

Theory in Review

Settlers: The Mythology of the White Proletariat

J. Sakai
Morningstar Press
Chicago, 1983

August 1990

by MCS

MIM has distributed many copies of *Settlers*, as the text has profoundly contributed to the party's line on the reactionary nature of the white nation, including the white nation working class, in North America. MIM does, however, have some criticisms of *Settlers*.

Sakai has a dim view of groups like MIM, since Sakai supports armed struggle *now*. After a simplistic reading of Mao's work, Sakai even finds justification for this position in Mao's writings. [The issue of launching armed struggle in the imperialist countries now is handled in MIM Theory 5, Chapter 5 "Armed Struggle Now: An Ultraleft Deviation."]

Sakai's political economy is derived from the Revolutionary Youth Movement I (RYM I). For a history of RYM I, MIM recommends *SDS* by Alan Adelson, or *Weatherman*, edited by Harold Jacobs. RYM I was a faction of SDS that took the strongest pro-nationalist line and favored immediate urban guerrilla warfare.

RYM II, which is where MIM has greater sympathies for the most part, was more cautious about armed struggle, opposed Trotskyism without cheerleading for every nationalist struggle and generally had a more analytical approach compared with the feel-good armed struggle crowd.

Sakai supports nationalist struggles and opposes white nation chauvinism. So even though Sakai does not explicitly identify him/herself as a descendant of RYM I, that is in fact where Sakai's ideas come from. And Sakai's work represents the best that this trend has to offer.

Most of what MIM has to criticize in *Settlers* has to do with the beginning and end of the book. The bulk of the book is a penetrating exposition of the relationship between nation and class as they exist concretely in the United States through history. For the most part, the analysis is clear enough for people outside Sakai's political trend to understand.

Perhaps the biggest objection to Sakai's history is his/her rendering of World War II as incorrectly handled by revolutionaries in the United States. The analysis starts with a quotation from imprisoned revolutionary George Jackson that says it was a mistake to side with U.S. imperialists against the Nazis, as Stalin had advised revolutionaries abroad.

The problem with this section is that it does not attempt an

assessment of the balance of forces at the time and whether the oppressed in the United States would have done better by opposing the U.S. war effort.

Nothing guaranteed that the imperialists would not gang up on the oppressed. Germany was occupying the first socialist state, the Soviet Union, which proved to be a powerhouse on the side of the oppressed. Why shouldn't oppressed people side with the Soviet Union (via the United States) against Germany?

Furthermore, could both imperialists have been overthrown? One possibility is that a strong anti-war effort by the oppressed within the United States would have succeeded. Then the United States would have withdrawn or never entered the war. Roosevelt would have negotiated with Britain, Germany and Japan instead.

This would have cost the Soviet Union and more Jewish people their existence. For that matter, Germany would have likely have held on to Europe. Getting the United States into the war created some space for a number of groups to operate. If the imperialists negotiated away their differences, this may have meant more hardship for Third World peoples.(1)

Overall, though, the most important issue in the book is not World War II, but the national question. Sakai goes too far in equating the nationalism of the oppressed nations with proletarian internationalism. S/he cites the Mugabe regime in Zimbabwe favorably while cheerleading for a particular faction of the PLO. On the back page, Sakai includes a picture of Ho Chi Minh and a quotation.

The rest of the book always cites nationalist leaders in a favorable light.

At the same time, Sakai borrows heavily from Lenin and Mao and decries "revisionism" throughout the book. However, cheerleading for nationalist struggles and opposing revisionism are not the same thing.

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Of course Sakai is correct that the chauvinist "left" has distorted Lenin's work on oppressed nationalities. Straightening this out is a tremendous favor to the international proletariat.

But for Sakai to go on to claim Lenin and Mao as backers is incorrect. In particular, Mao's Chinese Communist Party did not have any fraternal relations with any states except Albania. That means it regarded all the rest of the so-called communist world as hard-core revisionist or revisionist with the possibility of developing into genuine communist. How can one tell what is revisionist? Only Albania's communist party and other parties not in state power supported the continued class struggle under the dictatorship of the proletariat. The rest did not see the Soviet Union as state-capitalist.

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine was not a Maoist group and did not enjoy fraternal relations with the CCP as a party. There were some out-of-power parties that did, such as the one in Indonesia that was massacred in the 1960s, but Sakai is not referring to these nationalist armed liberation struggles for the most part.

So Sakai makes the error of confusing support of national liberation struggles with support of particular organizations dedicated to revisionism. This is the most important error in *Settlers*. To blindly cheerlead for Ho Chi Minh (while failing to point out what the Vietnamese Communist Party thought about the Cultural Revolution and mass struggles) to consolidate the dictatorship of the proletariat is the error of overlooking revisionism in the name of internationalism.

Sakai is correct that we only demonstrate our internationalism by supporting nationalist liberation struggles of oppressed countries. Yet to really support that struggle it is necessary to support a non-revisionist party leading it, a Maoist party. By 1994 it's clear that without a genuine communist party leading, countries such as Zimbabwe, China and Vietnam go back into capitalist dependency.

There are many contexts in which it is correct to simply support a nationalist struggle regardless of the organization involved. Especially in the United States where imperialism is headquartered, internationalists are called on constantly to oppose the maneuvers of the U.S. imperialists. U.S. intervention must be stopped everywhere and national struggles supported everywhere. That is not the same thing as supporting particular organizations.

Vietnam and Zimbabwe are especially bad cases of Sakai's error. Here supposedly socialist construction is underway and the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) and Zimbabwe's Mugabe took incorrect lines in political economy and in regard to the all around dictatorship of the proletariat. They did not recognize Mao's teachings on the necessity of continued revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat and hence are nothing more than capitalist dependencies now.

Notes:

1. See MIM Theory 6, "The Stalin Issue" for an analysis of Stalin, World War II and the United Front.

Night-Vision: Illuminating War & Class On The Neo-Colonial Terrain

Butch Lee and Red Rover, 1993

December 1993

by MC5

Although MIM heard that this book had some connection to J. Sakai's *Settlers: The Mythology of the White Proletariat*, MIM does not distribute *Night-Vision: Illuminating War & Class on the Neo-Colonial Terrain*. All three books (*Settlers*, *Night Vision*, and *Settlers* sequel *False Nationalism, False Internationalism*) are essential background material for those preparing for armed struggle in the imperialist countries.

Instead of distributing *Night-Vision* generally, MIM recommends that its comrades and associates read this in a MIM-sponsored study group. In priorities, MIM study groups should go in the order the books came out. *Settlers* is most important, followed by *False Nationalism, False Internationalism*, and now *Night-Vision*. To make this a reality for its prison comrades, MIM proposes that the Vagabond Press donate as many copies of the book and corresponding postage as it would like, and we will see to it that it gets into the hands of prisoners already studying these questions.

Night-Vision is a hodge-podge of important information, mostly from the present, with some reference to older theorists — such as Amílcar Cabral and Kwame Nkrumah. *Night-Vision* is also about connecting nation, class and gender.

Much of the book, especially toward the beginning will seem old hat to the MIM reader. The two essentially new propositions for Maoist readers derive from Arghiri Emmanuel and Maria Mies. Mies is the theorist who should be noted for distinguishing between unwaged and waged labor in the capitalist context and how gender is bound up with unwaged labor.(1)

Arghiri Emmanuel stands out for noting the contradiction between settler populations and the imperialists. This contradiction is not the one between capital and labor usually thought of by the mother country "Left." Instead, Emmanuel is talking about how imperialists lose use for their settlers in neocolonial situations, when settlers no longer directly rule a society. Hence, in South Africa, capitalist imperialism can survive without having settler rule, but the settlers fight a vicious rear-

guard action to keep the imperialists in their old colonial mode. In many situations, the settlers are more of a problem to the oppressed than the imperialists themselves, according to Emmanuel.

Butch Lee and Red Rover emphasize that we are in a neo-colonial age and not a colonial age. This also includes "de-settlerization." The settlers may protest, but the imperialists dispense with the privileges granted to the settlers in direct rule and move to establish an indigenous bourgeoisie in the oppressed nations.

The authors' position opposing neocolonialism and the new elites created is not the same as J. Sakai's original position or if it is, then it is a crude position held by them jointly. As MIM said before in its critique of Sakai, Sakai treats all nationalist movements as equivalent and progressive — negating that some are bourgeois-led and some are proletarian-led. While it is indeed progressive for a national bourgeoisie to seize power from the colonial bourgeoisie, that is not something that should be equated with communist seizure of power. Sakai counters that outsiders should not be deciding which movements are communist, but MIM disagrees. Communists always have to make decisions based on concrete analysis, without which no action or consistency is possible. All people, including even individual Euro-American men, must decide what reality is and how to change it.

Lee and Rover improve on Sakai to some extent by pointing to the dangers of neocolonialism, but overall *Night-Vision* does not have the strengths that *Settlers* has. *Settlers* is dense history, heavily influenced by Marxism-Leninism and Maoism. It is also very detailed in attacking revisionism. While we can see that Sakai could be anarchist, the possibility is much more evident in the case of Lee and Rover.

Lee and Rover go a long distance, but in the end they take up idealism. Recently, MIM said this about Toni Morrison as well. Though they quote Toni Morrison,(2) Lee and Rover are much more radical, in that they understand the limits of multiculturalism, seeing it as an expression of neocolonialism.(3)

By idealism, MIM means the willingness to publish a whole book for the public that concludes with no answers. In so doing it continues the sort of agnosticism of Sakai with regard to counting on the masses to rise up equally, whether under national bourgeois or proletarian leadership:

"Everyone is looking for new political answers. Young movements are groping for strategies & programs. We are not even pretending to offer those answers, and it's important to understand why. Because new answers come from the grassroots, from the strategies and understandings that always arise out of the struggles of the oppressed themselves. From the inventions, trials and

errors of practice. Whether it's the Black Panther Party or ACT-UP. The political answers we need are only going to come from new struggles, new social forces taking over."(4)

In which case, MIM wonders, why bother writing a book? The Redstockings wrote about women who seek to evade and paralyze by asking questions of things for which there are already answers. This is what Lee and Rover have done, not quickly, but in the final decision.

How is it that Sakai is able to offer such a definitive history of settlerism in North America if we can only get answers from the masses without offering them ourselves? The answer is that like it or not, people who collect information, analyze and then make decisions on what is true and not true, are leaders. People who do not are not leaders, and might be passive — paralyzed by the march of history and an unwillingness to make decisions. Most people who are not leaders themselves have the sense to follow the leaders they have chosen. That is the lesson of the vanguard party this century.

While Sakai took many definitive stands and demonstrated the qualities of revolutionary leadership, Sakai left it open if there was any genuine vanguard party. Here we see Lee and Rover do the same, except more openly.

Another area in which Lee and Rover rise into idealism is on the necessity of picking principal contradictions. Lee and Rover see a happy unity in the women and children of the Third World. Hence they see no need for pitting gender struggle against the national struggle. One

graphic that Lee and Rover include in their book goes as follows from a poster protesting the St. John's rape case in New York in 1991: "We are sick to death of people who prioritize the fight against sexism over the fight against racism. We are sick to death of people who prioritize the fight against racism over the fight against sexism."

MIM has come to believe that this is a mistaken position, again flowing from an unwillingness to make decisions — agnosticism, a form of idealism which is fatal for the oppressed. In material reality, there are situations when the oppressed must choose which struggle to prioritize. While work in solidarity with women and children workers of the Third World avoids this question, many practical questions, especially in North America, are rife with the problem of having to choose strategic sides. Many times fighting oppression will be very simple because the oppressed will be female and oppressed nationality. In other situations, life will be more complicated because there are cross-cutting oppressions. That is not to mention individual circumstances, where we will certainly have to stand against the Black women cops and bourgeois lawyers and side with white, male revolutionaries.

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The authors mention, but do not discuss at length, the concept of Black men as "an endangered species." (5) The authors ridicule the concept for its exclusion of Black women. Similarly, the anarchist-feminist authors ridicule the idea that the Black family needs strengthening without offering any evidence to the contrary. (6)

On the other side, the authors appear unaware that the concept of Black men as "an endangered species" arose in many connections precisely to disprove the simple idea that picking the unemployed, oppressed nationality women as the principal vehicle for change was the best way to go (e.g. welfare). No, it was pointed out that the effort made by feminists to raise Black women ahead of Black men benefits whites. This controversy is common knowledge within the Black community. However, what is less common knowledge is that there is some evidence that Black men are indeed relatively more oppressed than Black women. In this connection, the mortality and imprisonment figures of Black men of all ages come to bear in connection to genocide.

On the other hand, in connection to the "family," there is ample evidence that where the family is not intact, where the male may be missing, problems ranging from higher infant mortality to drug abuse are more rampant. These are not questions that should be dismissed quickly with a moralizing barb the way Lee and Rover do in one sentence. Revolutionary theory is not about picking the words that sound most righteous most quickly. While Lee and Rover avoided the ultraleft liberal tendency to tell such anecdotes precisely to glorify the individual and to eliminate any possibility for developing group consciousness, they nonetheless are somewhat guilty of a moralizing approach to theory as demonstrated in the case of Black gender relations.

If the oppressed are not united behind one strategy, based on one analysis, the oppressed will divide. Vanguard parties do their best to pick one analysis and corresponding strategy and then unite people behind it. That may be the most important reason that vanguard parties have served as the midwives of revolution this century while anarchism has led to no tangible results in the struggle against imperialism. Having the oppressed masses divided and going in different directions to meet the same problem is not something that they themselves can afford.

Unfortunately, there is nothing MIM can do to stop the gender aristocracy from lining up with someone like Anita Hill and making a big fuss to confuse the oppressed and saddle them with another loss in battle. What MIM can do is prepare the situation so that the next time, the oppressed themselves will not be even slightly divided on the question. (7)

Lee and Rover recognize the many divisions among the people who aren't imperialists. They see splits in the working class and splits in the two genders and within the various nations. They say that neo-colonialism has unleashed chaos pure and simple, and that the imperialists are happy to have the various groups fight it out with the settlers and each other. For

this reason, MIM itself would never publish and distribute such a destructive book that doesn't explain how to line up and re-organize the pieces of a communist movement.

STRENGTHS OF *NIGHT-VISION*

In most regards, MIM finds *Night-Vision* very agreeable. Indeed, there is some high-level unity on questions right down to the details, unity that we don't find in many places, including organizations like the League of Revolutionary Struggle and RCP, USA which call themselves Maoist. There is nothing in the book that couldn't have been or hasn't been discussed within MIM.

There are three main differences between MIM and the Lee and Rover types: 1) the question of the need for a vanguard party and democratic centralism 2) the weight of Mao Zedong and other proletarian leaders compared with that of various bourgeois nationalist leaders 3) the question of direct action and immediate armed struggle. We have discussed these

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elsewhere, so here we will go into the astonishing unity between MIM and the authors, given the other differences that exist.

For instance, Lee and Rover do not make the mistake of cheerleading for Anita Hill. (8) While progressives generally united on the point that Clarence Thomas is a bootlicking comprador, many were fooled by Anita Hill's individualist and reformist approach. We are happy to say that Lee and Rover were not swept up with the spontaneity of the situation that the bourgeois media and the Senate created.

Indeed, one thing that makes the Lee and Rover brand of ultraleftism so attractive is that it is not patently liberal. While many descendants of the Weather Underground would build bombs one day or front for those who did, they would often go fight charity battles or make excuses for Democrats the next day. Court battles are a favorite place of the ultraleft liberals to get righteous, usually by taking one side in a hopelessly confused situation. An example that Lee and Rover avoid is the Mike Tyson/Desiree Washington conflict. (9) Tyson got convicted for rape, but Lee and Rover don't then sing the praise of the criminal justice system and conclude that this is the way to go, as so many ultraleftists who are unconsciously liberal do.

The conflict between Tyson and Washington is searched

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endlessly by the liberals for symbolic meaning. Somehow the lives of the world champion fighter and a Miss America got mistaken for something real by the ultraleft liberals.

Lee and Rover also attack paternalism and the whole ideology of protection quite correctly. "Men are supposed to protect women, and adults are supposed to protect children. But nowhere in the world is this true. The supposed need to 'protect' is really the ideological justification for keeping you powerless so you can be abused and exploited." (10)

"Whenever anyone says that, how this group or that group is special and need protecting, that only means that they own you. That only means that you're property. When they're free, animals don't need the SPCA. Check it out." (10)

This issue has been a big one in the feminist movement in the imperialist countries. Not surprisingly, given their line against paternalist protection, Lee and Rover also find that gender is not something strictly biological: "Gender can even drift away from sex, away from its physical moorings." (11) They go on to explain how in some situations, biological men have been made into women.

Above all, MIM shares with the authors a sense of the importance of understanding parasitism. As much as MIM, the authors realize that the white nation is subsidized by the Third World and not the other way around. (12)

CONCLUSION

The book destroys the existing answers without offering new ones. This is something that MIM is careful to do only within its party circles, and then only by accident. Even within party circles, those advocating the creation and use of new theoretical weapons are required to bring forth evidence and a possible practice to replace the old ones being discarded. It is important not to sow doubt and confusion for the sake of doubt and confusion the way the police would like.

MIM is not aware if this kind of anarchism by Lee and Rover can sustain itself. Most anarchists are really only civil libertarians with another name. Lee and Rover appear to be

more of the genuine communist anarchists who are the only ones worthy of the name. This century, such anarchists have been increasingly outnumbered by bourgeois liberal rebels who call themselves anarchists. These bourgeois anarchists only make the genuine communist anarchists stand out more. In addition, the genuine communist anarchists deserve the respect of the Maoists because they do not falsely claim the mantles of Marx, Lenin and Mao the way revisionists do.

Lee and Rover are scientists, more or less influenced by Marxism-Leninism. They have made many, many advances by making analyses and then taking a stand. It appears that with regard to the need for a vanguard party and a summation of socialist experience, this group of people throws up its hands, right into the skies of agnosticism.

History has created this group of people, but in the long-run, we believe it will separate into two parts. One part will continue with its application of revolutionary science and work in the vanguard party. The other part will get lost in confusion over the conditions of neocolonialism, fall for pop sociology and fads in general, and then degenerate into parasitic anarchism or individualism.

Notes:

1. See Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour*. Zed Books: London, 1986.
2. Butch Lee and Red Rover. *Night-Vision: Illuminating War & Class on the Neo-Colonial Terrain*, 1993, p. 8.
3. Ibid., p. 54.
4. Ibid., p. vi.
5. Ibid., p. 10.
6. Ibid., p. 186.
7. See MIM Theory 2/3, Chapter 3 for extensive treatment of the Hill/Thomas debate.
8. Ibid., pp. 2-3.
9. Ibid., p. 179.
10. Ibid., p. 151.
11. Ibid., p. 31.
12. Ibid., p. 166.

sis is the influence of focoism on the Sendero line, if any. In a previous issue, MIM comrades discussed the Sendero line in favor of "militarization of the party."

The Sendero appear to claim that this is part of their original summation of Chinese experience including the Cultural Revolution. On the other hand, readers of Régis Debray and other focoists would notice his stress on military action as the highest form of propaganda.(2) Debray is also explicit on the relationship of the army to the party: "To subordinate the guerrilla group strategically and tactically to a party that has not radically changed its peacetime organization, or to treat it as one more ramification of party activity brings in its wake a series of fatal military errors." (3) For this reason, Debray opposes the Maoist conception that the party should command the army because he believes that military actions at the center and should not be separated from political experience.(4) In Cuba, it was the army that created the party.(5) Likewise, the Senderos' call for "militarization of the party" implies that the party is not already militarized, and is not already directing the revolutionary armed forces.

Furthermore, spectacular acts of urban sabotage performed by the Senderos if stressed at the expense of rural base-building also seem to indicate a focoist influence. Nonetheless, MIM currently has no definitive information or analyses of possible focoist influences on the Senderos. [MIM has since received much deeper information about the Shining Path and distributes all Shining Path literature available on this and other questions—MC5, 1993]

The debate in the United States today

In the United States, the line between focoism and Maoism is more blurred. This is not surprising given the fact that after Khrushchev denounced armed struggle as the path to revolution, revolutionary-minded people in the United States lumped together all Third World revolutionaries in order to discredit the reformist Communist Party, USA.

This kind of thinking has its place. It is still worthwhile to ponder the failure of Trotskyism and reformism in the Third World.

On the other hand, there are concrete differences in how Maoists and focoists organize in the United States.

George and Jonathan Jackson and the Black Panther Party often mentioned Ché and Mao in the same breath. The Weatherman and other descen-

dants of the Revolutionary Youth Movement did the same. For example, in the present, people such as J. Sakai, author of a history book on the United States from a proletarian perspective (*Settlers: The Mythology of the White Proletariat*), and E. Tani and K. Sera cite Mao to support focoism.

These Castroites are different than the mere servants of Soviet revisionism in that they see success in Cuba, but do not necessarily uphold the Communist Party in the USA or USSR.

George and Jonathan Jackson summed up the focoist position in the United States well by saying that "we cannot raise consciousness another millimeter" without armed struggle.(6) Focoists believe that small cells of armed revolutionaries can create the conditions of revolution through their actions. Good examples set by foco units will be copied by the masses, according to the focoists.

Ultimately, the focoist is 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."(7)

George 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."(7) Therefore, the C.P. of the 1930s bears responsibility for the enormous crimes of U.S. imperialism committed since the 1930s, according to Jackson.

There are two levels at which revolutionaries must deal with this argument. First, is it factually correct that revolutionary conditions will not appear for decades to come unless the bourgeoisie makes an uncharacteristic mistake? According to MIM's founding documents, especially on the international situation, this is not the case. Even according to the Weatherman in 1969, this was not the case: "Winning state power in the US will occur as a result of the military forces of the US overextending themselves around the world and being defeated piecemeal; struggle within the US will be a vital part of this process, but when the revolution triumphs in the US it will have been made by the people of the whole world."(8) The pressures of Third World liberation struggles are supplemented by

U.S.-Soviet contention, which has become more of a factor since the time that the Weatherman spoke of the principal contradiction, which was undoubtedly between U.S. imperialism and the Third World at the time. [Obviously this aspect of U.S. militarism has since changed with the near collapse of Russian empire—MC5, 1993]

Secondly, George Jackson, RYM I and J. Sakai 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. Thus, there is a scientific analysis of why the masses in the United States will not support revolution, but no scientific rationale for the course of action supported by Jackson, Sakai, E. Tani, Kaé Sera, et. al. They explain why there are no conditions for mass armed struggle, but then proceed to engage in armed struggle.

The focoists have two replies to this argument. One is an argument with suspiciously Judeo-Christian overtones. Basically, it says the masses of the United States are part of the enemy. They will never support revolution or at least not until the revolutionaries force the state to bring down repression on everybody. All that revolutionaries in the United States can do is serve as an isolated detachment of the Vietnamese, Filipino, Salvadoran, Filippino, etc. proletarian revolutions. Individual revolutionaries will fail in the United States but they will take some of the repressive forces/enemy 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. This is a particularly vicious disease (Judeo-Christian individual conscience-salving, guilt-tripping and existentialism) in the United States where the relatively free market economy provides a material basis for individualistic thinking as opposed to class consciousness.

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 SDS, they snicker and guffaw without explanation.

The lack of explanation of why armed struggle tactics are appropriate now in the United States, contrary to what Mao and Lin Biao [when Lin Biao was still correct] said, is itself powerful evidence that there is no explanation, only ideological presupposition. These people 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. Such people remind one of the Catholic activists who advised all the workers at a factory to quit their jobs because their production was military-related. 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 Mao Zedong Thought in order to win state power for the international proletariat actually endanger the revolution for their own selfish, moralistic ends.

The other rejoinder that focoists have is that subjective conditions create the material conditions for revolution. According to the focoists, the mere example of seeing one bullet down a helicopter will shatter the invincibility of the enemy. Those who believe that it is impossible to defeat the technologically advanced U.S. military will see otherwise in practice: "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." (10)

Secondly, the focoists say that the bourgeoisie will necessarily wreak repression on the masses in order to attack the revolutionaries.

The Maoist reply to these two arguments is two-fold. First, by ignoring material conditions, the focoists will not demonstrate the weakness of the imperialist state, but instead make themselves Christian martyrs who are useful to the imperialists in search of public proof of their invincibility. That is to say the 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.

Secondly, the imperialists will not have to impose heavy repression to oppose a failed revolution of martyrs/superheroes/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. Premature armed struggle sets back the onset of successful armed struggle. At this stage in history, even setting back the armed struggle a few days may result in a nuclear catastrophe for humanity.

Therefore, 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."(11)

A favorite Mao quote of George Jackson is "When revolution fails. . . it is the fault of the vanguard party."(12) However, this quote can be interpreted to mean that revolution may fail if the vanguard party starts armed struggle too soon or too late. But the real Mao quote that focoists need to come to terms with is as follows:

"Internally, capitalist countries practise bourgeois democracy (not feudalism) when they are not fascist nor at war; in their external relations, they are not opposed by, but themselves oppress other nations. Because of these characteristics.... 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 countries 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."

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."(13)

Grounds of unity: the RYM I line on the Euro-Amerikan masses

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 RYM I class analysis that corresponds to its military line. Rather, 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 of 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."(14)

Since the RYM class analysis does not correspond to its military tactics, it is possible for MIM to adopt the RYM class analysis wholesale.

How clearly Jackson formulates the question of the middle classes in the United States compared with Bob Avakian's statement in "Charting..." While Avakian claims to break new ground by re-emphasizing Lenin's formulations on economism, Jackson's explanations were short and easy to understand already by 1971: "A new pig-oriented class has been created at the bottom of our society from which the ruling class will be always able to draw some support."(15) Jackson adds that with victory in World War II, the bourgeoisie was able to offer Euro-Amerikan workers "the flea market that

mutated the workers' more genuine demands.... The controlling elites have co-opted large portions of the lowly working class." (16)

There is a difference between someone like Avakian, who tries to form the most revolutionary pole to divert workers' movements and someone like Sakai, who sees white workers allied with the imperialists. Avakian focuses on the history of "economism" in communist efforts in the United States and implies that a correct approach to workers would produce better results. Avakian thus shares with P.L. [Progressive Labor Party] the conviction that incorrect organizing has damaged revolutionary movements among Amerikan workers. On the other hand, RYM I types including Sakai focus on the "alliance" of white workers that "tie them to a certain extent to the imperialists." (Despite the difference of emphasis in "economism" vs. "alliance," neither school of thought necessarily holds that there has been a revolutionary opportunity in the United States since 1929.)

MIM should wish Avakian well with the Revolutionary Communist Party's (RCP) effort to fight "economism" in efforts to organize the bourgeoisified working class. Of the groups that do not see the white working class allied with imperialism in the short run, the RCP is the best. It emphasizes the decisiveness of the Black masses as of Avakian's most recent interview in *Revolution* magazine. The RCP also emphasizes the other oppressed nationalities and immigrants in the United States while falling short of saying that there is no Euro-Amerikan working class.

Nonetheless, MIM has been moving toward an acceptance of RYM I/Weatherman class analysis of the United States. (See MIM Theory issues 9-11; a political economy for this analysis was developed in new MT1 in 1992.)

Other questions and pro-RYM arguments

There is another possible reason to support RYM military tactics. Perhaps they work, but the public does not know it. When the bourgeoisie wins, as in the Brinks case, everyone hears about it. Yet, the people who are part of the Revolutionary Armed Task Force (RATF) are very capable people, often millionaires in their own right.

This is not to put them down for being capable and resourceful people. In particular the common scorn for the Weatherman as a bunch of rich white kids is incorrect. If they are doing the best thing for the revolution of the international proletariat, then it

does not matter who they are.

The question is whether covert gains of the RATF outweigh its public losses. Are there covert gains that the various focoists of the RATF and BLA have won worth the public losses to the revolution?

Undoubtedly there are some successes that the public does not hear about. On the other hand, the Weatherman typically released communiques to publicize its victories.

If the BLA, RATF, etc. cannot publicize their gains, then that in itself is reason to oppose their military tactics. The operation of Mao's mass line depends on the summation of information of the whole movements' successes and failures. Both in terms of propaganda and internal organizational life, communication is necessary.

It is the author's impression that there are focoists cells in operation in the United States. These cells stay separate for security reasons.

On the other hand, on behalf of the focoists, there is perhaps no reason for the labor aristocracy, which is most of the white people in the United States, to hear about victories in armed struggle. Propagandizing among the oppressed masses would be good enough. Between the opportunist strategy of grabbing bourgeois media time and the anarchist approach of influencing only those one meets in day-to-day life, there is a lot of room. However, it has always been a hallmark of focoism to seize the greatest amount of publicity possible and thus spark the prairie fire. It seems unlikely that there are tremendous secret focoist successes.

Tani and Sera describe the anti-imperialists this way: "In late 1969, SDS, the mass national organization of student radicalism and protest, split into two political tendencies. The first was the Anti-imperialist tendency, most visibly led by the Weather Underground Organization.... The second, opposing school of thought was the 'Marxist-Leninist party-building' tendency, initially led by the Progressive Labor Party's 'Worker-Student Alliance' and the Revolutionary Youth Movement 2 student bloc (whose elements became the October League, Revolutionary Communist Party, etc.). This tendency viewed the struggle as a classic, European-style worker vs. capitalist workplace conflict, and advocated using trade union reform campaigns to build a party like the 1930s Old Left. China was seen as the only world vanguard by them."

Ultimately, for Régis Debray and Tani and Sera, the failure of a reputedly revolutionary organization to take up armed struggle immediately defines that

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organization as bourgeois. For this reason, Tani and Sera skip over any polemic with Maoism in the United States. Nowhere in the book by Tani and Sera is there any argument why failure to take up armed struggle is bourgeois. Hence, the argument must be gleaned from Jackson and Debray and others.

Notes:

1. Ann Arbor News 1/17/88, p. B1.
2. Debray, Régis. 1967. *Revolution in the Revolution?* NY: Grove Press, p. 56.
3. Ibid., 67-8.
4. Ibid., 88-91.
5. Ibid., 108.
6. George Jackson, *Blood in My Eye*, Bantam Books, 1971, p. 10.
7. Ibid., p. 14.
8. Harold Jacobs, ed. "You Don't Need a Weatherman to Know Which Way the Wind Blows", p. 53
9. Tani, E. & Sera, Kaé. 1985. *False Nationalism False Internationalism: Class Contradictions in the Armed Struggle*. A Seeds Beneath the Snow Publication, p. 133.
10. Jonathan Jackson in George Jackson, Ibid., p. 19.
11. K. Fan, ed. "Long Live the Victory of People's War!" in Mao Tse-tung and Lin Piao: Post Revolutionary Writings, p. 383.
12. George Jackson, op cit., p. 27.
13. Fan, op. cit., p. 396.
14. Jacobs, op. cit., p. 65.
15. Ibid., p. 49.
16. Ibid., p. 102.