

**Fundamental
Political Line
of the
Maoist
Internationalist
Ministry of Prisons**

2nd Edition

Fundamental Political Line of the Maoist Internationalist Ministry of Prisons

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Intro to this Pamphlet

This pamphlet is an introduction to the Maoist Internationalist Ministry of Prisons, also known as MIM (Prisons). In it, we explain our basis in communist theory, and our scientific analysis of the world today, as well as some basic information about how we organize. Whether you're trying to build revolution to end imperialism, or focused on fighting the criminal injustice system, this pamphlet contains important documents that will help you understand our political line and practice.

Several articles in here are reprinted from the pamphlet "*What is the Maoist Internationalist Movement (MIM)?*" MIM was the predecessor organization to MIM(Prisons), establishing much of our theoretical basis.

We have included a glossary of some important terms, and we have a lot more literature we are happy to share that will help explain what we only touch on in here. So if you are reading this and don't understand something, write and ask us about it. We also conduct regular study groups by mail for prisoners, covering the pamphlet and other literature, so if you're interested in taking your understanding to a deeper level, let us know and we can sign you up for the study group.

We have organized this pamphlet into four sections:

1. **An overview of MIM(Prisons), our history, and our work**
2. **The basics of revolutionary theory**
3. **The three main strands of oppression: Class, Nation and Gender**
4. **How we organize**

MIM(Prisons) is not an organization for people who just want to study; we study with a goal of improving our practice. And so we hope that this pamphlet will inspire people to take up organizing work, both around the criminal injustice system specifically and against imperialism more generally.

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All artwork by US\$ prisoners.

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Section 1: Overview of MIM(Prisons): Our History and Our Work

What is the Maoist Internationalist Ministry of Prisons?

MIM(Prisons) is a cell of revolutionaries serving the oppressed masses inside U.S. prisons. We uphold the revolutionary communist ideology of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and work from the vantage point of the Third World proletariat. Our ideology is based in dialectical materialism, which means we work from objective reality to direct change rather than making decisions based on our subjective feelings about things.

Our name stems from the legacy of the Maoist Internationalist Movement (MIM). That party, based in North America, did most of the prisoner support work that is the focus of what we now do. When that party degenerated, the movement turned to a cell-based strategy that we uphold as currently more correct than a centralized party given our conditions in the United States today. Defining our organization as a cell means that we are independent of other organizations, but see ourselves as part of a greater Maoist movement within the United States and globally.

We believe imperialism is the number one enemy of the majority of the world's people; we cannot achieve our goal of ending all oppression without overthrowing imperialism. History has shown that the imperialists will wage war before they will allow an end to oppression. Revolution will become a reality within the United States as the military becomes over-extended in the government's attempts to maintain world hegemony.

As revolutionary internationalists, we support the self-determination of all nations and peoples. We support nations which choose to delink from the imperialist economy, including the right of the internal semi-colonies to secede from the United States. Today, the U.S. prison system is a major part of the imperialist state used to prevent the self-determination of oppressed nations. It is for this reason that we see prisoners in this country as being at the forefront of any anti-imperialist and revolutionary movement.

Within U.S. borders, the principal contradiction is between imperialism and the oppressed nations. Our enemies call us racists for pointing out that the white oppressor nation historically exploited and continues

to oppress other nations within the United States. But race is a made-up idea to justify oppression through ideas of inferiority. Nation is a concept based in reality and is defined by a group's land, language, economy and culture. Individuals from oppressed nations taking up leadership roles within imperialist Amerika does not negate this analysis. The average conditions of the oppressed nations are still significantly different from the oppressor nation overall.



MIM(Prisons) expresses general unity with all other groups and outbreaks against imperialism; mass movements against oppression have as many forms as forms of power. In this spirit, we insist on telling the uncompromising truth and discussing and criticizing the strategy and tactics of any given action. MIM(Prisons) encourages everyone — communist or not — to be involved in the struggle against imperialism.

Our focus on prisoner support is not a dividing line question for us. In fact, we believe that there is a dire need for Maoists to do organizing and educational work in many areas in the United States. We hope some people are inspired by our example around prisons and apply it to their own work to create more Maoist cells

and broaden the Maoist movement behind enemy lines.

MIM(Prisons) distinguishes ourselves from other groups on the six points below. We consider other organizations actively upholding these points to be fraternal.

1. **Communism is our goal.** Communism is a society where no group has power over any other group.
2. **Dictatorship of the proletariat is necessary.** In a dictatorship of the proletariat the formerly exploited majority dictates to the minority (who promoted exploitation) how society is to be run. In the case of imperialist nations, a Joint Dictatorship of the Proletariat of the Oppressed Nations (JDPON) must play this role where there is no internal proletariat or significant mass base that favors communism.
3. **We promote a United Front with all who oppose imperialism.** The road to the JDPON over the imperialist nations involves uniting all who can be united against imperialism. We cannot fight imperialism and fight others who are engaged in life-and-death conflicts with imperialism at the same time. Even imperialist nation classes can be allies in the United Front under certain conditions.
4. **A parasitic class dominates the First World countries.** As Marx, Engels and Lenin formulated and MIM Thought has reiterated through materialist analysis, imperialism extracts super-profits from the Third World and in part uses this wealth to buy off whole populations of so-called workers. These so-called workers bought off by imperialism form a new petty-bourgeoisie called the labor aristocracy; they are not a vehicle for Maoism. Those who work in the economic interests of the First World labor aristocracy form the mass base for imperialism's tightening death-grip on the Third World.
5. **New bourgeoisies will form under socialism.** Mao led the charge to expose the bourgeoisie that developed within the communist party in the Soviet Union and the campaign to bombard the headquarters in his own country of China. Those experiences demonstrated the necessity of continuous revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat. The class struggle does not end until the state has been abolished and communism is reached.
6. **The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China was the furthest advancement toward communism in history.** We uphold the Soviet

Union from 1917 until the death of Stalin in 1953, and the People's Republic of China from 1949 through 1976 as the best examples of modern socialism in practice. The arrest of the "Gang of Four" in China and the rise of Krushchev in the Soviet Union marked the restoration of capitalism in those countries. Other experiments in developing socialism in the 20th century only approached the Soviet level of progress (ie. Albania), or worse, stayed within the capitalist mode of production, generally due to a failure to break with the Theory of Productive Forces. ■



What is *Under Lock and Key*?

Under Lock & Key (ULK) is a newsletter that serves as the voice of the anti-imperialist movement within prisons in the United States. Fighting the injustice system is just one part of the anti-imperialist struggle, and it is important that comrades not lose sight of the connections to the larger battle. For this reason, in addition to news about prisons and prison struggles, we also publish more general news and analysis important to the anti-imperialist movement. We welcome support and collaboration from those who are focused only on prison issues, but we also challenge them to see the importance of carrying out their work as a part of a larger

anti-imperialist strategy.

ULK is a forum to develop and promote agitational campaigns led by MIM(Prisons) and United Struggle from Within (USW). Our current battles in the United States are legally permitted. We encourage prisoners to join these battles while explicitly discouraging them from engaging in any violence or illegal acts. MIM(Prisons) and its publications explicitly oppose the use of armed struggle at this time in the imperialist countries (including the United States).

ULK is edited and published by MIM(Prisons) and mostly written and illustrated by USW and other United Front organizations behind bars. *ULK* comes out every other month, with free subscriptions available for prisoners who cannot afford to pay. For people outside of prison, all issues of *ULK*, plus additional reports from within U.S. prisons, are available on MIM(Prisons)'s website: www.prisoncensorship.info ■

What is United Struggle from Within?

United Struggle from Within (USW) is a MIM(Prisons)-led mass organization for current and former U.S. prisoners. USW is explicitly anti-imperialist in leading campaigns on behalf of U.S. prisoners in alliance with national liberation struggles in the United States and around the world. USW won't champion struggles which are not in the interests of the international proletariat. USW will also not choose one nation's struggles over other oppressed nations' struggles. USW should work independently, but under the guidance of MIM(Prisons), to build public opinion and independent institutions of the oppressed in order to obtain state power independent of imperialism. Members don't have to agree with MIM(Prisons)'s cardinal points (see above) but they can't consciously disagree with any of them. ■

What is Anti-Imperialist Prisoner Support?

Launched in 2020, Anti-Imperialist Prisoner Support (AIPS) is a MIM(Prisons)-led mass organization

for those on the outside who want to support anti-imperialist prisoner organizing. Specifically, AIPS members and chapters will provide support for existing MIM(Prisons)/USW projects and help develop and support local campaigns to meet the needs of organizers inside. ■

United Front for Peace in Prisons

Rebuilding the anti-imperialist prison movement means uniting all who can be united around the common interest of the U.S. prison population in solidarity with the oppressed people of the Third World. Various tactics have been used by the state to promote and exacerbate existing contradictions among the lumpen, leading to the acceptance of the capitalist ideology of "I'm gonna do me."

Torture, abuse, and lack of freedom faced by the oppressed nations (particularly the imprisoned population) can only be addressed by building bridges along common interests and focusing our struggles on the real enemy — the imperialist state.

After years of printing this message from countless individuals across the United States a handful of organizations came out with a Statement of Unity around which to build such unity.

United Front for Peace in Prisons — Statement of Principles

The basis of any real unity comes from an agreement on certain key ideas. This statement does not grant authority to any party over any other party. We are mutually accountable to each other to uphold these points in order to remain active participants in this united front.

1. **PEACE:** WE organize to end the needless conflicts and violence within the U.S. prison environment. The oppressors use divide-and-conquer strategies so that we fight each other instead of them. We will stand together and defend ourselves from oppression.
2. **UNITY:** WE strive to unite with those facing the same struggles as us for our common interests. To maintain unity we have to keep an open line



of networking and communication, and ensure we address any situation with true facts. This is needed because of how the pigs utilize tactics such as rumors, snitches and fake communications to divide and keep division among the oppressed. The pigs see the end of their control within our unity.

3. **GROWTH:** WE recognize the importance of education and freedom to grow in order to build real unity. We support members within our organization who leave and embrace other political organizations and concepts that are within the anti-imperialist struggle. Everyone should get in where they fit in. Similarly, we recognize the right of comrades to leave our organization if we fail to live up to the principles and purpose of the United Front for Peace in Prison.
4. **INTERNATIONALISM:** WE struggle for the liberation of all oppressed people. While we are often referred to as "minorities" in this country, and we often find those who are in the same boat as us opposing us, our confidence in achieving our mission comes from our unity with all oppressed nations who represent the vast majority globally. We cannot liberate ourselves when participating in the oppression of other nations.
5. **INDEPENDENCE:** WE build our own institutions and programs independent of the United States government and all its branches, right down to the local police, because this system does not serve us. By developing independent power through these institutions we do not need to compromise our goals.

How to join the United Front for Peace in Prisons

1. Study and uphold the five principles of the united front.
2. Send your organization's name and a statement of unity to MIM(Prisons). Your statement can explain what the united front principles mean to your organization, how they relate to your work, why they are important, etc.
3. Develop peace and unity between factions where you are at on the basis of opposing oppression of all prisoners and oppressed people in general.
4. Send reports on your progress to Under Lock & Key. Did you develop a peace treaty or protocol that is working? Send it in for others to study and possibly use. Is your unity based on actions? Send us reports on the organizing you are doing.
5. Keep educating your members. The more educated your members are, the more unity you can develop, and the stronger your organization can

become. Unity comes from the inside out. By uniting internally, we can better unite with others as well. Contact MIM(Prisons)'s Free Political Books for Prisoners Program if you need additional materials to educate your members in history, politics and economics.■

Maoism Around Us

The following are excerpts from the essay "*Maoism Around Us*" published by MIM(Prisons) in May 2009. It provides some ideological history about where we are coming from.

Defining the MIM

MIM(Prisons) comes out of the legacy of the Maoist Internationalist Movement (MIM), which was a revolutionary party that no longer exists. We continue to refer to the broader Maoist movement as the MIM.

We define MIM as MIM defined itself. The following excerpt is from the 1999 Congress where "About MIM" was revised to define MIM as "a collection of existing or emerging Maoist internationalist parties." MIM had always defined the scope of its work to be within the First World. As the movement evolved, the vision took shape, and the Maoist Internationalist Party-Amerika was no longer synonymous with MIM. MIM is now a "movement" without a central organizational structure. Therefore its members are defined ideologically and fluidly, and not by membership roll or card.

The Maoist Internationalist Movement (MIM) is the collection of existing or emerging Maoist internationalist parties in the English-speaking imperialist countries and their English-speaking internal semi-colonies, as well as the existing or emerging Maoist internationalist parties in Belgium, France and Quebec and the existing or emerging Spanish-speaking Maoist internationalist parties of Aztlán, Puerto Rico and the territories of the U.\$ Empire...

MIM upholds the revolutionary communist ideology of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and is an internationalist organization that works from the vantage point of the Third World proletariat.

MIM struggles to end the oppression of all groups over other groups; classes, genders, nations. MIM knows this is only possible by building public opinion to seize power through armed struggle.

Revolution is a reality for the United States as the military becomes over-extended in the government's attempts to maintain world hegemony.

The 2005 MIM Congress resolutions on cell organizing (1) stressed the importance of organizing and documenting the development of our political line, specifically using the worldwide web. MIM(Prisons) hosts the MIM's website, archived from etext.org. We see this work as very important, especially in a period where our movement is so decentralized. MIM(Prisons) has a particular interest in playing this role in that we may be more true to the etext MIM-line than any other organization with an online presence. We also use these materials regularly in our education work offline.

The 2005 cell resolutions set up a division of labor that left the original MIM Comrade cell as a sort of center. The current complete decentralization seems to be the logical outcome of the cell resolutions, and MIM(Prisons) holds that there is no center of the MIM today.

The Maoist Internationalist Party-Amerika no longer exists, but the Maoist movement continues, and we continue to refer to this movement as the MIM. MIM(Prisons) considers itself a part of the MIM, which is currently without a center. We uphold the need for a vanguard party to seize power and build socialism, but do not fill that role ourselves. It is possible that MIM(Prisons) will spawn the vanguard party when the time is appropriate for such a centralized organization. We must vigilantly combat liberalism on this question: it is easy for First World people to promote an anti-vanguard position because that will be more popular in countries where revolutionary organizing is not a matter of life and death for the majority of the people. It is important to continue to evaluate the conditions in this country and in the world in general, to ensure that we are doing the best work we can for the world's people with the best possible organizing strategy.

The cell resolutions also put forth an outline for recognizing fraternal cells, stating that the MIM Comrade cell would renounce such status if line changes deemed it necessary. In many instances, it is better to just talk about line and take positions in struggles within the movement without naming names. Timeless documents on these struggles will be more useful in the long run. Favoring in-depth anonymous analysis over short, substance-less denunciations or lists discourages cheerleading and meddling by those who are not engaged in line struggles but want to have something to say anyway. Therefore this document is structured as an in-depth discussion and not a list of who's hot and who's not.

In MIM's original proposal they had specific

projects that they were recognizing as fraternal that they were then recommending others be involved with as form of division of labor. As long as the movement discourages the centralized party structure, we will by necessity have such a division of labor. Therefore, if one cell does not offer something, it is beneficial to be able to point to that something from another cell. This is the simplest example of cells working together. Any such work together requires accountability, especially if there are any differences in lines between the cells. Having such accountability is one of the main purposes of this paper.

Maoist Internationalist Ministry of Prisons

The major differences between MIM and MIM(Prisons) stem from the fact that we are not a centralized party, but a project with a specific role to play. As such, the question of armed struggle is not one that we must engage directly as an organization. While MIP-Amerika had aspired to play a vanguard role in armed struggle some day in the future, MIM(Prisons) will never play this role. Our role is in supporting the development of the anti-imperialist prison movement, in United Front with our allies. We cannot give up this role in order to take on completely new projects as our own as some have asked us to do. Our principal task is to maintain the prison ministry as a source of educational and agitational material and as a central coordinating body for the anti-imperialist prison movement. For this reason we have not taken on the armed struggle portion of the original MIM's statement of self-definition.

To an extent, the change in wording regarding armed struggle is tactical in our efforts to reach agreements with various departments of corrections regarding our literature. But it is also strategic in relation to organizational strategy; it is not just a change of semantics, MIM(Prisons) is not now or will it ever be an organization for carrying out armed struggle. Our theory on the topic, however, does not differ from the Maoist line in any way. We recognize the need for armed struggle to achieve true independence. As long as the oppressor has a gun to the head of the oppressed, they cannot be free. Peaceful transitions to so-called "independence" have only resulted in neo-colonialism, a 0% success rate in liberating a people from poverty and oppression. Armed struggles have also ended in neo-colonialism, but armed struggle increases the chances of independence to much greater than zero. By studying history we can continue to increase the success rate by learning from past mistakes.

As mentioned, one of MIM(Prisons)'s tasks in the division of labor is as a distributor of revolutionary,

particularly Maoist, materials among prisoners in the United States. There is always a major problem among the masses and the general public of not being able to distinguish between political lines. Many newsletters for prisoners pick and choose articles from all over the place and send them in together. While lacking in leadership, this is a fine service for a prisoner support group that is not claiming to represent a particular line to provide to those who would otherwise have no access to the information that anyone on the outside can obtain on their own. However, there have been other newsletters that claim to be produced by, or under the leadership of, a Maoist organization that practice this form of distribution, muddying the waters of revisionism. This same problem is seen online, where comrades have criticized such practices already.

Currently, *Under Lock & Key (ULK)* is under the complete editorial control of MIM(Prisons). In *ULK*, most of the writing is by prisoners, but we add commentary and analysis where necessary to push the most advanced line, and clarify where our line differs from others. Most of the prisoners that write us are not Maoists themselves. Most cannot distinguish us from revisionist organizations. Many don't understand why we are separate from liberal bourgeois organizations.

When MIM(Prisons) reprints material from other organizations we will specify our differences with the material. While we recognize that many of our readers don't see a difference between MIM(Prisons) and reformist or single issue groups, we will not do a full review of every such organization that we work with. That is United Front work. Fraternal work is another story. Organizations that claim Maoism as their ideology (in full or in part) must be assessed in the spirit of combating revisionism and staying on the road to liberation.

In the future, *ULK* may expand to include materials from more sectors of the Maoist movement. At this time, MIM(Prisons) occasionally distributes materials from other Maoist cells, where those materials correctly answer questions that we have not publicly provided analysis of ourselves or otherwise play a role that we cannot. This use of the division of labor allows MIM(Prisons) to serve more prisoners, without taking on the burden of a full Maoist Party that writes its own theory journal and has an up-to-date analysis on various international questions, among other tasks that the movement must tackle.

Organizational Strategy

Some very experienced comrades have fallen into the habit of behaving like, "if you can't google it, it doesn't exist." Many of the organizations we mention

in the full version of this document are primarily or strongly online entities. We focus on them because they inherently have a broader audience and serve as potential information sources for our comrades. The division of labor puts certain cells in more prominent roles of developing political line (or muddling it as the case may be with revisionist organizations claiming Maoism). Some groups are going to get more attention, but just like the number of members in an organization is not a meaningful measure of success in itself, neither is number of readers. Building public opinion does have something to do with the number of eyes and ears we can get a succinct revolutionary message to, but taking full advantage of a cell structure requires the movement to promote and embrace organizational obscurity.

There is a role for more widely read and more prominent online entities, which should in turn inspire more obscure and behind-the-scenes organizers. The traditional practices of announcing new chapters and describing on-the-ground organizing strategies are not generally a good idea. While the oppressed nation lumpen may find organization-building type work to come with more ease than the petty bourgeoisie, this is still best done in relative obscurity. To the extent that the lumpen are on the periphery of Amerikan society, we should use that to our advantage. Roads of outreach that are more closed and specific to the lumpen provide greater security and room for independent growth. There are already enough snitches in our ranks, we do not need to advertise to the cops and the cop-loving Amerikan public. The Panthers inspired many lumpen with their audacity. Our challenge is to create the same inspiration without bringing the same attention and repression from the state.

As a cell that spans the country and is not Internet only, MIM(Prisons) is unique, facing unique challenges. We support the 2005 MIM Congress cell resolution that stressed the benefits of localized cells that only work with people they know as well as Internet cells that are completely anonymous. We are neither of these. We also support the resolution's arguments for why a centralized Party is not an appropriate strategy at this time. But we are clear that democratic centralism is an essential tenet of communist organizing and that a successful revolutionary movement needs the leadership of a Leninist party.

Notes on the International Communist Movement

In addition to being a part of the U.S. prison movement and the Maoist Internationalist Movement, MIM(Prisons) plays an additional role in the Interna-

tional Communist Movement (ICM). The ICM is different from MIM in that it includes, and in fact is dominated by, the Third World. Our focus as an organization is not on resolving issues within the ICM or between the MIM and others in the ICM. As a Maoist organization with a public practice we will be a voice in the ICM. And our practice, both public and not, contributes to the advancement of the ICM.

While we are letting people know where we stand, we did want to mention the ICM, which is merely shorthand for the global struggle to end all oppression of groups of people over others. For without such a global perspective, our movement loses our main source of strategic confidence: the Third World. A few points that Maoists are united on include: 1) There is no Maoist (read: communist) party in state power today, anywhere. Including Cuba and the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea. 2) Parties denying that imperial nations are exploiters and oppressors are not leading the people towards a communist future, but a future based on the false hope of the theory of productive forces; thoroughly criticized during the Cultural Revolution in China. 3) The idea that there is a third choice in the principal contradiction between oppressed and oppressor nations is petty bourgeois vacillation.

The MIM internet-based etext cell did good work in its last few years in exposing the problems within the ICM. Readers should be aware that some older documents in the etext archive represent an earlier stage in MIM's international work and so contradict the more recent developments and do not represent the current state of affairs. Other cells continue to do excellent work to push these points as well. We also have great hope for our comrades in the Third World that seem to still be on the Maoist road, and those who have yet to take it up. The Internet may skew things to appear that the strongest positions in the ICM are coming from the First World. While the loudest voices claiming Maoism from the Third World are steeped in revisionism, without strong leadership from the Third World there is no ICM to speak of; that is inherent in the global class analysis of Maoism. A genuine ICM led from the First World is a Trotskyist fantasy. ■

Notes:

1. MIM. Resolutions on Cell Structure. MIM Congress 2005, Session II. <http://www.prison-censorship.info/archive/etext/wim/cong/cells2005.html>

Organizational Strategy: Reassessing Cell Structure 5 Years Out

by MIM(Prisons), October 2010

This article is part of a larger study pack on Organi-

zational Structure available through MIM(Prisons) that further addresses the different ways organizations are structured and their advantages and shortcomings.

Overall, MIM(Prisons) stands by the Resolutions on Cell Structure passed at the last MIM congress in 2005. After 5 years of putting that resolution into practice there is experience to sum up and questions that still need to be answered.

The theoretical basis for the cell structure is that the strength of a centralized party comes into play when vying for state power, whether by elections or otherwise. That is not in the cards for Maoists in the imperialist countries at this time. Maoism is a minority movement in the First World and will continue to be so for the foreseeable future. This makes it even more important that we utilize our strengths and shore up our weaknesses.

One of the main lessons to take from the cell structure resolutions is that "[w]e oppose having geographic cells come into contact with each other face-to-face. Infiltration and spying are rampant when it comes to MIM. The whole strength of having a locality-based cell is that it is possible to do all the things traditional to a movement. The security advantages of culling people we know into a cell are lost the moment we slack off on security and start accepting strangers or meeting with strangers face-to-face." We find it frustrating that critics of what happened at etext.org as MIM faced repression are willing to ignore the lessons of those setbacks.

At the last MIM congress in 2005, they spoke of a "MIM Center" that put out the newspaper, among other tasks. Soon after, there was no *MIM Notes* newspaper, followed by a degeneration of the original MIM Comrade (MC) cell and finally the shutting down of their last institution, the website at etext.org.

One of the challenges of small cells is developing and maintaining line. Much work has been done, and if every new group or every revolutionary had to start from scratch, we would never advance. That is why when etext.org was repressed, MIM(Prisons) posted an archive of the MIM website on our website. While we do not have a regular newspaper for the movement as a whole, the website is a crucial reference for us all.

Fraternal organizations do not agree on everything; they agree on cardinal principles that are determined by the conditions of the time. The etext.org site is not something Maoists must agree with 100%, but there is no doubt that it is still the most comprehensive starting point for any Maoist organization in the First World.

Democratic centralism is important for security and for political line development. Yet until we are organizing on a countrywide basis, there is no need for democratic centralism at that level, not to mention internationally.

In guerrilla warfare, the cell structure has been applied in a way that was hierarchical so that action cells were separate from each other, but each cell could be traced to the top of the organization. This relies on a centralized organization or center. While MIM mentions such a center being based around MIM Notes and etext.org in their 2005 resolutions, we do not see the need for this center given the current circumstances. As we have recognized before, certain ideological centers are bound to exist based on the law of uneven development. Yet such centers are not structural, but fluid, based on the type and amount of work done.

All that said, there is an inherent contradiction in the cell strategy. Since organizing strategy and security tactics are not dividing line questions, once the cell strategy is adopted and full decentralization has occurred, it is possible for cells to change their line on this question. Even the majority could do so and a new centralized party could push remaining cells to the periphery. Since we work to build a movement and not our individual organizations, and our work is already on the periphery, we should not be concerned about the impacts of such a move on our organization. It is, however, worrisome to the extent that we see our comrades opened up to attacks through faulty security.

Part of accepting cell strategy is distinguishing between cadre work and mass work. The self-described anarchist movement is able to mobilize large numbers in mass work while abhorring centralized organization. We should learn from their example, while not succumbing to the liberalism in our security practices or abandoning scientific leadership.

Getting the correct balance of cadre work and mass work will be more challenging with a cell structure. There is no way to impose a balance on the movement as a whole without a center, but we can pay attention to what is going on around us and get in where we fit in. Leading cells should not be shy to point out where the movement needs investment of resources.

One amendment we would make to the Resolutions on Cell Structure is to cut the suggestion that a one-persyn cell "in many ways...has the least worries security-wise!" Certainly, one-persyn cells should maintain high standards for admitting others. However, the value of criticism/self-criticism on the level of day-to-day work is something that is stressed within Maoism,

and we've benefited from in our own practice in MIM(Prisons). We still need democratic centralism with the cell structure to provide crucial discipline and accountability. The criticisms we can give and get from other cells will be limited in nature if our security is correct, and we have seen how one-persyn cells can degrade or disappear quickly.

2011 addendum: The problem of the blurring of the cadre organization and the mass organization with the decentralization into a cell structure is alluded to above. In our own practice around cell structure we made some anarchist errors in promoting the formation of new groups rather than consolidating our forces around clear lines and practice. As these problems developed more MIM(Prisons) came to pass the following resolution to promote greater ideological accountability within the anti-imperialist prison movement. ■

Building New Groups Vs. Working with USW and MIM(Prisons)

By MIM(Prisons), July 2011 (edited 2020 to add AIPS)

We only work to build three organizations at this time: MIM(Prisons), AIPS and USW. The only organizing group we run for prisoners is the USW Countrywide Council, and even that is mostly done through *Under Lock & Key* for efficiency and to reach the masses with info on USW work.

We do not think that we, or any other group, serves as the be-all-end-all vanguard organization for North America at this time. There are many roles to be played and more groups to be built. But for security reasons, and this is doubly true in prisons, organizational cells should be primarily location-based. Mass organizations like USW are countrywide because of coordination work through the vanguard organization MIM(Prisons).

Because of security concerns in prisons, and the very stringent restrictions on contact between prisoners, even within the same cell block, MIM(Prisons) encourages those who have unity with our cardinal principles to become USW leaders. We do not recruit prisoners directly into MIM(Prisons) because of communication restrictions of the prison system, but we afford these comrades the opportunity to contribute and participate at the level of full comrade in every aspect of organizing work feasible, including encouraging them to help us develop new political line and move forward our organizing strategies.

There are only a few conditions that would merit launching a new prison-based organization:

1. Comrades launching the organization disagree with MIM(Prisons)'s cardinal principles. If you agree with our cardinal principles, why not work with the established group led by MIM(Prisons): USW? If you think you disagree, it is important to clearly articulate the cardinal principles of your new organization if you hope to organize people around common goals.
2. A disagreement with MIM(Prisons)'s policy of not recruiting prisoners into MIM(Prisons) while they are behind bars. These comrades may wish to establish a vanguard organization in their location, whose members are subject to democratic centralism and can focus on cell-based organizing.
3. The case of a Lumpen Organization (L.O.) or other existing mass organization that develops into a revolutionary party and adopts cardinal principles affirming their communist ideology. While we would consider this a very positive development, we caution comrades that this has been tried more than once by the most advanced comrades in an L.O., and the limitations of communication with a countrywide group from within prison have always led to insurmountable obstacles in attempts to bring the whole organization together behind communist principles. Further, we maintain that if the members of such a group are not overwhelmingly supporting a move to communist organizing, the advanced elements would be better to leave the group and join or form another, rather than wrecking the existing group from within. The reason we talk about vanguards versus mass organizations is that there are too many contradictions among the masses for everyone to take the leap of forming a scientific communist organization all at once. Existing groups that take up anti-imperialism play a very valuable role in the United Front without becoming communist organizations, often accomplishing things the communists could not.
4. Comrades who wish to build a new nation-based vanguard. MIM(Prisons) is not a single-nation organization, but we affirm the value of such groups to the revolutionary movement within U. S. borders. Forming these organizations from scratch from within prison has significant difficulties, and we encourage prisoners to work with USW while building ranks and contacts on the outside.

Revolutionary organizations representing different nations, lumpen groups, or regions require self-sufficiency. If comrades trying to launch such organizations continue to fail for lack of resources and support they should be working within USW and MIM(Prisons) on other projects until their conditions change.

USW is a mass organization, and therefore comrades can join USW while maintaining membership in another organization if that organization allows dual membership and that organization does not openly disagree with MIM(Prisons)'s cardinal principles. ■

On Cardinal Principles



*MIM(Prisons) December 2016
edited for print in FPL April 2019*

In the last year there's been some struggle over MIM(Prisons)'s six main points (our cardinal principles). This is a good thing, as it indicates emerging Maoist cells trying to reconcile what does and should unite us. Tactics are not what unite us. Tactics is the realm where we need many cells trying many different things. Tactics are guided by line and strategy, and are much more flexible over shorter time periods and therefore require creativity that is in touch with the masses.

Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, or Maoism for short, is MIM(Prisons)'s political line. Maoism does not tell us whether putting money into one big advertisement or thousands of little fliers will have the greater effect. Maoism also doesn't tell us whether a hunger strike will be more effective than a legal battle. These are tactical questions.

Dividing Lines or Dividing Over Tactics

In the last year, a cell that we considered part of the broader Maoist Internationalist Movement (MIM) split with MIM(Prisons) over what we saw as a tactical question. Maoists should never split over tactical questions; this is the theoretical importance of distinguishing between line, strategy and tactics.

We pushed this cell to present its split in terms of ideological line in relation to our six main points. The response was that it upholds the six main points but believes there are other issues to split over, such as promoting white supremacy, which it accused MIM(Prisons) of doing. The cell came to this conclusion after MIM(Prisons) did not print a statement criticizing the actions of prison activists that we have no affiliation with. This cell had a history of working closely with MIM(Prisons) over many years. And despite all the work we have done in that time (work that it admits challenged white supremacy) the cell was willing to split with us over this one action (or lack of action).

We see this as an error in how one should assess other cells. A cell, just as an individual, should be assessed on the whole. If a cell has acted according to one line for years, but did one thing that you see as violating that line, you probably should not split with that cell. That would be an ultra-left error, because you are expecting others to be perfect. Once it has been established by a pattern of actions that a cell has shifted its line and violated cardinal principles, then it would be correct to stop working with and possibly publicly criticize that cell.

In this particular case, MIM(Prisons) was condemned, not for participating in an event perceived to be white supremacist in nature, but for not condemning it. In contrast, MIM(Prisons) would argue that in most cases even if we had participated in this one event, that would still not be sufficient reason to split. You might publicly condemn the event yourself, but this should not rise to the level of creating splits in the Maoist Internationalist Movement. Willingness to split over non-cardinal issues is a threat to our ability to consolidate our forces in this country where individualism and splitism prevail. (To clarify, division of labor into collaborating cells is not the same as a split.)

If a cell does promote a campaign that caters to white nationalism, then one should criticize that based on our 4th point on the First World labor aristocracy being a force for imperialism, and as a violation of the Maoist line that oppressed nations have a right to self-determination. As anti-imperialists, supporting the labor aristocracy and undermining oppressed-nation self-determination is a no no. And a consistent practice of doing this indicates an underlying incorrect line that is a cause for splitting.

Principles of Line or Strategy?

Another MIM cell recently questioned why MIM(Prisons) put forth six points, adding on to the three cardinal principles that have historically defined

the MIM. While we do present our six points in place of the three cardinals, it was not necessarily to say that the three cardinals were insufficient to define who is a communist. However, we must admit that we created confusion there.

The origin of our six main points is twofold. Our first goal with the six main points was to distinguish ourselves in the eyes of our readers. We were frustrated with the countless letters from people telling us to work with other groups, stop criticizing other groups and just unite around our common fight for justice. We wanted to succinctly differentiate ourselves from the countless organizations out there. Point 1 separates us from the Liberals, and in point 2 we split from the anarchists. Neither of those points were necessary in MIM's three cardinals, because all those claiming to be communists already agree on those two points. Point 3 separated us from the Trotskyists and neo-Trotskyists whose idealism leads them to unite with the petty-bourgeoisie in the First World while criticizing the bourgeois forces in the Third World even when they are fighting against imperialism. Points 4-6 are essentially the MIM cardinals.

While the three cardinals, as MIM came to refer to them, are nice and succinct dividing line points, they originally appeared in a greater context of a piece entitled "Who is a communist?" in the second edition of *What is MIM?*, which discusses concepts like "the abolition of power of people over people," "a communist party... is necessary," "democratic centralism," and "general unity with all other groups and outbreaks against imperialism."

The second contextual thing to understand about our six main points is that they were developed in the early years of our organization, when those in the MIM camp were figuring out how to relate to each other as separate cells/organizations. It was also a period of fierce struggle against those promoting a third way in the post-9/11 Middle East, while framing the struggles there as "McWorld vs. Jihad." Therefore, our point 3 (upholding a United Front with all who oppose imperialism) became, in the eyes of many organizations at that time, a dividing line question. The original MIM comrades, in fact, pushed this line hard to expose revisionists allying with the U.S. state department. While it is often tied up with the labor aristocracy question, it stands alone as its own point.

Mao's practice on building the united front of classes in oppressed countries, and his theoretical writings on this topic contributed to our line on the subject and the development of point 3. We can also take lessons from the rectification movement of the Com-

unist Party of the Philippines to find universal line lessons on united front building. However, in practice, who to form united fronts with is really a strategic question, as the answer may change as the strategic stage of struggle changes.

Mao's contribution on united front work was based on the assessment of the principal contradiction being between the oppressed nations and imperialism. Some seventy years later, we can say this is still the situation. But someday it will change. That is what makes our point 3 a strategic question and not a universal line question. From the early days of MIM, differences on the assessment of the principal contradiction have been a primary point of criticism MIM made of revisionist parties. That said, MIM never said the principal contradiction or united front was a cardinal principle.

In our point 2, we point out the need for a Joint Dictatorship of the Proletariat of the Oppressed Nations (JDPON) in order to implement socialism in the imperialist countries. This is MIM Thought, a logical application of MIM's line on the labor aristocracy to the universal communist principle of the need for a dictatorship of the proletariat. It is also a strategy question, that does not necessarily have universal application.

Who Defines the Cardinals?

"The materialist approach to cardinal principles stresses an examination of actual history, not just our own vivid imaginations of how the world SHOULD BE. We materialists do not take splitting the proletariat and its vanguard party lightly. We form only as many cardinal principles as are necessary to unmask the enemy's attempts to infiltrate us or divert us to a less efficient road to communism." - MC5(1)

The cell structure complicates things further. With a centralized organization MIM could say that if you agree on these three points and the need for a party then you should join ours. Then you are obligated to accept our other lines until you convince the party to change them. With many small cells there is not democratic centralism on line between them, and we could see many disagreements on many non-cardinal issues. This could lead to confusion and unnecessary division in the movement. Therefore we caution all MIM cells to carefully think out their positions before disagreeing with historical MIM line and the lines of other contemporary cells.

At the same time, we must not hold dogmatically to MIM Thought frozen in time of 2006 or earlier. The three cardinals themselves evolved over the years of the original MIM. While MIM formed in 1983, they did not get serious about the third cardinal until 1987. (2) In the *MIM Notes* archive, which is incomplete for

these early years, it is issue 42 from June 1990 when we first see the three cardinals presented as such. However, the paper version of issue 42 does not feature the three cardinals, so this seems to have been added to the web version after the fact. *MIM Notes* Issue 50 (March 1991) does have the three cardinals listed in the paper version. In 1999, MIM expanded the 3rd cardinal to include reference to Marx, Engels, and Lenin, describe the oppressor-nation labor aristocracy as a petty-bourgeois class and specifically list which countries this line applies to.(3)

In practice, MIM used the three cardinal principles to determine fraternal status.(4) This came up most strongly when it decided that the third cardinal applied internationally and not just to First World parties, thus cutting its direct promotion of some who were practicing People's War in the Third World. This began with the *"Resolution on defending cardinal principles in international context,"* 2002, but it was sometime after 2002 when MIM actually stopped any promotion of those parties.

Building MIM Today

MIM(Prisons) was announced as a MIM cell on 8



October 2007. To this day we often refer to *"Maoism Around Us,"* published in May 2009, when discussing these issues. This was one of what could be considered the founding documents of MIM(Prisons). While our ideology was already represented in the expansive work of MIM, in that article we addressed the situation we found ourselves in as the original centralized orga-

nization of MIM had ceased to exist. In it we pointed out that the MIM lives on, as it has historically been defined. We continued to print MIM's three cardinal principles in most issues of *Under Lock & Key*.

It was after our first official congress in July of 2010 that MIM(Prisons) put out our six main points. Since then we have referred to them as our "cardinal points" once or twice, and printed them in every issue of *ULK* with a similar tagline as we once printed MIM's three cardinals: "MIM(Prisons) distinguishes ourselves from other groups on the six points below."

As we've said before, we need more Maoist Internationalist cells. Topical cells that focus on gender, ecology and the environment, and anti-militarism are all good candidates. And there is an endless need for locality-based cells that focus on local recruitment and building around popular movements in the region that align with the interests of the Third World proletariat. But us saying this does not make them appear out of thin air. As we gain small victories in recruiting comrades outside prisons, we wonder if the MIM needs institutions that can allow those who agree on the three cardinals to join up in a meaningful way. A way that provides coordination without sacrificing security, independent initiative and other benefits of the cell structure. In mid-2016 we set up the subreddit /r/mao_internationalist "to help individuals and groups allied with the Maoist Internationalist Movement support each others' work." In 2020, MIM(Prisons) launched a private platform for comrades to coordinate work more securely. With all that has happened since this article was originally written, we feel more strongly that it is time to refocus on the three cardinals and push for a regroupment of MIM.

There are United Struggle from Within (USW) cells that might as well be considered MIM cells due to their advanced political practice. And there are prison-based cells that are in the MIM camp that are not USW, which are usually nation-based. We support the nation-based organizing strategy as a reason to form a new organization separate from USW. There is probably no tactical advantage to identifying prison-based cells as MIM cells, because of the repression in the prison environment, although there is obvious theoretical advantage in summarizing a group's line and practice.

Being in prison limits one's ability to coordinate with other cells without relying on MIM(Prison). For our own organization, MIM(Prisons) does not accept prisoners as members because it is not possible to have democratic centralism when all our mail is read by state employees. When coordinating between cells, we need to make similar considerations.

In most contexts that we are aware of, MIM(Prisons) is seen as the foremost cell representing the MIM today. While we are honored by that recognition, it is also a sign of how far we have to go. Discussion of party formation is no more relevant today than it was ten years ago when our organization just formed. If we cannot get more than a handful of cells putting in work at the level that MIM(Prisons) does, how can we build a Maoist Party? And what good would such a party do? There is no question of seizing power in the United States today, where MIM(Prisons) is based. But there is much work to do to prepare for that inevitability as the imperialists overextend themselves militarily and the Third World continues to strike blows against them.

■

Notes:

1. MC5, *What is a Cardinal Principle?* 26 August 1998.
2. *MIM History: How it all began, WIM?*, Second Ed., 1995, p. 16.
3. *Resolution Re-Wording Third Cardinal Principle, 1999 MIM Congress: Session II.*
4. *Resolutions on United Front, Third World Maoist Parties and the International Communist Movement Generally, 1996 MIM Congress.*

Section 2: The Basics of Revolutionary Theory

Definitions

This is an abbreviated glossary, write in to request the larger glossary that contains more terms.

COMMUNISM:

Communism is the abolition of power of people over people. This means abolishing "oppression," whether the oppression be of nations by nations, classes by classes, women by men or any other division in society. Communism is based on mutual cooperation, peace and justice instead of oppression.

Long-run goals of communism include the abolition of classes and organizing society without governments or borders. As in certain tribal societies in the past and living still today, communists believe that it is possible for humans to organize themselves without war, crime, starvation and homelessness. When there are social problems, communists blame those problems on how society is organized. They seek to organize society to bring out the best in people, however flawed the species may be. No communist leader has ever claimed that a society has achieved communism yet. That means the industrial societies of our time have either lived in capitalism or socialism.

Many people have communist intentions. They want to abolish oppression and claim work towards communism. Because MIM(Prisons) judges political movements based on their long term effects relative to other real-life movements, we encourage people with communist intentions to study and apply Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, which we believe has proved the most effective path towards communism. MIM(Prisons) reserves the term "communist" for those who share our views on the historic attempts in foreign countries to move toward communism and apply the method of dialectical materialism to current problems. The dividing line questions for communists involve an understanding of the two largest, most socialist experiments: China and the Soviet Union. MIM(Prisons) believes communists must agree on six important questions, which are listed on page 2 of recent issues of *Under Lock & Key* or on the About page of our website, prisoncensorship.info.

Finally, communists believe that a communist party — not just ad hoc or individual organizing — is necessary to seize state power from the oppressors. Within the party members carry out democratic centralism on all issues other than these six key points. This means



struggling over disagreements internally, while upholding the organization line in public.

People working to end oppression who do not agree with MIM(Prisons) on these six questions or do not believe in the necessity of a party belong in other organizations — organizations MIM(Prisons) believes belong to political trends that are historically proven to be less effective in bringing about the end of oppression.

MIM(Prisons) expresses general unity with all other groups and outbreaks against imperialism: mass movements against oppression have as many forms as forms of power. In this spirit, we insist on telling people the uncompromised truth and discussing and criticizing the strategy and tactics of any given action. MIM(Prisons) encourages everyone, communist or not, to be involved in the struggle against imperialism.

IMPERIALISM:

Imperialism is an economic system that V.I. Lenin defined as the "highest stage of capitalism." It became well pronounced in the early 1900s, and is defined by the globalization of capital, the dominance of finance

capital and the division of the world into imperialist and exploited nations; the latter Maoists see as the principal contradiction in the world today.

As the economic system that dominates the world, imperialism determines much of the material reality that all inhabitants of planet Earth face today, including war, poverty and environmental destruction. This means that the status quo promoted by imperialist interests is the biggest hindrance to change. As the dominant imperialist power, both financially and militarily, the United States generally serves as the primary target of our attacks as anti-imperialists.

MAOISM:

Maoism is the ideology which emerged from the first successful Third World peasant revolution that liberated China in 1949 and guided the building of socialism in that country until capitalists seized power in 1976. Maoism is a higher stage of revolutionary science built on the foundations of Marxism and Leninism, and developed by the experience of the Chinese people who took up the revolutionary project during that time. Since then, it has influenced all the subsequent anti-colonial struggles in Africa and Asia and inspired many other revolutionary movements including ones inside the United States.

Maoism is famous for many changes in China, including: land reform; collectivization of agriculture; abolishing China's huge drug addiction problem; ending pornography and prostitution; eliminating the practice of breaking wimmin's feet (footbinding) to make them smaller and supposedly cuter; establishing China's first law allowing divorce; and eventually instituting worker-run industry without private property in the means of production.

Mao developed and popularized the philosophy of dialectical materialism. A major contribution was the thesis that the superstructure of society can at times be primary over the economic base; that the subjective can be primary over the objective, which challenged the deterministic readings of Marx of the past. This theory was proven true in the revolutionary era in China when the Red Army built base areas that prototyped socialist relations of production and culture as a form of dual power prior to liberation from Japanese imperialism. This experience was important for the development of socialism under the dictatorship of the proletariat after the communists seized power in China. In this stage, the theory that the superstructure can be primary was proven true once again in the struggle against the theory of productive forces. Maoism put politics in command, sacrificing immediate improvements in economic output, in favor of trans-

forming the relations of production in order to unleash the new productive forces under socialism.

Related to this transformation of social relations, Maoism stresses reliance on the mass line in leading the vanguard party. Both are examples of Mao's saying that the masses alone make history. It is by collecting the ideas of the masses and synthesizing them through practice that the vanguard finds the correct path to creating a new society that serves the people. The strategy of Protracted People's War put the mass line in practice, and connected both the party and the army to the masses in a way that transformed all involved. This culminated in the masses of Chinese people ousting a financially, technically and even for many years numerically, superior occupying force. The mass line continued to be important under the dictatorship of the proletariat, and was again brought to the forefront during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR), when the masses of people were engaged in the struggle to distinguish the socialist road from the capitalist one.

Complete revolution is fundamental to Maoism. This means that all social, cultural, political and economic relations must be revolutionized. People will not be liberated by simply breaking the state or smashing capitalism. China's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution is the best example we have of this attempt to completely eradicate capitalist influence, and build a society free from oppression. A country whose majority was illiterate peasants, facing preventable illness, drug addiction and brutal abuse was transformed into one where everyone was engaged in regular political study sessions directly related to the daily needs of their local community — where the basics of food, clothing, shelter and health care became universal.

More specifically, and dividing supposed communists everywhere, Mao was the first communist leader to argue that class struggle continues under socialism and that such struggle must go on within the the communist party and against the bourgeoisie inside that party. Mao warned that without successful struggle against the bourgeoisie in the party, there would be a restoration of capitalism done in the name of socialism at first — as in fact happened in the Soviet Union and China. Since much of Mao's writing merely continues previous Marxism-Leninism or because many of the new parts of Marxism-Leninism contributed by Mao are now widely accepted, it is Mao's doctrine on the bourgeoisie in the party above all which continues to separate Maoism from other varieties of supposed communism to this day.

New Democracy is another development we take

from Maoism, that some dogmatists still use to dismiss the Chinese revolution as a bourgeois revolution. Semi-feudal/semi-colonial nations in the age of imperialism need to first liberate themselves from imperialism before they can build a socialist society. This national contradiction is resolved with a new democratic revolution which unites the national bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie and the exploited classes under the leadership of the proletariat.

Related to New Democracy is the relationship between the vanguard party and the united front against imperialism, and the importance of the leadership role of the proletarian party in relation to the united front. Similarly, Maoism stresses the importance of an army that is led and directed by the party. These lessons are vital to the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat today, especially in the exploited Third World countries.

CAPITALISM:

Capitalism is a mode of production, or economic system, where the bourgeoisie or capitalist class owns the means of production and exploits the labor of the proletariat. Because the proletariat owns nothing, they are forced to sell their labor power on the market in exchange for what they need to survive. When they work for the capitalist, the capitalist owns the value that they create and only pays them the portion of this value to sustain themselves. The rest is called surplus value, or the profit exploited from the worker, which is the basic law of capitalist economic relations.

Everything that has a use value and exchange value becomes a commodity under capitalism, including labor power. This allows for exchange to occur on a scale far beyond anything humans have done before capitalism, because exchange values of any two commodities can be quickly compared from anywhere in the capitalist world. Capital itself is a value that can bring about surplus value, exploiting the workers. Capital includes machines, tools and raw materials as well as the labor power of the workers. Commodities and capital are unique to the capitalist mode of production and embody the exploitative relationship of the bourgeoisie to the proletariat. In contrast, bourgeois economists would have us believe that these are eternal things, and ignore their relationship to exploitation.

Capitalism exists where non-workers control the production of wage-workers, even if private property is officially state property. Under capitalism, democracy for the working classes is undermined through people's lack of control of their own workplace and society as a whole. Workers have little say in how their workplace is organized or what will be produced. In

the United States, people in the inner cities have little control over their environment. They do not control the police or the spending of their tax money. And certainly the "justice" system is out of control.

SOCIALISM:

When Maoists use the term socialism we are referring to the transition stage between the capitalist mode of production and communism. This involves organizing society with the goal of meeting people's needs, not making profit. History shows that a dictatorship of the proletariat (the people instead of the capitalists) is necessary to make socialism work and maintain democracy in a socialist society.

STATE CAPITALISM:

Under state capitalism, the state nominally owns the means of production, but production is organized around the profitability of individual enterprises or sectors, not the needs of the people. The Soviet Union became state capitalist under Khrushchev, and China became state capitalist under Deng. In both cases, a new bourgeoisie developed within the state apparatus and the Communist Party itself.

REVISIONISM:

Revisionism refers to political views that claim to be Marxist yet revise Marx's work fundamentally by failing to apply the scientific method of dialectical materialism. Revisionists commonly downplay class struggle, overplay the struggle to increase production and technical progress compared with political matters, don't believe imperialism is dangerous, advocate reformist means of change and don't uphold the dictatorship of the proletariat. Revisionism is bourgeois ideology, enemy politics.

BOURGEOISIE:

The bourgeoisie is the exploiter class most characteristic of the capitalist system. Their wealth is obtained from the labor of others, in particular the proletariat.

The term "bourgeoisie" now usually refers to the capitalist class in common usage. The capitalist class is that class of people who own enough property that they would not have to work to make a living. The capitalist class only works if it wants to. Also included in the term are people with very powerful positions in production or government generally. A ruler may or may not have great assets on hand, but if s/he really wanted them, s/he has the power to get them. For example, Ronald Reagan made a speech in Japan with a \$1 million fee after he retired from the presidency. If he had been "poor" during the presidency, he still would have

been part of the "capitalist class." What he was doing was central enough to the ruling class of capitalism that he had de facto access to the means of production, even if he had gambled away his ranch and other assets in Las Vegas while he was in the White House.

An overly restrictive definition of capitalist is someone who owns the means of production — factories, tools and patents for example. What is important is not the literal ownership of means of production but access to those means of production. Such access could be merely the ability to get a loan so large that it is possible to live off the business connected to such a loan. Access to political information in the military, intelligence or executive branch would make it possible to be rich making a speech like Reagan did or by selling secrets to foreigners. People with such access to information also may be bourgeoisie. For example, Reagan could take his \$1 million speech fee and convert it into means of production such as ownership of tools and factory buildings. Whether he does that or not, we can say he has "access" to the means of production.

There is another common and critically important usage of the term "bourgeoisie." Technically the bourgeoisie includes other sections, including those more numerous than the capitalist class. The "petty-bourgeoisie" or "petit-bourgeoisie" refers to people who are exploiters but not on the scale of the capitalists. The petty-bourgeoisie often owns its own means of production or professional skills but does not hire enough workers to be able to quit working and still live a life of leisure. There are other categories of bourgeoisie that are not capitalist, such as what Mao called the "comprador bourgeoisie" which owes its existence to imperialist capitalists and cannot function on its own as a capitalist class.

LABOR ARISTOCRACY:

Unlike the traditional petty bourgeoisie, they do not own their own means of production and so must work for others. But unlike the proletariat and semi-proletariat the labor aristocracy in the First World earn more than the value of their labor and therefore have interests that fall in the bourgeois camp allying with imperialism.

In Lenin's day the Labor Aristocracy was the "upper strata of the proletariat." Lenin wrote that he was "obliged to distinguish between the 'upper stratum' of the workers and the 'lower stratum of the proletariat proper.'" (*Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*) "The capitalists can devote a part (and not a small one, at that!) of these superprofits to bribe *their own* workers, to create something like an alliance (recall the celebrated 'alliances' described by the Webbs of Eng-

lish trade unions and employers) between the workers of the given nation and their capitalists *against* the other countries." (Lenin, *Imperialism and the Split in Socialism*, Lenin's emphasis).

In the First World today we define this group as the lower segment of the petty-bourgeoisie, working for a wage and earning more than the value of their labor but without the means to get a loan to start a small business themselves. This group benefits from the imperialist world's superexploitation of the Third World. They are bought off by the imperialists with these superprofits. In the First World this group is not exploited and so not part of the proletariat. On the contrary, their incomes are often higher than those traditionally classified as the petty bourgeoisie in the Third World, further demonstrating their bourgeois character.

LUMPEN-PROLETARIAT:

In a world where the vast majority must sell their labor power to survive, the lumpen-proletariat are those who are not able to sell theirs due to the limitations of capitalism at providing full employment. This class is rarely employed, often living as parasites on other proletarians. A small portion of the proletariat in Europe when Marx first wrote about them, the lumpen-proletariat has become an important class in itself. With the rise of mega-slums in the Third World following the period of neo-colonialism, this class has surpassed 1 billion people.

FIRST WORLD LUMPEN:

The class of people in the First World who are excluded from the productive process. By virtue of living in the First World this class, on average, receives more material benefits from imperialism than the global proletariat. As such their interests are not the same as the exploited classes and we do not include them in the "lumpen-proletariat." But their conditions in many ways parallel those of the lumpen-proletariat standing in stark contrast to the majority of the First World populations.

AMERIKKA/AMERIKA:

The white settler nation which has occupied North America since the 1600s.

EXPLOITATION:

Exploitation is the appropriation of surplus labor from workers by capitalists. The main exploited classes in the world today are the peasantry, proletariat and lumpen-proletariat — almost wholly found in the Third World. A worker is exploited if they earn less than the value of the work they perform.

DELINKING

The process by which third world countries break away from the economic and political domination of first world countries. Instead of producing products at low wages for first world countries, taking on crippling debt from them, being objects of their charity etc., third world countries would develop their economies along lines that would benefit their own people the most.

MASS ORGANIZATION:

We use "mass organization" to refer to a group of people without a specifically worked out universal ideology (such as Maoism) leading it. Membership requirements are less strict than for a cadre organization, as a mass organization's aim is to unite as many people as possible, often around a single issue.

THIRD WORLD:

The portion of the geographic-social world subjected to imperialist exploitation by the First World.

FIRST WORLD:

Imperialist countries of the world.

CLASS:

A group of people with a common relation to the means of production, to the distribution of the means of consumption, and to other classes of people.

NATION:

"a nation is a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life, and psychological make up manifested in a community of culture." - J.V. Stalin

Nation is the predominant form of organization of humyn beings in the era of imperialism. As national markets and borders became important to the economic destiny of a region, the nation-states of Europe took form first. For the exploited, the national project is taken up in resistance to imperialism because it hinders their economic development.

GENDER:

One of three strands of oppression, the other two being class and nation. Gender can be thought of as socially-defined attributes related to one's sex organs and physiology. Patriarchy has led to the splitting of society into an oppressed (wimmin) and oppressor gender (men).

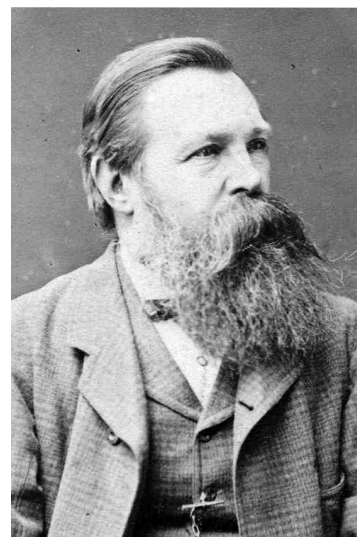
Historically reproductive status was very important to gender, but today the dynamics of leisure-time and humyn biological development are the material basis

of gender. For example, children are the oppressed gender regardless of genitalia, as they face the bulk of sexual oppression independent of class and national oppression.

People of biologically superior health-status are better workers, and that's a class thing, but if they have leisure-time, they are also better sexually privileged. We might think of models or prostitutes, but professional athletes of any kind also walk this fine line. Athletes, models and well-paid prostitutes are not oppressed as "objects," but in fact they hold sexual privilege. Older and disabled people as well as the very sick are at a disadvantage, not just at work but in leisure-time. For that matter there are some people with health statuses perfectly suited for work but not for leisure-time. ■

Engels definitions from Principles of Communism

*By Fredrich Engels,
1847 p5-15,-translated
by Paul M. Sweezy
(New York: Monthly
Review Press, 1964)*



Friedrich Engels in 1877

Question. What is Communism?

Answer. Communism is the doctrine of the conditions of liberation of the proletariat.

Question. What is the proletariat?

Answer. The proletariat is that class in society which lives entirely from the sale of its labor and does not draw profit from any kind of capital; whose weal and woe, whose life and death, whose whole existence depends on the demand for labor hence on the changing state of business, on the vagaries of unbridled competition. The proletariat, or the class of proletarians is, in a word, the working class of the nineteenth century.

Question. Proletarians, then, have not always existed?

Answer. No, there have always been poor and working classes, and the working have mostly been poor. But there have not always been workers and poor people living under conditions as they are today; in other words, there have not always been proletarians, any

more than there has always been free unbridled competition.

Question. How did the proletariat originate?

Answer. The proletariat originated in the industrial revolution which took place in England in the last half of the last (eighteenth) century, and which has since then been repeated in all civilized countries of the world. This industrial revolution was precipitated by the discovery of the steam engine, various spinning machines, the mechanical loom, and a whole series of other mechanical devices. These machines, which were very expensive and hence could be bought only by big capitalists, altered the whole mode of production and displaced the former workers, because the machines turned out cheaper and better commodities than the workers could produce with their inefficient spinning wheels and handlooms. The machines delivered industry wholly into the hands of the big capitalists and rendered entirely worthless the meager property of the workers (tools, looms, etc.). The result was that the capitalists soon had everything in their hands and nothing remained to workers. This marked the introduction of the factory system into the textile industry. Once the impulse to the introduction of machinery and the factory system had been given, this system spread quickly to all other branches of industry...

This is how it has come about that in civilized countries at the present time nearly all kinds of labor are performed in factories and in nearly all branches of work handicrafts and manufacture have been superseded. This process has to an ever greater degree ruined the old middle class, especially the small handicrafts men; it has entirely transformed the condition of the workers; and two new classes have been created which are gradually swallowing up all the others.

These are:

1. The class of big capitalists, who in all civilized countries are already in almost exclusive possession of all the means of subsistence and of the instruments (machines, factories) and materials necessary for the production of the means of subsistence. This is the bourgeois class, or the bourgeoisie.
2. The class of the wholly propertyless, who are obliged to sell their labor to the bourgeoisie in order to get in exchange the means of subsistence necessary for their support. This is called the class of proletarians, or the proletariat. ■

Science: the knowledge and application of knowledge on how to get from A to B the fastest

Reprinted from the Maoist Internationalist Movement (MIM) Frequently Asked Questions

"Why do you say you are scientists? Isn't it all just opinion?"

Proceeding from and developing the Enlightenment, Karl Marx did the most to show that there is now in fact a science of society, including a science of revolution — even if that science is struggling for recognition relative to the "hard sciences" of physics and chemistry. Marxism is no less a science than the theory of evolution and biology and science; even though Christian creationists oppose them. There was even a time when people did not realize there is a science of nuclear particles. What we call physics was not always so well-conceived or even imagined.

Like earth sciences such as geology and evolutionary biology, the science of society has frequent recourse to the study of the historical record. What all sciences have in common is the practice of proceeding with the useful assumption that the world is independent of the consciousness of the observer. The trees in the forest exist whether any other individuals or species live or die. The existence of truths regardless of the individual's will is a frequent and important manifestation of science.

Many Liberals including those calling themselves "Marxist," criticize us for believing in a struggle for a most scientific road to revolution. We believe there is a best way forward at all times. For saying this, the Liberals call us "sectarian," which is a word they misuse when they should say "committed" and "scientific." The Liberals and pseudo-Marxists exaggerate and caricature us as if we were saying there is only one progressive road in the world and it is MIM's. The Liberals oppose honing the best science, because science is frequently discomfiting for established beliefs, so they stress how the world has many truths. In contrast, we Marxists do not say truth is not a matter of everybody being 0% and MIM being 100% correct, but the difference between knowing 25% of the world and 30% is not to be sneered at. We are very concerned with it and we form an organization of scientists called the vanguard party for the purpose of advancing the truths available to society even if just a little further than they would have been advanced without an organization for the promotion of science production.

Relativism is the belief that everything is a matter of opinion. It underlies post-modernism, which is the fashion in academia today trying to replace Marxism as a systematic type of thought.

It just so happens that the spread of science also undermines the rule of the strongest individuals. The ruling class of the wealthiest individuals with private armies and government politicians at their disposal benefit from spreading relativism. It stands to reason that if there are only billions of people with their own equally valid opinions, opinions that cross-cancel, the oppressed and weak will have no basis to unite against the ruling elite, so it is that relativism protects the ruling class, and that is not a matter of opinion!

People who oppose science are superstitious or mystical. We Marxists may say they are pre-capitalist in having reactionary ideas dominant prior to those of the Enlightenment. The ultimate mystical ideas are religion, which cannot be falsified.

Science is partly production of falsifiable theses. "Falsifiable" in this context does not mean false or invented. It means that there is evidence conceivable that could disprove their thesis. "Falsifiable" means possibly proven false.

The belief in God as practiced by Christians, Muslims, etc. is not falsifiable. It is simply a belief in authority.

If in the year 2100 it turns out the bourgeoisie was the class that worked hard to bring about communism, we Marxists would have to concede that one of our theses was proved wrong and look for a replacement thesis. If the bourgeoisie turned out to be the class to actually accomplish communism in the year 2100, we scientists could not quote from Marx, Lenin and Mao--dead people--to contradict reality. Such an attitude would be unscientific dogmatism. The original use of the word "dogma" referred to religious beliefs before there was a Karl Marx. When Marxists practice dogmatism, it is not on account of their Marxism but on account of their being raised in a religious world where science is still progressing from relatively low levels.

Contrary to empiricists who allege to be scientists, falsifiable thesis production (science) does not mean throwing away a thesis as soon as one fact contradicts it. That would be like throwing out your flashlight just because it flickers sometimes. We Marxist-Leninist-Maoists would be proud to assist the world in getting from 25% to 30% truth in our lifetimes; hence, we do not throw away a scientific thesis until we find a scientific thesis that does even better in social practice or ex-

plaining historical evidence.

Amongst those who accept that there is a science of society, there are the elitists and philosophers as Marx called them who believe that science is a matter of the reflective genius of the most intelligent members of society. Max Weber was typical of this view in that he said science and practice of that science were two different things. He believed people practicing science could contaminate science by introducing their practical biases into science. Weber believed scientists could hand over results of their work to others for them to decide what to do with those results, so according to Weber, the two things should be separate, science production and what to do with science once it is supposedly produced.

In contrast, in his Theses on Feuerbach, Marx said most famously that "philosophers have only interpreted the world; the point however is to change it." According to Marx, many people conceiving themselves as elite intellectuals sit around observing reality and proposing scientific generalizations about reality, many of which would quickly evaporate if confronted with struggle in the real world. By trying to change something, we find out how well we understood that something scientifically. Applying heat and combining other elements with iron ore we change it to become steel, if we know our science.

According to us Marxists, the science of people is like the sciences of engineering or medicine with their obvious applied sides. No one doubts that a blue print for a car or a building has to be implemented through construction and no one doubts that the vaccine on the drawing board is not proved until tried in humans. Yet when it comes to science and society, economics, politics and revolution, many pre-scientific people who are unconscious allies of the bourgeoisie attempt to cut off the applied side of science and retard its development by so doing.

Marx said capitalism would retard solutions to homelessness, hunger, illness, pollution and war. He said that there was no way to dispute him without trying socialist revolution, anymore than a vaccine could be proved except by trying it. Is calling for volunteers to take a vaccine not science? And if calling for participants in a vaccine trial is production of science, then why is not calling for volunteers to make the proletarian revolution part of the production of science? The more volunteers to take the vaccine, the better is the chance of proving that it really works, and the more volunteers for the revolution who really carry it out thoroughly, the better will be the chance to see if socialism really works. The bottom line is that Marxism

does the most to promote all sciences with its explicit stress on the relationship between theory (scientific theses) and its (their) application in the real world.

The fact that a medical doctor could choose to do something other than cure illness does not make his work to cure illness unscientific. Yes, the doctor had an "opinion" that medicine is the career of choice. That is a completely different subject than whether or not medicine has a scientific element.

This is where non-Marxist scientists err and retard the development of science. The fact that Marxist-Leninist-Maoists could choose to abandon the profession or study whatever they want does not change the fact that Marxists-Leninist-Maoists advance science regarding poverty, hunger, pollution, war, illness and homelessness — above all through social practice, one large part of which is class struggle.

Many people, including most calling themselves "Marxist," separate ideology from science to such a degree that they prefer to advance Christian rules of ethical conduct regardless of their value in the real world, regardless of the fact that telling kids not to use birth control and not get sex education for instance actually increases the abortion rate. In contrast, we genuine Marxists interchange the terms scientific thesis and ideological principle freely. The only reason we should not interchange them freely occurs when we make a mistake and catch ourselves being non-Marxist, probably in a Christian way if we live in the Western imperialist countries. When we catch ourselves being Christian, we should refer to ideological errors undercutting science.

The proletariat is the group of people with the greatest interest in ending hunger, homelessness and war. That is not a moral statement the way the "Ten Commandments" is a moral statement. The proletariat exists independently of our will. The more clearly we proclaim proletarian principles and unite the proletariat in action, the more likely we will see what the proletariat can do!

Populists and social-democrats define the proletariat as the majority of any country. Such is a definition for the benefit of aspiring parliamentary politicians and it has no scientific value. These ideologues sacrifice science for ideology, by putting majority rule on a pedestal of moral principle regardless of what representing a majority in power means in its implications — racism, war and super-exploitation in the imperialist countries of today. We Marxists are looking for the least conservative element of society to mobilize to bring about the most change and we do not put

majority rule above finding this group of people who can reshape society in its revolutionary image.

When we Marxists speak of an "historic mission" of the proletariat, we are making at once both a scientific and ideological statement. The mission is that the proletariat will overthrow capitalism and establish classless society. It is either true that the proletariat tends toward the fulfillment of that mission or it is not. Hence, it is a falsifiable thesis. Our calling on the proletariat to fulfill that mission speeds up the production of science. Speeding up the production of the science of revolution more surely saves lives than the best vaccine. ■

Quotes from Materialism and Empirio-Criticism



V. I. Lenin in 1918

By V.I. Lenin. Published by Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, no year given.

"The fundamental premise of materialism is the recognition of the external world, of the existence of things outside and independent of our mind." (p. 78)

"Did Nature Exist Prior to Man? We have already seen this question is particularly repugnant to the philosophy

of Mach and Avenarius. Natural science positively asserts that the earth once existed in such a state that no man or any other creature existed or could have existed on it. Organic matter is a later phenomenon, the fruit of a long evolution. It follows that there was no sentient matter, no 'complexes of sensations', no self that was supposedly 'indissolubly' connected with the environment in accordance with Avenarius' doctrine. Matter is primary, and thought, consciousness, sensation are products of a very high development. Such is the materialist theory of knowledge, to which natural science instinctively subscribes." (p. 69)

"We have seen that the starting point and the fundamental premise of the philosophy of empirio-criticism is subjective idealism. The world is our sensation--this is the fundamental premise...The absurdity of this philosophy lies in the fact that it leads to solipsism, to the recognition of the existence of the philosophizing individuals only." (p. 89)

"Yesterday we did not know that coal tar contained

alizarin. Today we learned that it does. The question is did coal tar contain alizarin yesterday?

"Of course it did. To doubt it would be to make a mockery of modern science.

"And if that is so, three important epistemological conclusions follow:

"1. Things exist independently of our consciousness, independently of our perceptions, outside of us, for it is beyond doubt that alizarin existed in coal tar yesterday and it is equally beyond doubt that yesterday we knew nothing of the existence of this alizarin and received no sensations from it.

"2. There is definitely no difference in principle between the phenomenon and the thing-in-itself, and there can be no such difference. The only difference is between what is known and what is not yet known. And philosophical inventions of specific boundaries between the one and the other, inventions to the effect that the thing-in-itself is "beyond" phenomena (Kant), or that we can or must fence ourselves off by some philosophical partition from the problem of a world which in one part or another is still unknown but which exists outside us (Hume) — all this is the sheerest nonsense, Schrulle, crotchet, invention.

"3. In the theory of knowledge, as in every other branch of science, we must think dialectically, that is, we must not regard our knowledge as ready-made and unalterable, but must determine how knowledge emerges from ignorance, how incomplete, inexact knowledge becomes more complete and more exact." (p. 98) ■

Choosing One Ideology Over Another: The Materialist Method

Reprinted from the Maoist Internationalist Movement (MIM), *What's Your Line?* pamphlet.

"We can (and must) begin to build socialism, not with abstract human material, or with human material specially prepared by us, but with the human material bequeathed to us by capitalism. True, it is not an easy matter, but no other approach to this task is serious enough to warrant discussion." -V.I. Lenin, "'Left-Wing Communism' — An Infantile Disorder," *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 50.

It is only by examining the practice of various ideologies over the long run of history that one can decide which ideology is the most effective in promoting the end of oppression of oppressed groups by oppressor groups. In contrast, some people think it is fair to compare an abstract idea with an actual movement. That is not the materialist method. Once one allows ideas to be compared with actual, historical movements one has

no way of stopping all kinds of comparisons of ideas with actual practices. One can only compare practices with practices.

It is intellectuals and Trotskyists who compare practices with ideas to see how good or bad the practice is. With this comparison, for example, it is easy to shoot down the practice of Stalinism with the ideas of Trotskyism or the ideas of Madison and Jefferson or any idea for that matter. This method is not wrong because it is Trotskyist or Madisonian. Rather, Trotskyism is wrong because it uses this idealist method to criticize Stalinism instead of comparing Trotskyist practice with Stalinist practice.

In the same vein, it's not fair to compare Maoism with Jesus Christ in the abstract. Maybe Mao did not obey the 10 Commandments. But his followers have a better practice than the Christians when it comes to ending oppression.

The only time it is correct to evaluate a practice in relationship to an idea is within that practice. Maoists can determine if there are better ways to be Maoists and tap existing potential by discussing the ideas within Maoism. Even then, the only proof of the validity of a new Maoist idea is by comparing one Maoist practice with another Maoist practice.

Hence MIM asks "where's the substance?" There are infinite logically consistent ideas ranging from professors' pet economic models to Hare Krishna. Only some ideas, however, have come with practices to end oppression. By choosing the ideology that goes with the most historically effective practice of social change to end oppression, one separates oneself from dogmatism and religion. Dogmatism may take the form of believing in reform no matter what; it may take the form of opposing dogma all the time; but in every case dogmatism and religion really amount to comparing apples to oranges, the apples being ideas and the oranges being practices. Dogmatists of all stripes conclude that oranges should be more like apples. In contrast, Marxist materialists just pick the best oranges.

MIM forms the following conclusions on the materialist method:

In debate, we must decide when it is appropriate to compare practices with each other.

Then we must decide on when it is appropriate to develop ideas within a practice.

2011 MIM(Prisons) addendum: Many people ask us about religion because they have heard that communism is anti-religion. In some ways communism is

the best way for religious people to uphold their beliefs and put an end to the evils of murder, rape, hunger and other miseries of humyns. Some argue that Jesus Christ must have been a communist because ey gave to the poor.

An issue with religions, however, is that they uniformly reject scientific thinking. Religions require people to accept on faith that there is a higher power controlling life for humyns. So the first problem with religions is that they are fostering idealist thinking. Even those who do not believe in organized religion but consider themselves "spiritual" are buying in to this anti-materialism.

In addition, historically many religions have acted as apologists for the oppressor class in power, telling the oppressed people not to worry about their terrible conditions in this life because a better afterlife awaits them if they just suffer in silence. There are notable exceptions to this, including the liberation theologians of Latin America, some Muslim activists, and others.

Overall, we see the best of the religious movements and groups as allies in the fight against imperialism, but we still caution people that religion works just like television — it is an opiate for the mind, encouraging unscientific thinking. Belief in spirituality or religion is not a dividing line question to work with MIM(Prisons), and we accept into USW ALL who take up the anti-imperialist struggle. We will be honest in our push for everyone to study materialist thinking and why we oppose idealism.

Under socialism, it will be illegal for anyone to organize for counter-revolution, including for religious purposes. Like other unscientific activities, people will be free to practice in their homes, but they will not be allowed to go out recruiting and spreading these ideologies. Over time we expect that science will win out and people will give up religion just as they gave up believing that the world was flat. ■

Myths About Maoism

By Maoist Internationalist Movement (MIM), last edited November 1999, updated by MIM(Prisons) 2011

Common misperceptions:

1. As many as 30 million died in the Great Leap from famine and execution caused by Mao.
2. There was widespread violence perpetrated by Mao in the Cultural Revolution.
3. Mao opposed intellectuals, education and indi-

viduality.

The Great Leap — "Mao was a butcher"

Western scholars have estimated that between 16.4 million and 29.5 million people died in the Great Leap Forward.(1) It is a common argument that this was due to executions ordered by Mao and the Chinese Communist Party. People who know a little more about the history of China know about the famine, natural disasters and starvation during this period. However, they often attribute these starvation deaths to malicious programs and mismanagement of industrialization and distribution of goods.



Sending government officials to work in the countryside, 1957

The first problem with these myths is that they are based on inaccurate statistics. Such high mortality figures are based on comparing projected population size with actual population size. This method assumes constant population growth, which is far from reality during tumultuous periods in history such as revolution. The statistics are also based on figures supplied by the bourgeoisie and revisionists, which were enemies of the Great Leap.

In reality, the deaths attributed to the Great Leap (1958-60) are mostly due to starvation, particularly from the Great Leap's aftermath (1960-1), not executions. Flooding and drought seriously affected over half of China's land in that famine. The Soviet Union withdrew its industrial aid in 1960 causing a virtual halt in most of China's industry. The Soviet Union had agreed to provide about 300 modern industrial plants but only 154 were completed by 1960.(2) Thousands of Soviet technicians who were in China to assist with industrial development left within the period of a month, taking with them their blue-prints and stopping

supply shipments.(3)

Mao did claim government responsibility for 800,000 executions between 1949 and 1954. These were popularly sanctioned executions done in people's trials against the most hated landlords and pro-Japanese (pro-imperialist) elements who had terrorized the masses during World War II and its aftermath.(4)

Neither Mao, nor the Chinese Communist Party claimed the Great Leap Forward had been without mistakes. Self-criticism is an important part of Maoism, and Mao himself wrote self-criticisms on some practices of the Great Leap. Unlike the Soviets, the Chinese admitted when the goals they had set for themselves had been too high, and were unreasonable.

It is interesting that these myths are so actively propagated by capitalist countries, which are far more deserving of the label "butcher." Fourteen million children, mostly from capitalist Asian countries, die each year from starvation.(5) Using the same methods that the bourgeois scholars and media use, in the United States in 1986, 75,980 Blacks died from having inadequate health care.(6) If the United States were the same size as China, that would mean the deaths of over 300,000 Black people annually! (2.5 million people dead each year if there were as many Blacks as Chinese.)

With a quarter of the world's children, if China hadn't been liberated by Mao and the Chinese Communist Party, that situation would be much worse today. As it was, 22 million Chinese died of starvation during World War II, thanks to Japanese imperialism and the U.S.-backed regime. Under Mao and the Chinese Communist Party, the life expectancy of the Chinese



Big-characters posted on the campus of Peking University.

people doubled from 35 under the capitalist Kuomintang to 69.(7) In contrast, the starvation in capitalist countries and the inadequate health care for New Afrikans in the United States is so routine and white-washed that no capitalist politician bothers to make self-criticism or mention the problems.

The Cultural Revolution — "Mao perpetrated violence"

The Cultural Revolution is another popular target of the imperialists. Western analysis commonly attributes all violence that occurred between 1966-76 to Mao.

Although there were only a handful of Western observers in China during the Cultural Revolution, most Western observers are willing to attribute hundreds of thousands or millions of deaths to the Cultural Revolution. Usually there are no specifics, as there are few first-hand accounts by Westerners. No Westerner can claim a comprehensive study. While it is possible that there were millions of deaths during the Cultural Revolution, they were not ordered by Mao. Mao explicitly ordered that the Cultural Revolution be non-violent. Central Committee directives of the communist party stated that "When there is a debate, it should be conducted by reasoning, not by coercion or force."(8) Furthermore, the violence which occurred during civil war was largely the responsibility of factions opposed to Mao.

Mao's enemies in China were more realistic than the Western propagandists. They directly blamed Mao and his followers, the so-called "Gang of Four", for a total of 34,000 executions or deaths caused by other means of repression during the ten years of the Cultural Revolution. If Mao's enemies are correct, should the 34,000 have been executed? MIM(Prisons) does not know the facts. Nor does anyone except Mao's imprisoned followers, Mao's high-ranking enemies in the party, and the masses at large, who have not been asked in any systematic way by outside critics.

Mao, in the form of self-criticism, stated that there had been too many executions during the Cultural Revolution. In this writing, Mao expressed his philosophy, which is also MIM(Prisons)'s. According to Mao, it may be justified to execute a murderer or someone who blows up a factory, however, in most cases, including all cases in the schools, government and army, Mao believed: "What harm is there in not executing people? Those amenable to labour reform should go and do labour reform, so that rubbish can be transformed into something useful. Besides, people's heads are not like leeks. When you cut them off, they

will not grow again. If you cut off a head wrongly, there is no way of rectifying the mistake even if you want to."(9) If people calling themselves Maoists did not carry this philosophy out, MIM(Prisons) does not defend them. MIM(Prisons) does know for sure, and the statistics are available even in the United States for all to see, that Mao accomplished the most of any political leader this century and probably ever in history in reducing all kinds of violence combined.

Even many of Mao's own enemies who were purged (expelled) from the party survived. Deng Xiaoping, the leader of China shortly after Mao's death until 1992, survived after being purged as the number two ranking revisionist, and was sent to re-education camp. On June 3-4, 1989, Deng ordered the army to fire on hundreds of demonstrators in the Beijing rebellion. This violence is of course a small portion of the violence caused by capitalist restoration in China.

Mao and the Chinese Communist Party, with little outside help, brought about major changes in a developing country while carrying out a revolution and civil war. It is a mistake to hold the Chinese Communist Party, or particularly Mao, an individual, responsible for everything that occurred under the leadership. In the United States, a developed country which is not functioning in conditions anywhere near as difficult as those of the People's Republic of China (1949-1976), annually there are 20,000 murders, 75,000 deaths of New Afrikans because of systematic national oppression, the death of a worker from work-related causes every five minutes, and the death of a child every 50 minutes for lack of food or money.(10) Yet we almost never hear that the victims of capitalist violence were "killed" by presidents Reagan, Bush, Clinton, etc. as we are apt to hear with regard to famine deaths under Mao.

"Intellectuals and education were repressed under Mao"

Many Western people believe that Mao was against "real" education and "intellectuals" during the Cultural Revolution, and that schools were tools for "brain-washing" and "propaganda". These beliefs come from stories about the closing of universities in China, new requirements and regulations for textbooks and research, and new controls over what types of art and theater were to be encouraged or allowed. Some of this information was brought to Westerners by Chinese intellectuals who left China before or during the Cultural Revolution: they left because they believed their way of life and status was threatened by these changes.

Westerners define "real" education as that which re-

sembles Western educational topics and agendas; i.e. studying history and literature from the point of view of the oppressors and imperialists, mathematics/science with the goal of research toward technological or medical advances that increase the wealth and power of the ruling classes, and studying to the point of expertise and academic status but without emphasis on practical experience or usefulness for the community.

Westerners perceive Chinese education under Mao as "propaganda", because it encourages values and goals which contradict the goals of capitalism. These values and goals taught in China during the Cultural Revolution were consistent with the building of socialism. Education in Western nations is not perceived as "propaganda" by those who, consciously or not, agree with the goals of capitalism/imperialism and patriarchy. Similarly, advertising for capitalist products, while recognized as very influential on people's opinions and actions, is not perceived as "brain-washing" by those who benefit from capitalism and have therefore decided to tolerate it.

Western perceptions of Maoist attitudes toward education, intellectuals and art were mostly based on information from Chinese who rejected socialism, or from foreigners who examined the events in China from an outsider's viewpoint. You can gain a more realistic picture of the educational revolution in China by reading books by authors who support what's best for the majority of the people, and who were closely involved in the changes going on. For example, William Hinton's *Hundred Day War: The Cultural Revolution at Tsinghua University* explains how socialism developed and old oppressive educational ideas were dismantled in the context of a famous institute of science and engineering:

"Students now spend as much time in the factories and on the construction sites of greater Peking as they do in classrooms and laboratories, and professors devote as much energy to developing liaisons with the scores of factories and enterprises with which the university is allied as they do to lecturing and advising students. No longer will thousands of privileged young men and women withdraw into the leafy wonderland of Tsinghua to crack books until they are too old to laugh. No longer will they stuff their heads with mathematical formulas relating to the outmoded industrial practices of pre-war Europe and America, sweat through 'surprise attack' exams, and then emerge after years of isolation from production and political engagement unable to tell high-carbon steel from ordinary steel or a 'proletarian revolutionary' from a 'revisionist'.

"In primary school dead serious about reading books.

"In middle school read dead books seriously.

"In the university seriously read books to death!" (11)

Before his death, Mao said he wanted to be remembered only as a "teacher". Mao did not oppose education. He opposed Western-style education because of its use in creating and justifying the existence of self-interested classes that don't necessarily serve the public. Instead, education and intellectuals should only serve the public, and as part of this doctrine, Mao ordered the intellectuals to go live with the peasants to help the peasants, educate the peasants and learn from the peasants.

The majority of China's population was poor and illiterate and had very little access to basic needs, education or medical care. Regarding medical education, Mao said in 1965: "Medical education should be reformed. There's no need to read so many books. ...It will be enough to give three years to graduates from higher primary schools. They would then study and raise their standards daily through practice. If this kind of doctor is sent down to the countryside, even if they haven't much talent, they would be better than quacks and witch doctors and the villages would be better able to afford to keep them. ... the way doctors are trained is only for the benefit of the cities. And yet in China over 500 million of our population are peasants."(12)

And in fact, one of many socialist programs developed was the barefoot doctors, who were peasants trained for a few months in basic medical care and then worked in their village to prevent disease and injury improve sanitation, and treat common medical problems.(13)

The following was the order issued by the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in 1966:

"As regards scientists, technicians and ordinary members of working staffs, as long as they are patriotic, work energetically, are not against the party and socialism, and maintain no illicit relations with any foreign country, we should in the present movement continue to apply the policy of unity-criticism-unity."(14)

Vast improvements were made in the educational system in China. Old capitalist-based textbooks were put aside and new textbooks were used to teach the history and politics from the perspective of the majority of the people. For example, Fundamentals of Political Economy: a Popular Introductory Marxist Economics Text, was published in 1974 (Shanghai People's Press) and studied by schoolchildren. Also, the literacy rate in China increased dramatically.

Despite the major improvements, not all educa-

tional reforms were correct. There were people calling themselves "Maoists" who advocated attacking all intellectuals and 95% of the Communist Party members during the Cultural Revolution. Mao called these people "ultra-leftists," because they used socialist language and ideas to justify extreme actions without first trying to discuss and encourage these intellectuals to change their ways.(15) ■

Notes:

1. *Leading bourgeois China scholar Roderick MacFarquhar says 16.4 million to 29.5 million died. Origins of the Cultural Revolution: Great Leap Forward 1958-60* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 330.
2. Wheelwright, E.L. & McFarlane, Bruce. *The Chinese Road to Socialism: Economics of the Cultural Revolution* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), p. 35.
3. *Ibid*, p. 53.
4. "Whom have we executed? What sort of people? Elements for whom the masses had great hatred, and whose blood-debt was heavy." (Chairman Mao Talks to the People, NY: Pantheon books, 1974), p. 77. Mao also said fewer executions would be made in the future. (*Ibid.*, 78)
5. According to Ruth Sivard the figure for the whole world is 14,000,000 annually. The vast majority occur in capitalist Asian countries. *World Military and Social Expenditures 1987-8*, p.25.
6. Comparing the Black and white populations of the same age in the United States, the mortality rate for Blacks was 7.8 per 1,000 in 1986 and 5.2 for whites. (*Statistical Abstract of the United States 1989*, p. 74) There were 29.223 million Blacks in 1986. (*Ibid.*)
7. Associated Press in Ann Arbor News, 10/1/89, b9.
8. Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, 8/8/66 in *People's China: Social Experimentation, Politics, Entry onto the World Scene 1966 through 1972* (NY: Vintage Books, 1974), p. 277.
9. Chairman Mao Talks to the People, p. 78.
10. Vincente Navarro, "Historical Triumph: Capitalism or Socialism?" *Monthly Review*, November, 1989, pp. 49-50.
11. Hinton, William. *Hundred Day War: The Cultural Revolution at Tsinghua University* (Monthly Review Press, New York and London, 1972) pp. 13-14.
12. "Directive on Public Health, June 26, 1965" Chairman Mao Talks to the People: Talks and Letters: 1956-1971, Stuart Schram editor, Pantheon Books, 1974, p. 232.
13. The barefoot doctor program begin in the 1950s and grew into the mid-1970s. They used the official Chinese paramedical manual A Barefoot Doctor's Manual, Running Press, 1977.
14. CCP Central Committee, 8/8/66, in Chairman Mao Talks to the People, p. 281.
15. To see examples of essays by ultra-leftists opposed to Maoism, see the 70s, China: *The Revolution Is Dead, Long live the Revolution*, Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1977.

Section 3: Three Strands of Oppression

Why We Need to Define Strands of Oppression

In this section we will talk about the three main strands of oppression: class, nation and gender. First it's important to understand why we address these three areas specifically.

The scientific method of dialectical materialism says that everything is made up of contradictions and that change comes from within a thing as these contradictions develop. Our focus of study is humyn society. Within humyn society there are many contradictions. In the era of imperialism, the principal contradiction on a world scale is between imperialism and the oppressed nations. This contradiction contains within it many other contradictions: principally the contradictions of class and gender. Thus the contradictions of class and gender determine the contradictions of imperialism between nations.

Through scientific analysis we have arrived at the conclusion that there are three main strands of oppression in the world today: class, nation and gender. Class and gender contradictions pre-existed nations; nations are a phenomenon of class society. All three are closely intertwined so that, for instance, it is difficult to separate out the national oppression from the gender oppression in the lynching of a New Afrikan man for looking at a white womyn. However, we can say firmly that all of these three strands of oppression are independent because the elimination of any of them will not eliminate the others. For instance, national liberation cannot itself resolve the class and gender contradictions.

There are other potential candidates for separate strands of oppression. For instance, some say that the contradiction between humyns and the environment is a strand separate from class, nation and gender. The way we determine if a strand is separate is by considering whether it will be resolved when the other contradictions are resolved.

The contradiction between humyns and the natural world has existed since the beginning of the species. Like all living things, humyns are dependent on other things, living and non-living, in a large mutually dependent web of life. So the contradiction between nature and the species predates society, and is therefore outside of society. The fundamental project of the humyn species has always been to transform and guide

the natural world to meet their needs. The ecological crisis we face today is a contradiction between those who would destroy the natural systems of Earth for their individual short-term profit, a drive that is inherent in the capitalist system, and the needs of the species in general for longer term survival and health. So even something as urgent as the ecological crisis finds solution in resolving the contradictions within humyn society. We look towards humyn over humyn oppression to find the motive forces of change that will best meet all aspects of humyn survival needs, which are interdependent with the survival of Earth's complex network of natural systems. ■



Definitions and Position: The Three Main Strands of Oppression

Reprinted from *MIM Theory 2/3, Summer 1992*,

Edited by *MIM(Prisons) 2019*

(See above, in Section 2, for *Class, Nation and Gender definitions*)

Class

The capitalist class is the enemy. Anyone who owns the means of production or has a controlling interest is a capitalist. Most of these are white; some are of other nationalities. We cautiously attempt to unite the national bourgeoisies of the oppressed nationalities behind the program of smashing imperialism.

The class enemy, beyond the imperialists, is the labor aristocracy. (See *MIM(Prisons) labor aristocracy study pack*) They are the mass base for social democracy. Globally, the union leaders are the most dangerous of these enemies because they are paid in this position of trying to perpetuate this system and so are the lackeys of the imperialists--the compradors of class. In imperialist countries, the entire working class has become this enemy, paid to support and perpetuate the imperialist system.

In Third World countries, individual masses in the unions can be won over and, so, are worth targeting since they have come to political activity in some form. In the imperialist country the labor aristocracy is part of the petty-bourgeoisie and has an interest in maintaining imperialism. These individuals can commit class suicide and join the revolution. As a group they will not do this now.

We recognize the ideology of social democracy as

an enemy ideology tending toward fascism.

The petty-bourgeoisie has an individualist interest in revolution but not the material interest that the proletariat has. They could go either way as a group and ally with imperialism or revolution. Conditions determine which way they go as a group, and in imperialist countries today their material interests are allied with the bourgeoisie because of the wealth shared with them from the plunders of imperialism.

Nation

The highest national enemies are the imperialists, the principal oppressors of oppressed nations. Another nation enemy is the comprador bourgeoisie: those members of the nation who sell out and ally with the imperialists to oppress their own nation. Their wealth depends on imperialism. The oppressed nations must overthrow the traitorous comprador bourgeoisie to advance the national struggle.

There is also a Third World labor aristocracy, a section of the labor aristocracy discussed above. The Third World labor aristocracy, compradors and those aspiring to be compradors, confuse and set back the national struggle, just as the American labor aristocracy is a group aspiring to be imperialists that sets back the class struggle. For theoretical purposes, it will be useful to refer to the Third World groups dependent on imperialism as a national aristocracy. They are the mass base for cultural nationalism and integrationism. The leaders of the national aristocracy are the most dangerous and most clearly enemies because of their material relation to imperialism.

Individual Third World labor aristocrats, cultural nationalists, and integrationists may be won over and are worth targeting. They are politically active. These



individuals may commit class and nation suicide and join the revolution. As a group they will not do this now.

We recognize the ideologies of cultural nationalism and integrationism as enemy ideologies tending toward fascism. (see "Fascism and Contemporary Economics" study pack)

The national bourgeoisie is like the petty-bourgeoisie of class in that they both could either go the way of imperialism or ally with the revolution.

Gender

Clearly those who run the pornography or other gender oppressive capitalist businesses are patriarchal enemies.

We call the remainder of the gender enemy the gender aristocracy. First World females are bought off with class, nation and gender privilege and have a material interest in maintaining imperialism. First World males, as a group, also have an interest in perpetuating the patriarchy and so can be defined as a patriarchal enemy; most of these people fall into imperialist or labor aristocracy camps. The gender aristocracy is the mass base for First World pseudo-feminism. Females who are paid leaders of the First World pseudo-feminist movement are analogous to the union leaders, and cultural nationalist leaders.

Individuals in the mass organizations concerned with gender might be won over and are worth targeting. The individuals can commit class/nation/gender suicide and join revolution. As a group they will not do this now.

Pseudo-Feminist ideology is that of the enemy.

Separatists who profit directly from gender oppression are the gender bourgeoisie. A separatist running a whore-house would qualify here. They are analogous to the national bourgeoisie class as a potential ally or enemy.

Overview

The capitalists, the compradors, and the pornographers are roughly equivalent in terms of danger and unapproachability as enemies.

The labor aristocracy, national aristocracy, and gender aristocracy are the aspiring imperialists in class, nation and gender; they are materially bought off.

The petty-bourgeoisie, national bourgeoisie and gender-female bourgeoisie are all potential allies depending on the principal contradiction and their condi-

tions. All will be tested as allies or enemies.

People may ask, how is sexual privilege as the basis for the gender aristocracy separate from class privilege? In some senses it is not, just as national privilege is not always separate from class privilege. The billionaire who buys prostitutes' services is transforming one privilege into another. That transformation depends on the fact that it is possible to exchange money for prostitution. There is a definite link between class privilege and gender privilege.

Those aspects of sexual privilege that cannot be bought for money prove that gender is independent of class and that there really is such a thing as sexual privilege, the meat of which the patriarchal enemies thrive on. An example is reproduction. In some states it is possible to buy a mother's breeding services. In others it is not possible or it is restricted.

Another indication of sexual privilege is seen in the issue of rape. Two people from the same class, say the white working class, do not necessarily face the same sexual domination, although the difference will not be as great as between imperialist men and the Third World women.

The new phrases coined here are "national aristocracy" and "gender aristocracy." The gender aristocracy are those people who have high status in sexual privilege, regardless of their biology.

Note: In this article MIM(Prisons) clarified our use of language to use *female* and *male* when referring to biological sex and *men* and *wimmin* when referring to gender. We edited this article with that terminology for clarity. The point being made is that the "binary" of biology does not correlate with the binary of gender. See also our article on the myth of binary sex biology. ■

National Liberation Struggles: The Road from Imperialism to Socialism

Reprinted from the Maoist Internationalist Movement (MIM), What's Your Line? pamphlet, last edited 1994, updated by MIM(Prisons) 2019

The principal contradiction in the world today is that between imperialism and the oppressed nations, including the oppressed internal nations within the United States. Under these conditions, socialist revolution begins with a national liberation struggle led by a communist vanguard party.

Mao Zedong explained this principle: "When imperialism launches a war of aggression against a country,

all its various classes, except for some traitors, can temporarily unite in a national war against imperialism. At such a time, the contradiction between imperialism and the country concerned becomes the principal contradiction, while all the other contradictions among the various classes of the country...are temporarily relegated to a secondary or subordinate position."(1)

Nations are a phenomenon of class society. Class and gender contradictions pre-existed nations. Class and gender contradictions determine national contradictions in the same way they underlay and determine the contradictions of capitalism. National liberation changes the conditions under which class and gender struggles take place; but national liberation cannot itself resolve the class and gender contradictions.

In the era of imperialism, the principal contradiction on a world scale is between imperialism and the oppressed nations. This contradiction contains within it many other contradictions: principally the contradictions of class and gender. Thus, the contradictions of class and gender determine the contradictions of imperialism. Through national liberation struggles, proletarian and feminist interests are united in opposition to imperialism and national oppression, thus creating the conditions for the eventual destruction of class and gender oppression as well.

Lenin argued: "In the same way as mankind can arrive at the abolition of classes only through a transition period of the dictatorship of the oppressed class, it can arrive at the inevitable integration of nations only through a transition period of the complete emancipation of all oppressed nations, i.e., their freedom to secede."(2)

The people of the oppressor nations construct class and gender alliances that use nationalism to advance their class and gender interests within oppressor nations at the expense of the people of the oppressed nations. These strategic alliances are mainly two-fold: the alliance of the labor aristocracy and the imperialist bourgeoisie (class), and the gender alliance between dominant-nation women and dominant-nation men (gender).

The people of the oppressed nations, on the other hand, construct class and gender alliances that advance the interests of the nations and attack the foundations of imperialism. Their struggle is the revolutionary nationalist struggle, comprising an alliance of the working masses with the left-wing of the national bourgeoisie and sections of the petty bourgeoisie, and an alliance between women and left-wing men in the oppressed nation.

In the oppressor nations, the bourgeoisie generally leads the national class alliance, and the patriarchy leads the national gender alliance. In the oppressed nations, the level of leadership gained by the proletariat (or its ideology) in the national class alliance, and the level of leadership gained by feminism within the national gender alliance, determines the revolutionary potential of the national liberation struggle.

Class and gender struggles thus propel national liberation struggles: the class and gender contradictions between imperialism and the oppressed nations are prioritized over the internal contradictions (and the internal contradictions provide fuel for the fire of the overall movement).

This strategy is the best way to finally defeat imperialism and patriarchy, as historical experience demonstrates. In China, the communists' participation in the nation war against Japan was specifically internationalist in perspective, as articulated by Mao:

"[O]nly by fighting in defense of the motherland can we defeat the aggressors and achieve national liberation. And only by achieving national liberation will it be possible for the proletariat and other working people to achieve their own emancipation. The victory of China and the defeat of the invading imperialists will help the people of other countries. Thus in wars of national liberation patriotism is applied internationalism."(3)

This has been advanced in practice in the era of imperialism. But the idea predates modern imperialism, as Frederick Engels touched on it briefly in 1882. Engels said of the workers in Ireland and Poland in 1882 that they had "not only the right but even the duty to be nationalistic...they are most internationalistic when they are genuinely nationalistic." Ten years earlier, Engels had argued that Irish workers should have their own national organization, because to ask them to join the British Federal Council would have been an insult. (4)

Not all national struggles in the oppressed nations lead to socialism. The second half of the 20th century is full of countries that won independence only to fall into neocolonialism rather than rising toward socialism. The academic Juan Gomez-Quinones explains this:

"Historically, when the working class has been led by Marxists and the class struggle linked with the national liberation struggle, there has been a progressive revolutionary development. When the two have been separated or driven apart, national aspirations are cap-

tured by the bourgeoisie and right-winged petty bourgeoisie, who use them for power and advantage."(5)

Thus the Maoist Internationalist Movement seeks to pursue national liberation struggles led by communists (i.e. a Maoist vanguard party). At present, MIM is a collection of cells without a centralized party. We look forward to the emergence of independent vanguard parties among the oppressed nations within the United States and around the world. ■

Notes:

1. Mao Zedong, "On Contradiction," *Selected Works Vol. 1*, p331.
2. V.I. Lenin, "The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination." January-February 1916. From *Selected Works, One Volume Edition, International Publishers: New York, 1971*. p.160.
3. Mao, "The Role of the Chinese Communist Party in the National War", *Selected Works of Mao p: 866-522-7747e-Tung, Vol. II*, p.196.
4. Ian Cummins, *Mar, Engels and National Movements*, London:1980. p.104.
5. Juan Gomez-Quinones, "Critique on the National Question, Self-Determination and Nationalism." *Latin American Perspectives*, Spring 1982, issue 33, vol IX, no. 2. p. 77.

Single Nation Parties



Excerpted from "Maoism Around Us" by MIM(Prisons), Updated in August 2011 to reflect more recent assessments of the organizations discussed

2019 update: as far as we know NAMP no longer exists

MIM(Prisons) upholds the MIM-line on nationalism and single-nation parties.(1) MIM Thought seemed to rely on the experience of the previous generation as the main evidence of the usefulness of single-nation formations, and we believe more recent

developments confirm that this is still the case. At the same time, we also have no disagreements with those who focus on cross-national organization, even of the lumpen class where national divisions are much more pronounced. In some ways this approach is superior in promoting a humynism based on the commonalities of the lumpen situation, rather than slipping into pork-chop nationalism that attempts to capture and romanticize a culture of the past based on one's ancestry. For example, hip hop culture is a more promising battle ground for the oppressed today than Egyptology or even Kwanzaa.

There are two kinds of nationalism, revolutionary nationalism and reactionary nationalism. Revolutionary nationalism is first dependent upon a people's revolution with the end goal being the people in power. Therefore to be a revolutionary nationalist you would by necessity have to be a socialist. If you are a reactionary nationalist you are not a socialist and your end goal is the oppression of the people.

"Cultural nationalism, or pork chop nationalism, as I sometimes call it, is basically a problem of having the wrong political perspective. It seems to be a reaction instead of responding to political oppression. The cultural nationalists are concerned with returning to the old African culture and thereby regaining their identity and freedom. In other words, they feel that the African culture will automatically bring political freedom. Many times cultural nationalists fall into line as reactionary nationalists." — Huey P. Newton, 1968 (2)

There are a number of groups upholding "Pantherism" and "intercommunalism" that do not claim to be Maoists or even communists of any sort. While MIM(Prisons) sees the Black Panther Party developed by Huey P. Newton as the Maoist vanguard of the United States in the late 1960's, the Panther legacy took on such a mass character that Pantherism and Maoism are often not treated as the same thing. The BPP's own former Chief of Staff uses "intercommunalism" to hide the original Panthers' communist ideology.(3) The Panther legacy is so strong that people use it to this day as a cover while doing work for the state.

But just as we don't abandon Maoism to the revisionists, we do not leave the Panthers to them either. We uphold the Panther legacy and learn from their lessons. Two other organizations that we have distributed materials from and worked with also explicitly claim the Panther legacy while claiming Maoism. They are the New Afrikan Maoist Party (NAMP) and the New Afrikan Black Panther Party (NABPP). The MIM has had a long-standing policy of not working with revisionist organization so as not to confuse the people. This is not a universal principal, but one that

the party correctly applied for decades. In most cases we have also taken on this practice, but have made an exception with the NABPP who has had a long history of work with MIM, but has taken up lines opposed to Maoism. The nature of this work has been in the interests of U.S. prisoners, fighting against abuses such as torture, censorship and ongoing COINTELPRO campaigns by the state.

It is to our dismay that the New Afrikan Black Panther Party (NABPP) has developed the political line that it has, despite some members having had a long history of exposure to MIM line. Regardless, we have continued to work with their members on specific projects and even distributed particular writings. When doing so, we have specified our disagreements with the NABPP. We continue to see this practice as correct in the interests of the oppressed.

The NABPP, formerly known as the New Black Panther Party-Prison Chapter, evolved from within U.S. prisons and continues to have a significant overlap with our own work. Therefore it is of great importance that comrades understand the differences between us, even if we can admit that the NABPP has done some good work. A more detailed discussion of the NABPP was published in our review of Rashid's book *Defying the Tomb*, but we will address our basic differences here.

There is not much in the original debates between the MIM camp and the NABPP and its supporters that has not already been addressed by MIM in its debates with other Trotskyist and crypto-Trotskyist groups. The NABPP calls for working class unity within the United States and refers to the New Afrikan nation as an almost wholly "proletarian slave nation." (See MIM(Prisons) on U.S. Prison Economy below for our analysis of prison labor.) They decry outsourcing for reducing the ranks of the labor aristocracy in the United States, claim that people wouldn't be employed if they weren't being exploited and deny the history of Amerika's brutal white nationalism spelled out in J. Sakai's *Settlers: the Mythology of the White Proletariat*.

In the debates with NABPP, comrades in the New Afrikan Collectivist Association, a precursor to the New Afrikan Maoist Party (NAMP), criticized NABPP on its line on the New Afrikan proletariat as well as its line on a Pan-Afrikan nation. The latter question which NABPP addresses theoretically has been taken on in practice by the African People's Socialist Party (APSP), whom our comrades have also allied with in the past. (The APSP does not claim Maoism but does claim the legacy of the late BPP.) In

recent years they have combined their line that Africans (including New Afrikans in the United States) are the vanguard of the revolution with an apparent inability to build mass support for revolution within U.S. borders to come to a position of forming the African Socialist International, being led by the APSP. We see this as being much closer to the rcp=u\$'s Trotskyism in building the U.S.-based Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (now defunct), than to Pan-Afrikanism, and caution our revolutionary comrades in the Third World to be wary of such First World-led organizations. In the earliest history of Pan-Afrikanism, the different conditions faced by New Afrikans compared to most of Africa were quickly realized by many, resulting in separate efforts. And as stated above, a correct global class analysis would lead one to conclude that there is no need for First World leadership to create a revolutionary pole in an international arena.

Internationalism will come in many forms among the internal semi-colonies. Those with links to the Third World will tend to develop special relations along those lines. But any group based in the imperialist countries that is attempting to build internationalist ties on the basis of mutual class interests is falling into Trotskyism. NAMP's line that the New Afrikan nation is primarily a petty bourgeois nation, and that they do not form chapters in the Third World in respect of local comrades who can do a much better analysis of their conditions are key positions for any First World based communist organization or party.

NAMP sees single-nation party organizing as a logical high-priority given the principal contradiction as being between the oppressed nations and imperialism. MIM(Prisons) does not see this as a dividing line question, but would encourage all to take seriously the considerations put forth in the 2005 MIM resolutions on cell structure (see above), particularly in reference to maintaining the security and longevity of the movement as a whole.

After working closely with NAMP in our early years, we split with them over what we saw as a liquidationist line based in a faulty class analysis that gave too much credit to the New Afrikan petty bourgeoisie as a revolutionary class. We say their practice is liquidationist because they turned all their energy to building mass organizations focused on largely petty bourgeois projects. Rather than organizing around the progressive aspects of New Afrikan nationalism based in the oppression they face, NAMP chose to organize along economic lines, telling New Afrikans benefiting from imperialism that they deserved a bigger piece of the pie. This is the most common line we see among

the New Afrikan Nationalist organizations today. Rather than NABPP integrationism, or MIM proletarian internationalism we see much narrow bourgeois nationalism.

We do not have a list of fraternal organizations. If you see us distributing materials by a self-proclaimed Maoist group or working with them in any other way, you can assume that we see them as part of the Maoist Internationalist Movement unless we explicitly state otherwise. ■

Notes:

1. See MIM theory 7: Proletarian Feminist Revolutionary Nationalism
2. Foner, Philip S. *The Black Panthers Speak. Huey Newton Talks to the Movement...* p. 50.
3. While we do not address all of the new "Panther" groups here you can read an article on. The prominent NOI-linked "New Black Panther Party" and an interview on former BPP Chief of Staff David Hilliard's work in the *Defend the Legacy of the BPP newspaper archive study pack*, and online in our archive of the *etext.org* website:
<http://www.prisoncensorship.info/archive/etext/bpp/defendlegacy.html>
<http://www.prisoncensorship.info/archive/etext/bpp/hilliardclass.html>

Class Privilege and Oppression Who Are Our Friends? Who Are Our Enemies?

Reprinted from the Maoist Internationalist Movement (MIM), What's Your Line? pamphlet, last edited 1990. Edited by MIM(Prisons) in August 2011 to eliminate reference to the "super exploitation of...oppressed internal nations." Exploitation of the oppressed nations is the exception, not the rule in the United States. Certainly, there is no super exploitation to speak of in this country.

In 1926, Mao Zedong asked: "Who are our enemies? Who are our friends?...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 toward the revolution."(1) To avoid leading anyone down a dead-end road, communists always need to answer these questions.

MIM holds that, at the present, the majority of white workers in this country--skilled workers, trade unionists, paper-pushers, etc.--do not represent a revolutionary class. They do not create surplus value as much as reapportion the surplus which results from super exploitation of the Third World. They are not prepared to abandon bourgeois aspirations and mainly high-paying jobs to drop everything for the good of the international proletariat.

This is not the result of a lack of correct leadership, or from a simple failure to develop class consciousness. For the ideology which leads white workers to seek more TVs instead of less capitalists has a material basis which is itself a barrier.

Some people accuse MIM of being "anti-Marxist" for "ignoring the working class." But is this a new idea in Marxism?

In 1858, Engels wrote to Marx: "The English proletariat is actually becoming more and more bourgeois, so that the most bourgeois of all nations is apparently aiming ultimately at the possession of bourgeois aristocracy and a bourgeois proletariat alongside the bourgeoisie. For the nation which exploits the whole world this is of course to a certain extent justifiable."(2)

In his analysis of imperialism, Lenin further analyzed the role of this "labor aristocracy." And he wrote: "In the civil war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, they [the labor aristocracy] inevitably, and in no small numbers, take the side of the bourgeoisie...."(3)

MIM's class analysis relies heavily on the piercing historical work of J. Sakai in *Settlers: the Mythology of the White Proletariat*, (Morningstar Press, 1983).

The international proletariat has nothing to lose but its chains, and is therefore fully prepared--with the correct leadership--to lead proletarian revolution and end class oppression altogether in the long run. ■

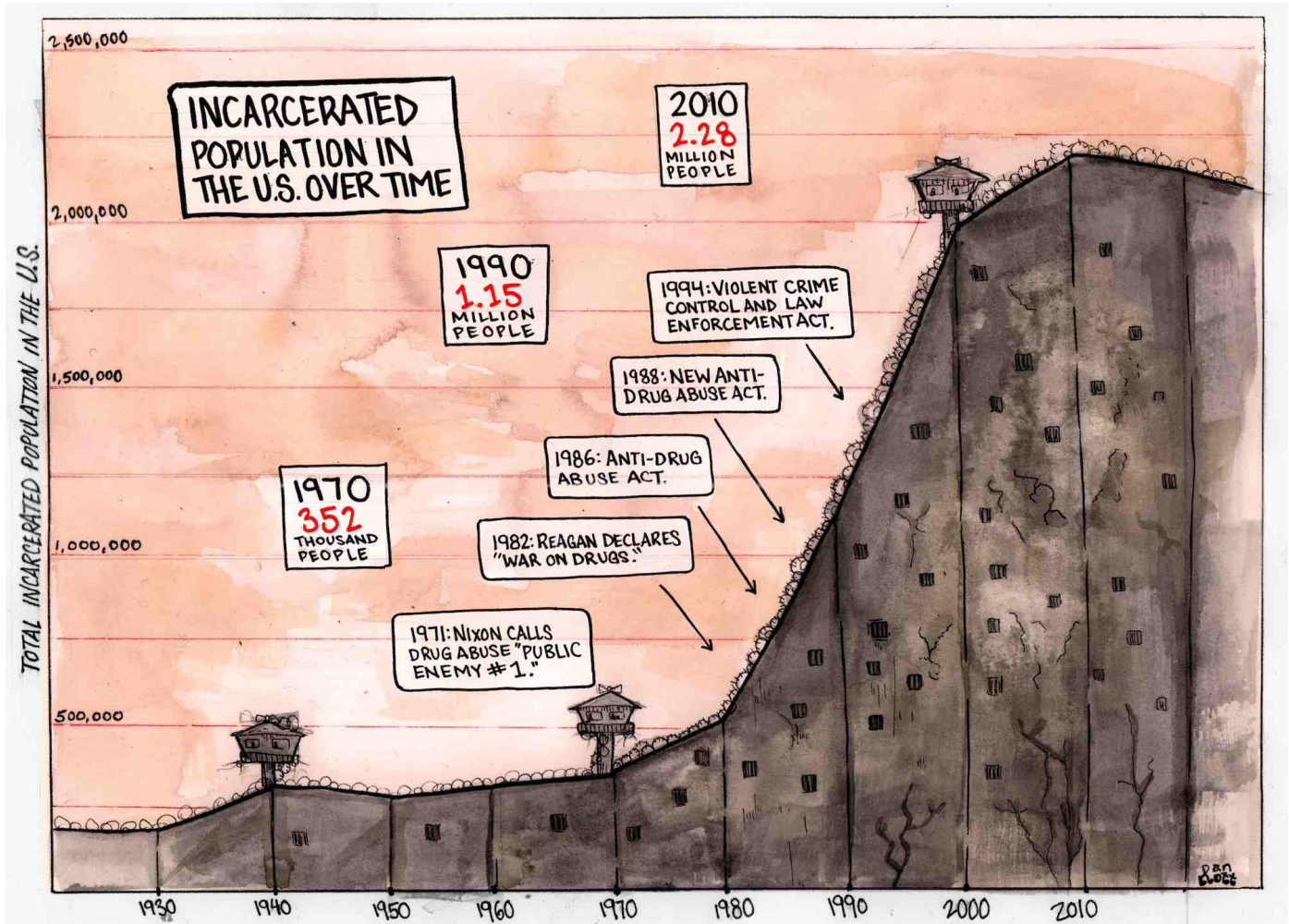
Notes:

1. Mao, "Analysis of the classes in Chinese Society," in *Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1971.
2. Engels quoted in Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, in *Selected Works Vol. 1*, New York: International Publishers, 1971. p.247.
3. *Ibid*, p.175.

The Political Economy of U\$. Mass Incarceration

The United States spends an enormous amount of money on the criminal injustice system. The prisons, police and court systems play an important role in the modern iteration of the largest settler state, that also serves as the world's primary imperialist power. In this period, the need to control the internal semi-colonies stands in contradiction to recent trends in integration. Meanwhile, as the criminal injustice system affects many people from many different walks of life, it has recently attracted a large amount of attention and criticism.

In this essay we will examine the political forces behind the evolution of what has become the most elaborate system of locking human beings in cages in history. We will examine the economics at play in such a massive system, including who is benefiting and who is paying. We will conclude with what implications this understanding has for the role of prison-based organizing in a revolutionary program for liberation.



From National Liberation to Mass Incarceration

The famous chart (see above) of U.S. incarceration rates shows the beginning of the upturn to the meteoric rise of the 1980s and 1990s in the early 1970s. That is immediately following the peak of the national liberation movements in this country as well as the mass resistance to the Vietnam War and a youth counterculture that continued into the 1970s.

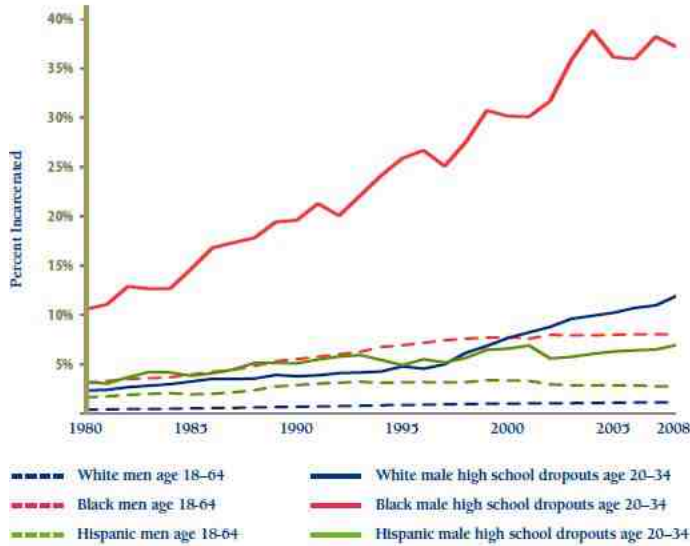
The 1980s through the 1990s became the "tough on crime" era. The ghettos went through a process of destabilization following the destruction of the leadership of the liberation movement, where the Black middle class was allowed more opportunities and out-roads, and drugs and guns were brought in. The New Afrikan ghetto shifted to become more and more an isolated lumpen and semi-proletariat. This coincided with all kinds of traumas and damage to those left in the inner cities with crumbling communities. If the unrest of the 1960s and early 1970s were not enough to justify the mass incarceration to the public, the real and sensationalized rise in debilitating drug use and violence were.

While there were periods of increased crime leading up to and during some of the prison boom, there were also periods of lower rates of crime. Crime rates were not improved in an overall way as imprisonment continued to skyrocket. In fact, crime rates worsened in the inner cities that were most affected by bringing significant portions of those populations into the criminal injustice system and out of the community.

Lock Up Blacks to Get White Votes

A 2007 report from the JFA Institute describes how the increase in prison populations in previous decades is a result of a change in laws and policies in enforcement.(1) We have been in the era of "tough on crime" politics for decades, despite the tactics of more police and prisons proving ineffective at reducing crime overall. Most Americans will still deny that these laws translate into increased control and repression of the internal semi-colonies. At the same time, millions of Americans are supporting these laws as a means of securing the jobs and livelihood of themselves and their families. While white people like to look at slavery and genocide as things in the past, the Amerikkkan

INCARCERATION RATE RISING
 More than one in three young, black men without a high school diploma is currently behind bars



nation has probably never been so deeply entrenched and invested as a nation of oppressors as they are today with millions serving as cops, spies and military personnel.

And while the white media would have you believe that "tough on crime" policies are protecting Americans from murderers and sexual predators, about two-thirds of the 650,000 prison admissions each year are people who have violated their probation or parole. And half of these violations are technical, in other words, they're going to prison for things most people could not be put in prison for.(1) The demand for more incarceration is putting hundreds of thousands of people in prison each year for doing things not generally considered crimes under U.S. law.

More Money + Less Work = More Cops

After the second inter-imperialist war, the United States rose to become the primary imperialist country in the world. It took advantage of the devastated European countries to position itself to define the global capitalist economy for the rest of the century. This allowed for a great influx of wealth into the United States during that period, primarily from the Third World periphery, where the Americans began to shift agricultural and later industrial production. This exploitation of cheap labor, under the gun of the strongest military in the world, became the basis for a growing service economy in the United States (and other imperialist core countries). The United States went full force into developing a consumer class, that would serve as a bribe and propaganda piece to tell the story that capitalism equaled prosperity.

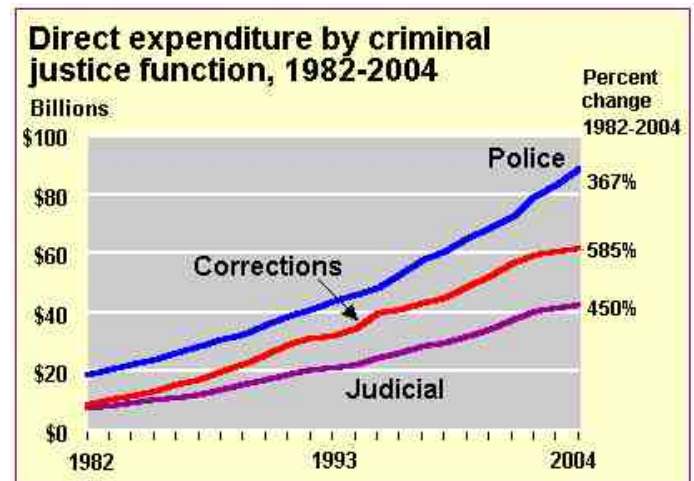
While indirectly the repressive arm of the state

maintains a system that materially benefits Americans, strictly speaking, prisons are a net loss financially for the Amerikkkan nation. As we'll discuss further, the prison boom cannot be blamed on any major corporate interests. What a beefed-up injustice system does offer economically is a means of employing millions of people at cushy exploiter wages. It is a means of shuffling the super-profits around the pigsty and maintaining a consumer population. These millions of people provide a self-perpetuating demand for more prisoners, and more funding for various law enforcement projects.

State Bureaucrats and National Oppression

One example of this self-perpetuating bureaucracy dates back to 1983 when James Gonzalez became Deputy Director of the California Department of Corrections. He immediately expanded the department's planning staff from 3 to 118 and began focusing on modeling that would forecast increasing needs for expansion into the future (it's not just C.O.s getting the jobs).(2) California built 23 major new prisons, expanded other prisons and increased its prison population 500% by 2007.(3) With more prisons, come more prison guards, creating the 40,000-strong California Correctional Peace Officers Association with yearly dues totaling \$31.6 million in 2017.(4) This is the same union that earned itself a raise following the exposure of gladiator fights staged by guards at Corcoran State Prison, where many prisoners were murdered. The very same that was behind the 3-strikes laws to put people away for 25-to-life for petty crimes, and that has campaigned repeatedly to eliminate educational programs for prisoners.

The Correctional Officers (C.O.s) are partners with the private industry that has boomed off of an economy based on war and repression. A visit to the American Corrections Association conference will tell you it's not just a few imperialist suits in a smoke-filled room. It is a getaway for a large mix of salesmen, cops and



C.O.s; just regular Amerikkans.(5)

In the united States there are laws that prevent the military from lobbying the government as a safeguard against war being carried out in the interests of the warmakers. There are no such limits on the police and correctional officers, allowing the war on gangs to go on perpetuating itself both politically and economically. The NYPD and LAPD have arsenals and capabilities that rival many nations' armed forces, and they are allowed to influence politics on the local, state and even federal level both directly and indirectly.

On the local level police departments have undermined trends toward so-called "community policing." Where youth in the community have been effective at reducing violence through dialogue and organizing, the police have rejected these programs in favor of community representatives who will rubber stamp their continued strategies of suppression and harassment of oppressed-nation youth. When street organizations came together to form peace treaties in Los Angeles and Chicago in the 1990s, the police responded immediately through the white media saying it was a hoax and it would never last. Let there be no confusion, the police created these wars and the police will not let them stop.

In the late 1990s, the New York Times reported that most white residents of New York City were comfortable with police behavior, while 9 out of 10 Blacks believed brutality against Blacks to be frequent. The regular "stop and frisking" by police that was then practiced under Mayor Giuliani, was found to be directed at Blacks and Latinos 90% of the time.(6)

Politically, the rest of the oppressor nation is willing to go along with the job security plans of the police and correctional officers as a means of protecting their collective privilege. One of the few things Amerikkans can agree to spend state money on. With that, the injustice system becomes an important part of the national culture in rallying the people in material support of the imperialist system that they benefit from.

Prisoncrats and Prison Labor

Almost all jobs working in prisons in the United States are government jobs, which come with a certain level of benefits and stability not offered in many other parts of the economy. Being a Correctional Officer is certainly one of the more dangerous and stressful state jobs. They expect their job to be a combination of pushing papers and pushing people around. Hence the term "prisoncrats." But who then will do the work to actually run the prisons? Mostly the prisoners themselves. While around 44% of prisoners have "jobs" of

some sort, the majority of those jobs are involved in prison maintenance.(7)

As resistance to mass incarceration has increased, one prominent ideology in that movement claims that free labor is why so many people are sent to prison in the first place. But this would be a very circular logic if the prisoners are mostly just doing work to maintain the prisons themselves. Exploiting prison labor for productive work has certainly been considered. In the next section we discuss how conflicting class interests have prevented it from happening.

Labor Aristocracy Blocks Prisoners From Productive Labor

If the motivation for being the number one imprisonment country in all of history was exploiting labor then you would see the majority of prisoners engaged in productive labor. Of the prisoners who work, less than 5% are attributed to a private employer, the rest work for the state. Of those who produce a product, less than 2% of those products are being sold to a private company.(7) There is a larger minority of prisoners that work in state-run industries that are arguably productive labor, because they are run for a profit internally. But even this is tiny in terms of state budgets, with profits from these industries accounting for at most 0.2% of the costs to run prisons. Less than 2% of prisoners produce products that are sold to private companies.

Generally, if prisoners work for an outside corporation and produce goods for interstate commerce, then they are legally required to receive Amerikkkan exploiter level wages. The benefit to the companies is that they can skimp on benefits and don't need to give raises. Small business owners have fought to limit the benefits of those who use prison labor, since they lack the capital to take advantage of such competitive advantages. The petty bourgeois interests here keep those of the imperialists in check. (8)

Some state industries export products to other countries, but interstate commerce has largely been restricted by the efforts of small business interests and Amerikan labor unions. Since the 1980s, the federal government has tried to embrace the model of "factories with fences." But the free market for slave labor continues to be hampered by state laws. In 2007, Alaska passed a law that allows the Department of Labor and Workforce Development to enter into contracts with private companies or individuals to sell them prison labor,

"provided that the commissioner consults with local union organizations beforehand in order to ensure that

the contract will not result in the displacement of employed workers, will not be applied in skills, crafts, or trades in which there is a surplus of available gainful labor in the locality, and will not impair existing contracts for services. A contract with an individual or a private organization must require that the commissioner be paid the minimum wage for each hour worked by a prisoner." (9)

Clearly this has nothing to do with prisoners' rights, but it is crafted for the protection of labor aristocracy jobs and small businesses. And as many states do, Alaska allows for the wages to be garnished before disbursing them to the prisoner. So there is no law that the prisoner must be paid a certain wage.

What about the one industry that does have unfettered access to prison labor? Theoretically, private prisons could collect fat contracts from the state and let prisoners do much of the work to run the facility. But after 3 decades of prison boom, still less than 5% of prisons are privately owned, at least partially due to an inability to remain profitable.(8) It is often pointed out that it costs more to keep a person in prison for a year than send them to college. (The difference for sending youth to a correctional facility compared to grade school can be differences in order of magnitude.) This is a price that largely-tax-averse Amerikkans have been willing to pay, as we'll address below.

MIM(Prisons) has no problem with prisoners doing work on principle. In fact, doing productive labor is a required aspect of rehabilitation for all sorts of class criminals, including all Amerikkans. However, this structure of the overseer with the nightstick making the prisoners scrub the floors and wash the dishes is too reminiscent of the slave days from which this all evolved, and does nothing to reform, but only to reinforce the system of oppression.

The Prisoner Class

Prisoners, more than the internal semi-colonies in general, are excluded from the economic system of production and distribution. That is why we generalize them as part of the First World lumpen class. The imprisoned lumpen are a unique group in their relations to the economy, but we do not consider prisoners a separate class per se. Based on the above info we could argue that a portion of prisoners are part of the proletariat class. However, prisoners in this country are most often referred to as slaves when a class is applied to them. Prisons are the modern day evolution of slavery in the sense that New Afrikans were first concentrated in the plantations, then the ghettos and now the prisons; and even some prison facilities in the south are former plantations. And similar histories of ghettoiza-

tion are seen with the colonization of the First Nations and Chican@s. But economically, the U\$. prison system does not reflect a system of slavery. This is despite the fact that the 13th amendment abolished slavery "except as a punishment for crime."

Slavery is a system characterized by the capture or purchase of humyns for the purpose of exploiting their labor. As Marx explained, "As a slave, the worker has exchange value, a value; as a free wage-worker he has no value; it is rather his power of disposing of his labor, effected by exchange with him, which has value." Marx is clarifying the distinction that slaves, as objects to be purchased, have exchange value. While capitalist workers are not purchased, they are selling their labor instead.(10) While prison labor is similar to slavery in that it involves workers who are receiving virtually no pay for their labor but are being provided with housing and other basic necessities, there are a few factors in prison labor that distinguish it from slavery as we use that term to define a system of exploitation. First, states have to pay other states to take their prisoners, implying they have no exchange value. Prisons are used as a tool of social control, with the use of prisoners' labor only as an afterthought to try to offset some of the operating costs. Which leads to our second point: there is no net profit made off the labor of prisoners -- because of the cost of incarceration, the state is only able to offset a portion of the cost of providing for a prisoner by using his/her labor. Because of these features of prisoner labor, we do not call it slavery.

Even if prisoner labor is not slavery in the economic sense of that term, it is still possible that prisoners are exploited. Exploitation means that someone is extracting surplus value from the labor of someone else. The profit or surplus-value arises when workers do more labor than is necessary to pay the cost of hiring their labor-power. This is the way that capitalists make a profit: they pay people less than their labor is worth and then sell products for their full value. The difference is the profit.

In the United States, the imperialists are paying workers more than the value of their labor. They can do this because of the tremendous superprofits stolen from exploiting the Third World workers. And they want to do this because it maintains a complicit population at home which has a material interest in imperialism and keeps capital circulating with its excessive consumption. Amerikkans support their imperialist government because they benefit from it. They may not all earn the same as the big capitalists, but even in a recession they can look to the Third World and see that they don't want to share the wealth around the world evenly

because that would mean a step down for First World so-called "workers."

There are some notable exceptions within U.S. borders: non-citizens are often forced into jobs that pay far below minimum wage (or often don't pay them at all) as they are in a shady sector of the economy. Many migrants in the United States are exploited, but they make up a very small portion of workers in this country.

Using the term exploitation to describe prisoner labor is complicated. Prisoners certainly earn very little for their labor, but we also have to include the cost of providing prisoners all of their necessities (although with very poor quality that leads to many unnecessary deaths). Of course much of what is being provided "for" prisoners is not part of their cost of living but rather part of the cost of keeping them captive and providing a high standard of living for their captors. However, it is fair to say that prisons are stealing the labor power of prisoners. They have made it impossible for prisoners to refuse to work and the actual pay prisoners receive is far less than the value of their labor. By stealing labor power, the U.S. prison system also prevents the self-determination of New Afrikans, Boriqua, Chicano@s and First Nations, whose people are vastly over-represented in the system and cannot contribute to building their nations as well while incarcerated or otherwise entangled in the system.

To the extent that the states can't continue to run prisons on tax money they don't have, prisoner labor is a valued part of the money going to the many labor aristocrats working in the prison system. An offset to the cost of running prisons is useful, even if that offset does not come close to covering even the cost of imprisoning those prisoners doing the work. But it's important to remember that this labor is only useful because expensive prisons existed first.

Profiteering Follows Policy

The importance of our point that prisoners are not generally exploited for economic profit is in understanding the real motive force behind the U.S. prison boom. Fundamentally, prisons are a money-losing operation. It costs vastly more money to run prisons than is generated from prisoner labor or any other aspect of the "industry." If prison labor was a gold mine for private profiteers, then we would see corporations of all sorts leading the drive for more prisons. On the contrary, though the fifth largest prison system in the United States in 2007 was the private Corrections Corporation of America (CCA),(11) the government still ran over 95% of the prisons overall.(8) 2022 numbers show only 8% of incarcerated people in the United States are held in private facilities.(42) That

8% includes many re-entry centers and people in home confinement, where these corporations have branched out after failing to expand their efforts to run large institutions.

As we mentioned above, lobbying by private prison and internal security firms is still legal. And Arizona's SB1070 bill to lock up more migrants was famously exposed as being developed by the American Legislative Exchange Council, which was made up of private industry and legislators, many of whom received campaign money from the private prison industry.(12) So we're not saying there aren't people who would like to see more private prisons and more productive prison labor, it just hasn't happened yet.

The prison boom originated in government policy as described above, and then new companies formed to profiteer, or in the case of telephone and commissary, old companies adapted their product to a specific opportunity. Prisons serve U.S. imperialism in controlling the local population, while placating the demands of the oppressor nation as a whole. SB1070 was private prisons trying to profit off of white fear of migrants. Only more recently, with the emergence of mass incarceration, the demands of Americans for more prisons are more economically oriented, rather than just social. And most of that economic interest is among state employees and unions, not private corporations.

In Ohio, the Department of Corrections had to go to the state Supreme Court in order to close prisons over the protests of the guard union.(13) The California Correctional Peace Officers Association, notorious for being the strongest in the country, has applied similar pressures preventing the state from cutting anything from the CDCR budget except for education programs in the late 2000s.

Private industries are making lots of money off prisons. From AT&T charging outrageous rates for prisoners to talk to their families, to the food companies that supply cheap (often inedible) food to prisons, to the private prison companies themselves, there is clearly money to be made. But these companies' profits are coming from the states' tax money, a mere shuffling of funds within the imperialist economy. Some companies like AT&T or some of the prison package services are selling goods or services directly to prisoners at drastically increased prices from what you'd get on the street. But even then, they are not exploiting the prisoners' labor, they are merely extorting their money. The private prisons are the only example where prison labor that is used to run the prisons may come into play in determining corporate profits.

The capitalist will invest in operations based on where the funding goes, so it is not really the evil corporations that are directly to blame for the U.S. prison boom. The government decides whether prisons are built. The U.S. government serves the overall interests of the imperialist class first and then must answer to its Amerikan constituency. It is the combination of these two interests, opposed to those of the oppressed nations of the world, that have led to the largest mass-incarceration in history. Currently, the strategy to dismantle this massive humyn experiment must recognize these two forces as the opposition, and then mobilize forces that have an interest in countering both imperialism and Amerikanism.

Direct Costs of Prisons

By 2015, 3 million people were employed in "criminal justice," making it the 5th largest field of employment in the country and one of the fastest growing industries.(14) Total spending on prisons and jails more than quadrupled over the thirty years between 1980 and 2010, from approximately \$17 billion in 1980 to more than \$80 billion in 2010. When including expenditures for police, judicial and legal services, the direct costs reached \$261 billion.(15)

For comparison, in 2015 the United States "defense" budget was \$637 billion, up from \$379 billion in 1980, a 68% increase.(16,17) In that same period, total government spending on K-12 education more than doubled, going from \$271 billion to over \$621 billion.(17) So we can see the growth in criminal justice system spending was dramatically faster than the growth in other government spending.

Hidden Costs of Prisons

While capitalism is great at budgeting costs and revenues for the capitalist, it is very poor at dealing with costs to everyone else, or society as a whole. Direct expenditures on prisons are just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the economic impact of prisons. One study, conducted in 2016, estimated the total aggregate burden of imprisonment at \$1 trillion, with an additional \$10 in social costs for every \$1 spent on corrections. This means that most of that \$1 trillion is being borne by families, community members, and prisoners themselves.(18)

Being locked up in prison comes with a lot of negative consequences beyond the obvious loss of years of one's life spent behind bars. Economically these costs include lost wages, reduced earnings once on the streets, injuries sustained behind bars (from guards and other prisoners), and for some the ultimate price of death from fatal injuries while in prison, or a shorter

life expectancy for prisoners. This totals up to annual costs of just under \$400 billion dollars per year.

Estimated Costs borne by prisoners:(18)

- Lost wages while imprisoned (\$70.5 billion)
- Reduced lifetime earnings (\$230.0 billion)
- Nonfatal injuries sustained in prison (\$28.0 billion)
- Higher mortality rates of former prisoners (\$62.6 billion)
- Fatal injuries to prisoners (\$1.7 billion)

Beyond the direct costs to prisoners, family members and society in general carry an even larger financial burden. This includes direct costs like traveling for visitation of loved ones and moving costs when families can no longer afford their homes. But also less obvious costs like the impact prison has on family members which has been demonstrated to worsen the health and educational achievement of prisoners' children, leaving some homeless, lead to higher rates of divorce and also reduce the marriage rate in the community. Further there are costs to society from homelessness of released prisoners, and reentry programs and others serving prisoners.

Estimates of Costs Borne by Families, Children, and Communities:(18)

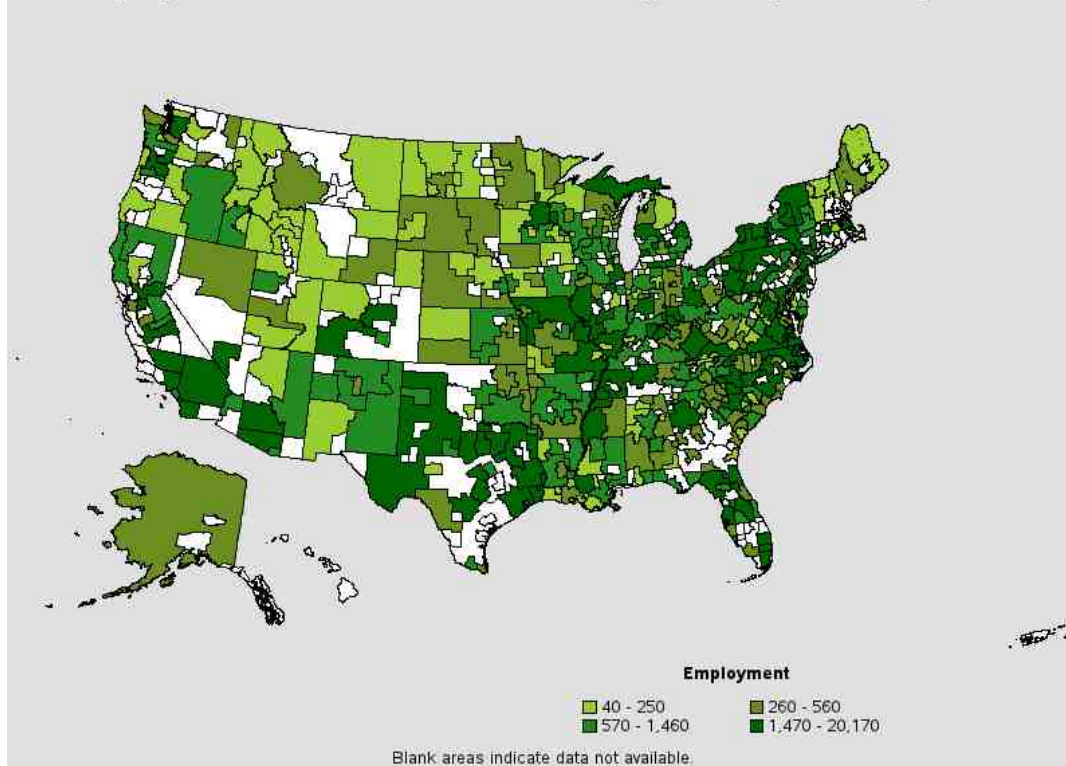
- Visitation costs (\$0.8 billion)
- Adverse health effects (\$10.2 billion)
- Infant mortality (\$1.2 billion)
- Children's education level and subsequent wages as an adult (\$30.0 billion)
- Children rendered homeless by parental imprisonment (\$0.9 billion)
- Homelessness of former prisoners (\$2.2 billion)
- Decreased property values (\$11.0 billion)
- Divorce (\$17.7 billion)
- Reduced marriage (\$9.0 billion)
- Child welfare (\$5.3 billion)

These expenses disproportionately impact oppressed-nation communities as the primary target of the criminal injustice system. A majority of prisoners are New Afrikan and Chican@, and this is a form of economic oppression against those nations. Unlike government expenditures which create jobs and fund

industries, most of these expenses do not directly financially benefit anyone. This is just economic punishment piled on top of the punishment. The massive United States prison system is not just a tool of repression, it is actively worsening the economic conditions of oppressed nations, keeping significant sectors of these nations trapped in precarious conditions.

Prisons Create Jobs

Employment of correctional officers and jailers, by area, May 2016



While prisons have a devastating impact on oppressed-nation communities in the United States, the prison boom initially played a different role for the disproportionately white employees of the criminal justice system and the mostly rural communities in which these prisons operate. Striking examples of this occurred in states like New York and California where prisons were built to provide jobs for rural white communities (upstate New York and in the central valley of California), but they are imprisoning mostly oppressed-nation people from urban communities.

The national makeup of prison staff has shifted dramatically since the boom days, however. In 2017, New Afrikans made up over 24% of bailiffs, correctional officers and jailers, that's two times their representation in the general population. First Nations had a similar over-representation rate.(19) While the overall rate for Latin@s was not so skewed, that data is less accurate because of how race and ethnicity are perceived, and the data collected. In addition, the effect might be more regionally significant. We know anecdotally that there are now a very large number of Chican@ prison guards

in the Central Valley of California where Chican@s generally outnumber white Americans overall. And from regular reports in *Under Lock & Key* we can conclude that more oppressed-nation guards has not translated into better treatment. Rather, there is a growing neo-colonial class within the semi-colonies that is allying with imperialism to oppress the semi-colonies themselves. The disproportionate numbers of colonial

subjects languishing in U. \$. prisons prevent us from concluding that the semi-colonies have actually been integrated into the oppressor nation.

Putting nationality aside, there are a lot of people in this country that depend on mass incarceration for their livelihood. In 2016, there were 431,600 guards in prisons and jails, earning on average \$46,750 per year or \$22.48 per hour.(20)

In 2012 (the latest data available from the U.S. Bureau of Justice) the total number of criminal justice system employees across federal, state and local governments was 2,425,011 of which 749,418 were prison staff.(21) About half of the total corrections budget goes to pay salaries for prison staff, which is two orders of magnitude more than the \$400 million in profits of private prison companies.(22)

There are other jobs generated more indirectly by prison spending: construction jobs building and maintaining prisons, and jobs in all of the industries that supply the prisons with food, bedding, clothing, and other basics required to support the prison population. While some of these costs are recovered through prisoner labor, the vast majority is still paid for by the government. Vendors also make a lot of money through commissary, phone bills, and other costs to prisoners. There are clearly a lot of individuals and corporations with an economic interest in the criminal justice system.

Most prisons are in rural areas, often in poorer parts of states. Some prison towns are entirely centered around employment at the prison, or support services like hotels for visiting families. Others may have a

more diversified economy but the prisons still provide a significant number of jobs for residents. These jobs give workers, and the community their jobs are supporting, a strong interest in seeing prisons stay full or grow bigger.

In reality, many jobs in newly-built prisons go to people from outside of the community where it was built. People with experience are brought in to fill these jobs. Many of these workers commute to the prison rather than relocate to a rural town. And there is some evidence that in the long run prisons are bad for the economy of rural communities. But this is definitely not a popular opinion as many communities lobby aggressively for prison construction. Once a prison is in place in a community, even if it's not working out so well, it's not easy to reverse course and change the economy. As a result some towns end up lobbying for building more prisons to help bolster their economy once they have one in place.(23)

Given the size of the criminal injustice system, and the many people employed in and around it, this is a big incentive to maintain Amerika's crazy high imprisonment rates. It is akin to a huge public works program where the government gives money to create jobs and subsidize corporations working in and around prisons.

Occupied Peoples in Settler Prisons

Most prison spending is at the state level. In 2010 state governments paid 57% of the direct cash costs, while 10% came from the federal government and 33% from local governments.(15) It's all government money, but this fact is interesting because it means state economic interest is likely more important than federal economic interest in determining criminal injustice system spending.

Looking closer at state spending on prisons we find that imprisonment rates vary dramatically by state.(24) Top states by imprisonment rate per 100,000 adults:

1. Louisiana 1370
2. Oklahoma 1340
3. Mississippi 1230
4. Alabama 1140
5. Georgia 1140
6. Texas 1050
7. Arizona 1050
8. Arkansas 1050

All other states have rates under 1000 with a few states down in the 300s.

Prison populations are still growing in a few states, but in the top imprisonment rate states listed above

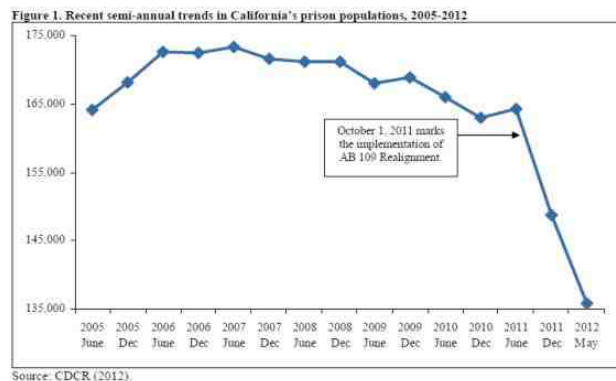
only Arizona's population grew between 2014 and 2015 (1.6%). Most of the states with an increase in imprisonment rate between 2014 and 2015 were very small states with smaller prison populations overall. (25)

All of the states with imprisonment rates over 1000/100,000 remain territories of particular importance to the internal semi-colonies. Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia contain most of the territory named "Kush" by New Afrikan Revolutionaries, and are also part of what is referred to as the "Black Belt." Oklahoma (a name derived from words meaning "red people") was a territory where First Nations were concentrated by force and where they attempted to create the state of "Sequoyah." Texas is a large portion of Aztlán, as is Arizona, which is also home of much of the current territories of the Navajo Nation.

There is a weaker correlation between that list of states and low economic wealth. It is possible these states feel a stronger drive to build prisons as an economic growth tool, in spite of the evidence mentioned above now suggesting this isn't necessarily the best path for towns to take. It's an interesting "investment" decision by these poorer southern states that suggests there is more than just economics in play since it is a money-losing operation for already financially strapped states.

Just as the decrease in country-wide imprisonment rates coincided with the peak of the recession in 2008, it's inevitable that economic interests by the states, and by the many employees of the criminal injustice system, are also influencing prison growth and prison shrinkage. In some cases it is a battle between the interests of the prison workers, who want prisons to grow, and the states that want to stop bleeding so much money into the prisons. In each state different condi-

Reduction in prison population in California



tions will determine who wins.

Less Money But Not Less Cops

In 2009, MIM(Prisons) cited a few examples of political responses to the economic crisis of that time hypothesizing that significant reductions seemed an unlikely response.

"Governor Quinn of Illinois responded to the crisis in his state last month by canceling plans of the previous governor to close Pontiac Correctional Center, citing "fiscal responsibility" and the protection of 600 local jobs and \$55.4 million in local revenue.(26) Pennsylvania is continuing down its path of prison expansion with plans for 8,000 more beds in the next 4 years for the same reasons.(27)"

While the statistics do show that the total imprisoned population has dipped in the decade since then, this was mostly in California, while the rest of the country has seen more stability.

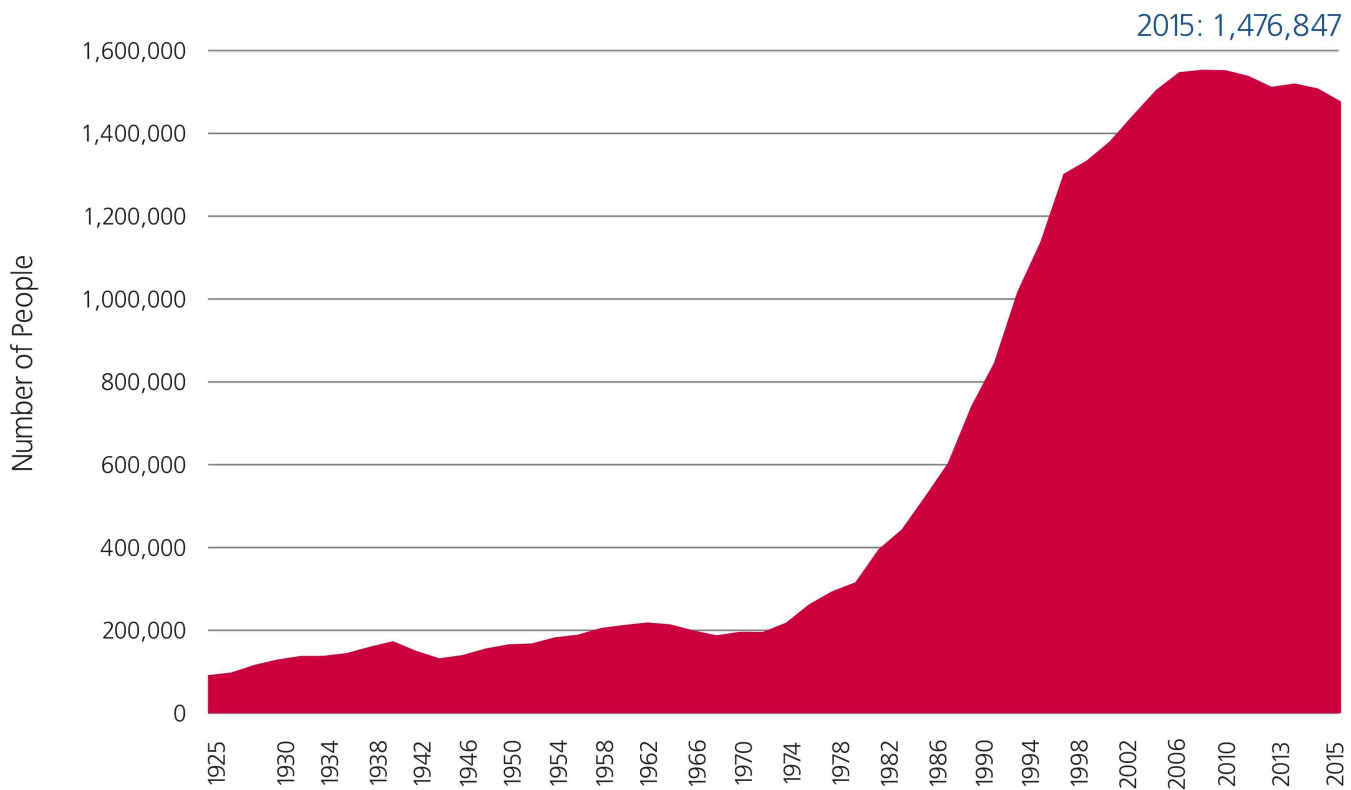
If anything, overcrowding continues to be a bigger issue in many states than funding issues. Though overcrowding may reflect a reluctance to build new facilities, which is related to budgets. Ohio just celebrated a modest decrease in their prison population at the end of

2017.(28) At 49,420, the population was a few thousands smaller than projected four years earlier when things weren't looking so good.(29) But overall the numbers have just hovered around 50,000 since before the 2008 economic crisis.

Ohio was looking to the court-ordered prison population reduction in California as an example of what might happen there if they didn't get their numbers under control. The California reduction (or "realignment") was to address overcrowding in response to a lawsuit about conditions, and not budget problems. It was significant, with a reduction of almost 30,000 prisoners in the year following the "realignment." Numbers are even lower today. However, county populations have increased as a result, with an estimated increase of 1 county prisoner for every 3 reduced in the state system. In other words, the county population was up over 10,000 people following the realignment.(30) Still California accounted for a majority of the decrease in prisoners in the United States since 2010.

Former Illinois Governor Pat Quinn canceled plans to close Pontiac Correctional Center back in 2009. But current Governor Bruce Rauner has a plan to reduce

U.S. State and Federal Prison Population, 1925-2015



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics *Prisoners Series*.

the population by 25% over the next decade, already having reduced it by thousands over a couple years. (31) The Illinois state system also remains over capacity at this time. However, Governor Rauner primarily cites fiscal concerns as motivation for the reforms.(32) Texas also recently reduced its population by 5,000, closing one prison. Both Texas and Illinois did this by putting more money into treatment programs and release resources.(32)

Pennsylvania has also implemented reforms in sentencing and preventing recidivism.(33) After the passing of the 2012 Justice Reinvestment Act, population numbers began to level off and even decrease by hundreds each year. Like Ohio, Pennsylvania's population has been hovering around 50,000, and like many other states these numbers remain over capacity for the state (which is closer to 43,000).(34)

Overall we're still talking about fairly marginal numbers here, and not a systematic transformation. The total number of people in prisons and jails at any given moment is still around 2.3 million, by far the highest imprisonment rate in the world. Ultimately, the economic crisis of 2008 did not have a huge impact on Americans because of the ability of imperialism to push crisis off on the periphery. But we can conclude from this experience that a serious economic crisis is not enough to significantly change the course of the massive American injustice system.

Why Are There Too Many in Prison?

While the prison movement has long been a front line of struggle for revolutionaries, in more recent years the staggering size of this human experiment of mass incarceration has brought the topic into the mainstream. This mainstreaming has shifted the politics being used to critique the prison system to be more reformist and reflective of the interests of petty bourgeois America.

If we dispose of our understanding of imperialism and the position of the internal semi-colonies within the United States, we might look for more purely financial motivations behind the mass incarceration craze of recent decades. This path has led many Americans to search for answers to the question of how this happened in concepts like the "prison industrial complex," and to focus on so-called "prisons-for-profit." As argued above, it wasn't primarily corporate profits behind the three-decades-long prison boom and the so-called "tough on crime" legislation.

In rightly criticizing "tough on crime" legislation, the moral, so-called culture war, within America led the left wing to blame the "war on drugs" for the prison

boom. Yet career politicians cater to the white nationalist voters, who demanded "tough on crime" stances. Up until recently, politicians who have attempted to go against the tide can attest to this.

Pause, Too Many Americans in Prison

The demand for "tough on crime" politicians finally showed pause by 2017, with a number of examples of candidates losing on this strategy. (35) The popularity of Michelle Alexander's book *The New Jim Crow* demonstrates a swing towards progressive reforms of the injustice system that even recognize the outcomes of national oppression, though it ignores the contemporary relationships of internal colonialism that we discuss here. While a progressive shift, this view still manages to fit within the ideology of petty bourgeois Americans by making the prison system sound like a relic of a past era, rather than a logical tool of social control in the current one. This might even be providing false optimism in the prospects of ending mass incarceration in the near future. But Alexander's book does stress the economic interests of Americans as a barrier to this happening:

"Alexander highlights the economic consequences of cutting prisons which show the strong financial investment that Americans have overall in this system: 'If four out of five people were released from prison, far more than a million people could lose their jobs.'(p. 218) This estimation doesn't include the private sector: private prisons, manufacturers of police and guard weapons, etc."(36)

Whether the non-economic causes of social control are insurmountable in the short term is really dependent on how the national contradiction plays out. In 2017, 71% of Americans said it is important to reduce the prison population, and 2 in 3 said they were likely to vote for an elected official that supported reducing the prison population by investing that money into drug treatment and mental health instead, even 65% of Trump voters thought this. (37) The number of large organizations focusing on the prison population, and examples of Republicans and Democrats working together on these issues, compared to the early days MIM's prison work, are also strong indications of the gradual shift.

By 1993 61% of Americans thought the main purpose of prisons was to punish, compared to 32% in 1980.(38) However, in 2016, 86% of Americans thought federal prisoners should be able to earn time off their sentence through participating in rehabilitation programs.(39)

An opinion that has also shifted over recent years in the United States is views on the legalization of mari-

juana and other drugs. Petty bourgeois interests have rallied around this cause for decades, both in the interest of using and in commercializing marijuana in an emerging open market. While limited in its scope, this campaign regularly brings up the racism of the drug laws of the 1970s to bolster its case, which exposes the national oppression at the heart of mass incarceration.

Ignoring these shifts, President Donald Trump and former Attorney General Jeff Sessions are not acting in the interests of the majority of their voters around mass incarceration and drug sentencing. The Trump administration even got elected on fear-mongering around the threats of darker-skinned foreigners invading and ravaging the country. While there has been a shift in thinking since MIM(Prisons) began its work around anti-imperialist prisoner organizing, it has not been enough to even bring meaningful reforms to fruition. We must push these issues much further to overcome the white nationalist politics of the settler nation.

More Rehabilitation, More Jobs

In June of 2019, California Governor Gavin Newsom celebrated an end to shipping prisoners to private prisons out of state because the state had successfully reduced its population as discussed above. At that time, the California Correctional Peace Officers Association (CCPOA) was linking from its homepage to an article entitled "California Maybe Replacing Its 'Prison-Industrial Complex' With Something Far Worse."⁽⁴⁰⁾ This was interesting because the article blames the CCPOA's political clout for exorbitant costs to pay their wages and fund new "rehabilitation" programs. But the article is also critical of the emerging private interest in running rehab programs and halfway houses.

So as the rhetoric shifts away from "tough on crime," the labor aristocracy and the private corporations working for the state are adapting. The budget for the criminal injustice system will only keep expanding and the interests of those chasing that money will continue to shape the lives of the millions of people controlled by the system. And we all know who is being controlled. In a half century, Amerikan prisons have gone from white dominated to New Afrikan dominated in a period where the New Afrikan population has increased less than 2 percentage points to its current level of about 12%. More "rehabilitation" programs is not going to address this stark disparity.

The JFA Institute report references research indicating that imprisonment often encourages crime. In their summary of literature, they point to evidence that people will leave criminal lifestyles when given opportunities. No shit? Stopping crime isn't exactly rocket

science. While communists know how to put an end to crime, the pigs and their fans have demonstrated that they aren't really interested in that. That would involve destroying their own privilege. In its advanced stage of parasitism, the Amerikkkan nation has a well-entrenched sector of pigs who get job security and pay raises from perpetuating crime and imprisonment.

Interestingly, the report also points to a number of studies indicating that government-run programs have very marginal effects on reducing recidivism. This conclusion is supported by reports we get from comrades criticizing government programs.⁽⁴¹⁾ Apparently, the literature also supports the need for programs like MIM(Prisons) Prisoner Re-Lease on Life program, because the only programs that seem to be effective in treatment and rehabilitation are independent from the government.⁽¹⁾ The people aren't stupid, they know what the state is there to do.

Conclusions

Prisoners, their families, their communities and nations pay a heavy price for imprisonment, and this includes a significant financial cost. The criminal injustice system is a key component of the ongoing national oppression that is part of imperialism.

Some anti-prison activists try to use the high costs of prison to their advantage, organizing around slogans that emphasize that this tax money could be better spent elsewhere, like on education. The 10-year aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis demonstrates the weakness of this approach. The social forces of change are not coming from state bureaucracy budget offices. States continue to make the political choice to pour money into a costly system of social control. The petty-bourgeois movement to legalize drugs has been a force of change, but not one that can address the system. The social force for real change is the oppressed nations that are still being targeted by the out-of-control injustice system, and the lumpen organizations that come up as a means of self-defense from this oppression.

Prisoners organizing in conjunction with national liberation and anti-imperialist movements on the outside is a strategy for real change. Tactics that can be used in this effort have and will include work strikes and boycotting services that extort prisoners' limited resources. These attack the interests discussed here. Though the financial interests didn't create prisons directly, they do help maintain the status quo and serve as a useful point for organizing prisoners in their own interests. Ultimately it is the settler-imperialist relationship that defines this country that is at the heart of mass incarceration and all the horrors that go on within U.\$. prisons. And that is why must build independent

institutions of the oppressed and public opinion against imperialism itself to find real solutions. ■

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Defining and Measuring the Lumpen Class in the United States: A Preliminary Analysis



By MIM(Prisons) July 2016

This article is a summary of a more extensive article on the lumpen class which is available from MIM(Prisons) upon request for \$5, or equivalent work trade.

U Can't Sell Dope Forever

"Power is the ability to define a phenomenon and make it act in a desired manner." - Huey P. Newton

Marxist socialism is based in the idea that humyns, as a group, can take charge of the natural and economic laws that determine their ability to meet their material needs. Taking charge does not mean that they can decide these laws, but that they can utilize them. In doing so they develop a scientific understanding of the world around them.

Under capitalism, the anarchy of production is the general rule. This is because capitalists only concern themselves with profit, while production and consumption of humyn needs is at the whim of the economic laws of capitalism. As a result people starve, wars are fought and the environment is degraded in

ways that make humyn life more difficult or even impossible. Another result is that whole groups of people are excluded from the production system. Whereas in pre-class societies, a group of humyns could produce the basic food and shelter that they needed to survive, capitalism is unique in keeping large groups of people from doing so.

In the industrialized countries like the United States, the culture and structure of society has eliminated opportunities and knowledge to be self-sufficient. Production is done socially instead. Simplistically this might look like: one company produces bread, another produces shoes, and everyone working for each company gets paid and uses their pay to buy things from the other companies. Everyone gets what they need by being a productive member of the larger society.

The problem is that there are not enough jobs. At first this might seem like a good thing. We are so advanced that we can get all the work done for the whole group with only a portion of those people having to work. But under capitalism, if you're not in an exploiter class, not working means you do not get a share of the collective product. So when whole groups are not able to get jobs, they must find other ways of getting the goods that they need to survive. And we all know various ways that people do this.

So first capitalism has separated people from their need to provide everything for themselves. In doing so the capitalists alienate the worker from their product because it becomes the property of the capitalist. But those without jobs are also alienated from the whole production process. People often turn to the illegal service economy of selling drugs or sexual favors, or robbing and fencing stolen goods. Many also turn to the state for social services to get a distribution of the social product, without participating in production.

All of these solutions are even more alienating than working for the capitalists. Being a shoemaker or a baker are productive tasks that people can find pleasure in, even if they do not have a say in how the product of their labor is then distributed. Given the option, people generally don't want to poison their community, deal with the threat of violence every day, sell their body, steal from people or even take handouts without being able to participate in producing. All of these endeavors require the individual to justify actions that they know are wrong, to dehumanize other people and themselves, and to just live under a lot of stress.

These activities, and the justifications that come with them, contribute to what then becomes the con-

sciousness of this group of people excluded from the economy. Marx wrote about the alienation of the proletariat resulting from them not having a say in how the product of their labor is utilized. But there is a deeper level of alienation among the lumpen in that they must alienate themselves from other humyn beings, even those who are in similar situations to themselves. Capitalism promotes a dog-eat-dog mentality that is alienating for all people because we are encouraged to look out for ourselves and not trust others. But this is most pronounced for the lumpen, who are in turn demonized for their disregard for other people.

The demonization that the lumpen faces by the rest of society is one reason that none of these endeavors have futures. You can't sell dope forever. You certainly can't be a prostitute forever. Robbing and scamming is dangerous to say the least. And there are strong policies today to keep people from being on public assistance for too long. So there is a strong interest among the lumpen class to choose another path, one that addresses the alienation and lack of control they have over their own lives, including a limited ability to meet their own needs.

While we recognize that the leading force for revolution is the proletariat, our analysis clearly shows that the proletariat is virtually non-existent within U.S. borders, limited primarily to the small migrant worker population. The predominance of the labor aristocracy within imperialist countries today makes the lumpen a more important element than in times and places where the proletariat is the overwhelming majority. Just as Mao had to apply Marx's analysis to Chinese conditions and understand the key role the peasantry plays in revolution in countries where that group is large, we must apply dialectical materialist analysis to the world today to understand the role that will be played by each significant class in American society.

The lumpen are a more important class in imperialist society today than in the past, and as a result we must identify those who fall in this group and analyze whether they are friends or enemies of the revolution. This essay attempts to identify the lumpen in the United States by looking at several potential indicators of economic and social position in society.

First World vs. Third World lumpen

The lumpen is defined as being excluded from the capitalist system; excluded from production and consumption. Of course, everyone must consume to survive, and the lumpen lives on as a class. But their consumption is outside the realm of capitalist relations. The lumpen must take from others what it needs to survive. And in an exploited country the lumpen takes

from working people, the petty bourgeoisie and other lumpen who surround them. It is much harder and therefore more rare to take from the bourgeoisie, so the bourgeoisie doesn't much care that the lumpen exist. The lumpen in the Third World is a parasite class, but primarily a parasite on the masses of the oppressed nations.

In the United States, we have no significant proletariat, so the lumpen class must be a parasite on the petty bourgeoisie. Historically that petty bourgeoisie has been white, while the lumpen have been concentrated in the New Afrikan ghettos, the reservations of First Nations, and the inner city oppressed communities in general. The national contradiction meant that the lumpen posed a threat to the stability of the country.

Beginning in the 1930s, social services allowed the emerging lumpen class to participate in the system of distribution and consumption without participating in production. They could do so in a way that was less precarious, less dangerous and better paying than their counterparts in the Third World. In addition to the federal government's services, there is infrastructure in the First World to provide clean water and sanitation to people of all classes. There is rampant overconsumption and waste that makes acquiring basic needs like food and clothing a snap, and there is enough wealth in the country that many non-governmental organizations can fund their own programs to provide food and other materials and services to those in need. For all these reasons, the First World lumpen are a qualitatively different class than the Third World lumpen proletariat in that they do benefit from living in an imperialist country.

Some claiming Marxism tell us that those we call lumpen are really part of the proletariat; they are just part of the reserve army of labor that Marx talked about being necessary to keep wages down among the workers that were employed via competition. But as has been demonstrated, there is no significant proletariat in the United States (request our Labor Aristocracy study pack for more on this topic). And while there is a contradiction between employers and employees over wages, this has not been an antagonistic contradiction in post-WWII U.S.A.

To the extent that there is a proletariat in this country, they are migrant workers. And therefore the reserve army of labor is found south of the Rio Grande and elsewhere in the Third World.

The First World lumpen are the remnants of a long history of national oppression. The question that they

face is whether the oppressor nation is willing and able to continue to integrate them into the Amerikan petty bourgeoisie, or if racism and economic crisis will lead to an increased lumpenization of the internal semi-colonies as Amerika pushes its problems off on them.

The white nation in North America has always been a predominately petty bourgeois nation. Therefore petty bourgeois class consciousness is overwhelmingly dominant among white people of all classes. Where there is potential for revolutionary white lumpen, it will be more common when in close proximity or integrated with oppressed nation lumpen. And these will be the exception to the rule. It is for this reason that we say the principal contradiction is nation in the United States, while spending much time discussing and addressing the lumpen class.

Therefore, in the analysis that follows, we will be defining the First World lumpen as a distinct class that is only evident in the United States within the oppressed nations.

Contemporary Class Analysis

In the last few decades we can already point to an expanding prison population, and the cutting of welfare roles, without an increase in employment, as some evidence to support lumpenization at the margins. As expected, this lumpenization has been disproportionately suffered by the oppressed nations. To the extent that whites have lost (or will lose) their class status, this concerns us as a likely trigger for growing fascist currents in Amerikkka, due to their historical consciousness as a settler nation and more recently as the most powerful nation on the planet. As we get into the numbers below, we'll see that the white "lumpen" population could arguably outnumber that in the internal semi-colonies. But percentage-wise they are a smaller minority within their nation, and their national identity pulls them much more strongly towards fascism. For this reason, we will disregard poor whites in most of the analysis below. Of course there are exceptions to every rule. And in particular, among youth and where poor whites are more influenced by oppressed nation culture there could certainly be some splits in the white nation.

While we have not seen a massive de-linking of the exploited populations, the internal contradictions of imperialism have brought significant economic downturns in recent years. In 2009 there was a steep rise in the percent of long-term unemployed (greater than 26 weeks), which has not yet declined significantly. It has hovered around 40 and 45% of all unemployed people; this is about double other high points dating back to 1960. [As of June 2016, over the 3 years since the orig-

inal writing, this figure has declined to around 25%, which is still higher than the 17-18% rates that were normal before 2008.] While this could be a sign of a growing de-classed population, the U.\$ economy is so rich that this unemployment has only resulted in modest increases in poverty rates.

Yet, even in the recent recession, government-defined poverty rates have not yet reached the levels they were at prior to 1965 when they were around 20%, give or take. In 2011 the poverty rate was recorded as 15%. Even this rate is inflated since assistance in the form of tax credits and food stamps is not counted as taxable income. If this income was included in their calculations it would pull 9.6 million people above the poverty line and bring the percent below the poverty rate to less than 12%.(1) So it is only a small group at the margins that may be seeing a shift in their material conditions such that they could arguably be seen as not largely benefiting from imperialism.

MIM has argued that youth are the most revolutionary group among the white nation because of their special status outside of the class to which they were born and because of the way that capitalist society puts youth in a position of disempowerment. A key to the labor aristocracy's attitude as a class is the fact that individuals who may not be making much money at the moment can look around at their peers and see that they should anticipate improving their position. This is especially true for whites. Oppressed nation youth without a high school diploma, on the other hand, receive a mixed message. They look at their peers of their age group and see that they truly can not expect to get a job any time soon. On the other hand they can look at older folks around them and see a large percent having joined the labor aristocracy. This may result in a split in the oppressed nations by age where youth are part of the lumpen class for a period of time but eventually are pulled into the labor aristocracy by the wealth and decadence of imperialist society, even if they exist at the low end of the labor aristocracy. See *"Age as Gender: The Third Strand Shaping the Oppressed Nation Lumpen"* by MIM(Prisons) for more on this.

Underground Economy

Non-Bourgeois Populations by National Groupings

	% Lumpen	# Lumpen	Semi-Proletariat	Non-Bourgeois Classes
New Afrikan	20	8,160,000	0	8,160,000
Latin@	5	2,620,000	8,500,000	11,120,000
First Nations	30	700,000	0	700,000
Total		11,480,000	8,500,000	19,980,000

The underground economy parallels the legal economy, and has a parallel class structure. While the economy is capitalist and therefore dominated by bourgeois ideology, the majority of the people in this economy could be considered part of the First World lumpen in that they live at the margins, often with a parasitic relationship to the greater economy. While all communities have people who work "off the books," just as they all have drug dealers, there is a qualitative difference between communities where that is the exception and where that is the rule.

We divide the underground economy into the following categories:

- a. illegal national bourgeoisie in drugs
- b. illegal labor aristocracy
- c. parasitic hustlers (thieves, scammers, pimps)
- d. illegal service workers (prostitutes, corner boys)
- e. small-time service workers (food prep, car repair, reselling)

Mao saw the national bourgeoisie as a class that can be an ally in the anti-imperialist war, but cannot liberate the nation itself. Due to the parasitic class nature of the internal semi-colonies in the United States today, we do not see the traditional Black and Brown bourgeoisie playing this role. Instead they are some hybrid of petty bourgeoisie and comprador bourgeoisie economically benefitting from the empire. Where we see a parallel to the national bourgeoisie of the exploited nations is among the marginally employed and illegally employed lumpen who rise within the illegal economy. Just as Mao's national bourgeoisie was disadvantaged by imperialist control of their nation, it is the lumpen alone that is excluded from participating in the spoils of empire as the majority of oppressed nationals within U.\$ borders do today. And when they do tap into those spoils through illegal enterprises, they remain in a precarious position.

The underground economy includes many small-time service workers who provide food preparation, car repair, vendor and small maintenance services in oppressed communities. The work performed is no dif-

ferent than any other service worker in the legal economy, but their work is usually irregular in such a way that they are part of an underclass that we consider close to the lumpen as they are excluded from the legal economy.

The illegal economy can be looked at separately from the service workers providing legal services off the books. The illegal economy is where we find those traditionally considered the lumpen. It would include the obviously-parasitic hustlers who rob, scam, fence and pimp. But the biggest sector of the illegal economy, and one of the most important sectors of the global economy, is the drug trade. The drug trade, while largely in the realm of the lumpen class, is successful enough to support a well-defined class structure of its own including a full-on bourgeoisie, a stable group earning what would be the equivalent of labor aristocracy wages, and a workforce that receives a more marginal income. The small-time drug dealers in oppressed communities could be grouped with the, largely female, sex workers as a group of illegal service workers who make incomes that are marginal in terms of global wage distribution.

Much of the illegal drug economy in the oppressed communities is carried out by lumpen organizations (L.O.s). These organizations historically were more dependent on extortion, and this still plays a large role in the economics of L.O.s. Extortion would be another example of clear parasitic relations of the lumpen with the rest of the community.

L.O.s are often formed along national lines, bringing with them a legacy or ideology of nationalism. Where these organizations are successful enough to create a bourgeoisie, or even an aspiring bourgeoisie, we see the basis for a national bourgeoisie in the internal semi-colonies.

Conclusions

The table page 50 sums up the conservative estimates we have made with regard to who constitutes the lumpen within U.\$. borders. (See the full article for our derivation of these numbers). Our best total estimate for New Afrikans and Raza comes from the sum of the people identified based on family income and those actively in prison or jail. First Nations are calculated separately. All other methods of calculation are going to double count people we identified by family income and so can not be added to our totals.

We conclude that conservatively we can count 20-25% of the New Afrikan nation as part of the lumpen. Among Raza we calculate between 15-20% as part of the lumpen or migrant proletariat.

To separate out the lumpen from the migrant proletariat among Raza we need to look at the number of migrant Raza in the United States. A Pew Hispanic Center 2005 report estimated 11.5 to 12 million total "illegal immigrants," 56% from Mexico, and 22% from other Latin American countries. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security in 2009 estimated 10.7 million "illegal immigrants," 62% from Mexico, and at least 15% from other Latin American countries. These numbers give us an estimate of between 8 and 9 million Latin American migrants in the United States. If the census accurately counts Latin American migrants, 17% of this population (based on 8,500,000 migrants) is not in the U.\$. legally and most of that group would be migrant proletariat. That leaves a rather small group of lumpen. We can probably assume, however, that the census undercounts migrant workers because of both the transitory nature of the population and the fear around filling out government paperwork. Based on this reasonable assumption, we can perhaps estimate that the lumpen population among Raza is between 5-10% of the total population.

Given the volatility of the people who are still young and are excluded from the system economically and along national lines, the imperialists have no interest in an expanding lumpen class. And the only internal contradiction that would force an expanding lumpen class in the imperialist countries is extreme economic crisis.

As a baseline we can say conservatively that around 2010 the lumpen class represented about 20% of New Afrika, 5% of Raza and 30% of First Nations. This population represents about 4% of the overall population of the United States, and there is no strong evidence of the First World lumpen increasing in a significant way in recent years.

One example MIM had cited in support of the Panther theory of an expanding lumpen due to mechanization was the skyrocketing prison population centered around the 1990s, but spanning the time between the demise of the Panthers and today. While the numbers are staggering, this is still a tiny proportion of the oppressed nations. And rather than being the product of shifting economic conditions, we argue that they are primarily a product of the open conflict between the white nation and oppressed nations in the United States via the white power structure of the state.

The police and prisons were the white nation's stick and the economic opportunities and integration were the carrot presented to the oppressed immediately following the strong liberation movements of the 1960s/70s. Therefore, if we see oppressed nation prison pop-

ulations shift into a downward trend, that would support the idea that the carrot is increasing in effectiveness in integrating them into Amerika.

The flip side of that is as long as oppressed nation prisoners keep increasing, we have strong evidence of an antagonistic contradiction along the lines of nation in the United States. Of course we have seen the trend level off a bit in recent years, ironically, largely in response to economic crisis. But it is too soon to say what that means. ■

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11. 2012 Statistical Abstract, US Census Bureau Table 232. Mean earnings by highest degree earned: 2009
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Gender Privilege and Oppression

by MIM(Prisons), January 2009

Updated 2019

[As revolutionaries committed to fighting gender oppression, we distinguish between the biology/physiology of sex (male/female), and the socially constructed categories of gender (men/wimmin). We define men as those those who are oppressors in leisure time and wimmin as those who are oppressed in leisure time, regardless of biological genitalia or reproductive capacity. The biological distinction between male and female is relevant as a description of someone's appearance (phenotype) that impacts social roles in a patriarchal society. As such we find sociological data that distinguish between males and females useful. We also recognize that under the patriarchy the categories of male and female are overused and given unscientific meanings.

When referring to people or individuals when gender is relevant, as it is in this article, we will refer to them as men or wimmin and use he or she pronouns. Otherwise, when referring to an individual in the third persyn, we will use either eir name or the neutral pronouns of ey, em, and eir. Ey, em, and eir are singularized versions of they, them, and their and we believe these more accurately reflect the biological sex of humyns, in that they downplay the inaccurate binary which has developed over thousands of years of patriarchal history.

Quotes from our earlier writings below were edited to update MIM(Prisons)'s use of language around gender and biological sex.]

Usually when people think about gender oppression they think in the black and white terms of wimmin being oppressed and men being in power. But the reality is a lot more complex. For instance, in prisons, which overwhelmingly house men, gender oppression takes on a special form where men experience gender oppression regularly at the hands of male and female guards and at the hands of other prisoners.



Gender oppression is one component of imperialism, and it is a particularly difficult topic for those living in the First World where the majority enjoy gender privilege but also experience gender oppression. Overall MIM(Prisons) sees First World wimmin and men as mainly oppressors, not oppressed, when it comes to gender. Globally we find gender privilege in the Amerikan men who buy wives/prostitutes in other countries. This leisure time privilege is connected to

economics, with men's greater access to jobs and positions of power around the world. With First World wimmin we see gender privilege in the form of contraceptive testing on Third World wimmin and nannies who allow First World wimmin to raise healthy children while experiencing great leisure time. In addition, gender and economics intersect creating the "ho relationship" where First World wimmin benefit from their access to rich men thanks to closed borders. Pornography that elevates the white womyn also allows, what we call the "gender aristocracy," to benefit from leisure time financially through the entertainment industry. While it's clear that First World men have more gender privilege and power than First World wimmin, overall both are oppressors on a global scale relative to Third World men and wimmin. As a group, the First World of all genders are more united than ever in their exploitation of the rest of the world.

Yet, even within the United States, there are groups that fall closer to the gender oppressed including those without citizenship, children and prisoners. In prisons, guards use their power to gain sexual access to prisoners (both male and female). And among prisoners there are some, generally sanctioned by guards, who also enjoy sexual access to prisoners. This sex between prisoners comes with a significant power differential because of the nature of imprisonment. That's not to say that sex outside of prison is free of power inequalities. MIM(Prisons) upholds the MIM position that no sex under the patriarchy can be fully consensual as long as there are power differentials between people. In other words, all sex is rape under patriarchy. There may be different types of coercion — the overt physical overpowering of someone is a very different kind of rape than the couple who both want to have sex. However, we cannot downplay the importance of things like money, looks, education, political power, and other things which lead someone to "consent" to sex. Desire is fucked up under capitalism and pretending things are equal when they are not prevents us from addressing the root of the problem.

An article in *Under Lock & Key 1* took an in-depth look at gender and rape in prisons:

"To help sort out the gender status of biomale prisoners, a recent Department of Justice report gives us the surprising statistics that, "In State and Federal prisons, 65% of inmate victims of staff sexual misconduct and harassment were male, while 58% of staff perpetrators were female." (Here we are discussing the 52% of reported sexual violence in prisons where the captor assaulted the captive. The rest were inmate-on-inmate assaults, addressed more in ULK6.)(1) In the general population 97% of sexual violence reports are [female] victims and the perpetrator is generally male

(around 98%). The instance of female perpetrators is actually a higher rate in instances of assaults on males, estimated at around 14%.(2) Much higher than female assaults on females, but nowhere near the 58% of assaults on prisoners of any biology.

"With 93% of the U.S. prison population being male, we would expect a much higher percentage of assaults to be against males than females, even if rates of assault for wimmin was higher. But assuming 97% of victimization is of females as it is on the street, you'd only get 29% of the absolute number of assaults being against men in prison. So we're seeing a ratio of male to female victims on the order of 2 times the general population. In other words, if wimmin are five times as likely to be assaulted in prison than they are on the street, then men are 10 times as likely.

"Unfortunately, the study does not breakdown the statistics of female on male vs female on female assaults. But even if we assume that all of the 35% of staff sexual assaults on females in state and federal prisons are perpetrated by females, that leaves another 23% of the perpetrators who are females attacking males (assuming one-to-one incidents, which was the vast majority). Even if you want to argue that no male guards ever sexually assault female prisoners, you see a significantly greater rate of bio-wimmin engaging in sexual violence against males in prison compared to the general population. Since female assaults on males in the general population are much higher than female assaults on females (14% vs. 2%), we would be better off assuming the opposite. If we assume a proportional breakdown you'd be comparing 58% female perpetrators against bio-men in prison against the 14% on the street. If that weren't bad enough, we must factor in that females are still only a minority of prison staff, accounting for 22% in the federal system.(3) So that 58% of assailants is coming from maybe a quarter of the staff that happen to be females. These are the statistics that back up our line on Lynndie England that it could have been any Amerikkkan womyn sexually assaulting Iraqi males. And if we acknowledge that Iraqis under occupation are much more powerless and oppressed than Amerikan citizens, then these statistics speak even louder to say that Amerikan females are the enemies of the oppressed."(5)

Just as the labor aristocracy usually outdoes the imperialists in its racist oppression, here we see an extreme example of the wimmin of the gender aristocracy outdoing men in gender oppression.

While discussing how to define gender, that same article went on: "...Prisoners (regardless of gender) and youth (regardless of gender) are reporting more sexual assaults than females over all. If being young or incarcerated is really twice as risky as having female genitalia as the report rates suggest, then not only are there other considerations to determine someone's gender status, but there are factors that are much more impor-

tant than a persyn's genitalia.

"MIM has established the basis for gender as purely gender in a persyn's physical development, age and health status. Therefore, when nation and class are not major complicating factors, such as within the Amerikan labor aristocracy, these are the basis for gender differences.

"However, the greatest differences in gender are found between the imperialist nations and the Third World people. Therefore, when we talk about the spectrum of gender oppression we place most First Worlders on the man end of the spectrum, regardless of biology. We have demonstrated how First World bio-wimmin benefit by the patriarchy elsewhere.(4) The picture of the bio-wimmin as sexual assailants in prisons above only adds to this argument..."

The fight against gender oppression must be waged directly in a battle against sexual assault and psycho-sexual warfare, and also as a part of the larger fight against imperialism because the patriarchy is intimately tied up with the capitalist system. In *ULK 6*, where this article originally appeared, we have an article about pornography in prison and why we oppose its censorship but at the same time we also oppose pornography in general. We take a global view comparing what some called the "feminism" of Sarah Palin with the real-world slaughter of children in Gaza this month. We also have several responses to an article on psycho-sexual warfare in prisons that was printed in *ULK 4*. That article inspired a lot of subscribers to write in about their experiences with the various ways that sex is used as an oppressive tool in the context of the prison system: guards paying for access to prisoner's sexuality in various ways, guards manipulating prisoners by offering sex, guards using sex to pit prisoners against each other, and guards just using sex to straight up harass prisoners. Some of these stories appear in *ULK 6*.

The lumpen get a bad rap when it comes to gender for not fitting into politically correct white cultural norms, which is exacerbated by white-owned entertainment companies that make their money selling images of the oppressed nations that exaggerate the negative to white consumers. The experiences of gender oppression faced by millions of oppressed-nation men are an educational opportunity that we see far more potential in than a college course in so-called feminism or "Take Back the Night" rally. We welcome further responses and analysis on this topic and encourage our comrades who want to study this issue in depth to get a copy of the MIM Theory 2/3 on gender and revolutionary feminism. ■

Notes:

1. U.S. Department of Justice. *Sexual Violence Reported by Correctional Authorities, 2006*.

August 2007. <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/svrca06.htm>

2. Whealin Ph.D., Julia M. National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Fact Sheet: Men and Sexual Trauma. http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/ncmain/ncdos/fact_shts/fs_male_sexual_assault.html?opm=1&rr=rr88&srt=d&echorr=true

3. <http://www.bop.gov/news/quick.jsp>

4. How does the gender aristocracy benefit? <http://www.etext.org/Policits/MIM/gender/garistocracybenefits.html>

5. MIM(Prisons) clarified our use of language to use female and male when referring to biological sex and men and wimmin when referring to gender. We edited this article with that terminology for clarity.

Section 4: How We Organize

In this section we address three important topics related to how we organize: security, democratic centralism, and focoism. The first, security, is a crucial issue for all serious revolutionaries to consider as we must take very seriously the power of the imperialist state and the need to organize effectively in the face of state repression. The second, democratic centralism, is a key question of organization and the appropriate application of the scientific method in testing out line and strategy across the organization. The third, focoism, is a failed organizational strategy that enjoys much support among activists in imperialist countries who romanticize the focoist call to arms and quick attacks on the enemy. In sum, this section lays out the most important organizational strategies, and those to avoid, for revolutionaries working in imperialist countries.

Fearlessness, Scientific Strategy and Security

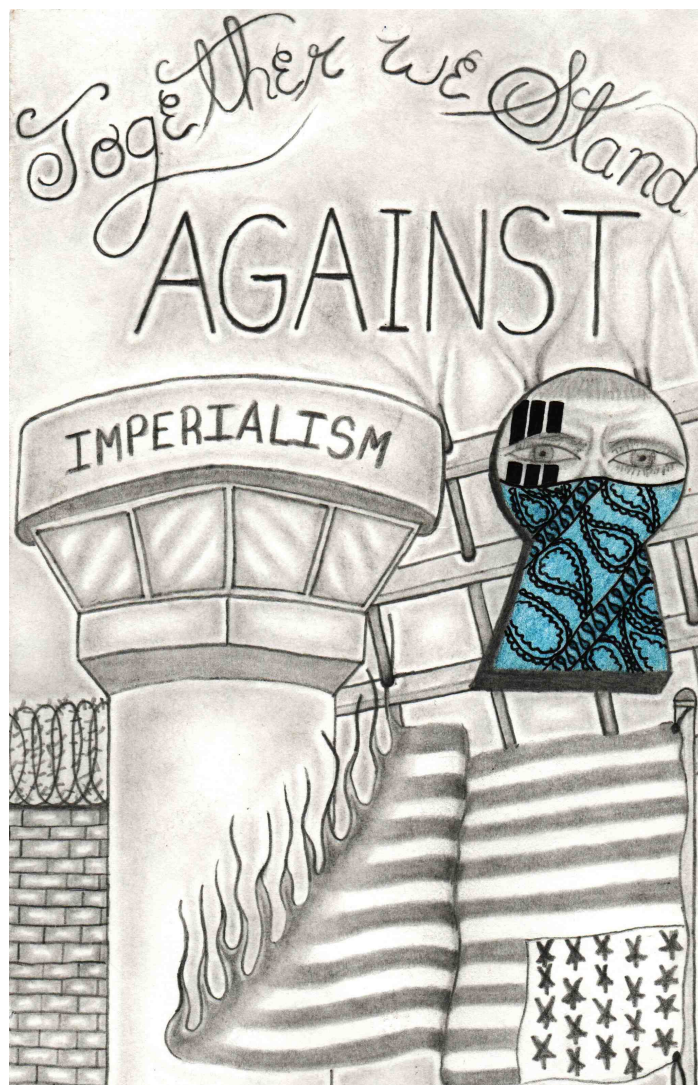
by MIM(Prisons), January 2008

Updated 2019

Comrades have recently brought up the axiom that fear leads to ignorance and that vanguard leadership is a matter of applying science with guts. It is the science in command that is primary here. Whether it is fear, love or rage, emotion cannot be the basis of our strategy and practice. Similarly, emotive rallying cries and hype cannot be the primary recruiting method of a vanguard organization.

The problem of fear often comes up in relation to those who have privilege that they are afraid of losing (the classic carrot and the stick). It is also used widely among the most oppressed and exploited when it is instilled as a fear of death and torture of friends and families. Among the lumpen who have little privilege to speak of, whose family structure has been destroyed by oppression and who has already faced torture as an individual, the basis for fear is very limited.

An arguable strength of the imperialist country communist movement is our ability to produce scientific analysis with complete independence. This is because our wealth and privilege can actually diminish both fear and class consciousness in a minority of cases. Some of the most dedicated activists in the oppressor nations often have a sense of fearlessness. This is probably necessary to make it over the long haul



without turning back to the comfort of one's class and national privilege.

In both these cases of fearlessness we have seen the outcome where people don't take security seriously. Most even scoff at the security practices put forth by the Maoist movement. Others act as if they have too much "important" work to be dealing with to take time worrying about security measures. Translate this to "I'm too lazy to deal with things that are going to make my work harder or take a little longer. I'd rather focus my time on the things that give me glory or that I somehow find some personal pleasure in." This is subjectivism.

When we work with people who don't even spend one minute a week thinking about security we are potentially sacrificing our own security, and more importantly, the security and integrity of the whole

movement. Such people have no role to play in a Leninist cadre organization. Security is not something we study in addition to theory, it stems directly from it.

Contrary to the bourgeois theory of history, bravado and individualism do not decide the course of events. Envisioning oneself standing strong and alone against the great oppressor may be a powerful subjective motivator. But to build one's political practice around such a fantasy is not going to win many battles.

Being serious about ending oppression means being serious about studying the world around us and learning from history. It means developing a strategic understanding of how the oppressed are rising and will succeed and therefore having confidence in that fact that we are acting with the tide of humyn history. If we have this understanding, then it is very obvious to us that we are more effective in contributing to this tide when we are not locked in an isolation cell or buried six feet deep.

Anyone who doesn't believe death or imprisonment are real threats needs to read some history. We may be better revolutionaries without fear, but not without prudence. For those who know the risks but don't care, you need to study history even harder as well as dialectical materialism until you can understand your own power.

There is a related point to make here in regard to the "security" concerns of correctional officers (C.O.s) and prison administrators. The most common reason for censorship of our literature in U.S. prisons is that MIM(Prisons) is somehow a threat to security. As long as we can agree that "security" for the C.O.s means less violence and fighting with guards and between prisoners, then our point here can be applied by them as well. While it may be true that our literature tends to attract some of the most defiant prisoners who are likely to physically defend themselves against a guard, our literature literally teaches people not to attack guards, or even violate any rules that would just bring down more repression, even when we are not explicitly stating that.

Overall, we don't expect this line of argument to convince a system that is set up to oppress specific segments of society. But, certainly some individual prison administrators are honestly interested in maintaining the peace without any ulterior political or racial motivations. The rest just keep oinking for more control units and more hazard pay.

Rashid (Kevin Johnson) has taken prison officials to task on this with eir *The Don't Shank the Guards* hand-

book, which has been censored in a number of states despite a stated purpose that C.O.s should agree with. This handbook provides a similar strategic orientation as MIM(Prisons) does for prisoners who desire to improve their situation. Where this pamphlet fails is in its pandering to the economic interests of Amerikans and its call to unite with the "masses" of the United States. This line leads to a strategy of putting Amerikans first, when oppressed-nation prisoners have a slim chance of ever being accepted into Amerika. If they succeed then they have only betrayed the oppressed people of the world. MIM(Prisons) puts forth a line that neither promotes shanking the oppressor, nor standing side-by-side with em in political struggle.

But Rashid agrees with us in having strategic confidence and a group approach to struggle: "Having been raised as we are with the idea of an 'eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,' getting even is deeply ingrained in us, but in a society based upon inequality, getting even carries a high price and is, in fact, impossible: At least it is impossible by individualist retaliation."

It is exactly such individualism that we need to combat on this side of the fear question in relation to security. Remember, it is also the FBI infiltrators who will have no fear in going up against the state with a few guns, because they know when the bullets start flying you're gonna die and they're gonna be rescued. So fearlessness does not mean going toe-to-toe with an army you cannot defeat. Sun Tzu taught us the idiocy of that centuries ago. And that is exactly what comrades are doing by throwing security out the window. They think they're invincible, they think they're hard, or they're just too lazy to deal with security questions.

"O divine art of subtlety and secrecy! Through you we learn to be invisible, through you inaudible and hence we can hold the enemy's fate in our hands."-Sun Tzu

With the New York State legislature passing a law that forbids "seriously mentally ill" prisoners from being put in SHU (yet to be signed by Governor Spitzer), we can see a clear example of what Rashid is talking about when ey writes, "[Riots, flooding cells, setting fires and shanking guards] have only provided prison coats with ammunition to demonize us and turn public opinion against us and concern away from prison reform issues and the way we are treated." Some editorials and discussions online among C.O.s and other Amerikans indicate the limited scope of this legislation. It is being used to highlight the abuse of the C.O.s instead of prisoners. It is being used to bolster support for the need for SHUs and the need for high-security mental institutions. And it is creating justification by saying that "we are taking out the prisoners who can't

handle the SHU mentally, but everyone else deserves to be there, just look how they are acting out." We had previously criticized the limited scope of this legislation, and passed on campaigning in support of it. Now we are seeing its use by the state to not just rally support to its side but also to divide the movement against control units.

While Americans are crying in outrage about all the prisoners who are going to "fake" mental illness to get out of the SHU now, MIM(Prisons) is still saying that the SHU is torture that creates the mental states that exist within it. The human mind is but a reflection of material reality, and decades of experience tell us that people who have been in long-term isolation often end up throwing excrement at guards as one of the only forms of action they can take on behalf of themselves. Call it mental illness if you want. But we know the cause and we know the cure. If prison officials aren't willing to eliminate the cause, perhaps they will at least let SHU prisoners communicate with MIM(Prisons) so that we can help them understand the futility and even counterproductivity of such actions. ■

What is a Pig Question?

reprinted from the Maoist Internationalist Movement (MIM), What's Your Line? Pamphlet, last edited 1991

Many well-meaning people ask MIM questions like these that are frustrating for both sides:

- Who is in MIM?
- How many members are there?
- Where are they based?
- What is the political history or 'pedigree' of this or that person?
- Who did this or that action?

These questions are frustrating for the interrogator because someone who is in MIM and not just answering for MIM will not answer them.

These questions are frustrating to MIM because they sidestep important theoretical questions, and because MIM will not answer these questions, it is subjected to whatever rumors people would like to make.

Many groups suffer from fewer of these problems because they answer these questions in the open.

The fundamental problem is that MIM has no way of seeing through every FBI, CIA, NSC, military intelligence, Mossad or ex-BOSS agent out there. No one knows who is a pig and who is not. Hence MIM asks

for understanding when it does not answer those questions which these pigs would be likely to ask.

Even when a well-intentioned person asks, the question is still a pig question. Sometimes information does not find its way to the pigs. Sometimes it does.

Within MIM, the membership is not entitled to equal or complete information about the membership of MIM. This is a conscious decision by the membership of MIM, not an undemocratic or politically obtuse abuse by MIM leaders.

What is a Pig?

A pig is a police officer or other representative of the government's repressive apparatus, especially one who breaks down people's doors or quietly infiltrates a movement.

People will notice MIM does not list its names or the most important details of its political practice in the newspaper; although a fraction of MIM activity is implied in the newspaper for those wishing to understand the nature of its influence and willing to read carefully. That is not a policy written in stone, but MIM has chosen to lead people substantially in the dark.

If anything, MIM is not professional enough in this regard. The party of Lenin and Stalin suffered repeated blows at the hands of police that caused it chaos. MIM takes comfort in the fact that Lenin's party still survived, but at the same time, there is no doubt that MIM has a way to go before equaling Lenin's party at its pre-1917 best in discipline and sustainability.

Pragmatism

As addressed in previous issues of MIM Notes, many people ask about MIM out of pragmatist concerns, not because they are pigs. The question of size in particular is a pragmatist, people-centered approach to the issue of vanguard leadership. MIM rejects this approach.

MIM has already confessed to having a small size in previous issues. People desiring large organizations should join the Democratic Party or the environmentalist movement or something amorphous.

MIM does not want everyone in its membership, especially people who would base their decision on size. MIM comes from Mao's legacy on leadership:

"The correctness or otherwise of the ideological and political line decides everything. When the Party's line is correct, then everything will come its way. If it has no followers, then it can have followers; if it has no guns, then it can have guns; if it has no political power, then it can have political power." (S. Schram, ed.)

Chairman Mao Talks to the People, p.290).

This understanding is much different than the ideology of pragmatism, which says to do whatever works at the time with no direction.

Lenin's Bolshevik party and Mao's communist party were both able to catapult past the much larger and better-financed parties and coalitions because of their scientific understanding of history, its motion and present-day realities.

People should ask themselves not about the size of MIM, but whether or not MIM has the most scientific analysis of current history. Questions like "who was right about what would happen in World War II--Trotzky or Stalin?" The following are some of the significant issues:

It was the Bolsheviks, not the Mensheviks, who got Russia out of World War I.

It was MIM that correctly predicted unemployment and economic crisis in the Soviet Union — not the Trotskyists and the other pro-Soviet revisionists.

It was the Maoists all along saying that Deng Xiaoping wanted to repress the student movement both in 1966 and 1989 at Tiananmen.

Ultimately, it was the movements in the tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao who brought the most rapid progress to society in the last 150 years.

Ironically, it is the pragmatists who substitute people-centered coalitions and wishful thinking for disciplined parties and scientific thinking that have failed to bring progress for the proletariat this century.

Reformism

Some people have a hard time envisioning the repression of the state because they have illusions that they live in a democracy with civil liberties. They have either never experienced revolutionary politics or they are blind to what happens all around them.

MIM has faced numerous and complicated operations by the state but MIM does not choose to educate people about its own situation at this point because of the desire to remain underground as much as possible.

Instead, MIM distributes literature examining historical repression in the United States, especially examples from the '60s and '70s. The reason for this is that things do not change that much in how the state repressed revolutionaries. (Except that the technology for surveillance gets better and better year after year.)

People who do not understand MIM's line on being semi-underground should read *False Nationalism, False Internationalism and Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement*. People who read a number of "sectarian" papers will be aware of things like COINTELPRO and infiltration campaigns.

The state conducts complicated, expensive and "paranoid" operations. People who do not know this are not ready to work closely with MIM.

Revolutionary Sacrifice

Some people do not like work in semi-underground situations because it means they do not receive the public acclaim they otherwise would. Many potential revolutionaries are also good speakers and organizers and would receive some attention in newspapers or demonstrations if they stayed above ground and did not work with MIM.

Working in a vanguard party also means a constant tension in everyday life. This involves making certain sacrifices on a daily basis.

Going Above Ground

In certain circumstances it is desirable to be above ground. Although Dennis Brutus is not a member of MIM, his life is an interesting one to consider on this theoretical point.

After winning acclaim as a Black poet and working against apartheid, Dennis Brutus found himself breaking rocks with Nelson Mandela in prison on Robben Island in South Africa. Then the regime deported him.

Where the state has deported someone and it is impossible to sneak back into the country, as Lenin's organizers did repeatedly in Russia, it no longer pays to be underground.

Aboveground, Brutus was able to draw attention to his own situation and then go ahead and publicly spearhead the movement to kick South Africa out of the Olympics. His activities in the open and abroad brought joy to the hearts of those struggling within South Africa.

Then in the United States, the Carter and Reagan administrations tried to deport Brutus. Once again, Brutus could not afford to work secretly. He had to bring public attention to himself.

MIM worked extensively on the campaign to keep Brutus in the United States.

The grounds the prosecution used to try to deport

Brutus were classified for national security reasons, so important was the surveillance work done on Brutus.

An agent from the Bureau of State Security (BOSS) in South Africa also wrote that Brutus was one of the top 20 opponents of the apartheid regime, in BOSS's estimation.

Various Western governments cooperated in their intelligence efforts on Brutus. Occasionally, these agencies made their surveillance public knowledge.

Is it unreasonable to suspect that those who work with Brutus are also the object of surveillance? It seems likely that people working to keep Brutus in the United States inevitably come under at least some observation as well.

Why should MIM make the job of the repressive apparatus any easier by being completely above ground?

On Strategy: Breaking Through Defenses

By a United Struggle from Within study group

May 2010

Updated 2019

[In *Under Lock & Key 13*, we printed some definitions that came from studying MIM Theory 5: *Diet for a Small Red Planet*, which focuses on line, strategy and tactics. In this article, we summarize some of the ways we applied those concepts to real-world examples while discussing the rest of the articles in MIM Theory 5.]

There are basically two ways we can make errors in our political work. We can make rightist errors or ultra-left errors. How we avoid the errors depends on our ability to assess our material conditions, because what is left and what is right changes as conditions change. For example, we spent time discussing focoism and opposing it as ultra-leftist because it calls for armed struggle in the First World. Yet, we recognize that armed struggle is a necessity to overthrow imperialism when we reach that stage.

Looking Left

While focoism was the main example, we tried to

define ultra-leftism in a more broad sense. Ultra-leftism in general means giving the appearance of being to the left of the political spectrum to the point of moral purity. In practice, however, it's really so far to the left that it's useless to real revolutionaries because it makes us seek unrealistic goals. Ultra-leftism denies our material reality and replaces it with idealism. A second example of ultra-leftism might be spending all one's time attacking other revolutionaries for not being perfect.

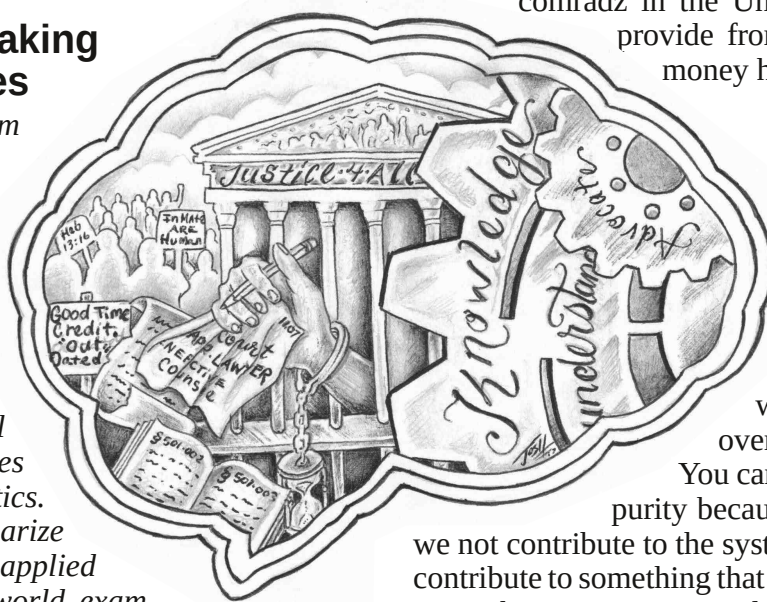
Ultra-leftists hurt the Third World because every time a comrade has to pull one of these cats over and pull their coats, they take away time, energy and resources that can be used for the development of the Third World nations. Take the approach that one prisoner wrote in to ULK on commissary for example. Ey writes that instead of everybody buying store and keeping our stomachs from touching our backs when our oppressors are feeding us like children, we should send all our money home. Not to our brothas and sistas in the Third World, or the institutions established by comradz in the United States that truthfully provide from them. But send all the money home. And then what?

This is an example of ultra-leftism because, to some, this may seem revolutionary and rebellious but in reality it is irrational thinking. The idea is based in purity rather than a strategy with the objective goal of overthrowing imperialism.

You can tell that the motivation is purity because the question is how do we not contribute to the system rather than how do we contribute to something that will change or end the system. This ignores material reality because you can't take the food from prisoners; then we'll really underdevelop our situation.

Looking Right

When looking at rightism, the main problem we face is "revolutionaries" that want to organize the majority of the people in the United States. By catering to the majority in a First World country a party's politics are inevitably watered down -- because the majority (in a First World country) are not oppressed. They put out a right opportunist line and get just whoever comes along. Basically, if you're an organization in the First World and have a large following you stand for bourgeois ideals. Once a person understands this you can pretty much place your bets on the small underdog



movement for the correct line/vanguard status.

While we must defend against right opportunism within our ranks, we might ally with those who are openly reformist and therefore to the right of us. Revolutionaries work on reforms because some do improve the lives of people on a small scale, yet more often our work on reform battles further confirms that reforms do not work and in the end what we really need is full-scale revolution. Trying to get some resources that will help advance the revolutionary's goals is a winnable battle worth fighting.

An example of a reform that can help a small percentage of the oppressed and could be used as a tactic in a larger strategy is limiting the number of people going into these torturous control units. Doing that work exposes the United States' cruelty, disregard for international law, brutality, etc. Hence it may help to work on SMUs, IMU, MCC, Ad-Max, etc. struggles and inhumanities because, as Mao said about public opinion, "The task of communists is to expose the fallacies of the reactionaries...and so accelerate the transformation of things and achieve the goal of revolution." While we may unite with and lead reformist battles, revolutionaries should not join liberal mass organizations because they will eventually be forced to water down their politics for the sake of the single-issue organization or risk alienation. Also, by working within a single-issue organization, revolutionaries may inadvertently be holding it back by disempowering potential recruits, thereby disempowering the group. One way they do this is by alienating potential new recruits with their more worked out politics, leaving the potential recruits feeling as if they have nothing to offer.

Mass organizations and single-issue work can be good ways for people to contribute to the anti-imperialist cause. We need to be looking to build alliances with these groups when it genuinely serves the international proletariat. In addition, we may need to pay close attention to mass organizations because a lot of people are brought into politics through them. And we need to be there to challenge them to struggle for the real solution of humyn beings: communism.

Find the Opening

In addition to reading *MIM Theory 5*, we studied two articles from the Black Panther newspaper entitled "In Defense of Self-Defense" and "The Correct Handling of a Revolution." In the latter article, Huey P. Newton wrote that, "the party must engage in activities that will teach the people." In our discussion of how to do this, one comrade discussed what ey coined "MIM(Prisons) University of Thought," which includes the various study and discussion groups

MIM(Prisons) facilitates. Through this institution, individuals have the opportunity to learn through study: the Party, its line and its history. Individuals can study the organization of movements through out our struggle for communist leadership by the proletariat and learn not only its victories and successes, but also its stagnation and failures.

Another related activity would be a campaign for the creation of giving (books, postal stamps, money, art, music, etc) by comrades that have to give. And everyone has something to give. An institution should be established that allows prisoners to send donated books to the cause, as well as funds. MIM(Prisons) has the lit project to distribute literature. This same institution can be used for prisoners who either have to send their books home due to excessiveness, or going to a control unit, or who want to just contribute to the cause.

Such a project not only progresses our efforts to receive the favor of the masses, but it also gives us an institution to counter the bourgeois-imperialist propaganda that is spread throughout this U.\$. capitalist imperialist society.

Part of Huey's point was to teach through action. So not only are people learning from the books, but they are learning from the sharing and coordinating of materials as a collective group outside of a for-profit/business structure. Even an illiterate comrade could learn from seeing the example of a book sharing program. Other activities mentioned that can teach the people were breakfast programs, community rehab on parks and other resources and lawsuits to fight censorship. ■

Democratic Centralism

Reprinted from the Maoist Internationalist Movement (MIM), What's Your Line? pamphlet, last edited 1991

"It is, I think, almost universally realized at present that the Bolsheviks could not have retained power for two and a half months, let alone two and a half years, without the most rigorous and truly iron discipline in our Party..."-V.I. Lenin(1)

Democratic centralism is a principle of organization that can be used (or abused) by any functioning group. The democratic part of the term defines the equal participation and voice expected from all members of the organization. The centralism refers to the mandate that all members uphold all decisions made by the democratic process of the organization.

In practical terms this translates into real participa-

tory democracy within, but with strict discipline expected from all members. Even if one member disagrees with a decision, they are expected to uphold the decision externally while working from within to convince other members that they are wrong. This method of organization is based on the assumption that eventually the majority of the members of a group, presented with conflicting views, will be able to arrive at the best possible decision. This may be a prolonged process, and mistakes may be made, but the democratic element ensures that debate can go on until all members are satisfied.

First, the question of why people organizing for a socialist revolution should adopt structures at all needs to be addressed. To answer this we need to look at groups that exist without structure, in relative anarchy. These organizations can never be truly democratic because they inevitably lead to the formation of informal cliques that translate into power for those more experienced or more connected people -- and powerlessness for other members. This is seen in single-issue organizations which almost always have a regular practice of informal decision making that only involves some of the members -- usually the more experienced ones. Ironically it is people in these groups who most often oppose democratic centralism, deeming it undemocratic by comparing it to their own practice.

This is not to say that cliques will not exist in a party. The difference between groups that don't follow democratic centralist principles and a party that does is that the party has the structure and therefore the potential to enact policies that keep individuals or groups from usurping power, allowing true democratic participation from all members. Structurally, democratic centralism disperses power to all the members. This possibility does not exist in supposedly unstructured organizations.

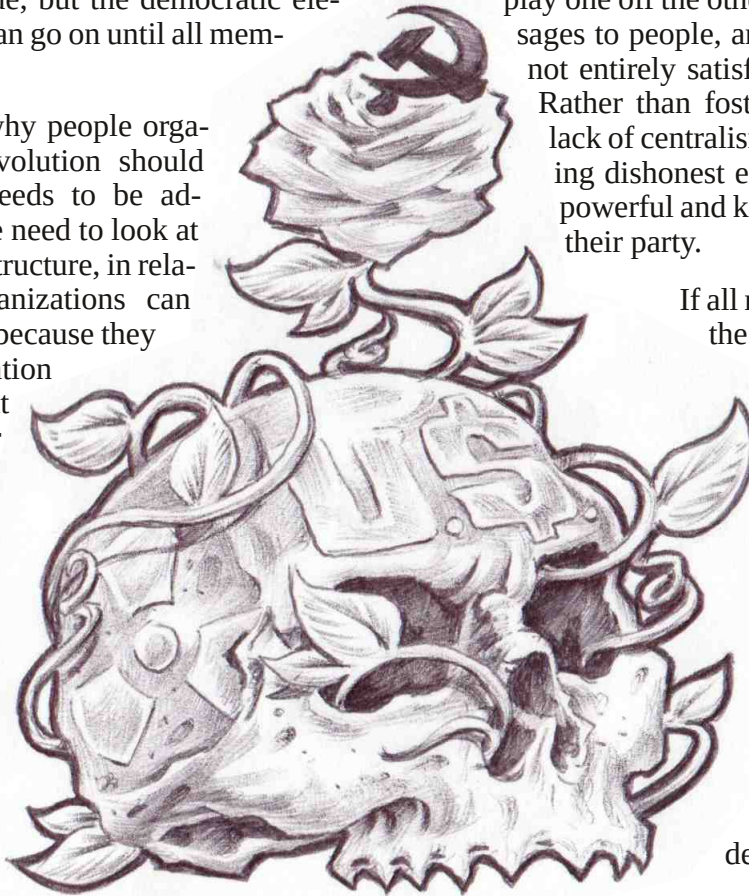
If you accept the need for some kind of organized structure, the next question that inevitably arises (for those who support democracy) is "why the discipline of centralism?" This can be answered in part by look-

ing at the history of the Black Panther Party (BPP). As an organization that only loosely enforced anything resembling centralism, particularly in the early years, the BPP suffered much infiltration and destruction at the hands of the FBI, CIA and police. It is much easier for these agents of the state to split and wreck a group which is not under centralist discipline. State spies had no problem discovering which BPP members disagreed with which others. They used this knowledge to play one off the other, by sending forged messages to people, and by agitating with those not entirely satisfied with a policy or rule. Rather than fostering healthy debate, the lack of centralism served to stifle it, allowing dishonest elements into destructively powerful and knowledgeable roles within their party.

If all members of a party uphold the party line to the general public it will be much more difficult for agents of the state to create false conflict from the outside. This reduces one potentially destructive force on the party. They may still pursue this destruction from within, and this is where the structure centralism becomes necessary to fight against the formation of cliques that are aimed at undermining democratic processes.

Of course, party members are not immune from the pressures the dominant capitalist ideology and culture exert on everyone's analysis and behavior. Even without state agents consciously trying to subvert the party, cadres are susceptible to spontaneous actions and incorrect ideas. Democratic centralism protects the party from being discredited by individual cadres following their spontaneous whims -- which cannot help but be influenced by bourgeois forces and ideology. Recognizing individualism as a danger, centralism mandates that political lines and the practice that they dictate be discussed and voted on by the membership before the party authorizes an action or statement in its name. Either way, from within or without, centralism provides a structure that enables the party to exist in the face of the powerful and destructive forces of the state.

In any group, a lack of discipline on the part of the



members of an organization can be destructive to that organization. People need to be counted on in order for work to run as smoothly and efficiently as possible. In an organization whose goal is to seize power from the bourgeoisie, discipline and unity are essential if it is to have any chance of success. The bourgeoisie is itself very organized and disciplined.

Although Marx's material analysis of history proved that socialism is inevitable, bourgeois ownership of the means of production and control over the production of culture clearly puts the ruling class at a huge tactical advantage over those attempting to overthrow the capitalist system. The capitalists can succeed in putting off revolution indefinitely if no organized group arises to overthrow this system. Undisciplined groups have no chance of wresting state power from the current ruling class.

The truly successful revolutions of history were led by revolutionary parties operating under the principle of democratic centralism. There are no examples of success to point to that did not use such structure. People are dying daily at the hands of capitalism, and to refuse a structure that has been proven to advance the revolutionary cause is to accept more deaths by postponing revolution.

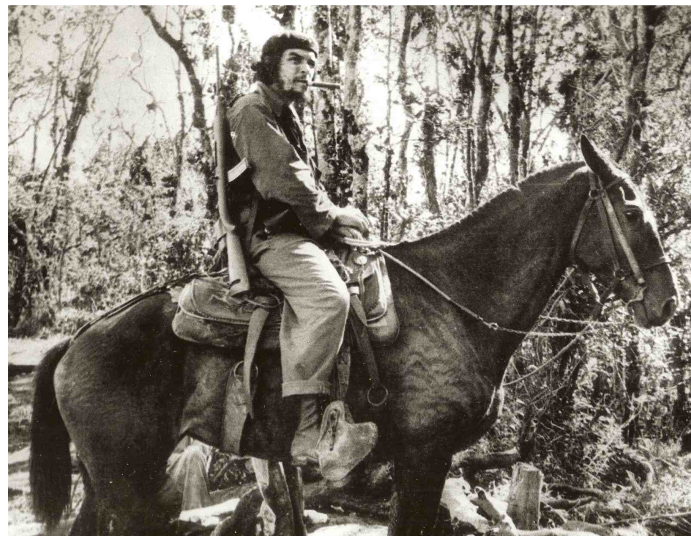
Recognizing that everyone's personal lives have repercussions for the organization as a whole, the discipline of centralism allows the party to make rules to minimize the potential damage to the party. Members regulate their personal activities for the sake of the organization, but working from the assumption of the importance of the organization. This is merely one facet of their devotion to their work. All rules controlling behavior are made by the members and are always up for debate and change internally. If one presumes that the majority of the members will arrive at policies effective in achieving the greatest good for the organization, working for the people of the world, they should be willing to carry out these rules in the interest of the party's success.

People sometimes complain about the freedoms they are giving up for the sake of the party. But these people fail to question what freedom is under capitalism. Certainly MIM does not have the freedom to oppose exploitation and oppression. Black, Latino and First Nation peoples in this country are not free to pursue "the Amerikan dream." People in Amerika's Third World colonies are not free to eat, have medical care or go to school. The freedoms that people in this country are afraid of giving up are privileges. If people really believe they deserve these "freedoms" they should not be fighting for a revolution and do not belong in a rev-

olutionary party in the first place.

Democratic centralism is the only structure of organization proven to advance the revolutionary cause. It is a structure of discipline that enables a revolutionary party to wage the most effective fight against the capitalist system. ■

Note:
Lenin, "Left-Wing" Communism, An Infantile Disorder, Selected Works, New York: International Publishers, 1971, p.516.



Che Guevara during the Cuban Revolution.

The Focoist Revolution

Reprinted from the Maoist Internationalist Movement (MIM), versions in the What is MIM? Pamphlet and MIM Theory 5, edited by MIM(Prisons) 2011

Focoism is a popular theory that says that small cells of armed revolutionaries can create the conditions for revolution through their actions. Demonstrated revolutionary victories, the successes of the foci, are supposed to lead the masses to revolution. If conditions are ripe, according to focoists "A single spark can start the revolutionary fire," they say.

Focoism often places great emphasis on armed struggle and the immediacy this brings to class warfare. Maoism, on the other hand, warns that taking up the gun too soon, and without the proper support of the masses, will result in fighting losing battles.

Focoists look to spectacular actions and tactics such as building takeovers, special demonstrations and flag burning to grab media attention to rouse the masses to rebel. Maoism is the more steady, methodical process of developing the most advanced theory and raising the mass consciousness through struggle and seizing power one calculated battle at a time.

Amerikan Focoism

In the United States, the line between focoism and Maoism is partly blurred because the focoists often possess a correct class analysis while supporting spontaneous tactics. Some focoist groups, for example, understood that the white working class in Amerika was not a revolutionary class, but still hold that their revolutionary violence directed against specific targets would unleash mass uprising.

Ultimately, focoists are scornful of analysis of concrete conditions except those of military struggle. "Conditions will never be altogether right for a broadly based revolutionary war unless the fascists are stricken by an uncharacteristic fit of total madness...Should we wait for something that is not likely to occur at least for decades? The conditions that are not present must be manufactured," writes George Jackson.(1,p.14)

Jackson gives the example of the 1930s as a case where conditions for revolution were present in Amerika, but "the vanguard elements betrayed the people of the nation and the world as a result of their failure to seize the time. The consequences were a catastrophic war and a new round of imperialist expansion."(1) Therefore, the Communist Party (CP) of the 1930s bears responsibility for the enormous crimes of the U.S. imperialism committed since the 1930s. The CP supported the U.S. government's involvement in World War II.

There are two levels at which revolutionaries must deal with Jackson's argument. First, is it true that revolutionary conditions will not appear for decades unless the bourgeoisie makes a mistake? MIM maintains that revolutionary situations may arrive, even suddenly, as the U.S. empire becomes over-extended abroad.

Weatherman, a focoist revolutionary group formed in the 1960s, agreed: "Winning state power in the United States will occur as a result of the military forces of the United States overextending themselves around the world and being defeated piecemeal; struggle within the United States will be a vital part of this process, but when the revolution triumphs in the United States it will have been made by the people of the whole world." (2) U.S.-Soviet competition to divide up the world supplements the pressures of Third World liberation struggles. Weatherman said the primary contradiction at the time was between U.S. imperialism and the Third World.

Second, Jackson, Revolutionary Youth Movement I and author J. Sakai in *Settlers: The Mythology of the White Proletariat* all point to the alliance between the bourgeoisified workers and the imperialists as one of

the main reasons for the failure of revolution in the United States. The focoists explain why there are no conditions for mass armed struggle, but then proceed to engage in armed struggle.

When it is pointed out that their tactics don't match their analysis, the focoists typically have two replies. One is a purist argument which says the U.S. masses are part of the enemy and will never support revolution, at least not until the revolutionaries force the state to bring down repression on everybody. All that Amerikan revolutionaries can do is serve as an isolated detachment of the Vietnamese, Filipino, Salvadoran, etc., proletarian revolutions. Individual revolutionaries will fail in the United States but they will take some of the enemy forces with them, and thus, make some contribution to the success of revolutions elsewhere.

This argument smacks of Judeo-Christian ethics because it basically says do what is morally pure even if the real world impact is slight. Focoists initiate armed struggle, not because they think that armed struggle offers the best chance of success now, but because they as individuals can feel morally correct for making the greatest sacrifices to fight imperialism now.

These people are not much different than those who leave the United States to demonstrate moral distaste for U.S. policies or to join Third World revolutionary movements to which they can make no contribution. People like these, who do not employ the science of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism in order to win state power, actually endanger the revolution for their own selfish, moralistic ends.

Additional evidence that Judeo-Christian ideology is at work in the focoist line in the United States comes from Tani and Sera. While Tani and Sera claim to uphold Mao faithfully, along with Ché, Ho, etc., they are quite blunt about Maoist movements in the United States: "We are not going to discuss the 'M-L Party-Building' tendency, since it was always a rightward trend of Bourgeois Marxism imitating the old CPUSA. To us the development of revolutionary forces within the U.S. oppressor nation rested with the efforts and decisions of the overall anti-imperialist tendency."(9) Sakai, Tani and Sera carefully document their argument against lame pro-Soviet revisionism, reformism and the "Left" generally, but when it comes to what they admit was the largest trend in the SDS, they snicker and guffaw without explanation.

The other rejoinder that focoists have is that subjective conditions create the material conditions for revolution. First, the focoists say that the mere example of seeing one bullet down a helicopter will shatter the in-

vincibility of the enemy. The defeat of the U.S. military is shown to be a reality: "How would they have felt (the pigs and the people) if the nameless, faceless, lightning-swift soldier of the people could have reached up, twisted the tail of their \$200,000 death bird, and hurled it into the streets, broken, ablaze!! I think that sort of thing has more to do with consciousness than anything else I can think of."(1, p.19)

Second, the focoists say that the bourgeoisie will necessarily bring down repression on the masses in order to attack the revolutionaries.

The Maoist reply to these two arguments is two-fold. First, because the focoists ignore the material conditions, they will not demonstrate the weakness of the imperialist state; instead they make themselves martyrs who are useful to the imperialists in search of public proof of their invincibility. That is to say that focoists will unintentionally convince the masses, more than ever before, of the myth that the imperialists cannot be defeated-by losing decisively to the imperialists.

Second, the imperialists will not have to impose heavy repression to oppose a failed revolution of martyrs and media stars. Where it does impose repression, the ruling class may gain the popular support of the bourgeoisified workers in favor of "law and order."

The crux of the issue is this: Do conditions exist for successful armed struggle in Amerika? If not, starting the armed struggle too soon will only taint armed struggle in the minds of those who would otherwise favor armed struggle when conditions are conducive. That is to say premature armed struggle sets back the onset of successful armed struggle.

Maoists do not regard focoism with a liberal eye. Lin Biao, second-in-command to Mao at the time, put it this way in 1965: "If they are to defeat a formidable enemy, revolutionary armed forces should not fight with a reckless disregard for the consequences when there is a great disparity between their own strength and the enemy's. If they do, they will suffer serious losses and bring heavy setbacks to the revolution."(3)

One of George Jackson's favorite quotations from Chairpersyn Mao is "When revolution fails...it is the fault of the vanguard party."(1,p.27) However, this can be interpreted to mean that revolution may fail if the vanguard party starts armed struggle too soon or too late. The focoists still need to deal with Mao's own analysis of the situation:

"Internally, capitalist countries practice bourgeois democracy (not feudalism) when they are not fascist or

not at war; in their external relations, they are not oppressed by, but themselves oppress other nations...In these countries, the question is one of long legal struggle...and the form of struggle bloodless (non-military)...the Communist Parties in the capitalist countries oppose the imperialist wars waged by their own countries; if such wars occur, the policy of these Parties is to bring about the defeat of reactionary governments of their own countries. The one war they want to fight is the civil war for which they are preparing. But this...should not be launched until the bourgeoisie becomes really helpless."(4)

Mao continued to uphold this basic line 30 years later, as evidenced in the Lin Biao article of 1965:

"Taking the entire globe, if North America and Western Europe can be called 'the cities of the world,' then Asia, Africa and Latin America constitute 'the rural areas of the world.' Since World War II, the proletarian revolutionary movement has for various reasons been temporarily held back in the North American and West European capitalist countries, while the people's revolutionary movement in Asia, Africa and Latin America has been growing vigorously. In a sense, the contemporary world revolution also presents a picture of the encirclement of cities by the rural areas. In the final analysis, the whole cause of world revolution hinges on the revolutionary struggles of the Asian, African and Latin American peoples who make up the overwhelming majority of the world's population."(3)

Grounds for Unity-Criticism-Unity

Although Maoists need to demarcate from the focoists' military line, the focoists' class analysis of the United States is often right on target. There is nothing in the RYMI class analysis that corresponds to its military line. Likewise, the Weatherman's class analysis of 1969 (and Sakai's class analysis today) demonstrate why armed struggle is out of the question at the moment:

"As a whole, the long-range interests of the non-colonial sections of the working class lie with overthrowing imperialism...However, virtually all the white working class also has short-range privileges from imperialism, which are not false privileges but very real ones which give them an edge of vested interest and tie them to a certain extent to the imperialists, especially when the latter are in a relatively prosperous phase."(2,p.65)

Jackson, too, formulates the question of the middle classes in the United States in 1971. "A new pig-oriented class has been created at the bottom of our society from which the ruling class will always be able to draw some support."(1,p.49) Jackson adds that with victory in World War II, the bourgeoisie was able to offer Euro-American workers "the flea market that muted the workers' more genuine demands...The controlling elites have co-opted large portions of the lowly

working class." (1,p.102)

Since these class analyses do not correspond to the military tactics their proponents advocate, MIM adopts the analysis without accepting that armed struggle is the best way forward at this time.

Engaging the Masses

While it is a hallmark of focoism to attempt to gain the greatest amount of media exposure in its mission to ignite the masses in the here and now, in reality this is one area where focoism has a hard time.

First, there is nothing to say that the masses inherently understand the focoists' spectacular actions, armed or otherwise. And if the foci rely on the bourgeois press, the masses are shown a distorted account of what actually happens and the tactic backfires. Here the methodical, Leninist strategy of building the party through building the newspaper, its organ, pays off. The Maoists stand ready with the most advanced theory and cogent explanations of the facts.

Second, while the spontaneity of the moment might delight some of the masses — those advanced enough to be in sympathy with the focoists — this remains largely in the realm of feel-good activism. Spectacular actions do not necessarily correspond with the most advanced theory and the best way forward, but focoists conceive of no other method to arouse the masses. Focoist-type demonstrations of force are thus substituted for the actual building and taking of power.

In the long-run focoism has never created socialism or communism, while in the short run it has gotten many of its proponents killed or imprisoned for their actions. There is no substitute for organizing around the most advanced line by convincing the masses and supporting their own initiatives. ■

Notes:

1. George Jackson, *Blood in My Eye* (New York: Bantam Books, 1971) p.10
2. Harold Jacobs, ed., "You Don't Need a Weatherman to Know Which Way the Wind Blows," *Weatherman*, (Ramparts Press, Inc. 1970) p.53
3. K.Fan, ed., "Long Live the Victory of People's War!" *Mao Tse-tung and Lin Piao* (New York: Anchor Press).
4. Mao Zedong, "Problems of War and Strategy" *Selected Works, Vol II. 1975, p.219-220*

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- Political economy of imperialism
- National liberation movements in the U.S.
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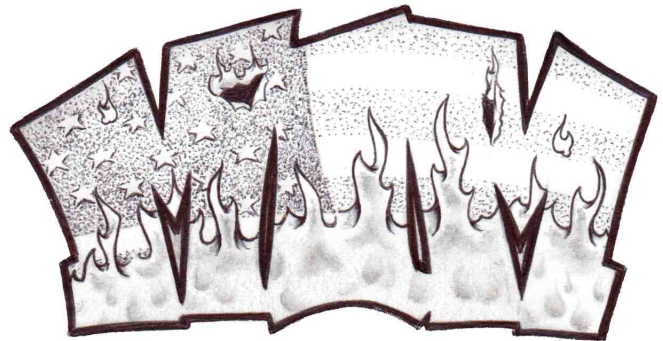
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- MT 8: The Anarchist Ideal and Communist Revolution
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