



**The
Black Liberation Army
Study Guide
+
Political Dictionary**

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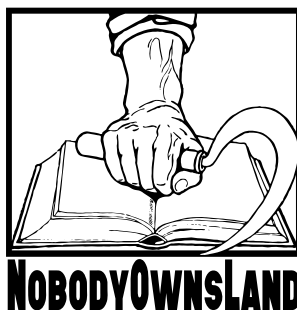


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Introduction

Although the concepts in this study guide have been reduced to simplified terms, we still anticipate that the new recruit, or comrades without a background for this type of knowledge, will require a few tutoring sessions. In fact, group and collective discussion on each topic of this guide as well as the supplements to follow should serve as the basic format for cadre political education classes. Each area command is encouraged to reproduce this study guide in the exact format set out here: any deletions, modifications, or changes must be cleared through the Coordinating Committee (CC).

Long Live The Black Revolution Worldwide!

Long Live the B.L.A.!

Build To Win!

COORDINATING COMMITTEE, NYURBA



Black Nation

I. The Nature of Black Revolution

As Black Revolutionaries we recognize the existence of the Black Nation in diaspora. That is to say, we hold that the tens of millions of Black people scattered throughout the American industrial centers to constitute an oppressed nation, a colony. We seek the liberation of that colony as a nation, and not as a mere class or racial minority. In other words, we reject Proletarian Revolution in the generally accepted sense of the term and opt for Black Revolution.

For the Black Nation we boldly seek a land base in which our people can live in peace, kinship, and human dignity. Upon this land we could cut ourselves loose — insofar as it is possible — from all ties with capitalism, and establish a human society: a system of socialism in which the means of production are owned by the whole people; where there is equitable distribution of wealth; and the spiritual and intellectual development of no person suffers because of economic want or deprivation of human rights.

We identify the enemies of the Black Nation not as white people per se, but as the monopoly capitalist class and its agents, be they Black or white. While we fully acknowledge the uniqueness of the Black soul and are aware of its beauty and latent power, we are convinced that its creativity has only barely been scratched. To some extent we concede that many of us harbor a certain amount of Black chauvinism, yet we are not “reverse-racist.” We do not seek to deny the essential humanity of other races, nor seek to exploit, oppress, or necessarily exclude other races. If there are those among other races such as John Brown, the S.L.A., the Weather people, Chicanos or whomsoever who can grasp

our vision of a human nation with human principles and who are willing to pay the blood sacrifices required and suffer along with us the agonies and ecstasies of Nation Building — then we hold they should/shall be welcomed into the Black Nation with open arms, full citizenship, and equal rights in every respect. The Black Nation to be shall be founded on human principles: we have suffered and the world has suffered enough inhumanities of person against person and race against race. We will have none of it.

It is not so with our class enemy. The differences between the Black masses and the bourgeois class have an economic base that is wholly irreconcilable. It is the greed and unscrupulous drive for profits of this class in one or another of its several forms (chattel slavery, wage slavery, etc.) which lies behind our three centuries of travail. At their hands we have suffered brutal and harsh oppression beyond those of civilized imagination. Stripped utterly of human status, we were reduced to the level of animals with no more rights than a draft horse. At the whim of our bourgeois masters we were whipped, raped, maimed, murdered; denied family ties and all human development. Similar oppression continues even today in direct and indirect forms. Behind the guise of white chauvinism infested in an entire nation of 200 million white workers, the dehumanizing conditions yet exist in the form of denial of opportunity and democratic rights. The social conditions imposed upon us yet heap untold misery upon our people. Genocide, spiritually and physically, continues systematically and premeditated — Black-on-Black crime, killer cops, last hired and first fired. All this and more can be traced ultimately to the imperatives of the bourgeois systems of money-making. These contradictions are irreconcilable and insoluble within the context of the system. We shall break loose from the system and not allow bourgeois ideology to infest and infiltrate the Black ranks, for it is an inhumanly alien creed: exploitative, deceitful, selfish, divisive. We shall persecute the class enemy ruthlessly, within and without... root and branch.

We clearly perceive that to tear the Black Nation away

from bourgeois, racist amerika entails a war and bloodletting of a magnitude the likes of which these shores have not witnessed for more than a hundred years. But such a war is inevitable considering our only other alternative is continued oppression and slavery. It is as the righteous comrade John Brown once stated: "...This guilty land shall not repent except by blood." Undoubtedly, much of the blood will be Black blood. Thousands of us shall die, perhaps tens of thousands. Millions of us will be imprisoned, incarcerated, interned. Families will be dislocated, torn away from loved ones; we will be tortured, raped and murdered. But we will fight on and we will win.

We will win because, among other things, we have a unique advantage which no other enemy of the amerikan ruling class has ever had. Although the amerikan ruling class sent armies and murder to whatever peoples and nations that have opposed their greedy aspirations, none of these nations and peoples have been able to send troops and murder back to the amerikan ruling class. Hence being scattered throughout the belly of the beast, oppressive as it is, has this one advantage — we have access to its entrails, its vital organs. And we shall take full advantage of this access. We shall strike boldly, ruthlessly, relentlessly. For it is war! War without terms!

There will be no honorable terms in this war, no "international rules." We will not be honored with the recognition of soldiers of a nation recognized and accepted in the world community of nations. We can be assured they will use everything in their considerable power to block such international recognition. They will label us as criminals and terrorists — outside the wall of protection of humane rules. Nor shall we ask them for any quarter, though from time to time we may put on a show of demanding they abide by their own lofty proclamations of justice, due process, etc. But such shows will be tactics to expose their true beastly nature. We know what to expect beforehand. These are the same people who murder our babies in church. KKK, CIA — they're all the same. Just like the CIA went through the mafia

to strike at the Premier of Cuba, likewise they used KKK contacts to hit Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. CIA, KKK, Cosa Nostra, fascism — all these kindred creeds have exploitation and oppression of peoples at their core and they're all interlocked. Hence, if there perchance are those who are yet blinded by bourgeois propaganda and think the monopoly capitalist oligarchy is somehow a nobler breed of pit viper — throw it out of your minds.

But again we reiterate that the enemy is the bourgeois ruling class and its agents and lackeys —and not the white workers. We must take great care in establishing this point, and in doing so contribute to the isolation of the enemy and possibly cut him off from his base of support among the white working class. Hopefully, we may cause a nation-wide division among them on par with the division which occurred during the Vietnam War. We can only do this by consistently and clearly avoiding brushes with the white working class, and heighten the contradiction by delivering devastating blows to the bourgeoisie. Anything we do to the bourgeoisie will be fair.

Our strategy in winning independence and separation is, simply stated, the strategy of Moses. To sow plague and afflict the capitalist pharaoh class — that they will be glad to let our people go. Black revolution is a colonial question which seeks not the destruction of the bourgeoisie as a class, nor to establish socialism in amerika, but has the limited objective of securing liberation of the Black colony through convincing the capitalist oligarchy that, although the loss of the colony is a fundamental setback, that with the demands for massive reparations and all, it would yet be to their greater advantage to surrender this part of their empire, that hopefully they may salvage the remainder.

That being the case, we have the strategic advantage of not advocating the destruction of amerika or the overthrow of the government thereby incensing the blind patriotism of 200 million apolitical, apathetic white workers. The bourgeois leaders will not be able to raise the cry that they are fighting to “save democracy,” restore “liberty,” and

“equality,” etc. They can only raise the tired old cry of “law ‘n order.”

The question then is how much pain must be inflicted — or will the ruling oligarchy ever surrender the Black colony: will they hold onto it at all costs? It is our estimation that Black Liberation, skillfully fought for, can inflict such strategic losses so as to threaten the loss of the entire empire. We pose no direct threat to the multi-multi-billion dollar international holdings of the bourgeoisie — the copper holdings in Chile, the oil holdings in the Middle East, the rubber, gold, diamonds, uranium, lead, thorium, tungsten, and endless other multi-billion dollar holdings which make up their African and third-world imperialist empire. But should we inflict strategic blows at the various key power and industrial centers, blow up Wall Street, the Pentagon, defense plants? The capitalist ruling class cannot fight a war at home and at the same time maintain their overseas empire. Things would become pretty much out of joint for the pigs. The contradictions would all sharpen and accelerate their pace of development.

Bourgeois priorities would become a jumble, their judgment distorted, their impulses erratic, and confusion would reign. Should we sustain such a struggle for just a few years the beast would be so crippled that the struggles of the third-world Nations to liberate themselves would be almost assured victory, and the whole international system would collapse in upon them. The rise of the Black Amerikan in serious and sustained warfare with the capitalist oppressor would signal the rise of the world’s masses in revolution — the spark that would set the world on fire.

Urban Guerrilla Warfare may not have been successful as it has been applied in South America in attempts to destroy bourgeois regimes and establish socialism. It is uniquely suited, however, for our own unique colonial situation: a colony in the Belly of The Beast. If mere riots and social disorder will gain significant concessions, indications are that skillfully applied urban guerrilla warfare on the same scale has a high chance of succeeding

II. Wither New Afrika

If during the course of our struggle we serve as a catalyst that will arouse the white workers into putting an end to the rule of monopoly capital, and establishing a socialist amerika, our problem may be somewhat simplified. Under socialism, integration into amerika becomes a viable alternative. We can possibly accept the definition of “Black Proletariat,” and be assured that the plight of our people will be qualitatively changed within the context of a socialist amerika. Self-determination in the form of community control of political, economic, and social institutions will have meaning.

But should our struggle fail to ignite the proletarian revolution in amerika, yet succeed in winning independence for the Black Colony — that is to say, force assent of the bourgeois oligarchy to separate and set-up our nation — the question remains: where to locate the new Black Nation?

The Black Belt South (the states of Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, South Carolina. So-called Black Belt because of the color of the fertile soil, not because of the color of the people) has currently been the subject of much controversy on the left concerning the existence of the Black Nation. (See Part IV of this paper, “Proletariat Revolution — No!”)

The Republic of New Afrika has already initiated a program to reclaim these lands, which at one time contained a majority-Black population. They have done considerable research in the legitimizing of this claim: have begun cooperative land development projects, and have called for a national Black plebiscite to gain the approval and recognition of the Black colony. Indications are that the Black masses would do well to get behind this movement with the full weight of our revolutionary thrust.

On the other hand, these lands do not hold any particular nostalgia for us as a “national homeland.” Also to make the imperialist surrender these lands may be too much for the imperialist themselves to handle. While they substantially

control the institutions of power and the opinion-shaping machinery, yet if we make it sufficiently hot for them to seek a solution in keeping with our demands, the masses of white workers who live in this area, and necessarily have to be “dispossessed” are likely to raise such strenuous and violent objections that the oligarchy may not be able to persuade them to comply, or overcome their opposition. In spite of this possibility, we should not relinquish our claim to these lands because it is a starting point with considerable legitimacy and moral justification.

It may be that we have other more viable alternatives, however. Marcus Garvey, in his “Back-to-Afrika” movement of the 20s, had planned to petition the League of Nations to turn over one of the former German colonies — either Tanzania or Southwest Afrika (Namibia) — to the National Negro Improvement Association for the relocation of the Black colony. Such an alternative presents its own set of problems, and may not be at all practical today, yet we submit it deserves careful and detailed consideration. Tanzania, of course, has become an independent nation on its own so it is therefore out of the question. Namibia is another matter.

Namibia has an area of 317,817 square miles. That is a land area 60 thousand square miles larger than Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and South Carolina combined. Yet it has a population total of less than a million people. It is currently under the boot-heel of South Afrikkka, which claims it as a “protectorate.”* But the United Nations has ordered South Afrikkka out of Namibia, and South Afrikkka has refused to comply. Hence the Namibians are waging armed struggle under the leadership of the Southwest Afrikan People’s Organization (SWAPO).

Perhaps investigation will reveal that for some reason or another, Namibia may not be able to economically accom-

* *Namibia gained its independence from South Afrika in 1990 thanks to the armed struggle waged by SWAPO and the People’s Liberation Army of Namibia — NobodyOwnsLand*

moderate 20 or 25 million Black amerikanized people. And certainly we would have to seek an agreement with SWAPO and other Black political/military organs which are waging the struggle there. Such an agreement must necessarily include some type of “affirmative action” guarantees in respect to the indigenous people to insure that another class system does not arise on their backs such as occurred in Liberia.

The South Afrikkans, on the other hand, with their amerikan imperialist allies, Gulf Oil, etc., underwriting investments and enterprises in Namibia — they are likely to have heart palpitations at the thought of 25 million angry, highly sophisticated Black people being deposited at their doorstep. But if we win an agreement with SWAPO, and approval of the U.N., and present sufficient threat to the amerikan empire, then opposition or not — South Afrikkka is in trouble.

But, and again, the fact remains that whether we choose the Black Belt South, Namibia, or wher-ever: very little will be accomplished until we have soundly rebuked the monopoly capitalist class.

III. Strategy

Nation Building — The Black (New Afrikan) Communes

The Black Nation must first be built in diaspora. That is, through social practice convert the hearts and minds of the fractured and scattered Black Colony into one heart and one mind.

This is a major task of the Black Liberation Movement. It involves the questions of unity, re-education, and winning mass commitment to the one aim of nation-building. The key is to overcome alienation. General human alienation and Black self-alienation. General human alienation is expressed in the dog-eat-dog, individualistic and selfish creeds that have been imbued in us. Black self-alienation is expressed in the lack of national confidence, or faith in Black ability. There are, in fact, a great many of our people who yet

question whether Black people are capable of high and noble motivation in their relations with one another. Other than the imperialist guns, it is mass alienation that stands as the major obstacle to Black Liberation.

We must overcome the alienation and apathy of the 25-30 million Black people, and mere preaching, propagandizing, and singing hit tunes about unity will not do it. Such things are valuable and certainly have their place, but it was not mere preaching and propagandizing that imbued us with Black self-alienation, but rather it was social practice in racist amerika. Therefore, it is in the area of actual social practice that the solution must be sought. We must put forth a program of action that will involve the Black Masses directly and consistently: adult, child, and elders in unalienated relations with one another. To establish Black communes each under the single banner of The New Black Nation, or “New Afrika” or whatever we choose to name it. Selfless love is the essence of unalienated relations. Each enclave, each commune, a brick in the edifice of the new nation. Black love, selfless love, love without contradiction — revolutionary love — is the rock upon which we found our house, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail.

Though in establishing the Black commune, and along with it the Black Cultural Strategy, we must be careful we move forward and not backward. Adopting Afrikan names and wearing Afrikan garb is well and good in that it denotes a new consciousness, re-claims the Black identity, and symbolizes a rejection of the oppressor’s culture. But we should keep in mind that culture is established in the process of revolution also. The champions that arise during this period become national champions for all the time. The dates of memorable occurrences become holidays; the acts and practices which are taken up by the people during the course of struggle are later instituted as ritual or national custom. In short, there is no need to go back in Afrikan history to import a culture, but rather our cultural revolution need only follow the course outlined by the imperatives of our struggle.

And so the imperative of our struggle is to overcome

human and Black-self alienation. Therefore, to obtain a clearer idea of what direction our cultural thrust must take let us briefly examine the nature of alienation.

The Nature of Alienation

In the first place, mass social alienation or human alienation of any historical epoch, be it slave, feudal or capitalist society, stems from alienated labor. When in the process of production, the product of labor is taken from the laborer and turned against them in that it goes to pay for the very machinery and organs of state and society which are oppressing them. Such organs include prisons, police, education (indoctrination) and media (propaganda) systems, and so forth. The alienation of labor does not stop these objective manifestations but is further transformed subjectively into alienation of human self; i.e., human consciousness and qualities become stunted and/or warped. Instead of mass intelligence and reason we have mass ignorance. Instead of discipline we have mass apathy which stems from essential powerlessness. Instead of love we have hatred and resentment. Instead of consideration of one's fellows, selfishness. Instead of collectivism, individualism.

Karl Marx, in analyzing the effects of alienated labor upon the masses states thus:

“As a result, therefore, man (the worker) only feels himself freely active in his animal functions — eating, drinking, procreating, or at most in his dwelling and in dressing-up, etc.; and in his human functions he no longer feels himself to be anything but an animal. What is animal becomes human and what is human becomes animal.”

(The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844. p. 111)

On the other hand, capitalist commodity production, in addition to all the classic forms of alienation mentioned above, also has its own peculiarly developed variety of alienation — rabid, vicious, predatory consumerism! Again Marx:

“The increase in the quantity of objects is accompanied by an

extension of the realm of the alien powers to which man is subjected, and every new product represents a new possibility of mutual swindling and mutual plundering. Man becomes ever poorer as man, his need for money becomes ever greater if he wants to overpower hostile being..." (Ibid p. 147)

In its greed and unbridled drive for profits, the bourgeoisie has created a world in which, unless they receive their profits, there will be no rewarding human relations; no art, no education, no edification of the human personality. Unless the capitalist gets their off-the-top, the individual is destined to live a grim, insecure, emasculated existence rife with heartbreak, misery and destitution.

Yet, in its unceasing increase "in the quantity of objects," capitalism has at least generated a contradiction that we may take advantage of. In its unbridled drive for markets and profits, capitalist production has far outstripped the simple needs of an unalienated, selfless people. It has created in the consciousness of the masses a vast array of artificial wants and needs — consumerism! To be greedy, avaricious, selfish, wasteful — people programmed like restless animals, to translate all nervous energy into insatiable appetite to consume, consume, consume. A people who would devour the earth, and failing that, turn to devour each other. The contradiction is this: In a land of plenty — this is a false consciousness. A "grafted mentality", as it is said.

Socialist revolution is diametrically opposed to this type of gross, animalistic materialism (not to be confused with philosophic materialism); and embraces a humanism so moral that it borders on the religious. Nor can this tendency in world socialism be attributed to either a quirk of prudence on the part of revolutionary leaders, nor to the claimed inability of socialist economies to produce. Cuba, Eastern Europe, Vietnam, and certainly the Peoples Republic of China — all recognize that truly human human relations is what the revolution is about in the first place. The aim is not only to take over capitalist political and economic power, but to destroy in its entirety the whole vicious, anti-people, money-oriented culture. Socialist revolution recognizes the

priority economic relations has on all other human relations; hence, great pains are taken to establish that every individual in socialist society is secure in material necessities. Then it goes further and frees human relations of the soul-warping influences of the profit motive by ordering a social super-structure/culture in which love and consideration of others may flourish; where one's human dignity is respected regardless of one's lack of material resources.

Similarly, we in the Black Liberation Movement must begin to take cognizance of this aspect of the struggle. To do so is not premature, but is of the most pressing historical imperatives:

"...we are faced with two choices: to continue as we have done for forty years fanning our pamphlets against the hurricane, or starting to build a new revolutionary culture that we will be able to turn on the old culture."

—George Jackson, Blood In My Eye

And those last half dozen words are highly important: a revolutionary culture that we will be able to turn on the old culture. Hereto Black Cultural Nationalists, perceiving the need of a new culture, have for the most part only succeeded in transplanting and transforming bourgeois values into a Black mode. The wearing of the latest Afrikan fashions, Afro cosmetics and artifacts, lavish Afrikan-style weddings and so forth did little more than take the same malignant consumerism and paint it in Blackface. The system quickly absorbed Black cultural nationalism and found a niche for it within the mainstream of predatory bourgeois economics. Black Cultural Nationalism, rather than a counter-culture, became another sub-culture where all the viciousness of the profit motive held full sway.

What is needed is a Revolutionary Black Cultural Movement which reverses the values rather than paints over them. Such a revolutionary culture must necessarily be rooted in voluntary poverty and collectivism.

Voluntary Poverty

The system depends upon a rapid turnover in commodities and consumer goods. They build automobiles and like items designed to come apart within a specific number of years; it bombards the public psyche with commercials and parades “middle class affluence” all to promote and develop artificial needs in the people. It changes style rapidly in everything from cars and clothes to furniture and appliances, inducing people to buy long, long before the goods they own have lost their utility. It promotes a “keep-up-with-the-Joneses,” and “rat-race” mentality, with the reward of status for those who keep up and the punishment of ridicule and loss of face for those who fall behind. One of our first jobs, then, is to induce the tens of millions of Black partisans to fall behind — and find glory in it!

The cynic reads what we propose here and doubtless will say it’s against “human nature”, when what they will most nearly mean is that it is against animal nature; and what they will actually be doing is considering us as niggers rather than Black people. For what we propose here is a human nature at its highest. Certainly there will be suffering, certainly there will be confusion, chaos, even death; for after all this is war. A just, uncompromising, nation-building People’s War.

Voluntary poverty! It is our task to create an atmosphere where a people need not have a dime in order to participate in society as a human being. An atmosphere where a person need not feel ashamed of their lack, nor feel they are offending their peers by not keeping up with the Joneses; a society where there is no status associated with gaudy dress and shiny gadgets. Such psychology should be reversed, and more stitches on one’s clothes should be held in the highest esteem.

People must be liberated from their lust for material goods. This is not to say, however, that a person should seek to live a bare and austere life but rather, with all the knowledge and skill at the fingertips of modern society and

all the technology and gadgets already in existence, it would appear that an individual can make — with their own hands, from pieces of scraps if necessary — just about any luxury item one desires. Nor should any material thing be so valued that a person cannot simply give it away without a qualm. For there must be a sharing on a vast scale: a sharing not only of material things, but of knowledge, skills, and time itself. Christmas for example, if it must be celebrated, should be done in such a way so as not to promote the aggrandizement of the exploiter.

Voluntary poverty immediately relieves tremendous pressure off the ghettos, where the young bloods, seeking to compensate their lack with a crow-bar and a pistol, incur a ceaseless war with the police and upon their neighbors. We must create a new spiritual world in the Black Colonies in which people may have fulfilling and rewarding relationships, and develop their human potentials without money being the overriding factor.

The Black Commune

What is called for in this instance is a National Black Cadre along Marxist-Leninist lines, i.e., professional revolutionaries whose whole occupation is organizing people and articulating the contradictions of class society. Dedicated Black people who perceive the essential humanity of every victim: every wino, every sex worker, every so-called criminal, and seek to involve every Black soul. People who with skill, confidence, and unswerving dedication will “cast down their nets where they are, for the harvest is plenteous, but the laborers indeed are few.”

Voluntary poverty is inseparable from commune-building. A vast number of Black people are locked into poverty in any regards. And people individualized and locked into poverty trying to eke out a living in an alienated world often find themselves sinking deeper and deeper into a lonely, embittering existential existence. Voluntary poverty however, as a way of life embraced and shared by a group of people, has proven itself a fulfilling life.

Here the wants and needs of the individual are not sought in a private desperation but is the shared concern of all, and the force which exudes from such a collective polarization is of such a nature as to solve the individual needs of all.

The communes should be set up on these three principles:

1. Economic self-reliance/survival programs;
2. To humanize relations among the people;
and
3. As a political base.

In the Marxist-Leninist tradition, commune-building in this manner would be considered “base-building among the people.” But in our application it is “Nation Building,” for it is from the Black Communes that we may anticipate New Afrika to spring.

The Black cadre, in an intense door-to-door campaign throughout the scattered colonies, organizes groups of families, groups of friends, and/or neighbors into innumerable communes and tied together in a federation of communes — all under the banner of the Black Nation, or New Afrika. Each commune would elect its own officials and representatives to the federation.

1) Economic self-reliance/survival programs

It being impossible to set up an immediate communist society where the means of production are owned by the people, we can at this point only do the second best thing and strive to set up a system of communalism wherein wealth and material goods are owned or at least shared in common. It would mean to give over into a common pot whatever worldly goods one may have acquired. Such a communalism would, of course, be completely voluntary and loosely speaking may be handled in this manner. While commune members may or may not all live in the same house (most likely they will not), each member of a particular commune shall present to the officials of that commune a list of goods and services which they currently place at the disposal of the commune. Goods may include anything from entire houses,

to rooms in a house, to any article whatever which has utility. The extent of one's giving will doubtless correspond to a certain ratio of the amount of possessions over the extent of one's metanoianized (revolutionized) consciousness. But regardless of the extent of one's giving — they may receive whatever goods are available simply by asking for it — and according to need.

The hundreds of millions of dollars in wages which are yet at the disposal of the Black worker, and which the capitalist sees as “consumer demand” money, becomes something else; a source of primitive accumulation for the commune. The communes must set up innumerable counter-economic institutions and survival programs. Food cooperatives, farms, repair shops become a premium; auto repair, appliance repair, small motor repair, etc., tailor shops, carpenter shops, and the whole range of services required for the well-being of the people — set up by the people themselves, and not by the cadre or some agency.

It is not in our best interest to set up profit-making enterprises. We should avoid at all cost the money-dog priorities and keep “politics in command.” The investment of commune funds into capitalist enterprise (stocks and bonds) should be wholly forbidden. Our communalism and survival programs are not the end we seek, but the means to an end. The setting up of petty commodity production should not be forbidden. Commune petty commodity production while distributed either at cost, free, or at minimal charge (though donations above price is fair), may not show a profit in the capitalist sense. But we can expect the surplus value created to far exceed that in a capitalist enterprise. That is because labor will be provided by volunteers, or wages paid at subsistence level only. In other words, the surplus value created in this manner, which in capitalist enterprise would be translated into profit for the owners, we instead again place at the disposal of the people. Periodic checks and audits should be made to be certain that no person is in position to take advantage of the largess of the commune or has slipped back into their degenerate bourgeois conscious-

ness and is raking off the best of everything for themselves and clique of favorites. While we cannot expect to carve out complete or even partial economic independence with these measures, we can become sufficiently self-reliant to have a perceptible undermining affect upon the system of “free enterprise.”

2) *Establishing human Human Relations*

Aside from its economic function, the New Afrikan Commune should serve as a base by which a whole counter-social superstructure is erected. In this area we can achieve not only self-reliance but a large measure of independence as well. It should be the business of the commune wherever possible to set up schools where real learning takes place; to promote street theaters, and People's' art; to publish newsletters and otherwise keep the commune informed and up to date about current issues and events concerning New Afrika. Legal services and medical services should be made available to its members. The communes, tied together in a federation of neighborhood communes with a centralized office to coordinate barter between communes, and to implement other services of a joint nature should be undertaken. Government “poverty money” should not be accepted except on an individual level. For that matter each commune should have its expert in the field of welfare, unemployment, aid for dependent children, and so forth, and see that each person so qualified receives full benefits. Government grants to fund our collective programs, economic or social, have a corrupting effect, and “poverty pimping” should be avoided.

3) *Political Base*

Finally, of course, the New Afrikan Communes should serve as a political base where the issues and candidates are known, discussed, endorsed, criticized, and/or exposed. The cadre should organize political study classes in each commune if possible. On the local level especially, the political clout of the communes will be a power to reckon

with. And of course the communes are to serve as a launching pad for strikes, demonstrations, boycotts, and other left activism.

It is by such strategy we involve the whole people in the revolutionary process. By initiating a counter-culture revolution centered around the communes of New Afrika we create a nationalist consciousness in concrete terms. At the same time our armed struggle will have definite aims, and wide support, and will not be conducted in an isolated, rootless way. We create the “new” person, i.e., the New Afrikan. To paraphrase a remark made by Karl Marx, we say: The Black Commune is the riddle of Black Liberation solved, and it knows itself to be that solution.

But a word of caution is due here. Various pacifist and activist sects have embraced the concept of voluntary poverty, and there is much to be learned from them. But for the most part they are small, insignificant enclaves with moral persuasions and lack revolutionary impact. Also, many vanguard people unconsciously, and occasionally consciously, practice the basic principles of voluntary poverty to some extent by automatically sharing their material wealth with other members of their organizations, or treating their organizations as communes. But in order for voluntary poverty to be a revolutionary factor it must be elevated to a mass level and be part of a whole liberation process and ongoing struggle; a process that includes mobilization of the masses, violence, and political, underground and above-ground activities. The Black Nation in motion.

As a nation, once we win independence we can expect there will be a period wherein we must live austere and make great sacrifices. A period where we will be required to live frugally and labor hard. No matter how much reparations we may win, our greatest national resource will ever remain the labor power of our people. Hence we must expect to labor as an inspired people, and we must not allow our frugality and austerity to destroy or undermine our humanity. Our human relations and human dignity is

enhanced by hard work as long as it is not alienated labor; as long as we eliminate class division and maintain People's control of institutions of power.

Voluntary Poverty and the Black Guerrilla

One last word. We as guerrillas are the warriors of the Black Nation. We are not ordinary Black partisans. We are angry people, totally displeased — a hundred percent dissatisfied. We will not be bought off. There is not sufficient money in the world to buy us. We do not seek personal aggrandizement, though we expropriate a thousand banks. We are not satisfied with \$600-dollar-per-month apartments. We have no desire for a partner, children, two cars, and a home in the suburbs. As long as Black people are under the yoke of capitalist oppression, as long as Black people lack control of the determining factors of their lives, we will not be satisfied with anything less than war. Comrade George speaks for us:

“So, my friends, the terms have been established. That is the only way I will accept any more time in this life. I don’t want to live any other way. I want to hide, run and look over my shoulder. The only woman that I could ever accept is one who would be willing to live out of a flight bag, sleep in a coal car, eat milkweed, bloodroot, wild greens, dandelions, a rabbit, a handful of rice. She would have to be willing to run and work all night and watch all day. She would bathe when we could, change clothes when we could. She would own nothing, not solely because she loved me but because she loved the principle, the revolution, the people.”

— Soledad Brother

In practical terms, we treat our individual cells as a commune (we tend to do this as an unconscious principle anyway), where the comrades share their meager possessions. But the fact that we will be making innumerable expropriations against the system means hundreds of thousands of dollars will pass through our hands individually. This money is to support the struggle, and while we must use a portion of it to meet our own minimal daily needs,

we must all consciously commit ourselves to the principles of voluntary poverty lest some comrade forget their calling. And of course if we, armed to the teeth and strapped like “bandits”, have embraced voluntary poverty and are supplying the above-ground movement with funds, it may possibly serve as a deterrent to some bourgeois-minded individual who might otherwise risk diverting the People’s funds to their own selfish purpose.

Above all we must eschew the principles of the money-dog. Neither we nor the revolution need money so bad that we compromise our revolutionary principles. There are some so-called Black nationalist sects who, in pursuing a bourgeois ethic, have gotten themselves in such a financial bind that they allow themselves to be utilized to funnel heroin into the Black community. Such a practice is in direct opposition to everything they are supposed to stand for, and it displays a contempt for Black people. Nothing intensifies and multiplies the contradictions of the colony like dope and they know it. Someday we may have to bring such so-called nationalist to a reckoning. Meanwhile, let us avoid such pitfalls ourselves.

IV. Proletarian Revolution — NO!

We reject proletarian revolution but not because, as some have proffered, a proletarian movement with a majority-white proletariat in the forefront would be inherently racist. This is not valid grounds for rejection. Granted that a white proletariat may indeed harbor significant remnants of racism, even so should the proletarian movement be successful and a socialist amerika established so the material basis for race discrimination would be substantially removed. People’s ownership of the means of production means there would be full employment, hence the competition between Black and white workers for available jobs would be removed. There would be fairer and wider distribution of wealth; the quality of life for the Black masses would be raised qualitatively overnight — even with proletarian

racism. But again we raise the question of proletarian racism only for the sake of argument and rebuttal. There is no certainty that proletarian racism, a remnant of degenerate bourgeois consciousness, could survive or be effective against the sharp and scientific dialectics of class struggle, particularly with Black Marxist-Leninist awareness being what it is today.

No. We reject proletarian revolution on other grounds. And those other grounds are essentially this: that in the final analysis it is not revolutionary — but counter-revolutionary.

In the first place, proletarian revolution seeks a complete defeat of the monopoly capitalist class, and to establish a socialist amerika. And it lacks a most fundamental ingredient — a radical proletariat.

“...The proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie.”

— *Communist Manifesto*

The Black worker — which comprises only about 10% of the amerikan proletariat class, it is true — is as radical as it can be (without necessarily being class conscious); they would as soon tear all this shit down and start de novo, on any system, as long as the new system has them in a more favorable position. The white workers are not. There is a certain visible vocal class-conscious element of the white working class, but this element is a minuscule minority for all its visibility.

By and large the white proletariat serves as the social base of support for monopoly capitalism; they identify very solidly with the capitalist system. After the white worker of Ford Motors, General Motors, U.S. Steel or whatever, has done with his strike once every two years, he is done with the class struggle. He sits back to enjoy his affluence and privileges again for another few years until the pinch of inflation galvanizes him again to action. And of course it was Marx who stated that the struggle for higher wages, while necessary, was in itself piecemeal reformism, and that the cry of the revolutionary was not for higher wages, but

“abolishment of the wage system.” This is the furthest thing from the minds of the white proletariat.

Due to the exploitation of the third world where the imperialists reap untold billions in the plundering of the natural resources and labor of the third-world masses, the imperialists have been able to cushion the edge of exploitation for their workers at home. The workers in the imperialist countries are paid a much, much higher wage and enjoy an infinitely higher standard of living. As a result the working class of the imperialist countries, particularly the U.S.A., are “bought off.” Their essential human needs are met, for the most part, within the context of the system.

For the Black Liberation Movement to take on the task of proletarian revolution would be to present a Black challenge to the “amerikkkan way of life”; would be to stir the blind patriotism and emotionalism of 200 million white amerikans. A few million of them are probably not even racist, but when you are “out to destroy amerika”, there you are. In other words, seizing proletarian power in amerika is not the job of the Black worker, and the Black Liberation Movement has no business trying.

Therefore, the orthodox Marxist-Leninist, i.e. the proletariatist, lacks a proletarian movement. If the proletariat are going to become involved in an in-depth People's movement that strikes at basic bourgeois institutions, it most necessarily must be a movement other than the “proletariat”, i.e. a white workers' movement; the Black Liberation Movement is the most likely replacement. Here they find a People's struggle that is daily, hourly, and nationally embroiled in the embittering contradictions that lie at the base of the system.

That being the case, one would think they would concentrate their energies towards supporting — even joining the Black Liberation Movement; but no, instead we find a tremendous effort on the part of many proletariatists to convert the Black Revolution into the proletarian revolution. To that end, they must destroy/defeat Black Liberation as a colonial question, and keep it within the contextual framework of a native proletarian issue. To this end, we find the

left engaged in a wide-ranging and heated debate on Black Liberation and “The National Question.” Or more specifically — whether a Black Nation exists in the five southern states termed “the Black-Belt South” (Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and South Carolina), and if not, whether there is scientific validity to any such claim in the conceivably near future.

Every proletarian organization of note, Black or white, has proffered position papers on the subject. Reams of paper and tons of rhetoric have been expended. Every paper uses as a starting point Stalin’s definition of a nation. To wit:

“A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people formed on the basis of common language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture.”

— *Marxism and The National Question, Stalin*

From there they generally go on to comment on the assessment of the Communist International, in which they analyzed the situation of Black people in the South during the era which extends from the Civil War until about 1930, and in the light of that definition conferred upon these people the status of an “oppressed nation.” Since that time the trend of Black migration to the urban industrial centers has taken its toll and Black people, it is acknowledged by all concerned, no longer constitute a majority in this area (except in a few counties in Mississippi); also, the development of capitalist methods of farming and the breakdown of the sharecropper feudal system dispossessed the people from the land, and they lost what little “economic cohesion” that existed for them. Hence, some take the position that a Black Nation no longer exists in this area, while others attempt to cling in some fashion or another to the old Comintern concept. All of this argument is terribly enlightening as these Marxist-Leninist are at their scientific best, and the information and historical knowledge they develop in the course of their arguments is invaluable and recommended reading. But for all its absorbing interest, we must at the

same time point out that it is an altogether false issue.

It was kind of funky at the onset. When the Communist International in 1928 first gauged the Black question in light of Stalin's definition and proclaimed a Black Nation — they did not do it with the thought in mind to promote Black Revolution, but rather to promote proletarian revolution. 1928, it may be recalled, was a period when the Marcus Garvey Black Nationalist movement was in its hey-day, with phenomenal success of mobilizing the Black masses. The Communist Party sought to undercut this movement. They sought to unite the Black Liberation Movement of that era with the proletarian movement by co-opting the claim of Black Nationhood. It was somewhat on the order of a campaign promise that, should the BLM join them, they would guarantee beforehand that when the proletarian revolution succeeded Black people would have the right to this land, to set up an independent nation, or a state within Socialist Amerika with self-determination.

By this we do not intend to pass too severe a judgment on the Comintern. All in all it was appropriate for the time. For the Black movement of that era was indeed in need of an ally as sophisticated, powerful and tenacious as the international proletariat. Indeed, whether the glorious Comrade Garvey knew it or not, Black Liberation, whether Back-to-Afrika, or whatever, could not be won without a struggle against imperialism. Nor do we intend to imply that the Comintern was working at deceit: they were not. Everything we've said here, they said it up front. What makes it funky was that up until that time, the proletarian movement had virtually ignored the oppression of Black people, and had made no serious efforts to organize, integrate, or take up issues with affected Black people. When they finally did make a move it was after the Black people had begun organizing themselves — then it was co-optive in intent. But at least during this period there existed a virile and forward-striding proletarian movement in Amerika; the era of "the Palmer raids," the Haymarket riots, the "IWW," Big Bill Heywood, and the "dynamite revolution," etc.

But not so today. Today the intention is the same: to divert the BLM into proletarian revolution, but in order to do this they find it more feasible to destroy all consideration of Black Liberation as a national question. Hence they take the same definition which the Comintern utilized to justify the Black nation — and use to challenge the Black Nation. “Look, you,” they say, “no Black majority currently exists in the south. The all important common economic activity is missing, you have no nation at this time.”

The truth is, of course, that we’ve had no nation there at any time but a prison, and a concentration/work camp. Technically speaking, even within the framework of Stalin’s definition, although we had a majority Black population and a common language, culture, etc., we lack an economically interwoven activity. The sharecropper feudal system tied us economically to the bourgeois planter class, or to the capitalist banks. The markets and retail purchases of the Black majority were dominated overwhelmingly by white ownership and bourgeois system of commodity production. Historically we have never exercised sovereignty there or self-determination over our lives. The Black-Belt South has been about as much of a nation to Black people as the penitentiary with its Black majority population.

No, while the Comintern was a little bit funky with its offer, today’s proletarian revolutionaries are indulging in rank hypocrisy. Because as long as capitalism is not kicked soundly in the ass, it makes little difference whether our claims to this land or any land can be scientifically “demonstrated.” And if the proletarian revolution were successful — again, it would make little difference whether we had any scientifically valid claim — we could “re-locate” or otherwise correct any deficiency that would legitimize our “morally” justified claim for self-determination. In other words, at the least the Communist International’s offer should still hold.

And so the question is why? Why are the orthodox Marxists so intent upon challenging Black Nationalism that they risk compromising the integrity of the Marxian science?

Is it because Black Nationalism is “narrow” and racist? We doubt it. Black so-called “racism” does not have the underpin-nings of vested interest and can be changed to perceive the class enemy relatively easy (relative to white consciousness changing).

Perhaps it is because Black Nationalism is “bourgeois,” i.e., the thrust of the Black bourgeoisie to create a national market, “to provide a market of Black-owned manufacture and services.” According to the Philadelphia Workers’ Organizing Committee (PWOC), a multi-national Marxist Leninist group, such as this is indeed the intent behind the rise of Black Nationalism. Yet by their own statistics, 89.5% of Black people are working-class, and only 10.5% are members of the Black bourgeois and petty bourgeois class. And of this 10.5% bourgeois/petty bourgeois, 9.9% are tied to the system in the capacity of “public administrators, salaried managers (manufacture, retail, etc.); professional (lawyers, doctors, college professors, etc.), sales managers, insurance brokers, realtors, etc.; foremen, police, firemen and security guards.”

And that leaves 1.2% who could benefit from a monopoly of Black markets. And that 1.2% divides evenly into 0.6% “self-employed managers” (manufacturers, contractors, retailers) and 0.6% farmers. So how could it be claimed that this minuscule Black bourgeois faction provides the base for a Black nationalist political movement? Certainly those tied to the system can be expected to remain loyal to the system in most instances; and the thirst for a monopoly of the Black market by the minuscule self-employed managers, contractors and retailers does not spill over into the area of armed struggle. And upon mentioning armed struggle we hit upon the gist of the problem.

We submit at this point, that the current Marxist proletariat seeks to channel Black liberation into proletarian revolution because Black liberation posed as a colonial question inherently entails armed struggle.

“Colonialism is not a thinking machine nor a body endowed

with reasoning faculties. It is violence in its natural state, and it will only yield when confronted with greater violence."

— Fanon

And this is the root of the problem. There is no place in the vision of amerikan proletarian revolution for violence. They perceive confrontation and struggle alright: they perceive parliamentary contest, general strikes, demonstrations, hopefully mass social disorder; at worst a scattered handful of jail terms, maybe riots, and some head busting. A few deaths — but armed struggle? "...The streets being cordoned off. Armored pig carriers everywhere, the smell of cordite..." Forget it. Let there be no mistake about it: no amount of provocateurism, no amount of criticizing or exhortation will "trick" them into a violent posture. No, we hate to admit it about fellow Marxist-Leninists, but we are afraid it is much as the indomitable Comrade Malcolm X said when speaking of Comrade King and the brothers in the early 1960's. He said (rather loudly): **"IF THESE SO-CALLED REVOLUTIONARIES KNEW WHAT REVOLUTION WAS REALLY ABOUT, THEY WOULD SHUT UP AND GET ON OUT OF THE WAY!"**

Similarly, it must be stated about the proletariat. They seek to channel Black Revolution into a piecemeal, reformist, wheel-spinning racial struggle. Let us take for example again the words of the PWOC. They contend that for many, this "boundless attachment" to the idea of the Black Nation is a moral aspiration, and that Black people do not want revolution, but freedom where they are at.

"It is clear that the Black People want not an artificial union but an end to discrimination and the achievement of full democracy... the right to self determination is at best abstract to them and is more often perceived as a demand injurious to their interests."

— *Against Dogmatism on the National Question, Pamphlet of the PWOC, p. 47*

In other words, they see as we see, that Black Revolution and establishing a Black Nation involves preparing 25

million Black people to perceive their interest anew, and migrate — flock to a particular area. In other words, it is an operation upon Black consciousness. To many this may indeed seem to be the truly far-fetched aspect of the whole proposition. But consider this: when the PWOC begins to speak of proletarian revolution, they end up saying we must operate on white consciousness (did Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. say different?).

“To merge the struggle of Black people with the American Workers’ Movement is the strategic aim — the path to Black Liberation and Socialist Revolution — the key to ‘ending the criminal rule of the U.S. monopoly class.’”

And:

“The most powerful obstacle is the promotion of the ideology of white supremacy, which not only serves to divide the class and split the white workers away from the Black freedom struggle, but actually enables the bourgeoisie to recruit sections of the white workers into its camp. The powerful grip of white chauvinist ideology over the masses of white workers turns them against the struggle for democratic rights on the part of the Black people. This ideology is the single most divisive weapon in the hands of the class enemy, splitting the working class, disorienting it politically and preventing it from gauging true friends and its real enemies.”

And Further:

“...we must direct our main blow against white chauvinism.”

“The class struggle, including the fight against discrimination in all its forms, is the school in which the white workers learn that their real interests lie with the Black workers; it is the active struggle of the white workers against racism that will generate confidence in the power of the united proletariat on the part of the Black workers.”

And so we ask — now who is the utopian? In the first place they base their whole strategy on a fiction. There is no “American Workers’ Movement.” A handful of left organizations with thinly “national” cadres in no way constitutes a

movement of amerikan workers. In essence what they're saying is that the primary job of proletarian revolution is altering the consciousness of the white working class.

We submit that changing the consciousness of Black people in accepting a Black Nation and committing themselves to struggle for it shall be qualitatively easier than attempting to change the consciousness of white workers. The material conditions support and promote white racism. The competition for jobs promotes racial antagonism. The differences in social/cultural conditions which result from denied vital areas of development: lumpen sub-culture etc., set further to broaden differences and reinforce centuries-long notions of white supremacy. Finally, white supremacy is actively promoted by the ruling class. This means millions of dollars are spent, and the power of established institutions is brought into play to maintain the white worker in a national conspiracy of racism.

To significantly change white consciousness, whether it be towards a more amenable position on the race question or on socialism, it would be necessary first to remove the material underpinnings. It is theorized that as the international contradictions sharpen — that is to say amid the growing socialist competition for world markets; and amid the recovery of other capitalist countries from the devastation wrought by World War II (see: Britain, France and especially Germany and Japan competing on the world markets) — this further proscribes and limits the amerikan imperialist access to markets and raw materials. The thrust of the third world for a greater share in its own resources (e.g. the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries), the nationalization of industry by other third-world countries, and of course the wars of liberation being won by the third world (Vietnam, Angola, Mozambique) all add up to perceptible constriction of the amerikan empire. Amerikan capitalism is no longer the virile expanding giant; it can no longer grant concessions without it affecting their profit index. A few more blows and it is believed (hoped) by the theorists that the amerikan ruling class will no longer be able

to protect the white working class from bearing the contradictions of exploitation. This, it is hoped, will radicalize them — will compel them to seek a socialist solution.

Others prophesy that “Soviet Social-Imperialism” in its expansion must inevitably clash with amerikan capitalist-imperialism, and in the ensuing world war usher in the proletarian revolution.

All this sort of thing is like waiting on an act of providence (especially the latest bit about “Soviet Social-Imperialism”). While it is true that the amerikan empire is constricting rather than expanding, there is no indication that this will bear well for race relations. Rather to the contrary, the imperialists are more likely to be successful in aiming white worker disaffection into racist channels. That, in fact, is precisely the problem. If capitalism were yet expanding, could yet grant concessions without it affecting adversely their profit margins, then the race issue in amerika would be considerably more amenable. As it stands, white worker consciousness is immutable within the context of the system.

No, the struggle against racism is necessary to expose contradictions, raise consciousness and educate Black people to the system; but as a primary strategy for liberation it is a bankrupt line. In one sense it is the other side of “narrow nationalism” in that it makes the race issues the main focus of struggle. It purports to hit at the root of the system, but actually engages the movement in endless piecemeal confrontation that, as soon as resolved in one area, re-appears in another. Today, a busing issue in Boston, tomorrow the death penalty in Georgia; democratic rights in South Carolina, migrant farm workers in Florida. Nazis in California, lynching in Mississippi; police brutality in Detroit, housing in Chicago. Kluxers in Cairo, Illinois; discrimination in the building trades. Failure of affirmative action in industry, and etc., ad infinitum. All this proves nothing if not that — in respect to race at least — white consciousness is immutable within the context of capitalism. If proletarian revolution is dependent upon altering this, then we can look to have the bourgeoisie with us until the year

2,000,000 AD.

On the other hand, Black consciousness is changing all the time. There is no consciousness in amerika which is growing and developing on par with Black consciousness. While today the Black masses may appear to be caught up in the clutches of degenerate bourgeois consciousness — of rabid consumerism, opportunism, individualism, “getting over on the next man,” and such other human alienation as generated by the galloping predatory capitalist economy — this is essentially a false consciousness without substantial material support, and against our “real interest.” It is but another stage in the Black Nation’s unending quest for its lost human identity. It is an integral part of the task of Black Socialist Revolution to recover this identity in the course of struggle. True, the state of Black consciousness is a major issue to be contended with, but we hold that affecting Black consciousness favorably holds infinitely greater promise than affecting white racism.

In conclusion, it should be pointed out that our rejection of proletarian revolution should not be construed in an absolute sense. Primarily we resist the attempts of certain Marxists to divert our struggle into non-productive channels. The proletarian methods of strike, demonstrations, boycotts, parliamentary maneuvers and so forth shall certainly be an integral part of our people’s struggle. But if Black Revolution is to be successful, we must maintain our perspective as an oppressed nation — a colonized people — and of the blood and sacrifice that entails.

Nor do we mean to entirely forsake proletarian revolution, such as it is, for we recognize a certain “...dialectical strengthening that occurs between the movement of liberation of the colonized peoples and the emancipatory struggles of the exploited working class of the imperialist countries” (Fanon). Particularly in that ours is a situation where both the “colonized peoples” and the “exploited working class of the imperialist country” occupy the same territory, the same industrial complexes, and the same economy. Certainly there is no way we can jerk the pillar of

the Black Colony out of the very ribs of the beast without having a profound effect on the proletarian struggle. We anticipate that where there be anything we can do to help further proletarian revolution — any way we can form united fronts, concerted action, or whatever — we will lock arms in unity. But there is no point in our attempting to submerge Black Liberation in proletarian struggle or masquerade as proletarian revolution. Such attempts are false, confusing, and in the final analysis leads head-long down a blind alley.

SOME QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. *What are some of the questions you have on this pamphlet? Discuss them with your cell.*
2. *What is the aim of Black Revolution?*
3. *What is the aim of Proletarian Revolution?*
4. *What are some of the alternatives for Black Revolution insofar as a land base is concerned?*
5. *Can you think of any new possible alternatives?*
6. *Discuss with your cell what you think is the most important aspect of the Nation-Building strategy outlined here.*
7. *Can you think of anything new that may be contributed to strategy?*
8. *Do you think you are ready to embrace “voluntary poverty” and live “communally” with your comrades?*
9. *Why do we reject proletarian revolution? Explain.*
10. *Is this rejection of proletarian revolution total? Explain.*

The Revolutionary Black Lumpenproletariat

“So the pimps, the hooligans, the unemployed and the petty criminals, urged on from behind, throw themselves into the struggle for liberation like stout working men... The prostitutes too, and the maids who are paid two pounds a month, all the hopeless dregs of humanity, all who turn in circles between suicide and madness, will recover their balance, once more go forward, and march proudly in the great procession of the awakened nation.”¹

— *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon

The question has been debated throughout the preceding decade: what is the place of the Black lumpenproletariat in the Black Liberation Movement? Is it in the vanguard? Is it reactionary? Or are they merely dispossessed, apolitical dregs who will be carried along in the Black workers’ struggle? Our answer to that question is: it depends. It depends on whether we’re going to intellectualize the Black Liberation Movement, whether we are going to win our freedom through democratic parliamentary processes, or whether it will require armed struggle — a national war of liberation.

Posed in this light the answer should appear obvious, but because of the considerable debate and discussion that yet rages on the left, we should perhaps deal with the question more in-depth.

First of all it should be noted that the term “lumpenproletariat” is a European term which came into usage during the early ages of capitalism when the peasants were driven from the land and had begun to congregate in the cities in large numbers, and without a means of livelihood. “Lumpen” literally means raggedy — the “raggedy proletariat” — and refers to that class of dispossessed individuals who live in urban areas, and would normally be among the working class (the proletariat) except that they are chronically without jobs, or are only marginally employed. As a result, this class generally seeks to augment its miserly

¹ *The Wretched of the Earth*, By Frantz Fanon

incomes with all sorts of illegal acts. Hence, lumpen-proletariat usually refers to petty criminals, pick-pockets, robbers, sex workers, pimps, and so forth. In its broader context it refers to anyone who is a dispossessed urban dweller without job skills or means of livelihood.

Being lumpen also carries with it a certain mentality generated by an unstable economic plight, a mentality characterized by a certain low level of cultural/educational development. In yet another sense, the lumpen mentality is characterized by “living by one’s wits,” by selfishness and opportunism, holding nothing sacred, owing allegiance to no one, and one’s only interest being to make a buck any way one can. For example, in the Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, Marx refers to Louis Bonaparte, in his adventurous, opportunistic thrust for power, as a “lumpen-proletarian.”

But it is in the Communist Manifesto itself that Marx expresses the line on the lumpenproletariat which succeeding generations of the left were to adopt as a matter of course. To wit:

“The ‘dangerous class’, the social scum, that passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of old society, may here and there be swept into the movement by a proletarian revolution; its conditions of life, however, prepare it far more for the part of a bribed tool of reactionary intrigue.”²

The lumpenproletariat has historically been disturbed and dismissed by the left. It was not until the 1960s that a phenomenon occurred which caused the left to reconsider the question of the lumpen class. That phenomenon was the fight against colonialism/racism.

It appears that in the struggle against imperialism, when the imperialist country also has a significant “settler” population within a colonized country, it is a sufficient catalyst to transform the lumpen element from a “bribed tool” of reaction, to a revolutionary vanguard element.

² The Communist Manifesto, By Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels

Frantz Fanon was the first to discuss this transformation.

*“It is within this mass of humanity, this people of the shanty towns, at the core of lumpenproletariat, that the rebellion will find its urban spearhead. For the lumpenproletariat, that horde of starving men, uprooted from their tribe and from their clan, constitutes one of the most spontaneous and the most radically revolutionary forces of a colonized people”.*³

Fanon did not make any special note that this was a phenomenon particular only to a colonized, racially divided people. It does appear true, however, that when a lumpen class develops among a relatively homogeneous people, whether it be European, Asian, South American, or whatever, that the causes of oppression cannot be as clearly seen. The dispossessed class developing in an uncultured, unlettered environment directs its criminal activity at members of its own race; the tendency is to internalize and idealize the causes of oppression. That is, they seek the cause of one's status as due to one's personal flaws and shortcomings: one is innately evil, predatory, lazy, selfish, lustful, etc. or one is simply unfortunate (will of the gods) etc. Whatever the reason, the fact remains that when the revolution takes place among a relatively homogeneous people, the lumpen element is yet to be singled out as a class for any special revolutionary accolades, particularly so exalted a position as “vanguard.”

What gave added weight to Fanon's observation and truly ignited debate was the role assumed by the Black lumpen in the U.S.A. in the 1960s. The Black workers struggled for a century after emancipation under the leadership of first one Black bourgeois liberal faction then another. Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, the NAACP, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., etc., and also under the guidance of left organizations, the Communist Party, etc. But it was not until violence broke out in the mid-sixties and the Black Panther Party, using as its social base the young angry, jobless, urban

³ Fanon, Ibid.

Black people, assumed vanguard position in the Black Liberation Movement. The Black lumpenproletariat and Black lumpen-proletarian leaders were propelled to the center stage of history, and debate raged on the left.

Violence having subsided into the Black Liberation Movement for the time being, the old classic definition of the lumpen element as a “tool of reaction” attempts to reassert and re-argue itself. But while such arguments tend to overlook the colonized/race factor, they cannot deny the history of the preceding decade; they cannot deny the new consciousness, the new status, the existence of a new element — a revolutionary Black lumpenproletariat. Our own position, therefore is this: if Black liberation is to be won at the ballot box, if Black liberation is to be won through demonstrations, strikes, boycotts, and other non-violent means, then indeed count the Black lumpenproletariat out. For the Black lumpenproletariat is violence personified.

The Black lumpenproletariat more than any other class in amerika, including the Black worker, has lived at ground zero, at the soul searing center of the most vicious “mainstream.” Persecuted by the state bureaucracy, the Black lumpen lives not only by their wits, but at wit’s end: hand to mouth, always one step away from disaster, one step from the gutter, or one step from prison. In everything from family disorganization, to self-alienation and war upon their neighbor (crime), to pitched battles with the police, the hand of every person is turned against them and the humanity of the lumpen suffers accordingly. The soul of the lumpen is an inactive, latent, but always smoldering bed of lava ready to erupt into violence at the slightest provocation.

Our contention is that as a class, it is only the Black lumpenproletariat that possessed the deep, desperate hatred — equal to the hatefulness and determination of the imperialist overlords — to hang on.

Our contention is that the Black workers lack the depth of determination to break the hold of capital on the Black Nation. The Black worker has historically played it safe. The Black worker has small experience with police relative to the

lumpen, and are frightened of them and all it entails. The Black worker has not lived their life on the “razor’s edge,” knows almost nothing of the tactic of “hit-n-run”, has small experience in the elemental arts of kill or be killed; is not prepared to risk prison, death, torture, and all the things which are an integral, if not daily part of the life of the lumpen, and of which shall be demanded of all Black people before liberation shall ever be won.

The Black lumpenproletariat is the warring class of the Black Colony — the cutting edge of the Black Nation.

We readily admit that in the final analysis the success of the revolution depends upon the worker. The lumpen knows nothing of the means of production. It is only the worker who ultimately can seize control of the factories and bring capitalist production to a grinding halt. It is only the worker who can, by their support or lack of support, throw any system into disarray. The lumpen does not possess the “habits of organization and management”, the knowledge and technical skill which enables a nation’s economy to function, and unless the worker assumes this responsibility then no evolution can be a success. Hence the workers’ position as the vanguard element is assured whether in socialist revolution or Black revolution. But by temperament, inclination, and experience in unstable, fast-paced, heated action, no class is better fitted for its historically necessary role of urban guerrilla than the Black lumpenproletariat.

Karl Marx, in his scientific analysis, discerned that “violence is the midwife of an old society pregnant with a new one.” Our contention is that amerika, the decadent old racist whore, is pregnant with a new nation, a Black nation, and the lumpenproletariat is who will produce the kicks and inflict the pain that will bring about the birth of that nation.

But in order to fulfill our historical role we must recognize that we as a class harbor ingrained negative characteristics which may too easily place us in the classical category of being tools of reaction. Again Fanon recognized this trait in the lumpenproletariat:

“...But if the rebellion’s leaders think it will be able to develop taking the masses into consideration, the lumpenproletariat will throw itself into the battle and will take part in the conflict — but this time on the side of the oppressor. And the oppressor, who never loses a chance of setting the niggers against each other, will be extremely skilled in using that ignorance and incomprehension which are the weaknesses of the lumpenproletariat. If this available reserve of human effort is not immediately organized by the forces of rebellion, it will find itself fighting as hired soldiers side by side with the colonial troops. In Algeria, it is the lumpenproletariat which furnished the harkis and the massalists; In Angola it supplied the road openers who nowadays precede the Portuguese armed columns, in the Congo, we find once more the lumpenproletariat in regional manifestations in Kasal and Katanga, while at Leopoldville the Congo’s enemies made use of it to organize ‘spontaneous’ mass meetings against Lumumba.”⁴

The message is clear that if we are to benefit from the experiences of our siblings in Afrika in this regard, then it is a vital part of our historical mission to take the Black lumpenproletariat in hand, and encourage the development of its revolutionary potential — less it be used against us. It is no accident that “the niggers are against each other”. It is no accident that the ghetto, economically depressed, is flooded with narcotics, keeping the whole community off-balance and in turmoil. Let there be no mistake: Black-on-Black crime is the conscious design of the evil people who run this system. And for the Black worker to cry for more and more police in the Black neighborhoods, and for great penalties for “criminals” is only furtherance of the evil scheme.

But there are those among the lumpenproletariat who have come to see clearly the nature of Black oppression, have come to discern the evil purpose we are serving, and have come to recognize our historical duty to our people, “and have resolved to help break the chains.” We perceive that for the Black lumpenproletariat especially, Black

⁴ Ibid.

liberation is our personal salvation, and gives meaning to our otherwise meaningless lives. Through adhering to the high, selfless principles of revolution, the lumpen re-joins the human race.

“The men of our group have developed as a result of living under a ruthless system, a set of mannerisms that numb the soul, we have been made the floor mat of the world, but the world is yet to see what can be done by men of our nature. By men who have walked the path of regression, abortion, and yet come out whole. There will be a special page in the book of life for men who crawl back from the grave, this page will tell of utter defeat, of ruin and passivity in one breath, and in the next — overwhelming victory and fulfillment.”⁵

— *Prison Letters of George Jackson*

We recognize that in order for Black revolution to be successful it requires a violence that is some-thing other than sporadic and spontaneous — that it requires a sophisticated, organized, scientific, protracted guerrilla warfare. And again because it does require such discipline, organization, and consistency, there are those who claim the Black lumpenproletariat cannot pull it off, that the Black lumpenproletariat cannot produce people in significant numbers who are capable of clear headed, sober, and consistent struggle. Only history will ultimately give us the answer. Meanwhile there are those of us who are willing to struggle without negative lumpen traits of petty individualism, lack of discipline, and training. There are those of us who are determined to take the hurt, pain, and violence that lies smoldering in our bosoms — and sophisticate it with patience and virtue, discipline it with knowledge and science, magnify it with collective action, and in so doing, elevate it to a level equal to the historical task before us.

Hence again we conclude with the words of the great spokesman for the Revolutionary Black Lumpenproletariat, Comrade George Jackson, a true dragon:

⁵ Prison Letters of George Jackson

*This Monster,
The Monster they've endangered in me
Will return to torment its maker,
From the grave,
From the pit, the profoundest pit
— Hurl me!
Into the next existence.
The descent into hell won't turn me.
I'll crawl back and dog his trail forever!
They can't stop our revenge.
Never — never!
For we are part of a righteous people,
Who anger slowly,
But rage — undamned,
We'll gather at his door in such a number,
That the rumbling of our feet will make the earth tremble.
For three hundred years without gratification,
We're going to charge him
Reparations in blood.
We're going to charge.
Like a mad and wounded rogue male elephant.
Trunk raised.
Ears flared,
Bullhorns blaring!!!
We'll do our dance in his chest.
This is one bunch of niggers that's positively displeased,
A hundred percent dissatisfied.
He'll never see anything in our eyes
— But daggers to pierce his cruel heart.
We'll never forgive,
We'll never forget,
And if we're guilty of anything at all,
It's for not leaning on him — hard enough.
— War without terms!⁶*

⁶ Ibid.

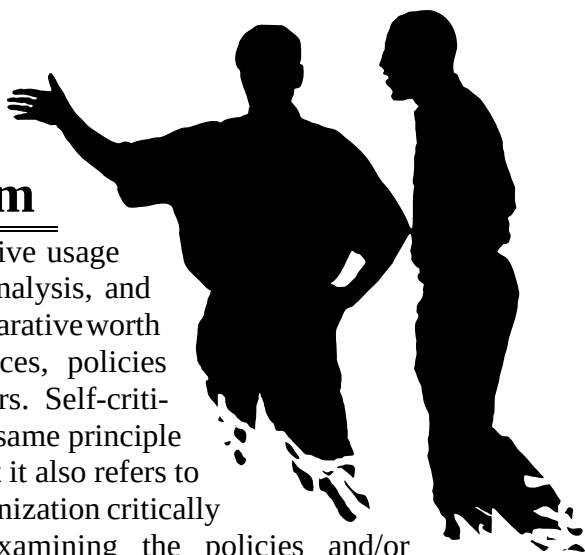
Criticism and Self-Criticism

Criticism in the positive usage is the examination, analysis, and evaluation of the comparative worth of one's acts, practices, policies and/or ideas by others. Self-criticism is of course this same principle applied to oneself, but it also refers to the practice of an organization critically examining and re-examining the policies and/or practices of its own members. Criticism and self-criticism are wholly necessary to human progress. Marxism-Leninism elevates positive criticism and self-criticism to a conscious principle and incorporates it into the day-to-day operational procedure of the organization.

Criticism in its positive usage corrects/adjusts mistakes of practice and of thought, resolves differences among individuals and makes for a smooth-running, well-functioning organization. Mao Zedong, in his discourse on criticism put forth the slogan "Unity-Criticism-Unity" to show how individuals come together and unite under one principle or set of principles, but in the actual working out of these principles differences arise for various reasons which militate against the accomplishment of declared ends, and against cohesion of the organization. When these differences arise there must be criticism in which those with differences interpenetrate, modify one another, and form a new and more perfect unity on the basis of having worked out contradictions that were inherent in the old unity.

I. Causes of Error

The differences which arise that disrupt unity can generally



be found to have their basis in these three categories of human errors:

1) Opportunism*: Opportunism is defined as that tendency for an individual or individuals to make a decision or commit an act that is favorable to their own self-aggrandizement and at the expense of the collective or the movement as a whole. Opportunism stems from selfishness and petty individualism. It is strictly against the principles of Marxism-Leninism. When opportunism arises, either in an individual or in an organization, it is to be severely criticized and if necessary the individual or individuals expelled from the organization or ostracized from the movement.

2) Subjectivism: The second type of error that disrupts unity and impairs revolutionary progress may be found in the general category called “subjectivism”. Subjectivism can be distinguished from opportunism often only by the merest of hairlines. It generally has to do with personality flaws. One makes a decision or commits an act that is based on one’s personal feelings, desires, resentments, jealousies, prejudices, etc. Such subjectivism may possibly stem from any number of sources: childhood trauma, subliminal conditioning, religious superstition, etc. When such subjectivism pops up to impede the functioning of the individual or the progress of the organization it is imperative that it be dealt with. The consciousness of many must necessarily be stripped of the old pernicious ideas and values imbued by the bourgeois culture. Though again Mao Zedong cautions that those traits and personal idiosyncrasies which are not particularly harmful to the individual or the cause, but are largely a matter of style, should not needlessly be criticized.

3) Errors From Objective Causes: Thirdly there is the type of error that stems from objective causes. For example one may have lacked certain objective information, or may have placed too heavy an emphasis on certain elements of a situation rather than other more correct elements. Perhaps

* Note: We should always qualify the definition of “opportunism” as being at the expense of the collective or of the movement as a whole.

the environmental conditions themselves may have been such as to limit the formulating of a more correct idea or policy: this last type of error is the type that a cell or collective will inevitably find itself dealing with again and again. That is to say, most persons coming into a collective can be expected to more or less quickly grasp the rules against opportunism and subjectivism (though from time to time these problems too must necessarily be dealt with) and subscribe to a Marxist-Leninist outlook which in its concreteness means analyzing a situation with the objective facts of the situation uppermost in mind. But the objective factors of a situation are continually undergoing change as the old elements and factors fade and diminish and new elements appear. Hence policy and practice must be re-examined periodically, and new policy made to account the changes in the situation.

Professionalism is said to be distinguished by “no wasted motion” — that is by making the least mistakes. To be a Marxist-Leninist organization is to be a professional revolutionary organization, which means errors and excessive baggage of ideological confusion are stripped away. In revolution and an organization of the type we are building, mistakes are counted in the number of lives lost, number of years served on a sentence, and setbacks for the cause of liberation. Hence, anything — any act, policy, or course of action on the part of anyone that affects the functioning of the whole collective — must be carefully scrutinized, examined and criticized.

II. Negative Criticism

But perhaps another way to get an indication of the value of positive criticism is to compare it with the bourgeois use of criticism, or negative criticism.

At the base of the difference between the bourgeois use of criticism and the socialist (Marxist-Leninist) use lies the false ideological emphasis on the individual rather than on the collective. As a result, for the bourgeoisie with their

emphasis on individualism, criticism inevitably is negative. It is not used to build, rather to destroy. It ceases to be a tool by which to correct and adjust mistakes or resolve differences and repair breeches in unity; rather it becomes a weapon of assault, a tool of domination, of one personality upon another. It is divisive and destructive; it is nit-picking and slanderous, an attack upon the intrinsic worth of an individual.

Such a use of criticism is typical of the alienated minds which emanate from bourgeois culture. Thus we see the “strong” personality exalted; the dictator who brooks no opposition, the patriarch that tolerates no criticism, the authoritarian whose dictum must be obeyed without question. Of course in the final analysis it must be pointed out that such creatures of alienation are not due solely to aberrations in bourgeois philosophy, but are inherent to the imperatives of class society and systems of alienated labor.

In primitive societies which were communistic, in that the means of production were held in common by the whole tribe or community and exploitation of one individual over another did not exist, we generally find criticism instituted to the more or less democratic plane which Marxism-Leninism has adopted.

Frantz Fanon, for example, points out that self-criticism is, in the final analysis, “an Afrikan institution”:

“Self-criticism has been much talked about of late, but few people realize that it is an Afrikan institution. Whether in the djemas of Northern Afrika, or in the meetings of Western Afrika, tradition demands that the quarrels which occur in a village should be settled in public. It is communal self-criticism, of course, and with a note of humor, because everybody is relaxed, and because in the last resort we all want the same things. But the more the intellectual imbibes the atmosphere of the people, the more completely he abandons the habits of calculation, of unwanted silence, of mental reservations, and shakes off the spirit of concealment. And it is*

* Djemas — village assemblies.

*true that already that level we can say that the community trumps, and that it spreads its own light and its own reason.”*⁷

But for all that, we see the bourgeois “negativity” toward criticism creeping again and again into the ranks of revolutionary organizations. One of the larger contradictions of Black lumpen struggle in the sixties, for example, was that in too many instances we lacked the science of positive criticism. In too many instances our leaders were exalted individuals with strong personalities that intimidated criticism, and resorted to “commandist” tactics. In a commandist mode of operation, instead of science we have domination by force and a swirling undercurrent of subjectivism, of jealousies, prejudices, resentments and of course opportunism. All of this leads to disruption in times of crisis and high susceptibility to the divisive seeds sown by the enemy. The cost in lives and long jail terms are still being paid.

A revolutionary organization that does not utilize criticism and self-criticism is not Marxist-Leninist. Mao Zedong advised, “...constantly expand the Red Army and enhance its quality through struggle so that it can fulfill its mission in the coming general insurrection.”⁸

Criticism is one of the types of struggle that enhances quality. The collective or cell that does not conduct criticism but allows mistaken practices and ideas to go unchecked builds up a subjective undercurrent that ultimately must destroy it in a whirlwind of crisis. A revolutionary vanguard organization may be compared to a battering ram that pounds away at the fortress which is the system. If the substance of the battering ram is lesser than the substance of the system we may expect the battering ram to break and shatter. In working out the contradictions through critical examination and expulsion of negative traits, an organization like a rock without flaws becomes more and more solid, more and more able to withstand the shocks and blows inherent in revolutionary struggle. If the system on the other

⁷ Wretched of the Earth, F. Fanon, (p. 47, 48)

⁸ Selected Military Writings of Mao Zedong, p. 17

hand is moribund with contradictions, we may therefore expect it to break and shatter at the impact of our revolutionary thrust. Only through struggle with the latent contradictions of individuals and objective errors of the organization can a collective hope to enhance its quality and fulfill its revolutionary vanguard role “...in the coming general insurrection.”

III. How to Conduct a Criticism Session

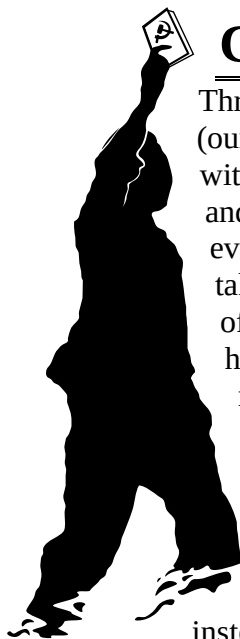
In conducting a criticism session we find that these few broad rules apply:

1. **CRITICISM NOT BEFORE THE COLLECTIVE:**
Mannerisms of a subjective nature which are minor and inconsistent with organizational rules and principles may be dealt with privately by one comrade simply pointing out the error and inconsistency to the other. The criticism should be acknowledged by the recipient and resolved at this point.
2. **CRITICISM BEFORE THE COLLECTIVE:**
 - a) Opportunism is a major departure from revolutionary principle and must be brought before the collective.
 - b) Subjective errors that persist after a criticism is brought in private should be brought before the collective.
 - c) All objective propositions that have to do with the organizational policy and practice, or that affect the Black Liberation Movement as a whole, should be brought before the collective.
3. Each criticism should be dealt with on its own merits; that is, do not bring up a criticism of another individual in order to divert attention from oneself (unless there is a direct connection between the two). Only after the original criticism has been resolved should another criticism be broached.
4. No attack upon personalities or unprincipled criticism.
 - a) No name-calling.
 - b) No disparaging remarks about an individual

- (only about the acts of an individual).
- c) Deal with the objective facts of a situation.
5. A criticism is not resolved until:
- a) The person who is the object of the criticism acknowledges their error and states their intention to amend their ways, or
 - b) The person who brought the criticism acknowledges that the criticism was invalid, or
 - c) Some point in between is reached where that portion which is valid is acknowledged and that portion which is invalid is acknowledged as invalid.

SOME QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Define positive criticism.
2. What are the three basic sources of human error?
3. What is the basis of bourgeois negativity towards criticism?
 - a) Philosophic basis?
 - b) Material basis?
4. What is one method of struggle that enhances the quality of an organization?
5. What are some of the ramifications of commandist tactics?



Combat Liberalism

Throughout the process of educating the people (ourselves) certain contradictions will arise within the ranks that must be critically attacked and resolved in order to ensure unity. Therefore every comrade (potential revolutionary) should take up this weapon and use it judiciously. All of these contradictions can be listed under the heading of “liberalisms”. Here are some basic manifestations of liberalism:

1. To let things slide for the sake of peace or friendship when a person has clearly done wrong and refrain from principled argument because of emotional feelings towards a sibling, or to touch on a matter lightly instead of going through it thoroughly, so as to stay on good terms. The result is that both the individual and organization is hurt.
2. To indulge in irresponsible criticism in private instead of actively putting forward one’s suggestion to the organization. To say nothing to a person, but gossip behind their back, or to say nothing at a meeting but to gossip afterwards. To follow one’s own inclination with no regard for the party’s principles.
3. To let things drift when they do not affect one personally; to say little when you know something is wrong, to be worldly-wise, play it safe and seek only to avoid blame.
4. Not to obey orders but to give pride or place to one’s own opinions and reject organizational discipline.
5. To indulge in personal attacks, pick quarrels, vent personal spite or seek revenge instead of entering into an argument and struggling against incorrect views for the sake of unity or progress, or getting the work done properly.
6. To be among the masses and fail to conduct propaganda and agitation and show no concern for their well-being.

7. To work half-heartedly without a definite plan or direction and muddle along.
8. To regard oneself as having rendered valuable service to the struggle and take off on an ego trip, thereby causing oneself to become alienated from the party and the people. To become so engrossed in theoretical analysis as to form an intellectual elite.
9. To be aware of one's own mistakes but make no effort to correct or admit to them.

Liberalism stems from petty-bourgeois selfishness; it places personal interest first and the struggle second, and this gives rise to ideological, political, and organizational incoherence. And again, the idea behind practicing liberalism is that if you are easy (liberal) on a comrade and allow them to get away with their manifestation of petty individualism, they will in turn be liberal when you display your petty individualism. Liberalism brings on personalism, resentments, prejudices, jealousy, and division.

COMBAT LIBERALISM!

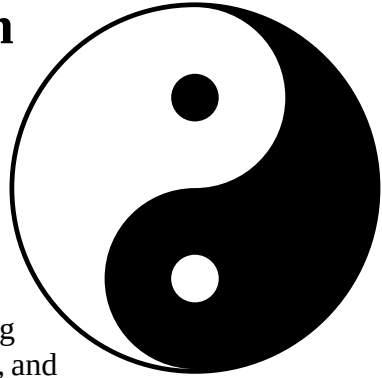
Dialectical Materialism at a Glance

Dialectical Materialism (DM) is the philosophic system worked out by Karl Marx over a hundred years ago, and which today the revolutionary masses of the world have embraced.

DM is the principle of ever-changing reality as it is found in the material world, and whose rules every science must embrace, whether consciously or unconsciously, if progress and control of the material world is to be made. The human being and human society are an integral part of the material; but under Western culture, while science and technology are so advanced that the moon and outer space may be explored, human nature, it is claimed, is yet so unpredictable that no sound science of human beings or of society can truly be formulated. Hence the continued chaos and turmoil of the modern world. The bourgeoisie, in other words, attempt to place the blame of the state of the world on a “natural” chaotic propensity of human nature, and to hide the fact that a human world can be created — if science is applied. DM, they scream, is a “schema” which the world cannot be made to fit into.

DM, however, is not a schema applied to various phenomena, but rather is the operating principles existing in all phenomena. And so in every sphere of human activity whether economic, social, psychological, or whatever, the revolutionary seeks the dialectical and the material principle already existing in a phenomenon. Having learned the principles of the particular phenomena involved, the revolutionary, like a scientist, can manipulate these factors by contributing one way or another to the principles already in motion — and thereby bend reality to their will, master it, and bring it under control.

While DM may be utilized by the individual in seeking



their own private ends, ultimately it must be said that DM is a People's philosophy and anti-bourgeois philosophy, because it shows that the overall motion of human history clearly indicates the world's masses will eventually triumph over private property and establish a world order of peace and familyhood free of exploitation and oppression. This was the truth which Karl Marx discerned and presented in unerring science. For this reason the bourgeoisie hates him, and would obliterate his science, but instead are themselves being obliterated by the inexorable motion of time, truth, and world revolution.

The following pamphlet does not propose to make a dialectician out of a comrade in one easy lesson, but is intended only as an introduction to the basic principle of DM so that our movement of Black Liberation may be in step and harmony with the world-truth that will “make us free”.

I. Materialism and Idealism

To begin: materialism in the Marxian sense does not refer to a philosophy in which one subscribes to self-aggrandizement through accumulation of wealth:

“By the word materialism the philistine understands gluttony, drunkenness, lust of the eye, lust of the flesh, arrogance, cupidity, avarice, miserliness, profit-hunting and stock exchange swindling — in short all the filthy vices in which he himself indulges in private.”⁹

Rather, materialism in the Marxian philosophy refers to the priority of that which is concrete and tangible over that which is intangible. By the same token, “idealism” in the Marxian sense does not refer to a belief in virtues of high standards and values. If that were the case Marxists would be termed idealist, for no one possesses higher standards or has higher hopes for humanity; rather, idealism refers to the belief and practice of putting that which is intangible (in the realm of ideas, spirit etc.) as having priority over that which

⁹ Ludwig Feurbach by Frederick Engels, Intl. Publishers, p. 31

is concrete and tangible. In short, it is the age-old question of mind vs. matter. DM discerns the priority of matter.

The most obvious idealism is a belief in God or supernatural forces. To the Marxist, God did not create the material world, but rather the material world, via human imagination, created God. The bourgeoisie seize upon this tenet of DM and attempt to inflame prejudice and tangle the class struggle on the horns of a false issue. Religion is not the issue insofar as it is not used in a reactionary and oppressive manner: there are other forms of idealism which are more subtle and infinitely more dangerous. The dangerous idealisms fall generally under the heading of subjectivisms, “subjective” being that which comes from the mind.

Mind, according to Marxism, definitely does not have priority over matter. Mind, in fact, is a product—an activity of matter and of the physical brain without which there would be no mind. A mind has no existence independent of the brain any more than sight has an existence independent of the eyes, or smell has an existence independent of the nose, etc. Yet for all the apparent priority of matter over mind, apparent at least in so far as time sequence is concerned, it seems to be an area which most aspiring Marxists seem to have the most trouble yet. The lumpen brothers particularly, quick to pounce upon any hint or suggestion of a god or of a religious proposition, superstition, etc., often overlook the subjective idealism which springs from within — thoughts, ideas, feelings, love, hate, attitudes, prejudices, and so forth. These things seem hard to recognize as idealisms. The root of the problem here is that these forms of idealism are real in spite of their intangibility, and have their effect in the real world of cause and effect. That is to say, people are motivated by love and hate; people do things because of prejudices and attitudes, because of their thoughts and ideas. But here again we emphasize priority.

Bourgeois theorists place priority on the subjective factors and attempt to account for the chaotic state of society as due to these unstable, unpredictable factors. Marxism, on

the other hand, insists that the subjective factors are generated by the objective conditions. As a result we can see the antagonism in the two approaches. The bourgeoisie's approach to social ills is predominately an attack upon people, and ranges from everything to moral preaching to regenerate the individual, to behavior modification, jails, and all the way to mass murder. Marxism, however, is predominately an attack upon conditions, i.e. upon systems of oppression which generate turmoil and misery and in the human psyche. That is not to say that both do not utilize, to some extent, objective as well as subjective factors, because there is recognition in both approaches of a certain interaction of the two. And so again it is a question of placing priority that determines whether one is taking an idealist or materialist approach.

For example, an idealist might argue that a chair, a table, or whatever, existed in someone's mind as an idea, and was put on a drawing board before it became a reality. Hence they would say, the priority of mind over matter. To this argument it should be pointed out that it is actual concrete conditions which give rise to ideas. In this instance it may be necessary to go all the way back to the cave man days before there were chairs. The idea of making something to sit upon sprang from the actual practice of sitting, first perhaps upon a large stone. Sitting upon a stone once it becomes a practice eventually gives rise to the idea of improving upon it by making it soft, or to seek something lighter or more portable — hence first here is reality — then the idea arises which improves upon reality in a step-by-step process until the Chippendale is arrived at thousands of years later. The priority of the objective conditions are displayed in a twofold manner in this example: first that the objective practice of sitting gave rise to the idea of chairs; second of how impossible it was for humans to think of a chair as complex as a Chippendale until the production process, the tools and technology existed which would make a Chippendale feasible. But the interaction of the objective and subjective are manifested throughout: hence the Marxian emphasis on

practice, then theory, then corrected practice, and then corrected theory and so on.

Marxism claims to be the science of revolution. The reason such considerations as materialism and idealism are so important is that in order to have a scientifically correct approach, one must have a scientifically correct analysis. For example, some of the forms of idealism which one is likely to run into in the struggle for Black liberation are:

1) Racism. Racism is an attitude spawned by conditions. It has been pretty thoroughly substantiated by historians that the doctrine of white supremacy did not arise until after the fact of slavery. Then it arose as a justification and rationalization of ruthless exploitation of Black people. Such racism having come into existence is real and becomes a factor in Black oppression. But the primary factor is the need of the system to have some mass of people whom it could exploit regardless of race. If a revolutionary placed their priority on racism as many are prone to do, and aimed their blows solely at white people yet leave the system of exploitation intact, then at the end of their struggle they will have found that the face and the color of the oppressor may have changed, but Black oppression remains.

2) The appeal to conscience. Another dangerous form of idealism which one frequently finds in the struggle is the “moral” appeal, the appeal to conscience. As a rule of thumb Marxism holds that one’s conscience is likely to follow the dictates of their economic interest. This was one of the primary differences between the unscientific utopian socialists of the pre-Marxian era and the scientific socialism of Marx & Engels. The utopian socialist perceived that the masses of humanity would not be so miserable if there was common ownership and equitable distribution of society’s wealth. They worked out various plans and approached the kings and rulers to put these plans into effect. This was called the “Age of Reason”, when the utopians made appeals to the conscience of the world rulers to initiate the “golden millennium” not by class struggle “but by fiat”. Marxians on the other hand realistically perceive that the bourgeoisie will

not be reasoned, bargained, or negotiated out of their position of wealth and power, and therefore it requires armed struggle on the part of the people.

Latter day utopians such as Mahatma Gandhi, and Dr. Martin Luther King did indeed put the masses in motion, which was an improvement over their predecessors, but they depended upon the brutality and suffering inflicted upon the masses to sway the conscience of the powers that be. Such a tactic always leaves the oppressor in a consolidated position able to dictate the terms of whatever new agreement (arrangement) that might be reached. Rulers under “non-violent attack” are yet to concede anything but negligible reforms. Even in India, while political control was turned over to brown faces, the bourgeoisie system of exploitation remains intact.

3) Personalism/Petty Individualism. One of the knottiest forms of idealism one is certain to encounter again and again is in the area of personalism/petty-individualism. This type of idealism is based on personal prejudice, habit, likes and dislikes, innate fears, childhood, trauma, or any number of subjective reasons. It is expressed in a manner of giving priority to these factors rather than to do what is best for the whole group. The bourgeois doctrine of individualism so prevalent in Western society give further impetus to this idealism. This type of unscience pops up again and again at the organizational level, and few seem to recognize the idealism it manifests. Opportunism, the taking advantage of a situation at the expense of the struggle, differs from personalism/petty individualism by the merest of hairlines, if at all.

In summary we would say that Marxism is based in philosophic materialism that places a priority on the actual concrete conditions in analyzing cause and effect relationships. We must take into account in every instance the concrete conditions. Why did a baby die in a fire? Was it because God willed it, or was it because the house was a firetrap? Why is the infant mortality rate so much higher among the poor than among the wealthy? Is it because poor

people are innately inferior, weaker, more susceptible to illness — or do the better conditions inherent in a higher standard of living have anything to do with it? Why are the penitentiaries filled predominately with poor people? Are poor people innately evil, “bad”, etc., or do the concrete conditions of their environment form the overriding factor? And if so, why aren’t these conditions, the cause — attacked instead of the individual, the effect? According to how one analyzes these situations will one deal with them differently: they will be more or less scientific, and hence be more or less effective.

II. Dialectical Method

In dealing with Marxian dialectics there are only three basic laws, and a scarce handful of related principles that one need concern oneself with. However, there are other important ramifications which one should be acquainted with before one can fully appreciate the exquisiteness of dialectical materialism as a scientific tool.

Dialectics was first introduced into human society in ancient Greece. It was a method made popular by Socrates in which he examined a question or proposition from every conceivable angle in order to arrive at the truth of it. In this manner truth was perceived as being many-sided. This involved perceiving that a thing existed only in relation to that which was its opposite — its contradiction. There can be no up without down, there is no negative without a positive, color is meaningless without its contrast, etc. It involved perceiving all the related interconnections and their effect upon the thesis.

One gathers, however, that with the Greeks dialectics was primarily a system of conversing, of examining a proposition verbally, and was not a system of logic like, for example, the syllogism, with formal categories of inductive and deductive reasoning, a major premise, minor premise, and a conclusion which logically follows. It was not until thousands of years later in what we may consider a relatively modern Germany

(18th and 19th century), in the hands of philosopher Georg Hegel, that dialectics was formulated as a system of logic.

Under Hegel, dialectics broadened the concept of contradictions to view everything in the universe as not only existing in relation to its contradictions, but because of them. He held that the contradictions of primary importance were the internal contradictions, that indeed all things in the universe were undergoing constant ceaseless motion, and that in this motion the contradictions worked themselves out, bringing about change. It was Hegel who deduced the three basic principles of dialectics which are to be found at work in everything in the universe, which enabled him to more appropriately deal with reality. The syllogisms are linear and logical, and do not account for change except in the most technical terms. Reality changes unceasingly, and is often neither linear nor logical, nor necessarily mechanical.

For example, if one were limited to the logic of Greek syllogisms and posed a premise that hydro-gen is a highly inflammable gas and oxygen is another highly combustible gas, it might stand logically that combining the two one would come up with another even more inflammable material. The truth of course is that one will produce H_2O , water, a non-flammable liquid. Nature is rife with such non-linear phenomena, illogical by certain standards, which hence cannot be dealt with properly by the use of linear systems. Hegelian dialectics, however, excels in dealing with paradox — i.e., contradictions. Dialectics may be defined then as the dynamic (energetic) interconnections and interdependence of everything in the universe, their influence upon each other, and how they change due to the motion of their respective internal contradictions.

But dialectics under Hegel had an idealist base. He perceived the universe and all its endless, ceaseless changes as the “absolute idea” working itself to perfection. We must assume that once this state of perfection was reached, then all motion, all change, and all of the universe itself would cease. Marx “rescued” dialectics, as he put it, and kept its rational kernel — its basic principles and laws of motion of

matter; he stripped it of its idealistic trappings and resolutely sought the explanation of things and their real and material connections, rather than fantastic ones. In so doing, Marx brought dialectics to the final leg of its journey toward being an unerring scientific tool.

.....

In a nutshell, the three laws of dialectics are these:

- 1) The law of quantitative changes leading to qualitative changes;
- 2) The law of interpenetration, struggle and unity of opposites;
- 3) The law of negation of the negation.

1) The law of quantitative changes leading to qualitative changes refers to the process by which a thing grows at first quantitatively — that is primarily in amount, degree or size — and then after a certain point is reached it develops an altogether new quality as a result of its quantitative growth. There is nothing in the universe which can undergo a continual quantitative addition or subtraction without ultimately developing a new and different quality altogether. This new quality is marked by a sudden and abrupt appearance called the nodal point.

For a very simplified example, we might use a string with a weight on the end of it. If weight were continually added the string would become more and more taut until a point is reached when suddenly it snaps. The lax, broken string would be in this instance the new quality come into being. A more complex example would be the birth of a child: after a certain period of continued growth, nourishment, and maturity of various combined factors, at the end of nine months it suddenly begins forcing its way out of the womb, and the parent goes through sudden and severe pain — the child is born.

The same can be said of any process. Take a flower or a child: quantitative additions are made to this factor and that, and suddenly a sprout has poked out of the ground. This sprout has its quantitative growth before a certain size is

reached and then suddenly one notices a bud; in time as further growth is continued another new development suddenly appears — a bloom. Or in the case of a child, a parent nourishing a baby may suddenly realize by virtue of the child's actions that they are no longer an infant but a toddler. This toddler grows quantitatively, then suddenly there is a prepubescent; again they grow through various physiological and psychological growth, and suddenly it is noticed they are decidedly an adolescent. And each new stage, it may be noted, is so different from the preceding one that it is indeed a new quality and not a mere continuation of the old. A tree is qualitatively different from a sapling and an adolescent is qualitatively different from a prepubescent. Notice again the abruptness of the change — the nodal point.

2) In the second principle of the interpenetration, struggle and unity of opposites, we take into more consideration the contradictory elements of play (though the contradictory elements are also an inherent part of the first law as well). We should note here that the contradictions primary to development are the internal contradictions. That is to say, a thing develops from stage to stage not merely according to external influences but rather because of the working out of internal contradictions. That is why when we apply a certain type of external heat to an egg it develops into a chicken, while applying heat to a rock produces, at best, only a crack in the rock. This is one of the principles of dialectics which makes it more in keeping with reality than other systems in that it teaches one to look inside of a thing to determine the nature of its development.

A thing usually consists not merely of a single contradiction (two opposing and conflicting elements) but a group of contradictions, and as Mao points out the contradictions are not equal:

“As we have said, one must not treat all the contradictions in a process as being equal but must distinguish between the principal and the secondary contradictions, and pay special attention to grasping the principal one. But, in any given contradiction, whether principal or secondary, should the two

contradictory aspects be treated as equal? Again, no. In any contradiction the development of the contradictory aspects is uneven. Sometimes they seem to be in equilibrium, which is however only temporary and relative, while unevenness is basic. Of the two contradictory aspects, one must be principal and the other secondary. The principal aspect is the one playing the leading role in the contradiction. The nature of a thing is determined mainly by the principal aspect of a contradiction, the aspect which has gained the dominant position.”¹⁰

In modern and Western society, particularly the U.S.A. for example, we see not one but a knot of contradictions. The contradiction between Black people and whites; the contradiction of crime, insanity, of poverty in the midst of plenty; the contradiction between bourgeois politicians and an apathetic constituency; the contradiction of inflation, recession, fuel shortages, energy crisis, tax loop-hole, tax “breaks”; the contradiction in justice for the rich and the poor; and one could go on and on. But the principle contradiction, the one which influences the existence and development of each of the others, is the contradiction between capital and labor. Then there is the dominant aspect of a contradiction from which a thing gains its name and nature. Capital being the dominant aspect in this example, the system is hence referred to as “the capitalist system.” Once labor becomes dominant in the struggle of these contradictions, the system will become known as a socialist system (i.e., social production and social ownership of the means of production).

Outside influences are important and have their bearing: they are said to be the “conditions” of a thing’s development. The dynamic interconnection of outside influence is that it contributes quantitatively to one or another of the internal contradictions, causing one to become the dominant aspect, or causing a diminishing of its changes to become dominant.

¹⁰ Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Zedong “On Contradictions”, Foreign Language Press, Peking p. 112

Taking an example in the realm of physical science: if we apply heat to water, one may think it is the heat which causes it to develop into steam — but of course it is the contradictions internal in the water itself. If one were to apply heat to nitroglycerin would it turn to steam? The contradiction of the water which makes it turn into steam is the rate of speed of the molecules of the water. Fire is an external condition and contributes to the speed of the molecules: a quantitative increase until the molecules suddenly leap (note the nodal point) from the body of water, and the new quality — steam — comes into being. Its temperature at any given point, the rate of evaporation, and the amount left in liquid form at any given time reflects the stage of unity of these opposing forces at that particular time.

Examining the internal contradictions of water further, we might consider the mobility of the molecules as one contradiction, and the cohesiveness of the body of water as the other. These two major contradictions exist in diametrical opposition — the first operating to disperse the molecules and the second to hold them together. Their existence together is not one of subtle balance, but rather is undergoing a struggle in which one of these qualities or the other is at all times attempting to assert its dominance in the material. When mobility is most dominant we have steam; when cohesiveness is we have ice. The character of the thing itself, its appearance and quality as ice, water or steam is determined by the stage of interpenetration of these two forces as they are tied together in struggle of “unity of opposites.”

These principles of dialectics can be found to be operating not only in the context of physical and social science, but included also is the very thinking processes of human beings. An individual may be going about with some outmoded concepts and notions in their head when they are introduced to a new body of knowledge. The new knowledge may not take at first but a struggle goes on, even unconsciously. As the individual digests, evaluates, compares in the light of their old concepts and experiences and sees it working in

reality — suddenly the light dawns.

Dialectics eliminates the static, fixed “metaphysical” way of thinking in which one sees things as though they were permanent and unchanging. The bourgeois propaganda/education skillfully leads us to accept the idea that “this is the way things are, this is the way they always have been in one form or another, and this is the way they always will be.” With such perspective one could not be expected to wage a struggle for fundamental change. One certainly cannot become a well-rounded revolutionary unless one can perceive the dialectical process of a society changing all the way into its opposite. As more people become politically conscious and acquainted with the socialist alternative, more people begin to challenge the warped, inhuman values which the system generates; more and more people begin to confront the insoluble contradictions of the system — finally the point is reached where civil war breaks out. War! This is the nodal point, the “...midwife of an old society pregnant with a new.”

3) The third law of dialectics, the negation of the negation, may perhaps shed even more light. The negation of the negation simply suggests the continued development of things. A thing is in one stage of development, its contradictions are worked out quantitatively, and it becomes a new thing; the new quality is said to have negated the old. But the new quality brings with it a set of new contradictions which, as they work themselves out, will ultimately negate that stage which negated the former stage — ergo, the negation of the negation.

There are at least two other underlying principles which one should take into account in comprehending this law: one is the tendency toward spiraling and upward development.

As a thing goes through its development from one stage to another and as the contradictions are worked out, it tends to be the weaker and least favorable characteristics of a primary element which are eliminated, while its more favorable traits (favorable in relation to the opposing element) often continue to exist, though it may cease to be dominant. As its opposing elements become dominant, it

creates a condition in which new elements and new contradictions come into play. In the negating of this new dominant stage often the old quality which was retained from the former dominant contradiction may reappear, but stronger and firmer, its negative qualities worked out in the earlier stage of its dominance. Hence there is a tendency for a thing to repeat itself, as it is sometimes said of history; or we have a type of development as can be noted in the rings of a tree spiraling upward — upward in that these things tend to “repeat” themselves on a higher plane.

Thus each stage of society is an advance over the former stage: ancient slave civilizations were an advance over primitive communism, feudalism was an advance over slave civilizations, capitalism an advance over feudalism, socialism an advance over capitalism, and in a return to communism we see a repeat of the old egalitarian principle on an infinitely higher plane.

Also in this principle of negation of negation we should consider the forward development of a thing in contradiction of directionless development. In some things the direction of development may be said to be quite relative. Take water for example: the development toward steam would be considered “forward” only if one desired it so. If one desired a cool drink then ice would be considered forward. It is possible then to change some things — in this instance the molecules of water from ice to water to steam, or back again from steam to water to ice — its forwardness being relative to what a person desires. In that regard we may consider certain things as being neither forward nor back-ward, but rather directionless.

On the other hand, take the development of a flower from a seed, to sprout, to bud, to bloom to seed. The direction here is all one way, hence it may be called forward in no uncertain terms. What causes some things to have directionless development and other things to have forward development is due to whether it relies more upon its internal contradictions for development, or upon external influences. Maurice Cornforth puts it succinctly:

“If some processes have direction and others have not, this depends solely on the particular character of the processes themselves and of the conditions under which they happen.

In general, since qualitative change in a process is always consequent upon quantitative change, it has a direction when those quantitative changes arise from conditions permanently operating within the process itself, and otherwise it has no direction. It has direction when (however conditioned by external factors) it is impelled forward by internal causes. In that case the direction it takes is ‘its own’ just because it arises from internal causes.”¹¹

In the human psyche we are confronted with the peculiar situation that some individuals develop “forwardly” while others are seeming “directionless”. Those who are directionless are those who are manipulated back and forth by changes in the outside environment. They can be bought and sold by the holding out of material rewards. Similarly, in the subjective realm, psychologists have found they can manipulate an inferiority or superiority complex in some individuals simply by changing others’ reactions to what the individual does. Likewise, more sensitive, lower animals can be manipulated in either direction simply by changing one’s reaction to it.

Though it should be noted that everything in the universe is influenced to some extent by its external environment, after a human being reaches a certain maturity (regretfully not everyone reaches this emotional/intellectual maturity) the outside influences become minimal and the individual consciously formulates a set of principles by which they guide themselves. To be human is itself an almost wholly subjective quality, and what distinguishes a human and elevates them qualitatively above the animal is that the human is imbued with higher principles: reasoning, discipline, language and a higher sense of collectivism, social responsibility, dignity, etc. Hence one who is consciously guided by higher principles has development

¹¹ Materialism and The Dialectical Method by Maurice Cornforth, Int Pub.

which can be said to be forward. For example, we see in non-Western societies that aged persons are revered for their wisdom, knowledge, prudence, sagesness, and dignity; while in Western industrial society, having lost their usefulness in the production process, the aged are shuttled aside and forgotten. Such treatment precipitates, in many, senility and various infirmities here associated with age.

This, then, is dialectical materialism in a nutshell. It is the Marxian method of analyzing change and development in a situation or thing by perceiving it in its dynamic interconnections, its motion — and with a materialist basis.

SOME QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What are two definitions of materialism?
2. What are two definitions of idealism?
3. What is meant by interaction between the mind and matter? Which has priority?
4. What is meant by subjectivism?
5. Name 3 kinds of subjectivism and explain how they lead to error.
6. What is the Marxian definition of dialectics?
7. What is the Nodal Point?
8. What is meant by “quantitative changes leading to qualitative changes”?
9. What is meant by “unity and struggle of opposites?”
10. What is the negation of the negation?



Democratic Centralism (Operating with a Central Committee)

Too often the comrades have an incorrect or incomplete idea of what democratic centralism and the central committee are about. Demo-

cratic Centralism and its key feature, the central committee, are scientific organizational concepts formulated by Lenin which enables mass organizations to function with the unity and impact of a single, closed fist. It is exceedingly necessary that this all-important aspect of organizational structure be understood by every member of our organization so that we may guide our actions accordingly.

Democratic centralism and the central committee is the organizational structure in conformity with the requirements of objective laws — and subjective laws as well. The objective laws which democratic centralism deals with are:

1) Laws dealing with the actual concrete situation;
balanced against

2) Laws dealing with the needs and capabilities of a unified and coordinated organization. The subjective laws incorporated in the process are those laws respecting the humanity of the individual members. Laws in all of these areas must be observed if unity and progress are to be maintained in the process of struggle.

Centralism, of itself, embodies two main ideas; authoritarianism on one side, and the coordinating and synthesizing of information and activity on the other. Democracy is the method by which the humanity of the individual is respected

by giving their ideas, opinions, and interest the force of law through an election process. We see in the concept of democratic centralism the synthesis of two opposing ideas: central authority and democracy; the two interpenetrate and take on the qualities of the other, i.e. democratizing centralism, and centralizing democracy.

In democratizing centralism, we recognize the need and primacy of central authority: that in order for a mass organization to be effective it requires a central authority whose word is law and binding on all — on pain of penalty. But the laws and policies formulated by central authority are not arbitrary and spun out of their head independent of the rank-and-file. Such a view of the central committee is described as “left” error.

“Our ‘lefts’ had a great love of centralism and more centralism as long as they were in positions of authority but once they no longer held the reins of leadership, they developed an aversion to discipline which they always saw as something to be imposed from without.”¹²

Left error (non-democratic centralism) leads “...to commandist and authoritarian methods of enforcement of discipline”: in a word, to totalitarianism and oppression. So while we recognize the need and primacy of a central authority, we must democratize centralism and centralize democracy, which entails:

“...that authority is something that flows from centralization of correct ideas and opinions from which flows the authority of the central institution... A line flows from the scattered and unsystematic ideas and opinions of numerous individuals throughout the organization who, in turn gain their ideas in the concrete world of social practice, occasioned by their involvement in class struggle, in class wars with the revisionists, and the bourgeoisie. These ideas are summed up by the central institutions, synthesized with the indirect

¹² Moving On, May 1975 issue. Publication of the Revolutionary Workers Congress formerly the Black Workers Congress of Detroit. Article entitled “Two Line Struggle”.

experiences of the international proletariat and then flow down throughout the organization as a political line. This political line is further enriched by the discussion and debate resulting from putting the line into practice.”¹³

“Right” error, on the other hand, stems from the view that democracy is the dominant aspect of this unity of democracy and concentration (see Mao Zedong’s “Ultra Democracy” section of *On Correcting Mistaken Ideas in the Party*). They complain bitterly of the authoritarian aspect and prefer a loose federation of individuals and/or collectives, each free to pursue their own course, and none bound to the will of the majority. Such a mode of operation causes factionalism, disintegration, and often a spilling of blood of our own people. This rightist error stems from petty-bourgeois individuals and opportunism, and has no place in Marxist-Leninist organization.

Democratic centralism is especially effective in above-ground political organization, and from time to time many of us will operate on this level. But the exigencies of our historical circumstances (waging war in the belly of the beast) calls for the type of autonomous cells similar to those described by Carlos Marighella. In such an organization we cannot expect a tight application of the principles of democratic centralism. Each team/cell/squad/commune is indeed free to initiate their own action, develop their own plan and deliver blows upon the system independently, spontaneously, and without necessarily being directed. This does not mean, however, that our organization is a mere loose federation of individuals or collectives “doing their own thing” and free to operate in any manner they wish — far from it. We must fashion an extraordinary and highly principled organization that is proficient, disciplined, supple and well-coordinated so that the force of our many thrusts will throw the system into crisis — bring it to its knees for a death blow by the people. This means we must keep abreast of the motion of the entire struggle; we must coordinate our

¹³ Ibid.

efforts, aid and abet one another; must concentrate our attacks in certain areas at times and ease-up in certain areas at times. In other words, in spite of the ostensible autonomy of the team/cell/squad/commune, we must function as a whole: like a scientific boxer with perfect balance, precision and skill.

That means we must have a central authority to gather and coordinate information, ideas, and opinions from every source: a central committee who can, on the basis of the objective and subjective information gathered, formulate a correct overall strategy; and whose strategies and policies so formulated meet with consistent success. The cause is significantly advanced as a result of its authority, whose decisions every member/team/cell/squad/commune is bound to follow on pain of punishment.

So in conclusion we say this: the revolutionary has a gun on their hip and the People's will in their heart. No one imposes their will upon the revolutionary (that is what the revolution is about in the first place). But the revolutionary is amenable to criticism, is guided by science, is sworn to high principle. The revolutionary casts their vote, and voices their opinion with the collective with confidence that the solution arrived at will take into account their report and be in keeping with revolutionary principles. They are confident, too, that the line so formulated will have all possible contradictions worked out, will confront the proper contradictions and expose other contradictions, that their dangers be avoided. The central committee, by absorbing the input of the rank-and-file, guides the overall struggle. The rank-and-file revolutionary regards the central committee like the two fists regard the brain — indeed, it is our brain.

Has there ever been an effective fist without a brain?

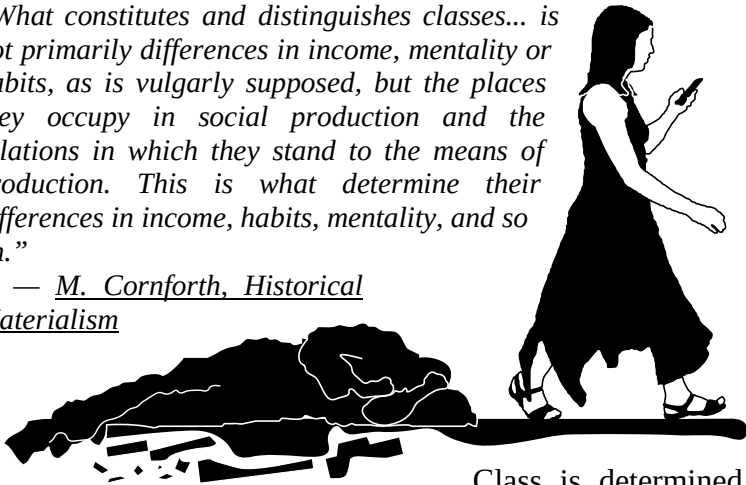
SOME QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What does the central committee formulate?
2. What are the objective laws which democratic centralism deals with?
3. What subjective laws are dealt with?
4. What is the "right" error in interpretation of democratic centralism?
5. What is the "left" error?
6. What is meant by "democratizing centralism"?
7. What is meant by "centralizing democracy"?
8. Is one free to disregard the directives of the C.C.?
9. On what basis does the C.C. formulate its directives?
10. How does the revolutionary regard their C.C.?

The Class Structure in Society

“What constitutes and distinguishes classes... is not primarily differences in income, mentality or habits, as is vulgarly supposed, but the places they occupy in social production and the relations in which they stand to the means of production. This is what determine their differences in income, habits, mentality, and so on.”

— M. Cornforth, *Historical Materialism*



Class is determined by one's relations to the means of production. Stated simply, this means class is determined by what one does for a living. The means of production are the land, raw materials, factories, machines, etc. required to produce goods and services in society. Slave and master, for example, are not only a social relationship, but more importantly a relationship in the means of production. There is a distinct difference between the master's and slave's relationship to the means of production. This is likewise for serf and feudal lord, capitalist and worker, and for the sharecropper, lumpen-proletariat and so forth. It is important that we learn the general class differences of society and of what direction is in the best interest of our people as a class as well as a race; for to be unconscious of the class factors is to wage race struggle rather than class struggle and is to play directly into the hands of the exploiter. capitalism thrives upon the division of the working classes into contending races.

“Who are our enemies? Who are our friends? This is a question of the first importance for the revolution. To assure that we will definitely achieve success in our revolution and not lead the masses astray, we must pay attention to uniting

with our real friends in order to attack our real enemies. To distinguish real friends from real enemies we must make a general analysis of the economic status of the various classes in Chinese society and of their respective attitudes towards the revolution.”

— Mao Zedong, *Analysis of Classes in Chinese Society*, 1926

A class analysis is one of the basic tools necessary to develop a correct revolutionary strategy. Heretofore there has been very little work done on a concrete class analysis of the U.S. in general and no (or minimal) work done on a class analysis of Black and third-world peoples. Such an energetic undertaking cannot be done justice in a short work of this nature — but the basics can be laid out and some penetrating questions raised.

Black people as a whole (90%) fall into the class category of workers (proletariat) and as such our best interest is in the economic and political defeat of the monopoly capitalist class — and in the instituting of a workers’ state. But because of our skin color, the bourgeoisie have found it convenient to set us aside for special oppression and super-exploitation. At the same time they have found it strategic to raise the quality of life of white workers and thereby enlist their aid and support of the capitalist system. Yet in spite of that we can expect the amerikan worker as an ally of the capitalist class to be only a temporary condition. As contradictions in world capitalism sharpen — inflation and depression; competition of other capitalist countries and of socialist countries; the winning of independence of third-world countries and the growing trend toward socialism, etc. — the bourgeoisie will no longer be able to shield the white worker from capitalist exploitation. The white worker may very well become radicalized and pursue their true interest as a worker via a workers’ state.

Until then, Black and third-world people must shoulder the task of socialist revolution and advance their own cause, and thereby the cause of humanity. It would behoove us, therefore, to get a clearer idea of the class structure of society and hence where we stand in relation to the world’s peoples

in the struggle for human liberation, i.e., the class struggle.

“...all past history was the history of class struggles; that these warring classes are always the product of conditions of production and exchange, in a word, of the economic conditions of their time...”

— Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, 1880

The U.S. can be divided into five basic classes. The original terms used to describe the classes, derived from European terminology, are listed in their original form; the more familiar U.S. designation is enclosed in parentheses. The five basic classes are:

- I. Bourgeoisie (Ruling Class)
- II. Petit-Bourgeoisie (Middle Class)
- III. Proletariat (Workers)
- IV. Peasants (Small Farmers)
- V. Lumpen-Proletariat (Bottom Class)

These classic classes can be further broken down into the following general sectors and categories:

- I. Bourgeoisie (Ruling Class)
 - Monopoly and Lieutenant sectors
- II. Petit-Bourgeoisie (Middle Class)
 - Business Managers and Professional sectors
- III. Proletariat (Workers)
 - Laborers, operatives, crafts, transport, service, clerical, sales, domestic and semi-professional categories
- IV. Peasants (Small Farmers)
 - Small farm owners and tenant-sharecropper sectors
- V. Lumpen-Proletariat (Bottom Class)
 - Tenuous and excluded workers and non-workers

“In class society, everyone lives as a member of a particular class, and every kind of thinking, without exception, is stamped with the brand of a class.”

—Mao Zedong, *On Practice*

Thus if every kind of thinking is stamped with the brand

of a class, then we ought to be particularly concerned with how each class thinks and what makes them think this way — and how it differs from how we think (or should be thinking) and why we think as we do.

The Bourgeoisie (The Ruling Class)

The term bourgeoisie is derived from the old French word “bourg” which meant “a town”, or more specifically “a fortified town.” During the feudal age in Europe most of the people lived in the country-side and were forced to work on the land. Those forced to work the land were called “serfs”. The decline of feudalism began when serfs began running away from their lords (the land owners) and congregating on various pockets of land. Mostly those serfs possessing some handicraft or artisan skills were the first to run away. They used their talents to make various small merchandise to sell passing travelers and merchants surrounding the countryside and each other. The places they congregated to live and sell their wares were called “bourgs” in French — and “burgs” in English. The people of these towns became known as the burghers, and they were the beginning of the bourgeoisie class: the class of merchants and capitalists, and today’s ruling class.

The bourgeoisie or ruling class is that class of society who either own or control the major sectors of the economy — for example, the controllers of the top 500 companies listed in Fortune magazine. This class composes approximately 1.5% of the U.S. population and also includes members of their entire family. This is a very small percentage of the overall population. It consists of the famed “Fifty Families”: the Rockefellers, Vanderbilts, DuPonts, Morgans, Mellons, Fords, Hunts, Ludwigs, the Hugheses et. al., joined together with their lieutenants. This includes the President of the U.S., a great many senators, heads of key agencies, and cabinet members.

Together this small group and their lieutenants make up only 1.5% of all the people in the U.S. Of the \$2 trillion a

year gross national product, these few people control almost \$1.8 trillion or 1,888 billion dollars. This ruling class, the real capitalists and their lieutenants, own or control 90% of the wealth in the U.S. In addition to that, this tiny minority owns or controls 60% of the world's wealth as well. It should be noted that in speaking of classes, we are dealing in relative numbers. All classes comprise at least several million people, but when we compare one or two million with hundreds of millions, then one or two million is a relative few.

The Monopoly Sector

The monopoly sector are the people that actually own the means of production (i.e., the industries, factories, land, mines, railroads, banks, buildings, ships, etc.) and they own approximately 25% of all the means of production in the U.S. outright. The remaining 65% is owned or controlled jointly (or collectively). In other words each of these monopoly capitalists own various percentages of all the other ruling class holdings so that all of them are interlocked and all the wealth remains in their small elite circles. They maintain a monopoly on the wealth of the entire U.S. This small elite monopoly is only about $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ of 1% of the entire U.S. population — between $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 million people, which includes their families (wives, children, cousins, uncles, etc.). Since actual power is probably exercised by only one or two in each family, then the actual power brokers in the monopoly sector of the U.S. boils down to a small elite core of approximately 25,000 individuals.

“This (monopoly) sector is 100% white, overwhelmingly from the North or Western European background. There are no third-world people and only a rare Catholic or Jew. There are many women who hold title to the wealth that gives this sector its power; however, only a few of them actually administer it. Most of the women's holdings are administered either by a male relative, her husband, or a hired manager.”

— Judah Hill, *Class Analysis: U.S. In The 1970s*

The above quote being true — and there seems every logical reason to assume it is — then it is obvious that the ruling class is almost totally composed of White Anglo-Saxons (i.e. WASPs) who are the true “power brokers” and “shot-callers” in the U.S. This does not mean that there are no Irish, Italian, or Jewish ruling class — there are. Recently there are indications that more Catholics, Jews and Mormons are making it to the ruling class and giving stiff competition to the WASP in some sectors of the economy. The Jews are very competitive in control of the media sector (movies, TV, newspapers) and they also exert heavy influence/control in the educational sector (colleges and universities, NYC high schools, AFT Teachers Union, etc.) — the recent BAKKE controversy seems to be an indication of their influence in education. The Italians, in particular those in the Mafia, have made colossal fortunes in cash money off the illegal heroin traffic (and the blood of Black and third-world peoples). They have put much of their money into legitimate industries too and seem to be giving the WASP stiff competition for behind-the-scenes control of some industries. They obviously have strong control and influence in the labor unions, and the Nixon presidential pardon of gangster Jimmy Hoffa is an indication of their influence and control. Howard Hughes’ entire empire is controlled by Mormons — so the Catholics, Jews, and Mormons are making much greater inroads to the ruling class, but they are presently only a few in this category. Oftentimes because we in the Black community have more direct contact with the rich Jewish landlord, merchant, or media executive, the rich Irish politician, the rich Italian businessman (with the Mafia connections, background, etc.) — we tend to be easily convinced that rich Jews run the entire country, or the rich Irish or Italian Mafia run the country. There are no doubt many, many rich Irish, Italian, Jews, etc., and more of them are making it to the ruling class, but in comparison to the whole ruling class their ratio is small; most are only rich flunkies, front men, lieutenants of the true ruling class. The real power yet remains in the hands of the white Anglo-

Saxon protestants, the WASPs: that closed society of the true ruling class.

Naturally there are no Black or third-world ruling class, and thus there is no true Black and third-world bourgeoisie in the U.S., simply because no Black/third-world person even comes close to having as much money and power as the true bourgeoisie. Comparing the richest Black person to the ruling class is like comparing pennies to a 1,000-dollar bill. It's also the primary reason the myth of Black capitalism by any Black person (group or organization) will always remain just that — a myth! The ruling class has so much more capital than any Black group that they can afford to let any Black capitalist group build up a certain amount of capital, industry, land and businesses until the Black people have invested all their money, then break them overnight as easily as one breaks a match-stick. Then they pick up the spoils and await some other foolish Black group climbing the capitalist ladder, naively thinking they are going to make it to the top and live the “good (white, ruling-class) life”. They too are soon broken and thrown back upon the heap because the ruling class is a closed society. It's 100% all-white and overwhelmingly White Anglo-Saxon Protestants — and they stick together to keep it that way.

Since many ruling class white females hold titles to the wealth and turn it over to male administrators, it's obvious that ruling class females wholeheartedly condone and advocate the policies of the ruling class males: thus the overriding concern of the ruling class is not a matter of white male supremacy or white female supremacy, but primarily white ruling-class supremacy.

The Lieutenant Sector

The Lieutenant Sector is usually the hired administrators of the ruling class. Often they act as the presidents of companies, sit on boards of directors, and administer the corporations and businesses of the monopoly. Some or quite a number of them may own small segments of the means of production but usually they do not own enough to control the

entire industry, and therefore most of their power comes from doing the administration or acting as mascots for the true ruling class. Their other sources of power usually comes from holding state offices such as the President of the U.S., the cabinet and advisors, the generals of the various branches of the military and various other representative and delegated federal posts. The lieutenant sector generally has the same outlook as the ruling class, since they are the spokesmen and representatives of the ruling class, and are therefore opposed to revolution because they would lose all their wealth and privileges. Revolution would redistribute all their wealth among the poor, working and oppressed peoples.

The Petit-Bourgeoisie (The Middle Class)

This class consists of the mediators: the medium-sized business-persons and managers, technicians, and professionals. They also own means of production in the form of medium-sized and small businesses, but they don't own or control them and their influence is usually limited to the regional level (e.g. statewide). Most petit-bourgeoisie either manage businesses and franchises, state bureaucracy, or are career professionals such as doctors, lawyers, college professors and similar. They make their living by their administrative, business, professional or intellectual skills; very few are directly engaged in production work on the physical labor level. The medium-sized business-persons and franchise owners usually identify very closely with the bourgeoisie because of their similarity and direct business connections to the bourgeoisie; whereas the small businesses (mom-and-pop stores, barber shops, shoe repair, etc.) oftentimes identify with the cause of working people because of their direct connection, dependence and similarity to working people's conditions. By the same token, managers, supervisors, and administrators oftentimes vacillate in their loyalty between the bourgeoisie and working class depending on which class they are closest or more dependent on for their support; professionals usually

divide along similar categories. Those involved in work closely related to the bourgeoisie such as technicians, industrial scientists, think tanks, etc. usually align with the bourgeoisie. Those involved in more academic or social fields as college professors, artists and writers, philosophers, social scientists, etc. often identify with working-class and oppressed people. As a rule the petit-bourgeoisie usually identifies with and supports the ruling class, but due to its intermediate position in the class structure, there are segments or elements in the class that range across the full political spectrum from outright fascist to revolutionary.

The Proletariat (Working Class)

Proletariat literally means “urban worker”. It is made up primarily of those people who work in production or services, must sell their labor power for wages, and do not own or control any fundamental means of production. The working class makes up about 80% of the labor force of the U.S. and Black and third-world people make up about 18% of the labor force in the U.S., although 90% of the Black and third-world labor force are workers. The working class produces almost all the goods and services in society: it produces the food, clothing, shelter, fuel, transportation, communications and other basic necessities to maintain life and the living standards of the people. But since the ruling class owns and controls all the fundamental means of production, they rip off the lion’s share of the wealth for their personal benefit and only pay the average worker just enough to subsist. This keeps the worker enslaved through wages since he has nothing to sell but his labor power. Therefore it is in the fundamental interest of the worker to destroy the bourgeoisie — and thus regain the fruits of their labor, raise their standard of living, plus free themselves from the oppressive control and exploitation by the blood-sucking ruling class by setting up a workers’ state. This process is called revolution — and it is necessary for workers to become conscious of their own best interest as a class first.

They will then realize that their interest is diametrically opposed to the interest of the ruling class — and that it can only liberate itself by the destruction of the ruling class.

Due to the excessive profits wrested from Black and third-world workers, both in the U.S. and through imperialism abroad, the ruling-class capitalists are able to provide a portion of the plunder to their workers at home and in Europe, — thus, to a large extent, buying off the revolutionary potential of the amerikan white worker and the European working class. Racism is the primary tool it uses to give extra benefits to white workers and to whites in general at the expense of super-exploitation and oppression of Black and third-world peoples. By the same process it gives a few extra crumbs to token negroes through rare appointments to positions in politics, commerce, poverty programs and grants so as to create a token Black petty-bourgeoisie mentality in the U.S. This is all simply another attempt to smother, confuse and defuse the revolutionary fervor of the Black and third-world working class.

The U.S. is a very advanced, technologically- and industrially-developed society. Its working class has many different categories. Some categories which were or would be classified as petit-bourgeois in earlier times, or in less advanced societies, are now classified as working class categories in the U.S. society. At present, it's difficult to determine if this is due to advanced technology actually proletarianizing some previous petit-bourgeoisie job categories (white-collar jobs, teachers, technicians, sales agents, etc.), or whether it's due to over-zealous class analysts being extremely liberal in their definition of the worker in terms of their relation to the means of production, and thus over-applying the category or term "worker". Any realistic class analysis of the U.S. society will demand a thorough and penetrating analysis of the quantitative and qualitative effects of advanced technology on the working class as a whole. Normal logic would seem to indicate that an increase in technology in a highly developed society would have a corresponding decrease on the total number of

workers — so that in an advanced, technological society such as the U.S., the overall ratio of the actual working class may be decreasing. This is probably the reason that present-day class analysis tends to increase the categories of workers to include an ever-widening circle of previously petit-bourgeois job categories and lumpenproletarian classes. It is not the intention to analyze these factors in a short work of this nature — but these are questions that must be given serious thought in any thorough, concrete class analysis of U.S. society. Obviously, present day class analysts shy away from tackling these questions because they do not fit (and may well contradict) certain aspects of the classical theories of Marx.

Various categories of workers are laborers, operators, transporters, servicemen, crafters, clerks, farmers, salespeople, house workers and also some semi-professional and non-workers. Whites make up the majority of the “white collar” and craft workers, while Black people and third-world peoples are predominately in the blue collar and service categories; women predominate in the clerical category. “Craft” jobs are usually the elite jobs of the working class and this category is more conservative than the average working category. Approximately 10% of transporter jobs are civil service (bus driver, subway, etc.) and Black people and third-world people have a higher representation in this segment of transportation — they are still highly under-represented in the private transportation segment (long-distance truck hauling, train engineers, etc.). Since transportation and communication play a vital role in the nation’s economy because they service and link all the other categories, these are two of the key categories that revolutionaries must influence.

Operatives include the segment of mass production workers — those who can run the machines in the large automated factories, industries, etc. — obviously this is the heart of the working class and it’s the category that is fundamental to the revolution. It must be influenced by revolutionary (i.e., working class) consciousness or the

revolution will have an extremely hard row to hoe. Farm workers and migrant workers are predominately Black and third-world, and possess inherent potential that could assist rural guerrilla warfare. Service workers and house workers are another category that is predominately Black and third-world and also predominately women: this category has an inherent potential that could definitely assist urban guerrilla warfare. The working class is a revolutionary class — generally it is oppressed, produces through the social organization of its labor, and is disciplined. Like the petit-bourgeoisie it contains elements that range from outright and active fascists and reactionaries to outright and active armed revolutionaries.

The fundamental problem with the working class at present is that the white working class in particular shares in the booty that the capitalists have ripped off from the Black and third-world people around the world so that it has been, in essence, bought off; it is racist and lacks consciousness. The Black and third-world working class suffers super-exploitation from this oppression and racism, and it's much more conscious than the white working class, but yet is still not well organized, nor is it the largest segment. The U.S. still has enough surplus from imperialist plunder to throw the Black and third-world workers enough crumbs (welfare, unemployment compensation, etc.) to keep the ferment just below the explosion point. The effects of massive drugs channeled into the Black/third-world communities; all the Television and its pervasive ruling class ideology; the prisons, occupying army of killer cops, liquor, sterilization; gadgets, consumerism, informers, spies; Black capitalist organizations, misleaders, Black mafia, etc. should not be underestimated in its ability to hamper the Black/third-world liberation movement.

The Peasants (Small Farmers)

Small farmers make up the lower strata of the farming industry. They primarily fall into two basic categories: 1)

The small farm owner and 2) the tenant or sharecropper. The small farm owners are those who own their own small farms and spend most of their time and manual labor seeking out a living for themselves on this land. They may sometimes hire extra labor, but the majority of the farm labor in this category is done by the farmer and their family. Usually they barely make enough to carry them over til next planting season and oftentimes some or much of the farm produce is consumed for subsistence. The tenants or sharecroppers are those farmers whose lifestyle is very similar to the small farmer, except they do not own the farmland but work in exchange for a percentage of the crops. The sharecroppers' lot is even more precarious, exploitative and oppressive than the small farmer because he must share the product of his crops; and he does not own the land, which for the small farmer can at least be mortgaged in lean years. The overwhelming majority of sharecroppers are Black and are primarily located in the Black Belt region and surrounding states.

Both the small farm owner and the tenant farmer are a vanishing class because of the devastating effect of large scale, highly mechanized methods of farming which made small farming almost totally unprofitable and drove many of the previous farm workers to the city looking for industrial work. Many were unsuited or unable to find any type of work except those hard, dirty, oppressive jobs that were shunned by the regular working class. Those that found jobs took them; others that could not/would not, oftentimes joined that large pool of surplus workers and the lumpen-proletariat class in the cities. Small farm work still provides a living only at the subsistence level — but strangely, the long migration from the farm to the cities and from the South to the North, it seems, is gradually subsiding and even reversing itself. In particular, more than a few Black people are gradually deserting the cities and taking that “Midnight Train to Georgia” back (somewhat) to that simple life they once knew — but with a higher political consciousness this time.

The Lumpen-Proletariat (The Bottom Class)

Lumpen literally means ragged. Proletariat means the urban working class: thus it follows that lumpen-proletariat means “ragged urban worker” — the bottom ragged section of the working class. This refers to those whose relation to the means of production is highly insecure. When they do find work it’s almost always the lowest paid, dirtiest and most oppressive work. The type of jobs available are limited to laborer, domestic, farm labor and the service category. There are many uncounted and undocumented aliens in this country who wind up in this class. Most people in the lumpen category are Black and third-world. Very often this class turns to “crime” to augment its income. There are many similarities between the situation of the Black and third-world people in this class in the U.S., and the lumpen-proletariat class in the colonial countries. Traditionally, Marxists have considered this class as non-revolutionary and untrustworthy. When race becomes a factor, it appears to make a difference in the revolutionary potential of this class. Frantz Fanon pointed out in The Wretched of the Earth that in the Algerian Revolution the lumpen was in the vanguard. In the U.S., where a significant proportion of Black and third-world people fall into this category by virtue of the system’s inability to absorb them into the mainstream, the Black lumpenproletariat again and again finds itself at the forefront of the struggle.

In light of a highly advanced technological society — with increasing technology displacing more and more workers — it is necessary to give serious analysis to this phenomenon. It is the consensus of Marxist-Leninist thinkers, however, that in spite of the enhanced role of the Black and third-world lumpen-proletariat, the working class is the vanguard of the revolution by virtue of historical economic necessity.

“Class and the individual — the function of a class analysis is to enable a revolutionary to examine large segments of society and draw generalizations about those segments’ reaction to

historical, economic, and social trends, and those segments' role in social struggle. Another function of class analysis is to provide a tool for analyzing ideology from the standpoint of what class of society that ideology represents and serves. There are difficulties, however, in applying class analysis to individuals... It is difficult to make clear-cut, absolute predictions about an individual's attitudes or actions based on class. It would be wrong to classify individuals as friend or enemy solely on their class position or background... Thus, a person is a member of a class, but also an individual. As a member of a class, his or her ideas and actions will be heavily influenced by class background and position, and these influences are deep, subtle, and in part unconscious. As an individual, a person is also influenced by many other factors—conscious and unconscious. It would be incorrect to relate to a person solely on the basis of class. It would be even more incorrect to ignore class factors in the social, political and cultural actions and ideas of a person. Lastly, it must be remembered that neither the consciousness of classes nor the consciousness of individuals is a static thing. In particular, the consciousness of both classes and individuals is affected by class struggle.”

— Judah Hill, *Class Analysis: United States in the 1970s*.

The Political Spectrum

Left	L-Center	R-Center	Right
Socialism (the People's side)	Civil Rights Orgs	Moderates	Capitalism (the Bourgeoisie side)
Black People	NAACP	Liberals	Wealthy People
Poor People	Labor Unions	Social Democrats	Upper-Middle Class
Third-World Peoples		C.O.R.E.	Professional People
Communist Parties		Black Capitalists	Racists & Bigots
Socialist Parties		Labor Leaders	Democratic Party
Anarchists			Republican Party
Radicals			Reactionaries
Militants			Fascists (Nazis & KKK)

BECOME FAMILIAR WITH THESE TERMS (SEE GRAPH) AND THEIR PLACE IN THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM.

1. The Left side: Here we find socialist organizations and political parties, and people who advocate revolution, socialism, anarchism, communism. The more vehemently a person or party advocates revolution, socialism, etc., the further to the left he is said to be.

2. The Right Side: Here we have capitalism-imperialism and the bourgeois ruling class. On this side we have the organizations, parties, and types of people who advocate the continued exploitation of the people. The more vehemently a person or party advocates keeping the people down and maintaining the “status quo”, the more to the right he is said to be.

3. Right of Center: Here we have what is referred to as liberals and moderates, social-democrats and so-forth. These people often espouse high ideals and sympathy for the people but in actuality they are for the bourgeoisie’s system. They propose piecemeal reforms to keep the people strung out and half-way appeased so that the people will not destroy the system.

4. Left of Center: we find (at least in this country) certain civil rights organizations as NAACP and labor unions (rank and file) which advocate reform for the people, and would earnestly like to reform the system to benefit the people — but they cling to their capitalist bosses, and usually end up selling out the people. The center is crowded with opportunists chasing the dollar.

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Historical Materialism by Maurice Cornforth

Socialism, Utopian and Scientific by Friedrich Engels

State and Revolution by V.I. Lenin

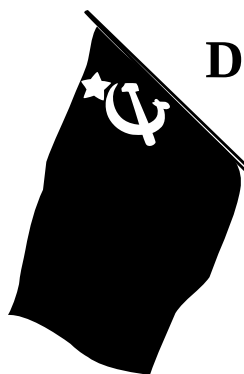
The Wretched of the Earth by Frantz Fanon

Class Analysis: United States in the 1970s by Judah Hill

Quotations of Mao Zedong by Mao Zedong

SOME QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What determines a person's class?
2. What class do the majority of Afro-Americans fall into?
3. Why is the Amerikan white worker non-revolutionary?
4. What is meant by "lumpen-proletariat"?
5. What kind of state would be in the best interest of the proletariat?
6. What is a liberal?
7. What is a reactionary?
8. What is a leftist?
9. What is an opportunist?



Dictatorship of the Proletariat

What's it all about?

“Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of revolutionary transformation of the

one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.”

— Karl Marx¹⁴

The questions have been asked, “what is the difference between socialism and communism?” and “what is the dictatorship of the proletariat? Is a dictatorship necessary?”

Broadly speaking, the answer to the first question is that the difference between socialism and communism is that under socialism a state apparatus exists, while communism is projected as a stateless society. To the second, “dictatorship of the proletariat” merely expresses the fact that a government or state for the worker has been established. And yes, it is necessary.

But to leave the explanation at that is to fail to impart a sound understanding of socialism-communism, and the dictatorship of the proletariat. To really comprehend what these things mean we necessarily must kick up the entire nest of political terminology: “capitalism”, “fascism”, “democracy”, “anarchism”, etc., because these things are only truly understood in relation to one another.

First it is necessary that we clear up some misconceptions about the state and its origins. According to bourgeois education (indoctrination), we have been somehow led to believe that the state is an institution that has always existed

¹⁴ Critique of the Gotha Programme, Marx

in one form or another and always shall exist. Modern people under Western influence cannot imagine a civilization without a state, and further, the Westerner does not necessarily consider the state as primarily and foremost an organ of force. We are taught that government is “by the people” and “for the people.” When we do consider force and violence as primary characteristics of a state, it is always some other state, and not the good ole U.S.A. And so naively, we are always “shocked” when the brute arm of the U.S. state shows through this heavy coating of deceit and propaganda/indoctrination (the exception, of course is those millions of us who live at the heart of contradictions in the system, and know the bourgeois state first-hand as predominately an organ of force). However, the Marxian view as articulated by Friedrich Engels in his historical study Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State shows clearly and in scientific terms that the state is at all times an organ of force; even more, it is in every instance an instrument by which one class imposes its will over all other classes. Engels, after a careful and thorough documentation, concludes:

“The state is therefore by no means a power forced on society from without... Rather it is a product of society at a certain stage of development; it is the admission that this society has become entangled in an insoluble contradiction with itself, that it has split into irreconcilable antagonisms which it is powerless to dispel. But in order that these antagonisms and classes with conflicting economic interests might not consume them-selves and society in fruitless struggle, it became necessary to have a power seemingly standing above society that would alleviate the conflict, and keep it within the bounds of ‘order’— and this power, arisen out of society but placing itself above it, and alienating itself more and more from it, is the state.”

“... Because the state arose from the need to hold class antagonisms in check, but because it arose, at the same time, in the midst of the conflict of these classes it is, as a rule, the state of the most powerful, economically dominant class which, through the medium of the state, becomes also the politically

dominant class and thus acquires new means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed class. Thus, the state of antiquity was above all the state of the slave owners for the purpose of holding down the slaves, as the feudal state was the organ of the nobility for holding down the peasant serfs and bondsmen, and the modern representative state is an instrument of exploitation of wage labor by capital.”¹⁵

I. Dictatorship as Synonymous with State

When the Marxists use the term “dictatorship of the proletariat” it is not intended as a dictatorship in the sense as used by the bourgeoisie, meaning a state governed by a single individual who has absolute power and arbitrarily dictates laws and policies, his rule enforced by police measures.

Such a definition needs serious correction before it can serve as enlightening information. Even if a single individual had so called “absolute” power, they are still ruling a group or class of individuals, or else they would have no base of support and could themselves be easily overthrown. If we examine the policies and laws enacted under whomsoever, be it Napoleon Bonaparte, Pinochet of Chile, Fidel Castro, or the U.S.’s Gerald Ford, we would find in each instance that the measures enforced ensure that a certain class will benefit economically and politically, while another group or class(es) are being persecuted economically and politically: that is, exploited economically and deprived of effective participation in decision-making processes.

Hence, in a right-wing dictatorship such as was known to exist in Chile and other countries, it is called fascism because the class for whom it rules is a small clique of capitalist and bourgeois individuals, and all pretense of political democracy has been dispensed with. Under such a dictatorship the people are surely exploited and oppressed. They generally live in (object) poverty, and have no say-so in the political process.

¹⁵ Origins of the Family, Private Property and The State, Engels

The bourgeois press attempts to play off left-wing dictatorships as equally reprehensible, and in fact they make a great play on the term “dictatorship”. They point at Stalin as the communist dictator of Russia, Castro as the totalitarian ruler of Cuba, Mao Zedong as the despot of China. (Notice they do not attempt to claim an individual dictator for other socialist countries: Poland, Albania, Romania, Vietnam, etc.) The truth of the matter is that these men — Stalin, Castro, Mao and others — made great contributions to their nations’ struggle for liberation and in the process won by dint of dedication to unselfish principles, considerable esteem, and influence among the masses and their peers! This was so much the case that they came to preside over political committees who ruled for the working class. These committees enacted economic policies for the uplifting of and aggrandizement of the great masses of people: policies which are inimical to the profit-making of that relatively small class of exploiter-owners known as the capitalists or bourgeoisie. Likewise, the political power of the bourgeoisie is severely proscribed under socialism.

The United States is a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. It is in that class for whom the state apparatus rules. Economically the policies enacted ensure the bourgeoisie will garner the larger share of the wealth, and of course politically it is they who exercise control while the other groups — workers, peasants/farmers, Black people and other third-world peoples have only nominal political effectiveness, although they comprise a majority. However, in the U.S. a measure of political democracy does exist as long as it poses no threat to bourgeois rule — we will explore this subject more later.

II. Principles of Historical Materialism

A nation, state, or society may in a sense be compared to a great building. A building has a foundation upon which is erected girders, beams, rafters, etc., as a superstructure. The rest of the house is built in conformity with the foundation

and superstructure. In a society the foundation is its economic system. The social superstructure is the laws, education system, culture, media, art, religion and so forth. The economic base is reflected throughout the social superstructure and the fabric of society. While not determined in a fixed way by this basic economic structure, the superstructure and fabric of society is yet inevitably consistent and in conformity with the base in all important respects.

For example, if a society is based upon cattle raising, then we are likely to find laws defining ownership, inheritance, and penalties for abridging ownership of cattle. The education system is going to be concerned with passing on to succeeding generations the knowledge of breeding and caring for cattle; there are likely to be rodeo-type festivals such as exist in Argentina and the Western United States. Likewise the religion is likely to reflect the economic base: for example, the pastoral communities of the Middle East gave rise to the archetype of the “Good Shepard”; or if fishing were the main economic activity of a community then we are likely to find fish laws, fish festivals, fish gods and so forth.

In their examination and analysis of the various societies which have existed down through history, Marx and Engels discerned some basic patterns and general rules that hold true from one society and culture to the next. The most obvious of these general rules was that those individuals who were wealthy and claimed ownership of the means of production are also the rulers of that society. (If not directly the rulers, then an apparatus of state was so arranged that those who ruled directly ruled in behalf of that owner class, and at their behest.) Another general rule that logically followed was that the social superstructure is generally such that it served to promote, perpetuate, justify, and glorify the ruling class; while at the same time it downgraded, persecuted, and otherwise culturally and legally oppressed the other classes.

In modern capitalist society, for example, the economic system is based upon urban industrial-social production with

the exploitation of the working class majority by the capitalist class minority.

Exploitation of labor is robbery. Seen in the most lenient light, it remains a self-seeking profiteering at the expense of others. With this as an economic base it is small wonder that 90% of bourgeois law concerns itself with maintaining bourgeois property relations rather than human relations and human rights. The education system seeks to impress upon young minds an outlook which justifies and glorifies the bourgeoisie. Robbery and selfishness being built into the economic foundation, the society likewise requires bloodletting and deceit on a commensurate scale. These are reflected throughout the superstructure as prisons are crammed with those in violation of bourgeois property rights, young thieves are gunned down in the streets, and bourgeois armies patrol the face of the globe on “search and destroy” missions of rebel hide-outs. The television programs and movies (cultural outlets) are inundated with blood and violence. A multi-billion dollar propaganda has grown up whose sole job is to infuse selfishness and consumerism into the consciousness of the masses: “—you, too, can join the great amerikan leisure class” if you buy this product or that. A foreigner picking up such magazines as *Ebony* with its glossy display of Black success might be hard put to understand the rebellion of the Black masses. Meanwhile, in real life, a working class youth sits in the heart of the ghetto — where by dint of economic/political/culture pressure their family is disorganized, their neighborhood rundown, and the underemployed populace attempt to augment their miserly income with all sorts of illegal and quasi-legal activities. Such a youth sits in front of a TV, watching one program after another which portrays the so-called “average amerikan family” (that is, when the programs of violence are not on). It presents perpetual display of opulence and sugary plots: a father who works “at the office”, a mother who stays home and minds the house, and of course the “middle class” neighborhood at its affluent best. From the perspective of their own tumultuous reality,

their family and friends are a far cry from this image: if they must look up to the amerikans, then they must look down on themselves. If the life on TV is presented as superior, then their lives and the lives of those they affiliate with must be inferior.

Such is the nature of things under the “Dictatorship of the Bourgeoisie”. Under socialism — the Dictatorship of the Proletariat — the economic system is an urban, industrial, social production base; but these means of production are owned by the workers, and the workers are the ruling class (in this instance the various communist parties and People's parties administer the workers state). The law explicitly forbids exploitation of the labor of others, and is concerned primarily with ensuring human rights. The educational/cultural systems, schools, arts, music, TV, etc., glorify and enhance the noble character of the worker; selflessness is taught and practiced widely and people are led to be motivated by higher principles rather than by that old nemesis of human relations — the profit motive.

III. Democracy

We are led to believe through the amazing effectiveness of the bourgeois propaganda media that somehow bourgeois governments are not organs of force, are not instruments of class rule, but rather are “mediators” of the diverse interest of the people. Yet when we examine the term democracy we find that its essence is equality: equal opportunity, equality under law, and equitable distribution of wealth. Political democracy refers to the equal rights of individuals and classes to participate in the governing process. Freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of the press and so forth are all regarded as components of political democracy. Bourgeois propagandists would have us believe that the brute arm of their government is to ensure and enforce this equality!

Nothing is further from the truth. If democracy means equality, then capitalism is in direct opposition to it. By its

very nature it operates to keep individuals and classes unequal. If the interest of capital is to be served then the interest of the worker must suffer; if the interest of white jobs (trade unions, etc.) and white neighborhoods is to be upheld, then Black and third-world workers must suffer. It is impossible for the state to serve the interest of all people as long as the people are divided by class issues which have as their base the exploitation of one class/race by another. This contradiction lies at the base of the bourgeois system and reverberates throughout society: in the race issue, the school issue, the draft, the war, crime, inflation, unemployment, tax-loopholes, industrial pollution, the military budget, federal budget, etc. ad infinitum. When these contradictions become so heightened and sharp as to threaten the existence of bourgeois rule, the bourgeois overlords openly turn to fascism. Under fascism the government seizes control of the economy and ensures the smooth flow of capitalist profit. All pretense of democracy is dispensed with, and the masses are held in abeyance by brutal police measures. Black people have been living under what is essentially fascism for 300 years.

Cynically, the bourgeois propagandist attempts to portray socialist and communist systems as a threat to democratic freedom rather than as a threat to the capitalist profit-making process. This is of course designed to give the common person a stake in “fighting communism.” Socialism and communism with their equality in the economic sphere have no basic contradiction to democracy; in fact democratic freedoms are broadened to include vast segments of the population which were formerly excluded under capitalism. Under a socialist revolution such as occurred in China, Russia, Cuba, Mozambique, Angola, etc., crime, prostitution and illiteracy are wiped out in a generation: not under threat of going to jail for these activities — on the contrary, it is in the capitalist countries where the prisons are bulging with humanity so labeled “criminal” — but because want and social deprivation are wiped out.

In the socialist countries the schools and universities are

openly free to all, and even the most backward peasant is introduced to the enlightenment of the written word. The child born under capitalism in the ghetto who aspires to become, say, a doctor is not nearly as likely to attain this goal as a child born to well-to-do parents. Under socialism this situation is eliminated: a child is carefully developed and may attain whatever goals their capacity and will allow, no matter what station their parents possess. Their equality under law is assured by the collectivist consciousness of their peers and of society.

IV. Political Democracy

The bourgeoisie insist that the essence of political democracy is to have a multi-party system. Here again the hypocrisy and contradiction is glaring: for in their so-called two-party system there is no difference between the parties! Both represent capitalist interest, though different factions of capitalist interest. It was one of their own, the former president Franklin D. Roosevelt, who remarked: "...the difference between the Democratic Party and the Republican Party is the difference between Tweedle Dum and Tweedle Dee."

Under capitalism the people have no power and no party. And further, the masses are lulled into political apathy and inactivity by the senseless din of the bourgeois press. The change which is likely to occur in a poor person's life as a result of a switch between the two political parties is almost wholly negligible, and people see that — so why all the fuss? More than 50% of the people of voting age do not vote. That would total, in actual figures, more than a hundred million people. So where is all the vaunted democracy and freedom which amerikans are supposed to enjoy? It was Lenin who pointed out that often capitalism operates best behind the facade of political democracy.

Under socialism the masses have much greater political awareness and participation. In fact, socialist revolution cannot take place until the political awareness of the masses

is quantitatively and qualitatively increased. Then socialist government is based upon the concept of the “soviet” — the council and collective. At every level whether it is at the factory, school or wherever, the people are led to make collective decisions and actively participate in the processes which govern their lives. Socialism believes in an inherent intelligence of the people, and after a certain amount of education to liberate their minds from bourgeois influences, they are able to make decisions which are consistent with their own interest and fair-play of all. That is why the slogan raised by the Black Panthers at the time when they were revolutionary, “All Power To The People”, was such an exceedingly appropriate slogan: not only does it express the aim of the socialist revolution, but at the same time points out the contradiction of lack of power of the people under system.

Socialism, as a rule, openly has only one political party — though within this one party there may be several factions representing divergent interests (industrial worker interest, agricultural worker interest, etc.) and divergent ideas on how to best implement socialism. The bourgeoisie, on the other hand, is allowed no voice or participation in political affairs. One cannot attain high office merely on the strength of one’s glowing personality through a popularity contest such as the bourgeois circus of “democratic” election; only, rather, through the manifestation of one’s selfless devotion to socialist principle and one’s competency in the execution of one’s duties may a revolutionary expect to rise accordingly. And the motivation to rise is neither for money nor power — but to serve the people.

V. Anarchism: Or, is a Dictatorship of the Proletariat Necessary?

Anarchy, in its strictest sense, means simply a society without a government — without state authority. Of course, the bourgeoisie seize upon such an idea to imply a lawless society, or a society in a state of political confusion and

disorder. Apparently there is no place in the bourgeois mentality that will allow for a concept of humanity harmoniously existing without a state authority towering over them to enforce peace and order. Yet anarchism, as just such a concept, is a legitimate category in political philosophy. As a political concept it stands for the abolition of formal government and free action for the individual, where land and other resources are common property.

History shows that in primitive times before the rise of class society, humanity lived in what was essentially stateless societies, and lived in relative peace. Some Afrikan tribes, Indigenous Amerikan tribes of the eighteenth century, and some aboriginal tribes found some places in South Amerika and the pacific are fair examples of how all humanity lived ten and twenty thousand years ago. These societies were essentially communistic in that the basic means of production (hunting tools, food gathering areas, etc.), were held in common by the entire tribe. Their democracy was usually much more thoroughgoing than anything in modern times, in that the chiefs and leaders were selected democratically by the whole people including the women, and women had an equal say in community council. The chiefs and leaders did not exploit the labor of others, nor were there any standing armies or police forces to enforce the will of the chiefs or a clique of rulers. The people were the ruling class and the authority of the chiefs and leaders extended only as far as centralizing decisions beneficial to the entire tribe. There was no mass murder, theft against one's neighbors, or juvenile delinquency; the deeply ingrained social ills that beset modern class society were either extremely rare or unheard of. An occasional war with a strange tribe may break out and result in some deaths, but the warriors defended their people on a voluntary basis, and if one thought for whatever reason that the conflict was not worthwhile then one was free not to participate.

It is a return to a state of affairs on this order, although with modern adjustments, that the anarchists advocate. They recognize the state as an instrument of oppression and of

class rule, and insist humanity needs no such institution elevated above humanity, requiring a lavish allegiance from and subordination of the people. About a half century ago (about the latter part of the 19th century) the anarchists were very active in the class struggle and their activities were characterized by violent “terrorist” attacks upon the system. Today the violence of the anarchist has pretty much subsided, but the basic anarchist political tendency has been taken over by various peaceniks and pacifists. They correctly view the state and monopoly capital as the enemies of humanity: most have some acquaintance with communist ideology and are in agreement with parts of it. But they issue an unequivocal NO to a dictatorship of the proletariat. They seek a pure democracy, a perfect democracy—in an impure and imperfect world!

Marxist-Leninists perceive the revolution as an ongoing process of which the political overthrow of the bourgeoisie is but the first stage. It is in this first stage where the gains of the people must be consolidated as quickly as possible, broadened and protected by instituting a People’s state apparatus to replace the old bourgeois state machinery which has been smashed. A few quotes by Lenin and Stalin tell the story:

“For many reasons the bourgeoisie that is overthrown in one country remains for a long time stronger than the proletariat which has overthrown it. Therefore, the whole point is to retain power, to consolidate it, to make it invincible.”

“...The transition from capitalism to communism represents an entire historical epoch. Until this epoch has terminated, the exploiters will inevitably cherish the hope of restoration, and this hope will be converted into attempts at restoration. And after their first serious defeat, the overthrown exploiters – who had not expected their overthrow, never believed it possible, never conceded the thought of it – will throw themselves with tenfold energy, with furious passion and hatred grown a hundredfold, into the battle for the recovery of their lost ‘paradise’ on behalf of their families, who had been leading such a sweet and easy life and whom now the ‘common herd’

is condemning to ruin and destitution (or to common work)”.

“For a long time after the revolution the exploiters inevitably continue to enjoy a number of great practical advantages: they still have money (since it is impossible to abolish money all at once), some movable property – often fairly considerable; they still have various connections, habits of organization and management, knowledge of all the ‘secrets’ (customs, methods, means and possibilities) of management, superior education, close connections with the higher technical personnel (who live and think like the bourgeoisie), incomparably greater experience in the art of war (this is very important), and so on, and so forth”.

“The dictatorship of the proletariat is a most determined and most ruthless war waged by the new class against a more powerful enemy, the bourgeoisie, whose resistance is increased tenfold by its overthrow”.

“The dictatorship of the proletariat cannot be ‘complete’ democracy, democracy for all, for the rich as well as for the poor; the dictatorship of the proletariat must be a state that is democratic in a new way – for the proletarians and the property-less in general – and dictatorial in a new way – against the bourgeoisie...”¹⁶

VI. Communism

“What we have to deal with here is a communist society not as it has developed on its own foundation, but on the contrary just as it emerges from capitalist society; which is thus in every respect economically, morally and intellectually still stamped with the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it emerges”.¹⁷

After capitalism has been defeated and the socialist state reigns for a time, then eventually the state under socialism “withers away” and we have a new type of society: a communist society. Communism is a stateless society which develops after the bourgeois class has been eliminated, and the minds of the masses have been liberated from the

¹⁶ Foundation of Leninism, Stalin

¹⁷ Critique of the Gotha Programme, Marx

predatory influences of bourgeois society.

In that all states are based upon the cleavage of society into contending classes with irreconcilable interest, it logically follows that once class differences have been obliterated and there exist only one class — the working class — then the need for a state to enforce and impose the will of one class over another begins to diminish. It is envisioned that the duties of the state will dwindle to mere managerial duties and paperwork. The state as an instrument of force will “wither away”: communism will have arrived.

But not only is communism distinguished from socialism by the absence of a state, but also the people will have developed so humanly that crime, insanity, and the myriad social diseases which derive from a jungle society will have also vanished. In other words, revolution at every level of human existence will have occurred, and selflessness will have become the predominant creed of humanity.

“In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labor, and therewith also the antithesis between mental and physical labor has vanished, after labor has become not only a means of life but life’s prime want; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-around development of the individual, and all the springs of cooperative wealth flow more abundantly – only then can the narrow horizon of the bourgeois right be crossed in its entirety and society inscribe on its banners: From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.”¹⁸

Conclusion

And so it can be seen that the aim of socialist revolution, of which Revolutionary Black Nationalism is a part, is the creation of a human society in which the latent intelligence and talents of all people are given free reign. This, of course, will not be easy; but only through prolonged and protracted struggle that can only culminate in the defeat of monopoly

¹⁸ Ibid.

capitalism — can only culminate in the ownership of the means of production being placed in the hands of the people — will exploitation of man by man be brought to an end.

The revolution is not limited, however, to a political and economic takeover, but is thoroughgoing and continues into the realm of ideas as the entire social superstructure is given a complete overhaul and re-structured on socialist principles. To complete this stage of the revolution itself will require an entire epoch in which a state machinery is erected to consolidate the people's gains, eliminate the bourgeoisie as a class, protect the people's freedom, and aid in the transformation of the human heart.

Finally a stage will be reached when this transformation is complete and the psychopathy in the economic foundation and in the minds of the people will have utterly diminished; class society will be transformed to classless society and there will be no need for an organ of force to impose the will of a ruling class upon a people, because the people will be the ruling class. The state itself will be tossed upon the scrapheap of history, and as Marx states it, the "prehistory" of man/womankind will have ended and human history will begin.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

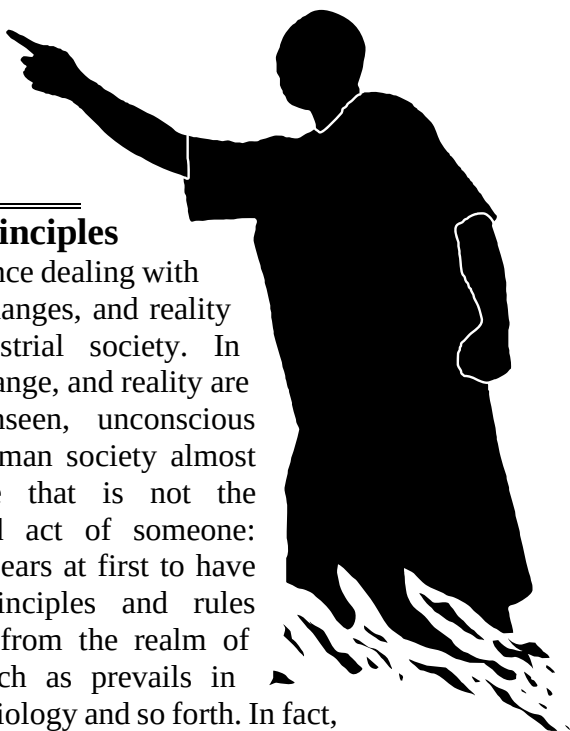
1. What is the difference between socialism and capitalism?
2. Between socialism and fascism?
3. Between socialism and anarchism?
4. Between socialism and communism?
5. What are the basic contradictions between capitalism and democracy?

Marxian Political Economy

Some Basic Principles

Marxism is a science dealing with the movement, changes, and reality of modern industrial society. In nature motion, change, and reality are governed by unseen, unconscious forces. But in human society almost nothing is done that is not the conscious, willed act of someone: hence society appears at first to have governed by principles and rules wholly removed from the realm of material laws such as prevails in physics, botany, biology and so forth. In fact, bourgeois theorists would have us believe that the will of man is so "spiritually guided", subjective, and unpredictable that no true science of society can be derived — at least not on a par with the physical sciences. Marxism exposes the lie in these assertions, and cuts through the confusion and chaos of bourgeois pseudo-sociology with the consistency and precision of materially verifiable science.

Marx determined that the ideas in the human mind, the sins they set themselves, and the emotions they feel arise in response to their material conditions of existence, which include their relationship with nature and relationship to one another in society. The key to the laws of human development Marx discerned is to be found in, first of all, the economic prerequisites of human life: "The simple fact that mankind must first of all eat, drink, have shelter, and clothing before it can pursue politics, science, art, religion,



etc."¹⁹

The Marxist Maurice Cornforth put it like this:

*“It is the necessary condition of any human life that people should produce their means of subsistence, and that they should enter into production relations corresponding with their productive forces... From these conditions arise definite interests, contradictions of interest, aims and ambitions. Ideas, passions, plans, and intentions arise in the mind of individuals accordingly, in response to these conditions of life. And so social life proceeds.”*²⁰

Hence, the key to understanding society is to be found in a society's mode of production and relations of production. The individual who purports to understand man and society without a proper acquaintance with the economic principles of a society and their ramifications is most probably caught up in idealism and delusion, and will be unable to come up with adequate solutions to the myriad social problems that confront them in everyday life. Economics is the basis, the foundation, of all human relations either direct or indirect; and as the economy goes, as a rule, so go human relations.*

Here in the U.S.A. we live under a political economic system referred to as democratic capitalism. This system is characterized by high industrial and technological development, social production, and private ownership. Capitalism is one of several economic forms under which exploitation of man by man takes place. In addition to its high industrial and technological development, it differs from the classic forms of chattel slavery and feudalism in that under slavery and feudalism the exploitation takes place is a direct and open way; slaves and serfs are compelled by law to work for

¹⁹ Engels Speech at The Graveside of Karl Marx, Selected Works of Marx and Engels

²⁰ Historical Materialism, Maurice Cornforth p.24

* NOTE: Marx & his collaborator Engels acknowledge that while economics is the basis of human society, it is not the “only” determining factor. “Marx and I are partly to blame for the fact that the younger people sometimes lay more stress on the economic side than is due to it.” (Engels, Letter to J. Mock, Sept. 21, 1890)

their masters.

Under capitalism, however, the exploitation is hidden behind a far more complex set of social-economic relations, and in fact the exploited worker appears at first to be “free” because there is no law compelling him to work for any particular capitalist, nor any statute governing how the fruits of production are to be divided between the worker and capitalist; hence the bourgeois theorists characterize capitalism as “free enterprise” for the worker and boss alike.

But the fact that the workers work and yet remain in poverty and misery while the capitalist continues to grow richer and more powerful has led the world's masses to come to their senses and analyze this social system in light of Marxian science, which lays bare the essence of capitalist exploitation.

Where and How Does Capitalist Exploitation Take Place?

The great fortunes of capital are not amassed through retail trade and commerce, through “buying cheap and selling dear.” In modern times, although a certain amount of profit is had in the retail commerce field, by and large most buying and selling takes place between the capitalists themselves; exploitation of the masses only takes place very nominally at this end.

“The bulk of sales are between capitalists; the capitalist whose workers produce raw materials (such as iron ore) sells to the capitalist whose workers produce semi-manufactured goods (such as steel tubes), who sells to another capitalist whose workers produce a finished product (such as bicycles), who sells to a wholesaler, who sells to a retailer. There are at the same time a host of transactions with sub-contractors supplying components (such as bells or brakes), with suppliers of machinery, of fuel, and so forth. It is very evident, therefore, that if a profit is made by buying below value and selling above value, what one capitalist gains another loses, and the capitalist class as a whole is no better off. The capitalist class as a whole cannot overreach itself. The great profits of the

*capitalists – equal in magnitude to the total wages paid to the working class – cannot therefore be thus explained."*²¹

Yet we are so misled and beguiled by the fact that in capitalist society wealth "presents itself as an immense accumulation of commodities" that we see many of our people go into the retail trade business as soon as they are able to scrounge, borrow, or steal the bare minimum to become a "Black capitalist." Much to their disillusionment they generally find that to own a corner grocery store, liquor store, or whatever is a great hassle that requires total dedication, work, and sacrifice — just to keep their heads above the water. Unable to take full advantage of the discount which accrues to wholesale purchase, they cannot compete with the monopoly retail capitalist who either owns the wholesale outlet outright, or makes their purchases in such high wholesale lots that their discount is enormous. As a result we see each year a great number of small business go to the wall. And those who survive, the innumerable "mom & pop" stores that dot the lower-income neighborhoods, usually have prices scandalously higher than the prices found in the monopoly enterprises. They are victims in some sense of the illusion propagated by free enterprise that "everybody has the opportunity to become wealthy" in their system. In actuality becoming wealthy under capitalism is like a bingo game: for every one winner there is a hundred losers.

The Theory of Surplus Value

The great fortunes are made, and the exploitation of the masses takes place, in the factories and points of production.

*"(Marx) uncovered the essence of modern capitalist economy, explaining how the hiring of labor, the purchase of labor power, masks the enslavement of millions of property-less people by a small group of capitalists..."*²²

²¹ Political Economy by John Eaton, p. 65

²² Lenin, Collected Works Vol. II "Our Program", quoted in Political economy by A. Leontieva

Surplus value is the term given to the value created by workers over and above the cost of production (which includes raw materials, machinery, upkeep, and the wages of the workers). This surplus value is realized as profit by the capitalist. Marx points out that:

“The essential difference between the various economic forms of society — between, for instance, a society based on slave labor and one based on wage labor — lies only in the mode in which this surplus labor is in each case extracted from the actual producer, the laborer.”²³

For example, if we were to compare hypothetically the capitalist system with the system of chattel slavery, we would first have the slave master with, say, a hundred slaves at work in the fields. In a year’s time this hundred slaves may produce a million dollars in value of cotton. Out of that million dollars is subtracted the cost of tools, fertilizer, seeds, etc., and the upkeep of the slaves themselves. Of course, the slaves may eat hog guts and other refuse, wear rags, and live in shanty shacks; all told, the cost of production and the upkeep of the slaves might add up to a few thousand dollars at most. That leaves 997,000 dollars as surplus value — profit — in the pocket of the slave master.

Similarly in the factories we have, say, a thousand workers producing several billion dollars in value per year. Out of these billions come the cost of raw materials, upkeep of machinery, and wages of the workers, all of which may add up to several hundred million dollars. What happens to the other billions of surplus value created by the labor of the workers? It goes into the pocket of the capitalist as it did the pocket of the slave master.

Let there be no mistake about it: this surplus value is the creation of the workers and not of the machinery. Given a raw material which already has a value (since it is produced by the hands of other workers), the machine merely transfers its own value over into the product little by little until the

²³ Karl Marx

machine is worn out. It is the workers whose intelligence, skill, and physical dexterity adds new value to the product.

The buyer and seller add nothing new to the product and must derive their profit from adding a surcharge which is passed on to the consumer. On those occasions when there is a shortage of supply and an excess of demand the merchant capitalist may indeed gross extra profits. But in normal business transactions they only net what is called “the average rate of profit.”

As for the worker, they must be kept alive and fit to work; they must have food, clothing, and shelter — the necessities and means of sustaining human life. While the slave master himself had provided directly for the slave, the worker is given a wage by which to acquire these things for himself and family. Sure enough, no sooner does the worker draw this wage than pays it out to the merchant, the grocer, the landlord, and the loan shark.

What determines the general level of wages is the general level of the standard of living. For example in the Midwest, where the standard of living is relatively moderate, a worker employed by Firestone Rubber Company may earn something like 150 dollars per week. On the East or West Coast, where the standard of living is higher, we would likely find a worker employed by the same company paid 200 dollars per week. But in a country like Liberia, or other third-world countries where Firestone has rubber plantations and processing plants, the cost of food, clothing, and shelter is extremely low, and the workers are paid something like 25 cents per day! The surplus value created by these third-world workers is stupendous.

In point of fact, all multinational capitalists make billions more in profit in so-called “underdeveloped”, third-world countries than in their home country. Here we see the crux of imperialism, which has four main features: 1) the plundering of the raw resources of third-world countries, 2) the exploitation of a cheap labor supply, 3) the creation of a market where they may dump and make a profit from finished products, and 4) the prevention of third-world

countries from developing industrially, thus rendering them competitors against other third-world countries who are also exploited for their cheap labor and inputs by the imperialists.

The Power of the Giant Monopolies

Capital never stands still. It either marches forward — extending its power, growing richer, replacing old plants and equipment with new ones, acquiring new undertakings and new markets — or else it is crushed or absorbed by rivals. The hotter the rivalry between competing capital, the more single-minded the pursuit of profit must necessarily be for the capitalist. Marx foresaw that in time, due to the rabid competition, great economic power would be concentrated into the hands of fewer and fewer giant monopolies.

This power of the monopoly capitalist is wielded in many ways. They virtually control the government and the military with bribes, kickbacks, and the promise of a luxurious pension upon retirement from public life. They fix and raise prices to suit themselves. Wages, in spite of collective bargaining, are offset by cost of living increases so that the share of a corporation's earnings going to wages remain the same. Management has more freedom in determining their salary; hence the corporations decide who is to become wealthy. They decide what kind of jobs are to be made available and how many, whether or not to automate, and where to establish or close plants, regardless of how negatively it may affect a local population. They decide what investments will be made and what will be produced, promoted, or shelved. All of these decisions directly affect the quality of life of tens of millions, but neither the people nor their politicians exercise any control over these areas of power.

The Distribution of Surplus Value and Alienated Labor

In national commodity production, the only areas where value is created is in the factories, farms and construction

sites; yet society has many other areas of labor which, while not value-productive, are still sites of socially useful and necessary labor. The price of labor such as by doctors, nurses, teachers, lawyers, white-collar clerks — and the cost of the machinery of the state used to maintain order for the system such as politicians, police, armies and the school system — this is all paid out of the surplus value created by the toiling masses at the point of production. How this distribution takes place entails a set of complex social and economic relations which the following sections attempt to explain in brief.

Profit

Profit, as we have already discussed, derives directly from the exploitation of the worker. It falls under the category of "unearned income" in that no labor is put forth to obtain it. The merchant capitalist in retail business obtains his share of the surplus value in that the industrial capitalist surrenders the product to him at a reduced rate, i.e. at a rate less than what he would obtain should he sell directly to the consumer himself. The retail merchant with his store, clerks, salesmen and so forth add nothing new to the product and create no new value. He sees the wages of his clerks as eating into the profit he would enjoy if he did not have to pay them. As a result we see a noticeably lower wage paid to workers in the distributive clerk field and service field.

Interest

Interest is another area of unearned income, which no labor has been put forth to obtain. Here the lender becomes something of a partner to the capitalist, who borrows money in order to pay costs related to the creation of surplus value. Out of the surplus value created, he will repay the lender the sum of money borrowed plus a certain higher percentage which has been agreed upon in advance as the "price" (the interest rate) of borrowing the money. In an advanced capitalist society, supplies of money — a form of capital —

come mainly from the banks in close association with other large financial institutions. Banks in capitalist society are institutions where excess and otherwise idle funds of innumerable individuals and businesses are accumulated. The banker pays out small dividends to its depositors, but uses its vast stores of excess capital to loan to whatever "free enterprise" ventures show a relatively good chance of profitability — i.e. of creating surplus value.

Rent

Rent, too, is unearned income. It too is paid out of the surplus value produced by wage labor.

"Rent is clearly unearned income. The landowner does no work, and he sells no labour-power; he receives his rent simply because he is by legal title the owner of land. However, the money that the landowner receives for allowing someone else to have use of his land is just as good money as that which the capitalist receives when he makes a profit out of the worker; money paid in rent can buy the products of other men's labour just as well as any other money. The landowner is very obviously not a recipient of wages, and what comes to him as rent cannot come from anywhere else but out of the product of unpaid labour. It cannot be anything but surplus value".²⁴

Taxes

For the most part, unemployed persons, pensioners, armed forces, police, civil servants, government officials, politicians, and most doctors, nurses, and teachers (except for a small percentage employed privately) receive their incomes as state employees; their compensation is derived from taxes.

Broadly there are two forms of tax: direct tax, namely direct deductions from income such as income tax; and indirect tax, as tax added to the purchase price of commodities such as tobacco. The indirect taxes are called

²⁴ Political Economy, John Eaton p. 130

"custom" or "excise" taxes and are paid by the importer or manufacturer to the state and then passed on to the consumer in the form of higher prices. Indirect taxation falls most heavily on the lower income groups. All the taxation — income tax, corporate tax, and indirect tax — is effectively surplus value accrued to the state.

*"State expenditures is, therefore, increasingly the battleground of class interest, the desire of the capitalist class being to use State finance to strengthen their domination, to facilitate means of increasing profits and impose exactions that hit the masses of people. The working class, on the other hand, fight for the improvement of social services against state expenditure to buttress the capitalist class."*²⁵

In this respect, we see how completely is the worker's product used against him that the capitalists use their profits exacted off the sweat and brow of the worker to further maintain control of the surplus value appropriated by the state. They utilize state institutions, legislatures, courts, schools, police, prisons, etc. to keep the worker in check and maintain the status quo. Also, it is to the capitalist interest for the state to make ever greater multi-billion dollar military outlays so that monopoly giants can get government contracts to build tanks, planes, ammunition, etc.

Yet while the struggle of the working class to gain influence over government expenditures cannot be denied, it most not be overlooked that this is a piecemeal measure, primarily with the benefit of "survival" and "educational value" for the workers; it is not an end in itself. In the final analysis, if this struggle were won completely it would only mean the consolidation of the welfare state, and welfare is not socialism. Under welfare the people do not own the means of production, and the burden rests wholly upon the backs of the workers who must pay an increased tax to cover the cost of this welfare. The psychology is to make the recipient of welfare feel ashamed of "living off the labor of

²⁵ Ibid. 214

others." Meanwhile the real parasite, the capitalist, is getting away clean: monopoly profits are not touched by welfare. So it is clear that the welfare state must be avoided. We must opt for total revolution.

The grip of the capitalist over state and local government (and national) is tightened further via "the public debt," or "national debt." In many instances, in order to administer certain benefits and fulfill state functions the government must operate at a "deficit." That is, they just borrow money by floating bonds to the capitalists and capitalist finance institutions. But this money borrowed, unlike the loans to industry, cannot be used to create surplus value or otherwise compete with "free enterprise". Hence it can only be paid back through exacting taxes from the workers. Bourgeois law is farther arranged so that the paying of public debt, "national debt" etc. is high on the priorities of legal imperatives of society. As a result we see such contradiction as the banks effectively taking over the administration of New York City.

So it can be seen that not only does the wealth of the exploiting class rent off the backs of the workers, but so does the entire society including the superstructure of laws, courts, politicians, police, prisons, schools, cultural media, etc. But in spite of these things having been the product of the worker and his labor, a worker has no control of these things; by and large this social superstructure is used against him. Alienated labor leads to alienated consciousness — alienation from one's human self and alienation of people from other people. Exploitation becomes the rule of the day; the profit motive rather than human motives is in full sway. Men/women develop selfishly, materialistically, animalistically. Mass crime, mass insanity, mass family disorganization, and mass misery are the lot of the workers in the bourgeois state.

Depressions

Another contradiction of primary importance is the tendency every 10 years or so for the capitalist economy to go into a

slump period in which sales of goods fall to or below the cost of production. The capitalist cannot make a profit here, hence ceases production and a general laying off occurs throughout the economy. Such depressions, or "business recessions" are caused by overproduction: the glutting of the market of capitalist manufacture. No one elucidates this point clearer than Marx himself:

*"It is enough to mention the commercial crisis that by their periodical return put on its trial, each time more threateningly, the existence of the entire bourgeois society. In these crises a great part not only of the existing products, but also of the provisionally created productive forces, are periodically destroyed. In these crises there breaks out an epidemic that, in all earlier epochs, would have seemed an absurdity — the epidemic of over-production. Society suddenly finds itself put back into a state of momentary barbarism; It appears as if a famine, a universal war of devastation had cut off the supply of every means of subsistence; industry and commerce seem to be destroyed; and why? Because there is too much civilization, too much means of subsistence, too much industry, too much commerce."*²⁶

In these periods of crisis the fact that capitalist production is solely for capitalist profit becomes glaringly clear. In such times warehouses may be filled with clothes, dealers' lots may be crammed with cars, shoe stores may overflow with shoes: but unless the capitalist gets his profit everyone will wear rags, no one will ride, and we'll all go barefoot. The capitalist have created an economic system, wherein, although they themselves do not work, unless they some how receive payment there will be no culture, no education, no edification of the human spirit.

Another feature which becomes prominent during these times of crisis is the existence of the "industrial reserve army of unemployed." In times of widespread unemployment the labor market is depressed, and the bourgeoisie begin to promote the idea of overpopulation. The earth, they claim, cannot produce at a rate to keep pace with the ever burgeon-

²⁶ Communist Manifesto by K. Marx

ing population rate. The birth rate must be controlled and reduced, they claim, and they thereby justify their genocidal designs upon the third world and poor people. What they mean, of course, is that their system cannot profitably accommodate the large masses of people. They cannot provide jobs — hence the masses must be supported on the public dime and great unrest simmers. If there are fewer people, they reason, there will be fewer enemies of the system. Hence they murder the population at birth rather than let them reach the battlefield. The heinous games of the bourgeoisie never ends.

Inflation

On the other hand, during boom periods when the capitalist economy is going full blast with full production and relatively full employment, supply generally lags behind demand, resulting in higher prices: this is inflation. The workers then, in order to keep up with the ever rising cost of living, strike for higher wages and greater benefits. The monopoly corporations never takes a loss of profits, however — never. They compensate by raising prices, which then accelerates the rate of inflation. They blame the worker, of course, claiming that they would not have to do this had the worker not made such extravagant demands in the first place.

The fortunes of the capitalist are also devalued by inflation, however. Their capital assets, too, cost more and more. When the workers of each company win a higher wage, each company attempts to pass the burden of the additional cost over to his consumer; this consumer, as we have discussed, is often other capitalists. Hence while the worker suffers in his quality of life during inflation, the capitalist is threatened with a pain in the pocketbook unless he can manipulate, juggle, and balance things out. It is therefore understandable that the government is prodded into acting to curb inflation.

The government attempts to curb inflation by putting the reins on how much money can be borrowed. They do this by

increasing the amount of interest to be paid on Federal Reserve loans. This means the private banks, all of whom are underwritten by the Federal Reserve system, must also raise their interest on loans to capitalists. The capitalist doing a booming business is yet hesitant to borrow more money to expand production if the interest rate is relatively exorbitant. During slump periods the government attempts to spur business by lowering interest rates.

Other measures the government takes to curb inflation are putting a ceiling on prices and freezing wages. As has been observed under the Nixon-Ford administration, the ceiling on prices is a mockery, while the wage freeze is strictly enforced.

War Economy

But depressions and recessions are not that easy to pull out of, and sometimes extraordinary methods are resorted to: this is where the “war economy” comes in. War periods are prosperous times for capitalists and for the national bourgeois economy. During a war, the government announces a huge war budget; in the USA as much as 90 or 100 billion dollars are spent on military expenditures. When the capitalist sees this he knows he is going to get a government contract to build tanks, planes, jeeps, arms, chemical weapons, etc. So he expands his factories and plants, hiring more and more workers. The workers, for their part, begin to demand and buy more of their products — cars, new appliances, tape players, motorized skateboards, electric can-openers, what-ever — which in turn causes an expansion of automobile plants, appliance manufacturers, television factories and so forth. Even more workers are hired, who in turn spend more. A boom period ensues: inflation is rampant and the bourgeois economy rolls.

On the other hand, should the government announce a cut-back in military expenditure, then immediately the capitalist closes some plants, restricts his production and causes thousands of workers to be laid off. The consumer

dollar now being restricted, consumer goods are suddenly in surplus far exceeding demand. Commodities are overproduced, a slump sets in, and we see general layoffs all around the economy.

Such is the nature of production under capitalism: chaotic, anarchistic, predatory, cancerous.

*“The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with those the whole relations of society... Constantly revolutionizing production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away — and all new formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify; all that is solid melts into air; all that is holy is profaned.”*²⁷

Almighty dollar.

Conclusion

In truth, there was a time when capitalism was progressive — was, in fact, revolutionary. The capitalist mode of production when it first arrived on the scene was an advance over the old feudal system of production. Through its development of science, industry, and technology capitalism made it possible that a greater number of people could be included in “the good life”. It made it possible for a greater number of people to become cultured and educated, for a time allowing a higher development of human potential. This could not have been possible except that capitalism developed and broadened the means of production. Marx, true to his scientific materialist base, points out in a criticism of one of his contemporaries:

“He (Stirner) imagines that people up to now have always formed a concept of man and then won freedom for themselves to the extent that was necessary to realize this concept; that the

²⁷ Ibid.

measure of freedom that they achieved was determined each time by their idea of the ideal of man at the time... In reality, of course, what happened was that people won freedom for themselves each time to the extent that was dictated and permitted not by their ideal of man, but by the existing productive forces. All conquests of freedom hitherto, however have been based on restricted productive forces. The production which these productive forces could provide was insufficient for the whole of society and made development possible only if some persons satisfied their needs at the expense of others, and therefore some—the minority—obtained the monopoly of development, while others—the majority—owing to the constant struggle to satisfy their most essential needs, were for the time being (i.e. until the birth of new revolutionary productive forces) excluded from any development.”²⁸

That was several hundred years since capitalism has been progressive. Today capitalism stands solidly in the way of human progress. Capitalism has so developed science and technology that there exist virtually no limits to its potential... Except the limits placed on them artificially by the capitalist owners. The technology exists today through which it is possible to irrigate great deserts if they wish; to plow, if necessary, the very mountain sides by helicopter and mechanical horsepower; to utilize higher forms of energy to accomplish whatever task of labor that confronts humanity; to reduce the working hours of all humanity to a few hours per week each. And at the same time it would be possible to feed, clothe, and house every person on the planet several times over. In a word, the material means presently exist that all the world's masses may enjoy "the good life", may be liberated from the mind-binding influence of poverty and want.

But the means of production are not utilized to this end. Why? Because there is no profit in it for the capitalist. Millions starve today in the Sahel region of Africa, in the Himalayas of India. Countless other millions live miserable,

²⁸ German Ideology, K. Marx, pg. 115-116.

demented half-lives because existing technology is not allowed to produce to its full potential. It is these very real conditions, according to Marx, which are the conditions to make successful revolution possible. These conditions are not merely those of mass misery and unrest — which has existed since the beginning of class society — but rather the existence of technology which can enable progress to spread and include greater numbers of people. One of the laws which Marx found operative in his materialist analysis of history was that whenever the relations of production acted as a "fetter" upon the means of production, these relations of production were inevitably torn asunder: revolution!

Today the capitalist relations of production act as a fetter on production. In humanity's inexorable thrust for ever higher development — freedom and kinship of all people — these fetters will be torn asunder, and new relations of production established that will unleash the productive forces and enable every person to live to their full potential.

Socialism

World socialism is next in the logical sequence following world capitalism. Socialism resolves the major contradiction which exists under capitalism — social production yet private appropriation. Under socialism the means of production will be owned socially, operated socially, and the fruits of labor appropriated socially.

With this major contradiction overcome in all important economic spheres — e.g., after the disalienation of labor — we may expect a corresponding disalienation to take place spiritually and in the human consciousness. A human society will at least be possible where kinship of humanity can be more than just a mystical yearning but an actuality. Crime, insanity, and the misery that accompanies the predatory profit motive will be assuaged; freedom in more than the abstract context will be possible. All people will be free to develop their human talents and potentials; opportunity to seek a career in whatever field one wishes and qualifies for

will be available to all. Political freedom of self-determination will be broadened to include direct People's control over all the institutions of power which govern their lives. This would include economic, political, social, and cultural institutions. Socialism means revolution in every sphere of human activity.

SOME QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Where and how does capitalist exploitation take place?
2. What is meant by surplus value?
3. What is socially useful, but not value-productive labor?
4. What are the forms of unearned income?
5. How is the Welfare State arrived at?
6. How do depressions occur?
7. How does inflation occur?
8. How does a war economy occur?



Terrorism and the Black Revolution

Terror may be defined as indiscriminate violence and murder inflicted on the public to break their resistance.

Terrorism is endemic to the system of capitalist exploitation. To begin with, it is terrorizing to be robbed of the fruits of one's labor, to be paid a bare subsistence wage for back-breaking labor. It is terrorizing to be made to stand helplessly by while watching one's children and loved ones go without and live miserable, culturally deprived half-lives for lack of money; to be evicted from one's home because of inability to pay the rent; to live in a cold, dark room or home because the electricity has been cut off. It is terrorizing to have one's children become poisoned and even die from chipping lead-based paint; to live in rat-infested, plaster-falling, plumbing-leaking apartments and pay exorbitant rents. There is a note of terror in being denied a much-needed job solely because one is Black and/or of an oppressed gender. There is terror in being denied one's humanity and pushed around by bureaucratic "welfare" officials. There is terror in standing before a judge and being sentenced to a long prison term for a mistake one was driven into making. There is terror in "stop and frisk" and "20 hour detention" laws. These and more are terror inflicted daily and indiscriminately upon the people, bringing great violence and disruption to their lives.

To enforce such rule, the bourgeois organs of force — the police and armies — are themselves denied the right to think and empathize with the masses, for they must control, patrol, and ride hard on the masses. Hence they are rigorously

trained and conditioned to react to key words: “criminal”, “communist”, “law and order”, etc., and to kill on command. Thus My Lai, Soweto, Sharpsville, Wounded Knee, the Watts riots, Attica, Jackson State, Kent State, Montgomery, Alabama, the Fred Hampton/Mark Clark raid, the S.L.A. “shoot-outs” (shoot-ins), etc. and ad infinitum.

Terror, violence and murder indiscriminate and merciless are one with the overall fabric of capitalism-imperialism, and we can never expect otherwise under this system — never. Because as long as the system is based upon mass robbery, there shall always be required in it the twin evils of mass deceit and mass murder.

Yet for all the terrorism and foul murder on their part, the bourgeois media projects as “terrorism” any violent act of the people in quest of their freedom. Perhaps one of the most glaring examples of the cynicism and “doublespeak” of the bourgeois press occurred in a recent (September 1976) presentation off the bourgeois wire services, in which we are told five Palestinian “terrorists” took hostages in a Lebanon hostel and “demanded release of over 80 Palestinians held prisoner in Lebanon jails. Right-wing Syrian forces, went the news release, “moved in and killed one of the ‘terrorists’ and four hostages. Capturing the other three ‘terrorists’ the next day, they hung them by the neck in front of the same hotel.”

Or again, perhaps one of the more infamous examples of bourgeois “doublespeak” was uttered by a U.S. Army commander in justification of his slaughter of innocents during the Vietnam War. “In order to save the city”, he said, “we had to destroy it.”

Yet the word “terrorism” is never used by the bourgeois media in connection with the atrocities committed by their forces, no matter how gross. Terrorism is a word strictly applied to revolutionaries. In fact, it is an obvious attempt by these “opinion-makers” and “mind-shapers” to make the words “terrorism” and “revolutionary” synonymous. And the trouble is that all too often many of us are misled by it. Too many of us allow ourselves and our struggle to be defined by the deceit and propaganda of the bourgeoisie.

Revolutionary violence is not indiscriminately aimed at people. The bourgeois notion of “terrorism” is inconsistent with the aims and principles of socialist revolution: socialism stands for the uplifting of the masses, the kinship of humanity, the edification of the human spirit. If the revolution is fighting for the people and trying to enlist the people’s support, what sense does it make for the revolutionary to indiscriminately murder people, or terrorize their lives with measures that rob them of their dignity?

Take for example the “shoot-out” at the San Rafael courthouse: upon taking the jurors hostage, one of the comrades, in a mistaken sense of revolutionary ethics, suggested they be “tied together by the necks”. Willie Christmas, who took command of the situation after the heroic Jonathan had made his move, vetoed the suggestion. “To dehumanize and humiliate people is their thing”, he postulated, “not ours.” This act of revolutionary humanism did not go unnoticed by the people, and militated to the benefit of Angela Davis when she was tried, as one of the jurors who had been held hostage recalled the incident and gave testimony of it.

Close scrutiny of the actions of the heroic Symbionese Liberation Army, portrayed in the media as “savage terrorists”, reveals that they were extremely scrupulous and selective in their violence, and in fact did much to advance the cause of revolution in the hearts and minds of the people. Look to the example of the numerous bombs planted by the Weather Underground — where in each instance they issue a telephone call to the target so that the workers may clear the area and pointless fatalities be avoided — and compare this with, say, the right wing bombing of churches by the KKK in Alabama, blowing up children in Sunday school. Terror is clearly a tool of the right and not of the left.

We must not lose sight of those facts as we rise to wrest the freedom of the Black Nation. Black Revolution is Socialist Revolution aimed at the monopoly capitalist class and its lackeys and agents, not indiscriminately at any white people: we must seek, if at all possible, to isolate the monopoly class from its white worker base of support and

bring about a cleavage in amerikan society such as occurred during the Vietnam War. This must be a conscious part of our strategy. We must avoid at all cost the types of misguided actions as the “Zebra” assaults where white working class people were indiscriminately cut down. It is only the monopoly class that can benefit from race war. We can be assured, in fact, that they will promote our cause as a race war rather than a socialist revolution and attempt to fan the flames of race hatred. They would not give a damn whether we might inflict terror and violence upon the white working class or not. Such, in fact, plays directly into their hands — consolidates and reinforces their position.

Bombings, kidnappings, sniping, revolutionary executions, surprise raids, bank robbery: all of these are rightfully weapons of urban guerrilla warfare. As we use them we must take care to maintain high principles and keep in mind that Power To the People is more than just “campaign rhetoric”: it is the whole aim of Black Socialist Revolution.

Political Dictionary

A:

Absolute Equalitarianism: The narrow and fixed view that “all things are equal” and that every situation, person or policy should be approached and dealt with in a uniform manner regardless of the actual circumstances, conditions and need. Also spelled as “absolute egalitarianism”.

Agent Provocateur: One who joins a group in order to encourage its members to commit illegal acts which they are then busted for. They pretend to be sympathetic toward the aims of the group that they infiltrate.

Amerikan Ideology: Economic development regardless of the cost to human beings; a few advancing at the expense of everyone else, and all whites advancing on the backs of Black people and other peoples of color.

Anarchism: The philosophy of total freedom without any governmental structure or state. It rejects the necessity of a dictatorship of the proletariat to re-educate and organize the masses and protect the gains of the revolution as a transitory stage in the development towards true Communism, when the state will have withered away.

Automation: The process of using mechanical or electronic machines to do routine repetitive work automatically instead of employing human hands and minds.

B:

Black: A political designation to refer not only to Afro-Americans but to people of color who are engaged in revolutionary work in the U.S. and all over the world. It should not be taken to mean the domination of Afro-Americans upon other people of color or the exclusion of

them from Black revolutionary organizations.

Black Collaborator: Those few Black people brought into the capitalist system at various levels, including such high levels as Black capitalists, project directors, administrators, etc., who have enough of a stake in the operation of the system to cooperate in pacification programs against their Black kin.

Black Revolutionary Power: The taking of state power by Black Americans in order to revolutionize the entire country on the basis of their enriched concept of being.

Bourgeoisie: The rich and super rich. They are the ruling elite who own and manage the means of production, and the real rulers in a capitalist society. They dictate policy, and have the common people working for them or enslaved by them under threat of violence, starvation or death.

By Any Means Necessary: One of Malcolm X's famous statements advocating the taking of whatever extreme actions are required to win our liberation.

C:

Cadre: A nucleus of trained, experienced activists in an organization capable of assuming leadership and/or training and education, guiding others to perform functional roles in the revolution.

Capitalism: An economic system based upon the myth of free enterprise and private ownership of the means of production and profit. Examples of capitalist countries include the U.S.A., France, Britain and West Germany.

Capitalist Accumulation: The major parts of the profits derived from the exploitation of labor are reinvested in new and more advanced means of production.

Civil Rights: Rights that any society gives to every individual in that society if it treasures its legitimacy, its right to exist.

Class Society: A tier system where the people are separated into different levels of prestige based on their relationships to the means of production.

Cliqueism: The tendency to form into little groups based upon subjective and often opportunistic alliances, which negates overall organizational unity.

Collective: A cooperative unit or organization that utilizes its strength in unity to struggle for common goals and objectives.

Colonialism: Foreign domination of a country or people where the economic, political and military structure is controlled and run by the occupying force.

Communism: A social system based on collective ownership of the means of production and the absence of classes or a state apparatus.

Constant Capital: Capital invested in machinery whose value is simply transferred into the finished product on a per-item basis.

Constructive Criticism: The positive correcting and pointing out of mistaken ideas and incorrect practices; the offering of concrete practical solutions that builds instead of tears down.

Contradiction: The basic two-sided-ness of all things which consists of a clash between opposites; the internal struggle in all phenomena that spurs growth, development and transformation.

Coup: Overthrow.

Coup D'état: The successful overthrow of existing authority in one audacious stroke, usually by a section of the armed forces; a sudden, decisive exercise in political force, especially the violent overthrow of an existing government by a small group. This often results in political power falling into the lap of a rival, pro-imperialist group. Another name for a coup d'etat is a putsch (or "Palace

Revolution”).

Coup de Grace: A death blow or shot administered to end the suffering of one who is mortally wounded; a decisive finishing blow or event.

Counter Revolution: Someone or something that goes against revolutionary principles and practices.

Cyclical Concept of Change: The idea that things just continue to go around in a cycle until they return to where they started; in its more modern formulation, “it has always been this way and it will always be this way.”

D:

Democracy: A system where the people enjoy the freedom and will to advocate for their own interest. They are actively involved in the governing process and have the right to vote, criticize and participate in the choosing of leaders, policy, and programs.

Democratic Centralism: The unity between freedom and discipline. Within any organization or society, you can do neither without a degree of democracy nor centralism. Under Democratic Centralism, every member of society is afforded the freedom to speak their opinion, make suggestions and criticize any errors on all levels as long as the unity and discipline of the whole is maintained. Any organized society must have rules, principles, and guidelines within which all members of society are expected to observe and respect. Under Democratic Centralism these rules are governed by the will and imperative of the people themselves.

Detente: The mellowing out and relaxing of hostile and strained relationships between two or more nations.

Dialectics: The study of contradictions within the very essence of things. It is the scientific, analytical approach to studying contradictions within nature which takes into

account the historical development and interaction of related things. Dialectics holds that nothing exists independent, isolated, or unconnected from other things; that all phenomena are connected and part of a whole system, dependent on and determined by each other. Dialectics also holds that all things are in a constant state of motion and change. Changes on a small enough level begin with a quantitative character before, after a certain point, the degree of change becomes qualitative and the thing's overall essence or character is different. These changes follow definite patterns determined by the external and internal contradictions within and surrounding objects, people and systems.

Dogmatic: Rigid and unbending; failing to take into account the changing conditions or the differences between one situation and another.

Dollar Imperialism: Sham independence whereby one country is independent in name only and often must rely on countries like the United States for economic aid, which turns the country accepting the aid into a puppet state.

Dollar Diplomacy: Diplomacy based solely on economic factors; diplomacy orchestrated to primarily further capitalist financial and commercial interests.

E:

Economics: The study of social laws governing the production and distribution of the material means of satisfying human needs.

Emotionalism: The practice of acting out of passion, feelings and the spirit of the atmosphere. Spontaneity and whimsicality.

Empire: In these modern times it represents the highest stage of development of a capitalist nation. It is characterized by expanding spheres of influence throughout the world using military coups and financial-economic

means to gain control over peoples and lands.

Empiricism: The practice of analyzing situations in a subjective manner based only upon individual or personal knowledge and experience, negating external investigation, history and knowledge.

Equalitarianism: Concepts advocating, or characterized by the belief that all people should have equal political, social and economic rights. Alternatively spelled as “egalitarianism”.

Ethics: The study of standards of conduct and moral judgment (moral philosophy). Deals with social relations among friends, family and associates, irrespective of citizenship.

Exploitation: The unjust method of using people for profit and advantage.

External Causes: In theories of change, a mechanical way of thinking which attributes change only to external or outside forces. Applied to human beings, it acts as a barrier to revolutionary thinking because it leads the oppressed to depend on others or on changes in external conditions to make changes in and for them.

F:

Fascism: A repressive form of government that takes on police state characteristics, in that all forms of political, economic and social opposition are forcibly suppressed to maintain the status quo.

Forces of Production: In order to produce, instruments of production are necessary like tools, machines, means of transport, etc. But these do not produce anything by themselves. The forces of production, therefore, consist of the instruments of production as well as people, with their production experience and skill, who use these instruments.

Feudalism: A repressive system of government where the common people, known as vassals, must render services to the oppressors, known as lords, in exchange for protection and use of land.

Fifth Column: A term applied to rebel sympathizers in Madrid in 1936 when four rebel columns were advancing in the city. It means a group of secret sympathizers or supporters of an enemy who engage in espionage or sabotage behind lines of defense or national borders.

Freedom: The right to understand the world, the environment and the forces acting on us with agency to deal with these circumstances so that we may harmonize as a people and develop to a higher level.

G:

General Contradiction of Capitalism: Socialized (or group) labor but private ownership and profit.

“Grasp Each End to Pull Forward the Middle”: This means, on the one hand, spending time with units which had achieved conspicuous successes, mastering their methods and helping them to advance still further. On the other hand, working with units where failures have occurred, giving them guidance and help. After the experience has been summed up, lessons are drawn and publicized for the benefit of average units — “the middle” — so that similar mistakes might be avoided and successes achieved on the broadest possible front.

Growth and Split: In the People’s War in Vietnam, a method used for expansion where a particular unit is developed to sufficient strength and then an individual or group of individuals is detached to form the nucleus of another unit.

H:

Hegemony: World wide occupation, control and manipulation by an imperialist power over under-developed countries through economic, military, and political domination.

Historical Materialism: The dialectical and materialist approach to understanding the history and development of society by examining the source and origins of social ideas, theories, political philosophies and institutions — the spiritual life of society — which is determined by the conditions of the material life of society.

Humane: Beliefs, thoughts, or actions that are centered on mankind and are concerned with helping all of humanity move to a higher level of development and existence.

Humanism: A philosophy about people that regard them as the supreme good and aim to guarantee in practice the best conditions for human happiness.

I:

Idealism: The concept that states the mind is primary and matter is secondary; that all things originate from the idea and that matter is only a reflection of what exists in the mind, as one perceives it. In idealism, the physical world can only be conceived as relative to or dependent on mental image.

Ideology: A system set on principles and beliefs relating to life, culture, politics, etc. Integrated assertions, theories, and aims that constitute a sociopolitical program.

Ideological Struggle: The conflict, fought through rhetoric and practice rather than physical aggression, between different ideologies in trying to prove themselves correct and those opposing incorrect.

Imperialism: The exploitation, rape, and subsequent oppre-

ssion practiced by one nation over another for greed and profit. The extension of capitalism into the international arena.

Individualism: A narrow, selfish approach or outlook based upon putting oneself before the interest of the people, organization, and comrades. A bourgeois tendency expressed in the “boot-strap” theory.

Initiative: The self-reliant exercising of one’s imagination, creativity and will to tackle all problems and fervently develop new strategies and programs; being in the forefront and taking the lead, i.e., to “Seize the Time.”

Insurrection: A concentrated attack upon existing authority by members of an oppressed group, usually with the intention of taking power (if only temporarily) during the course of revolutionary struggle, or at the culmination of a process of revolutionary struggle.

Irresponsible Criticism: Frivolous and irrelevant correcting or pointing out of minor and needless points, which instead of building tears down and obstructs progressive growth and development; nit-picking which tends to sidetrack one from what really has to be done; ungrounded and unfounded criticism; criticizing without investigation and thinking first.

Islam: Way of life that instructs total submission and obedience to Allah, Creator of the universe and all therein. The scientific and practical, economic, social, cultural and military life of all true Muslims (believers). The laws and doctrines of Islam are explicitly laid out in the Holy Qur’an and through the Sunnah (the traditions of the Holy Prophet — peace be upon him).

J:

Juche: In the socialist revolution of Korea, the principle that a people must rely primarily on their own creativity, human power and natural resources to advance their liberation.

L:

Lackey: A flunky or footman. Also: to wait upon or serve slavishly.

Liberation: The state of freedom from a repressive or exploitative existence, where the people have gained control of their own lives and the right to self-determination.

Lumpenproletariat: The underclass, unemployed, marginally employed and those who live outside of the law such as the “criminal” element. The aged, infirm and disabled are also part of this class because they are marginally employed and therefore not a secure part of the productive process. Those on welfare and social security are also members of this class.

M:

Machine Politics: Typical of a highly organized political organization called a “machine.” “The Machine” is ruthless, impersonal, interested only in results rather than in forums or programs and political ideology. Usually under the command of a boss. Spoils, favors, and patronage supply the “oil” for the machine and ruthless, often lawless men the “muscle.” (The politics of mayors Daley and Rizzo are examples.)

Managerial Class: The managers of the capitalist enterprises and institutions who are involved in the day to day running of affairs, i.e. government officials, politicians, judges, corporate executives, etc.

Mass Line: The political guiding principle of a revolutionary organization that must provide concrete programs for the systematic transformation stage of the oppressed masses through collective struggle.

Materialism: The concept that matter is primary and that the world is material. All ideas and theories are secondary or subject to the interaction of mass in the material world.

Matter and nature are objective reality existing outside and independent of our mind. Matter is primary because it is the source of ideas, sensations and consciousness. The idea is secondary and derivative because it is a reflection of matter and varies by individual perception. The only real objective reality is the material world, i.e. physical matter.

Means of Production: The means by which capitalism, for example, undertakes production: normally including factories, industrial plants in which to produce, machinery and tools with which to fashion raw materials, and the new materials themselves, including auxiliary materials such as fuel and oil.

Metaphysics: Spookism. That which exists outside of reality and cannot be perceived by the five senses. This concept states that the idea is the only true and permanent reality. Knowledge derived from acceptance of pre-existing ideas is the only genuine and valid wisdom, e.g. religion, which is based on the belief of Divine Word.

“Mind Behind the Gun”: (Vietnamese) This means that propaganda must precede organization of the oppressed masses into physical bases or units of armed struggle. Only when a people have been imbued with a new vision of themselves in a new political role can they exercise, to the fullest, their specially humane qualities of will and courage, of initiative and ingenuity, of intelligence and skill, and of creativity and unity.

Mode of Production: The way in which people produce and exchange their means of life. Every society is based on this, which ultimately determines the character of all social activities and institutions. The mode of production is always social, for the material goods required by the community are produced by the labor of many, who carry on a mutual exchange of activities in producing the social product which is distributed among the community. The forces of production enter into certain relations of

production in order for the forces of production to be applied according to the different relations of production. Examples: Slavery, Feudalism, Capitalism, Socialism, Communism.

Mojo: An Afro-American term meaning magic powers of influence. In a political sense it means the magical hands of the people; their power to define political, social, economic, spiritual, and military phenomena and make change in a desired manner — e.g., to bring about revolutionary advancement to the evolution of humankind.

Morale: The moral or mental condition of the individual or group with respect to courage, discipline, confidence, enthusiasm, and willingness to endure hardship or sacrifice.

Morality: The code of human conduct with set standards for the individual or groups in relation to other individuals and groups. Differing from custom, it implies consciousness (conscious recognition) or acceptance of a desirable value.

N:

Neo-Colonialism: Foreign domination of a country or people by an imperialist power where the economic, political, and military structure is run by a native bourgeoisie. The imperialists maintain control of the economy because they continue to own the means of production, and the client state is totally dependent, militarily and politically, on the imperialists for their survival.

Neo-Colonialism (Domestic): The use of “Black faces in high places”, as a cover for white power is Neo-Colonialism. Neo-Colonialism domestically simply means that direct white power in its own name is replaced by indirect white power or white power in the name and shape of Black people.

New Afrikan: Revolutionary national identity of the Afro-American or Black person born within the U.S.A., or a

citizen of the People's Republic of New Afrika (The Black Belt Region).

New International: The growing body of developing nations representing a revolutionary humanist force of billions, which imperialism cannot destroy short of atomic warfare powerful enough to destroy the entire planet.

New Man/Woman/Person: One who is politically conscious, creative, and socially responsible. One who puts politics in command of economics and will always work together for the best interest of their community.

O:

Objectivism: The method of analysis which takes into account the entirety of the situation. Approaching a situation open-mindedly, wholly and completely without prejudice.

Oppression: Unjust and cruel exercise of authority to deny people their human rights and their right to a decent, healthy life. Intolerable living conditions such as inadequate health, education, medical care, housing, etc.

Organic Composition of Capital: The changing proportion of capital invested in labor compared to that invested in machinery.

Ottoman: Footstool.

P:

Petit-Bourgeoisie: The middle class or privileged worker who enjoys a relatively comfortable level of existence: the small businessmen, entrepreneurs and self-employed. Artists, entertainers, doctors, lawyers, and athletes being to this class. They do not own or control the major means of production but their main aspiration is to obtain the status, wealth and power of the bourgeoisie.

Philistine: A person regarded as smugly narrow and conven-

tional in their views and tactics, lacking in and indifferent to cultural and aesthetic values, etc. Bourgeois and materialistic.

Philosophy: World outlook; how one perceives, understands and interprets life in general. A method of understanding the world history, contradictions and development of things.

Policy: The objectives and goals which a group (organization, state, nation, international organization) sets for itself, plus the means adopted toward the postulated goal.

Politics: A process by which the political and social decisions involving the organization of society are made and the method of solving political contradictions.

Principles: The fundamental grounds on which a human being, organization, movement, cause or concept stands. Its basic aspects are expressed in terms of rules, codes, ethics, laws and statements of philosophical truths which explain all examined natural, social and universal spheres and guide human thought and action to transforming the human world for the benefit of the human being.

Production: The human activity which adapts natural resources to human needs. A process of acquiring the material necessities of life, e.g. food, clothing, fuel, etc.

Progressive: That person, organization, action, movement, phenomenon or train of events in moving/raising the human, social, economic, political, and scientific level of society; that which moves people forward into the future, away from the past.

Proletariat: The largest class which comprises the majority of the working masses, who must sell their labor power in order to survive. They represent the lowest level of the employed with the lowest wages, benefits and rights, who usually have little or no power or control of their working conditions, management or planning. It is the class that has the most to lose due to the advent of increased

technology and automation because they are being driven out of their jobs into the ranks of the unemployed. Marx classified them as the most potentially revolutionary class because of their sheer numbers as well as their social consciousness and needs which are directly tied to the whole process of production.

Propaganda: The publicized activity by which the party or revolutionary organization politicizes the masses.

Purpose: The reason for being or doing.

Putschism: The negative tendency of comrades, particularly leadership, to jump into a situation issuing commands without any investigation as to the circumstances of the situation. A commandist and arrogant practice demonstrating a lack of patience and understanding.

Putsch: A secretly plotted and suddenly executed attempt to overthrow a government. (See: Coup D'etat)

Putschist: One who advocates or organizes a putsch.

Q:

Quisling (kwiz-lin): A traitor. From Vidkun Quisling, Norwegian politician in 1945. One who collaborates with the invaders of their country, especially by serving in a puppet government. Also: Quislingism.

R:

Racism: The philosophy and practice which pursues or condones the systematic oppression of another race because that oppressed race is believed inferior.

Reactionary: Characterized by a tendency toward rolling back and repressing changes to the status quo. Includes those forces which oppose revolutionary change and actively work to prevent or destroy any progressive movement, country, etc.

Rebellion: An attack upon existing authority by members of an oppressed group, usually with the intention on the part of the rebels to take state power. It is usually spontaneous.

Reformism: The amending and making of internal changes within a system, such as by changing laws or introducing and funding poverty programs for the people without changing the whole system for what it is.

Relations of Production: These are relations in which people of a given society must arrange and enter into by necessity to perpetuate human existence. Since the birth of class societies, these relations have long existed where the property holders came to exercise a relationship of dominance, exploitation and wealth over the property-less. Other forms of these relations are between master and slave, feudal lord and serf, landlord and peasant, capitalist and worker, etc.

Revisionism: Deviation from and manipulation or modification of the correct revolutionary line (or of any particular belief or practice) to suit one's own personal vested interest.

Revolt: An organized attempt to seize power, usually by a section of the armed forces, without prior organization of the masses in struggle and without any clear set of social objectives.

Revolution: A complete and radical change from one social system to another; the violent and complete struggle waged by the people to rid themselves of an oppressive system of government into a more progressive and humane society. This includes not only the political structure, but also the philosophy and ideology, mode of production, relations of production, as well as the spiritual and social mentality and outlook of society.

Revolutionary Army: An armed group of activists that arises from within and on the side of an oppressed group for the expressed purpose of carrying out the political

tasks of a class or group, a primary one of which is to wage armed struggle to eliminate the oppressor's armed protection forces that are used to repress – by any means necessary – the revolutionary thrust of the oppressed. A revolutionary army liberates themselves and directs their destiny toward new and greater human and social relations for the oppressed and those who formerly oppressed them. Thus, the revolutionary army is distinguished from conventional armies by its members' consciousness of the army's political duty toward liberation of the people.

Running Dog: (Origin – Chinese) See Lackey or Ottoman.
Example usage: “They were a running dog for U.S. imperialism.”

S:

Self-Consciousness: The capacity to reflect upon and learn from past experiences and to, out of these reflections, develop programs and plans for the future.

Self-Criticism: The self-conscious process of an individual or group.

Socialism: A social system where the means of production are owned collectively by the people through a state, where the basis for production is for the people's welfare, not profit. The people are organized on all levels of society and play an active role in the management and decision-making process. The People's right to the basic necessities of life is protected and most social services such as education, health and child care are free. The people are represented by a People's Government dedicated to upholding the principles of socialism and serving the people and humanity unselfishly, courageous of sacrifice and free from corruption. People work and contribute to society according to their needs and abilities. There is no oppressed class and the rulers are the people themselves; no huge corporations or private

ownership of the means of production, industry, social services, etc. A society where the profit motive has been replaced with the concern for mankind.

State Islam: A system of government based upon the belief in one God. State Islam is structured under the universal principles of the Holy Quran.

Status-Quo: The present existing state of affairs; keeping things just as they are.

Strike: A stoppage of activity by a body of people, usually for the purpose of expressing a grievance or of forcing management to comply with their demands.

Subjectivism: Injecting one's emotions, passions and feelings in an analysis or decision, which results in a narrow, one-sided method of drawing a situation and all of its relating factors.

Surplus Value: The value which the workers produce over and above the value of their labor power: capitalist profit.

System: The thousands of words, objects, actions, thoughts, methods of doing things and attitudes of judgment. The "way" all these things are put together for a common goal is a system.

T:

Technological Development: The level reached by science and industry as shown in what tools are produced as humans try to cope with their environment.

Terrorism: Terrorism is the deliberate, systematic murder, maiming, and menacing of the innocent to inspire fear and in order to gain political ends. Civilians are the key to the terrorist's strategy: neither men, women, children or the handicapped are exempted. What "distinguishes" terrorism is the willful and calculated choice of innocents as targets. A guerrilla is not a terrorist, because guerrillas pit themselves against far superior combatants; but terror-

ists aim for “anybody except soldiers,” and they attack with the specific goal of instilling fear, hoping to scare their opponents into submission.

Theory: Set of ideas, assumptions, and principles upon which one attempts to prove a certain conclusion.

Totalitarianism: A repressive form of government where strict controls on all aspects of life are imposed on the people and the regime in power has total and complete authority and say-so.

Truth: The laws that determine how a thing works: objective reality. Revolution is an effort to discover or create truth, not to prove what is true.

U:

United Front: A long-term alliance of social classes and groups like women, queer people, youth and elders or different factions of a cultural, regional, or political space to focus on clear-cut political program.

Unity: The working together of two separate entities.

Unity-Criticism-Unity: The process of the members of a group, unit or organization uniting on a set of principles and objectives to struggle internally and privately among themselves by working together, observing and analyzing each other's errors and then offering constructive criticism to each other to correct errors and overcome any shortcomings in order to strengthen each other and thus advance the group towards its stated objectives. This is a continuous process of transforming old unities to new ones in a never-ending process. Any organized body must engage in principled unity, criticism and practice if it wishes to succeed in accomplishing its stated objectives.

V:

Vacillate: To shuck and jive. To waiver from one side to the

other.

Value of Existing Capital: That already invested in the means of production when newer and more modern means of production are constantly being created.

Variable Capital: Capital invested in labor. Only the capital invested in labor can produce varying quantities of surplus value, depending on how long and how hard one works the workers.

Vanguard Party: The instrument by which means the militancy and the rebellion of the revolutionary social forces can be transformed from purely reflexive, trial-and-error reactions into purposeful, planned and pragmatic struggles for power.

W:

Way of Life: A set of social values and institutional means for a society's pursuit of goals and satisfaction of needs, together with a set of established or emerging habits of behavior corresponding to these. To be distinctive for a group of people, a way of life must include at least some major social or political values and institutions that differ from those prevailing among other groups of people.

Welfare-Warfare State: A state (e.g., U.S.A.) which aims both to satisfy the expanding economic appetites of an increasingly self-interested population and to achieve domination over other powers and people.



The Black Liberation Army was the armed wing of the Black Panther Party, dedicated to striking against US imperialism and white supremacy from the inside, with the aim of establishing a socialist Black People's Republic.

This book is a combination of two of their internal political education works: their Study Guide and Political Dictionary. We reproduce them here in the hopes that this can inspire present and future communist parties and orgs to form a correct line towards the Black national liberation struggle and develop better internal and external political education materials.