a far greater extent at the rank-and-file level... than at the level of labor leadership... [For example] The initiative to recruit Arab workers into the organization of railway workers came from the Jewish workers, and not from the full-time functionaries” (Bernstein, 2000: 212, 213). The policies of the Jewish and Arab nationalist labor organizations (i.e. the Histadrut, the Arab Union of Workers) were to create ethnically exclusivist unions. In those sectors where the separatists could not establish effective political control, the rank-and-file workers attempted and several times succeeded in forming interethnic unions.

Fourth, until they were politically marginalized by the Labor Zionists of the Histadrut in the mid-1920s, it was the anti-Zionist Jewish communists who took the lead in advocating Arab-Jewish working class unity. Fifth, the attempt to be both nationalist and anti-capitalist led several leftist Zionist groups and factions to advocate separatism as the best strategy for both Jews and Arabs. Class politics were subordinated to national separatist politics. Sixth, nationalist politics among the Zionists were co-mingled with a colonial mentality of cultural superiority. The idea was that the presence of the Europeans (in this case, Jews) would contribute to the cultural uplifting of the Arabs. This ideology mixed nationalism with a paternalist perspective that saw the European immigrant as having a civilizing effect on the less cultured indigenous people (Lockman, 1996).

Finally, the workers’ antiracist solidarity was constantly attacked by the Palestinian and Zionist nationalists who preferred separation and conflict to unity and peace. *The seeds of today’s Israeli-Palestinian conflict were planted by the nationalist leaderships who sabotaged the repeated efforts at unity. The contemporary conflict does not extend back into “time immemorial”; it has specific roots in the nationalist movements, in the class interests of nationalist leaders, and in the policies of outside imperial powers.*

Cooperative antiracist actions were undercut by the strategies and tactics of the nationalist elites to divide Arabs and Jews. The anti-racism of workers, farmers, consumers, and others was continually assaulted ideologically, politically, physically. The anti-racists



were battered with nationalist arguments. They also suffered beatings and assassinations at the hands of the nationalists. Their attempts to create bi-national or interethnic unions were countered by the nationalists' creation of ethnically separate unions. Even the Palestine Communist Party succumbed to this nationalist influence and divided itself into separate Jewish and Arab sections by 1943. But the biggest blow to solidarity was perhaps the 1948 war because the triumph of nationalist forces resulted in the flight of a large part of the Palestinian population and the creation of a State which then had the power to institutionalize ethnic separation.

### **Part Three: The Contemporary Consequences of "National Liberation"**

The bourgeois basis of Zionist and Palestinian politics was consolidated after World War II to the advantage of the Jewish and Palestinian upper classes. The capitalists have prospered while the working classes – kept separate by nationalist and pro-imperialist politics – have only suffered. Consider first the Palestinians, second the Israelis.

#### **The Palestinians**

When approximately 700,000 Palestinians fled or were expelled during the 1948 war, the peasants and proletariat wound up destitute in refugee camps without land for the peasants or jobs for the wage laborers. The story was different for the commercial and landowning class, which during the Mandate had accumulated considerable wealth through land sales, export of crops, and contractual deals with the British government in Palestine. Much of this wealth was held "in the form of stocks and shares, bank deposits, cash, and financial investments abroad"; indeed, "about 16 percent of the total capital owned in the country [Palestine], was held by the non-Jewish population in the form of assets that could be transferred abroad" (Smith cited Berberoglu, 2004: 49, 50).

Many of the Palestinian bourgeoisie fled to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and reacquired their wealth from formerly blocked accounts in Barclay's Bank and the Ottoman Bank in the early 1950s. About ten million Palestinian pounds "was estimated to have been transferred to Jordan in the form of bank deposits and cash... The magnitude of such a sum can be gauged by the fact that this figure equaled the total amount of money in circulation in the Hashemite Kingdom at the time" (Smith cited in Berberoglu, 2004: 50). With this reacquisition of capital, the Palestinian upper class rebuilt their businesses or invested in new commercial ventures. They became involved in the oil economies

of the Gulf region thus linking themselves to the royal families of various oil producing countries such as Kuwait and Qatar. In Jordan, a group of Palestinian merchant families achieved financial success through loyalty to King Hussein: "This elite, termed the 'king's Palestinians' or the 'Palestinian G7', included... the Masri, Nuqul and Salfiti families and the owners of the Arab Bank, the Shouman family" (Bouillion, 2004: 38). A number of upper class families also prospered through business ventures in Europe and the United States.

The reconstituted Palestinian capitalist class used their money to dominate the newly formed Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) which was initially created in 1964 by Egypt's ruler Gamal al-Nasser in an effort to control the direction of Palestinian diaspora politics (Gelvin, Cambridge 2005: 198, 199). The PLO was an umbrella organization for various political groups; it came to be dominated by El Fatah which had been founded by a member of the old Husayni family, Yasir Arafat, who himself "had been personal secretary to Abd-al-Qadir al-Husayni (one of the members of the Husayni family who was killed fighting the Israelis in April 1948)". The internal organization that decided El-Fatah's policies, the Gehaza, was composed of Husaynis or men connected to Husaynis through marriage (Divine in Migdal, 1980: 228). Fatah also relied on other families from the Palestinian establishment such as the Ghosseins, Kaddoumis, and the Abu So'uds (Aburish, 1997: 167). The donations of the elite allowed them to contain the agenda of the PLO within acceptable nationalist and private enterprise boundaries. "Most important among them were the Palestinian G7 from Jordan and the Shouman-run Arab Bank...The biggest conduit for private aid was the Geneva-based Welfare Association, sponsored by more than 100 of the richest Diaspora Palestinian businessmen" (Bouillion, 2004: 48).

After the signing of the Oslo Accord in 1993, the PLO elites set up the Palestinian Authority (PA) to establish a quasi-state in the West Bank and Gaza. The main function of the PA - dominated by the old PLO elite (the "Tunisians") who, after decades abroad, returned to the Occupied Territories only in 1994 - was to generate profits for the capitalist class. The capitalists established a few "core conglomerates," which concentrated capital. "The largest of those companies was the Palestine Development and Investment Company (PADICO), set up in 1993 by the Palestinian G7 from Jordan. With a working capital of \$1.5 billion, it engaged in industrial projects, tourism, and developed telecommunications through its subsidiary, the Palestine Telecommunications Co (Paltel), as well as industrial parks in the Palestinian Territories through another daughter, the Palestine Industrial Estates Development Co. (PIEDCO). PADICO also owned the Palestine Securities Exchange..." (Bouillion, 2004: 45, 46). Another conglomerate, the Arab Palestinian Investment Company (APIC) was established

by investors from the Saudi royal family and most of the Palestinian G7 to create industrial and trade enterprises. The PA was used to take market share away from small business by establishing monopolies; no less than thirteen monopolies were created and put under the control of five members of the PA's inner circle. As economic power became concentrated in the hands of Palestinian big business, small and medium size business decreased.

The political economy of contemporary Palestinian secular nationalism has been summarized by Markus Bouillion in his book, *The Peace Business: Money and Power in the Palestine-Israel Conflict*: "The PA increasingly transformed itself into a rentier quasi-state. The political-economic elites used 'the resources of the state to allow for the primitive accumulation of capital' and distributed 'these "privileges" tactically in ways that allow the regime to hold its power.' [...] As in Israel and Jordan, therefore, power in the Palestinian economy came to be centralized in the core elites, which pursued highly personalized interest politics and marginalized most ordinary Palestinians." (50). An example of the disparity between the PA and the Palestinian working class is the comparison of the monthly PA subsidy to Yasir Arafat's wife with the daily income of 50 percent of the Palestinians: she lived in Paris on a monthly (!) subsidy of \$100,000 while half the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, according to the World Bank, lived on less than two dollars a day in 2004 (Gelvin, Cambridge 2005: 239).

It should be noted that the Palestinian nationalists in their quest for power and wealth subordinated themselves to greater powers: Israel, the United States and Europe. For example, "[b]etween 1995 and 2000, 60 percent of total PA revenue came from indirect taxes collected by the Israeli government on goods imported from abroad and destined for the Occupied Territories... if the Israeli government chooses to withhold payment of this money – as it has since December 2000 – then the PA faces a major fiscal crisis... The other major source of PA income is foreign disbursements from the United States, Europe, and Arab governments. In 2001, these funds covered about 75 percent of the PA's salary budget," paying 122,000 public sector workers (Hanieh, 2002: 36). In this way nationalist politics came under the influence of outside imperial powers each seeking to advance their own agendas. The Israelis kept a hold on the land, resources and security of the territories while the U.S. and the Arab governments guaranteed that no radical politics would emerge in an autonomous Palestine.

## Hamas

The transparent corruption of the PA and its failure to counteract effectively Israeli policies of closure and sanctions amid the growing impoverishment of the Palestinian working class has led to the emergence of the

Islamic Resistance Movement (better known as "Hamis") as a competitor for power. Hamis, which many view as a predominantly religious organization, is essentially a nationalist organization with no revolutionary pretensions. Its primary goal is the national liberation of Palestine. Article 12 of its charter makes this clear: "According to the Islamic Resistance Movement, nationalism is part and parcel of its religious creed...Whereas other nationalisms consist of material, human, or territorial considerations, the Islamic Resistance Movement's nationalism carries all of that plus all the more important divine factors..." (Mishal and Sela, 2006: 182). And, according to Article 25 of its charter, Hamis is also anti-communist: "It respects them [other nationalist movements] as long as they do not give their allegiance to the Communist East..." (Mishal and Sela, 2006: 191).

As an anti-revolutionary nationalist movement, Hamis emerged with the economic and political support of the area's ruling classes: Saudi, Kuwaiti, and Israeli. After the oil boom of the 1970s, the upper classes of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait increased their contributions to Islamic charities and social welfare organizations in the Occupied Territories of the West Bank and Gaza, "financing a host of Islamic foundations and mosques from which those foundations distributed largesse. In 1967, there were 77 mosques in Gaza; by the outbreak of the intifada [1987], there were 150. Many of these mosques... acted as incubators for Islamic political organizations". Funding from Persian Gulf states for Hamis increased after 1990 as they transferred their prior support from the PLO because it sided with Iraq in the crisis over Kuwait. The Muslim charities were quite extensive and produced strong linkages with the local populations through organization of "daycare, kindergartens, primary schools, vocational training centers, blood banks, medical clinics, libraries, youth and sporting clubs, and soup kitchens". The spread of the Islamic charities was also implicitly supported by Israel, which not only hoped that such aid would keep the Palestinians pacified but also thought that an emphasis on religious renewal and piety might undercut the political influence of the secular PLO (Gelvin, Cambridge, 2005: 222, 223).

One of the political forces the Israeli rulers sought to counteract in the 1980s was not simply the PLO whose leader, Arafat, increasingly appeared to Palestinians as a "bourgeois fraud" but the new trade union and community activists in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. These activists had organized about 20 percent of the Palestinian workers into unions. Furthermore, they put forth the view that the Palestinians should not waste time trying to establish a separate nation-state. Rather they should attempt to integrate themselves into the prevailing system and, sooner or later, the demographic weight of a larger Arab population would turn Israel into a "de facto binational state" (Sachar, 1996: 962). Fearful of this nonviolent strategy and what it meant

for the ethnocentric character of Israel, the National Unity government under Peres and Shamir “authorized a certain limited enlargement of Moslem fundamentalist activities in Palestine. The fundamentalists’ program and institutions were directed principally by Hamas, an indigenous, Gaza-based movement...With unofficial Israeli approval now, these right-wing religionists were authorized to build new mosques, Islamic schools and colleges, clinics and infirmaries, and thus presumably to function as a more ‘spiritual’ alternative to Fatah and other PLO factions in Palestine” (Sachar, 1996: 963).

This line of thinking on the part of the Israeli authorities had a historical precedent: The Zionists spent “substantial sums” to set up the National Muslim societies in 1922 and 1923 as an alternative to the Arab Executive (Lesch, 1979: 51). Another precedent, of which Israeli rulers were likely aware, was found across the border in Jordan. When the West Bank was under the control of Jordan in the 1950s and 1960s, “Amman’s official policy had been marked by a tacit alliance with the Muslim Brothers against both pan-Arab movements and communism” (Mishal and Sela, 2006: 155). The old British colonial policy of supporting Islamic groups and their networks of mosques and charities to contain political thought and activism within acceptable limits has found its contemporary counterpart in the support of local ruling classes for Hamas.

The Israeli, Saudi, and Kuwaiti ruling classes would not support Hamas if it was a revolutionary organization seeking to overthrow the existing class structure. The Israeli, Saudi, and Kuwaiti ruling classes would not support Hamas if it was trying to organize Arab and Jewish workers into a revolutionary force. If these reactionary powers support it, how “progressive” can it be? A similar point can be made about the nationalist Lebanese political party, Hizbullah. For Hizbullah the achievement of social justice does not involve creating social equality. Private property is accepted thus giving owners of the means of production the power to exploit the labor power of the workers. For Hizbullah, alms-giving, tithing, and appropriate state policy will create a social order that “transcends” class differences. The struggle for social justice does not support class conflict. Justice is determined by individual moral behavior. (Hamzeh, 2004: 42, 43).

## The Israelis

Jewish nationalism was able to create a state apparatus in 1948. With state power, what has the nationalist movement done for the capitalists and workers of Israel? The answer to this question can be divided into three historical periods marking the rise of the capitalists and the decline of the workers.

The first period from 1948 to 1973 saw the channeling of almost all capital transfers to Israel (coming from German reparations and foreign Jewish contributions) “to

favored business groups considered allies in the ‘national project’. These groups eventually developed into the key conglomerates that dominated the Israeli economy in the following years” (Hanieh, 2002: 31). The ranks of the working class grew with tremendous immigration of Arab, African and Asian Jews known collectively as the Mizrahim. These immigrants were relegated to the lower paying jobs as Israeli society developed a pronounced system of inequality

Another source of capital was the property abandoned by the Palestinians in the 1948 war as they fled or were forced out. The results were that, of Israel’s total land area, over 60 percent consisted of abandoned Arab property. The new farmland (about 2 million acres) was four times greater than what the Zionists controlled before the war. The total value of this capital has been estimated at 120 million pounds (expressed in 1947 financial values). In addition, the 150,000-200,000 Palestinians within Israel’s borders – under military rule until 1966 – lost almost 40 percent of their land through confiscation by the state; this amounted to 75,000 acres. Within thirty years (1950s – 1980s) the percentage of Palestinians tilling the soil fell from 70 percent to less than 10 percent. Many of them became workers at menial jobs within Israel.

After Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza in 1967, the economies of these territories became integrated with Israel’s. Palestinians entered the Israeli economy as a cheap labor force boosting profits; they constituted about seven percent of the workforce. A third of those commuting into Israel for work were “illegals” – they were hired by labor contractors who transported them to sub-minimum wage menial jobs in agriculture, construction, industry, and service. The workers had to depart before dawn to reach their jobs and did not return until mid-evening. They began to avoid the commute by not returning home on a daily basis; instead they started sleeping near their job sites - “in basements, huts, abandoned buses, even on open beaches” (Sachar, 1996: 961).

Economic penetration of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip allowed the Israeli capitalists to dominate the Occupied Territories and begin a process of “de-development” stifling Palestinian economic independence while Israeli firms and Palestinian compradors profited. About half of the military orders issued in the Occupied Territories between 1967 and 1994 dealt with economic matters. The overall objective was to make the West Bank and Gaza economies colonies of Israel. The workforce was proletarianized through the destruction of agriculture. As the occupation began, about 44 percent of Palestinian workers labored in farming; thirty years later, because of land expropriation and destruction of farmland for “security reasons,” only about 12 percent of the Palestinian workers were in farming. Those driven out of agriculture either became migrant workers to the Arab oil states or low-wage commuters to Israel.

Another method used for the political economic domination of the territories involved creating a loyal social base of colonists through a settlement movement subsidized by the state. The settlement movement required land acquisition. Although some land (about 50,000 acres) was purchased between 1979 and 1982, most was seized under security measures and through bureaucratic fiat. By late 1981 Israel “acquired not less than 31 percent of the West Bank’s total land area” (Sachar, 1996: 868). This state supported colonization, beginning in the 1970s, dramatically expanded in the 1980s and 1990s when the state, at Sharon’s behest, began to recruit secular nationalists to move to the West Bank. Because there were not enough religious nationalists to colonize the occupied territory, the state began to offer land and loans on financial terms better than within Israel itself. The ruling class financed colonization through state subsidization of real estate and mortgages, tax exemptions for businesses operating in the West Bank, and the construction of development infrastructure such as water and power lines, sewer systems, roads, bridges, and street lights. The subsequent influx of hundreds of thousands of settlers plus the construction of the “security” wall has made the West Bank a part of Israel. That is, much of the West Bank is not “occupied” – it is conquered.

The second period in the development of the Israeli economy was from 1974 to 1985 and saw military production become a central industry. The direction of state military spending to the powerful conglomerates resulted in tremendous profits for these groups. Israel by 1987 exported weapons to 40 countries; at its high point in the 1980s, weapons represented one quarter of exports and use one quarter of the industrial labor force. The Israeli ruling class used this profitable industry to develop political links with other ruling classes in the world including (or especially) those which had not extended diplomatic recognition even in the 1960s, such as Singapore, Taiwan, and South Korea. Israel provided training for Taiwan’s secret service, trained the private armies of Philippine dictator, Ferdinand Marcos, stationed Mossad agents in Jakarta, Indonesia under the anti-communist Suharto regime, sent military advisors to Thailand and Sri Lanka, sold weapons to Zaire’s billionaire kleptocrat, Joseph Mobutu, and to Morocco’s repressive King Hassan II. (Sachar, 1996: 946).

The Israeli ruling class made its most impressive alliance with the white supremacist rulers of South Africa. South African Prime Minister John Vorster made an official state visit to Israel in 1976 “at a time when other nations all but quarantined South Africa for its policy of apartheid”. Following this both nations approved bilateral trade agreements for weapons. South Africa provided steel for Israeli tanks and built its latest submarine. Israel traded jets, patrol boats, missiles, howitzers, communications equipment and radar systems. In September 1979 this cooperation reached its fruition in a joint nuclear bomb

test 1500 miles southeast of the Cape of Good Hope near the Prince Edwards Islands.

As profits fell during a worldwide recession in the mid-1980s and local inflation slowed the economy, a third period began with the Economic Stabilization Plan of 1985. This phase, continuing to the present day, has been characterized by neo-liberal reforms more tightly integrating Israel into the global economy by replacing public capital with corporate capital and cutting the living standards of the workers. American investment rose leading to increasing Americanization and the “McDonaldization” of Israeli society and culture.

Just as Palestinian capital became highly concentrated in the 1990s, so did Israeli capital: “A survey conducted by the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange revealed that six families controlled 40 percent of the value of the shares traded on the stock exchange [...]. These six families control 12 of 17 economic conglomerates in Israel, and their total sales amount to 10 percent of Israel’s annual GDP. As a result of their dominant status, the capital groups of these families made some 90 percent of the net profit of these 17 economic conglomerates. [...] This control enables them to concentrate far-reaching political power in their hands.” (Gozansky in Leon, 2004: 137). Integration into the global economy has resulted not only in the concentration of capital but also the ownership of a huge percentage of Israeli capital by foreigners.: “foreign corporations and entrepreneurs today own 50 percent of the 20 largest companies in Israel that trade on the stock exchange, including banks, and companies involved in high-tech, chemicals and drugs, insurance and investment” (Gozansky in Leon, 2004: 137).

If economic and political power has become concentrated among six Israeli families and a number of foreign investors, what does it mean to say that Israel is a state of all the Jewish people? *Nationalism, whether ethnic, racial, or religious, works to hide and mystify economic inequality and class antagonisms, fooling workers into believing in “their own” national leaders.*

To increase profits Israeli capitalists have employed four strategies. First, they began in 1993 to import foreign workers as cheaper substitutes for the Palestinian laborers they had used since 1967. These new workers, numbering about 300,000 in mid-2003 “were often brought ‘illegally’ (although with full knowledge of the Israeli government). They were brought by labor-hire firms set up in Thailand, the Philippines, and Romania, with employers taking their passports on arrival, employing them in very poor conditions and often withholding pay. They formed an ideal reserve army of labor...” (Hanieh, 2002: 34). They now constitute about 16 percent of the labor force and are tremendously profitable since most earn less than minimum wage and lack benefits like overtime pay and annual vacations. The use of foreign labor has meant a collapse of Palestinian employment within Israel as

the number of Palestinian workers in the years 1992 to 1996 declined from 116,000 to 28,100. Whereas formerly 33 percent of Palestinian workers had jobs in Israel, by 1996 only 6 percent did. And, in the West bank and Gaza, as of 2004 the number of unemployed Palestinians was 226,300. In a labor force of 845,000 this constituted an unemployment rate of 26.8 percent! (Farsakh, 2005: 206, 207).

Second, the Israeli capitalists supported the Oslo Peace Accords in 1993 to get an end to the Arab boycott so that Israeli firms could subcontract low tech industrial production (e.g. textiles) to lower wage industrial zones in Jordan and Egypt; in this they have been successful. Third, after Oslo they partnered with Palestinian capitalists for development projects in the Occupied Territories. The large Israeli firm Koor, for example, formed a partnership with the Palestinian Authority for infrastructure projects. In this light, the Oslo Accords can be viewed as a deal between the Israeli and Palestinian business classes to allow the PLO to consolidate its political grip on the Palestinians under the watchful eye of Israel while both partners in the deal make money. The collapse of Oslo has seemingly negated this strategy. Fourth, the Israeli ruling class assaulted the Israeli workers themselves.

This was done not only by pitting them against low wage immigrant labor but also by shifting the terms of employment and curtailing the organizing power of workers. There has been a growth in hiring workers through manpower agencies and contractors which deny workers the rights accorded to those previously hired through trade unions. The result of this is that, according to Israeli government statistics, 32 percent of all families and 36 percent of all children are, on the basis of their incomes alone, living in poverty. By 2003 almost 11 percent of the workforce was unemployed. *Clearly, Jewish nationalism has enabled a few to profit from the exploitation of "their own" people.*

A final observation is in order about Israeli nationalism. In spite of achieving formal national independence in 1948, Israeli rulers, like the Palestinian nationalists, have always sought the patronage and protection of an imperial power. In the 1950s Britain and France were powers with which to align; the Suez Crisis of 1956, however, revealed American dominance over Britain. The 1967 war convinced the Americans to back Israel as a potent military ally in the Middle East. American financial patronage and military protection has meant reducing Israel to the status of a servant power performing useful errands and services for the U.S. ruling class. These errands and services have included aid to apartheid South Africa, training Central American soldiers in counterinsurgency tactics, and providing weapons to Iran during its war with Iraq in the 1980s. In the 1970s and 1980s the U.S. could not openly intervene against peasant rebellions in Central America because of the anti-imperialist politics of the American workers.

The American anti-war movement – particularly in the military – crippled the U.S. as an openly interventionist power. In this political context, the American ruling class relied on Israel for some important imperialist work. In the 1970s and 1980s Israel provided weapons to the fascist oligarchies of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras and to the CIA mercenary army, the Contras. Israeli officers helped train the armies of the oligarchies of Guatemala and El Salvador in counterinsurgency tactics. Israel also sold weapons to the anticommunist Pinochet dictatorship in Chile that killed between 3,000 and 5,000 people upon seizing power and to the military dictatorship in Argentina that waged a “dirty war” against leftists leaving 25,000 to 30,000 disappeared. The Israeli ruling class also acted as a surrogate for the Americans in other areas by supplying military assistance to counterrevolutionary guerrillas such as UNITA in Angola, MNR in Mozambique, Habre in Chad and the Contras against Nicaragua (Sachar, 1996: 947-949). Are these the actions of an independent nation or of a client regime? Whatever answer you choose, the established fact is that the Israeli ruling class has deliberately linked itself at different times to fascist forces around the world in South Africa, Zaire (Congo), Morocco, Chile, Argentina, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

## Conclusion

After a century of nationalism in Palestine and Israel, the Arab and Jewish working classes have received only misery. Nationalist leaders have pushed them into ethno-national conflicts and have continually exploited them for their labor. Attempts at working class and anti-racist unity have been continuously sabotaged by the local and imperialist ruling classes in the Middle East. A century of nationalism and opportunist alliances with imperialist powers have brought neither peace nor prosperity for Arab and Jewish workers. The capitalists are the ones who profit, while the workers suffer.

Nationalism holds no revolutionary potential for changing our world for the better. It is a tool of capitalism, used to divide and conquer workers from Palestine and Baghdad to New Orleans and Oaxaca. Only an internationalist and multiracial movement of workers, students, and soldiers organized around communist politics can put an end to the genocidal wars, colonial domination, vicious economic inequality, and racist and sexist brutalities that the capitalist ruling classes of every country create and maintain to stay in power.

Despite their fiery rhetoric, all national liberation movements have kept capitalist exploitation, racism, and inequality alive and well after achieving “independence.” The bourgeois leaders of the nationalist movements always put their class interests ahead of the “people,” while misleading workers to see the struggle for justice and freedom in racial or ethnic, rather than class, terms. As

the history of Palestine shows, nationalism is always anti-working class and divides workers through ethnic, racial, and/or religious divisions to weaken their revolutionary potential. Nationalist leaders are opportunist to the core, looking always for the best deal from one or another imperialist ruling class in order to safeguard their local power and profits. The recent dealings between Hugo Chavez's Bolivarian Revolution and Russia, China, and the E.U. is one contemporary example. Iran's growing relationship with Russia and China reveals another. Even groups like Hamas and Hezbollah, seen as possible liberators for Arab and Muslim workers, offer nothing but new nationalist (capitalist) leaders to take over the machinery of oppression, poverty, and misery rooted in the profit and wage-slave system. Revolutionary movements of the past were crippled by nationalism and collaboration with national bourgeois leaders.

It is fashionable today within what is called the political "Left" to discuss the merits of a two-state vs. one-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict. Is either "solution" an advance for the working class? What do the Palestinian and Israeli workers gain from national independence? The Israeli workers have had it for well over fifty years. The result is that they have become such a highly exploited labor force that many choose to leave the country in search of better opportunities abroad. More than half of the world's Jews (the majority of whom are workers, not capitalists) choose not to exercise their national "right of return". This fact in itself says something about the hollow appeal of nationalism. For Palestinian workers to be told that they will see an end to exploitation and the violation of their rights if they have national independence under

either bourgeois forces -Fatah or Hamas – is laughable. For a Leftist or a "progressive" (whatever that means) to claim that national independence is a worthy goal only shows intellectual shallowness and a lack of political courage.

It may be objected that there are no other viable alternatives to nationhood. Immediately, and next year, and the year after, this is certainly true. If, however, anti-capitalists refuse to raise the goal of a world without borders, if they refuse to attack nationalism as another form of racism, if they are unwilling to assert that workers must organize across boundaries, they will have even greater difficulties organizing against exploitation and war. The material basis for this working class organizing exists: the tremendous and accelerating international labor migrations of the last twenty to twenty five years have forced workers to leave one nation for another. How deep can national allegiance be when it is changed like an overcoat? How deep can it be when workers see their national bourgeoisie locate factories abroad?

Many workers around the world today are bicultural and bilingual. With populations of immigrant workers scattered around the planet, there exists the basis for political organizing across borders. What is desperately needed now is a revival of communist politics across all borders – national, ethnic, racial, and religious – that relies on the politicizing and mobilizing of the international working class (rather than aid from the local bosses and/or outside imperialists) to take state power from the capitalist rulers, regardless of their race, nationality, or professed religion. The opportunity is there, why not seize it?



## Red-Led GIs Blast Racist Brass Soldiers Rebel During Vietnam Era

US imperialists, challenged by their imperialist rivals like Russia, China and the European Union, are expanding their deadly wars in the Middle East and possibly elsewhere. Make no mistake about it, the US bosses will fight to the last drop of the blood of the working class to save their threatened empire—if they can get away with it. *This article is directed to all those who aim to end the deadly war in Iraq.* Learning from the Vietnam War and past wars, we need to go after the source of wars for profit: capitalism and imperialism.

Many active duty personnel today hate the Iraq war and want it to end. Pacifism will not end the rulers' wars or the profit system that makes them necessary. Such pacifism leaves us to face the next war and the next. Concentrating on those who refuse to serve in the military will not stop imperialist wars. Anti-racist soldiers fighting back in the military and workers fighting back in the factories can lead to rebellions against the war makers. This can lead to the growth of a mass revolutionary communist movement that ends imperialist war and the capitalist system itself, putting the working class in power through communist revolution.

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“By God, we’ve licked the Vietnam Syndrome once and for all,” bragged George Bush Sr. after Gulf War I—a bit prematurely. The Iraq War debacle has brought it roaring back. The working class’s continued unwillingness to blindly sacrifice for U.S. imperialism still haunts the bosses.

The bosses’ think-tanks offer solutions based on their reading of the Vietnam era. Progressive Labor Party cut its teeth in the Army during this period. We would do well to also study the lessons learned.

Our military experiences showed the value of young revolutionaries going into the bosses’ Armed Forces—particularly at a time when the bosses were trying to deal with a losing war. At Ft. Lewis, WA, our class-based, anti-imperialist struggle against racism helped us grow. The Party earned the respect of some of the most militant fighters and leaders—black, Latin and white. Winning GIs to revolutionary communism turned out to be more similar than different from that struggle “back in the world.”

Our Ft. Lewis political work was not the most notable fightback during the Vietnam era. It certainly wasn’t the only Party-led struggle worth studying. It was, however, the first time we recruited revolutionary communists from

During the Vietnam War, masses of soldiers and sailors rebelled against the racist, imperialist war makers. The fight back of the Vietnamese coupled with the rebellions in the US military spelled the end of the Vietnam War.

Before that, during WWI, Russian soldiers and workers, led by the Soviet Communist Party, rebelled against the war—at the front, in the factories and the cities. These soldiers and workers took power in Russia, ending WWI and showing the workers of the world, for the first time, that the working class could take power and run society in its own interests.

But unfortunately these brave soldiers and workers didn’t completely eliminate capitalism. So today face similar challenges. As soldiers and workers and their allies organize around the principles of anti-racism and international workers’ solidarity, especially in the armed forces, the revolutionary movement will grow in numbers and resolve. The examples in this article will be repeated and improved upon. The imperialists will start their wars, but the working class will finish them. The working class will win!

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among rebelling active duty troops, putting the potential for a revolutionary armed force squarely on the agenda.

### Shelter Half

I arrived at the base in 1972, a little after GI rebellion peaked. Nearly half the Army’s active duty soldiers participated in organized resistance or rebellion the year before. By ‘72, the Armed Forces were well into their transition to a volunteer force. The bosses had no other viable option.

I soon met two GIs who wanted to organize. John, a white guy, knew the Party in Boston. Michael, a black soldier, I had shown a couple of CHALLENGEs, the Party’s revolutionary communist newspaper. We started our political work out of an off-base coffee house called the Shelter Half.

Michael and I became fast friends and later roommates. Ironically, one of the first struggles I remember concerned nothing that was considered “political.” Michael and another friend had been selling pot for some time before I met him. I told Michael I thought drugs promoted escapism and were contradictory to the political fightback we were trying to organize. His pot-selling friend had a

fit! He accused me (and the Party) of trying to control Michael's life. Michael chose politics over drugs. From then on we were inseparable. In fact, it became a big "salt and pepper" joke on base.

The Shelter Half let us use their meeting room and mimeograph machine (remember, this was before the time of Kinko's) to promote our newly formed Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) active-duty chapter. Things were chummy as long as we limited our struggles and literature to the fight for "GI rights." Everybody was on board when we circulated a petition calling for enlisted men's councils, grades E-1 to E-6, to decide Article XV punishments instead of the company captain—the military equivalent of a "jury of your peers." Our new chapter got 150 signatures, while a more established group at Ft. Hood got 800 more. We were dizzy with success.

### Anti-Racist Struggles Show the Way

As 1972 drew to a close, three historic anti-racist struggles would change the course of our VVAW chapter and the Party's military work. The fight to Free Billy Dean Smith intensified, while sailors on the USS *Kitty Hawk* and *Constellation* mutinied.

Billy Dean Smith was a black GI accused of "fragging" (killing with a fragmentation grenade) two officers in Vietnam. He was set free after nearly two years of solitary confinement and a huge campaign among soldiers to stop his "legal lynching."

Revisionists wanted to limit literature and demonstrations to the slogan "Free Billy Dean Smith." The Party and its base upped the ante, adding the slogan "Stop the Racist Frame-up!" This struggle mirrored the debate in the anti-Vietnam War movement at large. The revisionists wanted to keep anti-racist class struggle

out of the movement because "people, particularly white workers and soldiers, weren't ready for it." Instead, they would falsely portray support for black, Latin or Native American nationalist movements as anti-racist.

"This attack on Billy Dean Smith can clearly be seen as racist by comparing his case with Lt. Calley's," wrote a multi-racial group of soldiers influenced by our line during Smith's confinement. "Calley was convicted of murdering 22 Vietnamese people. Billy Smith hasn't been convicted of anything. Calley has been provided with an apartment where he lives and is able to visit with his girlfriend. Billy Smith is locked up in an isolation cell 23 hours out of every day. Calley is white; Smith is black. Calley killed non-white people, while Billy Smith is accused of killing white officers. Calley acted consistently with a racist and genocidal war while Smith [a U.S. grunt in Vietnam] opposed the war."

"The Army figures it can get away with attacking Billy Smith because of the divisions it has promoted between black and white soldiers... We must overcome all divisions and unite all GIs...to STOP THE RACIST FRAME-UP, FREE BILLY DEAN SMITH!"

We sent a contingent of Ft. Lewis soldiers to a Free Billy Dean Smith rally sponsored by the Washington state VVAW on Veterans' Day, October 23rd. Michael gave a speech calling for a class-based anti-racist, anti-genocidal war movement within the military and to "Stop the Racist Frame-Up." Together we sold CHALLENGE to most of the hundreds in attendance.

Eleven days earlier the Navy lost control of the U.S.S. *Kitty Hawk*. Black sailors violently revolted when ordered to return to the Gulf of Tonkin, Vietnam, because two replacements ships had been sabotaged.

A month later the U.S.S. *Constellation* erupted in what the *New York Times* aptly described as "the first mass mutiny in the U.S. Navy." On November 2, the ship's Captain Ward announced that two hundred and fifty sailors would be administratively discharged with "less than honorable" paper. Most sailors assumed these punitive discharges were aimed at activists who were organizing against the racist use of Article XV's, court-martials and deployment to Vietnam. The next day, a multi-racial group of over 100 sailors staged a sit-in on the after mess deck. To avoid imminent mass rebellion, the ship's brass—in consultation with the Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet, Adm. Zumwalt—cut sea operations short. They sent a beach party of 130 sailors ashore at San Diego to cool things down. The sailors refused to return! So great was the brass's fear of this nascent



Draft resistance and evasion will not stop the "economic draft" that sweeps hundreds of thousands of working class youth into the military. Communists must be inside, organizing for revolution, among these workers.



multi-racial, anti-racist, anti-imperialist unity that they gave up and reassigned the sailors to shore duty.

On November 21st our new VVAW chapter led 50 GIs and supporters to the office of Congressman Floyd Hicks in Tacoma. Hicks was chairman of the sub-committee charged with investigating the *Kitty Hawk* and *Constellation* rebellions. We demanded that “the investigation be fair and not a whitewash” and that it be expanded to “probe racism at Ft. Lewis, [neighboring] McChord AFB and throughout the military.” We made the mistake of leaving the Article XV petition signed by 150 soldiers with his aid Barry Jackson, asking for legislation based on its contents.

Under orders from Hicks, Jackson immediately turned the names over to the Commanding General of Ft. Lewis, henceforth known as “Filthy” Fulton. The Army’s Criminal Investigation Division (CID) investigated, but nobody would rat on the organizers. Most said they “found the petition in the shower” or refused to talk at all. When asked how the person who gave him the petition was dressed, one GI answered, “I think he was wearing a clown suit.” We’d never make the mistake of giving names to elected government representatives again.

Even worse, Hicks concluded his hearings stating that “The riot on the *Kitty Hawk* [was caused] by a very few men, most of whom were of below-average mental capacity...all of whom were black.” We couldn’t let this racist garbage go unanswered!

On February 3rd the next year, we led another march of 60 back to his office. This time we hung him in effigy. We built for this march by circulating a “Hicks: Wanted for Racism” poster throughout the base. “HICKS HAS PROVEN HIMSELF TO BE A SERVANT OF THE RULING CLASS: THEREBY MAKING HIM AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE” the poster shouted. Another leaflet urged soldiers to “Ask Hicks why white sailors supported blacks in their action! Racism hurts all GIs for it divides the unity of the movement, and keeps us from fighting the real enemies, the Brass.”

### Sharpening the Struggle

By December ‘72, these struggles convinced most of the leadership in our small VVAW chapter that emphasizing the Party’s class line against racism would sharpen the struggle and lead to growth. Racism was sparking the most militant fight-backs in the Army, even as the bosses were trying to “manage defeat” in Vietnam.

The Shelter Half proprietors and John opposed this shift. They wanted to maintain our emphasis on “GI rights.” Their “answer” to racism was to support nationalist movements within the military, the U.S. at large and the nationalist program of the Vietnamese National



Liberation Front (NLF). Soldiers, they maintained, were not ready for an “advanced” anti-racist class line. Up to now we had built a small organization of mostly white soldiers. They were certain we would lose most of our members.

Eventually, this difference developed into a split, more internal development in the Party, and a nation-wide struggle in VVAW. As we predicted, this intense ideological and practical struggle led to growth. It also paved the way for recruitment of rebelling GIs to the revolutionary communist Progressive Labor Party (PLP).

From the beginning, our anti-racist program encompassed international unity of the working class and soldiers. Michael and I wrote a widely sold pamphlet entitled “Ft. Lewis VVAW speaks out on RACISM IN THE MILITARY.” The preface began:

Just as bringing civilization to America was rationalization for the virtual genocide of the Indian, so did racism begin as the justification of slavery. And now, killing Vietnamese is condoned because they are not people; they are “g\*\*ks.”

The next sentence continued, “We...were ruled by a group of power-crazed, wealth-seeking, inhumane barbarians...”

The pamphlet endorsed an 8 point program: international unity, no riot control, no bad discharges, fight the racist Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), ally with other anti-racist groups, any lifer or officer using a racist slur or committing a racist act must be immediately relieved of command, fighting racist and inadequate medical care, and, of course, end the genocidal war in Vietnam.

“We should try to remember that the U.S. government does not have a ‘split personality’, having racist policies at home and non-racist abroad, or vice versa,” the pamphlet warned. Rejecting imperialism and patriotism, it listed 35 “criminal invasions.”

The last sentence read: “The fight against racism is a fight for the unity of all GIs. It is a life and death struggle.”

As we put this program into practice, the Shelter Half

concocted a rationale to kick us out of their facilities. They would no longer aid us if we didn't support the NLF's nationalist program, as well as a virtual smorgasbord of "identity politics." The Party rejected nationalism as pro-boss and counterrevolutionary. By now, most of our base in VVAW also had been won to this position. We refused.

John freaked. He stopped working with us, tried to resurrect another organization with the Shelter Half, the GI Alliance. The new Alliance never got off the ground, while our anti-racist VVAW chapter grew to about 50 members, a slight majority black, leading rebellion and struggle throughout the base involving thousands of soldiers.

The new GI Alliance's only claim to fame was praise for anti-racist actions and company newsletters in David Cortright's book "Soldiers in Revolt." In fact, the Party-led VVAW chapter led those struggles and produced those leaflets, not the Alliance. The Alliance was an attempt to subvert the Party-led, class-based, anti-racist struggle. In practice, Ft. Lewis soldiers were not in the least bit fooled.

We distributed hundreds of the "Racism in the Military" pamphlets over the course of six months before we were ready to directly lead company rebellions. Our regular CHALLENGE readership approached 50/issue during this period. Many began to debate our anti-racist and revolutionary ideas. Combined with some smaller struggles around this line, we paved the way for the explosions ahead.

### **Building CHALLENGE Networks**

Our attempts to increase CHALLENGE sales during this period paid off. We got some help selling the paper to soldiers living in apartments off base, but most of our distribution was done through networks on base. In fact, defending the distribution of our revolutionary communist paper led to some sharp struggles—in and of themselves.

At one point, Captain "All-swine" Alwine started a campaign to stop the reading and distribution of CHALLENGE within a particularly rebellious company, the 864th. Every issue, 15 brown envelopes would arrive in the company mail. It didn't take long for the brass to figure what was up: the company had fifteen CHALLENGE subscribers.

He and his lieutenants launched a campaign to crush CHALLENGE distribution by seizing one of these envelopes. They picked the GI they figured was most likely to cave in. The company clerk warned us of the captain's ploy.

We quickly made plans to secure our readership under any circumstances. We alerted the targeted GI. He boldly marched into the Captain's office and grabbed the CHALLENGE envelope, which the clerk had already

told us was sitting on All-swine's desk. "Give me my mail back!" he shouted and marched out again. He managed to hold it together until he made it back to the room where his compatriots had assembled. All-swine's campaign never got off the ground.

Soon after this the Party decided Ft. Lewis comrades should guarantee an article every issue. Usually there was plenty to report. In between, we ran interviews with soldiers commenting on the political issues of the day.

My friend Michael was getting excited about the paper. He reported that a friend in his company always respected the political work we did as individuals. His view of us changed, however, after he read the paper. He realized this was not just a few well intentioned individuals, but a serious Party. "PLP must be a serious organization," was the way he put it after finishing his third issue of the paper.

Eventually the circulation approached 100 with 35 subscriptions. We would turn to this base time and time again as the struggle intensified.

### **The Not-So-Calm before the Storm**

During these months of mass agitation, the Army started rap sessions on racism. Unbeknownst to the brass, we sent one of our members to what turned out to be an ideological fight between the enlisted men (EMs) and the officer leading the discussion.

The brass began the session by playing "Bad, Bad Leroy Brown" by Jim Croce. This popular song told the tale of Leroy Brown "from the south side of Chicago," who was "meaner than a junk yard dog." The Lieuy then asked the EMs if they thought Leroy was black. Obviously, you were racist if you thought so.

Before anybody could answer, our guy, who was himself black, interrupted: "We're supposed to have a serious discussion on military racism and you are playing these trivial tricks to blame EMs. Racism here is caused by the brass, who use it to divide us and keep us weak and to justify their imperialist war. Stop wasting our time!"

The whole room erupted. The lieutenant beat a hasty retreat, cutting the meeting short. Most of our literature from then on would belittle the Army's racism rap sessions.

As our anti-racist reputation grew, a local TV station asked us to send a black representative to a Sunday morning talk show to discuss "the racism issue in the military." They were expecting a militant black nationalist. They had other official panelists prepared to answer him at the Saturday pre-recording.

Instead they got a revolutionary communist class analysis of racism, including a call for all GIs to unite and build for socialist revolution (our line at the time). Our representative outlined, in some detail, how racism

hurt all workers and soldiers, black, Asian, Latin, Native American or white: U.S., Vietnamese or any other nationality. The opposition appealed to patriotism and a “better America.” The military’s reforms are meant to pacify the troops so the brass can carry out their racist mission at home and abroad, our VVAW member rebutted.

That Sunday morning was the first time I ever saw a blank TV screen in the daytime. Despite repeated calls, the station refused to air the broadcast.

We never volunteered to participate in the bosses’ media circus again. We learned we would have to start espousing ideas contrary to our goals to get significant airtime. Either that or they would attack us. We relied on CHALLENGE and our own pamphlets and leaflets to get the word out.

Of course, that didn’t stop the bosses’ press from trying to use us for their own imperialist aims. One local *Tacoma News-Tribune* reporter, Jack Williams, wrote us a long letter swearing that he didn’t “write whitewashes.” He tried to excuse himself and his partner *New York Times* military reporter Drew Middleton, whom he called “one of the finest and most experienced reporters in the nation.” He admitted they had only interviewed “gung-ho officers and senior NCOs,” in their “pro-army” series on the volunteer services.

Trying to get in our good graces, he switched gears, calling Vietnam “a despicable and idiotic adventure.”

“I assure you that any feed I get from you people, on the volunteer system or anything else to do with the military, I will regard with respect and objectivity,” the letter continued. We weren’t biting this time.

Instead of wasting time (or worse!) with reporters, we built for a big anti-war Inauguration Day demonstration planned for San Francisco on January 20th, 1973. The Party and allied groups held their own rally before, marched to the general demonstration, and held a student conference the next day. We sent a GI van down to participate.

On the way down I gave Michael the Party’s *Sit Down* pamphlet, which described how communists led the sit-down occupation at the General Motors’ Flint, Mich. plant. It had a big effect on him. “I didn’t realize white workers could be so militant,” he commented, further distancing him from his nationalist origins in the Black Panther Party.

I spoke at the Party’s demonstration about our anti-racist, anti-imperialist program. Michael spoke the next day against black nationalism. We consciously decided to have a white GI talk about the need to fight racism and a black one about the need to combat black nationalism. On the way home, Michael joined the PLP.

## A Company Erupts

Even as we engaged in mass agitation, we developed a plan to concentrate our basebuilding efforts in a couple of companies. Our efforts were rewarded with company-wide rebellions involving a large number of returning active-duty Vietnam veterans.

A Party member remembered the first of a series of rebellions in his unit during the spring of 1973 in the pages of CHALLENGE.

My company had been out in the field for three days. The foxholes we had been ordered to lay down in had been turned into swimming pools by the incessant rain. We were all angry as hell.

Some of us were trucked back to the barracks. Our Capt. “Allswine” Alwine ordered us to get haircuts before returning to camp. Nobody wanted to do it. Many black soldiers complained that nobody on base knew how to cut their hair. Following their lead, white soldiers also refused.

The lifers immediately split us up into two groups, one black and one white. They ordered us into trucks. A few of us organizers scurried between them.

Then it happened. My friend [Pete] led all the black soldiers out of their truck. They boarded the truck carrying their white buddies. Hugs and “power” daps [handshakes] were exchanged as well as heartfelt vows to fight the brass together. We commandeered the truck, kicked the lifers off, and sped back to camp.

It was night when we arrived back at camp. Our comrades had built small fires to dry themselves as they stood watch on the perimeter. We went from blaze to blaze, picking up soldiers as we went. After circling the camp we headed for the captain’s headquarters.

He must have seen us because he sent the chaplain out to run interference. The chaplain told us we were violating God’s word. We told him to go to a place where God is reputed not to be. I don’t know if he took our advice, but he sure left in a hurry!

We caught the captain in his tent. More than 50 of us, black, Latin and white, presented our list of anti-racist demands: no bad discharges, no job discrimination, no riot control, no Article XVs, no racist slurs from lifers, no genocidal war and, of course, no haircuts! We retired to the heated officers’ tent—no more wet foxholes for us!

The commanding lieutenant of my platoon, a recent ROTC grad, ordered us out to the perimeter. In the pitch black of the tent you could hear one GI, recently returned from Vietnam, ask the officer where he hailed from. ‘Idaho,’ replied the Lieuy.

The Vietnam vet shot back, ‘Where I come from we eat people from Idaho!’ The Lieuy left for good.

I will never forget the camaraderie of those days. The grandeur of these rank-and file soldiers uniting to fight the racist brass surpasses any Hollywood war epic.

From then on, rebellions were a regular thing in the 864th. Soldiers “accidentally” missed nails while putting up drywall, leaving rooms full of hammer holes. Cement

was left to harden in mounds on the side of the road. All sorts of equipment turned up unusable.

One of the more significant of these minor rebellions concerned riot control training. Unrest was spreading from our company to the larger battalion. The battalion leader organized a counterattack.

The brass began the battalion-wide class by warning us that students would try to “brainwash” us during riots. All the other rebels, in Detroit for instance, were lumpen “pushers and pimps.”

I had recently read an article in *Scientific American*, of all places, that concluded after extensive research that the rebels were mostly active or laid-off auto workers. I said as much referring to this “prestigious” magazine.

A right-winger, who obviously was primed by the brass, stood up. “Why don’t you shut your mouth,” he threatened.

Two black soldiers shot back, “Why don’t you try and make him!”

You could hear folding chairs tipping over as the room began to split in two. The brass quickly cancelled the class and escorted the warring factions back to the barracks.

The next week the brass made the mistake of conducting riot control “field training.” We turned it into practice on how to “turn the guns on the brass.” Needless to say, they never called us up for riot duty!

This was not the last time these brave soldiers defended me and the Party. I particularly remember a lifer who was pressured to resign after a number of rebellions against his racist demagoguery. He returned to the barracks with a rifle threatening to kill me. A large group of unarmed Vietnam vets surrounded me, taunting the racist. He sulked off, never to return.

Word of these rebellions was spread all over the base though our CHALLENGE networks, leaflets and pamphlets. Armed “Farces” Day marked the broadening of anti-racist fightback to the whole base. The connection between our company struggles and the broader base-wide fight—although long distant—was made clear.

### Anti-Racist Rebellion Spreads Through Fort

The 864th rebellions and those starting in other companies, the increasing CHALLENGE sales and widening distribution of VVAW anti-racist literature gave us the confidence to call for a demonstration on May 19th, Armed Forces Day. Armed “Farces” Day, as it had become known in the GI movement, had been a traditional day of protest for the past few years. We planned a rally at the fort’s entrance followed by a march to a nearby park.

We might have been confident, but the brass was taking no chances. The base commander General “Filthy” Fulton devoted his whole speech at a review of Ft. Lewis troops

to attacking VVAW and those fighting racism on base. We published, for those who didn’t hear it first hand, how he pleaded with GIs to use proper channels—like the chain of command and the human relations councils—instead of associating with “the few dissidents.”

His underlings, such as a North Fort Major, lied about our record. “They are trying to get black and white fighting among each other.” He said this after seeing a big UNITE on dozens of our leaflets.

The brass soon realized their ability to persuade or intimidate was waning. They had to do something more drastic. They figured the 864th was the center of rebellion. The base commander ordered the company out of state (to build a Boy Scout camp of all things) during the crucial days before and during the demonstration. This led to the second major rebellion.

This rebellion was also triggered by a seemingly non-political issue. The brass ordered us to keep our white T-shirts on while working in the hot sun. This time white soldiers complained first. They demanded to be allowed to take them off. They wanted a tan.

A multi-racial group went to confront the captain; black soldiers were used to supporting their white “brothers” and vice versa. The captain ran out the back of his tent when he saw us coming.

That was it! We let his underlings know what was really on our minds. They had taken us to a racist hellhole. We wanted to be sent back to the base now!

The night before groups had visited the nearby town, Spirit Lake, Idaho. We knew something wasn’t right when saw signs in the local stores saying “We reserve the right to refuse service to anybody.” Pretty soon it became clear: you couldn’t go down the street without you or your friends being called the “n” word.

Instead of sending us home, the brass restricted us to camp. That Friday night our camp turned into a drug bazaar. You could find any hard drug you wanted. Since we weren’t allowed out, we knew the brass had brought in the drugs to pacify us.

Leaving nothing to chance, the brass organized porn movie showings. You can bet there was a lot of struggle about that.

The brass could care less about the Boy Scout camp. Saturday morning our rebellion intensified. By Saturday afternoon, they sent the black GIs home, too late to join the rally and march. Sunday morning, they let the white GIs go, leaving the Boy Scouts with a half-finished mess.

Progress reports of our anti-racist rebellion were sent back to the fort. Organizers in other companies redoubled their efforts. Black soldiers took the lead. On the day of the demonstration they led a hundred GIs past the commanders’ phalanx of armed vehicles to join our civilian supporters at the rally. “Filthy” Fulton was left to

stare at the proceedings through binoculars behind a wall of MPs. He didn't need his binoculars to see our slogans. ***Fight to Win-Fight Racism in the military; on the streets! Indict the US Gov't for Genocide at home and abroad!***

By now, the Party's base was leading fight-backs and rebellions in companies all over the base. Each one was publicized through leaflets and CHALLENGE articles. Political lessons from each struggle were discussed and debated, then written up for circulation to hundreds on base. Thousands eventually got some kind of literature from us. A few of these struggles come to mind.

Two VVAW activists, Pvts. Greg Douglas and Jose Fernandez of the 709th Maintenance Co., were threatened with court-martial for leaving the scene of an incredible series of harassments. Both had a history of fighting racist harassment in their company. One racist goon, Sgt. Fields, was particularly incensed because they had been organizing against his harassment and racist comments. After spending all day doing K.P. in the field, they were surrounded by a number of lifers and told to dig foxholes. After awhile they made them do P.T. and then told them to continue digging foxholes. At this, they demanded to see the C.O., to no avail. Finally they walked away.

"Defend Fernandez and Douglas! Make the Real Criminals—The Racist Brass—Pay for Their Crimes!" leaflets were circulated throughout the fort. This time it was easy; the brass never pressed charges. Fernandez eventually became my roommate when we were discharged.

Another friend, Pvt. Bill Alexander, was targeted by the racist Capt. Adams of the 2nd/60th. Adams vowed to "get Alexander and his n...r friends." He called Alexander "white trash" for associating and organizing with black GIs. "The brass drummed up a series of charges which, if gone unchecked, would have led to a dishonorable discharge," reported CHALLENGE (7/12/73).

We started our campaign to "Jail Racist Capt. Adams, Not Alexander" by sticking the fort. Leaflets and CHALLENGE articles followed. "Because of Alexander's determination to fight back and constant agitation by his friends on the post, all charges against Alexander were dropped and he was given an honorable discharge, not jail," CHALLENGE was able to report.

In perhaps the most "serious" of these cases, Sp/4 Steven Baldwin of the 411th Transportation Co. was sentenced to pre-trial confinement. Prior to confinement, he faced a special court-martial for "not trimming his sideburns," "playing his radio too loud on the bus," and "bringing one of his friends (ed. a party organizer) into the company area."

Baldwin's real crime was leading 15 black and white GIs to confront their company commander, Major Glaston J. Ford, Jr. One 411TC officer had the racist gall to say, in

what he thought was a private conversation, that, "With Baldwin gone so is racism in the 411th. Racism was an invention of Baldwin."

CHALLENGE (7/12/73) reported that the confrontation lasted three hours. "In face of the militance and solidarity shown by the GI contingent, Major Ford decided that it would be best if he did not face them down alone...To help bail him out he called upon seven MPs in addition to representatives of the Equal Opportunity Commission [as well as] the brigade and battalion commanders."

Despite the arrest, one brother vowed, "We're gonna keep on fighting. We're gonna fight until Baldwin is free and until all of us are free!" All off a sudden Ford's superiors decided an investigation of Ford's racist activities was warranted—not that these "investigations" ever made any real difference. When Baldwin eventually got out of the stockade, he continued to bring many to our meetings.

CHALLENGE concluded:

The struggles in the 2nd/60th and the 411TC, led by minority GIs and communists, aid the plight of all GIs. We will continue to build VVAW and PLP and we will run all the racist bosses and their stooges off this planet. Free Steven Baldwin! Workers of the World, Unite!

### **Soldiers Answer Red-Baiting; Help Develop Communist Strategy**

Ironically, the success of our military work brought the national office of VVAW down on us. They were threatened by our class line. They tried to call us racist for not supporting nationalism. Their anti-communist bait fell flat. They were mostly white revisionists, while our chapter was clearly multi-racial, with plenty of black and Latin leadership that respected the Party's revolutionary communist politics. In fact, some of these hardened leaders would soon join the PLP.

The National Office demanded "the expulsion of VVAW members who belong[ed] to Progressive Labor Party" and anyone "who failed to support the [Vietnamese NLF] Seven Point and Nine Point Peace Proposals." Further, they wanted traveling "range riders" supposedly to help with organizing, but everybody knew these political thugs would force the National Office's ideology on the regions.

The Party answered with an open letter. In addition, the Washington state leadership wrote their own statement that "[came] from the unanimous consent of the membership present at the last regional meeting [consisting of] representative from Ft. Lewis, Seattle, University of Washington, Longview, Vancouver and Bellingham." The state leaders sent copies of both to every region in the country.

The Party letter reviewed our military work, explained why we thought racism was a key class question and

why every GI had a stake in defeating it. We explained how nationalism always aided and abetted some bosses' imperialist plans, subverting the interests of the international working class. There was no such thing as progressive nationalism.

We thought the nationalist politics of the Vietnamese NLF—implicit in the Peace Proposals—were a betrayal of 30 years of armed struggle against imperialism. Besides, the U.S. imperialist invaders didn't have a right to negotiate a blade of grass in Vietnam. We vowed to continue to build for socialist revolution among soldiers. Our goal, communism, was the only way to end racism and imperialism.

This was a hard line to take at the time, but couldn't have proved more correct. One needs only to look at the vicious exploitation at the Vietnam Nike factory to see that we were right.

The state letter started "we have had experience with co-optation and can recognize the difference between groups that want to subvert VVAW and those that want to work with us on an up-front basis." The Student Mobilization Committee, a collection of revisionists and opportunists, were the subject of particularly scathing criticism. The Party, on the other hand, really helped VVAW advance.

VVAW in Washington has PLP members... [They have] put their asses on the line to work with servicemen... Although there are certain differences between PL and VVAW, we have resolved conflicts by open discussion. No doubt PL would like to have strong influence on VVAW, but there is a difference between influence and subversion/co-optation... In any event, no one, not the national office, nor in any other region(s) will dictate to this region what the composition of our membership will be.

...The proposal that 'all members of VVAW, after sufficient time for education must support...the seven and nine point (proposals) is elitist bullshit! ...Who will do the educating? From what point of view? Is someone going to show us the error of our ways because we do not agree with part or all of the seven or nine points?

...We think [the range riders] is a waste of time and a combination power/ego tripping... Money could be better spent...

...It is also important that any charges against any group be well founded in fact and not the product of paranoia, misinformation, or rumors.

The letter ended with the "hope that [the National Office] will accept our remarks in the spirit of brotherhood in which they were offered." They were not.

These two letters blunted the National Office's attack. They were never able to enforce their rotten politics.

A black marine veteran in the state chapter followed this struggle closer than we realized. He later joined the Party and played a key role at the Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton during one of the larger post-Vietnam military struggles. Meanwhile, the active-duty soldiers

made plans to "advance under attack."

The following summer PLP held its convention. Two Ft. Lewis soldiers were elected delegates. We used this opportunity to take stock of our military work and prepare the advance.

Internal documents showed we reviewed our work over the past nine months for the convention. We had gone from a small, mostly white, VVAW chapter to weekly meetings of a dozen or so GIs, at least 50% minority. We recruited one black GI and had bi-weekly [PLP] study groups. Our CHALLENGE sales had reached 100 with 35 subscriptions. We quickly outlined a few struggles. Then the delegates drew some political lessons:

Various objections have been raised by party members and others to making the fight against racism the main focus in the military. [The soldier delegates] feel almost all these objections boil down to the same central issue: can white GI's be won to fighting racism.

Just like all workers and students, GI's must fight racism if they intend to build an effective struggle and any type of organization that can withstand the ruling class attempts to kill us off in their world-wide search for profits.

...Since we have started this anti-racist campaign, the brass have been doing their best to scare white GI's away from fighting racism...These scare tactics have not worked. We have succeeded in gathering some of the most militant, serious fighters, black, Latin and white by concentrating on the fight against racism. We have had some small success in recruiting where those comrades who continued to concentrate on fighting harassment have not had any to our knowledge.

After calling for a bold approach and flexible tactics the GI delegates got to the heart of the matter.

As we grow bigger, the attacks by the brass and the various vultures on the left increase. This is to be expected and shows we must be doing something right. *But we cannot advance under this attack unless we recruit [to the Party].*

The potential is good. We have a good reputation among scores... There are external factors that hold us up: anti-communism and other groups around. Mainly, it is our own failure to realize how crucial recruiting is that has held us back. Somehow recruiting doesn't seem as glamorous as building a mass organization.

...But just what would the situation at Ft. Lewis be if the Party was not around? ...There are a lot of sincere anti-racist fighters in and around VVAW, who are not in the Party, but it is only PL's ideas of class unity, no respect for the bosses' laws, and eventually revolution put forward in an organized way by PLP members that will advance the struggle.

But, most important, how is PL going to lead a revolution unless we recruit working class members like the GIs we know? They have a rich history of class struggle and a tremendous class hatred for the bosses... These guys believe in PL and need PL's ideas to advance our class.

We ended with a 5 point program that concentrated on basebuilding, individual and collective ideological

discussion, bi-monthly Party events with Seattle, and new CHALLENGE sellers, subscribers and sustainers. We took this plan seriously, but not seriously enough. As time would tell, we were more than right about the sharpening attacks. We would have been crushed if we hadn't started to implement this plan for communist recruitment. Even so, we never reached our full potential.

## We Accuse!

After the convention, we started a campaign against racist medical care at Ft. Lewis Madigan Hospital. One of our Party members at the hospital had been recently discharged, but another Latin medical corpsman took up the slack. "Discrimination begins the moment a patient is admitted to the ward," he testified. "If he's an officer he automatically gets the best place. When the doctors finally arrive, they start with the officers. [Enlisted men and their families wait] hours and hours...missing lunch [or] entire days."

A black GI mother and a black GI wife backed him up with personal horror stories. We printed these 3 testimonials in a "Fight Racist Medical Care" leaflet. "As more and more minorities are forced into the Armed Forces, racism will be used to justify worsening medical care for all GIs and their families," we concluded, inviting soldiers to a joint demonstration with civilian hospital workers in Seattle. "This is not meant as an attack on all doctors or staff, but rather on a system that allows understaffing and long lines of patients."

"Racism will take many forms as the brass prepares to cut medical services to release funds for 'essential' projects like imperialist [war and] weaponry," CHALLENGE added (9/6/73).

All our charges were verified in a congressional hearing the next year, not that it mattered! On July 28th, three of us were arrested for distributing this leaflet on base. CHALLENGE (9/6/73) describes the scene:

"Hurry up and get those guys out of here!" This was the panicked response of an MP Sergeant as he saw residents of the Ft. Lewis housing project raising clenched fist and peace signs in solidarity with 3 GIs accused of passing out a leaflet entitled "Fight Racist Medical Care." But even hustling the GIs off to the MP station didn't stop the flow of support as lower ranking MPs gave clenched fist salutes after reading the leaflet. Really incensed by this time, the brass spent the rest of the night trying to coerce the housing project residents to give up their leaflets for "evidence." Only three surrendered their leaflets out of over 200 families in the project.

The Army Criminal Investigation Division (CID) interrogated us separately. They wanted information about the Party. They showed each of us a pile of about 100 pictures taken at the Armed "Farces" Day rally.

"We know so-and-so is the PLP Minister of Propaganda," an interrogator would shout, pointing to a picture of a GI

at the rally. "This guy is the Minister of Defense. Tell us what position these others hold." We answered with our name, rank and serial number. We were well trained.

A few months later I made fun of the CID operatives at a Party meeting. "They didn't even know the difference between PLP and Black Panther Party," I said with a sneer. Our party would never use such pompous titles.

The Party chairperson was not amused. "He could have been the Minister of Propaganda and the other could have been the Minister of Defense," he told me. We could have recruited more Party members than we did.

One small thing exemplifies our weakness. We didn't distribute a single PLP leaflet explaining how our revolutionary communist politics related to the trial. Despite all our class struggle and CHALLENGE sales, we hesitated to put communist (or then, socialist) revolution front and center.

We did manage to recruit the Latin corpsman and began to issue our first leaflets in Spanish. The corpsman hailed from Puerto Rico, where U.S. imperialism had plans for a huge oil super-port, surrounded by petrochemical plants. No other state in the U.S. would okay such a dangerous plan. The Puget Sound communities near Ft. Lewis were adamant in their opposition. In the midst of the court-martial proceedings, he wrote our first bi-lingual leaflet calling for "International Solidarity," urging GIs to "Fight the super-ports, Fight racism, Fight imperialism, and Fight for socialism!"

The brass waited nearly a month before pressing charges, hoping the uproar over the arrests would settle down. By now, the brass were determined to make an example out of us and we were determined to indict them for racism in their own courtroom.

Nonetheless, we did not want to turn into a "Defense Organization." We continued our campaign against racist medical care at Madigan, forcing the hospital to publicly acknowledge that patient lines were indeed too long. Calls for anti-racist, international solidarity, like the super-port campaign, continued. Our CHALLENGE sales increased where the struggle was hottest.

We asked GIs to donate \$ 5.00 every payday to support our fightback. They responded with over \$200, a tidy sum in those days. "Many GIs who have never been involved in anything boldly stepped forward to fight back and assume leadership." (CHALLENGE, 12/13/73)

After three weeks of threats, the brass managed to intimidate one of the leafleters. He turned. They also launched an anti-communist campaign in the 411th TC, the company of one of the other remaining defendants. CHALLENGE reported:

The well known racist and lunatic Major Ford [ed. the very same racist goon who attacked Baldwin] has directed his lackeys to spread out-and-out lies...His subordinates told the company 1) it is illegal to read "that communist paper"

being circulated in the company; 2) it is illegal to go to VVAW meetings or have VVAW leaflets; 3) if you know any members of VVAW or PLP you had to turn them in; and 4) it is illegal to associate with communists.

As it turned out, this anti-communist campaign never found traction. A friend told the tale in a letter to CHALLENGE (10/4/73).

The brass are being handed defeats on many fronts....In [one defendant's] company, the statements made by Major Ford forbidding...dissent...were exposed for the lies they are...This pig was forced to apologize to the assembled company. The militant history of GIs uniting—black, white and Latin—to fight the 411th brass and the potential for future rebellion, led by VVAW and PLP, caused this quick retreat.

GIs are responding to anti-racist and communist ideas and will send the brass scum back into the sewers that they came from.

They must have been responding because CHALLENGE sales doubled in the 411th TC.

It wasn't until October that the brass actually felt ready to get on with the court-martial. It turned out they were overly optimistic.

Over fifty soldiers volunteered to be our character witnesses. Every one of them showed at the trial, plus some comrades who had already been discharged. This multi-racial group of rank-and-file soldiers and veterans freaked the prosecutor out. He started arguing with the defense attorney. He wanted most sent back to their duty stations.

Our supporters surrounded the lawyers. One guy shouted that anybody over rank of E5 [a lifer or officer] should get the hell out of there. The prosecutor looked up at this angry "mob" and caved in.

"The military judge threatened several times to clear the courtroom because of noise from the gallery." (*Tacoma News-Tribune* 9/14/73) Then things really got going!

Spec. 5 Wesley Brim, the only witness in the whole housing project they could get to testify against us, "identified one [leafleter] as white and the other as a 'colored boy.'"

The galley erupted! "Your Honor, I object!" shouted a black man from the gallery. "You have two defendants here fighting racism, and you have a witness here pushing it!" (*Tacoma News-Tribune*) The judge threw our comrade out. Some followed in disgust, but most remained standing and shouting.

When the judge managed to get things calmed down, the prosecution went to get their only collaborating witness, the turncoat. The prosecutor returned, shrugged and said, "We can't find him." Pandemonium ensued!

As we later learned, every black soldier in the turncoat's company had surrounded him in the barracks some days before. The turncoat, who was black, was told that things

would go badly for him if he dared testify against the two white anti-racists and communists on trial. So he fled!

The Army and FBI started a nation-wide man hunt, while the judge issued an indefinite continuance. A few weeks later, they dragged him back into the courtroom.

Fifty more GIs came to support us. We were convicted, but given short sentences.

Even as we were led off to the stockade accompanied by raised fists, others were already printing and distributing leaflets demanding our freedom and jail for "the racist-fascist brass." There was no shortage of venom:

The racist ass-kissing brass have once again shown themselves to be the real pigs that they are. Gen. Filthy (Fulton) that low-down dirty rotten illegitimate son of Adolf Hitler and chief hog of the Gestapo intervened personally to insure that [the defendants] would be place in confinement.

These [jailings] are just another indication of whose interests these two-faced war-mongering bastards really represent.

To tell the truth, the stockade wasn't so bad. Our reputations, not to mention CHALLENGE and our leaflets, had preceded us. One of our "rioting" buddies from the 864th greeted us at the gate, introducing us to the fellas. He had been incarcerated a few weeks earlier for cold-cocking a lifer. We gathered the prisoners' stories for publication after we got out.

A day or two after I got out, I was due to be discharged. The First Sergeant at the separation center noticed I had a couple of weeks stockade time. This "bad" time was supposed to be added to my active-duty schedule. He told me I'd have to wait 2 weeks for my discharge.

I told him he'd better call General Fulton. He was so shocked that a private would even suggest such a thing that he brought the "request" to his Lieutenant. The Lieuy called post headquarters. After a while, he returned to the room. "Don't ask any questions. Just get him out of here!" he ordered.

## **There Can Be No Revolution without Revolutionary Communist Soldiers**

In January 2007, Iraq veterans spoke at a panel in Tacoma, WA, near Ft. Lewis. One vet told of his orientation in Kuwait by the brass before "going in country." The officer in charge asked the assembled grunts what they would do if their convoy saw an Iraqi kid in the middle of the road. "We'd stop," answered one soldier.

"You never stop for a fucking hajji kid," the officer yelled back.

"We'd go down another road," offered another troop.

"You never veer from your path for a fucking hajji kid. You run the fucking hajji kid over!"



“Racial dehumanizing,” the Iraq vet emphasized, “doesn’t originate with the grunts.” It is the conscious strategy of the officer corps, meant to justify U.S. imperialism’s brutal atrocities.

To make sure we got the point, he related another example that took place during a division briefing in front of a commanding general. Divisional briefings, he noted, were the second highest briefings in Iraq.

The day before, an 18-year-old, only in the army a few months, panicked. He shot at a car rapidly approaching a check point. These check points were randomly established throughout the city. You never knew where one would pop-up. He then saw the results of his work. An Iraqi mother and her children were dead.

A full-bird colonel, kissing-up in hopes of getting his General star, turned to face the room. “None of this would happen if these fucking hajjis learn to drive,” he said, dismissing the atrocity.

After these vets gave their testimony, the so-called “distinguished” panel of professors, clergy and liberals asked questions. Nobody from the audience was allowed to speak. The panel head asked the last two (leading) questions. Do you thing the U.S. is committing war crimes in Iraq?

No vet had trouble answering, “Yes!”

The last question showed where the panel organizers were heading. “Would you advise somebody thinking of going into the Armed Forces not to join because they could become part of the war crimes?”

Afterwards, the Iraq vet talked with a Vietnam era Ft. Lewis VVAW organizer. The Vietnam vet told the young soldier how he had joined the army to organize against racism and imperialist war. Soldiers could do more than just individually disobey “illegal” orders. They could organize their fellow “grunts” to lead the anti-imperialist struggle. He clearly stated that his was a different strategic outlook than just passively warning young people to stay out of the military.

This excited the Iraq veteran, despite having been backed into the limited strategy advocated by the panel a few moments before. He had just begun to read about the GI movement during Vietnam. He asked for more information on the subject. Both danger and opportunity present themselves in today’s military work.

Our Ft. Lewis experiences speak to the need for more comrades to join the bosses’ Armed Forces—and to the political possibilities. Their outlook must go beyond warning young workers and students away from the military lest they “become part of the war crimes.” Our job is to end war crimes!

We have to smash capitalism and its lethal offspring, racism and imperialism, to end these brutal atrocities. Communist revolution is the only way to defeat

capitalism. There can be no talk of revolution without winning significant numbers of soldiers to revolutionary communist politics.

As in the civilian world, winning young soldiers to our politics is a multi-faceted process. CHALLENGE networks were essential to our work at Ft. Lewis. We learned never to rely on the bosses’ media. They would first ignore us. When that failed they tried to co-opt us. Finally, they just attacked us. Timely VVAW leaflets, clearly influenced by CHALLENGE and our Party’s class line against racism, helped fill the gap between issues of our paper. We could have used Party leaflets as well. Bi-weekly communist study groups allowed us to discuss individual questions in depth. Constant ideological struggle, both oral and written, were invaluable.

The key organizers and eventual recruits were our fast friends, on and off the base. Many were our roommates at one time or another. We learned to trust each other. Like they say, “Without trust you ain’t got much.”

The truth of the Party’s line was proved to many through class struggle. Our class line against racism distinguished us from the various fakers on the left. Black and Latin soldiers were harmed most by racism, but racism hurt all GIs. International class solidarity stood in stark contrast to the bosses’ racism. The fight against racism proved in practice to strengthen our ability to fight back as a class. The potential for working class revolution became more real.

In order to fight the racist brass we had to defeat the bosses’ ideas within our own ranks. There was no natural or spontaneous progression from the identity politics and opportunism of the Shelter Half or the VVAW national office to our anti-racist rebellions. We had to fight against their rotten politics if we wanted to sharpen the struggle. We tried not to make secondary things primary, but this struggle was unavoidable if the Party and VVAW was to advance politically and grow. As we fought for and eventually led mass rebellion, many—black, Latin and white—saw the value of our anti-racist class line. “Struggle with, struggle against” was our guiding motto.

Our Party had earned the respect of hundreds, if not thousands of GIs. We were in a position to recruit many to our Party. We recruited a few: more that the comrades that preceded us, but not nearly as many as we could.

There were objective limits to our ability to recruit soldiers then—as there are now. We concluded that we had not reached those limits at Ft. Lewis because we had not appreciated how crucial was the recruiting of revolutionary communist soldiers. Although our mass anti-racist struggle was essential, it was not enough. Building for communist revolution must always be primary.

At that same panel in Tacoma another Iraq vet told how he led a rebellion against a “suicide mission.” He

knew the real battle was about which class you sided with. Good for him! Some said the bosses left Vietnam because they were afraid they would lose the Army. Too bad they didn't. Look where we are now. We had allowed the beast to survive, so now we have to deal with even more dangerous racism and imperialism.

The patriotic surge after September 11—although not unprecedented in the annals of U.S. or world history—made it easier for the bosses to politically prepare for the imperialist invasion of Iraq. The demise of the old international communist movement left the ruling class without a mortal enemy. Even so, the stakes for the bosses are, in some ways, even higher than Vietnam. We are talking about Mid East oil—the key to the bosses' empire. The chaos that threatens the Mid East would trigger massive bloody attacks on the world's workers. The imperialists are even today jockeying for position in the imperialist bloodbath that eventually lies ahead.

This period presents formidable political obstacles to building GI resistance and rebellion. The bosses and their agents are working overtime to win anti-war soldiers to pacifism and patriotism—vital to the ruler's plans for future bigger wars. We have to prepare to work under all kinds of political circumstances.

The Party's strategy of appealing to the anti-racist, anti-imperialist class interests of soldiers excites many anti-war soldiers and Iraq veterans. We must join with these angry soldiers and vets to sharpen the struggle, once again exposing the bosses' ideas within our ranks. "Struggle with, struggle against" should remain our motto.

The threat of wider war makes our revolutionary communist outlook even more essential. History has taught us there is no halfway house to workers' power. We fight directly for communism. Our line has advanced; so must our practice.

Our job remains to win soldiers to smash the bosses' racist Armed Forces and with their class brothers and sisters forge an invincible Red Army to do away with capitalism's horrors once and for all. Learning from our strengths and weaknesses during Vietnam can help prepare future soldiers for the only war worth fighting—the class war for communism.

### **Post Script: Lifelong Brothers in Struggle**

Soldiers I fought back with during the Vietnam era have revisited my life over the 30-plus years since I was discharged. Their early exposure to revolutionary communist politics in the military still reverberates through their lives. I never fail to be amazed and inspired. A few incidents come to mind.

About 25 years after I left the army, I got involved with an opposition caucus in my union. Caucus members from

various cities gathered for a strategy meeting at a central location. I didn't know most of the workers from far away, but one of these guys remembered me from Ft. Lewis.

I had spent sometime on his living room couch during the court-martial. The FBI had visited him after I was discharged, trying to get information on my activities. He refused to talk to them. He wasn't about to forget me!

He quickly gathered up his friends for a "side meeting." He bragged about our struggle at Ft. Lewis and then asked if I could get him and his friends CHALLENGE. Not only had he remembered our Party's revolutionary communist newspaper 25 years later, but he assumed Party comrades were in the struggle for the long haul. "These people really know how to fight," he said, recommending us to his friends.

Black marines rebelled against the Klan at Camp Pendleton, CA in the fall of 1976. Marine Klansmen had been "openly distributing Klan literature on base, posting K.K.K. stickers on barracks doors and hiding illicit weapons in their quarters." Two black soldiers had already been "beaten by marines wearing K.K.K. insignia outside the enlisted men's club on base." Klansmen "swaggered about the base in armed groups harassing blacks and 'tried to get them to fight'" according to court-martial testimony (New York Times, 1/8/73).

On December 6th, the marines held a pre-trial hearing to present charges against 14 black marines. The Camp Pendleton 14, as they became known, had responded to the K.K.K. in the only language the Klan understood—violently.

The black marine vet, who had followed our struggles against the VVAW national office three years before, took vacation from his industrial job and flew to the camp to help our Party mount an anti-racist defense. He had recently joined the party.

Talk about a baptism of fire! PL-led anti-racists—black, Latin and white—beat David Duke, National Grand Dragon of the KKK, and his supporters when they showed up for the pre-trial hearing. A battle with the camp's MPs ensued. Black and Latin comrades took the lead.

Our militant anti-racism freaked the liberals and led to sharp ideological struggle and political advances within our organization. Jesse Jackson came down to the camp to talk with the base commander. He and the ruling class forces behind him wanted a show against the Klan. He reasoned this would better prepare the marines to fight for the national (read: bosses') interests abroad. We, on the other hand, revealed the links between racism in the states and racist imperialism.

Our new recruit made it clear during meetings that he had come to build for communist revolution—the only way to finally smash racism and imperialism. Some told him that was not what he was supposed to do. He was to limit his activities to "Freeing the Camp Pendleton 14."

“That’s what you’re down here for,” they ordered.

As it turned out, the Party continued to bring the red flag to events—figuratively and literally. The defendants were more than open to our revolutionary politics. Our new recruit learned a lot from this struggle and gave speeches at meetings and demonstrations when he returned to his home city.

The court-martial dragged on for almost a year. The harshest sentence included 2 years jail time. Others got months of hard labor, fines and reduction in rank. The Klansmen were transferred to other bases and to other parts of Camp Pendleton to “defuse the situation.” (New York Times, 1/8/73) Membership in the Klan was legal according to the Marines and didn’t interfere with their mission.

Our Party and base advanced through this sharp struggle. Some in our organization, unfortunately, caved in to the demands of the liberals. They wanted to be “big” and if that meant hiding revolutionary communist politics so be it, they reasoned. The Party’s national leadership called a general meeting to settle this question. Still in his work clothes after a hard day’s work, our new recruit jumped back on a plane to defend the party at that meeting. Introduced to our politics during the Ft. Lewis rebellions, he played an important role defending communist politics. It was hard to say he was a “rookie” anymore.

Somewhere between these two incidents, I met my rioting buddy, Pete, from the 864th as I was entering the gate to work. We hadn’t seen each other for more than 15 years. He asked how I was doing. “Oh, the same old thing,” I answered, noncommittally.

“That’s good because this place is the most racist worksite I’ve ever seen!” Apparently he remembered. So we started an anti-racist fight-back at work.

A few weeks later, he invited me over to his house. The living room was filled with relatives and friends. My wife and I sat down and the whole crowd began reminiscing about Ft. Lewis and all sorts of personal details of my life.

Now I was confused. Did I know these people? Had I forgotten that I had met them? I might forget a name, but never a face. Then they all started laughing. It seems my rioting buddy had been entertaining his relatives and friends with stories of our anti-racist rebellion in the Army for fifteen years. They knew the stories by heart and more than most people about me personally.

You never know how far our modest efforts will go. Soldiers respond to revolutionary communist politics. It opens the door to a lifetime of struggle. Dare to Struggle, Dare to Win!



## The Massive GI Fight-Back Against the Vietnam War

In 1971, Col. Robert D. Heinl wrote: “The morale, discipline, and battle worthiness of the US Armed Forces are, with a few salient exceptions, lower and worse than at any time in this century and possibly in the history of the United States.”

He continued, “By every conceivable indicator, our army that now remains in Vietnam is in a state approaching collapse, with individual units avoiding or having refused combat, murdering their officers, drug-ridden and dispirited where not mutinous.” And to emphasize how quickly things can change, he said that only a few short years before they had been “the best army the United States had ever put into the field.

The Overseas Weekly ran a revealing article in the same year (1971) titled, “GI’s declare War on the Army.” There were at least two soldier rebellions every week during the summer of 1971, according to official army reports. Soldiers, sailors and even airmen revolted in the States, overseas, and at the front in Southeast Asia. “Fragging”—blowing up officers and lifers with fragmentation grenades detonated by mutinous soldiers—became common.

Every base had its groups of rebels. Hundreds of resistance newspapers were published. There were rebellions in every stockade in the military and the military prison in Vietnam, Long Binh Jail, was burnt to the ground twice.

The most militant fight-backs outside of Vietnam were in Germany. The summer of 1970 at Nellingen was one of the most violent. Tensions reached a climax on September 21, following a week of racist harassment, black and white GI’s broke a 7:30pm curfew, marching through the base chanting “join us.” The brass tried to paint this as a “racial incident” but as one black GI told Overseas Weekly, “There is no racial problem among E-5’s and below...that’s one thing our demonstration proved.”

A letter CHALLENGE from a GI in Germany reflects this unity against the racist brass. It said:

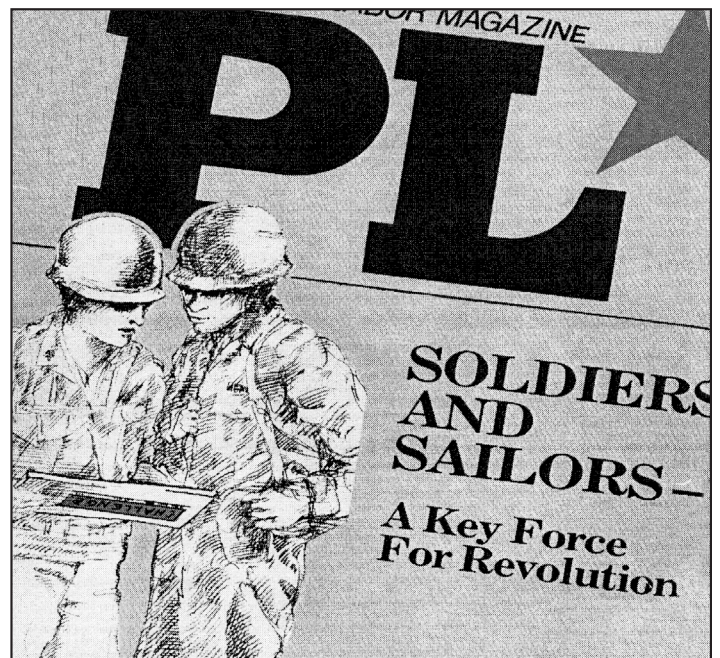
Recently, much publicity was given to the burning of a cross, KKK-style, at the post here. It seems there was such an organization of racist lifers. But the publicity tried to shift the blame on to white troops in general.... The magazines make this out to be a racial clash when it’s really a class struggle of working class black GI’s, often with white GI’s alongside them, against the brass and their cops.

As the government was forced to withdraw ground forces, it relied more on the Navy and Air Force. Shore leaves were repeatedly canceled. Angry disgruntled sailors sabotaged many ships, leading to strict schedules. Resistance mushroomed. The first major rebellion took place on the carrier *Kitty Hawk*, October 12-13, 1972.

Black sailors led the multi-racial revolt when they were force to return to the Gulf of Tonkin because two other ships had been sabotaged.

The largest rebellion of sailors occurred the next month on the carrier *Constellation*. Aptly described as the “first mass mutiny in the history of the US Navy,” the *Constellation* revolt was anti-racist. Two hundred and fifty sailors were to be administratively discharged with “less than honorable” papers. Fearing these punitive discharges would go to anti-racist activists on board, a multi-racial group of over 100 sailors started a sit-in in the after mess deck. Capt. Ward, in consultation with the commander of the Pacific Fleet, Adm. Zumwalt, allowed some 130 sailors to go ashore as a beach party to cool things off. They refused to go! So great was the brass’ fear of multi-racial rebellion that they gave up and reassigned the sailors to shore duty.

These valuable experiences merit our attention today, as the war in Iraq is costing more and more lives of US GI’s and of Iraqis. The Progressive Labor Party has confidence that rank-and-file GI’s, workers and students who hate the war will again unite to fight back. Anti-war youth in the military have a crucial role to play in that fight. We must learn from history. We need to see that our main enemy is the class of bosses with their politicians who put us in harms’ way for their oil profits and empire. Our enemy is the capitalist system of exploitation, racism and wars for profits. With this insight, over time, we will build an anti-racist, anti-imperialist internationalist movement capable of leading the working class to get rid of the racist profit system that perpetuates wars and exploitation for profit. Then the working class will run society to produce and to share and to meet the needs of the international working class, not for the bosses bloody profits. Join us!



## Stalin and HG Wells Debate Marxism vs. Liberalism

On July 23, 1934 author HG Wells visited the USSR to meet with Soviet Communist Party (CPSU) leader Joseph Stalin for an interview. At the time Wells belonged to a group of intellectuals termed Fabian Socialists who believed that through voting you could reform capitalism and build socialism. This group represented a pacifist viewpoint that not all elements of the ruling class were "bad" or anti-working class and that the ruling class could therefore be won to pursuing socialism. The Fabian Socialist sought to ally themselves with the ruling class rather than organize the working class for revolution. The CPSU as represented at this debate by Stalin obviously disagreed with this viewpoint. The CPSU instead believed that the contradiction between the working class and the ruling class could only be resolved with the triumph of the working class over the ruling class in a violent revolution and with the creation of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This is one of the fundamental tenants of Marxism-Leninism, the philosophy that the PLP was formed around.

At the time of this meeting inter-imperialist contradictions were sharpening and pushing the world towards war. This sharpening contradiction led to economic instability around the world, with the exception of the USSR, that in turn sharpened the contradiction between the needs of the working class and the needs of the ruling class. In order to defend itself the capitalist class in the US under the leadership of President Roosevelt issued a

number of reforms to win workers away from communism and prepare the United States for war. This same process was going on in other capitalist states and represents the rise of fascism, capitalism's way of fighting to save itself by brutalizing the working class. HG Wells represents those who would urge workers' to side with reformist elements, specifically Roosevelt. His support of reformism also leads him to praise the biggest imperialists of the U.S. ruling class. Stalin and the CPSU represent those who would argue for workers' power through communist revolution.

We are including this debate in *The COMMUNIST* because today we face a similar situation. The contradiction of inter-imperialist rivalry once again is sharpening and pushing the world's capitalist nations towards war. Once again candidates are springing up trying to win the working class to fight and die for this war. Once again they put forward with reforms, trying to convince us that we need to sacrifice for the nation, that place the burden of war preparation squarely on the shoulders of the working class, especially black and immigrant workers. As we near the 2008 election and as Obama and Clinton try to distinguish themselves as modern FDR's we can look back to this debate and try to pull away some important lessons. The particulars are different, but the generalities are the same. Many of us will doubtless be having this same debate with members of our base very soon.

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### *EXHIBIT No. 44*

*[New York, New Century Publishers, September 1937; reprinted October 1950. Joseph Stalin and H. G. Wells, Marxism VS. Liberalism: An Interview.]*

**WELLS:** I try to see the world through the eyes of the common man, and not as a party politician or a responsible administrator. My visit to the United States excited my mind. The old financial world is collapsing; the economic life of the country is being reorganized on new lines. Lenin said: "We must learn to do business," learn this from the capitalists. Today the capitalists have to learn from you, to grasp the spirit of socialism. It seems to me that what is taking place in the United States is a profound reorganization, the creation of planned, that is, socialist, economy. You and Roosevelt begin from two different starting points. But is there not a relation in ideas, a kinship of ideas, between Washington and

Moscow? In Washington I was struck by the same thing I see going on here; they are building offices, they are creating a number of new state regulation bodies, they are organizing a long-needed Civil Service. Their need, like yours, is directive ability.

**STALIN:** The United States is pursuing a different aim from that which we are pursuing in the U.S.S.R. The aim which the Americans are pursuing arose out of the economic troubles, out of the economic crisis. The Americans want to rid themselves of the crisis on the basis of private capitalist activity without changing the economic basis. They are trying to reduce to a minimum the ruin, the losses caused by the existing economic system. Here, however, as you know, in place of the old destroyed economic basis an entirely different, a new economic basis has been created. Even if the Americans you mention partly achieve their aim, i.e., reduce these losses to a minimum, they will not destroy the roots of

the anarchy which is inherent in the existing capitalist system. They are preserving the economic system which must inevitably lead, and cannot but lead, to anarchy in production. Thus, at best, it will be a matter, not of the reorganization of society, not of abolishing the old social system which gives rise to anarchy and crises, but of restricting certain of its bad features, restricting certain of its excesses. Subjectively, perhaps, these Americans think they are reorganizing society; objectively, however, they are preserving the present basis of society. That is why, objectively, there will be no reorganization of society. Nor will there be planned economy. What is planned economy? What are some of its attributes? Planned economy tries to abolish unemployment. Let us suppose it is possible, while preserving the capitalist system, to reduce unemployment to a certain minimum. But surely, no capitalist would ever agree to the complete abolition of unemployment, to the abolition of the reserve army of unemployed, the purpose of which is to bring pressure on the labor market, to ensure a supply of cheap labor. Here you have one of the rents in the “planned economy” of bourgeois society. Furthermore, planned economy presupposes increased output in those branches of industry which produce goods that the masses of the people need particularly. But you know that the expansion of production under capitalism takes place for entirely different motives, that capital flows into those branches of economy in which the rate of profit is highest. You will never compel a capitalist to incur loss to himself and agree to a lower rate of profit for the sake of satisfying the needs of the people. Without getting rid of the capitalists, without abolishing the principle of private property in the means of production, it is impossible to create planned economy.

**WELLS:** I agree with much of what you have said. But I would like to stress the point that if a country as a whole adopts the principle of planned economy, if the government, gradually, step by step, begins consistently to apply this principle, the financial oligarchy will at last be abolished and socialism, in the Anglo-Saxon meaning of the word, will be brought about. The effect of the ideas of Roosevelt’s “New Deal” is most powerful, and in my opinion they are socialist ideas. It seems to me that instead of stressing the antagonism between the two worlds, we should, in the present circumstances, strive to establish a common tongue for all the constructive forces.

**STALIN:** In speaking of the impossibility of realizing the principles of planned economy while preserving the economic basis of capitalism I do not in the least desire to belittle the outstanding personal qualities of Roosevelt. Undoubtedly Roosevelt stands out as one of the strongest figures among all the captains of the contemporary capitalist world. That is why I would like once again to emphasize the point that my conviction that planned

economy is impossible under the conditions of capitalism does not mean that I have any doubts about the personal abilities, talent, and courage of President Roosevelt. But if the circumstances are unfavorable, the most talented captain cannot reach the goal you refer to. Theoretically, of course, the possibility of marching gradually, step by step, under the conditions of capitalism, towards the goal which you call socialism in the Anglo-Saxon meaning of the word, is not precluded. But what will this “socialism” be? At best, bridling to some extent the most unbridled of individual representatives of capitalist profit, some increase in the application of the principle of regulation in national economy. That is all very well. But as soon as Roosevelt, or any other captain in the contemporary bourgeois world, proceeds to undertake something serious against the foundation of capitalism, he will inevitably suffer utter defeat.

The banks, the industries, the large enterprises, the large farms are not in Roosevelt’s hands. All these are private property. The rail-roads, the mercantile fleet, all these belong to private owners. And finally, the army of skilled workers, the engineers, the technicians, these too are not at Roosevelt’s command, they are at the command of the private owners; they all work for the private owners. We must not forget the functions of the State in the bourgeois world. The State is an institution that organizes the defense of the country, organizes the maintenance of “order”; it is an apparatus for collecting taxes. The capitalist State does not deal much with economy in the strict sense of the word; the latter is not in the hands of the State. On the contrary, the State is in the hands of capitalist economy. That is why I fear that, in spite of all his energy and abilities, Roosevelt will not achieve the goal you mention, if indeed that is his goal. Perhaps, in the course of several generations, it will be possible to approach this goal somewhat; but I personally think that even this is not very probable. .

**WELLS:** Perhaps I believe more strongly in the economic interpretation of politics than you do. Huge forces driving towards better organization, for the better functioning of the community, that is, for socialism, have been brought into action by invention and modern science. Organization, and the regulation of individual action, have become mechanical necessities, irrespective of social theories. If we begin with the State control of the banks and then follow with the control of transport, of the heavy industries, of industry in general, of commerce, etc., such an all-embracing control will be equivalent to the State ownership of all branches of national economy. This will be the process of socialization. Socialism and individualism are not opposites like black and white. There are many intermediate stages between them. There is individualism that borders on brig-andage, and there

is discipline and organization that are the equivalent of socialism. The introduction of planned economy depends, to a large degree, upon the organizers of economy, upon the skilled technical intelligentsia, who, step by step, can be converted to the socialist principles of organization. And this is the most important thing. Because organization comes before socialism. It is the more important fact. Without organization the socialist idea is a mere idea.

**STALIN:** There is no, nor should there be, irreconcilable contrast between the individual and the collective, between the interests of the individual person and the interests of the collective, There should be no such contrast, because collectivism, socialism, does not deny, but combines individual interests with the interests of the collective. Socialism cannot abstract itself from individual interests. Socialist society alone can most fully satisfy these personal interests. More than that; socialist society alone can firmly safeguard the interests of the individual. In this sense there is no irreconcilable contrast between "individualism" and socialism. But can we deny the contrast between classes, between the propertied class, the capitalist class, and the toiling class, the proletarian class? On the one hand we have the propertied class which owns the banks, the factories, the mines, transport, the plantations in colonies. These people see nothing but their own interests, their striving after profits. They do not submit to the will of the collective; they strive to subordinate every collective to their will. On the other hand we have the class of the poor, the exploited Class, which owns neither factories nor works [i.e. an industrial plant], nor banks, which is compelled to live by selling its labor power to the capitalists and which lacks the opportunity to satisfy its most elementary requirements. How can such opposite interests and strivings be reconciled? As far as I know, Roosevelt has not succeeded in finding the path of conciliation between these interests. And it is impossible, as experience has shown. Incidentally, you know the situation in the United States better than I do as I have never been there and I watch American affairs mainly from literature. But I have some experience in fighting for socialism and this experience tells me that if Roosevelt makes a real attempt to satisfy the interests of the proletarian class at the expense of the capitalist class, the latter will put another president in his place. The capitalists will say: Presidents come and presidents go, but we go on forever; if this or that president does not protect our interests, we shall find another. What can the president oppose to the will of the capitalist class?

**WELLS:** I object to this simplified classification of mankind into poor and rich. Of course there is a category of people which strives only for profit. But are not these people regarded as nuisances in the West just as much as here? Are there not plenty of people in the West for

whom profit is not an end, who own a certain amount of wealth, who want to invest and obtain a profit from this investment, but who do not regard this as the main object? They regard investment as an inconvenient necessity. Are there not plenty of capable and devoted engineers, organizers of industry, whose activities are stimulated by something other than profit? In my opinion there is a numerous class of capable people who admit that the present system is unsatisfactory and who are destined to play a great role in future socialist society. During the past few years I have been much engaged in and have thought of the need for conducting propaganda in favor of socialism and cosmopolitanism among wide circles of engineers, airmen, military-technical people, etc. It is useless approaching these circles with two track class war propaganda. These people understand the condition of the world. They understand that it is a bloody muddle, but they regard your simple class-war antagonism as nonsense.

**STALIN:** You object to the simplified classification of mankind into rich and poor. Of course there is a middle stratum, there is the technical intelligentsia that you have mentioned and among which there are very good and very honest people. Among them there are also dishonest and wicked people, there are all sorts of people among them. But first of all mankind is divided into rich and poor, into property owners and exploited; and to abstract oneself from this fundamental division and from the antagonism between poor and rich means abstracting oneself from the fundamental fact. I do not deny the existence of intermediate, middle strata, which either take the side of one or other of these two conflicting classes, or else take up a neutral or semi-neutral position in this struggle. But, I repeat, to abstract oneself from this fundamental division in society and from the fundamental struggle between the two main classes means ignoring facts. This struggle is going on and will continue. The outcome of the struggle will be determined by the proletarian class, the working class.

**WELLS:** But are there not many people who are not poor, but who work and work productively?

**STALIN:** Of course, there are small landowners, artisans, small traders, but it is not these people who decide the fate of a country, but the toiling masses, who produce all the things society requires.

**WELLS:** But there are very different kinds of capitalists. There are capitalists who only think about profit, about getting rich; but there are also those who are prepared to make sacrifices. Take old Morgan for example. He only thought about profit; he was a parasite on society, simply,

he merely accumulated wealth. But take Rockefeller. He is a brilliant organizer; he has set an example of how to organize the delivery of oil that is worthy of emulation. Or take Ford. Of course Ford is selfish. But is he not a passionate organizer of rationalized production from whom you take lessons? I would like to emphasize the fact that recently an important change in opinion towards the U.S.S.R. has taken place in English speaking countries. The reason for this, first of all, is the position of Japan and the events in Germany. But there are other reasons besides those arising from international politics. There is a more profound reason, namely, the recognition by many people of the fact that the system based on private profit is breaking down. Under these circumstances, it seems to me, we must not bring to the forefront the antagonism between the two worlds, but should strive to combine all the constructive movements, all the constructive forces in one line as much as possible. It seems to me that I am more to the Left than you, Mr. Stalin; I think the old system is nearer to its end than you think.

**STALIN:** In speaking of the capitalists who strive only for profit, only to get rich, I do not want to say that these are the most worthless people, capable of nothing else. Many of them undoubtedly possess great organizing talent, which I do not dream of denying. We Soviet people learn a great deal from the capitalists. And Morgan, whom you characterize so unfavorably, was undoubtedly a good, capable organizer. But if you mean people who are prepared to reconstruct the world, of course, you will not be able to find them in the ranks of those who faithfully serve the cause of profit. We and they stand at opposite poles. You mentioned Ford. Of course, he is a capable organizer of production. But don't you know his attitude towards the working class? Don't you know how many workers he throws on the street? The capitalist is riveted to profit; and no power on earth can tear him away from it. Capitalism will be abolished, not, by "organizers" of production, not by the technical intelligentsia, but by the working class, because the aforementioned strata do not play an independent role. The engineer, the organizer of production, does not work as he would like to, but as he is ordered, in such a way as to serve the interests of his employers. There are exceptions of course; there are people in this stratum who have awakened from the intoxication of capitalism the technical intelligentsia can, under certain conditions, perform miracles and greatly benefit mankind. But it can also cause great harm. We Soviet people have not a little experience of the technical intelligentsia. After the October Revolution, a certain section of the technical intelligentsia refused to take part in the work of constructing the new society; they opposed this work of construction and sabotaged it. We did all we possibly could to bring the technical intelligentsia into this work of construction we tried this way and that. Not a little time passed before our technical intelligentsia

agreed actively to assist the new system. Today the best section of this technical intelligentsia are in the front rank of the builders of socialist society. Having this experience, we are far from underestimating the good and the bad sides of the technical intelligentsia and we know that on the one hand it can do harm, and on the other hand, it can perform "miracles." Of course, things would be different if it were possible, at one stroke, spiritually to tear the technical intelligentsia away from the capitalist world. But that is utopia. Are there many of the technical intelligentsia who would dare break away from the bourgeois world and set to work to reconstruct society? Do you think there are many people of this kind, say, in England or in France? No, there are few who would be willing to break away from their employers and begin reconstructing the world. Besides, can we lose sight of the fact that in order to transform the world it is necessary to have political power? It seems to me, Mr. Wells, that you greatly underestimate the question of political power, that it entirely drops out of your conception. What can those, even with the best intentions in the world, do if they are unable to raise the question of seizing power, and do not possess power? At best they can help the class which takes power, but they cannot change the world themselves. This can only be done by a great class which will take the place of the capitalist class and become the sovereign master as the latter was before. This class is the working class. Of course, the assistance of the technical intelligentsia must be accepted; and the latter, in turn, must be assisted. But it must not be thought that the technical intelligentsia can play an independent historical role. The transformation of the world is a great, complicated and painful process. For this great task a great class is required. Big ships go on long voyages.

**WELLS:** Yes, but for long voyages a captain and a navigator are required.

**STALIN:** That is true; but what is first required for a long voyage is a big ship. What is a navigator without a ship? An idle man.

**WELLS:** The big ship is humanity, not a class.

**STALIN:** You, Mr. Wells, evidently start out with the assumption that all men are good. I, however, do not forget that there are many wicked men. I do not believe in the goodness of the bourgeoisie.

**WELLS:** I remember the situation with regard to the technical intelligentsia several decades ago. At that time the technical intelligentsia was numerically small, but there was much to do and every engineer, technician



and intellectual found his opportunity. That is why the technical intelligentsia was the least revolutionary class. Now, however, there is a superabundance of technical intellectuals, and their mentality has changed very sharply. The skilled man, who would formerly never listen to revolutionary talk, is now greatly interested in it. Recently I was dining with the Royal Society, our great English scientific society. The President's speech was a speech for social planning and scientific control. Thirty years ago, they would not have listened to what I say to them now. Today, the man at the head of the Royal Society holds revolutionary views and insists on the scientific reorganization of human society. Mentality changes. Your class-war propaganda has not kept pace with these facts.

**STALIN:** Yes, I know this, and this is to be explained by the fact that capitalist society is now in a cul-de-sac. The capitalists are seeking, but cannot find, a way out of this cul-de-sac that would be compatible with the dignity of this class, compatible with the interests of this class. They could, to some extent, crawl out of the crisis on their hands and knees, but they cannot find an exit that would enable them to walk out of it with head raised high, a way out that would not fundamentally disturb the interests of capitalism. This, of course, is realized by wide circles of the technical intelligentsia. A large section of it is beginning to realize the community of its interests with those of the class which is capable of pointing the way out of the cul-de-sac.

**WELLS:** You of all people know something about revolutions, Mr. Stalin, from the practical side. Do the masses ever rise? Is it not an established truth that all revolutions are made by a minority?

**STALIN:** To bring about a revolution a leading revolutionary minority is required; but the most talented, devoted and energetic minority would be helpless if it did not rely upon the at least passive support of millions.

**WELLS:** I watch communist propaganda in the West and it seems to me that in modern conditions this propaganda sounds very old-fashioned, because it is insurrectionary propaganda. Propaganda in favor of the violent overthrow of the social system was all very well when it was directed against tyranny. But under modern conditions, when the system is collapsing anyhow, stress should be laid on efficiency, on competence, on productiveness, and not on insurrection. It seems to me that the insurrectionary note is obsolete. The communist propaganda in the West is a nuisance to constructive minded people.

**STALIN:** Of course the old system is breaking down, decaying. That is true. But it is also true that new efforts are being made by other methods, by every means, to protect, to save this dying system. You draw a wrong conclusion from a correct postulate. You rightly state that the old world is breaking down. But you are wrong in thinking that it is breaking down of its own accord. No, the substitution of one social system for another is a complicated and long revolutionary process. It is not simply a spontaneous process, but a struggle, it is a process connected with the clash of classes. Capitalism is decaying, but it must not be compared simply with a tree which has decayed to such an extent that it must fall to the ground of its own accord. No, revolution, the substitution of one social system for another, has always been a struggle, a painful and a cruel struggle, a life and death struggle. And every time the people of the new world came into power, they had to defend themselves against the attempts of the old world to restore the old order by force; these people of the new world always had to be on the alert, always had to be ready to repel the attacks of the old world upon the new system. Yes, you are right when you say that the old social system is breaking down; but it is not breaking down of its own accord. Take Fascism for example. Fascism is a reactionary force which is trying to preserve the old world by means of violence. What will you do with the fascists? Argue with them? Try to convince them? But this will have no effect upon them at all. Communists do not in the least idealize the methods of violence. But they, the Communists, do not want to be taken by surprise, they cannot count on the old world voluntarily departing from the stage, they see that the old system is violently defending itself, and that is why the Communists say to the working class: Answer violence with violence; do all you can to prevent the old dying order from crushing you, do, not permit it to put manacles on your hands, on the hands with which you will overthrow the old system. As you see, the Communists regard the substitution of one social system for another, not simply as a spontaneous and peaceful process, but as a complicated, long and violent process. Communists cannot ignore facts.

**WELLS:** But look at what is now going on in the capitalist world. The collapse is not a simple one: it is the outbreak of reactionary violence which is degenerating to gangsterism. And it seems to me that when it comes to a conflict with reactionary and unintelligent violence, socialists can appeal to the law, and instead of regarding the police as the enemy they should support them in the fight against the reactionaries. I think that it is useless operating with the methods of the old rigid insurrectionary socialism.

**STALIN:** The Communists base themselves on rich historical experience which teaches that obsolete classes do not voluntarily abandon the stage of history. Recall the history of England in the seventeenth century. Did not many say that the old social system had decayed? But did it not, nevertheless, require a Cromwell to crush it by force?

**WELLS:** Cromwell operated on the basis of the constitution and in the name of constitutional order.

**STALIN:** In the name of the constitution he resorted to violence, beheaded the king, dispersed Parliament, arrested some and beheaded others! Or take an example from our history. Was it not clear for a long time that the tsarist system was decaying, was breaking down? But how much blood had to be shed in order to overthrow it? And what about the October Revolution? Were there not plenty of people who knew that we alone, the Bolsheviks, were indicating the only correct way out? Was it not clear that Russian capitalism had decayed? But you know how great was the resistance, how much blood had to be shed in order to defend the October Revolution from all its enemies, internal and external. Or take France at the end of the eighteenth century. Long before 1789 it was clear to many how rotten the royal power, the feudal system was. But a popular insurrection, a clash of classes was not, could not be avoided. Why? Because the classes which must abandon the stage of history are the last to become convinced that their role is ended. It is impossible to convince them of this. They think that the fissures in the decaying edifice of the old order can be mended, that the tottering edifice of the old order can be repaired and saved. That is why dying classes take to arms and resort to every means to save their existence as a ruling class. The rich experience of history teaches that up to now not a single class has voluntarily made way for another class. There is no such precedent in world history. The Communists have learned this lesson of history. Communists would welcome the voluntary departure of the bourgeoisie. But such a turn of affairs is improbable: that is what experience teaches. That is why the Communists want to be prepared for the worst and call upon the working class to be vigilant, to be prepared for battle. Who wants a captain who lulls the vigilance of his army, a captain who does not understand that the enemy will not surrender, that he must be crushed? To be such a captain means deceiving, betraying the working class. That is why I think that what seems to you to be old-fashioned is in fact a measure of revolutionary expediency for the working class.

**WELLS:** I do not deny that force has to be used, but I think the forms of the struggle should fit as closely as possible to the opportunities presented by the existing

laws, which must be defended against reactionary attacks. There is no need to disorganize the old system because it is' disorganizing itself enough as it is. That is why it seems to me insurrection against the old order, against the law, is obsolete, old-fashioned. Incidentally, I deliberately exaggerate in order to bring the truth out more clearly. I can formulate my point of view in the following way: first, I am for order; second, I attack the present system in so far as it cannot assure order: third, I think that class war propaganda may detach from socialism just those educated people whom socialism needs.

**STALIN:** Permit me now to reply to, your three points: First, the main thing for the revolution is the existence of a social bulwark. This bulwark of the revolution is the working class. Second, an auxiliary force is required, that which the Communists call a Party. To the Party belong the intelligent workers and those elements of the technical intelligentsia which are closely connected with the working class. The intelligentsia can be strong only if it combines with the working class. If it opposes the working class it becomes a cipher [i.e. something having no value]. Third, political power is required as a lever for change. The new political power creates the new laws, the new order, which is revolutionary order. I do not stand for any kind of order. I stand for order that corresponds to the interests of the working class. If however, any of the laws of the old order can be utilized in the interests of the struggle for the new order, the old laws should be utilized. I cannot object to your postulate that the present system should be attacked in so far as it does not insure the necessary order for the people. And, finally, you are wrong if you think that the Communists are enamored with violence. They would be very pleased to drop violent methods if the ruling class agreed to give way to the working class. But the experience of history speaks against such an assumption.

**WELLS:** There was a case in the history of England, however, of a class voluntarily handing over power to another class. In the period between 1830 and 1870, the aristocracy, whose influence was still very considerable at the end of the eighteenth century, voluntarily, without a severe struggle, surrendered power to the bourgeoisie, which serves as a sentimental support of the monarchy. Subsequently, this transference of power led to the establishment of the rule of the financial oligarchy.

**STALIN:** But you have imperceptibly passed from questions of revolution to questions of reform. This is not the same thing. Don't you think that the Chartist movement played a great role in the Reforms in England in the nineteenth century?

**WELLS:** The Chartists did little and disappeared without leaving a trace.

**STALIN:** I do not agree with you. The Chartists, and the strike movement which they organized, played a great role; they compelled the ruling classes to make a number of concessions in regard to the franchise, in regard to abolishing the so-called “rotten boroughs,” and in regard to some of the points of the “Charter.” Chartism played a not unimportant historical role and compelled a section of the ruling classes to make certain concessions, reforms, in order to avert great shocks. Generally speaking, it must be said that of all the ruling classes, the ruling classes of England, both the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, proved to be the cleverest, most flexible from the point of view of their class interests, from the point of view of maintaining their power. Take as an example, say, from modern history, the general strike in England in 1926. The first thing any other bourgeoisie would have done in the face of such an event, when the General Council of Trade Unions called for a strike, would have been to arrest the trade union leaders. The British bourgeoisie did not do that, and it acted cleverly from the point of view of its own interests. I cannot conceive of such a flexible strategy being employed by the bourgeoisie in the

United States, Germany or France. In order to maintain their rule, the ruling classes of Great Britain have never foresworn small concessions, reforms. But it would be a mistake to think that these reforms were revolutionary.

**WELLS:** You have a higher opinion of the ruling classes of my country than I have. But is there a great difference between a small revolution and a great reform? Is not a reform a small revolution?

**STALIN:** Owing to pressure from below, the pressure of the masses, the bourgeoisie may sometimes concede certain partial reforms while remaining on the basis of the existing social-economic system. Acting in this way, it calculates that these concessions are necessary in order to preserve its class rule. This is the essence of reform. Revolution, however, means the transference of power from one class to another. That is why it is impossible to describe any reform as revolution. That is why we cannot count on the change of social systems taking place as an imperceptible transition from one system to another by means, of reforms, by the ruling class making concessions.

Wells’ position of reformism and a peaceful road to socialism led him to support positions that pave the way to fascism. He argued that because capitalism was breaking down communists should support the ruling class’ move to centralize banking and industry. This, however, is the hallmark of the bourgeoisie’s move to fascism. He also put the defense of “order” at the top of his agenda without analyzing the class basis of order.

While the Party line today has evolved beyond the line developed by Lenin and Stalin in many ways, most notably the decision to fight directly for communism, there are many things that Stalin gets right in this debate. His attack of reformism and his explanation of the essence of class struggle are critical lessons for us to remember as the US continues its march towards full blown fascism and war. Capitalism is rooted in the brutal exploitation of the working class by the capitalist class and no reform can change this. There are no good bosses, a lesson that the CPSU would forget as they developed the Popular Front shortly after this debate. The ruling class will always fight to subjugate the working class. Reforms are simply a way to keep the working class in line. It is a pressure release valve that the capitalists use whenever they feel their control slipping away. The reality of the world is one of class domination and no amount of voting can change that. No dominant class has ever given up power willingly. If we want change, if we want an end to the war, hunger, and misery that is capitalism then the only recourse we have is communist revolution.



# The Struggle for Revolutionary Dialectics

## The Debate in 1960's China over “One Divides into Two” Versus “Two Combine into One”

By fighting for communism, the working class is making a huge change in society, a change we won't be able to make without understanding a lot about how change takes place. Dialectics is the philosophy of change and development, advanced by Marx and Engels and developed further in the Soviet and Chinese revolutions. To move the fight for communism forward, our party spreads knowledge of dialectics and develops it further, based on the experience of the international working class and developments in science. This article is about a big fight over dialectics that took place in China in the mid-1960s. Studying the history of past struggles over dialectical ideas is a particularly good way to learn about dialectics, since it shows the political results of different lines on dialectics. The debates we review here show clearly why having the right line about dialectics can make a big difference in the fight for communism. They also had an influence on the development of dialectical thinking in our party.

### Unity of Opposites, the Basic Law of Dialectics

The most fundamental law of dialectics is that the unity and struggle of opposites is the basis of all change and development. A combination of unity and struggle is called a “contradiction.” Every thing or process contains contradictions, that is, two sides that are connected to each other, but also struggle and interfere with each other. There are contradictions in every aspect of the world. The most important one is the contradiction in capitalist society between the working class and the capitalist class, but even a basketball game is a contradiction between two teams that are united in a single game, but play defense and hold each other back. Contradictions occur everywhere in nature, like the forces of attraction and repulsion inside an atom. Even inside the party, there are contradictions between different political ideas, which partly exist in everyone. Contradictions are important because they make things change. The internal back and forth struggle of the two sides of the contradiction causes change, and point that change in a particular direction. As long as capitalism lasts, the contradiction between workers and capitalist pushes capitalist society toward crisis and revolution. The contradiction between two basketball teams drives both teams to play harder. Contradictions don't last forever, however. Eventually they get resolved, that is, they stop being contradictions.

The buzzer sounds in the basketball game, or communist revolution destroys capitalism. When contradictions are resolved, however, new ones are always created.

### How Contradictions are Resolved

The biggest issue in dialectics is how contradictions are resolved. Marx said that resolution only happens when the two sides “fight to a decision,” and one wins, for example, the working class overthrows the capitalists [1]. Right-wing philosophers claim that the two sides don't have to fight until one wins, but could merge into a so-called “synthesis.” A synthesis is supposed to contain both sides in such a way that they no longer interfere with each other. Many union leaders, for example, oppose fighting the bosses, and claim that workers can have a kind of synthesis with bosses “for the common good.” Throughout the history of the communist movement, support for one of these two lines on dialectics --“fighting to a decision” or “synthesis”--has marked the difference between revolutionary communist politics and revisionism, that is, capitalist politics posing as communist.

### Soviet Revisionism in Philosophy

Because the politics of the fight for communism is closely linked to dialectical philosophy, conflict over dialectics has been a key part of the fight against revisionism. This was true during the so-called “Sino-Soviet Dispute” of the 1960s, which was a fight conducted by the Communist Party of China (CPC) against the revisionism of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). Soviet leaders like Khrushchev rejected revolution and substituted for it “peaceful transition to socialism” and “peaceful coexistence” with imperialism. To back up these sell out ideas, Soviet philosophers claimed that oppositions can be overcome “by means of combination (merging)” [2] or claimed that “contradictions are transformed into differences, and differences are merged into unity.”[3] In 1963 this idea that contradictions can be resolved by merging opposites was sharply rejected by CPC spokesman Zhou Yang:

“The modern [Soviet] revisionists have wantonly distorted and revised the Marxist-Leninist teaching on the laws of contradiction, and spread their views about the merging and reconciliation of contradictions.... Some of their philosophers even claim that the law of the unity and struggle of opposites is outmoded under socialist conditions.”[4]

Despite this CPC stance against the Soviet distortions of dialectics, we will see that similar ideas were in the CPC itself. In fact, the struggle against Soviet revisionism led directly to a struggle within the CPC against the so-called “capitalist road,” that is, the politics and policies that led the USSR back to capitalism and imperialism. The Left in China fought against taking that road.

### “One Divides into Two”

Mao Zedong, leader of the Chinese Communist Party until his death in 1976, called the unity-of-opposites law “One divides into two” [5], by which he meant that everything has two sides that struggle with each other. Mao used this “One divides into two” slogan to popularize dialectics and in particular to explain that since contradiction is everywhere, controversy and struggle are normal and unavoidable. To defend a version of the peaceful synthesis line, however, Yang Xianzhen, a philosophical



*Mao Zedong, 1935*

big shot as head of the CPC’s philosophy school, announced the slogan “Two combine into one.” Yang claimed that “Two combine into one” is also a general dialectical law of change which says that all opposites tend to combine into a unified whole, without one side destroying the other. This view of dialectics was directly connected to the “capitalist road” line, which tried to strengthen the capitalist features of socialism in China, instead of making a rapid transition to communism.

### Yang Combines Capitalism and Communism

Despite the fact that capitalism and communism can no more peacefully coexist than fire and ice, Yang described Chinese society as having a “synthesized economic base,” which combined capitalist and socialist or communist social relations. He said the capitalist side didn’t need to be smashed, but would disappear gradually and peacefully. In essence, this theory was a philosophical excuse for allowing capitalism to continue to exist openly in China after the working class had established political power. Like other “capitalist roaders” in China, Yang said that it was a good thing if some people became rich:

“In recent years, there has been a tendency to fear people getting rich, which is extremely dangerous. The tendency

of being afraid of people getting rich comes from the fear of the development of capitalism, from the fear of individuals trying to build up their own family fortune.” [6]

The CPC’s policy of allying with rich peasants and allowing “good capitalists,” to keep running their businesses, called “New Democracy,” strengthened the pro-capitalist forces in China. The pro-capitalist line supported a wage system with a lot of inequality and special privileges for party leaders and government officials. After a long struggle, these pro-capitalist forces eventually won power in China in 1978, led by Deng Xiaoping. Not surprisingly, in 1980 Yang’s concept of “synthesized economic base” became the official description of China’s economic system [7], a cover up for the fact that China had reverted to capitalism by then.

### The Fight over “Two Combine into One”

In May, 1964, Ai and Lin, two of Yang’s students at the CPC philosophy school, published an article defending his idea that “Two combine into one” was a general law of dialectics [8]. To support Yang’s claim, they gave various examples of things that actually do combine, such as atoms that combine into molecules, and China’s industry and agriculture, which combine into a single economy. They left out the fact that only some atoms can combine and may do so only after a difficult struggle, and the fact that China’s agriculture and industry sometimes strongly interfered with each other.

Ai and Lin criticized the view that resolution requires that one side defeat the other. They said that “One divides into two,” is only a method that people use to understand processes in the world, but isn’t a fundamental law of all change. The debate started by this article raged in the press for over a year, and many workers and peasants eventually got in on it, writing hundreds of comments and articles.

In August, 1964, Mao weighed in on the debate. Instead of rejecting synthesis outright, he said that what synthesis really means is the stronger side “eating up” the weaker one. When the CPC defeated the capitalist armies of the Guomindang during the revolution,

“The synthesis took place like this: their armies came, and we devoured them, we ate them bite by bite. It was not a case of two combining into one as expounded by Yang Xianzhen, it was not the synthesis of two peacefully coexisting opposites. They didn’t want to coexist peacefully, they wanted to devour you.” [9]

What is at stake in Mao’s comments is not just a debate over the word “synthesis,” but about how contradictions are resolved. Yang’s view of change implied that there was no need to defeat the capitalist elements in Chinese society and inside the CPC, while Mao’s view means that one side would win, and take over the losing side. Rather than fighting to a decision, Yang claimed that the two sides of a contradiction are “indivisibly connected” and

that “Dialectics is the teaching that shows how opposites become identical (united). Seek common ground while reserving differences.” [10]

In the late 1960s in China there actually was a fight to a decision over the issue of capitalism versus communism, called the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR). While the GPCR was going on, Yang was thrown into jail until 1975. Convincing workers and peasants to understand that Yang’s view of change was false was a crucial step toward launching the GPCR. You can’t start a revolution if you think that the working class and the bosses are “indivisibly connected” and need to “seek common ground.” The GPCR began soon after the “One divides into two” versus “Two combine into one” debate had run its course.

### Ai Siqi’s Contribution

In 1965, after a year of sharp struggle against “Two combine into one,” the communist philosopher Ai Siqi, who represented a Left line in the CPC on this issue, summarized the results of the debate [11]:

- Opposite sides of things or processes are usually formed by dividing up, and not by combining two already existing things. Capitalism, for example, did not come about by sticking workers and capitalists together. Instead, the class differences between workers and bosses emerged and became more sharply defined through a dialectical process driven by the internal contradictions of capitalism, that is, by the capitalists’ need to exploit workers to make a profit.

- When opposites do combine, their conflict continues and can intensify. At any given time, one side will have the upper hand. It is rare, and always temporary, for the two sides to have equal power. The idea of some people in the teachers’ struggle in Oaxaca, for example, that the teachers’ movement and the government can exist in parallel without one defeating the other is a dangerous illusion.
- When opposites do combine, it takes struggle to put them together and keep them together. To illustrate peaceful combination, Yang’s students gave the example of atoms’ combining to form molecules. But Beijing University chemistry professor Fu Ying countered that hydrogen and oxygen atoms may have to collide tens of millions of times before they stick together to form water. [12] When atoms do combine — and many cannot — there is always a struggle. Similarly, uniting the working class in the fight for communism can only happen after a long struggle by communists with the most ideologically advanced line.
- Opposites are not indivisible, as Yang’s students claimed, but are at best relatively stable and eventually come apart. This was Lenin’s point in his famous statement that “The unity ... of opposites is conditional, temporary, transitory, relative. The struggle of mutually exclusive opposites is absolute, just as development and motion are absolute.”[13] If opposites really were indivisible, how could a revolution ever take place?

Ai Siqi concluded that “Unity will exist if maintained through struggle; it will perish if sought through compromise.” This means that unity of the working class can’t be achieved by communists adopting the most popular position--making unprincipled compromises--but by fighting for unity around a more advanced line, even if it means giving up a lower level of agreement with some people, at least for the time being.

### Philosophical Mistakes of the Left

Despite the important correct ideas that the pro-communist forces fought for in the “Two combine into one” debate, the good guys also had important ideological weaknesses during these debates. These weaknesses played a role in the eventual reversal of workers’ power in China. While Mao Zedong, Ai Siqi, and others were right in their rejection of Yang’s revisionist philosophy, they unfortunately shared a number of wrong ideas with Yang’s side. These errors weakened their case against “Two combine into one,” and led them to accept policies that helped strengthen the capitalist aspects of socialist China.



**让社会主义新文艺占领一切舞台**

*“Let new socialistic culture conquer every stage.”*

Since the late 1930s, the CPC had made alliances with the so-called “national bourgeoisie,” the supposedly “good” capitalists willing to work with communists. During the war against Japanese imperialism, the CPC even made alliances with big landlords who were willing to fight against the Japanese invasion. The CPC agreed with the rest of the international communist movement during World War II that it was necessary to build a “united front” with various “lesser” enemies of the working class to oppose fascism. Everywhere it was practiced, this policy proved to strengthen pro-capitalist forces and severely damaged the communist movement. Ai Siqi agreed with the idea of a united front with “good” capitalists, but argued with Yang about how unity with the enemy should be analyzed and carried out. Sticking up for a united front with the enemy was an important concession to Yang’s claim that opposites really could combine into a relatively stable whole.

### “Non-Antagonistic” Contradictions

Both sides of the debate also said that under socialism, there is a special type of contradiction called “non-antagonistic,” which can be eliminated without becoming more intense and fighting to a decision. This idea, which also proved completely wrong, assumed that workers’ power could be combined with the capitalist features of socialism, like a wage system, without leading to intense conflict. But in the GPCR, the internal conflicts of socialism in China became very intense and eventually broke out into a civil war. These events in China showed that socialism itself is a contradiction, which attempts to combine workers’ power with capitalist inequality, a contradiction which is not “non-antagonistic,” but must be resolved by a fight to the finish. Unfortunately, the workers and peasants lost this fight in the GPCR.

The theory of non-antagonistic contradictions seemed plausible partly because it gave a rationale for treating contradictions among friends differently than contradictions between enemies. Its mistake was claiming that the types of contradiction and the course of their development and resolution are different in these two cases. Non-antagonistic theory says that contradictions “among the people” do not tend to become more intense. On the contrary they do tend to become more intense, but still must be resolved by different methods--different ways of becoming intense--than contradictions with the enemy.

### Contradictions Among Friends and Comrades

In the party and among friends we should not see fighting to a decision as one group of people defeating another, but one line winning out over another. Fighting for the best line means winning people away

from mistaken views and actions, which the Chinese communists called “curing the disease to save the patient.” Of course, the struggle to cure the patient might make him worse temporarily. Reaching a “higher unity,” a unity based on more thorough agreement with a more advanced line, can mean giving up a lower unity. This idea also applies to struggling for the party’s line in mass organizations. We aim for a “higher unity” of the working class, which means not only giving up a lower unity with pro-boss liberals, but perhaps also with some workers and their allies who can’t be won over to the higher view at this time.

Although the CPC fought against Khrushchev’s line about “peaceful transition to socialism,” Ai Siqi’s comments show that the CPC had adopted part of that line. Ai said that that China had to struggle against imperialists to “preserve peace,” wrongly assuming that the contradiction between workers’ power and imperialism could be kept from intensifying. In fact, the Vietnam War was already heating up. In the early 1970s, the CPC caved in to U.S. imperialism and made a deal with U. S. President Nixon, partly out of fear of Soviet imperialism after the reversal of workers’ power in the Soviet Union. This deal with the U. S. bosses also strengthened the pro-capitalist forces in the CPC and helped pave the way for the defeat of working class power in China in 1978.

### Other Philosophical Battles in Pre-GPCR China

Although the “Two combine into one” was the biggest and most important, there were a number of other philosophical battles in the late 1950s and 1960s in China that were a significant part of the fight against revisionism. These issues are all connected and people who had the wrong ideas about “Two combine into one” were wrong about these other issues, too.

One issue was the question of the main contradiction in Chinese society. Every thing or process has multiple contradictions inside it that effect how it changes. At any one time, one of these contradictions has the biggest influence on the development of that thing. This is called the main contradiction. In 1956, CPC leader Liu Shaoqi, who became the most notorious “capitalist road” politician during the GPCR, claimed that the main contradiction in China was between its “advanced socialist system” and its “backward social productive forces.” This implied that resolving the contradiction between the working class and the capitalist class was not the CPC’s main job. Liu and other “capitalist roaders” wanted the party to concentrate on building up production in ways that strengthened capitalist relations, rather than fighting an anti-capitalist class struggle, which they saw as basically over. [14]

## Productive Forces Determinism

The “main contradiction” issue is directly connected to a revisionist theory of social development called “productive forces determinism.” This theory says that the development of new social relations--like communism--is mainly driven by the development of society’s forces of production, rather than by politically conscious social movements and political action. It claimed that political movements can accomplish something only when the productive forces have gotten big enough. This meant that communism would only be possible in the far future, when a high level of economic development has been achieved. (For a thorough explanation of what is wrong with productive forces determinism, see the *PL Magazine* article at [http://www.plp.org/pl\\_magazine/commecon.html](http://www.plp.org/pl_magazine/commecon.html)).

Yang Xianzhen, who supported this reactionary theory, claimed that:

“Only with a higher level of productive forces than that of socialist society, namely, the level of communist society, can we practice the principle ‘from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.’”[15]

In fact much of the Chinese communist movement had lived for a long time on a very modest need-based system, called the “supply system,” which was dismantled after the 1949 revolution. In the late 1950s, Mao advocated going back to this egalitarian system, which was not based on a high level of development of the forces of production:

“Why must we grasp a wages system? .... Our Party is a party which continuously fought a war for more than 20 years. For a long time it has implemented the free supply system. From several tens of thousands of persons it grew to several million, right up to liberation. In the very beginning the collective lived an egalitarian life. In work everyone was industrious and in warfare all were courageous. *There was absolutely no reliance on material incentives, but rather a reliance on the drumbeat of revolutionary spirit.*” [16]

Mao’s argument here is not only that past experience shows that a high level of development of production is not necessary for equality, but that political commitment and “revolutionary spirit,” rather than wages and inequality, can motivate people to work hard and fight hard. In general, Mao argued that political movements can make enormous changes in the social relations and productive forces of society--that political ideas and actions can change material reality.

## The Dialectical Identity of Thought and Being

The idea that political consciousness and actions can change reality doesn’t just apply to rejecting wages and inequality. In line with Marx’s statement that “theory itself becomes a material force once it has gripped the masses” [17], Mao made a more general point this way:

“Among our comrades there are many who do not yet understand [the dialectical materialist] theory of

knowledge.... Nor do they comprehend that matter can be transformed in consciousness and consciousness into matter, although such leaps are phenomena of everyday life.” [18]

Matter is transformed into consciousness everyday because people learn new information by observing and changing the world. On the other hand, transforming consciousness into matter is what workers do when they work. Workers modify parts of the world according to plans they have in advance, changing their goals and ideas into material reality. As Marx wrote in *Capital*, “At the end of every labor process, we get a result that already existed in the imagination of the laborer at its commencement.” [19] The communist movement performs a collective labor that changes society according to its plans and makes a new collective, egalitarian society. Like all labor, however, the fight for communism can only succeed if our plans are based on objective knowledge of the world.

In dialectical terminology, the fact that matter can be transformed into ideas and ideas into matter is called the “dialectical identity of thought and being.” “Dialectical identity” doesn’t mean that two things are the same, but that they are linked together, and in the right circumstances, one can be transformed into the other.

Yang Xianzhen accepted that matter can produce ideas, but he rejected the idea that political consciousness can lead to material changes. He rejected the dialectical identity of thought and being as an idealist principle that leads to “subjectivism.” In particular he called trying to make a rapid transition to communism “subjectivism.”

Sticking up for the dialectical identity idea, Ai Siqi pointed out the political consequences of denying it. He wrote that

“Those who deny the dialectical identity of thought and existence, who can’t see the subjective dynamism of the people, and that leading thought, while reflecting objective law, can enter into the mass movement and transform into a great material force that can move heaven and earth. Such people make right opportunist mistakes.”[20]

Denying that political consciousness can transform into changes in the world not only denies the power of mass movements, but also rules out social organization based on political “incentives,” rather than wages and inequality, that is, communism.

## What We Inherit from Communist Philosophy in China

We have only given a short sketch of the many-sided philosophical struggles in the communist movement in China. All of these issues are still directly relevant to the fight for communism, and especially the struggle against revisionism, but the lessons about dialectics are the most important. Although the pro-capitalist wing of the CPC eventually won, let Yang out of jail, and even now praise



him as a hero [21], correct ideas about dialectics are among the many important political and philosophical lessons that we should learn from the GPCR period. The struggle in China to defeat the philosophy of reconciliation was a big advance in dialectics, despite important mistakes.

The rejection of the “Two combine into one” idea is directly relevant to our work in mass organizations, which are often led by agents of the liberal imperialists. It is dead wrong to expect that pro-worker and pro-boss politics can combine peacefully inside mass organizations. Instead, we have to fight to win workers and their allies to our line and defeat the ideas of the enemy. If we don’t sharpen the struggle for our line and against capitalist ideas among the rank and file, these organizations will strengthen the capitalists hold over the working class.

It is also up to us to apply the advanced dialectics developed in China more thoroughly than was done there, and apply the critique of “Two combine into one” to socialism. Socialism tried to combine working class power with wages and inequality, which are fundamentally capitalist relationships. These two sides are incompatible and in all cases, lead to the downfall of socialism and its replacement by capitalism. In the Soviet Union and in China, however, even people who fought against right-wing philosophy and politics considered these incompatible sides to be in a “non-antagonistic” relation. The history of socialism shows, however, that the wage system and workers’ power have to fight to a decision. Unless the wages system is defeated, the inequality that it brings will take us back to capitalism. This is the biggest lesson from “One divides into two.”



*“Smash the old world / Establish a new world.”*

[1] K. Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law," in *Marx Engels Collected Works*, New York, 1976, vol. 3, p. 89.

[2] P. N Fedoseev, "The 22nd Congress of the CPSU and the Tasks of Scientific Research Work in the field of Philosophy," *Voprosy Filosofii*, 1962, no. 4, pp. 19-20.

[3] M. B. Mitin, "The 22nd Congress of the CPSU and the Tasks of Scientific Work in the Field of Marxist-Leninist Philosophy," *Voprosy Filosofii*, 1962, no. 4, p. 137.

[4] Zhou Yang, "The Fighting Task Confronting Workers in Philosophy and the Social Sciences," *Beijing Review*, Jan 3, 1964, p. 17.

[5] Mao Zedong, *Selected Works*, Beijing, 1977, vol. 5, p. 516.

[6] Yang Xianzhen, "Respect Dialectics (November, 1961)," *Chinese Law and Government*, vol. 24, nos. 1-2, Spring-Summer 1991, p. 108.

[7] Yao Boma, "Reevaluating the 'Theory of an Integrated Economic Base,'" *Guangming Ribao*, 7/3/80, FBIS 7/24/80.

[8] Ai Hengwu and Lin Qingshan, "Dividing one into two' and 'Combining two into one'," *Guangming Ribao*, 5/29/64, Current Background, #745.

[9] S. Schramm, *Mao Tse-Tung Unrehearsed*, London, 1974, pp. 224.

[10] Yang Xianzhen, "Study and Grasp the Law of the Unity of Opposites ...," *Chinese Law and Government*, vol. 24, nos. 1-2, Spring-Summer 1991, p. 113.

[11] Ai Siqu, "Surreptitious Substitution of Theory of Reconciliation of Contradictions and Classes for Revolutionary Dialectics Must Not Be Permitted," *People's Daily*, May 20, 1965, SCMP 3475.

[12] Gong Yushi, "Some Matters Concerning Professor Fu Ying," *Beijing University Gazette*, October 20, 2002, [http://www.pku.edu.cn/news/xiao\\_kan/newpaper/969/3-1.htm](http://www.pku.edu.cn/news/xiao_kan/newpaper/969/3-1.htm)

[13] V. I. Lenin, "On the question of dialectics," in *On Dialectical Materialism*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977, p. 382.

[14] The Writing Group of the State Planning Commission, "Continuing the Revolution or Restoring Capitalism? Criticizing the 'theory of productive forces' of Liu Shao-chi and other political swindlers," *Beijing Review*, 9/10/71.

[15] Yang Xianzhen, "Uphold the Workstyle of Seeking Truth from Facts ...," *Chinese Law and Government*, vol. 24, nos. 1-2, Spring-Summer 1991, p. 73.

[16] Mao Zedong, "Opinion on the Free Supply System," in *Miscellany of Mao Tse-Tung Thought (1949-1968)*, vol. II, Joint Publications Research Service, JPRS 61269-2, 20 Feb. 1974, Page 233, emphasis added.

[17] K. Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law. Introduction," *Marx Engels Collected Works*, New York, 1976, vol. 3, p. 182.

[18] Mao Zedong, "Where to Correct Ideas Come from?" in *Mao Tse-Tung Four Essays on Philosophy*, Beijing: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1968, p. 136.

[19] K. Marx, Capital, vol. I, *Karl Marx Frederick Engels Collected Works*, New York : International Publishers, 1976, vol. 35, p. 188.

[20] Ai Siqu, as quoted in C. L. Hamrin, *Alternatives within Chinese Marxism 1955-1965: Yang Hsien-Chen's Theory of Dialectics*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1975, p. 275, punctuation modified.

[21] "Party Strength," *People's Daily*, Beijing, 7/20/03.



Comrade Lenin Sweeps the Globe Clean  
(Caption of 1920 Soviet poster)

## SCIENCE:

An Instrument for the Working Class to Liberate Ourselves from Capitalism  
vs.

## INTELLIGENT DESIGN:

An Anti-Working-Class Fundamentalist Christian Plot to Destroy Science

### WHY IS SCIENCE VITAL TO THE WORKING CLASS?

The importance of science to the working class is unlimited. However, the working class needs science first and foremost in order to liberate ourselves from slavery — the slavery of exploitation, racism, sexism, poverty, war, and genocide that are inflicted on us every day by the voracious system of capitalism and its owners, the major bosses. We need a scientific approach to the universe and everything in it, but for now particularly to capitalist society.

After the working class seizes political power, through armed revolution, and organizes a new form of state power to prevent the expropriated capitalists from returning to power or a new capitalist class from arising, there will be an unlimited need for a scientific approach to such things as health, environment, food production, economics, and predicting and responding to natural disasters.

### Science is a necessary tool for the working class to liberate itself

The need for science as *a tool for liberation* is the most fundamental reason for the working class and our allies to understand that mastering and using science is in our interest. Without a scientific approach to the question of liberation, the working class is doomed to generations more of misery and early death. Indeed until the working class around the world understands the necessity for science, and begins to apply it in a collective manner to our present condition, we and our children and grandchildren and all future descendants are doomed to suffer endlessly — and needlessly.

Furthermore the working class needs to understand that religion is the enemy of liberation. Any other argument in favor of science and against religion, its chief competitor, floats in the air and is subject to different matters of opinion — or, as communists would say, is idealist, i.e., not based in reality and in our real needs. As we discuss below, while religion has many aspects, some that appear to be positive for the working class, it is primarily a weapon of the ruling class to throw dust in the eyes of the

working class about science, so that they can maintain their power and profits.

The most immediate need for the working class is to apply scientific methods to studying and learning the history of social revolutions. This science was founded in the 1800s by people like Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and V. I. Lenin and has been developed further by many millions of others in collective struggle against capitalist oppression. When the capitalist ruling class passively watches or actively encourages its supporters as they deny that there can be such a thing as a scientific approach to history or revolution, they are trying to stave off the inevitable realization by the working class that the opposite is the truth.

Among the capitalists' supporters, certain Christian fundamentalists go even further. They are trying to prevent the working class from understanding and appreciating the necessity for science primarily by removing evolutionary theory, a central aspect of science, from the public schools and replacing it with Creationist "Science" or with the "theory" of Intelligent Design.

In particular, they claim 1) that evolution is "only" a theory, 2) that a theory is only a guess and not true, 3) that, rather than through evolution by natural means, nature in all its complexity was intentionally developed by a supreme being, and 4) that the only source of comfort in this world of misery is the embracing of religion. Whether intentionally or not, these fundamentalists are only helping to prolong the existence of the capitalists as a class.

So let's proceed to discuss

- the recent history of Creationism and Intelligent Design,
- what science really is,
- how the ruling class uses it,
- what the theory of evolution by natural selection really says,
- the ID "arguments" against evolution,
- how religion and science are related,
- why the working class must defeat this ruling class assault on us, and finally
- why armed revolution for communism is the only way this can be finally achieved.

## THE RECENT HISTORY OF INTELLIGENT DESIGN

### Creationism and Intelligent Design attack our children

The publication of this pamphlet is prompted by the ongoing attempts by certain Christian fundamentalists to remove the teaching of biological evolution from the public schools. Such a removal would rob our children of an education in one of the more central aspects of science in the modern world. Even more importantly, it would tend to deceive the working class about the nature of science in general.

As a fallback position, if they could not remove evolution altogether, the fundamentalists have demanded that Creationism, or as they have come to call it “Creationist Science,” be taught alongside evolution, so that each of our children would be able to choose which “science” appealed to them more. Creationism is the claim that the universe and all forms of life were created by “God” in one week a few thousand years ago, as the Bible says, and that nothing much has changed since.

While not completely preventing children from learning about evolution, the teaching of evolution alongside its denial would introduce further confusion into what is already a very complex set of ideas, woven together into a magnificent and consistent theoretical framework that requires a significant amount of study and effort to understand. Furthermore it would promote the idea that evolution and Creationism are equally valid alternative points of view, implying that science and religion are likewise equally valid. And closely related, it would blur the lines between science and religion by offering a blatant falsehood in the guise of truth, namely that Creationism is scientific.

The efforts of the creationists have sometimes been successful, at least temporarily. The battle has been going back and forth in Kansas since 1999 when creationists on the Kansas State Board of Education first voted to remove references to evolution in the schools and were then voted out of office. However, they regained office in 2004, and in late 2005, instead of removing evolution or introducing Creationism as such, they put the teaching of what they called “Intelligent Design” into the curriculum. Intelligent Design (ID) is the claim that life is so complex that it could only have been brought about by an act of intentional intelligence, though its advocates are cagey about who or what possesses that intelligence.

Similarly in Dover, Pennsylvania, the school board was voted out of office in late 2005 after having introduced ID into the public schools the year before. A few weeks later, in a court suit brought by the fundamentalists in still another effort to introduce ID into the public schools, U.S. District Judge John E. Jones declared that, even

if ID advocates refused to admit that the intelligent designer had to be “God,” ID was religion in thin disguise and therefore violated the clause in the U.S. Constitution calling for the separation of church and state.

Indeed much of the opposition to teaching ID in the schools, instead of being based on a rejection of ID itself as just plain false, has been based on a belief in the need for the separation of church and state. Judge Jones, after all, is a Republican churchgoer, but he saw through the creationists’ denial that the supposed intelligent designer had to be “God,” and he specifically called them dishonest in his lengthy written opinion. Even members of the clergy have denounced ID, saying, “To reject this truth [the fact of evolution] or to treat it as ‘one theory among others’ is to deliberately embrace scientific ignorance and to transmit such ignorance to our children (quoted in Carroll — all references at the end).”

### Creationism is not new

Indeed Creationism was the prevailing view among scientists, let alone religionists, up to the mid 1800s, when Charles Darwin in England published his major book in 1859 called *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, known generally simply as *The Origin of Species*. In fact, Darwin struggled to overcome the bonds that creationist thinking held him in, since he himself was an Anglican minister. And *Origin* was his answer to the creationists, who were not just the religious fundamentalists but were the majority of biological and geological scientists of his day.

Before then the concept that present day nature had evolved from earlier forms was certainly not unknown, but it was merely one idea among others in the scientific literature. With this classic book Darwin not only confirmed with literally mountains of evidence (since much of it came from fossils buried in mountains) that evolution had indeed taken place, and over hundreds of millions of years, but he did so by discovering the primary mechanism by which it took place, namely what he called “natural selection.”

Intelligent Design, which is Creationism in its latest guise, starts from a slightly different point of view. Whereas Creationism is simply a statement that stands on its own, ID advocates recognize the formidable power of the science of evolution and they throw down the gauntlet in the form of a question: How can organs that are so tremendously complex as, say, an eye (the usual example) arise without some intelligent designer having produced it? Since they mean this question rhetorically, i.e., they don’t ask it in order to find an answer, their position is primarily one of incredulity, i.e., inability to believe that such a thing could have happened.

They are not the first to ask this question. It was earlier

posed more than 200 years ago in 1802 by another Anglican clergyman, William Paley, who used the analogy of a pocket watch that he imagined finding on the ground. Anyone finding such a complex mechanism, said Paley, would immediately realize that it hadn't been created by accident, but rather must have been put together intentionally by a thinking being, in this case, of course, a person. He then likened the watch to the eye, and drew the same conclusion that there must have been an intelligent designer, which he naturally concluded had to be "God."

### Temporary defeats will not stop the creationists

The temporary defeats of Creationism/ID in Kansas and Pennsylvania have not ended the efforts to introduce ID into the public schools, with the ultimate goal of expunging evolution from the curriculum completely. But it is not only science that is under attack by the fundamentalists. All other religious outlooks are also under attack by them. The drive to force ID down the throats of school children amounts to religious bigotry. After all, ID is only one of many religious ideologies. Below we discuss who benefits and loses from religion in general.

Before we do, we note that there is an interesting parallel between Darwin's major contribution and that of his strong admirer, Karl Marx, that other earth-shaking scientist of the mid-1800s, whose Communist Manifesto (co-authored by his friend and ally Friedrich Engels) was published in 1848, just 11 years before *The Origin of Species*. The concept that Darwin discovered and introduced was not evolution, but rather a major mechanism by which it takes place, which also happened to cement the concept of evolution in biological science. Similarly the concept that Marx discovered and introduced was not the struggle between social classes, but rather the ubiquitous nature and the future outcome made possible by that struggle, namely communism — rule of society by the working class.

No scientist ever contributes a new idea out of whole cloth, but rather at most simply advances the science another step, often by resolving growing contradictions among the involved concepts. However, while most scientific advances merely add quantitatively to our understanding, there are others that make a *qualitative* change and completely overturn our previous way of looking at the phenomena. Such qualitative advances dwarf the quantitative ones. The theories of evolution by natural selection and ubiquitous class struggle leading to communism are among those giant steps for humankind — far more significant than Neil Armstrong's first step on the moon in 1969.

## WHAT IS SCIENCE?

One comment on this section: Abstractions are always difficult to follow by themselves, but just giving examples without the overview doesn't lend itself to much understanding either. One has to inevitably precede the other, so don't be discouraged if this part seems unclear at first. If you reread it after covering other sections of the pamphlet, your understanding will deepen each time you approach it.

### Science is a method, not a body of knowledge

Science is a method of approaching problems, not a body of knowledge. For its long term survival, the capitalist ruling class promotes science not only as if it were finished knowledge, but as if it were comprised of a divided set of many bodies of knowledge. These include, for example, mathematics, physics, astronomy, chemistry, biology, meteorology and geology. They further divide science into the opposing categories of pure and applied sciences, or physical and life sciences, also called hard and soft sciences.

To parallel the categories of science listed above, universities are divided into departments. Other departments in the university, such as languages, art, religion, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, economics and history, are said by the ruling class and its promoters to be something altogether different from science. They either imply or openly proclaim that to speak of a scientific approach to language or art or history is sheer nonsense. However, if science is a method of approaching problems, rather than a body of knowledge, then there is indeed such a thing as a scientific approach to language, art and history.

The scientific method consists essentially of endless cycles of either systematic or insightful/intuitive guesses (hunches, hypotheses) about reality followed by observations or experiments that test how true the hypotheses may be, then, based on the results of observations or experiments (evidence), amended and improved hypotheses and still more observations/experiments that test the truth of the amended hypotheses.

In short, science is an organized example of the process of trial and error. Everyone is familiar with that process, since it is something that each of us engages in every day of our lives. As infants, from the day we are born, we all engage in trial and error to learn to distinguish objects in our visual field, to recognize our parents, to use our hands to grasp or move objects within our reach, to realize that when an object disappears from our field of view it may still exist behind another object, how to know when we are at the edge of a surface so that we don't fall off it, and so on. These are all primitive forms of science, but we generally reserve the term for the organized collective

forms of hypothesis and experimentation or observation.

Eventually the process of experiment/observation leads, sooner or later, to results that fail to confirm the hypothesis. Then more and more complex proposals are made to explain the exceptions and to patch up the hypothesis, and often at some point some new insight is needed to improve on, or completely replace, the hypothesis. That insight often comes when someone suddenly recognizes the significance of something that has been staring us in the face, but has gone unnoticed or unquestioned.

Often that insight takes one of four forms: 1) recognition that two completely separate things are actually examples of the same thing, even though they had never been thought about at the same time, or 2) recognition that two things assumed to be the same are actually different – the opposite of the first type, or 3) recognition that something that has been assumed to be true and has never been questioned is actually untrue, or 4) recognition of the possibility or actuality of something that had never been considered or thought possible. There may be others that we haven't thought of, but these give the flavor.

Such insights are the key to major advances in science. The working out of the consequences of such an insight, and on that basis the evaluation of whether or not it is true, is what observation and experimentation are all about.

### Some examples of scientific insight

- Isaac Newton in the 1600s had an insight that the apple falling from the tree on earth was undergoing a motion that was qualitatively the same thing as the moon's motion around the earth. Having put these two separate things together he was then able to investigate the phenomenon systematically and propose a law of gravity. His law — still useful, for example, for rocket engineering and astronomy — is that the attractive force of gravity between two objects is weaker the farther apart the two objects are, and in particular that the force weakens by a factor of 4 at 2 times the distance, a factor of 9 at 3 times the distance, and so on, the so-called inverse square law. This is an example of the first type of insight.
- Albert Einstein in the early 1900s had an insight that light was different from other wave phenomena, such as sound or surfing waves, in that light was able to travel in an empty vacuum without requiring a medium. The medium that was previously thought to carry light was called the ether, but Einstein realized that all of the many experiments that failed to detect it failed because it didn't exist. Freed from this false idea, he was then able to investigate systematically and propose the special theory of relativity. This is an example of both the second

and the third types of insight.

- Charles Darwin in the early 1800s had an insight that the fossil pattern in rocks and the side-by-side geographical existence of similar but different living species had similar causes, with one changing over time the other over space. This suggested to him that the various forms of life evolved out of other forms, rather than all having been created at the same time by "God." He further realized that when plant and animal breeders were able to develop new breeds of dogs, cattle, or other domesticated animals, by selecting them for some desired feature (strength, size or milk yield, for example), they were doing something similar to what nature had done automatically (natural versus artificial selection). He was then able to investigate systematically and propose that automatic selection performed in nature could explain the evolution of different life forms. This is an example of both the first and third types of insight, since Darwin had to put different things together and he had to rid himself of the previously unquestioned assumption of simultaneous creation.
- Karl Marx in the mid to late 1800s had an insight that there was a difference between labor time and labor power — the first being the time the worker puts in at the factory each day, and the second being the labor time it takes to produce what the worker and her/his family need to stay alive another day. He was then able to investigate systematically and show that capitalist profit is based on the hidden theft of some of the workers' labor time, because the bosses pay only for labor power (which is generally less than labor time) but steal the product (whose value is that of the labor time it took to make it). This is an example of the second type of insight. Marx called the difference (between the value of labor time and the value of labor power) "surplus value," which is the essential core of the capitalists' profit. He also showed that the workers' recognition of this exploitation, and of all the horrors inflicted on the workers by the capitalists' control of that stolen profit and their need to continue to expand their profits or go out of business, could lead the working class to overthrow the capitalists and institute an egalitarian communist system of society. This is an example of the fourth type of insight.

### The two sides of progress – planting and weeding

Thousands of other examples could be given, but one thing common to all of them is that progress in science is a two-sided process. It not only involves the emergence of new truer ideas, but also involves the recognition and rejection

of old false ideas. Indeed all learning involves both of these aspects — the gaining of new ideas and the purging of old assumptions or illusions that are false and hinder understanding. The process is somewhat like gardening — planting and weeding. If any progress is to be made, either in organized science or in an individual's learning, both sides of this process are vital and inseparably linked. And often the weeding takes far more time and effort than the planting — in the classroom, in the laboratory and in life.

### **The related roles of induction and deduction, another two-sided process**

Insight into a new hypothesis to explain observed phenomena is called induction, and the hard work of discovering all the consequences of the hypothesis — both those already observed and those yet to be expected — is called deduction. Induction and deduction are both crucial aspects of scientific work, and while they are different from each other they are inseparably linked. Unless induction is followed systematically by deduction of its consequences and then by experiment or observation to confirm or disconfirm these consequences, induction or insight just remains guesswork, faith, or whatever you want to call it, but it certainly isn't science. It only becomes science when evidence is brought to bear, evidence derived from experiment or observation.

Hypotheses, resulting from induction, are generally the product of intuition, but intuition that is nourished by a relatively full knowledge of the phenomena to be explained and that usually results only after a tremendous amount of work thinking about them and discussing them with many others. Because insights don't arise just because you wish you could have an insight, induction is a relatively rare event. They occur all the time, but not as frequently as deductions, which receive more guidance from already proposed hypotheses.

Hypotheses, in fact, generate lots of questions that demand answers, questions that are essentially deductions of the consequences of the hypothesis. There is creativity in both of these opposite processes. Insight into new recognitions is clearly a creative act, but ferreting out questions through the act of deduction is also creative, even if not requiring quite as much concentrated work as induction.

Failing to recognize some of the implications of a hypothesis, and therefore failing to test them, can mislead for a time, particularly those implications that would be disconfirmed if subjected to experiment or observation. Failing to evaluate alternative hypotheses can also mislead. These two types of failure are quite common in certain fields of science, as we discuss below under the topic heading "The enemies of science within the fields of science" in the section headed "The ID attack on evolutionary theory."

### **All aspects of the class struggle constitute experiments**

The concept of experiment is not confined only to manipulations of nature in the laboratory, or to our individual efforts to explore our surroundings. Experiment can be much broader than that. In particular, the working class, in our collective struggles with the capitalist class to survive from day to day, to build unions, to organize revolutions, in short to find collective ways of improving our lives, is continually experimenting in the broadest sense. The Bolshevik revolution that created the Soviet Union in the early 1900s, the Chinese revolution after World War II, the struggles of Native Americans against the genocide committed by the expanding U.S., the struggles of slaves to gain freedom and end chattel slavery, the civil rights movement, all these are not just examples of class struggle. They also constitute experiments from which we have the opportunity to learn strategies and tactics that work and differentiate them from those that are doomed to fail.

But, and this is critical, in order for lessons to be extracted, these struggles have to be studied in a systematic way, and the lessons drawn depend critically on the outlook with which the investigation is approached. Thus capitalists will generally draw one lesson, while the working class, using the outlook developed and popularized by Marx and Engels in the mid 1800s, will generally draw the opposite lesson. Marx and Engels were the first to study the history of class struggles over the millennia and to show that by such study, and by applying the lessons from the class struggle in organized practice, the working class around the world is capable of liberating ourselves from all forms of capitalist slavery and oppression once and for all. But again, as with all experiments, trial and error is central to these efforts. Marx and Engels organized the first communist party in Europe in the mid-1800s, precisely to carry out this task of study (to build theory) and practice (to carry out and test its conclusions), and to study again and engage in practice again, in endless cycles.

When the Parisian workers seized power in 1871 and organized the Paris commune, Marx drew conclusions about what should be done after the workers control the state by examining what the workers in fact did. The commune was defeated and destroyed soon thereafter by the combined armies of the French and German capitalist ruling classes, who had been at war with each other up to that point. They both found the working class in Paris to be the more critical enemy, rather than each other. From their defeat, Marx drew further conclusions about what it would take for workers not only to seize power but to be able to hold it — namely that the capitalist state had to be completely destroyed and a completely new type of state had to be created that was suitable for the working class to rule.

The Soviet and Chinese revolutions constitute evidence

that the working class has the ability to seize power from the capitalists. But both these revolutions have since been defeated by their internal errors, and both societies have again been placed under the hammerlock of capitalism, with untold horrors being committed against the workers, who formerly held political power there. The capitalists and their intellectual defenders gloat over these defeats and claim that they prove that attempts to build communism cannot possibly last, and that the international working class ought to give up on any hope for liberation from capitalism. Since trial and error is known to be a part of all scientific endeavor, the capitalists try to convince us that revolution has nothing to do with science. Otherwise the working class might regard these defeats as part of the lessons to be learned in order to improve our strategies and tactics, until one day we will be able not only to seize power from the capitalists, but to destroy that class and hold power permanently.

### **Levels of organization and levels of analysis**

One of the major contributions of Marx and Engels to science has been the explicit consideration of levels of organization of matter and the levels of analysis appropriate to them. Most theories about societies, for example, both before and since Marx, have regarded societies merely as collections of individuals. They have either failed to see, or have tried to hide the fact, that there are laws of operation of societies on the social level that emerge only on that level and are relatively independent of individual desires and actions. So they promote the idea that “human nature” determines how societies function. But capitalism functions differently from feudalism, from communism, from ancient Greek and Roman slave societies and from tribal societies. To acknowledge that different organizations of society function very differently, and at the same time to claim that they depend on an unchanging “human nature,” constitutes a logical inconsistency.

Only by studying societies on the social level, as well as on the individual level, and as well as in their relationships with other societies around them both past and present, as well as in their relationships to the changing physical environment in which they develop, can we discover the essential features of the societies. Only then can we understand that what is commonly called “human nature” really is human social nature that differs radically depending on the social context in which people are born and develop, or which we create collectively.

Thus the characteristics of societies affects the characteristics of humans within them, just as the nature of humans affects the nature of their societies, but in just what way each level affects the other level requires examination of all relevant levels at the same time. Furthermore one cannot understand a particular individual except in her/his relationship to all other

individuals around her/him and to the surrounding social level, again both past and present. Different levels of organization require different levels of analysis. Then, and only then, can the relationships between the various levels be understood. Nor are the laws governing development on different levels simply reducible to those on lower levels, and vice versa.

This is no less true in physics, astronomy, chemistry or biology. In biology, for example, we have to study biomolecules, cells, organs, organisms, species, to name a few levels of organization of living matter, and none of these levels can be understood in isolation from the rest. In physics, to take another example, the temperature of a system of matter has an understandable meaning at the level of the system but also can be understood at the next lower level as the collection of motions of all the atoms and molecules that make up the system—but only when the system is in so-called equilibrium (otherwise the system has no temperature). This was a discovery that was not immediately self-evident. In fact, nothing is self-evident until it is recognized. Only by studying each level as a separate level and in its relationship to all the other levels can we come to understand them.

### **Marx and Engels first gave practical meaning to dialectical and materialist thinking**

As we said above, scientific insights are relatively rare events in the development of human knowledge and understanding. However, insights were given a more systematic foundation and a greater likelihood of arising through Marx and Engels’ approach of “dialectical materialism.” While Marx didn’t invent either dialectics or materialism as a way of understanding the world around us and within us, he and Engels introduced these approaches into the popular mainstream and wedded them together as both necessary for scientific thinking to reflect reality.

Many readers are familiar to one degree or another with the terms “dialectics” or “materialism” or with “dialectical materialism,” but understanding what dialectics really means is a long and difficult struggle throughout life in trying to understand what it means in each context we study. Similarly, understanding how to keep in sight a materialist approach to analyzing everything in the world takes a lifetime of practice in doing so. Much of the difficulty is caused by the way capitalist education teaches us to think in ways specifically designed to blunt curiosity and to foster superficial rote answers rather than profound thoughtful questions. In a world run by the working class in its own interests, dialectical and materialist thinking will become second nature.

Let’s take materialism first, since it may be the easier to understand of the two. The terms “materialism” and “materialist” are not used here in the narrow capitalist



sense of greed for material things. Rather the terms are used in Marx's sense of being rooted in material reality. Materialism, as a philosophical approach to the world, stands opposed to idealism. Again, not "idealism" in the narrow capitalist sense of hoping against hope for the betterment of humanity, but in the philosophical sense that ideas are more important than, and stand apart from, material reality — regardless of where the ideas come from and regardless of how well they correspond to reality. The chief example of idealism in this sense is religion.

The term "dialectics" comes from dialog between two parties representing ideas that contradict each other. The German philosopher Hegel developed dialectics as a conflict between opposing ideas, or more precisely as a conflict between people holding opposing ideas. Marx and Engels broadened that context and developed dialectics as an investigation of conflicts within and between all things, not just two parties arguing different points of view. They developed dialectics primarily as a guide to what questions to ask of things around us in order to understand their inner workings, how they relate to other things and, most importantly, how they develop and change. Without understanding how something develops and changes we can't understand what the thing really is and where it stands in relation to other things.

Asking the right questions is most of the battle. Answers to these questions come from study, observation and experiment, but without questions, and the right questions at that, there can be no recognition of answers. Dialectics steers us always to seek, among other aspects, the two-way interaction between any two things, whether on the same level of organization or on different levels, and the internal changes that each thing undergoes as a result of the interaction. If we want to understand the development of anything over time, from an infant to a tree to a society to a chemical compound to the universe, we need to examine the things that make it up (its internal structure), as well as the things that surround it and with which it interacts, both directly and indirectly. To the extent that we leave out consideration of one or another important feature, we will fail to understand the thing. Then eventually we learn what we have failed to take into account by seeing how our understanding goes wrong or is in error.

The critical relationships, both internal and external to a thing, are characterized by conflict, or what Marx and Engels called contradiction. While the word "contradiction" originally meant the conflict between two statements (literally "contra-" meaning "against," and "-diction" meaning "talking"), it has been broadened to mean conflict between any two things or any two aspects of things. Just as the word "dialectics" originally involved conflict between two points of view and was broadened to mean conflict within or between any things.

However, the central usefulness of dialectics is the

understanding that all things are continually changing, even as they retain certain features. Just as materialism stands opposed to idealism, dialectical thinking stands opposed to mechanical thinking. Mechanical thinking is everywhere in capitalist society, in writings about science, history, art, psychology, and so on. It takes the point of view that things can be understood in themselves without necessarily having to take account of their relationships with other things around them, either on the same level of organization or on higher or lower levels, or without necessarily having to take account of their history or development over time. In particular, mechanical thinking neglects the changes that things undergo during their interactions with other things, and often goes so far as to deny that there are any significant changes. Mechanical thinking is generally accurate enough when applied to machines (hence the term), but it is often extremely inaccurate when applied to anything else.

For one thing, mechanical thinking often fails to look for qualitative change or for the conflicts that produce such change. It often regards relationships in a one-sided way, seeing only the effect that one thing has on another, completely neglecting the reverse effect. This outlook derives, at least in part, from the social relationships in exploitative class society.

For example, in a capitalist business the top boss is the active party, and, to the boss, the workers are essentially nothing more than parts in a machine that follow the orders of the boss. This relationship exists in one of its purest forms in capitalist armies. The fact that workers in a factory, for example, see many ways in which to streamline the work process, or soldiers see many ways in which their lives are wasted in unnecessarily dangerous and unproductive and criminal battles, is completely lost in a mechanical outlook. And of course, a mechanical outlook ignores the possibility of mutiny or revolution.

For another example, by bringing up oil from the ground and using it to power industry and transportation, capitalists change our surroundings by causing global warming, pollution, and many other changes in our environment. These changes in the environment, in turn, change us by causing asthma and other lung diseases, or by causing flooding in coastal areas. A mechanical approach leads to denial that human activity in a capitalist society causes these disasters. Therefore the capitalists encourage us to take a mechanical approach.

Still another example is the one-sided outlook of many biologists that the genes or DNA in the cells in our body determine how we behave, without recognizing that not only does our environment participate in shaping our behavior but that both our environment and our activities determine how our genes are activated and used by the cells. This erroneous way of thinking mimics the one-sided top-down mechanical view of the relationship between bosses and workers, or officers and soldiers.

Dialectics, on the other hand, encourages us to see the two-way relationships, and to see how each participant in an interaction is affected by that interaction and how each changes in the process. In the daily class struggle, for example, workers don't just follow orders but also learn how to organize and fight back. By studying history and organizing ourselves, through our communist leadership, to put the lessons into practice, we can vanquish the bosses and their armies and in the process completely change ourselves as a class and as individuals. This also completely changes the nature of what is left of the bosses, if any survive the revolution.

Finding the ways in which things change requires investigation, i.e., observation and experiment. It isn't automatically obvious just because of using a dialectical approach. But because a mechanical outlook doesn't steer us to look for the ways in which these changes take place, the understanding of these vital issues is often completely missed. There are many exceptions in capitalist writings, but they are not consistent. So dialectical materialism guides the questions, and without the questions the answers are not even sought, let alone found.

### **Asking the right questions is the key to understanding anything**

Learning to ask the right questions is the essence of training in any field of specialization. For example, an auto mechanic and a layperson can both face the same car and wonder why it isn't working properly, but the mechanic is trained through school and practice to ask particular questions and to investigate common causes of the failure. A radiologist and a pediatrician can both look at a chest x-ray, but the radiologist will see things the pediatrician might easily miss because she is trained to ask the right questions of the image and improves with practice. An art historian and a layperson can look at the same painting, but the historian will be able to explain much more about the painting because of her training and practice in the art of that period.

Similarly, communists and non-communists are able to look at the same situation in the class struggle, but the communists will be able to see better how to advance the struggle and swing the situation in favor of the working class because of training in the theory and practice of history and revolution. The essence of that training is learning the way that dialectical materialism leads us to ask the right questions. In each of these examples, the answers, and indeed some of the questions, will vary depending on the situation, but the starting questions are learned through training and practice.

Examples of "right questions" include such things as "Why did the Soviet and Chinese revolutions ultimately revert to capitalism?" or "How did it come about that a few people are extremely rich while the vast majority of the world's

people are poor and have to survive by selling their labor power to the extremely rich?" or "How is it that despite the fact that the great majority of U.S. citizens oppose the war in Iraq, the politicians keep pouring money and lives into it and the media keep hiding the truth?"

One of the major assaults on the working class due to capitalist education is that schoolchildren are trained to provide answers to questions already made up by others, but not to develop questions themselves. Many teachers find out the hard way, when they begin to teach, that they now have to learn for the first time how to develop questions that they have never been trained, or trained very badly, to do. That, in many cases, is when they find that they really begin to understand their subject. Furthermore elementary and secondary school teachers, as well as many college teachers, are discouraged from permitting students to develop and follow the logic of their own questions by curricula that force them to cover a certain amount of predetermined material in a predetermined amount of time. So it is not only that the schools fail to teach working class children to develop their own questions. To a very large degree, students are actively prevented from doing so. It falls to communists to relight that fire, and to lead by example and question everything about capitalism and the world.

(For a much fuller discussion of dialectical materialism see the PLP pamphlet "Jailbreak.")

### **Quality and quantity**

All things have both qualitative aspects and quantitative aspects. Without considering quality there can be no consideration of quantity. For example, when we consider the *quantity* of length of a table, the *quality* of length has to be understood first as something that can be compared between two things by holding them side by side — one the table and the other some standard such as a ruler. Or the *quantity* of time between now and when I have to leave for work has to be understood as some *quality* that can be compared between the process of my getting ready for work and some other process used by everyone as a common standard, such as the movement of a clock.

By failing to keep quality in mind, many a professional scientist has arrived at false conclusions by simply manipulating mathematical symbols without keeping in mind to what they refer. And many a student has been left out of the discussion of an equation in physics because the teacher failed to adequately explain the qualitative aspects that underlay the quantitative aspects. It was through a questioning of the qualitative aspects of time and space, for example, that Einstein arrived at the theory of special relativity as a more accurate description of motion than Newton's theory.

Another aspect of the relationship between quality and quantity is that quantitative changes in some aspect of

a thing can lead to qualitative changes in the thing. For example, when heating water, the quantity of temperature of the water sooner or later reaches a certain point where the water changes qualitatively from a liquid to a gas (it boils away). Or when the class struggle reaches a certain quantitative level of intensity, the qualitative nature of capitalist society changes from one ruled by the capitalists to one ruled by the workers, such as with the Russian or Chinese revolutions.

### **What is a theory?**

When an insight (hypothesis) unites many observed phenomena and the number of confirmed deductions (consequences) from that hypothesis continues to multiply, the collection of hypothesis and consequences becomes a theory. For example, the theories of gravity, of relativity, of evolution, or of communist revolution.

One confusing thing is that the everyday usage of the word “theory” is not the same as the scientific usage. The everyday usage just means a guess, as in “I have a theory that the moon landing was faked.” Even within science the word “theory” is sometimes misused to mean a hypothesis (guess) that seems plausible but has not been confirmed with evidence. IDers rely on this street use of the word to confuse the working class about evolutionary theory.

Furthermore it’s one thing to have a hypothesis that hasn’t yet been confirmed. It’s quite another thing to have a hypothesis that cannot, even in principle, be confirmed. The latter type does not qualify as science. One example is the claim that there is a supreme being that chooses not to reveal itself directly to anyone. Only guesses that can, at least in principle, be confirmed or disconfirmed qualify as part of science.

Practical obstacles to confirming or disconfirming guesses, such as the difficulty in obtaining a piece of the inner core of Jupiter to discover what materials it is made of, do not disqualify the question from being scientific. After all, today’s practical obstacle is often tomorrow’s achievability, and even today the proposal can often be made as to how the hypothesis could be confirmed some time in the future. It is the absence of ways to confirm, and not the technical or practical current inability to confirm, that makes the difference between science and non-science.

### **True, false and the real world**

Which brings us to two related questions: Is there such a thing as true and false? Is there a real world apart from our perceptions? These are closely related, because if there is no real world, there can be no true or false. True statements can only be true if they are statements about a relatively stable real world and can be confirmed by anyone with the proper tools. Conversely, false

statements can only be false if they are statements about a relatively stable real world and can be disconfirmed by everyone as false. It is one of the mainstays of materialist thinking that there is indeed a real world apart from our perceptions and interactions with it. Thus, trees do fall in the middle of forests whether or not there is anyone around to see or hear the event.

In everyday life all of us certainly show that we believe there is such a thing as a real world and that there are true and false statements about it. For a trivial example, all of us have taken tests in school including questions as to whether a statement is true or false. However, a philosophical argument sometimes develops when the question of reality, apart from our perception, is approached directly. People who argue that there is no such reality are called “logical positivists,” a confusingly unintuitive phrase. But even logical positivists act in their daily lives as though there is indeed a real world. For example, challenge any of them to step in front of an oncoming locomotive and their inconsistency will be revealed.

### **What is evidence?**

Evidence in broad terms is any information that confirms or disconfirms a hypothesis. It is the link between the real world and humans who ask questions about it. Evidence can come from direct observation or experiment, in the broadest sense. It can also come from what others say or write. Evidence can be weaker or stronger. In general, what makes it stronger is the number of independent sources and types of evidence that lead to the same conclusion. Furthermore direct observation or experiment is stronger than what others say or write, though the more trustworthy a speaker or author, the stronger the evidence contained in their statements.

However, evidence is subject to perception and interpretation by humans. It is here that we can get it wrong, at least temporarily – and sometimes even for very long periods of time, sometimes millennia. Many textbooks, for example, are simply dead wrong about a lot of things. The worst offenders are history textbooks that are commissioned by the capitalist ruling class specifically to hide from the working class the true history of class struggle and how the working class has won battles against their bosses and/or oppressors in the past.

But history of class struggle is not the only topic that is subject to error or falsehood in textbooks. Even physics, which seems to be the most objective of sciences, since its subject matter is the furthest removed from the struggle between classes, suffers from all the weaknesses that scientists have in trying to interpret and understand the real world.

For example, there have been almost a hundred years of writing on the science of quantum mechanics, a very

complex branch of physics dealing with microscopic particles such as atoms and molecules, and that is hard to understand (even for physicists). As a central part of the theory, all the text books always have, and still do maintain that there can be no precise reality in the world of microscopic particles. Despite the fact that this has been disproved, by a few physicists who question everything they don't understand or that seems just plain wrong, all textbooks and most physicists still believe that this view is correct (Bohm, Smolin, Beller).

### How are evidence and proof related?

Proof can be thought of as the product of enough evidence. However, proof is never absolute, and is only approached closer and closer by more and more evidence. In other words, evidence is to proof as practice is to perfect. There comes a point in a concert pianist's development when her practice allows her performances, *for all practical purposes*, to be perfect, at least in hitting the correct notes. There also comes a point in the accumulation of evidence for a theory when, *for all practical purposes*, the theory is proven, and denying its validity without counterevidence, or without an alternative theory that explains all the evidence even better, is just dishonesty, ignorance, wishful thinking, or some other less than valid approach to the real world.

However, even theories for which evidence has mounted for long periods of time (and which *for all practical purposes* have therefore been proven) can one day be replaced by newer theories that deny their essential features, even while retaining some of their superficial aspects. This can occur when finally some new evidence or a new theory arises that convincingly debunks it, or at least reveals its limits of applicability. For example, Einstein's special relativity theory replaced the Newtonian view of physics, that had held firm for over 200 years, by revealing its limits of applicability (namely to velocities much less than that of light) even while retaining certain aspects of the Newtonian view to high degrees of approximation.

Because proof can never be absolute – whether in science or in any other human endeavor – in criminal trials, for example, the jury is instructed by the judge that the standard of proof of guilt is “beyond a reasonable doubt.” In other words, in that context proof beyond a reasonable doubt is proof for all practical purposes. But that's the best that we can ever do, recognizing that the verdict, like a scientific theory, may later be shown to have been wrong in at least some respects.

### Can science ever be completely objective?

In particular, is science so objective that everyone ought to be able to come to agreement? The short answer is No.

In the practice of science there is much room for insights

and intuitions in the formation of guesses, and there is much room for choosing such things as which questions about reality to pursue, what conceptual framework (theory) to use to relate new evidence to already established guesses, and which evidence to accept as relevant and which to reject as irrelevant.

But the source of these things is often to be found outside science. It is these things that prevent science from being a predetermined process on which all objective people/scientists can come to agree. While the real world is the final arbiter of answers to those questions that get asked, it does not determine which questions get asked and which ignored, or how the answers are interpreted and related to other things in the world.

The claim that Marx's theory of revolution cannot be scientific, or more generally that an analysis of history cannot be scientific, is based on a fallacy about science. The fallacy is that science is completely objective while Marx's theory of revolution is biased toward the interests of the working class and against the interests of the ruling class. However, the bias in Marxist theory is no more nor less than that in any science. Bias simply guides the choice of questions to be asked, how to view evidence, and which evidence is relevant and which irrelevant. These choices are necessarily common to all science. It is still the real world that is the final test.

The working classes in Paris in 1870, in Russia in 1917, and in China in 1949 have shown that they are capable of overthrowing capitalism and organizing a new world in their own interests. Since through these revolutions the working class, so far, has only achieved temporary political power, there is clearly much more to learn about how to seize and hold that power. But, as we have said, trial and error is a necessary part of all scientific processes.

The capitalists claim that the temporary nature of these revolutions is evidence that communism cannot work and therefore should not be attempted. This is paralleled by the ID claim that the existence of unanswered questions in evolutionary theory is evidence that evolution is only a guess and not a fact. Both of these false claims overlook the fact that all advances in science and society are a result of trial and error and never fall from the sky fully formed and perfected.

While bias is unavoidable in science, there is bias that leads away from the real world and bias that steers toward it. The only bias that is harmful is that which prevents a theory from being an accurate reflection of the real world. It is therefore not enough to accuse a scientific opponent of bias, without showing that her/his conclusions are not supported by the real world while yours are.

However, this formulation has to be modified. We really mean the only bias that is *destructive to science* (rather than “harmful”) is that which prevents a theory from being an accurate reflection of the real world. After all, in saying “harmful” rather than “destructive to science”

we were implicitly taking the point of view of the working class. But what is harmful to the working class is generally beneficial to the capitalist class, since they are a small class that could not possibly exploit, oppress and rule over the vast majority of humanity without the corruption of science that leads the working class away from reality and the search for liberation.

### **Pseudoscience and religion**

To help understand what science is and isn't, we need, among other things, to understand pseudoscience, i.e., efforts within fields of science that fail to measure up to the requirement for objectively weighing evidence. Pseudoscience engages in only partial application of the scientific method to partially false content. We will say more about pseudoscience below, but suffice it to say here that it is more similar to, than different from, religious thinking (faith without evidence). Pseudoscience acts to oppose science from *within* various fields of science, while religious thinking acts to oppose science from the outside. Therefore pseudoscience is the more dangerous, since it has the surface appearance of science, like the fabled wolf in sheep's clothing, harder to detect and therefore harder to defeat. It is like the Democrats or trade union officials who are enemies of the working class from within, pretending to be the allies of the workers but really believing in and carrying out the will of the capitalists. PLP publications, particularly our newspaper CHALLENGE, are brimming with examples of these enemies within.

### **Science is a cumulative and collective process**

A central aspect of science is that it is a *collective*, rather than individual, endeavor of human beings. The main thing that separates humans from other animals is that humans pass on their discoveries about the real world not just to their immediate offspring, but from generation to generation, and in cumulative fashion. Books, pictures, schools, and many other forms of continuity allow humans to build on the achievements of our ancestors so that we are not consigned to continual repetition, generation after generation, of the same questions or even, more importantly, the same oppressive conditions of life. If mistakes are repeated over and over again, it is because the problem is not being approached scientifically.

Despite the mythology fostered by the ruling class and most science historians that certain individuals such as Newton, Einstein, Darwin, Leonardo, Aristotle, or even by implication Marx are somehow qualitatively different types of humans (geniuses) from the rest of us, the fact is that none of them achieved anything outside the context of the social relationships of their time or without the help of many other humans with whom they were in direct or

indirect contact. Their insights were the product of years of intense social exchange of ideas with others, focused concentration, and consistent hard work.

And their contributions are just the tip of an iceberg. The submerged part is the millions upon millions of scientific discoveries and inventions by uncelebrated workers and tradespersons over thousands of years. For the most part they were illiterate, and therefore they could not record their inventions in print. So science historians, for the most part, have ignored their contributions. Moreover much of the written European and U.S. history of discoveries and inventions over the millennia overlook the overwhelming contributions from Asian, Middle Eastern, African, "New World" Indian and Latin American peoples (Conner).

And finally, the only way that the likes of Newton, Einstein, Darwin, Leonardo, or Aristotle can be (falsely) considered unique and different types of human beings is by considering them not only outside the context of everything else accomplished in science by millions of others, but by considering their scientific contributions outside the context of themselves. That is, Newton, for example, was mainly ignorant when it came to history or biology or poetry or things outside certain fields of physics. It is only by considering the one or, in the case of certain other "geniuses," the few areas in which they made significant contributions (along with millions of other unsung heroes) that the illusion is created that they are somehow different from the rest of us.

Marx is one of a handful of exceptions who excelled in a wide variety of fields. But he didn't do this because he was somehow differently endowed, but rather because he was motivated to help resolve the injustices he saw all around him and he used the intellectual framework of dialectical materialism to see the interrelationships among all aspects and levels of human endeavor and of the natural world. For example, in order to expose the essential feature of capitalist economics as hidden theft from the working class, he had to study mathematics, history, economics, philosophy, and other branches of science. Meanwhile, in addition to some of these, his friend and colleague Engels studied and wrote about anthropology and natural science. *We can all aspire to achieve similar successes if we are motivated and use the scientific tool of dialectical materialism.*

The best scientists, without even knowing they are doing so, also use either a dialectical or materialist approach, or both, to their respective fields. One linguist, for example, when asked recently if he was a Marxist, responded that he didn't know, since Marxism deals with so many different aspects of the universe. He simply fell into a dialectical materialist approach to linguistics because it made the most sense to him and allowed him to explain a wide variety of aspects of language acquisition.

## Scientific discoveries only take root when the time is right

Besides the collective exchange of ideas and hard mental labor over many years, sometimes centuries, the recognition of the law of gravity also required that the social context be such as to permit this discovery to catch on, gain other followers and bear fruit, thus becoming the basis for the development of still further understanding of physics.

The necessity of the preparedness of social conditions (that the times be right) finds confirmation in the fact, for example, that more than half the inventions and discoveries attributed to European inventors and scientists had long since been invented or discovered in China, sometimes centuries earlier. They had been brought to Europe by traders and other travelers, but lay dormant until the times called for them. Examples include the printing press, the biology of the silkworm, spinning wheels and other textile-handling machines, mechanical clocks, suspension bridges, oil drilling techniques, steel, gunpowder, iron plows, ship rudders, the compass and multiple masts, to name only a few (Conner).

### Summary

So in summary, communists and almost all professional scientists start from the point of view that there is indeed a real world apart from our perceptions, and that every single one of us acts in our daily lives as though we are well aware of this fact, regardless of what we claim to believe, or even believe we believe. If there is a real world, then there are indeed true and false statements about it. If there were no real world, truth and falsity would have no foundation. But since there is, they do.

The practice and building of theories, which again feed practice that improves theories, in endless cycles, is rooted in the reality of the world around us and outside of us. This merging of theory and practice constitutes a materialist approach to our surroundings and to ourselves. In looking to construct theories, the most successful approach is to consider everything at every level that may impact on the subject at hand, and the interrelationships and interactions among them, which is the essence of a dialectical approach. Theories are less successful to the extent that they neglect either a materialist or dialectical approach.

The best science then is a method for separating truth from falsity, about anything, including history, art, or other so-called humanities. Of course, there are additional aspects of human endeavor other than truth and falsity, such as esthetics and taste. But these we will only mention in passing, since the purpose of this essay is to discuss science and the different ways in which it is useful to the ruling class and to the working class. The main embodiment of the idealist approach to the world is religion, which will be discussed later in the pamphlet.

## HOW IS SCIENCE IMPORTANT TO THE RULING CLASS?

We have already discussed *why* science is important to the working class but discuss here *how* it is important to the ruling class. We make this distinction because the importance of science to the ruling class is limited, while the importance to the working class is unlimited. For the ruling class, their use of science is essentially limited to two functions: a) the production of their profits and b) the maintenance of their power over the vast majority of humanity.

The ruling class is willing to support with jobs, research grants, awards, publishing opportunities and publicity those scientists who develop those aspects of science that result in profit-making or war-making or surveillance technologies. Even the exploration of space, on which the ruling class has spent vast amounts of our money, is fundamentally intended for their military purposes. Research on health and health care also consumes a certain amount of our money, but it is primarily directed at keeping workers and soldiers just healthy enough to be able to produce capitalist profits and fight wars of conquest.

On the other hand, the ruling class has little use for that small minority of scientists who think more deeply and broadly and who question the very foundations of accepted theories when, regardless of how successful, they seem flawed. Because of the risks to their own careers, such scientists are few and far between. Since they often cannot get or hold positions in universities, they almost always have to have independent incomes so they can think, write and publish their ideas on their own (Smolin).

### Technology explodes under capitalism

The current technology explosion had its roots in the European renaissance of the 1400-1500s, which, in turn, borrowed, or more appropriately stole, from other cultures in the Middle and Far East, the Western Hemisphere, and Africa. It was during the renaissance that there was an explosive advance of scientific theories about physics, chemistry and astronomy, encouraged and made necessary by the commercial and economic needs of the rising capitalist class.

On the other hand, it was also during that era that this explosion of science was most threatening to the current feudal ruling classes – the landowners, the king and the church. Among many others, Galileo, an Italian physicist, was threatened by the church with burning at the stake if he did not recant his theories. For example, he said that Venus, which he could see through his newly invented telescope, was like Earth and not a heavenly body in a different class from Earth. The church relied, and many

churches still do, on the concept of a heaven apart from earth, where those who obey the clergy during life could count on spending eternity after they die in a degree of comfort unknown to them during life. Any statement that tended to dissolve the concept of heaven was a threat to the church's power. Galileo backed off, but countless other scientists and philosophers were, in fact, burned at the stake.

In contrast, the rising capitalist class found science to be useful for the development of the means of production, but only certain scientists were supported and only research into some questions was funded by the capitalists. Through funding, the ruling class could attempt to determine the direction in which scientific progress would be made. But this manipulation, while powerful, has its limits. There was, and there continues to be, an ever-present danger of scientific insights that could threaten their ruling position or their profits.

For example, the current U.S. administration, with even less style and finesse than most, co-opts and hires scientists to debunk the scientific discovery that global warming is taking place and is largely due to CO2 emissions from fossil fuels (coal and oil). It has taken the U.S. out of the Kyoto Protocol that most nations (169 of them as of December 2006) have signed and ratified, a treaty designed to decrease these emissions. The U.S. has signed but never ratified the Protocol, which means, according to the Protocol, it is not bound by it.

The current U.S. administration would rather spare the short-term expense and protect the current profits of its friends in the oil and manufacturing industries. It refuses to prevent the increase in disastrous floods, fires, erosion and loss of wetlands, and to preserve the environment for future generations. In order to throw pixie dust in our eyes, the hired scientists raise false questions about the scientific conclusions of the vast majority of the world's investigators in this field — that the continuation of preventable global warming will have devastating consequences for humanity, not to mention the rest of plant and animal life forms. Thus the ruling class misuses and lies about science whenever real scientific conclusions get in the way of its profits and power.

As it became clear that the position of the capitalist ruling class could be threatened by everything that Marx researched, wrote about and put into practice in the 1800s, he received little official support. To the extent that he supported the Union side against the southern Confederacy of slave owners during the Civil War in the U.S., he was employed as a correspondent by the anti-slavery *New York Tribune* newspaper. On the other hand, he was only able to develop the theory of capitalism, in his earth-shaking book *Capital*, because his friend and collaborator Engels inherited a factory from his father and used the profits in part to support Marx and his family during those years. Because he was funding the

beginning of the end of private ownership of factories, the Engelses of the world have been extremely rare. But the rarity of such individual exceptions only highlights the rule that virtually all capitalists will use and misuse science to stay in power, even when that means killing millions in near genocidal wars.

### **Capitalist class relationships act as a “fetter” on scientific development**

Because the world's capitalists rule everywhere, and because their use and financial backing for science is limited to their own class needs (profits and state power), this acts as an obstacle to — or, as Marx put it, a fetter on — the development of science. If investigation of scientific questions is funded by the rulers primarily if it will increase their profits or enhance their war-making ability or other needs related to maintaining their class dominance, the vast majority of questions that arise cannot gain their backing, and few women or men can afford to devote the time and effort to pursue them without such backing.

Furthermore, at a deeper and less easily detectable level, even with respect to those investigations that are permitted, most scientists apply an inadequate range of levels of scientific analysis. Without necessarily realizing it, their scientific thinking suffers from a pervasive capitalist outlook on the world that is far too narrow to conquer the problems. This narrowness of outlook pervades virtually all aspects of science in capitalist society and only serves the interests of the ruling class by preventing the more profound questions from being asked, such as “Why are we poor?” or “Why do workers from different countries or religions often hate and try to kill each other?”

As an example, most scientific handling of major public health issues — such as AIDS or TB or Mad Cow or other infectious diseases — is confined to looking for the microscopic agent of the disease (a virus or a bacterium or some other agent), the place where it was originally transferred from animals to humans, what causes it to spread and drugs and other methods that can combat the disease. The findings that result from these investigations may be perfectly valid as far as they go, yet, at a social level, scientists fail to recognize that the underlying root of the disease lies in capitalist class relationships and the extreme impoverishment of the vast majority of the world's population that these relationships require. The scientists are therefore blinded to the reality that until capitalism is “cured,” diseases such as AIDS, TB or parasitic diseases can at best be limited in one location or another but can never be eliminated from the earth.

And now let's proceed to discuss evolutionary theory, a theory that first arose in the younger days of capitalism and continues to be developed, but today is still under attack from fundamentalist religious forces.

## EVOLUTIONARY THEORY

The science of evolution is central to science in general, particularly because it is fundamentally about qualitative change. Fundamentalist religious attacks on evolution underscore the central importance of religion as a weapon in the hands of the capitalists, particularly because the last thing the capitalists want is change – i.e., change in the current form of social organization in which they alone rule. And Creationism and Intelligent Design are nothing if they aren't a statement that once the various species were created they have never changed.

We discuss religion more fully below, but here we discuss the essential features of evolutionary theory. We also briefly discuss the evidence that led Darwin to confirm the *fact* that evolution has taken place, and to discover what he thought to be its primary mechanism, natural selection.

There are basically two different levels of evolution: *micro*- and *macro*evolution. Microevolution refers to changes *within* a species that can happen over time from sheer random effects called drift or from natural selection in the face of changing environments or other forms of selection, such as intentional selection by animal breeders or lab experimenters (more on this below).

*Macro*evolution, on the other hand, refers to the emergence of new species out of old ones — qualitative change. Darwin was particularly concerned with the macro level, though it can only be understood in its relationship to the micro level. There are many excellent and manageable reviews of evolutionary theory — for example, see Eldredge, Arthur, Carroll or Ruse. Of course, Darwin is also an unbeatable source on the original theory, but the more modern works contain information on the progress since Darwin.

### Who was Darwin and what was the theory he presented in 1859?

Charles Darwin, born in England in 1809, started as a geologist, as well as an Anglican minister, who trained himself to be a naturalist and who observed detailed facts of nature with a keen eye. Everywhere he traveled he kept a notebook in which he recorded thousands of details. He developed an encyclopedic knowledge about the earth and its rocks and mountains, as well as about plants and animals all over the world. In his early twenties he took off on a 6-year voyage on a ship called the *Beagle* that traveled around the world, spending much time in South America and the Galapagos Islands in the Pacific Ocean off the coast of Ecuador. It was only armed with this vast knowledge that he was able to detect patterns to which those with lesser knowledge and experience were completely blind. Such knowledge, gained by long and

laborious study, is a prerequisite to insights that chart new pathways in science.

Surrounded by predominantly creationist thinking in the first half of the 1800s, Darwin gradually developed the insight that there had to be some natural process that explained many facts that seemed unlikely to be the work of a supernatural creator with a mind and with goals. For example, he wondered why two different species of rheas lived in neighboring parts of southern and western South America. (The South American rhea resembles the African ostrich and the Australian emu, the class of large flightless birds.) He saw in that pattern something similar to the way fossils of long dead creatures were trapped in layer upon layer of earth and rock. Neighboring regions contained different species, with similar species succeeding each other in layers of rock that were more and more superficial and therefore had been laid down more and more recently.

His insight led him to suppose that, rather than all these creatures having been created at the same time by “God,” they seem to have been created at different times and in different places, which cried out for an explanation. He didn't think it likely that “God” would have bothered to lay down such a pattern across neighboring places, and certainly, he thought, “God” wouldn't have laid successive species across successive portions of time.

He also noted that plant and animal breeders were able to select plants or animals for certain desirable features and selectively breed them to develop purer breeds. Of course, in order for breeders to be able to select different features that they desired, there had to be a certain amount of variation among the various cows or crops or dogs to begin with. For example, cows that gave more milk, or crops that yielded more food per acre, or dogs that could herd sheep. After many generations of selective breeding, different varieties of cows or dogs arose. Just think of the many breeds of dogs, all of which belong to the same species and can interbreed, barring such physical difficulties as might be faced by a Great Dane and a Chihuahua.

Darwin wondered if an analogy to this selective breeding could happen in nature without anyone's trying. He found that tremendous variation did indeed exist in nature ready to be selected. He also guessed that if selection could lead to different breeds ultimately becoming so different from one another that they could no longer interbreed. If this occurred then new species would have arisen.

The definition of “species,” as with *all* definitions, has some fuzzy edges (i.e., contains exceptions), because the real world has fuzzy edges. As a rule, for animals at least, species is often defined as a group within which interbreeding can take place between pairs of opposite sex, but outside the group no interbreeding is possible. To sharpen the definition it is often added that in order to be a species the group must share common ancestors. However, there are exceptions to this definition, as is true



for all definitions of things in the real world. For example, lions and tigers are different species, but they can mate. Furthermore their offspring are usually not sterile, i.e., they, too, can reproduce. Horses and donkeys, likewise, are different species but, while they can mate, their offspring are usually sterile, though not always.

Nature contains exceptions all over the place, but this should not prevent us from using definitions that are good for all practical purposes. We can always examine the exceptions separately and learn even more from them. In that regard, definitions are like proofs. They can be valid for all practical purposes yet always will have limits of applicability. As one philosopher has said, it is impossible to pick the precise moment when day turns into night, or night into day; nevertheless no one has any trouble distinguishing night from day. Indeed they are as different as night and day.

Darwin realized, not long after his return from the *Beagle* voyage, that this could happen through something that he logically termed natural selection, as opposed to deliberate human (artificial) selection. And such change in the appearance, size and behaviors of different varieties would constitute microevolution, i.e., change. Recognizing the reality of evolution itself was not so difficult. It was the problem of how microevolution could lead to new species (macroevolution) that occupied most of Darwin's mental efforts. Once he came up with an answer he was afraid to publish it, for fear that he would be forever barred from the halls of science, particularly since it not only flew in the face of current scientific thinking, but also in the face of religious teachings.

However, about 20 years later in the late 1850s Darwin received a manuscript from Alfred Russel Wallace proposing the same theory of natural selection. It was then that he decided to write and publish his major book *On the Origin of Species*, which came out in 1859. But being scrupulously honest, he first jointly published a paper with Wallace the year before, laying out the theory and giving Wallace full credit for his similar discovery. In his book Darwin enlarged on the details and tried to anticipate all the objections he could think of and answer them in detail.

As it turned out, over 40 years earlier a U.S. physician, William Charles Wells, had put forward an essentially similar theory of natural selection, but Darwin had not heard of it until he had already published three editions of his book. In the fourth edition he gave Wells credit for the much earlier discovery.

This coincidence of independent discovery by more than one person is not at all unusual in science. Rather it is the rule when the times are right for a discovery to take place, and take root. However, in this case Darwin's book went far beyond both Wells's and Wallace's thinking. He even disagreed with Wallace on certain aspects. One important disagreement was whether natural selection was the

main mechanism of evolution, as Darwin maintained, or the *only* one, as Wallace claimed (Gould).

Unfortunately one of the weaknesses in Darwin's book lay in his admiration of Thomas Malthus, a political economist and also another Anglican clergyman who was born some 43 years earlier than Darwin. Malthus theorized that since food production increases more slowly than the human population, creating shortages and famines, increasing numbers of people would starve to death. In other words, competition among people for scarce food supplies would play a key role in determining who would survive. His premise was completely false. Among other errors, with advances in the science of food production over 200 years later, increases have not only kept up with population, but can exceed its growth. The only thing that creates starvation among large sections of humanity is capitalist production for profit instead of for need.

However, from Malthus's hypothesis, and from the competition of capitalists that he saw all around him, Darwin drew the false conclusion that all plants and animals are engaged in a competition *against each other* for survival, with only the conquerors surviving. Following the publication of Darwin's theory, Herbert Spencer an English philosopher, extended the theory to human society, which later came to be called social Darwinism, in which he justified dog-eat-dog capitalist competition as no more than a reflection of nature. Interpreting natural selection in this way, Spencer coined the term the "survival of the fittest," which is a completely unnecessary part of the theory of natural selection, but which even Darwin adopted in a later edition of his book. The survival of the "fit" is all that is needed at most, and for animals who help each other, such as humans, the definition even of "fit" has to be expanded greatly. But this type of unscientific thinking led directly to eugenics toward the end of the 1900s and to Nazi genocide half a century later.

### What is the proof that biological evolution has taken place?

Since then there have been many forms of confirming evidence for evolution and for natural selection as one of its major mechanisms. Aside from the fossil patterns and neighboring regional patterns, other examples of evidence for evolution by natural selection include the following:

- Fruit flies, that reproduce new generations in a few days and are therefore useful for laboratory experiments on breeding, have been made to develop increasing levels of alcohol resistance by the deliberate selection of surviving flies in higher and higher concentrations of alcohol to breed the next generation.
- Antibiotics are known to drive the creation of new varieties or species of drug-resistant bacteria by

killing all bacteria except for those that somehow become equipped with a change that renders the antibiotic impotent against them. The development of drug resistance is a major medical problem in the world for treatment of often fatal infectious diseases, such as TB or certain forms of staph.

- Embryos of vastly different species, such as fish and humans, go through similar stages of development, such as arches on either side of the neck that in fish turn into gills and in humans into the jaws, the small bones of the inner ear, and the bones and cartilages involved in speech.
- Limbs and other body parts of various vertebrates (animals with spines) are similar in the numbers and arrangements of bones, such as in fins, arms and legs, and wings (called homology).
- DNA is found in the cells of all living (and extinct) creatures from bacteria to roses to palm trees to ants to mice to pigs to lions to humans.
- Furthermore the amount of difference between the DNA of two different species parallels the amount of difference in their sizes and shapes — in other words, the more one species has evolved away from another the more the DNA has changed, and conversely the closer two species are to each other in size and shape the closer their DNA structures are.
- Successive generations of moths in industrial England, as the soot from factories darkened the trees, turned a darker color for camouflage from birds that eat them, and this change reversed itself in areas where pollution was lessened. (This example actually turns out to be far more complicated than that and has been the subject of a large amount of experimentation, observation and controversy among biologists over many decades. But most, if not all, of them agree that, while there may be more factors involved in the unquestioned evolution of moth coloration over time, nevertheless all these factors illustrate natural selection at work. Reality has unlimited complexity, and the struggle to understand more and more of the involved factors illustrates the ongoing process of science — which, as we said above, is a method rather than a body of knowledge.)

This is just a small sampling of the various pieces of evidence that take us beyond a reasonable doubt that evolution really takes place, and that not all species were created at the same time. Indeed, if not all members within a species are created at the same time — for example, your great grandparents were created before you — why should it be that all species were created at the same time?

There have been many new discoveries that have revolutionized the science of evolution since Darwin's

time, things about which he knew nothing but in broad outline may have had some suspicions. For example, he knew that there must be something that was passed from generation to generation through impregnation, since he needed to explain why offspring look much more similar to their parents than to other members of the species or to other species. But he didn't know anything about genes or chromosomes or DNA or the genetic code that translates from DNA to proteins. These were discovered in stages, from the mid 1800s when Darwin wrote to the latter part of the 20th century, a hundred and fifty years later.

Because over the last 150 years there have been so many independent types of confirming evidence for evolution, and more continue to be discovered every day, the fact that all forms of life today have arisen out of earlier forms and were not created at the same time has, for all practical purposes, been proven. In this case, we might add, beyond a reasonable doubt.

### **How does natural selection work?**

So far we have explained the essential features of evolution, and now we will explain the essential features of natural selection. Examples help to illustrate the process. Sickle cell anemia occurs when one gene that is involved in the construction of hemoglobin undergoes a mutation that changes the DNA and hence the structure of the hemoglobin. Hemoglobin is the molecule that occupies our red blood cells and carries oxygen from the lungs to everywhere else in the body. The hemoglobin that results from this particular mutation causes deformity of the red cells into the shape of a sickle (a crescent-shaped instrument used to cut grass and grains) rather than the normal disc shape. The sickle shape hinders the passage of the cells through small blood vessels and causes a painful decrease in oxygen supply to various parts of the body in those people who receive the mutated gene from both parents. Furthermore before treatment was developed, they tended to die young. Those who have the gene from only one parent generally live a full life, and do not sickle to the same degree. They are said to have sickle trait rather than sickle cell disease.

This mutated gene was allowed to spread in various populations where malaria exists because a little bit of sickling prevents malaria from making one sick, for reasons we won't go into here. So people living in areas where malaria is widespread — mainly the eastern Mediterranean, India, and West Africa — and who have one mutated gene from one parent but a healthy one from the other parent will be protected from malaria and will survive long enough to produce children.

In areas free of malaria the mutated gene had no chance to spread in the population because non-sicklers would generally survive to adulthood, and they and their children would be a much larger portion of the population than sicklers, who might die young. But in areas with malaria,

death of non-sicklers from malaria allowed the protected sicklers to spread throughout the population. So malaria is a selection pressure that favors sickling. Thus that which is a relative advantage in one environment (sickling in the presence of malaria) is a relative disadvantage in another environment (where malaria is absent). This process in no way suggests intelligent design, but rather illustrates natural selection.

A second example, which is just a hypothesis (educated guess) at this point, requires further research and evidence before it can be accepted as fact. The proposal is called the Slaveship Hypothesis of hypertension (high blood pressure). Black citizens in the U.S. have higher rates of hypertension than other ethnic groups, in part caused by higher sensitivity to salt intake and retention. To explain this fact it has been suggested that the Middle Passage, in which black African men and women were stolen from their native lands and brought to the Western Hemisphere under unimaginably gruesome conditions in slave ships, constituted selection pressure for those who were able to retain salt and thereby prevent dehydration and death. Those who were less able to retain salt, according to the hypothesis, were much more likely to die on shipboard, leaving those with higher salt retention as survivors who made it to land and into slavery. Their descendants then have, again according to the hypothesis, higher rates of salt retention and consequent hypertension. Whether or not this turns out to be true, only time will tell, but the thinking behind it does illustrate the process of natural selection. It does not take into account much higher levels of stress caused by extreme racism, which also contributes to greater levels of hypertension.

In summary, the essence of natural selection is that those members of the population who have forms of genes that are incompatible with the environment tend to die young and fail to produce children, allowing those with forms of genes that are compatible to increase their proportion of the population. It is important to note that natural selection continues to play a role all the time, including the present.

Thus any particular body configurations or capabilities that are at least in part based on gene differences and that allow the possessors of those body configurations and capabilities to live long enough to breed, or have more offspring for whatever reason, and to live long enough to raise their offspring to childbearing age so that they too may have offspring, will eventually come to predominate in the species in any particular environment that favors those configurations or capabilities. This, however, is still microevolution.

### What causes macroevolution?

But what causes new species to arise, macroevolution? Darwin thought, and it is still a widely accepted explanation among biologists, that if a small number of

members of the species were somehow separated from the main group, and in these new surroundings found sufficiently different environmental features, such as different types of available food, they would be under different pressures to evolve in different directions. He assumed that this was the way the various species of finches, mockingbirds, tortoises and lizards on the various Galapagos Islands (separated by tens of miles) developed differently on these different islands.

After enough generations of evolution took place under different environmental conditions, the two groups of what were originally members of the same species would develop enough difference from each other that even if brought back together they could no longer interbreed. Then a new species would have arisen from this small group (so-called founders) that somehow got separated from the main group. Meanwhile the main group, i.e., the ancestral species, might continue to exist even as its descendant species now exists.

Thus while hominids (a succession of various forms of human-like species) evolved from chimps hundreds of thousands of years ago, nevertheless chimps continue to exist as an ancestral species alongside of its descendant species, us, while earlier hominids happen to be extinct.

So the result of this entirely natural process, without any goal and without any mind or being that can summon up a goal, is the emergence of species and features of species that are said to be adapted to the environment that the species finds itself living in. The great height of the giraffe, for example, may be an adaptation to reaching the high leaves on the trees or to seeing lions at a great distance before they are attacked or to some other advantage, in the sense that it developed in response to one or another advantage, over many generations. Then as a result the height is now a characteristic of each member of the species. What happened to the species as a whole over time became the property of each *member* of the species.

Looked at from the outside, one can easily imagine that this could also have been attained by a supernatural being with a goal in mind of allowing the giraffe to feed off the high leaves or to detect and avoid lions or to accomplish some other goal. The fallacy in ID thinking is the illusion that, just because one can imagine this happening through a supernatural being with a goal in mind, it did in fact happen that way. They, of course, apply it also to much more complex structures than great height, claiming that there are no intermediate steps that they can imagine to account for the final outcome, but the point is the same. But their lack of imagination is not the stuff of which science is made, although it is part of the stuff of which arrogant ignorance is made.

## Cleverness in the absence of knowledge leads to dead ends

Science is hard work, years and years of persistent investigation and cooperation with many others investigating the same phenomena. But the scientific method is more than just hard work. There used to be, and may still be for all we know, a shelf in the library at the Harvard College Observatory reserved for what was called crank literature. These were self-published essays (no respectable scientific journal or publisher would print them) by very clever people trying to show how, for example, Einstein's special relativity theory was all wrong.

It's not that these authors weren't clever and not that they didn't do a lot of creative thinking, it's just that they didn't understand the theory they aimed to debunk. The work they failed to do was to study, and come to understand, special relativity theory. So their arguments were aimed at strawpersons. They were debunking a version of the theory that no one would have defended. This, in effect, is what the ID people do when they debunk a false version of evolutionary theory, though it is difficult, without more investigation than is worth the effort, to know when they themselves are just ignorant of it, or when they are simply lying and relying on the fact that most of their audience will be untrained in the theory. Either way the outcome is the same.

## THE ID ATTACK ON EVOLUTIONARY THEORY

So what's the fuss coming from the IDers? As outlined in the second section of this pamphlet on the recent history of ID, in at least a temporary concession to their losses both in court and at the ballot box so far, rather than demand that the teaching of evolutionary theory be removed from the schools altogether, they now demand that ID be taught alongside evolutionary theory as an equally valid approach to biology.

The basis of the claim of equal validity is twofold: a) First, IDers claim that evolutionary theory is just that, namely a theory, and not a fact, and b) second, IDers claim that a creationist explanation of how the biological world got to be the way it is today is just as scientific as evolutionary theory. In answering these claims, this section necessarily recaps and summarizes some of the above discussion of evolutionary theory. This may incidentally help the reader to understand it better.

### Is it true that evolution is “just” a theory and not a fact?

First, on their claim that evolutionary theory is just that, namely a theory, and not a fact. As we have seen, this is absolutely false and relies on a common misunderstanding

on the part of the lay public. There is little in the world that is as completely proven *fact* as evolution, i.e., that all plants, animals (including humans), and fungi have evolved over time out of ancestral forms and are traceable all the way back to bacteria, and even before cells to molecules of varying complexity. The *theory* behind it — called the “theory of evolution” — is not the *statement* that all life has evolved from earlier forms, but rather an *explanation* for how that took place — i.e., the mechanisms of evolution, natural selection along with other processes discovered more recently.

Darwin first cemented the *fact* of evolution and provided the initial form of the *theory*. Since Darwin, voluminous evidence continues to confirm the *fact* of evolution more strongly than ever. As to Darwin's proposed theory, it has undergone tremendous evolution and advancement. This is precisely the way science progresses. Scientific theories are not inert, but rather are continually changing bodies of ideas — changing, of course, through the efforts of scientists working in that particular field, and through new discoveries that these efforts produce.

This change usually does not involve complete rejection of prior forms in favor of newer forms, but on rare occasions it can mean just that. The scientific process usually involves refinement, development, clarification, reinterpretation of meaning, and so on. This continual change is a result of the use of scientific methods for attempting to understand the real world. The real world is the final arbiter, and all theories, whether in physics, chemistry, biology, history, or what have you, are constantly undergoing questioning, extension, and, when found to be necessary, revision, either partial or sometimes complete. The continual questioning of everything is central to the scientific process, even though it is not applied consistently by all scientists all the time. Questioning often leads to controversy, out of which progress can be made.

Questioning and controversy are major *strengths* of the scientific process in all areas, but IDers single out evolutionary theory to exploit the questioning and controversy as though they were weaknesses. They dishonestly jump into every controversy, or as yet unanswered question, to claim that this shows the falseness of evolutionary theory. Nor do they hesitate to declare to the unwary listener that even those questions that have been answered with voluminous evidence are still in the jury room. But as we have seen, one of the things that signifies a stronger scientific theory is the degree to which it generates new questions that require new answers.

### Is it true that Creationism or ID is just as scientific as evolutionary theory?

The IDers claim that their explanation of how the biological world got to be the way it is today is just as

scientific as evolutionary theory. Unlike within science, questions and challenges to the creationist or ID position rarely if ever come from within, though there are plenty of challenges to it from those in opposition. The creationists' defensive answer to any and all challenges, as with all religious outlooks, is generally very flexible. In general, it takes the form that "God" can do anything, and we cannot know what "God" intended. In this fashion no challenge can conceivably succeed in changing or developing the outlook, which fact alone takes Creationism/ID out of the running for a scientific theory.

Only when some group within the creationist/ID outlook, often centered around some individual, wants for their own power reasons to branch off and form their own outlook, is there controversy. But this kind of controversy is not subjected to the test of reality.

The very lack of questioning or testing from within the outlook leads to a lack of development, refinement, and extension of Creationism and ID. This lack of development is the very antithesis of science. This static position, if nothing else, demonstrates that ID is not, in fact, science and therefore has no place in the science curriculum in the schools. While the concept that "God" created all the creatures, along with the heavens and the earth, in one short period of time, may have resulted from someone's inductive insight way back when, nevertheless it does not produce deductive predictions that can be investigated experimentally or observationally. For this reason, too, there is no conceivable evidence that could either confirm or disconfirm it. This too keeps the outlook from being subject to modification and therefore from being scientific. Creationism is a dead-end concept that offers no basis for its own further development, let alone the further development of the science of biology.

As a result of the emptiness of Creationism and ID, its advocates, rather than advancing their own outlook, spend all their time trying to find fault with evolutionary theory. They are little different from the church during the European renaissance hundreds of years ago whose position of authority was threatened by the discoveries and theories of Galileo and many other scientists and philosophers.

### **What is ID's major argument against evolution, and what's wrong with it?**

The basis of ID is the concept that such well adapted biological features as, for example, the eye couldn't possibly have arisen through accident in a spontaneous way. The eye is too detailed and too perfect for it to have developed without an intentional being with a goal in mind. This was what Reverend Paley (mentioned above) was thinking when in 1802 he likened the eye to a watch. Of course, a watch did develop at the hands of a maker with a goal in mind. Or more precisely, a watch had

thousands of makers who developed it piecemeal over many centuries, each with a goal or purpose in mind. But this development was based on a lot of trial and error, with each improvement based on the recognition of a defect in the way it was currently functioning.

This trial and error also happens to parallel the way the mechanism of natural selection works — getting rid of less successful stages in favor of more successful stages when they happen to occur and are genetically inheritable. Less or more successful, that is, in whatever environment, or so-called ecological niche, the population happens to find itself. It is a principle of dialectical thinking that success can never be judged independent of context, since something successful in one environment may be unsuccessful in another, and vice versa.

In contrast to the watch, the eye did not have a developer, or developers, with any goal in mind. However, it did develop in many stages, though IDers claim that it is so perfect that it could not have happened in stages, since, they argue, intermediate stages would not have survived natural selection. This is the "argument from incredulity" (unwillingness to believe). The "argument" goes: since we can't imagine this happening, it must not have.

Darwin himself anticipated this non-argument and answered it in *The Origin of Species*. He showed the way the eye might have developed by examining its various rudimentary stages in a variety of still living species of animals. For example, the eye could easily have begun with light sensitive nervous tissue that was then organized into cells arranged to detect the direction from which the light was coming, and then organized into focusing apparatus that functioned to provide clearer images, and then muscles to control the focusing and the movement of the eye toward different directions. The cells covering the light sensitive cells at some point became transparent to visible light, and so on.

The fact that Darwin anticipated this objection almost 150 years ago is not because he could see that far into the future. Rather his contemporaries were making the same objection. ID therefore, has made no progress whatsoever in the last century and a half, unlike the science of evolution which has evolved tremendously, as discussed above in the section on evolutionary theory.

### **What's so perfect about the human body?**

An additional point is that the eye is not, in fact, as perfect as all that, in either its structure or function. After all, consider the number of people who have to wear glasses for either close or distant vision, the common eventual clouding in the lens (cataracts), the almost inevitable inability to focus as we get older (presbyopia), macular degeneration, and other disorders. Also consider the lump of jelly behind the lens (vitreous) that can function as a cushion for trauma and protect the light-sensitive cells

in the back (retina), but does so hardly better than the water that fills the anterior part of the eye, and worse yet, the vitreous commonly gives us annoying floaters and eventually detaches from the retina in almost everyone as we age, with the risk of tearing the retina and even pulling it loose (detachment) with consequent blindness. Of course, people have learned to fix much of this surgically, but then there is no dispute that people apply intelligent, or intentional, design. The dispute is over whether there is a non-human intelligent designer.

Other problems with the eye are, first, that a huge variety of animals – including horses, giraffes and cattle, for example – have eyes on opposite sides of their heads that see in different directions from each other. This means that, while they can see in all directions at the same time and be warned of possible dangers, they have no stereoscopic vision, i.e., no significant capability of depth perception. Humans and many other animals, on the other hand, have stereoscopic vision, because our eyes are in the front of our heads and both eyes can see the same thing at the same time. But we can't see behind us to warn us of silent dangers approaching. A more intelligent design would be that both horses and people possess both capabilities, perhaps requiring a third eye in the backs of our heads.

But even more fundamentally arbitrary is the assumption by IDers of a particular motivation on the part of the intelligent designer. If giraffes, for example, have eyes on either side of their heads and are tall enough to detect lions before they have a chance to sneak up close enough to capture them, in whose interests did the intelligent designer design? Clearly not the lion's in this case. If lions have eyes in front of their heads so that they can judge the distance to the giraffe and sneak up close enough to capture them, the designer did not have the giraffe's interests in mind. Only a natural process in which each of these two species is forced to fend for itself and develop its own characteristics can be part of the development of the giraffe's ability to detect and outrun and the lion's ability to sneak up and capture.

Of course, the IDers will undoubtedly respond that the intelligent designer decided to let each species fend for itself – an example of the infinite flexibility of the outlook to fit whatever objections arise, but which robs it of any explanatory power whatsoever. It also reminds one of the glee with which the ancient Roman slave-owning ruling class threw gladiators into the arena and watched them fight to the death – the opposite of a working-class outlook.

Still other problems with the eye are that human retinas, unlike those of certain other creatures, are sensitive only to a particular range of the electromagnetic spectrum, that portion commonly referred to as "light," but not to x-rays, radio waves or infra-red, for example. Therefore humans are unable to see much in the dark. In fact, the

very definition of "dark" is the relative absence only of visible light, but not necessarily of other ranges of the spectrum. However, humans have been able to develop a fix for that weakness in the form of x-ray detectors, radios, or infra-red goggles (although, as with many capitalist inventions, the latter have been developed primarily for the purpose of killing, i.e., police or military use).

Human bodies in general suffer from similar imperfections. Other examples include our immune systems, which help us to fight off bacteria or viruses or other things that make us sick. The immune system is an extremely complex set of cells and cellular products such as antibodies that do a fair to middling job in many cases, but need help in the form of antibiotics in a lot of cases. On the other hand, the immune system can also be our enemy. There are many diseases in which our immune systems attack us instead of the bacteria/viruses. Allergies are the most common example, and they can range from bothersome to extremely serious. There are also autoimmune diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis that can cripple and cause severe pain and dysfunction. Also the main reason we treat strep throat with antibiotics is to prevent the development of antibodies to the strep that also attack certain cells in our own kidneys.

Cancer is yet another example in which our bodies attack us. All cancers have in common that some of our own cells either lose or block those molecular mechanisms that keep their multiplication in check. Instead the cells grow wild, eventually taking over some of our vital organs, preventing them from functioning properly and eventually resulting in our deaths.

The heart is subject to arrhythmias, vertebral discs to oozing into the spinal canal and squeezing on nerves with excruciating pain and immobilization, hips and knees to degeneration requiring replacement, and so on. And there are hundreds of other examples that could be given of the imperfections of our bodies.

### **How intelligent is the supposed "intelligent designer"?**

Furthermore why is it that an "intelligent designer" didn't give us natural watches or clocks? We have only the crudest timekeeping response to the 24-hour day, which mainly involves the pineal gland in the back of our brains. Why did we have to fill the need for accurate and precise timekeeping through our own inventions and improvements? It would seem that if there were an intelligent designer of the eye, of the immune system, of the timekeeping organ, either she/he/it would definitely be an underachiever (to borrow from Woody Allen) or she/he/it has some mischievous goal in mind for us. Either way, this is hardly the work of a benevolent and intelligent creator.

The concept of goal or purpose arises from universal

human experience, in which all humans, and no doubt certain other animals to some extent (a subject of extensive research), have the experience of deciding we want to bring about some change in our surroundings, or even in ourselves, and then setting out to make it happen. The ability to have a goal or purpose is peculiar to humans (and, again, certain other animals), but not to trees or snails or mountains.

Goal/purpose acts in an interesting way, in which, as Marx said, we are capable of erecting a building first in our imaginations and then in fact. In this way our imagining the building is the beginning of the process, while the building that we imagine is at the end of the process toward which we strive. In a sense this reverses the natural order in which things happen, with the final product existing at the beginning of the process (in our imaginations) and the starting (imagined) building existing at the end in reality. In this way, the imagined building is one of the contributing causes of the actual building's development, as contributing causes always precede their effects.

Much of what humans do is based on a decision of what outcome we desire. But extrapolating this ability to some type of non-natural being doesn't necessarily make it so. There are many ideas we can extend beyond their real limits that are not necessarily possible in fact. We can, after all, imagine that we can fly without airplanes. The attribution of goal or purpose to nature is called teleology. Teleology is the concept that things happen because of some outcome, which reverses cause and effect. The first syllable, "tel-," means "end" in Greek.

IDers advance many other arguments against evolution, but they all amount to the same thing. In particular, they are all based on a profound ignorance of evolutionary theory and the overwhelming observational and experimental evidence for it. Rather than take up more space here, we refer the reader to a book that answers hundreds of such arguments in detail (Isaak).

### **The enemies of science within the fields of science**

The erroneous outlook that characterizes ID has its counterparts *within* the fields called science, particularly in biology. It is not simply ID that attributes goal/purpose to some unnamed being; much science writing suffers from a similar defect. The main difference is that ID looks to an outside source of power ("God"), while certain scientists (lots of them) look to internal sources (DNA). This is particularly true of the field of Sociobiology (SB), which is now called Evolutionary Psychology (EP), a name switch brought about for much the same reason as the switch from Creationism to Intelligent Design – namely, to evade their critics.

Advocates of SB and EP maintain that complex behaviors

have been "programmed" into our genes through natural selection over hundreds of thousands of years. These include, they claim, such complex behaviors as rape, aggression, fear of snakes and aversion to incest. They are sometimes called "nativists" because of their claims for innateness of these behaviors in infants at birth. The essential feature of nativist concepts is that the relationship between genes and the rest of the organism that possesses the genes is a one-way street. That is, the genes direct the rest of the organism's development and behavior, but, according to them, the organism and its experiences have no effect on the genes—or at least no effect once tens of thousands of years have "programmed" the genes. By adhering to dialectical principles we are reminded to avoid such errors of one-way thinking, and to regard the one-wayness alone as sufficient to render any conclusions derived from it false.

As we said above, the concept of a "God" who works in mysterious ways, and whose motivations are hidden from us, is an infinitely flexible way to answer any question as to why such horrors as slavery or genocide occur. The assumption by nativists that natural selection has programmed complex behaviors into our genes is likewise infinitely flexible. It yields plausible sounding answers to questions as to why people do certain things. But the nativists do not regard it as their responsibility to find evidence that these complex behaviors are indeed determined or directed by our genes. Furthermore they use the counter-scientific tool of unconstrained assumption, without searching for, or even granting that there could be, alternative explanations. Thus they get failing grades on both the deduction and induction fronts (Buller, Blumberg).

The outlook of these nativists (within science) and that of the creationists/IDers (outside of science) are more alike than different. True, the nativists will ridicule the IDers to demonstrate their intellectual superiority, but they fail to see how similar they are to the targets of their ridicule. Some of them also have a tendency to ridicule their scientific opponents, the scientists who do respect the need to supply evidence and who do respect the need to evaluate alternative explanations before they can settle on one over another. But while nativists have much in common with IDers, since they labor within the field of science they are even more dangerous than the IDers. After all, as we discussed above, millions of voters have thrown the IDers and creationists out of office. But unfortunately most scientists are willing to treat the nativists as though they deserve the time of day. So just as we are forced to debunk the IDers, we cannot ignore the nativists.

(See the Summer 2007 issue of PLP's THE COMMUNIST MAGAZINE for reviews of books by and about nativists.)

## RELIGION AND SCIENCE

### Scientists and religion

Many, though not all, professional scientists are religious. Many believe in a “God.” Many attend church or synagogue or mosque. They, like everyone else who is religious to some degree, look to “God” and to religion for comfort, guidance in their social lives, meaning in their lives, and so on. This is particularly true at times of personal tragedy, such as the loss of a family member or severe illness or danger. All of these are important human needs, and religion sometimes appears to be the best way to satisfy those needs, whether for professional scientists or not.

However, religion is not the only way to fill those needs. In particular, communists and many workers and their allies today look to friends, family, and other class allies for comfort and for guidance, rather than to their minister, rabbi, imam, or “God.” Indeed, religionists often look to these sources as well. And to find meaning in one’s life there is nothing more meaningful than devoting one’s life to the liberation of the working class from wage slavery and its attendant atrocities, for the sake of present and future generations.

And even more important, religion does not eliminate poverty, unemployment, drug addiction, racism, wars, or prevent levees from breaking or bridges from collapsing. If anything religion only makes these avoidable horrors more acceptable.

It is important to distinguish between the concept of “God” and the organized institution of religion. They are separable entities. After all, some religions have no concept of “God,” such as Buddhism, Jainism or Sikhism. Some worship one “God,” such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Zoroastrianism. And still others have multiple “Gods,” such as Shintoism and ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman religions. Conversely the concept of “God” arose prior to the organization of religion. Later it was simply adapted by some organizers of religion for their own needs.

When early nomadic hunters and gatherers, and later sedentary agriculturalists, sought explanations of patterns they noticed in nature, such as day and night and the seasons, the idea came easily that there was something or someone out there orchestrating these things. After all, they were able to organize things into patterns themselves, so it was not much of an extrapolation. But this concept of an unseen being preceded organized religion.

In fact, the hypothesis of a supreme being may be regarded as one of the earliest forms of science. After all, at least they were asking the question, How did this come about? And asking the questions, as we said above, is 90% of the battle in science.

### Agnosticism versus “atheism”

Scientists who believe in “God,” like other people, have various interpretations of what “God” is. But the concept comes down to some non-natural or supernatural entity. When those who practice the scientific method from 9 to 5, so to speak, believe that there is a “God” or at least consider themselves to be agnostic (i.e., don’t know whether there is or not), they are either being inconsistent or they are at least unnecessarily limiting the domain of applicability of the scientific method. Consistency certainly plays a major role in science, as the discovery of inconsistency drives many a questioning and revision in science.

Still other scientists and many other people, including many communists, believe in the non-existence of “God” and consider themselves “atheists” (we will explain the reason for these quotation marks momentarily). A common justification for agnosticism, as opposed to “atheism,” is the statement that while there is no scientific proof of “God’s” existence, neither is there proof of “God’s” non-existence. So some scientists, as well as others, believe themselves to be agnostic and don’t take a position, leaving it to others. This only reflects the lack of a thoroughgoing adherence to scientific method.

The problem here is not only that there is an absence of proof that “God” exists, but *there isn’t any scientific reason to believe in that existence*. In other words, the burden of proof, from a scientific point of view, should not be on those who doubt or deny the existence of “God,” but rather on those who believe in “God’s” existence. The reason that the burden is, in fact, placed on “atheists” is that the power of organized religion, backed by the political and economic power of the ruling classes throughout the ages, gives them the ability to decide where that burden is to be placed.

This brings us to the reason we put “atheism” in quotes. The very word is forced on us by the power of organized religion (backed by the political and economic power of the ruling class). That is, a-theism, meaning not theism, defines the position that there is no “God” in terms of what it is not, namely not theist, not “God”-believing. It would be more scientifically valid and consistent to term the belief that there is no “God” something like “naturalism” and use the term “a-naturalism” for the belief that there is a “God.” In today’s world that might seem like the tail wagging the dog, but the class power relationships will not always be the way they are today under exploitative class society. And in any case it is scientifically more justifiable terminology.

### The Bible and its inconsistencies

As to the reasons to doubt the Bible’s account of history, consider how it came to be. The concept that it was through the leaders of organized religion getting a direct communication from “God,” i.e., divine revelation to the



self-anointed few, comes from precisely those self-anointed few. Why should anyone believe them? In fact, until the printing press was brought to Europe in the 1400s from China (where it was invented several hundred years earlier), regardless of how the Bible was first written, each time it was copied it was hand written by monks and other clerical personnel.

Furthermore it was only translated into English for the first time in the late 1300s. It was previously only in Greek, Hebrew, and Latin. Over the next two centuries numerous other versions finally culminated in the still popular King James version in the 1600s. Each time it was copied or translated, as in the game of telephone, it was amended to accord with the biases of the copier, translator, or in the case of the King James Bible the sponsor. As various Protestant groupings split from the Catholic Church and from one another, over and over, these biases reflected the self-interests of new competing sets of self-appointed religious leaders. After countless rounds of such copying and retranslations from the ancient languages, it is no wonder that the various versions contradict each other.

Without going into the hundreds of thousands of examples of inconsistencies in one or another version of the Bible (see, for example, Isaak, p. 211), suffice it to say that there is no reason to take anything it says as “gospel.” In fact, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John in the New Testament, which all purport to describe the crucifixion of Jesus, contradict each other perversely in many details. It is ironic that the word “gospel” therefore has come to stand for “truth.” There can only be one truth, given the existence of a real world, even if there can be as many, and perhaps more, different feelings about or interpretations of events as there are interpreters. From these various interpretations we struggle with each other and with the real world to come closer and closer to the truth about the real world, but only if we have a materialist approach.

And the many versions of the Bible represents the Judeo-Christian religions but not the huge numbers of religions outside the centers of Europe and the U.S. Religion divides the world into factions that are led by their masters to kill each other for the gain of the masters. “God-Jehovah-Allah” is on our side, say both the opposite parties to a war. Science, on the other hand, is an international effort, constructed and organized as a way of arriving at internationally accepted theories of everything from atoms to galaxies, from biology to geology. However, science under capitalism suffers from severe and detrimental aspects of competition (consider the Nobel Prize, for example), even if competition sometimes speeds up the process, as well as limitations on what research is promoted, or even allowed. More often than not, competition drives scientists, in their haste to publish or in their need for a job with job security, into blind alleys. In contrast, in science, as in all human endeavors, there are also tremendous elements of cooperation.

Capitalists, who as a class rule the world today, thrive on domestic and international competition, while the working class, who are about to rule the world tomorrow, thrive on international cooperation. Under communism, science will no longer need to involve competition. Cooperation will then rule the day. This will make possible much greater progress in all areas. Then the pressures driving the process forward will be the needs of humanity yet to be satisfied – the relief from poverty, illness, hunger and danger.

### The role of proof in agnosticism

Agnostics demand absolute proof that there isn't a “God” in the real world apart from the concept in the minds of humans. We have discussed the nature of proof above under the topic heading “How are evidence and proof related?” in the section “What is science?” In particular, we pointed out that there is no such thing as absolute proof, but only proof for all practical purposes. There is no absolute proof that ice can never catch fire, or that the sun will not continue to rise tomorrow for at least the next several billion years, but no scientist, and very few others, would claim agnosticism based on that lack of proof. Rather they would firmly deny that it could happen.

What then is the source of this sudden invoking of agnosticism when it comes to the non-existence of “God”? It is the overwhelming peer pressure within modern societies around the world and the millennia of organized religion that create the illusion that there may be a reason to believe in the existence of “God.” We have been putting the word “God” in quotes for two reasons: 1) because there are vast numbers of concepts of “God,” and no one single concept to which the word refers, and 2) because the *concept* of “God” exists without a “God” in the real world.

Among the more famous modern scientists who believed in some concept of “God” was Einstein. In objecting to the prevalent interpretation of quantum mechanics, namely that nature is at root probabilistic and has no definite characteristics, he famously retorted, “I don't believe God plays dice with the universe.” Was he being metaphorical or literal? Apparently literal, since he also said that he believed in some kind of a Supreme Being that created the universe, but that he had no idea what the Supreme Being was like otherwise.

Those scientists who maintain that the only really scientific approach to the question of “God” is agnosticism justify that position on the grounds that there is no proof either way. However, they are attributing to the concept of proof in this instance a quality that they never demand of it in other areas of life – absoluteness. As we have discussed, proof is never absolute, but rather it has the quality of being acceptable for all practical purposes.

The comedian George Carlin puts it in a lighter vein. He explains that he was doing a controlled experiment to see if “God” answers prayer. So he first prayed to “God” and then he prayed to Joe Pesci. He found that the results were “about the same.” Even comedians can be scientists, and vice versa.

Of course, prayer can give psychological comfort to the one who prays if she/he believes in “God,” but it cannot play a causal role in bringing about a desired outcome, except perhaps through strengthening one’s resolve to act to bring it about. Whenever the desired outcome does in fact arise independent of the actions of the one who prays, the relationship between prayer and outcome is coincidental. Coincidences, after all, are not only all around us, but they are the things that we tend to notice. We often fail to notice those much more common occasions when the desired outcome fails to arise. This common phenomenon is known as selective perception.

### **The source of a claim and the content of a claim**

In addition, even before the issue of proof arises, in order to be accepted, a concept must be reasonable. For example, just because someone maintains that a flying saucer landed in her/his cornfield, and she/he can produce several witnesses to confirm it, doesn’t mean we have to believe it. More fundamentally, it doesn’t mean that it is true. The best way to approach reasonableness is from two directions, namely is it a reasonable claim and, if not, can we find a cause for someone to make such a statement?

If we feel that the claim is reasonable we might demand evidence, though as we have pointed out, particular pieces of evidence are confirmation but there may not be enough evidence to constitute proof (for all practical purposes). The less reasonable a claim is, the more independent types of evidence we may demand before we consider that there is enough evidence to constitute proof. Conversely, the more reasonable a claim is, the fewer types of evidence we demand as proof.

If we feel that a claim is not reasonable, can we provide an explanation of why the claim might have been made in the first place and of why so many witnesses were willing to confirm it? The farmer who saw the flying saucer might have misinterpreted certain natural phenomena, such as the breaking up of light from the setting moon by mountains on the horizon and airwaves that caused flashing in different colors, interpreted as lights on a space ship. This might also explain why so many witnesses confirmed it. Or the farmer may be a liar or a publicity seeker, with the witnesses having been paid off. Either hypothesis, of course, requires evidence. Sufficiently persistent investigation into these speculations should produce a way to tell which is correct.

### **Can “fifty million Frenchpersons” be wrong?**

There is an expression, “Fifty million Frenchmen can’t be wrong,” that comes from a musical of the 1920s by the songwriter Cole Porter. It means that if a large enough number of people believe something, it must be true. But if they all derive their belief from the same source, and the source is unreliable, they can indeed all be wrong – all fifty million of them.

There is a famous fallacy in logic called the fable of the Emperor of China. Could one determine to a high degree of accuracy the height of the Chinese Emperor by asking every one of his millions of subjects how tall he is? This would certainly constitute a tremendous number of pieces of evidence. But the fallacy is that these pieces of evidence are not independent types, or even independent from each other within the type, since an impression of the Emperor’s height would likely be part of the popular culture, even for those who never laid eyes on him. So the number of pieces of evidence is then irrelevant. Besides, there is no necessary connection between how tall people who have never seen him think he is and how tall he actually is. This introduces an error in the estimates that is undeterminable, without comparing them to the Emperor’s actual height. In that case, however, who would need the opinion of the millions of people?

An explanation for why so many people believe that an all-powerful, benevolent “God” exists outside of the collective minds can only be found in the study of the history of religions and “God” worship. It is precisely this history that the creationists demand not be questioned or studied. And with good reason, because in that history might be found the explanation of why so many people believe in “God” even if “God” doesn’t exist in the real world. Of course, a concept of a “God” does indeed exist in the minds of millions of people, now and throughout much of history, and as a result in many cultures, but that does not mean that “God” exists outside of those minds and cultures, i.e., in the real world.

### **The history of religion is the history of a powerful priestly class**

We have to study the history of religion to learn why it is that so many people believe in a “God” for which there is no evidence outside of the minds of people, and outside the statements that these minds produce. When we do so, we find that religions, including the concept of “God,” are always organized by a class of clerical persons who assert their power over the vast majority of humanity as the main, if not only, links between people and “God.” Indeed the original translators of the Bible into English were opposed and sometimes burned at the stake by kings, queens, and popes, who wanted to keep complete control of the “Word of God” and conceal the hidden reality from

the masses of common people (Bobrick).

The recent scandals over sexual abuse of children by members of the Catholic clergy reach into various orders, such as the Franciscans, Carmelites, and Jesuits, and are resulting in hundreds of multimillion-dollar out-of-court settlements. It is not just the higher-ups in the various religious hierarchies, or the early creators of the various religious orders, who have been aware of their power over their millions of followers. Even thousands of individual members of the clergy are aware of this power and often bend it to their own use, in what almost everyone would agree are ghastly criminal pursuits.

Once we understand that the concept of “God” has always been a tool in the hands of the priestly class that arose when class societies arose, a tool to wield power over the rest of the population and attain great wealth thereby, we realize that, other than millennia of overwhelming peer pressure, there is no reason to believe that there is a “God” outside the mind (Blech). Then the only scientifically consistent position is the belief that there is not a “God” outside the minds of people. That is, the only scientifically consistent position is naturalism (so-called “atheism”), rather than agnosticism.

In the battle between science and religion it is important to remember that battles are not fought by ideas, but rather by people holding those ideas, or more accurately in today’s world, by social and economic classes. Behind every great battle of ideas is class interest. The capitalists have a stake in one set of ideas and the working class in another set. Changing the real world from capitalism to communism is in the interest of the working class and against the interest of the ruling class. It may take some searching to find under the table the class whose interests any particular idea serves – in particular, to find the connection between that particular idea and the need to change or keep the world as it is – but with enough effort it can be found.

Religion, all religion, and the belief in “God” are ideas pushed by the capitalists to protect their class power by blinding the working class to our need to be strictly scientific in our approach to managing the problems we have as workers and in changing the world to a communist egalitarian society that will serve the interests, for a change, of the working class and not our exploitative and oppressive enemies, the capitalists.

### **Within religion there are some progressive aspects, but not enough to count**

An apparent exception can be found, for example, in liberation theology. Liberation theology is a development in the Catholic church in Latin America, involving priests who side with the working class against the capitalists, but at the same time do so to counter the influence of Marxist revolutionaries. Two famous 20th

century examples, out of many, are Oscar Romero, the Archbishop of El Salvador, and Dom Helder Camara, a Bishop in Brazil. Archbishop Romero was assassinated in 1980 by the Salvadoran ruling class for his advocacy on behalf of the poor working class. Bishop Camara is noted for having said, “When I gave food to the poor, they called me a saint. When I asked why people are poor, they called me a communist.”

Coming from the Brazilian ruling class, this was not, of course, intended as a compliment, nor did Bishop Camara consider it as a compliment, though we would regard it as one. However, it was an undeserved compliment. This illustrates the constraints inherent in religion, since Bishop Camara, as admirable as his advocacy for the poor working class may have seemed, not only had no solution within the confines of religion for our oppression as a class but actually stood opposed to any revolutionary attempts to organize the working class to solve our own problems.

The only possible solution is the transference of political and economic power from the oppressive capitalists to the liberated working class. And the only possible agency of that transference is the working class itself, led and organized by communists to see the need for communism and motivated with the readiness to fight a collective armed struggle to bring it about. The ideological bonds of religion and the illusion that, under such clergymen as Archbishop Romero and Bishop Camara, the church can alleviate the suffering of the working class, both serve as major obstacles to liberation from that suffering. Unless a well-meaning clergyman/woman leaves the church, denounces its harmful restraining effects and joins the working class in organizing and carrying out a revolution for communism, that clergyman/woman, in fact though not necessarily in intent, is an enemy of the working class.

Indeed, many PLP comrades work in church groups on reform issues that other members of the congregation, and occasionally the clergyman/woman, are willing to struggle around, such as the fight against racism or to end the U.S. terrorist war on Iraq. But in so doing the comrades always strive to win the others to see the need to join PLP and fight for communist revolution, as the only way that can succeed in winning and holding even the reforms that they all want to bring about.

### **To change the world the working class needs science, not religion**

As to the relative validity of science and religion for understanding the real world and how to change it, religion consists of a body of ideas, while science consists of a body of ideas along with a method of confirming their truth, and changing those ideas when necessary. The one that will serve better to change the world and help us to escape poverty, war, racism, sexism and genocide is

science. The one that will serve better to handicap us in changing the world and to tie us to the present state of affairs is religion.

Communists strive to convince the working class of the enslaving quality of religion and to overthrow its ideological hold, as it hampers the development of the revolutionary movement. However, understanding that ideas that have been systematically instilled for millennia will not disappear in hours, communists also struggle patiently first to win workers to join in building a revolutionary movement, maintaining their religious ideas if they must, but attempting to show each step of the way how battles with the ruling class might have been strengthened were it not for the chains of religion.

Communists strive to persuade workers that religion is our enemy, not to outlaw religion. The capitalists lie when they claim that the Soviet Union, where the working class had seized political power, outlawed religious ideas. Once a revolution for communism has succeeded in breaking the iron grip of the capitalists on the world, it will certainly come to pass that those attempting to regain power will again try to push religion as one of their weapons. That organized attempt will most certainly be outlawed, but this does not mean that religious ideas will, or even could, be outlawed.

## **THE WORKING CLASS MUST DEFEAT THIS ATTACK ON SCIENCE**

As we said in the opening sentences of this pamphlet, the most important function of science for the international working class is that, without understanding and grasping science, we cannot hope to achieve our liberation from the atrocities of capitalism. This pamphlet was written therefore not just to answer questions about ID and about science, though we have tried to do that in brief outline as best we can in such a limited space. It was mainly written as part of the struggle by PLP to convince members of the working class, students and soldiers of the need to destroy capitalism with armed revolution and to institute the egalitarian system of communism in its place, and, to begin with, to convince workers, students and soldiers of the need to join the PLP to help lead that revolution.

We hope we have begun to convince the reader that science is a tool that can be seized by the working class for the making of this revolution, and for making and keeping the world livable once the revolution has put the workers and our allies in the driver's seat. The capitalist class and other exploiting classes before them have appropriated the means and ideas of science for the purpose of extending their profits and for the purpose of maintaining their violent control over the rest of humanity. But then the capitalists appropriate (steal) everything that workers produce.

Creationism, Intelligent Design and all religion, fundamentalist or not, is a tool in the hands of the capitalists for our continued exploitation and oppression. Because of this, the working class has an absolute need to resoundingly defeat them and their ideological hold over us. This means, in the first instance, that each of us needs to come to understand at least the elements of science and how it works, and to begin to put it to conscious and collective use for the purpose of organizing the revolution. We have a responsibility to our families, friends and class to master the elements of science, even if at first we don't need to understand relativity theory or quantum mechanics in all their gory details, or even all the ins and outs of evolutionary theory.

However, it is more important for us to understand evolutionary theory than to understand relativity theory or quantum mechanics, because evolution is about change, and change is about revolution. Relativity theory and quantum mechanics can wait awhile. Some day, after the working class controls the schools and every institution in the world, the understanding of relativity theory and quantum mechanics can also become the property of everyone. This will, incidentally, bring that much closer the day that these theories will be replaced with even more accurate theories. Once the mental chains of capitalist ideology begin to wash away, we will all be able to achieve the understanding of any complex theoretical material with fewer and fewer of the burdens produced by false assumptions that creep into everything we try to learn. Then there will be many more of us to investigate how nature and society work, and to develop more and more accurate theories to explain them, as well as to change them.

There is no short cut to liberation. To paraphrase Mao Zedong, a past leader of the Chinese Communist Party, revolution is no tea party. Neither is the struggle to understand what science is and how it works. But all it needs is the motivation provided by a vision of a new world, one free of racism, sexism, exploitation, war and genocide. It is the striving for such a world that can give life meaning, without the need for religion to supply an imagined satisfaction of that very human need.

The only way to defeat ID and all other enslaving capitalist ideology is in the course of the struggle for communist revolution, and in its ultimate achievement all around the world. Join us in this monumental effort now. We have a world to win, and to understand.

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*For a more in-depth explanation of dialectical materialism, see <http://www.plp.org/pamphlets/jailbreak.html>.*

*For a more thorough discussion of religion from the communist point of view, see <http://www.plp.org/pamphlets/religion.html>.*

*For reviews of books by and about nativists, see THE COMMUNIST MAGAZINE, <http://www.plp.org/thecomm/summer07.pdf>.*

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