

the **Communist** ★

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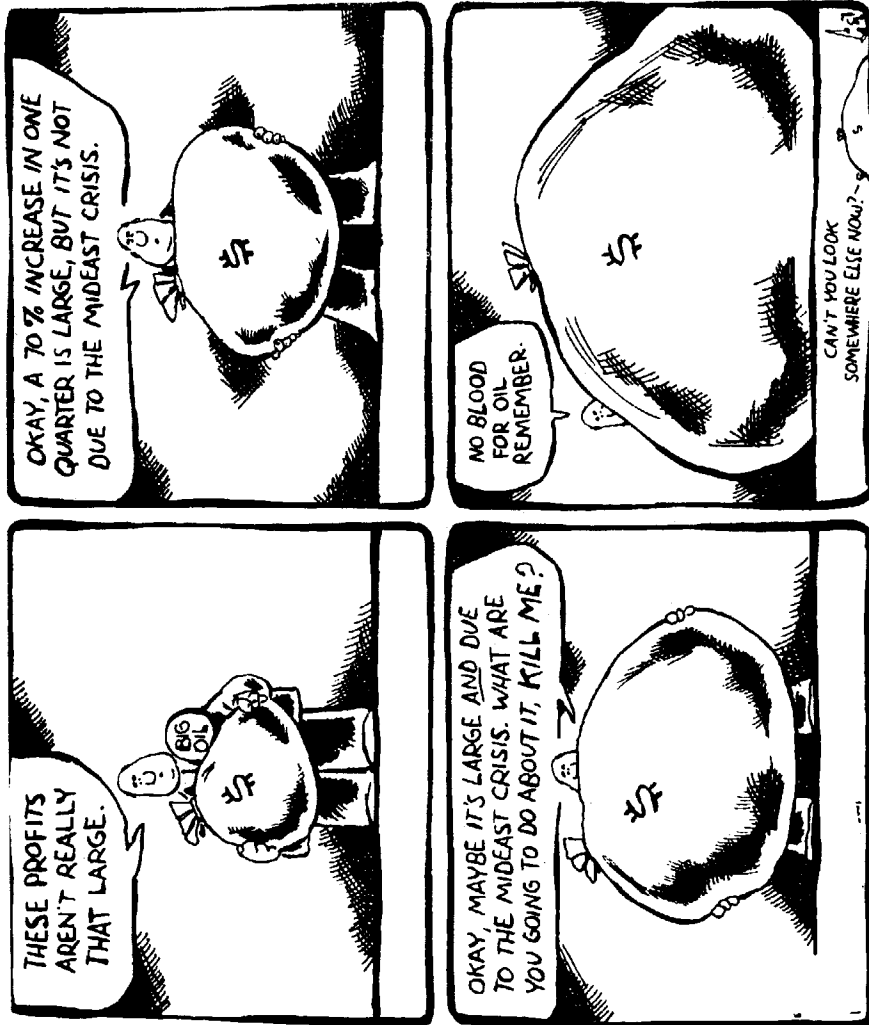
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IRAQI POLITICAL HISTORY

**CAN COMMUNISTS USE
THE ENEMY'S CULTURE?**

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ARTICLES

CUBAN SMOKE

Fidel's revolution has the undeserved reputation of being the last bastion of revolutionary communism. But Cuban socialism oppressed the working people just as socialism did elsewhere, and nowhere did it lead to communism. Here we examine this matter.

CAN COMMUNISTS USE THE ENEMY'S CULTURE? 38

Capitalist culture fosters the most absurd misconceptions about life as organized by the bourgeoisie. Its role is to seduce those whom the bourgeoisie exploits, starves and slaughters. Communists have a vital interest in exposing the real class content of bourgeois culture, as a first step toward destroying it. This is the first of two articles.

THE OIL WAR

CHALLENGE/DESAFIO's coverage of the Bush-Baath bashing, which is excerpted here, was the only coherent explanation of what was going on.

CHRONOLOGY OF IRAQI POLITICAL HISTORY

The oil-y, violent true story of a British imperialist invention.

FEATURES:

RED READS

History of time; Fighting sexism; Creating reputations.

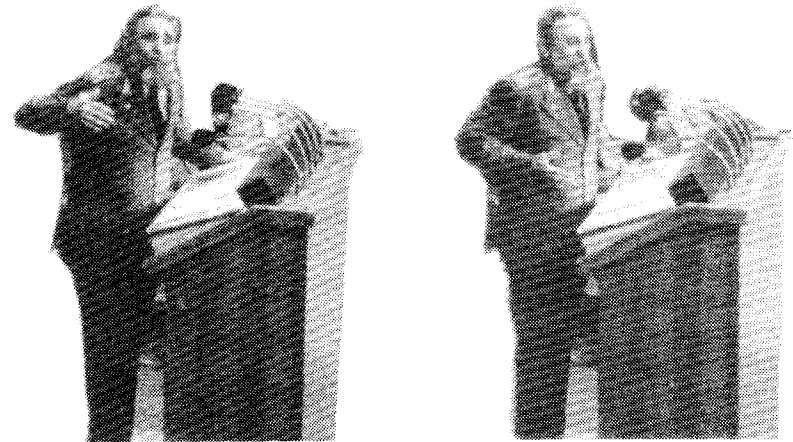
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CUBAN SMOKE



Over the past three decades Fidel Castro and the movement he leads have enjoyed tremendous prestige within the international revolutionary movement, and especially in Latin America.

The reasons are not hard to find:

- Fidel was a daring and resourceful revolutionary who always spit in the eye of the enemy. He seemed to know what to do. He won power through armed struggle, and destroyed the notorious torturers and oppressors of the people. He used the force of the state to defeat U.S. imperialism and the Cuban reactionaries who attacked the revolution. For these reasons, he won the love of the Cuban working people.
- Fidel gave moral and material support to other insurgent national liberation movements in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. So millions who hated US imperialism saw Fidel

as their hero and spokesperson.

□ Fidel defiantly declared the Cuban revolution to be "communist," and proceeded to implement a series of social and economic reforms that gave Cubans one of the highest living standards in the hemisphere.

(By contrast, the Communist Parties, who had been the traditional leaders of the continent's oppressed, were played out. They had no strategic direction. Having long since given up on armed insurrection, they had no idea how to bring the working class to power. They were part of the Establishment, playing the game of elections, union organizing and reformist power brokering.)

All-in-all, anti-imperialists all over the world have looked on Cuba as a model of how the struggle against imperialism and the establishment of socialism should be carried out. And now many have heard Fidel's speeches attacking perestroika in the Soviet Union and think Fidel represents the left wing of the world communist movement.

It is a good image, worthy of respect. But what is the reality behind the image? That is what this article is about.

This article will show that, no

matter what the image is, Castro and the Cuban revolution have never been on the left wing of anything, and they aren't now either.

OUR MAIN POINTS, BRIEFLY STATED:

- Fidel and his group were never revolutionary communists, neither in ideology nor in practice. They were never animated by more than the pipe dreams of the European bourgeoisie, and desired nothing better than to bring those dreams to life in an independent Cuba.

- Their radical nationalism has its ideological roots in 19th century German romanticism—a way of thinking that emphasizes preserving the traditional values of "the people." But these are values, forced on the people by past ruling classes, which guarantee the complete dependence of the people upon despotic rulers. (All modern nationalisms—socialist "progressive" nationalism, pan-Arabism, pan-Slavism, pan-Germanism, etc.—share this foundation.)

- Fidel and his group always were (and they remain) liberal capitalist reformers. The society they lead has never advanced beyond capitalism. Cuba leads a market-driven, imperialist-determined, imperialist-

dominated economic and social life despite Fidel's anti-imperialist, anti-market speeches. It is a sad irony, but his radical nationalism was what forced Fidel to become imperialism's chief Cuban agent. If he had been a communist, he could have avoided that disgrace.

- The "Communist" movement Castro declared himself part of in 1961 was just that part of a disintegrating movement that was then openly renouncing communism. In that gang (of which he is the last survivor) there was no Left.

- The "Marxism-Leninism" Castro announced he had embraced was a "Marxism-Leninism" purged of all its content, all its revolutionary communist ideas. It is a disgusting concoction brewed by state capitalists to justify their fascist-like control of society. The ideology and politics of the various class forces in the Cuban revolution, and their relationship to each other, prevented the Cuban workers from advancing to communism.

For Fidel and his group, the art of governing lies in making whatever self-serving choice circumstances seem to require, and then covering everything in an ideological disguise. In Cuba under Fidel, ideology (not religion or chemistry) is used to drug

the masses.

The Cuban revolution's prestige is based on mistaking words with deeds. Its current crisis is a crisis of nationalist politics, not a crisis of communism.

FIDEL'S PROGRESS: ANTI-COMMUNIST TO 'MARXIST-LENINIST'

I. Getting Power

Fidel is the son of a poor Spanish immigrant to Cuba who became a rich farmer. Fidel was sent to private schools and eventually to Havana University. There he became the most prominent anti-communist student leader, leading the university wing of the "Partido del Pueblo Cubano" (known as the "Ortodoxos") which was an anti-corruption, ("clean government,"), populist, nationalist, anti-communist party. After graduating as a lawyer, Fidel went into tenant organizing in Havana. He decided to run as an Ortodoxo candidate for the Cuban Congress in 1952, but Batista's coup on March 10, 1952 canceled the election.

Fidel immediately set himself the task of organizing a group to overthrow the dictator by force. (He was not alone—other groups were being formed.) In his first attempt, on July 26, 1953, Fidel led 165 men and two women in



Nearly the entire Rebel Army assembled in early 1957.

an armed attack on the Moncada army post (the Cuban army's second largest base, and the key to controlling eastern Cuba) in Santiago de Cuba. Fidel expected a popular uprising to greet his capture of Moncada. That was his plan. But the attack failed, and there was no uprising. Fidel was captured a few days later, tried and sentenced to a long jail term. At his trial he delivered a speech which became famous as "La Historia Me Absolvera" ("History Will Absolve Me.") In this speech he sketched a reformist bourgeois political program, completely within the Ortodoxo tradition. This remained his program until well after his seizure of power.

In December, 1955 he was freed by Batista, and left at once for Mexico where he began to organize a new attempt to overthrow the dictator.

A year later, in December 1956, Fidel headed back to Cuba aboard a private yacht named the "Granma." He was leading the 81 revolutionary soldiers of a new group he called the "July 26 Movement" in honor of his first attempt. With this armed nucleus he planned to challenge the 80,000 soldiers of the dictatorship.

The landing operation was a military fiasco. Batista had been tipped off, and his troops were waiting. Only 12 revolutionaries

managed to escape, somehow getting to the nearby Sierra Maestra mountains. (This was neither the desired plan nor the contingency plan. The possibility of this disaster was completely unforeseen and unplanned for.) But this remnant, led by Fidel, began to wage a guerrilla war against the Batista government. Batista responded by unleashing a reign of terror and torture throughout Cuba.

By mid-1958 about 3,000 insurgents were part of Fidel's "26 of July Movement Rebel Armed Forces," fighting the government in eastern Cuba. Other, smaller armed groups, belonging to other political groups, were in the field against Batista in other parts of the country. Popular unrest grew to fever pitch throughout Cuba. By October the government was tottering on its last legs, and rumors of coups and plots flew thick and fast.

By mid-December, an offensive being led by Che Guevara, Fidel's most trusted and most competent companion, effectively cut the island in two at the midpoint, isolating east from west. This convinced Batista to pack his plane with gold, tip off a few cronies, and flee to Ciudad Trujillo (as the capital of Santo Domingo was then called), Miami and Madrid. On January 1, 1959 Fidel announced the

power was now his, and, hailed as a liberator by virtually the whole Cuban people, he marched triumphantly across Cuba at the head of a column of his troops, reaching Havana on January 8, 1959.

2. Complicated Politics Of Fidel's Radical "Good Government" Reform Movement

Now a complicated political situation developed, as Fidel tried to implement the reforms he had promised, while holding together the anti-communist bourgeois coalition represented by his "July 26 Movement."

So, on the one hand, shortly after entering Havana, Castro made a pilgrimage to the tomb of his old Ortodoxo leader, the anti-communist Eduardo Chibas, and declared that the 26th of July Movement "was the continuation of the work of Chibas, the harvest of the seed that he planted in our people." (*Bohemia*, January 18-25, 1959, p 105). He then appointed a government almost wholly drawn from the old bourgeois ruling groups. In case anyone failed to understand him, on April 23, 1959 he said that fascism, Peronism, and communism were all merely different kinds of "totalitarianism". And on May 21, 1959, he talked of communism as a system "which

solves the economic problems, but which suppresses liberties, the liberties which are so dear to Man, and which I know the Cuban people feel."

On the other hand, he tried to carry out the populist reforms outlined in "History Will Absolve Me." He proposed, for example, to freeze prices, cut taxes, reduce rents, stop importing luxury goods, expel the Mafia gangsters who controlled Havana and ran its gambling, drugs and commercial sex rackets (around which the whole Cuban tourist industry was built) and close down their rackets, and implement a land reform.

These reforms would threaten *some* of the profits of those U.S. business interests which controlled the Cuban economy lock, stock and barrel. For these companies (who were not used to getting less than 100% of what they wanted, all the time) this was nothing but the horror of communism. The U.S. government backed up the U.S. companies and threatened to retaliate against Cuba if Castro implemented his reforms. Fidel answered this "insolence" (as he termed the U.S. threats) by threatening not merely to implement reforms, but to expropriate the U.S. corporations' properties if the U.S. government retaliated.

One thing led to another.

To give himself some freedom of maneuver Fidel bought a boat-load of arms and ammunition from Belgium. So when the ship arrived in Havana harbor, the CIA blew it up, killing dozens of port workers in the process.

The Western oil companies refused to sell him crude oil. So Castro bought a tanker-load from Moscow. Then the oil-company-owned refineries refused to process it. And so Castro seized the local refineries.

So it went. In short order, the U.S. government had slapped a total economic embargo on Cuba, and was busily organizing an invasion to overthrow Castro; while Fidel for his part had not only enacted his reforms, but had nationalized all the U.S. companies in Cuba.

While this was going on the old-line politicians (who could not effectively oppose Fidel, and increasingly saw little reason to support him) who cared about having political power only to the extent they could use it to enrich themselves and protect their cronies, deserted Fidel's coalition and left for Miami. Fighting (especially fighting the U.S.) and being called "communist"—this was more than they were made for. Soon virtually the entire Cuban urban and commercial bourgeoisie—several hundred thousand strong—had

emigrated.

3. The Turn To Moscow

As the U.S. government turned the economic screws on him, Castro had to find a new trading partner, because the immediate improvement of material living conditions, coupled with general economic development, were—and are—the essence of his revolutionary nationalist-reformist politics.

He was prepared to break with U.S. imperialism—this was the hallmark of his radicalism—but only on condition that he would be embraced by another bloc. The limitations of his radical nationalism barred him from considering the path a communist would have adopted, the path of self-sufficient economic development.

A policy of self-sufficient economic development would guarantee the revolution could not be destroyed by the powerful world market economic forces the imperialists control and can manipulate.

Self-sufficient economic development removes the country from the world market, and suppresses the domestic free market. This is the only way to keep the imperialists' hands off the revolution.

For Cuba, breaking with the

world market would have had the immediate effect of lowering material living conditions generally, although not for the most oppressed workers and farmers (who could scarcely live more poorly.) These classes would have had to be the base and leaders of the revolution were this policy to be carried out successfully.

This general lowering of material living conditions would have been an immediate effect, but it would not have been long-lasting condition. But, no matter how briefly it might have lasted, this was precisely what Fidel didn't want at all.

Also, to break with the world market, and suppress the domestic market, requires a total reorganization of social and production relations. But revolutionizing the relations of production was something wholly outside the fidelista understanding.

So, all-in-all, a communist strategy for revolution and for economic development could not produce the desired fidelista results.

4. Moscow's Interest

For its own reasons Moscow beckoned, and Fidel turned to Moscow.

In those days the Soviet Union

was ruled by a self-confident group of expansionist-minded state capitalists led by Nikita Khrushchev. They had consolidated their power in 1957 with a huge purge of their considerable opposition. They then officially and openly scuttled the Soviet Union's communist program by renouncing the goal of a working class dictatorship over society. They followed up by unashamedly changing the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from being a group claiming to act in the interests of the working class into a group that denied the working class had any class interests. In reality they wanted to supplant U.S. imperialism's dominance of the world market with their own. To help them achieve this end they needed to hide it. They wished to present themselves as more "anti-imperialist" than anyone else claiming to be communist (the Chinese, for example). So they were delighted to have a chance to challenge the U.S. government right on its own doorstep.

THE OLD CUBAN CP: OPPORTUNISM FINALLY REWARDED

As his bourgeois allies deserted him, Fidel was forced to patch things up with the only other nationally organized political force in the country, his old enemy, the Cuban Communist

Party.

Founded in 1925, the Cuban Communist Party became one of the biggest and most influential in Latin America, with a significant mass base in the working class (especially among the sugar cane workers) and in the petty bourgeoisie. But from its formative years on its leadership was under the guidance and supervision of the leaders of the U.S. Communist Party, which was perhaps the least communist and most anti-revolutionary of any party leadership claiming to belong to the Marxist-Leninist tradition. (They were the only Communist Party leaders in the world who dissolved their own organization in order to bring about a united front (!) with their bourgeois rivals.)

Long before Fidel became politically active, the Cuban Communist Party had completely abandoned any idea of armed struggle, or of communism. It concocted a theoretical justification for its treachery to the Cuban working class called "geographic determinism." This theory held that because the U.S. was only 90 miles away, the Cuban communists could achieve nothing the U.S. government would not stand for. Following the logic of this theory, the party changed its name in 1940 from "Communist" to "Revolutionary Union." That

apparently was too radical, so in 1944 it became the "Popular Socialist Party."

The PSP thoroughly disapproved of Castro, in whom the leadership saw a great, uncontrollable danger. After the 1953 Moncada attack the PSP issued a statement saying :

We repudiate the putschist methods, peculiar to bourgeois political factions, of the action in Santiago de Cuba and Bayamo, which was an adventurist attempt to attack both military headquarters. The heroism displayed by the participants in this action is false and sterile, as it is guided by mistaken bourgeois conceptions.

The disavowal didn't help the PSP. Batista had been the Revolutionary Union presidential candidate in 1940. At that time he appointed PSP leaders to cabinet seats, and handed control of the Cuban union federation to the PSP. Now he proceeded to suppress the PSP newspaper and outlaw the party. That is what the U.S. required. Cooperation with communists, which Roosevelt had to put up with during World War II, Eisenhower refused to tolerate. The Cuban bourgeoisie was governed by "geographic determinism."

Nor did the PSP approve of Castro's "Granma" expedition. In a *Letter of the National Committee of the Popular Socialist Party to the*

26th of July Movement, dated February 28, 1957, the PSP leaders expressed their "radical disagreement with the tactics and plans" put forward by Fidel.

But even from its beginning—and increasingly as Fidel's guerrilla war got stronger and more popular—younger, more radical PSP members joined the armed struggle without PSP authorization, or even against orders. In many respects the July 26 guerrilla movement depended on the PSP base in the countryside. (Che Guevara wrote to Fidel while on the march to central Cuba in 1958:

We couldn't establish contact with the 26th of July organization, since a couple of supposed members refused to help when I asked, and I only got it—money, rain gear, some shoes, medicines, food, and guides—from members of the PSP, who told me they had asked for help from the groups in the [July 26] Movement and received the following answer...: "If Che sends a request in writing, we'll help him; if not he can go fuck himself.)

The PSP ranks began to exert pressure on the leadership to support Fidel, and the leadership ordered a number of its cadres to join Fidel in the Sierra.

Still, the PSP leadership did not support the general strike called by the July 26th Movement on April 9, 1958. Largely as a result

of the PSP holding back, the strike was a failure. This failure emboldened Batista to try to wipe Fidel out once and for all by launching a major offensive in the Sierra. (Fidel had only about 300 ill-armed soldiers at that time.)

Having sabotaged the strike, thereby objectively strengthening Batista, the National Committee of the PSP then took its next step to "help" Fidel by issuing a truly looney statement June 28, 1958 which called for an end to violence and for a negotiated settlement to the war "by means of democratic and clean elections, respected by all, by which the people can effectively decide by means of the vote and the results of which would be honorably respected." (This is almost to the word exactly the same as the line announced in 1991 by Villalobos, traitorous leader of the Salvadoran FMLN, whom Castro supports.)

It was too late for such opportunism. The guerrillas were able to defeat Batista's offensive and as a consequence grew bigger and more popular, and six months later, had won the war and political power. But within nine months of winning power Fidel unexpectedly discovered he needed the help of the PSP to exercise that power, and the PSP leaders, "revolutionaries" outside the revolution, were dying to

oblige.

So in the next year—1960—the three willing partners—Fidel, Khrushchev and the PSP—worked quickly to draw closer together and unite the July 26 Movement with the PSP. When the U.S. invaded with its mercenary army at the Bay of Pigs on April 15, 1961, Fidel taunted Kennedy, and informed Cuba, that the revolution was now "socialist" and he himself was now a "Marxist-Leninist"! (He somewhat bewilderingly "explained" that he hadn't mentioned it before because on the one hand he had been a victim of "imperialist propaganda," and on the other hand because "the proclamation of socialism in the period of the insurrectional struggle would not have been understood by the people", although the "main leaders" —meaning Fidel, who was always the only leader—always intended socialism.)

THE KEY MATTER: WHO DECIDES?

The purpose of a communist organization is to lead struggles which liberate workers from the condition of being things to be bought and sold, so that they may acquire fully the status of being free men and women.

With communism the conditions exist for humanity to live

freely and produce enough so there is a world of abundance for all to share. That is the purpose of communism. Without communism both mass freedom and a life of abundance for all are impossible.

What is the difference between communism and the socialism that united Fidel, Khrushchev and the leaders of the PSP, and to which they were now going to subject the Cuban working people?

I. Fidel's Impossible Dream

These three conjured up for the people a wholly imaginary socialism as a society supposedly evolving in a harmonious way with gradually achieved technical and economic advances. Their main aim was that real class struggle should not be permitted to disturb this imaginary harmonious economic development. That is why they constantly preached "Unity! Unity! Unity!" But since in the real socialist world there were class divisions and class struggles, all who bought this dream merely doomed themselves to a false consciousness about their real situation.

In their socialist scale of values industry was favored over

agriculture.

Their socialism was committed to increasing production on the solid capitalist basis of increasing worker productivity and by accumulating capital. That was the main thing.

In their socialism the workers were instruments to be used for increasing production, and especially for increasing productivity and profits.

Their socialism was based on imposing sacrifices on workers, with rigid discipline in production as a primary goal, the discipline underpinned by higher pay for greater competence.

Restructuring the existing production relations (which is the way the struggle for communism is carried on) and satisfying the working class' need for political power was on no socialist agenda. (They permitted no one to know that the purpose of communism is not profit, but the liberation of the working class *from* profit.)

Emphasizing productivity leads, of course, to a concern with education and health. A modern economy needs a healthy, educated workforce. But this is education of a particular type. On one side, there is education to produce scientific, cultural and

managerial skills; that is, high-level education for the elite. On the other side there is education to inculcate in workers a sense of order and discipline and respect for hierarchy.

Fidel's unchanging vision—both before he called it socialism, and afterward as well—was of an anti-corruption political administration, centralized power granting broader freedoms to the cultured, greater scope for the scientific and cultural elites, and an assertive national identity. And with the addition of an alliance with the Soviet Union, this is just what the PSP leaders supported.

In short, their shared vision of socialism was economic growth directed by an elite for the good of the people. This sounds benign, but it never fails to result in ruthless oppression. This is not communism, nor does it—nor can it—lead to communism. It stands opposed to communism. For the Cuban workers, communist liberation from this “actually existing socialism” can only be found through a struggle against the party calling itself “Communist.”

2. The Communist Program

The Cuban working people needed—and still need—an entirely different kind of society

than the one envisioned by Fidel and the PSP.

● *The working people need a society under their own control and operating in their interests;*

● *a society with fully socially integrated production, not commodity production;*

● *a society with egalitarianism in the distribution of rights, not privileged groups;*

● *a society scrapping work divisions and the labor market, not continuing the division between creative intellectual labor and rote mechanical labor;*

● *a society with democratic centralism, not despotic corporate centralism;*

● *a society with mass educa-*

“Guillermo Garcia is a hero of the Revolution, the first peasant to join Fidel's forces in the Sierra Maestra. Today...a charter member of Cuba's eleven-man politburo...I ask Guillermo if there ever were discussions about political ideology while they were in the mountains.

“Chico, who had time for that? For all of us there was only one thing on our minds. To beat Batista. ...We let Fidel do our thinking for us.” (Castro's Cuba, Lee Lockwood, Random House, 1969, page 23)

tion, not elite training.

This is a program that never was articulated within the Cuban revolution.

Socialism does not lead in the direction of these workers' needs. This is why communist workers cannot fail to reject socialism, even for the limited purpose of building the economy.

Fidel and his group never carried out any struggles for these communist goals because to them it was all irrelevant.¹

In terms of the working class' need to free itself by revolutionizing production relations, the important question is: “Who decides how the means of production are going to be used, the majority who work or the minority who stand apart from production?”

This question—“who decides?”—has nothing to do

with how much is being produced. That is a different matter. The forms within which production and development are carried on are not products of the production process. These forms are products of class struggle.

Therefore, for the working class a critical matter is the *nature* of the factory or enterprise they work in. Is it primarily a production unit, or is it the basis of the proletarian dictatorship?

The capitalists can lose state power but capitalist production relations will continue if the production process doesn't change through a complete transformation of social relationships. Merely placing new faces in old roles, as the Cuban revolution did, doesn't change production relations. In fact, capitalist style management is one of the objective basis for the existence of the bourgeoisie.

Tinkering with “management

1 Che Guevara seemed to stand apart from the rest. Che became famous for briefly carrying on a campaign to use moral incentives, that is, a maximum of ethical pressure, rather than material incentives, to motivate workers to increase their productivity within the existing production forms. But this merely romanticized the actually existing capitalist social relations, and helped disguise the fact that the workers remained at the traditional level of dependency. Not only did it not undermine the actual production relations, it helped strengthen and perpetuate them. Anyway, Che's very words, “political conscience,” proved too radical, no matter what they disguised, and Che soon left Cuba for good.

techniques" (a never-ending pre-occupation of the Cubans, who currently are trying to adapt Japanese capitalism's "democratic formulas" of labor relations, according to Carlos Aldana, the Cuban party's official ideologist) is not the same thing as transforming industrial management. Work rules possess a class character.

HOW COMMUNIST'S SEE THE WORK OF THE WORKERS' PARTY

Experience proves that if the working class is really to control the means of production in the interest of the whole class, it requires the intermediary of a ruling proletarian political party. The line of the ruling party directs the class struggle. Therefore the party line becomes the main factor in making it possible to reject capitalist forms of management.

But this will happen only if this ruling party is the instrument of the ideological and political unity of the working class. To be such an instrument, the party must be the carrier of revolutionary Marxism-Leninism, the proletarian ideology.

Success for the party lies in ensuring that the masses of people make this Marxist-Leninist ideology their own through their own social practice. This goal requires

that the party be of the masses, must be a part of the inner life of the masses, and not merely be "for" the masses—that is, that it not be a group apart from the masses, but commanding mass support (as was the July 26 Movement.)

Mass support for the party does not necessarily mean the masses have made proletarian ideology their own, or that their social practice is no longer dominated by bourgeois ideology (especially in production.)

The aim of communism is the unification of social life. This is done by ending class divisions within society. But the working class is itself divided by class society, and these divisions must also be overcome. The communists struggle to unite the working class in ideas, perceptions and action through a struggle over ideas and a social practice that requires individual and particular interests to be subordinated to collective interests. People have to come to agree that the collective interest comes first.

Such a way of thinking cannot be forced on people. But, however long it takes to develop, *until this unity is forged the working class cannot directly control the means of production in its own class interest. It requires the state for this purpose.*

Give Us Our Orders!"—is all wrong.

HOW FIDELISTAS MEASURE SUCCESS

We are interested in the Cuban revolution only for one reason—to see whether the path it took helped create the new kind of modern society we are fighting for (one of worker solidarity and cooperation) or whether its path obstructed the creation of such a society. We are interested in Cuba's economic development only to the extent it has some bearing on this matter. *Economic development is a by-product, not a purpose, of the communist revolution.*

Fidel and his group, however, defined socialism and the revolution's success solely in terms of increasing productivity and production. Production, Fidel said in 1965, was "a point of honor...a yardstick by which to measure the capability of the revolution." Failure in production meant the Cuban people would "cease being revolutionaries." (From his standpoint this made good sense, since the purpose of his revolution was to improve material living standards.)

But this definition of "revolutionary" is implicitly an attack on the Cuban working people because it demands of

None of the previous developments of human society—the transition from primitive communism to slavery, from slavery to feudalism, from feudalism to capitalism—required that the masses of exploited workers be conscious of their class interests. On the contrary, the more ignorant the masses, the better for the particular aspiring ruling class at a given point in history.

Those earlier transitions' main requirement was a conscious and organized ascending ruling class. In this respect only, the transition to communism is no different. Since the working class is the ascending ruling class of the future, society's future transition requires, and waits upon, a conscious and organized working class.

The big difference is that previously ascending ruling classes were tiny minorities. The working class is billions. For the working class to establish communism, millions of workers have to be won to the ideas and social practice of building an egalitarian society based on the communist principle of "from each according to his/her commitment, to each according to his/her need." Nothing else will do. Fidel's political theory—as expressed in his traditional slogan: "Commander in Chief—

them that they define their self-worth in terms of their agreement to excel as slaves, to excel as part of a production process they don't control.

Nothing could come of this but that the working class would ultimately reject communism: a rejection of the revolution's allegedly communist, but really exploitative, content. This is precisely what happened in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and now we have to examine how this process developed in Cuba.

EXPORT! EXPORT!

As a result of the Revolution's initial populist economic reforms the purchasing power of the lower middle class and of the working people grew. Between 1959-1961 there was a growing demand for consumer goods. People were able to buy the things the bourgeoisie had taught them to want, but which they couldn't afford under the old regime. (Meanwhile, most Cubans were ill-fed, ill-housed, and ill-dressed, and what was being produced, taken as a whole, ill-suited their needs.) Nevertheless, employment and production expanded in order to meet the new demand. The production growth was mainly achieved by better utilizing the already existing productive capacity, which had been created in the first place to meet

bourgeois tastes.

(The capitalists who ran Cuba prior to Castro limited the use of the productive capacity of their plants, as all capitalists do, to turn out no more than what they could sell on the market. In the US today, for example, the capitalists use only about 70% of capacity.)

By 1962 the economic stimulus of the reforms had reached its limit. Full plant capacity had been reached. To produce more such goods required building more facilities for production. More power had to be generated—which the Cubans understood to mean building more big coal or oil burning electric generating plants. More transmission lines were needed. More roads. Castro wasn't leading a movement which could tackle such projects on a voluntary, decentralized basis, making use of local materials and local know-how. He was forced to rely on the capitalist approach of using capital in its form as money.

But Castro did not have the required money. The government had spent a great deal on social programs and on defense. The U.S. embargo made imported things more expensive. Because of the embargo, U.S. equipment that broke down could not be repaired. It had to

be replaced with entirely new Soviet equipment. And Soviet equipment was expensive. The capitalist Soviet Union and its bloc would not underwrite the political changes in Cuba free of charge. So in order to pay for imported goods and equipment the new, nationalist Cuban government decided to subordinate Cuba completely to the world market.

This subordination to the world market had two parts. One part was to increase exports. Cuba naturally would rely on producing the export it had a "comparative advantage" in producing—sugar. ("Comparative advantage" is a term bourgeois economists use to designate a product a country knows how to, and can, produce profitably.) So decades of nationalist denunciation of the sugar economy and its bad effects on Cuba resulted in a nationalist revolution which based itself on extending the sugar economy. Sugar was—and still is—Cuba's most marketable commodity. (Even today sugar makes up 75% of Cuba's export earnings.)

The other part of the strategy of subordination to the world market was to implement a program of domestic savings: getting the workers to produce more for less, and cutting down on imported consumer goods.

But, as anyone who ever studied the way of a one-crop agricultural country is treated by the world market could have predicted, Cuba developed a large deficit in its balance of payments, which only grew larger as time passed, no matter what the Cubans did. (Not unrelated to this is the fact that one consequence of making market-based exports and imports an important part of a country's overall economy is that this determines that commodity production and the free market will play an important role in the domestic economy as well, either legally, or illegally as a black market.)

CENTRALIZING THE ECONOMY—BUT IN WHOSE INTEREST?

To enforce the sugar export strategy required that the central authorities have effective control of agriculture. If the first land reform, in 1961, gave some land to farmworkers (who used the land they got to produce food crops mainly for the domestic market, something very beneficial to the workers), a second land reform, in 1963, forced them to produce nothing but sugar for export (something very beneficial to the developing privileged class of ruling officials.)

In every possible way the gov-

ernment forced farmers into sugar cane cultivation. Even the small plots of land previously given to state-employed farmworkers were taken away because they spent "too much time" on them producing food for domestic consumption, time that could be spent cultivating sugar cane for export.

As a result, state-owned land dedicated to sugar production increased by about 38% within the first year of the reform and continued to increase for the remainder of the 1960s.

These reforms were portrayed as hastening the transition from socialism to communism by eliminating private property. In reality the farm workers remained separated from control of their means of production. These changes were aimed at strengthening Cuban state capitalism's ability to export more sugar.

The second aspect of the government's dual strategy for accumulating capital—domestic savings—was implemented in agriculture by mobilizing thousands of urban volunteers to work in the sugar fields. This was portrayed as the way supposedly to start abolishing the distinction between manual and intellectual labor and to emphasize moral over material work incentives, according to communist

principles. But nothing of the sort was involved. It was merely a command from the top to the rank and file. In reality it merely maximized sugar earnings by minimizing direct production costs through using unpaid labor. By 1970, more than one third of the labor force worked part time in agriculture.

A NEW WAGE SYSTEM TO OPPRESS WORKERS

Industry had been almost completely nationalized in the first two years following the revolution's 1959 triumph. The government's policy for accumulation of capital as it applied to industry meant producing less to satisfy workers needs while getting them to produce more. Che Guevara, then the Minister of Industry, brought in specialists from the Soviet Union and other socialist countries to help Cuba make the proper adjustments. Thousands of Cuban technicians were trained by these specialists.

The Soviet bloc economic advisers helped develop a national wage system that was implemented in 1962. Its provisions linked wages to the achievement of certain defined standards. Workers not achieving these standards received a salary proportional to what they did produce. Where possible the cruder capitalist method of piece

rates was applied.

In this way an eight-group wage scale was established. Group I was the lowest, and received the minimum wage of 0.48 Cuban peso per hour. Group VIII, the highest, whose work was theoretically 3.08 times more complex (not 3.0 or 3.1, mind you!), earned 3.08 times more, or 1.49 pesos. Close to three-quarters of all workers were classified in the lowest groups I to IV.

These wages were advertised as material incentives designed to motivate the workers to increase production. Propaganda aside, in reality they were measures taken by the government to set up a national labor disciplinary system enforced by wage differences. Rather than help unite the working class to assist it in controlling the means of production, this system was designed to further divide the working class so it could be controlled more easily by the managers and political leaders, and to materially benefit these managers and leaders.

First of all, no system of material incentives could stimulate the Cuban working class to do anything, for the simple reason that there were no consumer goods available to the working class. There was nothing workers could spend money on: 95% of their necessities were rationed.

But consumer goods were available to the privileged managers, intellectuals and political leaders. Material incentives were not meaningless to them.

The incentive wage system was actually the prelude to a massive wage cut. Almost three-quarters of the non-agricultural work force already received wages higher than those allowed by this system. These were wages won in bitter class struggle against the bosses who ran Cuba before the Revolution. These wages, called "historic wages," were not lowered by the system because it was politically impossible for the revolutionary government not to respect them. Instead they were later eliminated by the unions.

ATTACKING WORKERS THROUGH 'SACRIFICE'

So, because of the actual impossibility of basing labor discipline on material incentives, between 1962 and 1966 Fidel's government had to rely on "moral incentives" that emphasized sacrificing for the revolution by doing voluntary work, and on "socialist emulation." (Capitalists always fall back on "morality" when they run out of cash.)

Voluntary work and socialist emulation (competition between workers for social recognition—either as individuals or in

groups—for meeting the production goals set for them) were used to mobilize hundreds of thousands of workers to fulfill and overfulfill production plans, save on materials, improve production quality, and increase work discipline.

The Cuban workers of the 1960s were very enthusiastic about moral incentives, and made Che Guevara a popular hero for championing them. Plainly Cuba's working class rejected capitalism.

But now they found themselves in the peculiar dual situation with which socialism confronts workers. Socialism proclaims to the workers that they are society's masters. This should motivate a maximum of effort and sacrifice. That makes sense if the workers feel themselves masters of factory and farm, of the whole production process.

But, on the other hand, since socialism retains the capitalist production relations unchanged, changing merely the ownership forms, the workers really remain wage slaves. For slaves, sacrifice is senseless. The only sensible thing is to reject sacrifice—"Why should we be sacrificed for the sake of production?"—when they realize they are not masters of the production process.

Not to defend individual interest—in this case, to renounce

payment of the market-value of your labor—was in Cuba motivated by an egalitarian spirit. But not to defend this individual interest becomes suicidal unless it is accompanied by a working class-based demand for political, economic and cultural power.

As it became clear to the Cuban workers that they remained merely labor-power, that they remained merchandise to be bought and sold, they objected to being further sacrificed, they rejected the "moral incentives," they rejected suicide. Without payment they would not work.

But without a communist leadership among them to help them draw the lessons of their experience, cynicism, political apathy and anti-communism grew. This was the result of a campaign to which initially the Cuban working class responded enthusiastically because it believed it was a rejection of capitalism.

A Cuban university professor confirmed this when she said in 1990: "This idea of [now] motivating workers through moral rather than material incentives is like beating a dead horse. That was useful in the 1960s, when people really believed the rhetoric. But it won't work today." (To which a troubled, sincerely devoted but politically illiterate Cuban jour-

nalist responded: "We have to revive the dream.")

These methods fall into the category of "tinkering with management techniques." It was just a way of getting workers voluntarily to step up production within the existing production relations. This is not transforming social or production relations. Although this seems to be a social practice designed to "transform political consciousness," since the exploitative situation the working class finds itself in isn't being attacked, this really just extorts more free labor.

The end result, for the working class, of relying on the socialist religion of "moral incentives" (rather than on materialist class struggle) is greater relative impoverishment, growing cynicism, a turning away from politics and a strengthening of capitalist ideology and practices.

THE REVOLUTION STAGNATES, THE WORKERS KEEP PAYING

From 1962 to 1970 the Cuban economy stagnated in terms of growth, although more was being produced and the working class had more material goods available to it than under the old capitalist regime. Of course nothing had ever advanced on the front of transforming manage-

ment relations, that is, on the front of "*who decides*" what and how to produce.

The revolutionary government never seriously considered a communist strategy of self-sufficient development. It chose to continue the capitalist market-oriented strategy of capital accumulation by producing for export and limiting imports. The strategy seemed radical only because the U.S. imperialist bloc was rejected in favor of the Soviet imperialist bloc. But the relationship between Cuba and imperialism remained the same.

In 1966 the Cuban leadership again emphasized "equality" and moral incentives as a way to get the working class to sacrifice more and to produce more. A resolution passed by the Labor Ministry in 1966 put it this way:

The advances made by our Socialist Revolution have clearly demonstrated that man (sic) is capable of realizing truly productive feats without requiring the application of wage forms in which the increase in productivity carries with it a higher wage. This reveals that ...payment by output has become ultimately detrimental to the development of a communist consciousness.

Having said these nice words, the Ministry proceeded to force "communist consciousness" along by cutting the wages for all workers (except for the lowest-

paid workers in the state sector.) Average wages for state workers declined 12% between 1966 and 1971. Pay for overtime work was eliminated.

At the same time the government continued to try to reduce its trade imbalance with the Soviets by importing still less. Material consumption for the masses of workers was drastically reduced. During these years per capita consumption of consumer goods was reduced to 91% of the 1961 level.

In other words, Fidel and the Cuban Communist Party were just using communist phrases to cover up an attack on the working class—to squeeze more surplus value out of them in order to pay the Socialist bosses and to accumulate more capital—while giving the impression nationally, and internationally, that they were building “the new man” that Che Guevara talked and wrote about.

Coupled with increases in Soviet aid, the capital saved by applying this austerity program in the name of “communist principles” and from the “free urban labor,” the government was able to increase its investment in capital accumulation.

But 1970 was a year of great failure. The regime had targeted a phenomenal increase in sugar production for 1970—a ten mill-

ion ton harvest—and couldn't pull it off despite mobilizing every possible resource. Fidel faced a serious problem. By his own definition his “revolutionary strategy” had failed. The export strategy was a failure. The working class was disaffected.

The export strategy propounded by this radical nationalist failed because rather than emancipate Cuba from the clutches of the imperialist-dominated world market, where she would forever be exploited, it tied her even more closely to it. Market forces Cuba could not control forced the price of sugar to below two cents a pound between 1966 and 1968. Even at the subsidized prices the USSR paid, the revenue generated was not enough.

AFTER 10 YEARS THE WORKERS HAD ENOUGH

The working class was disenchanted because although the state talked a great deal about communism, its policies of capital accumulation and refusal to lead class struggle to transform social relations were in direct contradiction to the need of the workers to improve their lives and to exercise their control over the work process. But the regime's revolutionary socialist rhetoric confused and disoriented workers on this matter.

1.58 pesos was obtained; in 1970 this fell to 1.38 pesos, a decline of 48% in the surplus value.

What conclusion did the Cuban leadership draw from its success in building a real, if illegal, market economy, and its failure to lead a real advance toward communism? Its conclusion was that it was all the workers' fault. Communist consciousness was too “leftist.” The workers weren't ready for communism. The leaders, in Fidel's words, “suffered from errors of...idealistically interpreting Marxism...[in]...approaching communist forms of production and distribution...”

Fidel decided that he had misestimated how much sugar he could profitably sell to accumulate the capital he wanted for investment. Though he lowered his sales and growth goals, he still had to generate a surplus of production over consumption. So if he couldn't rely so much on squeezing the market, he had to rely even more on squeezing the workers. The policy of increasing domestic savings and improving workers' productivity became even more important. The problem he faced was the old one: how to get the workers to produce more.

What was crystal clear however, was that while the working class possessed more than 3.3 billion pesos—more than an entire year's wages for the whole working class—they could buy nothing, and had to tighten their belts. But the upper echelons of labor, government and Party officials had easy access to scarce goods and services.

The revolution's failure was reflected in the working class, therefore, not by rebellion, which requires political clarity and leadership, but by demoralization, cynicism, by a turning away from politics, and by disgust at what was perceived as corruption. There was a society-wide growth of individualism and hypocrisy practiced through such acts as loyal revolutionaries trafficking on the black market, or stealing supplies from work to use privately, or hiring labor, or staying away from work.

By 1968 a study of more than 200 enterprises revealed that up to one half of the workday was wasted largely due to poor discipline. After the failed 1970 sugar harvest general absenteeism from work rose to 20% daily. Workers' productivity—the government's main concern—declined: in 1966, for each peso paid in wages, a production of

MORE EFFICIENT OPPRESSION OF THE WORKERS

Since, as he saw it, the workers had resisted the government's "push toward communism," he now decided to rely on the managers. A system was devised of material incentives mainly for the benefit of directors and managers, who by this time had crystallized into a distinct social stratum with considerable power. and to more systematically enforce fascist-style centralized authoritarianism over the working class. In short, the Cubans for the next fifteen years closely copied Soviet and Eastern European practices. (It went so far that Fidel, famous for his off-the-cuff speeches, now took to reading from a prepared text.)

Thousands of time-and-motion experts and technicians were trained and sent into workplaces in order to "achieve the maximum utilization of human resources, increase productivity, and minimize cost." By 1973, standards of productivity and quality had been administratively assigned to two million workers (82% of state workers).

At the same time membership in the Communist Party was vastly expanded, going from 50,000 to 500,000. This facilitated the

consolidation of the new ruling class since the party was basically a vehicle for organizing the privileged stratum and apportioning privilege and power. (Apart from this vital function the party has no real inner life, its life consisting as it does of innumerable meetings, all devoid of any meaningful discussion or decision-making. The Cubans have a word for this—"meetingism"—"reunismo" in Spanish.)

The trade unions were given a key role in the Cuban bosses' plans to discipline the workers and get them to produce more. For this purpose unions were expanded. The old union officials most closely identified with the previous economic policies were dumped. Over 26,000 new union locals were established and local union elections were held in which 87% of the almost 118,000 officials elected were brand new in the job. Unions were given a seat on management boards, so as to share responsibility for, and lay a basis for claiming the workers were involved in, setting wage policies and production standards.

To mobilize the workers, unions began to have regular meetings, at which were discussed such issues as how to meet quality, savings, and production quotas. The main purpose behind these meetings was to get

the workers to feel they had helped decide the policies.

In this way the unions played a decisive role in getting workers to accept wage cuts and speedup. In 1973 the VIII Congress of Cuban Workers "demanded":

start paying wages again according to the quantity and quality of work done by each worker, cancel the practice of paying outstanding workers 100% of their wages when they were absent or retired, the gradual elimination of 'historical wages', and the perfection of labor standards to better stimulate productivity.

Fidel also decided to use fascism more openly to force workers into obedience in case everything else failed. In 1971 he enacted the Compulsory Work Law, which made work (for men) an obligation in addition to a "socialist right." This law stipulated that workers guilty of absenteeism were to be deprived of vacations, excluded from social benefits, and in severe cases, transferred to work camps. The law helped reduce absenteeism and forced some previously unproductive workers to join the work force.

But despite this law, and the tangle of "rights" and "obligations," nationwide unemployment in 1970—before the law existed, when work was merely a "right"—was 1.3%. In

1981, when the economy was booming, and work was both a "right" and an "obligation", officially-admitted unemployment had grown to 3.4%. The lesson is that capitalism requires unemployment, no matter what laws it passes.

There is no doubt that the Compulsory Work Law, the speed up introduced by the time-and-motion experts, the material benefits given to successful managers, the tease of material rewards for workers who sacrificed, and the imaginary control that workers were given over the work process had a positive effect on productivity.

Productivity increased sharply. In 1972, for example, the output per worker jumped 21%.

The contribution of the time-and-motion experts was especially dramatic. A study of 500 work centers showed that they were able to reduce employment by 6% over a three year period.

FASCIST CARICATURE OF PARIS COMMUNE

In 1975 the Organs of People's Power (OPP) were created. They are legislative bodies and seemingly also have responsibility for the administration of local service, trade and industrial operations accounting for 34% of all Cuban enterprises. Local OPPs were supposed to have

some input about the choice and priority of projects and about naming or replacing enterprize directors nominally under their control. Meetings are usually taken up with discussions of bureaucratic deficiencies, including consumer scarcities and complaints about urban services. In short, these are caricatures of the Paris Commune, which was based on nationally coordinated, locally-based power and responsibility, and from which "communism" takes its name.

But in the Cuban version, by contrast, these OPPs were ultimately responsible to JUCEPLAN (the state planning agency). From their inception they were criticized for being impotent at the local level and unrepresentative at the national level. Many delegates to the national assembly of People's Power are actually from Havana, but represent towns or cities in other provinces about which they know very little.

Cuba is an example of the fact that if the relationship between the center and the base takes the form of a strict top-down chain of command, then the mechanisms of capitalist society will be reproduced. The local base unit—whether a factory or farm or office—will operate simply as the basic cell in a despotic body. If this basic cell is given a relative autonomy in self-management

subject to rigid central control over production plans, then its reproduction of capitalist-style despotism will be intensified. After all, this is how the modern corporation functions. So this is the way to despotism via decentralization.

In other words, it is wrong to argue that the struggle of centralism against decentralism is the same as the struggle for working class control of society. By themselves structures determine nothing. The working class can be oppressed in a decentralized as well as a centralized way. The structure most beneficial to the working class is democratic centralism, but only because this structure makes it easier to struggle for working class control of society, and not because it automatically guarantees such control.

A former delegate to one of the OPPs in Havana commented in 1990:

What's missing from the People's Power is the power. People would come to see us and lodge scores of complaints, which I would run around trying to solve. But I didn't have the authority to solve the problems, not even a problem like getting a stop sign put in at a busy street corner, or ensuring better service at the local pizzeria. So people starting blaming me when the solutions were out of my hands.

Behind this smoke screen of "People's Power" is hidden the real purpose of the OPPs: to mobilize the masses, to strengthen mass satisfaction with the regime, which is in all respects alienated from the masses. This is a traditional authoritarian political technique, a technique whose use was especially characteristic of fascist regimes.

THE LEGAL MARKET ECONOMY WAS EVEN WORSE THAN THE BLACK MARKET

The years between 1970-86 were years of intensifying capitalist development fostering growing working class alienation. The "New System of Economic Management and Planning (SDPE)" which the First Congress of the Cuban Communist Party copied in 1975 from the 1965 Soviet economic "reforms" turned out to be a disaster even in their own terms. "According to the system," a Cuban economist explained 15 years later, "workers' salaries were supposed to be linked to their output, but workplace norms would be lowered so that output would look high and everyone would receive bonuses. The result was...a decline in productivity..."

In some areas the result was even worse for the new ruling

class than low productivity—no productivity. The hierarchical spirit so permeated the elitist educational system of this "socialist revolution" that very soon a labor shortage developed in some sectors because young educated Cubans felt they were too good for manual labor. The construction industry was especially hard-hit by this ideological epidemic. Since Cuba's bosses were in no position to import, say, Turkish or Bangladeshi or Palestinian workers to do their dirty work, this was a serious problem.

Even among the new ruling groups the SDPE wrecked havoc. The SDPE re-established some of the free market capitalist practices that the government had eliminated when the state capitalist system was introduced in 1961. Some of SDPE's measures were:

- Individuals were allowed to purchase a license from the state to offer services such as appliance and auto repair work, carpentry, plumbing and so on, on a self-employed basis. Only services that did not conflict with planned state activity were licensed. In the first month 2,000 people took out licenses to be peddlers in Havana alone. By 1981 private contracting cooperatives were building 38% of the new housing units.

But a problem the private producers had was that they had no way to buy raw materials. After the state-owned enterprises bought what they needed (and they had priority), there was nothing left. So the private producers simply stole what they needed.

•The government permitted the remaining 35,000 private farmers to sell to the public at whatever price they could get any output that exceeded the quotas that had to be delivered to the state. This increase in consumer goods on the market made more attractive the development policy based on material incentives, since there might now be something to buy.

At first the government claimed this free market policy was responsible for big increases in the production of vegetables, rice, beans and pork. Years later (10 years later) when the policy changed, the government claimed there really had been no increase at all in total production. Instead, the farmers withheld produce they should have sold to the state at low prices, which would have benefitted everyone, and sold it instead on the free market for high prices, which benefitted only themselves.

Now the combined result of this was the following. On the one

hand a new privileged group was in formation whose existence was defined by owning wealth in money, and who could possibly become politically powerful because of this wealth. This threatened the ruling group whose privileges were secured not by wealth, but by monopolization of power.

On the other hand this new privileged class produced, by its very appearance, significant discontent among the working people, who opposed inequality, (although, paradoxically, they accepted being paid according to work done, which produces inequality). But the wealth of these private businessmen seemed to emerge from stealing and swindling, not from working, and worst—they were a product of the revolution's policies.

Finally, to the extent the farmers developed their private production, the economy passed out of the government's direct control. Very rapidly the farmers started diversifying their production, cutting back on sugar cane, for which the state paid a low price, and growing what they could sell at a high price on the free markets. This directly threatened the capital accumulation strategy which was the underpinning for the existence of the entire new ruling class.

Sugar exports remained crucial

to capital accumulation. After the crisis caused by the failure of the 1970 10-million-ton target, production goals were lowered. But now there was a serious push for mechanization, to increase the surplus value produced by the sugar workers. Cuba now produces a lot of sugar with far fewer workers, having thus increased the rate of exploitation of the sugar workers.

In 1975, 25% of cane cutting and 95% of loading were mechanized. By 1981 46% of the cutting was mechanized as was 97% of the loading. By 1985 62% of the cutting was mechanized and 100% of the loading was mechanized. This drastically cut down the number of cane cutters: in the 1960s there were 350,000 cane cutters, in 1980, 144,000 and in 1985, 72,000. Productivity of cane cutters is high, reaching

a record in 1985 of 3.76 tons per worker per day.

THE BOSSES REWARD THEMSELVES FOR THEIR HARD WORK

This free market policy couldn't last once the new ruling stratum realized what was happening. But before they realized the extent of the new problems they had caused themselves, they were delighted with what they thought were the results of their policy. So in 1980 they decided to reward themselves.

In 1980 the Second Congress of the Cuban Communist Party decided to introduce the "General Reform of Wages and Prices" to "stimulate an increase in labor productivity, a decrease in cost of production, and to improve discipline."

"Here No One Surrenders. Commander In Chief, Give Us Our Orders"



To accomplish this it was decided to increase the highest wages, those paid to motivate enterprize directors and skilled personnel. The minimum wage was increased, but more importantly, the spread between the highest and the minimum wage was increased. The highest wage now was 5.29 times the minimum wage. The spread had been 3.08. *So this was a 71% increase in planned inequality and privilege.*²

THE RECTIFICATION CAMPAIGN

by 1984 a disturbing result was discovered in the Cuban economy as a result of all these "successes." The production of its key export, sugar, had fallen 700,000 tons below plan. Its two other important exports, nickel and citrus production also

declined. The volume of imports had increased. Cuba's leaders also discovered they couldn't sell their products for much. They had priced their goods in U.S. dollars, but now, because of the weak U.S. economy the dollar fell drastically in value, giving the Cubans a big loss. What they imported rose not only in volume, but also in price. To top things off, hurricanes and drought wiped out their harvests. All of a sudden Cuba's hard currency earnings fell 27%. The Cubans couldn't pay their debts any better than could the Mexicans or Brazilians.

Responding to these problems, the Third Party Congress, held in December, 1985, launched the "Rectification of Errors and Struggle Against Negative Tendencies" campaign, which still continues. The errors and bad

2 In actual effect, the spread between lower and higher paid workers is even greater. The privileged life style is actually determined by how much money one has left over *after* meeting one's basic needs. Take a hypothetical case of a worker who makes \$10 an hour and one who makes \$15 an hour. After taxes and monthly living expenses, the worker earning \$10 an hour might have \$100 left over. If the worker earning \$15 an hour has the same living costs, the money he or she has left over would be \$700. Even though one worker makes only half as much more than the other (the same as 50% more), in reality—in terms of being able to afford a more privileged life style—this worker is making **seven times more (the same as 700% more)** than the other worker. Imagine what this planned 71% increase in privilege meant to the Cuban working people.

tendencies in question were obviously those of the working class, since the campaign's main aims were to tighten up quality controls and work norms, and emphasize the work ethic, (and also to weed out corrupt administrators.)

The Construction Ministry, responsible for implementing investment decisions, became the main target of Rectification. The construction industry had been a fiasco. Hundreds of important projects begun between 1976 and 1986 were never completed. Buildings were left half done, bridges went up without connecting roads; housing was built far away from jobs, transport and services.

The Third Party Congress concluded that this happened because "any given construction project was wrapped up in a bureaucratic nightmare—taking orders from dozens of ministries and companies concerned only with their own economic plans, figures and pay bonuses." "Success was judged by what profits appeared on the books and not tied to quality, overall efficiency and actual completion of a project." "Productivity was low because management paid too little attention to forming healthy labor relations and working conditions."

CUBA'S CONSTRUCTION CONTINGENTS

The leadership's solution was two-fold. First, eliminate the "bureaucratic nightmare" by centralizing production (although the "nightmare" seems to be less bureaucratic than political—the leadership's frenzied attempt to exploit the workers so as to earn profits to pay management bonuses.) Second, set up little construction companies, which they call "construction contingents," to increase labor productivity, decrease losses and expenses caused by unproductive time, and provide a better mechanism to implement material and moral incentives.

(Also in 1986 special commissions were sent around the world, from the USSR to Japan, from Canada to Western Europe, in search of the most "modern" managerial techniques to be applied to Cuba's socialist enterprises—as if management has no class power implications.)

A construction contingent is made up of brigades. A brigade is a stable group of workers, chosen for their loyalty to the revolution's leadership. Loyalty to the leadership is considered proof of your "communist ideology."

("I don't understand what's

happening in the world," an old militant is quoted as telling a reporter recently. "I don't even know what communism is anymore. But one thing I do know. I'm 100% fidelista.")

Everything about these contingents reeks of disguised capitalist super-exploitation. This is graphically illustrated by the following excerpt from a 1989 interview with "national hero" Candido Palmero, head of the most famous contingent, the "Blas Roca":

We are building a five-star hotel, a first in Cuba. You find us in agricultural work, building four huge refrigeration centers,...facilities for 1991 Pan American Games,...[He cites dozens of other projects.]

The contingent is responsible for each project—from breaking the ground to putting on the last coat of paint. In the past all sorts of ministries and companies were involved. Now it is just us. We bring in the equipment and supplies while each brigade, operating like a mini-company, is responsible for the particular project and is free to make decisions as it sees fit.

Performance is measured on strict accounting, maximum use of equipment, job completion and quality of work....They know the cost down to the last penny. They know what they have produced that particular day. Furthermore nobody has just one

skill or sits around if his equipment has broken down. We've all mastered more than one job so a minute is never wasted.

The most important thing about all this is not the work itself. Fidel has spent a lot of time with us designing the contingents, trying to find a higher communist way of work. He says we are a kind of laboratory for the entire country and we have changed all the rules.

First, everyone here has volunteered for the job. They apply at the work place and are then selected to represent their co-workers in this mass mobilization. Some 85 percent of our people are not professional construction workers, but come from all walks of life. As a mobilization, the requirements to work here center on the motivation to help the country and our people, not simply to earn more money.

When we formed the first brigade we told Fidel that we would not collect pay bonuses of any kind, including overtime pay after 8 hours. He flatly rejected that on the grounds that we should be paid according to our work. So when we work for 15 hours we get paid for 15 hours.

But don't think that any one works 374 hours a month for the money. We do this for honor, pride and our country. We work 14 hours a day, six days a week and every other Sunday. But everyone volunteers on that day off as well.

When problems crop up, we don't apply national work rules. We resolve them through the collective. And this includes labor discipline issues. For example, the problem is discussed, a course of action is voted on and there's no appeal. We have had success with this approach to date. We have good discipline, upheld by the collective.

Workers with the best records are rewarded on the job and in the community. Their neighbors, family, children learn about what this person has done for the country and special recognition is paid at the block association meetings.

Again, nobody works this hard just for the pay. For the last two years, we have tripled the national average productivity rate.

Management is kept down to a minimum and is out there working like everyone else 14 hours a day.

The contingent receives the best medical care Cuba's socialist medical system can provide and this attention to 'the individual's well being' is key to ideological and political work. It also includes two balanced hot meals a day, air conditioning, color TV's and videos in the workers' lounges, and drawing the family into the contingent's social life.

To understand why the Cuban ruling class is so happy with these contingents, consider this: In 1989, the average Cuban construction worker earned 4,000

pesos a year and produced 7,000 pesos in value. From a capitalist's viewpoint (and this is how the Cubans develop their statistics) this represents a labor cost of 57%. From a working class standpoint, this is a wage of about 2 pesos an hour, and an exploitation rate of 75%.

Contingent members, however, earned 5 to 6,000 pesos a year. *This seems to be more money, but is actually a 33% pay cut, representing an hourly wage of about 1.33 pesos.*

The contingent members produced 16 to 20,000 pesos per year in value. As the bosses look at it therefore, the contingent form of production involved an average labor cost of less than 40%, or a saving of almost 30% from the traditional way of doing things.

Again, from the working class standpoint, the contingent members were exploited at a rate 210% more than the traditional construction workers, for which privilege they were given 50% more money.

What is communist about this "higher communist way of work?"

- The plan is decided on by the Ministry.
- The brigade's leadership is chosen by the Ministry.
- The workers are chosen by

management from a pool of physically-able volunteers motivated by some combination of the desire to have access to more goods, and patriotism.

- Production and profitability standards are defined by the Ministry.
- Operational autonomy in carrying out the Ministry's plan is decentralized to the brigade level.
- If Ministry standards are met by the workers they earn 50% more in total money wages than other workers doing the same work, plus they get other benefits not otherwise available to workers.
- Individualism is the key to the movement's politics and ideological training.
- The gains Cuba's workers have won in health and job safety standards, as well as in general working conditions, don't apply on these jobs. Speedup is a mild word to describe what goes on. Labor discipline is strict, top-down and without appeal. Work is so intense, and of such long duration—a workday runs from 7 in the morning to 9 at night, every day of the week, no days off—that only the healthiest and strongest could endure it.

For being born healthy and strong they become a privileged caste.

This is hardly a movement toward working class empowerment. In fact, what is the difference between this and the most exploitative capitalism? Where is the revolution of the old working relations into communist production relations? Where is the production of intelligence and culture? Where is the criticism of elitism and of profit-making?

A COMPARISON WITH THE CUBAN MODEL

Contrast this Cuban experience (if you can) with the following experience, on which the Cuban plan seems to be based. If the Cubans are carrying on a "higher communist way of work" what follows must be "advanced communism":

The...workers work in production teams of about thirty people, all of whom are responsible for the efficiency of the team. The rules are strict, verging on ruthless. The pressure to keep up production comes from the rules, and the rules are enforced by the production team itself. If one member of the team is late for work or doesn't show up, the paychecks of all thirty members of the team can be damaged that week. The reaction to absenteeism...is swift and unpleasant, and come from other members of the production team rather than from management. Members who become sick may try to struggle

through a day's work, for fear of hurting or irritating their fellow-members. If a member is thought by others to be lazy, they nag him and lecture him, and if he doesn't take to lectures they get him fired...

During a factory startup, the production teams gradually take control of the factory. The teams themselves begin to decide who will stay with the team and who will be fired. Plenty of people are fired... "If there's one guy in a group who isn't doing well, the others train him or get rid of him," [the company president] said... One time, some members of a team in a...plant reportedly chased a guy around the plant with an angle iron...

The worker's wage has recently been...equal to unionized worker's pay. Unlike a union wage, [this company's] wage is more bonus than anything else... If they [produce] a lot...they also made good money. "We're against labor unions," [the company president] said. "It's not the union pay scale that we object to; it's the work rules."

This is from a report on the viciously anti-labor, unsafe, air polluting Nucor Corporation, the tenth largest U.S. steel producer, which in 1988 owned 22 plants in the U.S. and sold \$850 million worth of goods, for a net profit of \$50 million. (*The New Yorker*, February 25, 1991, page 64.)

In 1990 an investigator sym-

pathetic to the Cuban leadership had this to say about the Rectification campaign:

The construction industry aside, it is hard to get a sense of what rectification has meant. In interview after interview, government officials repeated generalizations about greater efficiency, less bureaucracy, less corruption and higher worker morale. But many workers I spoke with saw no change, and it is not yet clear whether productivity levels have improved... One person I interviewed, a university professor... who participated in numerous studies of the Cuban economy... told me in confidence: "For most Cubans the rectification campaign is a big joke. Sure, a few corrupt administrators were kicked out, but there are plenty more bad apples where they came from. The level of productivity is abysmal and the bureaucracy is still maddening." ("Things Fall Apart," in *NACLA*, August 1990, page 18.)

APARTHEID TOURISM

Rhetoric aside, Rectification is a desperate attempt by the fidelista ruling clique to try to survive in the crisis-ridden world capitalist system. Full blown market capitalism in the former Socialist bloc means big problems for Fidel's state capitalism. Everything will be bought and sold for hard currency, something Cuba has very little of. Fidel will have to prostitute the Cuban working class on the free market even more to try to get the desperately needed hard currency.

Part of Fidel's solution is to develop the Cuban tourist industry into a hard currency earner equal to the sugar industry. The industry will eventually employ 250,000 workers. Rectification has given his plan a tremendous boost. Construction contingents are building thousands of tourist quarters in record time, while hundreds of thousands of volunteers are hard at work renovating and beautifying the cities.

Cuban tourism under Fidel won't be much different from Cuban tourism under Batista. The bosses' faces have changed—that's all. Fidel has replaced Batista and Mexican and Spanish businessmen have replaced the U.S. bosses. But the relationship is the same. The foreign bosses can own 51% of the hotels and can export all their profits. Fidel has given them the power to suspend or fire workers, while stripping workers of the right to appeal to the Workers Council (elected workers' officials who are supposed to deal with labor grievances.) Workers in this industry can now appeal only through the formal judicial system.

Officially sanctioned prostitution is bound to follow. *Playboy* magazine recently made an officially authorized trip to Cuba to photograph one of their

specialized soft-core porn spreads on Cuban women. This is intended to help tourism. Gambling can't be far behind.

Inequality has taken a qualitative leap forward—South African style. The Cuban working class has no access to the facilities used by the tourists, including the beaches. The workers have a name for this racist discrimination. They call it "apartheid tourism."

One thing is certain: complete free market capitalism is eventually bound to come to Cuba as it did to the other Socialist countries. As the different privileged groups inside Cuba reach maturity, they will inevitably demand the free market and the multi-party system, since these are the best arenas for them to vie for wealth and power.

From the Cuban experience we see that at best socialism produces state ownership of the means of production. This is merely a legal transformation of ownership relations. It is not yet an overall transformation of social relations, an ending to elitism, hierarchy, racism, sexism. There is no transformation particularly of those relations within which production is carried out.

Communism involves a radical transformation of the process of social production. This transformation is the result of

purposeful, unified, collective struggle by the working people for this end. This is a class struggle, which in the end comes to supersede the state and ends the state's existence.

But to carry through this class struggle, the working people must reject nonproletarian ideologies. Such ideologies divide them, and make possible the reproduction of exploitative relations. So long as ideas deriving from the ideology of an exploiting class continue to exist, the workers can be divided and there can be private appropriation by an exploiting class. This is true no matter what legal form this private appropriation takes—whether within state ownership or collective ownership. (From the viewpoint of the exploiting class within socialism, the best form is that one which is best disguised and parades most effectively as private appropriation's opposite.)

Neither in Cuba, nor in any other socialist society, did social transformation advance beyond the formal, legal stage (except briefly in China in the 1960s.) The relationship of class forces within socialism bars the path to successful class struggle for continuing, more radical social transformation. Nonproletarian ideology cannot be rejected by

the working people because they are told it is proletarian ideology by the very leaders and parties they regard as leading the proletarian cause.

This is what happened, and is still continuing to happen, in Cuba. The situation is unstable, and in any case the existing system can't last long.

Even if the Cuban workers wish no more than to keep the radical reforms brought them by the revolution, even if they wish no more than to avoid the East German-type catastrophe of massive unemployment, and the destruction of the health care, housing, education, and welfare programs they worked so hard to create, they have only one option: Organize their own revolutionary communist party and fight for an egalitarian, self-sufficient, communist Cuba.

Primitive communism was a product of necessity and it was enforced by scarcity. But modern communism is a product of consciousness—the mass communist consciousness of the world's working class—and is required if humanity is to live a life of abundance. Communism can only be achieved by fighting for it before, during and after the revolution.

CAN COMMUNISTS USE THE ENEMY'S CULTURE?

Capitalism holds power at gun-point, but its survival depends upon ideas. The United States has a population of approximately 250 million. The ruling class represents a tiny fraction of this number. Its parasites in business, advertising, the professions and academia, and its career goons in the military and police constitute a larger but still puny segment. Yet this minority organizes society in its interests and amasses fabulous wealth, while the majority—workers and others—live and toil in deadly conditions of deepening misery at worst and mounting instability at best. How can such an apparently absurd relationship maintain itself? How can this ruthless, greedy minority dictate to a majority whom it exploits, starves, and slaughters, and to whom it owes everything?

The capitalist dictatorship continues to outlive crisis after crisis only because it can parade as something other than a dictatorship. To do so, it needs to portray bourgeois property relations, bourgeois social life, and bourgeois morality as universal, eternal, and unsurpassable. The ideology that justifies this lie can be reduced to a few simple propositions. At their core lies the pseudo-theory of individualism, which in essence glorifies the dog-eat-dog world of so-called "free" market economics. Corollaries include the notions that I am what I own, that the drive for profit is an eternal trait of "human nature", that "mental" labor deserves far greater reward than "manual" labor, that the highest human achievement resides in becoming a boss, and that success and failure in the marketplace are purely subjective matters. Capitalism tells us we all get what we deserve and deserve what we get. Racism, elitism, nationalism and male chauvinism grow naturally from this ideological source, which in turn springs from the economic foundations of the profit system.

But capitalist ideology rarely appears naked for all to recognize. Most of the time, like capitalist dictatorship, it masquerades as something else—science, religion, ethics, art, music, litera-

ture, film, drama, or sport. These forms and many others constitute the superstructure of capitalist culture, whose effect on us is all the more harmful as it hides its class content. Communists have a vital stake in unmasking and rejecting this content. Indeed, to the degree we remain the prisoners of bourgeois culture, believing any of it still had value for the working class, we allow the enemy's ideas to victimize us and to cripple our movement.

Communist revolution has a military component, a political component, an ideological component, an economic component—and a cultural component. Winning means winning on all these fronts. History shows that failure on even one of them leads to defeat on every one. In many respects, the cultural battle may be the most sensitive and difficult of all, because culture fosters the most deeply and passionately held illusions.

The time to begin shedding these illusions is now, not in the future, after the seizure of power. The process will be long and difficult, but it is absolutely necessary. Bourgeois culture is vast and insidious. It tries to seduce everyone, even the most battle-hardened and ideologically steeled revolutionaries. To win communism, to build an egalitarian society, to create the poten-

tial conditions for working class culture, we must first expose, fight, and destroy bourgeois culture root and branch.

The present paper is offered as a contribution to this process, in the hope that it will generate discussion within the Party and among its friends to help advance our strategic and practical understanding of *Road to Revolution IV*.

THE CLASS BASIS OF CULTURE

In their ground-breaking work of 1846, *The German Ideology*, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels showed that the dominant culture throughout the history of class society had always been the culture of the rulers:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e., the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than...the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas... (Marx and Engels: *Selected Works*, vol. I, p. 47).

The rulers of every society since civilization began have develo-

ped and exploited culture to consolidate their power and subdue their enemies. In ancient Greece, the state made public heroes of poets who praised its military conquests. Five hundred years later, a comprehensive reorganization of the arts helped Augustus strengthen his position as Rome's first emperor. Writers won fame and fortune by promoting the new regime.

The historian Livy glorified Roman imperialism, past and present. Horace's lyrical poems urged political passivity, a Stoic acceptance of suffering, and blind subservience to the ruling class: "It is sweet and beautiful to die for one's country." Vergil accepted Augustus's standing commission to compose the *Aeneid*, a work that would rival Homer's epics and venerate one-man rule.

The class bias of these writers was not accidental. They had everything to gain from the new order. Both Vergil and Horace had lost their paternal estates in the confiscations that followed the wars prior to Augustus's ascension. They subsequently received substantial amends.

Critics call this the "Golden Age" of Latin literature, and it did produce some astonishingly skillful art. But, far more than their talents, what sustained Livy, Horace, and Vergil was the

determination of the rulers of the day to expand the slave system by force of arms. To do so, they needed to concentrate power in one man and suppress dissent, even among the upper classes. Banishment awaited writers, like Ovid, who withheld their services in this reorganization of opinion.

In the European feudal period, the Church dominated culture. It had both its own particular landholding interests to defend and the classwide interests of kings and nobles. Written literature existed but with a few notable exceptions remained tightly under jealous Church control. Most secular poetry either glorified the chivalrous exploits of the ruling class or studied aristocratic mating habits under the system known as "courtly love."

Architecture was queen of culture in the Middle Ages, when the great cathedrals of Europe rose to glorify the supposedly eternal union of "throne, altar, and nobility." Tourists who gawk at these cathedrals today can barely imagine the mental hammerlock in which they held the people of the twelfth century. Before touching the stone in the quarries, the peasants who did the back-breaking construction work first went to daily confession. Once finished, each cathedral dominated the landscape for

miles around. It also dominated cultural life.

Here religion, morality, pageantry, and entertainment all blended into a whole. The illiterate peasants or burghers contemplated the huge, dark vault, which reinforced their sense of nothingness in the face of God's supposedly infinite majesty. The service, conducted in a secret code—Latin—comprehensible only to the initiated priests, further intimidated and enthralled the faithful. The ritual of confession underscored the notion that humanity, stained with original sin, could reach grace only through divine mercy and thanks to the church's intervention. For diversion, the worshipper could look at the extraordinary stained-glass windows, which told edifying picture-stories about the lives of holy men and women.

At the height of the Middle Ages, the great cathedrals combined the functions of the modern church, school, newspaper, and electronic media.

Today, 800 years later, religion survives in a different form, and culture is primarily secular. It is, however, as consciously and ruthlessly dominated by the selfish interests of capitalist plutocrats as it was by feudal kings, princes and bishops, and 1000 years before them, by

Roman emperors.

Every revolutionary movement has to make a decisive break with the culture of the old order. Without such a break, history shows that the seizure of economic and political power is temporary at best. As a first step, we must sharpen our understanding of the forms and methods used by capitalism to maintain its cultural hegemony.

THE BUSINESS OF CULTURE: THE CULTURE OF BUSINESS

Until the invention of the printing press, books—the most basic written form of modern culture—had to be produced individually. Until the development of still photography and, later, recordings and moving pictures, visual and musical culture was also “unique:” a painting couldn’t be duplicated, and a symphony had to be played each time it was heard. With the industrial revolution and the development of advanced capitalism came the mass reproducibility of culture. The written word, music, film, the plastic arts became universally accessible. The capitalists brayed that the general availability of books, movies, television, radio, newspapers, museums, concerts, and recorded music

proved that never had society or culture been so democratic.

In fact, the opposite was and remains the case. The mass reproducibility of art, music, and literature under capitalism consolidates the power of the capitalists, not of the working class. Culture in class society is primarily an instrument for social control, a sledgehammer or narcotic used to degrade the working class, instill capitalist values in it, and delude it with alienated dreams. In a class society, the answer to the question: Whom does culture serve? lies in the identity of the impresario, not of the audience.

In advanced capitalist society, culture is inseparable from the mass media. Whoever controls communications controls intellectual life. As the U.S. moves with increasing openness and rapidity toward fascism, this control is becoming ever more concentrated in a dwindling number of corporate hands. These simultaneous developments are hardly inconsistent.

Today, the U.S. media include more than 25,000 “outlets:” book, newspaper and magazine publishers, recording and film studios, TV and radio stations, cable networks. Twenty-three corporations control most of these, exactly half the number

that exercised such control in 1981. The trend is toward further consolidation. At the end of World War II, 80 percent of U.S. newspapers were owned by small businessmen and women. By 1989, the proportion had turned into its opposite, with 80 percent now owned by corporate chains. In 1981, twenty corporations controlled the lion’s share of 11,000 magazines published in the U.S.; by 1988, the eleven had shrunk to three.

Profitability dictates that major media barons own as many media as possible. Bigtime owners of cable systems include corporations with controlling interest in books, magazines, newspapers, and broadcasting. SONY bought CBS Records and immediately grabbed a company with exclusive rights to 35,000 songs. As Ben H. Bagdikian remarks in his useful book, *The Media Monopoly*:

In (the) fondest scenario (of the new global giants), a magazine owned by the company selects or commissions an article that is suitable for later transformation into a television series on a network owned by the company; then it becomes a screenplay for a movie studio owned by the company, with the movie sound track sung by a vocalist made popular by feature articles in the company-owned magazines and by constant playing of the sound track by company-owned radio stations, after which the songs become popu-

lar in a record label owned by the company and so on, with reruns on company cable systems and rentals of its videocassettes all over the world (Beacon Press, Boston, 1990, p. 243).

This process is not likely to stop soon. The means of communication follow the capitalist crisis pattern of tightening control over the means of production. Bagdikian quotes investment banker Christopher Shaw, who has brokered 120 media takeovers, as predicting that, by the year 2000, all U.S. media may be in the hands of six conglomerates (p. 5). Even a liberal critique of this pattern can see that it leads to cultural fascism. Bagdikian writes:

An alarming pattern emerges. On one side is information limited by each individual’s own experience and effort; on the other, the unseen affairs of the community, the nation, and the world, information needed by the individual to prevent political powerlessness. What connects the two are the mass media, and that system is being reduced to a small number of closed circuits in which the owners of the conduits—newspapers, magazines, broadcast stations, and all the other mass media—prefer to use material they own or that tends to serve their economic purposes (p. 5).

If we change the word “individual” in Bagdikian’s analysis to read “workers,” we can see

that the ownership of the means of cultural production and distribution accurately reflects class relations in U.S. society today. The media have become an indispensable element of the bourgeois state apparatus.

BUY THE PRODUCT; BUY THE SYSTEM

This hegemony of large corporations over culture reinforces capitalist rule in two ways. First, it stimulates market demand through advertising and misleads workers onto a treadmill of perpetual consumption. In the second place, it plays a pervasive and sinister ideological role by shilling for the capitalist system as a whole.

A recent internationally administered test ranked U.S. teenagers at the bottom of fifty countries in math and science skills. One reason must be the increasingly abysmal miseducation provided in the concentration camps that call themselves public schools. However, the schools tell only part of the story. Mathematics and science require that the mind be trained to reason methodically and critically. The "free" market system of commodity production demands the opposite: that the mind be engaged only to the point of commercial enticement, and never beyond.

As U.S. capitalism produces fewer and increasingly shoddy goods, its propaganda arm—advertising—needs to push them with mounting shrillness and guile. Commercial advertising probably exerts the most profound and intense of all cultural influences on U.S. youth. In the social fiction that blurs class distinctions and treats everyone as a "consumer," 1,600 advertising messages are aimed every day at each person in the U.S. We remain unaware that we have received the majority of these messages. We may notice eighty of them. Twelve at most may make an impression that we retain consciously. But their cumulative effect on the mind is as deadly as the effect of cigarettes on the lungs. By the age of seventeen, the average American child has seen or heard 350,000 commercials.

Each of these commercials has both a particular and a general message. On the one hand, it encourages or cajoles the victim into buying a specific product. The appeal is usually greed, fear, lust, or a combination thereof. On the other hand, it reinforces the premise underlying all commodity production: that a thing has value primarily because it can be sold for a profit, and that human beings have value insofar as they contribute to and benefit from this seedy process.

When the average person receives this message in one form or another more than twenty thousand times a year, and when those who deliver it also control the means of producing and delivering all forms of communication, the conclusion is inescapable. Such a society will neither tolerate nor promote literature, art, film, journalism, or music that challenge or threaten property or profit.

This restriction appears in both crude and subtle form. When oil companies used the sharpening contradictions between U.S. imperialism and OPEC countries to reap windfall profits in the 1970s by jacking up gas and oil profits, the Mobil Corporation took the lead in spending millions to advertise itself as an altruistic force for moral and social good. Other companies followed suit, cynically portraying themselves as

...hero, a responsible citizen, a force for good, presenting information on the work the company is doing in community relations, assisting the less fortunate, minimizing pollution, controlling drugs, ameliorating poverty (Bagdikian, p. 58).

With the Gulf War, the oil companies' "good citizenship" performed the deadly magic of committing genocide while simultaneously quadrupling their profits. One thinks of

Budweiser, which after raking in billions from beer-bellies and drunkenness, now hypocritically calls upon "responsible Americans" to enjoy its product in moderation as part of the "good life." Each giant corporation that so publicizes itself has its own anthem and liturgy, designed to cover its thievery and murderousness in the Good Samaritan's cloak.

General Electric provides another instructive example. This is the warmaker/strikebreaker that under the pretense of "bringing good things to life" acquired RCA Corporation in 1986, thereby becoming the owner of NBC television. NBC's shamelessly jingoistic nightly rantings in praise of the imperialist slaughter in the Gulf appear in this context as nothing more than a sales pitch for the military contracting interests of both the ruling class and the parent company.

Not all commercial vindications of capitalism appear quite so blatant or heavy-handed. The great mass movements of the 1960s and 1970s taught the rulers a lesson in cultural co-optation. In the wake of ghetto uprisings and demonstrations against the Vietnam war, Madison Avenue miraculously discovered that revolution and rebellion were "in." "Join the Dodge rebellion," screamed an

ad twenty years ago, urging U.S. auto buyers to resist Japanese and German products by purchasing a made-in-the-U.S.A. Chrysler Corporation jalopy. Ironically, at the time, U.S. auto workers, including Chrysler workers led by communists in the PLP, found themselves on the front lines of a strike wave. This was definitely not the type of rebellion the Dodge ads intended to stimulate.

This co-optation of politics by advertising continues apace today. Every so often, a "revolutionary" skin-blocker, fragrance, or mouthwash finds its way onto the market. New absorbent pads allow elderly women to conserve their "independence," despite weak bladders. A whole slew of products, from fashion to hair care and personal hygiene, promotes black nationalism. And by now, as every woman knows, "You've come a long way, baby:" you can vote for CarteReagaBush, dream about driving a BMW, "stay free" in Maxi Pads, and give yourself lung cancer. Your kids may not be able to read or add; they may get themselves shot up for Exxon or G.E. in the Arabian desert; but you, at least, can try to go for the gold and hope to have it all.

THE BOURGEOISIE HAD SOMETHING TO SAY —ONCE UPON A TIME

To be sure, advertising does not provide the sole outlet for capitalist culture. We have dealt with it here for two reasons: first, because it exerts the greatest of all quantitative cultural influences and second, because it sets the tone for the essentially alienated commodity relations inherent in all the rest of bourgeois culture today.

This alienation was not always the case. From the fifteenth through the eighteenth centuries, when it fought to seize power from feudalism, the bourgeoisie had a revolutionary world outlook. Its leading writers, artists, and musicians made radical criticisms of the status quo. Describing the leaders of the bourgeois revolution's initial stage, the great social, economic, and religious upheaval known today as the Reformation, Engels says:

It was the greatest progressive revolution that mankind has so far experienced, a time which called for giants and produced giants—giants in power of thought, passion, and character, in universality and learning. The men who founded the modern rule of the bourgeoisie had anything but bourgeois limitations. On the contrary, the adventurous character of the time inspired them

to a greater or less degree. There was hardly a man of importance then living who had not travelled extensively, who did not command four or five languages, who did not shine in a number of fields. The heroes of that time had not yet come under the servitude of the division of labor, the restricting effects of which, with its production of onesidedness, we so often notice in their successors. But what is especially characteristic of them is that they almost all pursue their lives and activities in the midst of contemporary movements, in the practical struggle; they take sides and join in the fight, one by speaking and writing, another with the sword, many with both (*Dialectics of Nature*, Introduction, pp.2-3; emphasis mine).

Engels was referring to giants like Leonardo da Vinci, Albrecht Durer, Nicolo Macchiavelli, and Martin Luther. Their contributions advanced philosophy, literature, science and art and objectively paved the way for bourgeois power by weakening the influence of Catholicism.

In subsequent phases of bourgeois ascension, mathematics, physics, and the natural sciences made quantum leaps with Newton, Leibniz, Napier, Kepler, and others, who built upon a foundation laid by Arab scientists, long suppressed by the Church.

In literature, radical humanists like Moliere pilloried the

Church, exposed its fundamental hypocrisies, and laid the groundwork for the mechanical materialists of the eighteenth century.

Philosophers like Diderot and Rousseau respectively debunked the notion of God the "creator" and sought the social origins of inequality, thereby helping create the ideological climate for the French Revolution of 1789, an upheaval that continued the work of the Reformation and paved the way for scientific communism.

The spirit of revolutionary bourgeois democracy infused music and poetry alike. Mozart's popular sympathies are well documented. He chose the most radical dramatic literature available for his great operas *Don Juan* (the portrait of a decadent aristocrat that is also a defense of atheism) and *The Marriage of Figaro* (a daring attack against the nobility's power and privilege). His patrons at Court made him pay dearly for his principles— but he stuck to them. Beethoven went further yet. Holding the honest illusion that Napoleon's armies would install triumphant democracy throughout Europe, he dedicated his Third Symphony, the *Eroica*, to Bonaparte— and then canceled the inscription upon learning that Napoleon had himself crowned Emperor.

Beethoven, too, held fast to his republican principles. Unlike others who renounced their revolutionary ideals or wallowed in cynicism after the temporary victory of European monarchist reaction at the Congress of Vienna in 1815, he chose to remain silent musically rather than prostitute himself by composing light opera for the wealthy. The English poet Wordsworth perhaps best summarized the spirit that illuminated the dawn of bourgeois state power: "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, / But to be young was very heaven" (*The Prelude*, Book II). Wordsworth's "bliss" was clearly the heady enthusiasm of participation in a life and death struggle to change the world. His "heaven" was the revolutionary movement. Such vibrance and dynamism characterized the best of bourgeois culture during the period when the bourgeoisie represented a force for positive, radical change.

As capitalism consolidated its choke-hold on society, feudal servitude gave way to capitalist wage slavery, and bourgeois culture rapidly turned into its opposite. Beethoven and Wordsworth were progressives only in an historical sense. They have little or nothing to offer the working class today. It has other fish to fry.

CULTURE—FOR THE VULTURES

As the "liberty, equality, and fraternity" the French Revolution had promised to champion rapidly proved a cruel hoax, the effect on literature and the arts was twofold. On the one hand, despite the brutality of primitive capital accumulation, the system itself remained dynamic until the First World War, and so did its culture. The 19th century was the great period of bourgeois realism in fiction. Whatever their own political point of view, the leading novelists of the day (Balzac, Stendhal, Flaubert, Zola, Dickens, Eliot, Austen, Dostoevski, Tolstoi) accurately and grippingly portrayed fundamental contradictions of contemporary class society.

On the other hand, the exploitive nature of production for profit drove a wedge between the artist and public, relegated all literary and artistic endeavor to commodity status (Balzac and Dickens had to churn out their fiction as line-by-line piecework for the gazettes of the day), and began producing the most alienated culture history has yet seen. It did so in two ways.

First, the capitalist division of labor between "mental" and "manual" created a class of cultural "experts" in the former

category and, by so doing, drove a wedge between them and the working class. At the dawn of human society, poetry grew out of the work-songs that accompanied labor. These songs had codified and systematized the rhythms of the cries uttered by rowers, heavers, haulers, reapers, spinners, etc., performing their various tasks. The cries synchronized the action specific to the task, and the song embellished the cry. Thus, in its most rudimentary form, poetry was inseparable from labor and subservient to it. Slavery succeeded primitive communism; other, more advanced forms of class society supplanted slavery; and poetry, literature, and art in general became further and further detached from the labor process, until the emergence of contemporary bourgeois society, in which, as George Thomson points out,

...the poet has lost touch with the people, the underlying unity of poetical and popular speech has been to a large extent effaced; and, where it still survives, it is the people, not the poets, who have preserved it (*The Human Essence*, p.67).

According to bourgeois esthetics, the writer's or artist's job is to get as far away from ordinary people as possible by striving for "beauty." Since it first arose as a cultural concept in the eighteenth century, this idea has

undergone many transformations, but their content remains. The modern theoreticians of "art for art's sake" express themselves in many convoluted jargons, but they all hold fast to the premise that a work has "beauty" only insofar as it is alienated from the labor process, from workers, and from the class struggle. Scratch even the most self-proclaimed anti-establishment aesthete, and you'll always draw the blood of a petty-bourgeois individualist.

BOURGEOIS ARTISTS ALIENATED FROM THE BOURGEOISIE AS WELL

But at the same time capitalism alienates writers and artists from the working class, it also alienates them from itself. Under the commodity production system, culture is another commodity. Manuscripts and screenplays have to be sold to publishers and studios; paintings and sculptures have to be auctioned at galleries; composers and musicians need to hustle recording contracts and "gigs." Most serious artists hate the thought of doing business: they consider it beneath their dignity. The successful ones overcome their squeamishness and cry all the way to the bank.

The historical turning-point at which this alienation became irreversible was the brutal suppression of the workers'

revolutionary movements throughout Europe in 1848. The petty bourgeoisie played an ignoble role during this process—betraying the working class, helping the capitalists consolidate power at gunpoint, and then screaming with self-righteous indignation when the capitalists didn't show proper gratitude. Marx analyzed this contradiction in his study *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte*.

The forms and complexity of cultural alienation have increased in both variety and scope since then. This paper cannot attempt to enumerate or describe them. We can, however, state generally that for the last century and a half, bourgeois culture has become an increasingly reactionary humanism with three premises: 1) under the status quo one cannot hope for individual happiness or positive social interaction; 2) not too much can be done to overcome this problem; 3) human existence is therefore absurd or tragic, and the best one can do is indulge one's whims (hedonism) or lucidly and heroically fight a losing battle (existentialism) against a hostile world. In other words, the system's rotten, you're rotten, I'm rotten, but that's the way it goes. At least we can get a few kicks out of life.

Revolutionaries concerned

with developing a political strategy for cultural work that will help lead to the workers' dictatorship and an egalitarian society cannot adopt this approach. Art or literature is not "progressive" simply because it shows the horrors of capitalism. If this were the only criterion, then the most degenerate garbage would pass muster. According to this line, the drug culture would have a positive side, because drugs represent the most intense form of escapism, and the desire to escape proves that reality under capitalism is unbearable; therefore, in the twisted logic of 1960s LSD guru Timothy Leary, "Tune in, turn on, and drop out."

The job of communists is not simply to mirror or bemoan bourgeois alienation, but to smash the system that makes it a condition of social life. as Marx wrote more than 150 years ago in *The German Ideology*, the point is not merely to interpret an oppressive world, but to change it. Nothing short of revolutionary communism can make the changes that are needed. Nothing short of revolutionary communism can be considered "progressive."

WITH VANNA AND SCHWARTZENEGGER, WHO NEEDS SHAKESPEARE?

The degeneracy of contemporary U.S. culture reflects the collapse of U.S. imperialism. Hollywood and the TV networks produce material that on average has about the same quality in its own domain as automobiles made by Ford, Chrysler, or GM. The form of these extravaganzas is usually inept, and the content is moronic, deprived, or both.

Reacting to the pornographic, anti-semitic pseudo-art and literature spawned during the 1930s in Nazi Germany, the German communist playwright and poet Bertolt Brecht wrote:

Explaining the irresistible, appalling decadence of culture in our time is a painful, simple task. We need merely remind ourselves what culture is to realize immediately that it is no longer anything but a memory, that we hardly have anything more than a dim notion of it. An assessment of what constitutes a culture makes any other proof unnecessary. If, by "culture," we mean that which surrounds us, then we can consider ourselves swimming in one. (*The Arts and Revolution*, "Cultural Heritage").

The Nazi vulgarities Brecht attacked in this passage were

tame in comparison with the putrid excrescences one can unearth with a mere twist of the wrist today. In a sick caricature of ancient Greece conquering Rome culturally after Rome had enslaved her economically, talk shows, yuppie-glorifying drivel, mind-deadening rap and rock, pornography and racist sadism have become the leading export of dying U.S. imperialism. The Pentagon can well consider MTV, "Wheel of Fortune," "Rocky," and the cesspool of hard and soft core soaps from Hollywood, the networks, and the publishing houses as its most trustworthy weapons for exerting what remains of U.S. bosses' international influence. .

CULTURAL FASCISTS vs CULTURAL NATIONALISTS

The hamburger economy has brought forth a culture with icons like Madonna and shrines like Disneyland. However, while such unsavoriness or pap may serve well to dull the minds of workers and others whom U.S. capitalism needs to oppress here and abroad, the situation has an inevitable drawback from the bosses' point of view. It's all well and good to poison the intellect of the masses, but when the poison also begins to incapacitate the "best and brightest," the children of the bourgeoisie and

those of the middle class among whom the system needs to recruit its cadre, then capitalism's theorists begin to worry. The brain-child of this concern is the "cultural literacy" movement. Launched with the publication of Allan Bloom's book *The Closing of the American Mind*, this crusade bemoans the current decline in standards and prescribes a return to the golden age of yore, when every college graduate could quote chapter and verse from the classics of "Western Civilization." Whether or not such an age ever existed is moot: the "good old days" of U.S. imperialism reached their height in the 1950s, under the presidency of Eisenhower, who had trouble speaking in complete English sentences. Bloom & Co. view the recent past with rose colored glasses. Their nostalgia is almost comical.

However, its racist, anti-working class bias is not. The "literacy" baloney blames the victims of U.S. miseducation for what this society has done to them and then calls for the revival of a cultural elite that can recite Shakespeare from memory while dutifully humming Beethoven (whom they have taken pains to bleed dry of all his revolutionary spirit).

Bloom & Co. can offer little more than fascistic yearnings for an illusory Eden of the intellect

in which everybody talked like a Harvard blueblood and had season tickets to the opera. Their class bias prevents them from recognizing the awful truth: that bourgeois culture can no longer renew itself, because the capitalist system has nothing new to say. Its cheerleading for the idols of "Western Civilization" barely cloaks the desperate, selfish sterility of contemporary bourgeois thought. The working class and its allies have no trouble in recognizing the "cultural literacy" gurus as enemies.

But the cultural nationalists who occupy the other official chair in capitalism's current debate on this question are a different matter altogether. Their demagoguery is less obvious and more seductive than that of the Bloom bunch. These nationalists attack the racist, male supremacist traditions of U.S. cultural history and connect these traditions to economic and social oppression. However, the connection is not made from a working class point of view, and for this reason, the nationalist revolt against bourgeois cultural oppression merely duplicates the essence of this oppression in new packaging. The enemy, according to them, is not the profit system that exploits all workers but rather a "white, male culture." Now we all know that capitalism tends to be dominated by white men, at least

in the West, and that Rambo and Dirty Harry represent this domination. However, revolutionaries must not confuse appearances with essences or form with content. Rambo and Dirty Harry reflect the male chauvinism and racism of the U.S. profit system, not a self-sustaining "white, male culture." The distinction is not purely semantic.

If the enemy is capitalism, then we have to unite all workers and their potential allies to destroy capitalism. That is the position of the PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY. If the enemy is "white, male culture," then the answer is not working class unity but rather the modern tribalism promoted by the cultural nationalists. This tribalism is a reactionary, self-defeating dead-end. No wonder the bosses are promoting it like gangbusters in both the universities and the media.

The new tribalism emphasizes every conceivable difference among workers and oppressed people and attempts to portray these differences as primary. Under the guise of "multi-cultural diversity," it isolates sections of the working class and erects barriers among them. As a September 2, 1990 article in the *New York Times* by the reactionary critic Richard Bernstein admits:

The country is in the grip of what might be called a cult of otherness, the word otherness being highly fashionable in academic circles these days. Twenty-five years ago the civil rights movement began to erase differences imposed by race and ethnic origin. Now the cult of otherness asserts that these differences are unbridgeable.

Classical bourgeois education subdivided the study of history, literature, and the arts into national components. One could specialize in Italian history, German literature, Chinese philosophy, or such amalgams of these "disciplines" as "comparative literature," "history and literature," or "politics, philosophy, and economics." Modern tribalism merely caricatures this approach, justifying itself with the pseudo-radical pretense of giving a voice to the oppressed. Thus, universities offer courses in "black studies," "chicano studies," "women's studies," "gay studies," "lesbian studies," and various combinations thereof. Every oppressed group is implicitly urged to seek liberation by contemplating itself and its history in isolation from others and from the class struggle. More to the point: this approach constitutes each of these groups as a fictitious whole in which all classes belonging to the group unite and affirm their differences from the other groups. Accordingly, any group can def-

ine itself as oppressed and study itself. I suffer, but you're from another tribe: you can't understand my suffering.

Such an approach not only trivializes the concept of oppression in class society, by implicitly equating the problems of wealthy pederasts with, say, those of unemployed black steel workers' children; it also obscures the real class enemy and stifles the development of solidarity against him.

This is of course the ruling class's purpose in promoting cultural nationalism. The bosses are perfectly willing to encourage such a response to the cultural fascists because it enables them to control both sides of the debate. The spectacular success of filmmaker Spike Lee illustrates how they do so.

GET MILITANT: BECOME A MILLIONAIRE

Lee is a significant figure on the contemporary cultural scene both because of his films and because of the public role he has begun to play beyond them. In the few years since he left film school, his career has skyrocketed from low-budget sleepers to blockbusters. His film *Do the Right Thing*, released in 1989, was the pivot of this process.

In a certain sense, this film appears to have its good points. The photography is lush—too much so for a story that takes place in Bedford-Stuyvesant. The dialogue is often witty and funny. Lee's characterizations attempt to negate the racist stereotyping one normally associates with Hollywood's portrayals of black people. The film depicts the New York police as a fascist army of occupation all too ready to use murderous Gestapo tactics against black working class youth.

Do the Right Thing has many weaknesses, even on its own terms, but they need not concern us here. Lee is significant for the present discussion because his work has just enough talent and just enough skill to disguise the trite nationalist lie in a new robe whose only purpose is to sucker the unwary.

Do the Right Thing boils down to the proposition that if you can't lick capitalism, join it in another room. Sal, the white pizzeria boss, and Mookie, the black delivery man, are the two primary characters who attempt to forge some sort of multi-racial unity. In the end, they fail, not because of the class differences that separate them, but because Sal is white and Mookie is black, and because never, according to Lee's world view, the twain shall

meet. At the climax of the film, Sal, who until then has appeared to despise racism, shows his true colors, by hurling racist invective at Radio Raheem, and aggravates an already ugly incident. The Police arrive, murder Radio Raheem, and provoke a rebellion started by Mookie, who can think of no better political target to trash than Sal's pizzeria. The next day, Sal and Mookie meet for a final verbal confrontation. They recognize that with all the good will in the world, they remain unable to get along. Sal angrily hurls a few hundred dollars at Mookie's feet as severance pay. Mookie picks up the money, presumably to try starting his own business, and the film ends.

In a play called *Puntila and Matti, His Hired Man*, the German communist Bertolt Brecht depicts a similar master-servant relationship. Puntila the boss reveals his humane side, but only when he drinks. However, he always sobers up and returns to his class essence. The play ends with Matti understanding that the true Puntila is the sober one, that there is no such thing as a good boss, and that workers have to turn their backs on capitalism:

...of course our friendship couldn't last. Sobriety sets in and draws the line between you and me. And even if we shed a tear because two kinds

of animal can't cross it doesn't help. It's just a waste of tears. It's time your hired hands showed you their rears. They'll quickly find good masters when the masters are the working men (Scene 12).

Unlike Brecht's Matti, Lee's Mookie doesn't turn his back on capitalism. He embraces it. Mookie does the "right thing," according to the film, by picking up the money: he, too, deserves a shot at the American dream. The way to fight racism, according to this logic, is to have more black bosses and politicians. *Do the Right Thing* played a major role in promoting the David Dinkins campaign. Now, like Philadelphia and Washington, New York has a black mayor to implement racist budget cuts, break strikes, and hire more killer cops.

Lee takes his own advice and proves how bankrupt it is. He has become quite an entrepreneur, opening the first of what promises to be a chain of Spike Lee souvenir stores in the ghetto. The message is as cynical as it is vicious: it's OK to be exploited as long as Spike's the one doing it.

Like all pseudo-radical nationalists who pose against the rulers, Lee is really their creature. He heads a film company called "Forty Acres and a Mule." This is his claim to independ-

ence. But media companies, as we showed earlier, must dance to the tune called by the banks that finance their operations and the distributors who market them. Lee's distributor is the giant Universal. Universal is in turn controlled by the megacorporation MCA. On the MCA board of directors sits Felix Rohatyn, the Lazard Freres investment banker who concocted the Big MAC scheme to bail out New York City bosses financially in the 1970s. This scam stole billions from city workers' pension funds and sliced billions more in essential city services. Hardest hit, as usual, were New York's black and hispanic workers.

So the real boss of cultural nationalism's newest darling ranks among the leaders of U.S. urban racism. Rohatyn's latest recommendation, made in a September 1990 New York Times op-ed piece, calls for the emergency hiring of 5,000 more racist cops to repress mass rebellions that the collapsing U.S. economy will surely ignite. Mayor Dinkins, whom *Do The Right Thing* helped elect, scrambled to endorse this proposal within hours after Rohatyn had published it. Because Dinkins so anxiously hopes to do the right thing by his master Rohatyn, many of these cops are sure to be black. They too will

kill and terrorize black, hispanic, and white workers—and Spike Lee's films will help them do so, by covering Dinkins' and nationalism's true relationship to the ruling class.

Cultural nationalism serves the same ends as cultural fascism. Only the tactics and appearance differ. Bloom & Co. preach to the avowed racists. Lee and his ilk try to delude anti-racists with the belief that all-class unity among black people and an integrated state apparatus can give capitalism a human face. In reality, the profit system has many faces. None of them is or can become human. Lee belongs in the same sewer as Bloom.

THE EXCEPTIONS PROVE THE RULE

Development is uneven, and all bourgeois novels, films, plays, art works, and music are not equally depraved or reactionary. Some may have redeeming qualities. Once in a long while—almost never on TV—a story may appear that exposes the system or that portrays ordinary people treating each other with decency and respect.

Such material has become increasingly rare. The best of it was produced in the greatest quantity at the height of the old communist movement, during the 1930s and 1940s. During the 1950s, the

rising civil rights movement generated some sincere and relatively competent efforts to portray multiracial unity. However, even the best progressive cultural work quickly found itself drowned in the swamp of individualist, alienated rot. The bosses' academic establishment and media consciously promoted the reactionary William Faulkner and the egomaniac Hemingway as the titans of 20th century literature, with a host of second stringers not far behind. When the dazzling musician Louis Armstrong came out of the working class and redefined the concepts of rhythm and melody, the rulers co-opted him and later made him an unofficial ambassador to Africa for U.S. imperialism.

Today, capitalism can't even manage to produce a Faulkner. Its better writers can do little more than obliquely and cynically expose some of the system's howling absurdities. The worst of the best do nothing but contemplate their own petty-bourgeois navels, and when you've contemplated one petty-bourgeois navel, you've learned more than you need to know

about the subject. A good satiric film like *Roger and Me* cleverly contrasts the misery and desperation of laid-off auto workers with the callous greed of industry moguls and toadies. Its conclusion shows that capitalist acknowledges no social responsibility except to make profits. Well and good, but not nearly good enough. *Roger and Me* leaves the viewer angry but frustrated: the bosses stink, the system is cruel and vicious, but nothing can be done. Furthermore, for every cultural product that has a few positive qualities, the system generates a stampede of degeneracy, racism, self-indulgence, and pornographic filth.

Communists can't limit cultural struggle to seeking needles in haystacks or promoting the best of a bad lot. Smashing the system means smashing its culture. The working class needs something else.

By A.T.

Part II of this article will discuss the experience of the proletarian movement in combatting ruling class culture, and the cultural tasks of communists today.

THE OIL WAR...

**Excerpts from
CHALLENGE-DESAFIO'S
coverage and commentary
on the Bush-Baath bashing
inflicted on the Iraqi people.**



ORIGIN OF THE WAR

Why is the U.S. battling over Iraq? Because it is one key to the rich Middle East, containing 70% of the world's oil reserves. Capitalism is in crisis on a world scale. Production and profit rates are down; markets are shrinking and investments in plant and equipment are sliding. This is a crisis of overproduction, as Marx predicted would continually occur under capitalism.

Now the declining U.S. is desperate. For years its government deficits have been financed by German, Saudi and Japanese money. They

provide the cash to bail out the deficit. But Germany just announced its unwillingness to continue financing at the same rate because it is more profitable to invest in its new allies in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and build up the former East Germany.

The aftermath of the Iran-Iraq war showed this trend. Both countries began a massive reconstruction. Iraq's program alone cost \$30 billion. But not one penny went to U.S. capitalists. It was a German-Japanese-Soviet-French affair. Iran's was more of the same. The U.S. was "losing influence," meaning losing profits. The current U.S. invasion of the Middle East is trying to reverse that flow of profits back towards the U.S.

Unlike Iran and Iraq, the Saudis and Kuwaitis are still in the U.S. camp. They must recycle their oil profits through the U.S. Washington and Wall Street want to keep it that way, which is another reason for the U.S. invasion of the Middle East and its drive to eliminate Hussein, to take Iraq away from the Soviets-German-Japan axis and into the U.S. sphere, and to put Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in a state of increased dependence on the U.S.

U.S. DOUBLE DEALING: HOW BUSH USED KUWAIT AND TRICKED HUSSEIN

Since the fall of the Shah, U.S. policy has been to prevent either Iran or Iraq from becoming the predominant power in the Gulf, threatening U.S. control over the region's oil supply and price. Now information is surfacing which supports CHALLENGE/DESAFIO's position that U.S. rulers have welcomed, encouraged and even planned for a war with Iraq as the best way to destroy Iraq's emergence from its war with Iran as potentially the most powerful military power in the Middle East. The latest information includes:

Kuwait had been working directly with the CIA to further U.S. aims. An agreement between Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia had actually been worked out which would have prevented an invasion and larger war, but it was sabotaged by the Bush Administration.

Even immediately after the August 2 Iraqi invasion, Arab negotiations were in the works for Hussein to withdraw within days, based on another agreement endorsed by the Saudis, but this, too, was submarined by Bush & Co. who "wanted war, war, war," according to Crown Prince Hassan, brother of Jordan's King Hussein.

Below we detail Iraq's complaints that Kuwait was sabotaging Iraq's

recovery from its war with Iran (a war which the Kuwaitis desperately wanted) by breaking OPEC's oil production quotas and forcing the price of oil way down, costing Iraq billions in expected oil revenues. When Kuwait ignored Iraq's pleas to reverse this policy, and instead forgive Iraq's war debt to Kuwait, Hussein felt he had no choice but to invade Kuwait to protect the Iraq economy. But, as we show, before he did so, he sought out the potential U.S. reaction to such a move and was assured by the U.S. that this whole conflict was an "Arab-to-Arab" dispute, implying the U.S. would do nothing.

THE PLOT THICKENS

Hussein knew that the U.S.'s CIA was aware of his troop movements to the Kuwaiti border, yet not only did the Bush gang warn neither the world nor the UN of an impending invasion, it actually encouraged the idea that the U.S. was still "friendly" with Iraq and the "Butcher of Baghdad." (Bush defeated proposed Congressional sanctions against Iraq a few days before the Aug. 2 invasion and had its Ambassador to Iraq tell Hussein directly that the U.S. would not intervene.) Here the plot thickens.

As Iraq continued to mass more than 100,000 troops on the Kuwaiti border, an Arab summit was set up for July 31 in Jidda, Saudi Arabia. A "secret arrangement between President Saddam Hussein of Iraq, King Fahd of Saudi Arabia and the emir of Kuwait" had promised that "the Saudis and the Kuwaitis each would pledge an initial \$10 billion to assist the war-weary Iraqis, as a down payment on the \$30 billion Saddam demanded last May. The issue of war-debt reduction, the disputed boundary, and secret oil production were all supposed to be on the table." *The Village Voice*, March 5, 1991)

However, the day before the Arab summit to officially seal this agreement, Jordan's King Hussein met with Kuwait's foreign minister, in Kuwait City. The ruling emir's brother began the meeting "by making sarcastic remarks about the Iraqi soldiers near the border." He then went on to tell the Jordanian delegation that, "We are not going to respond to [Iraq]...if they don't like it, let them occupy our territory...we are going to bring in the Americans."

At the summit itself, to everyone's astonishment, the Kuwaitis offered Iraq \$500,000, not the \$10 billion it had secretly pledged. "The meeting broke up without even a discussion of Iraq's oil production and border complaints. Two days later, Saddam invaded Kuwait."

March 1991

The freedom of Kuwait,
the return of the
Government and the
restoration of one
man, one vote.....



.....and this is the man
who has that one vote.

WHY THE EMIR OF KUWAIT TREATED HUSSEIN SO ARROGANTLY

Why was Kuwait so arrogant towards Iraq and so confident about U.S. intervention (which the U.S. had led Saddam Hussein to believe would not occur)? A document discovered on the first day of the invasion and released by the Iraqis shortly afterwards to Reuters press agency revealed a 1989 letter from the Kuwaiti security forces chief to the Minister of the Interior relating that he had "visited the headquarters of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency" from "12 to 18 November 1989." In it he listed eight major points of agreement made in a private meeting on November 14, 1989 with CIA chief William Webster.

This agreement included a CIA pledge to train 128 bodyguards for the Emir. Other points of agreement included closer ties between the Kuwaiti State Security Department and the CIA, including American help in computerizing the Department's offices in exchange for information about the "armaments and social and political structures of Iran and Iraq." In his letter, the Emir's security forces chief wrote:

We agreed with the American side that it was important to take advantage of the deteriorating economic situation in Iraq in order to put pressure on that

country's Government to delineate our countries' common border. [The CIA said] broad cooperation should be initiated between us...[and] coordinated at a high level.

The CIA admitted that such a meeting between Brigadier General Fahd and CIA chief Webster did indeed take place on Nov. 14, 1989, but said the letter was a forgery. When the *Voice* showed the contents of the letter to Jordan's King Hussein while interviewing him the last week of February, "King Hussein said that he felt it accurately describes U.S. policy towards Iraq and Iran."

Further supporting this idea that Kuwait was following U.S. orders to insure failure of any negotiated agreement (which the Saudis thought were "in the bag") was "a handwritten note from the emir of Kuwait to his foreign minister" at the July 31 Arab summit indicating that he should ignore Iraq's demands and its threat to invade on the advice of "our friends in Washington, London and Egypt." Thus did the last pre-war Arab summit negotiations collapse on July 31, and Iraq invaded on August 2.

When Jordan's King Hussein was asked by the *Voice* interviewer "if he thought the Arab understanding was that Saddam Hussein had been provoked into his invasion thereby stepping into a noose the allies had prepared for him," he replied, "I believe it is."

When the Kuwaitis, assured of U.S. support if Saddam invaded, reneged on a prearranged agreement to pay Iraq \$10 billion in "war reparations," "offering" \$500,000 instead the stage was set for war.

Even with Kuwait under Iraqi control, the Saudis were ready to compromise, if Iraq withdrew "to the disputed border area a move that would have left him in possession of the Rumaila oil fields and the two islands" off the coast. *The New Yorker* magazine, Jan. 7, 1991) The magazine also reports that Saddam Hussein told Jordan's King Hussein in response to the latter's plea to withdraw shortly after the invasion that he would do so "over the week-end" as long as there was no public Arab condemnation of him prior to that. The Bush Administration set about insuring such a condemnation, led by Egypt's Mubarak (who was then forgiven a \$7 billion arms debt by the U.S.).

While another Arab summit was meeting in Cairo on August 5 to work out an Iraqi withdrawal, possibly based on the Saudi compromise, Bush phoned Mubarak. Shortly afterwards, the Arab summit supposedly called to work out an Arab compromise to avoid war resulted in a public Arab condemnation of Iraq. "Later, King Hussein

said, he learned that Mubarak had been pressured to get the foreign ministers to pass the anti-Saddam resolution by 5 P.M. on August 3, in order to coincide with the presentation of the U.S.- drafted Security Council resolution calling for an economic boycott of Iraq." The fix was in.

Bush, returning from a weekend at Camp David that afternoon, referred to the Iraqis as "international outlaws and renegades." He said, "I was told by one leader [presumably Jordan's Hussein]...back on Friday that they needed 48 hours to find what was called an 'Arab solution.' That obviously has failed." But, points out *The New Yorker* after an extensive interview with Jordan's Hussein and some of his aides, "the sequence of events suggests rather strongly that Bush had been instrumental in causing it to fail."

The "plan" was then carried out and led to the massacre of possibly 100,000 Iraqi civilians and retreating soldiers, the devastation of Baghdad and the possible spread of disease epidemics due to the destruction of much of Iraq's water supply. Such are the results of imperialist machinations over oil and control of the Persian Gulf.

YASIR ARAFAT AND THE 'ARAB PEACE PLAN'

Yasir Arafat, head of the Palestine Liberation Organization, confirmed this report in an interview published in the February 5, 1991 *Christian Science Monitor (CSM)*. Arafat said that "the U.S. thwarted last-minute efforts to reach a negotiated solution..., setting the stage for a conflict..." Arafat told the *CSM* that the "first opportunity for a peaceful settlement was missed at an Arab summit in Baghdad in May 1990." At that time "Hussein offered to... negotiate a mutually acceptable border with Kuwait.... But... Kuwait was dissuaded from negotiating with Iraq by a message sent to Arab rulers on the eve of the summit from Washington... that led Kuwait to believe it could rely instead on the force of U.S. arms."

The U.S. ultimatum said it intended "to maintain our naval presence in the Gulf for the foreseeable future" and that the Bush Administration would "be concerned if any summit resolution undercuts either the presence or the support we get for it." These are the same U.S. rulers who are always mouthing baloney about "honoring the sovereignty of nations."

The *CSM* quotes Arafat as saying, "The U.S. was encouraging Kuwait not to offer any compromise, which meant... no negotiated solution to

avoid the Gulf crisis." At the very same moment the Bush gang was repeatedly publicly assuring Hussein that it wouldn't interfere in Arab "border disputes."

Arafat visited both Hussein and the Emir of Kuwait days before the invasion. On July 30, at a mini summit of four Arab rulers, that was held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait refused to negotiate. After the August 2 invasion (about which Hussein also received many "signals" from the U.S. that it would not intervene) Arafat again pursued a compromise, talking to both Hussein and to the Saudi King Fahd. The reports Arafat saying that Fahd "agreed to a settlement that would leave the two islands and the Rumaila oil field in Iraqi hands." Arafat was them "dispatched to Baghdad by Arab leaders to convince Iraq to attend an emergency Arab summit in Cairo" on August 9-10.

Algeria's President Benjadid received assurances from the Iraqi delegation "that Iraq would still withdraw from Kuwait if the Arab commission came up with a satisfactory compromise." However, plans for an Arab commission were "torpedoed" by an Egyptian resolution "condemning the invasion and inviting Western forces to Saudi Arabia to help liberate Kuwait. The vote [in favor] split the Arab League," 12 to 9. (Remember, the U.S. was later to "forgive" Egypt its \$7 billion debt to the U.S. One hand washes the other?)

"I asked Kuwait," says Arafat, "Are you in need of a resolution or a solution?... They said no.... 'In a matter of days the Americans will solve the problem....' All efforts [says Arafat] to make a dialogue were torpedoed. The U.S. wanted the [Arab] summit to sanction foreign troops. It wanted cover for military intervention. If the U.S. had supported negotiations in the first place, Saddam might not have invaded Kuwait."

Arafat told the CSM that, "Saddam's final decision to seize all of Kuwait was based on fears that U.S. troops would do, in 1991, what British troops did in 1961.... Called in by Kuwait because of a threat from Iraq, the British adjusted the border northward, costing Iraq access to oil fields, including part of Rumaila."

(Of course, "co-incidentally," Kuwait has billions in investments in Britain, from where they are now handling all their world-wide financial dealings.)

It is becoming clearer by the hour that the U.S. rulers, in pursuing their aim to control the supply and price of oil in the Gulf (containing 70% of the world's oil reserves), tried strenuously (and succeeded) in

"persuading" Kuwait to rebuff a negotiated settlement to its border dispute with Iraq. After virtually assuring Hussein it would not oppose a military solution of the dispute, the U.S. then used his invasion as the pretext to send a half million troops to the Gulf and turn the dispute into a war in which it has already dropped more bombs on Iraq and Kuwait than it dropped in all of World War II!

Hussein also followed imperialist footprints. Acting on behalf of the Iraqi ruling class, he sought to force oil prices up (and get out of the debt caused by the 8-year war with Iran) by denying Kuwait access to the Rumaila oil field and thereby reduce its ability to overproduce and force oil prices down. When Kuwait followed U.S. dictates, Hussein resorted to "politics by other means," or war.

It appears that this was just what the Bush gang wanted, a chance to deal with what it perceives to be the new threat to the oil supply in the Gulf a stronger Iraq. Presto: war!

This imperialist fight, especially the schemes by U.S. rulers, is leading to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Arab and U.S. workers. Only full-scale rebellion inside and outside the military can turn things around in favor of the world's workers.

FIGHTING IN THE GULF FOR CONTROL OF EUROPE

Yes, Hussein is a capitalist dictator and uses fascist tactics to oppress Iraqi workers. But Hussein had been supported, fed and armed by the U.S. and its allies for over a decade. Now the Bush Administration has entered this war on the pretext of "defeating an aggressor," an aggressor the U.S. helped build up when it was no less fascistic than it is now. The U.S. rulers are using this war as part of a long-range strategy to dominate the Middle East's huge oil reserves on which the entire capitalist industrial world depends (not to mention the huge profits to be gained from it).

The Gulf region contains 70% of the world's known oil reserves. (The U.S. has only 2.5% of these reserves, and the most expensive to get out of the ground, at that). And U.S. bosses are prepared to end the lives of thousands of U.S. and Iraqi soldiers—mainly workers—in their pursuit of control over Gulf oil. This is the law of imperialism and profits: continuously going to war to re-divide the world's markets.

Ever since the murderous Shah of Iran was smashed and U.S. rulers lost their armed henchman in the Middle East, the U.S. has been seeking permanent bases in the region. In January, 1980, the Carter

Doctrine was proclaimed: the U.S. would go to war to prevent any "outside force" from gaining control over the Gulf. Says *The Nation* magazine (January 28, 1991):

In the real world of the 1990s, those who defend the oil fort will have de facto control of an Arabian treasure beyond the dreams of an Aladdin. And pressed ever more sharply by a resurgent Europe and Japan, the United States and Britain (the one large country to support the Bush Administration down the line) have no intention of internationalizing the surplus.

...Precisely because the area's oil supplies are relatively more important to the allies, the United States' unique ability to project power within the region confers enormous leverage in its negotiations with the allies over, for example, American commercial access to Western Europe or Japan....Any country that succeeds in dominating the region would probably exercise plenary power over the price of oil.'

The war against Iraq represents U.S. imperialism's attempt to regain by force of arms what it cannot gain by economic power—economic and political leverage over their major imperialist rivals, Germany and Japan.

The U.S. policy has been described as Mutually Assured Destabilization; no war but no peace; no clear winner or loser among the Middle Eastern rulers, by following a divide-and-rule principle. One clear example has been the U.S. attitude towards Iran and Iraq.

The U.S. has always cried crocodile tears over the oppressed Kurdish people, both in Iraq and Iran. But they have used the Kurds as pawns, just like they have used all others in their quest for power and profits.

The official U.S. Pike Commission study of U.S. covert intervention in Iraq and Iran in the early 1970s declared: "Documents in the Committee's possession show that the President [Nixon], Dr. Kissinger and the foreign head of state [the Shah] hoped that our clients [the Kurds] would not prevail. They preferred instead that the insurgents simply continue a level of hostilities sufficient to sap the resources of our ally's neighboring country [Iraq]." Of course, conveniently, "This policy was not imparted to our clients, who were encouraged to continue fighting." (*Harper's* magazine, January 1991)

Then the Shah, the U.S.-created strongman, signed a treaty in 1975 temporarily ending Iran's border dispute with Iraq on Iranian terms (Iraq was represented, incidentally, by the then No. 2 man, Baath party leader, but not yet President, Saddam Hussein.) The U.S. immediately

ended all aid to the Kurds. This was Saddam Hussein's price for the treaty. The very next day Hussein launched his search-and-destroy campaign in Kurdistan, without a whimper from the Kurds' former "ally" in Washington. It was then, in 1975, that the *N. Y. Times* characterized Iraq as "pragmatic, [and] cooperative," and credited this to the "personal strength" of who else but their new found friend—Saddam Hussein!

The Pike Commission report was immediately "restricted." Who was the CIA director of that policy beginning in January, 1976, which buried the Kurds and the Pike expose? None other than George Bush!

Once the Shah was overthrown, and the equally repressive but anti-U.S. Khomeini regime took over, the balance was shifting against Washington. What to do? Maybe stimulate Iraq to start a little war against Iran? Far-fetched? "Iranians of all factions are convinced that the United States actively encouraged Iraq to attack their country on September 22, 1980." (*Harper's*, January 1991)

But there's more. Gary Sick, Carter's National Security Council overseer of Gulf policy in 1980, told *Harper's* :

After the hostages were taken in Teheran [in Nov. 1979], there was a very strong view, especially from Brzezinski [Carter's National Security Council chief] that in effect Iran should be punished from all sides. He made public statements to the effect that he would not mind an Iraqi move against Iran.

To back it up, "U.S. intelligence and satellite data—to show that Iranian forces would swiftly crack—had been made available to Saddam..." (Reported in the London *Financial Times*, as described in *Harper's*.)

No White House accusations were made at this time against the "butcher of Baghdad" for invading another "sovereign nation." Egg-ing on Hussein to attack Iran was part of the U.S. policy to maintain "mutual destabilization" in the Middle East while it pursued its aim of eventually establishing military control over the supply and price of Gulf oil.

Then, of course, it had to insure that, if Iraq couldn't win this war, it shouldn't lose it. No wonder patriot Oliver North's diary entry for May 15, 1986, included every gun runner imaginable selling arms to both sides: "Cunningham running guns to Baghdad for CIA, then leaps to Teheran...Secord running guns to Iran," etc. (*Harper's*, Jan. 1991)

Never mind that Iraq and Hussein were routinely killing Kurds and jailing and torturing political prisoners during the 1980s. No, said two ruling class flunkies, the U.S. must "Back Iraq": "The fall of the existing regime in Iraq would enormously enhance Iranian influence, endanger the supply of oil, threaten pro-American regimes throughout the area and upset the Arab-Israeli balance." (Daniel Pipes and Laurie Mylroie, in *The New Republic* April 27, 1987.)

No wonder the Reagan Administration didn't insist on an apology when an Iraqi jet hit the Navy ship *Stark* with a missile, killing 37 U.S. sailors. That easily could have been an excuse for the U.S. to declare war on Iraq, if it served U.S. rulers' interests. But this "mistake" was a small price to pay if Iraq would continue to prevent Iran from endangering U.S. oil interests in the Middle East. They were hoping that Hussein might replace the Shah as the U.S. resident strongman in the region. (Forget about the deaths of one million Iraqi and Iranian workers and youth, slaughtering each other on the battlefields of a U.S.-encouraged war.)

Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and other Arab oil dictatorships backed Iraq in this 8-year war, because they feared Iran even more. While Hussein's armies did the dying, Iraq amassed a huge economic debt from this war, owing billions to both Kuwait and the Saudis. Hussein wanted



that debt forgiven for his good deeds against Khomeini. So what did the Kuwaitis give him? They broke the OPEC oil production quotas they had agreed to, producing enough extra oil to sharply lower the price and thereby cost Hussein even more billions in profits.

After he was refused any help, on May 28, 1990, at an Arab League summit, Hussein accused both Kuwait and Saudi Arabia of waging "economic war against Iraq." Without an agreement, Hussein threatened war. On July 11, at an OPEC meeting, Hussein lost his bid to limit production and raise oil prices, greatly harming the Iraqi bosses' economy. Five days later, the Iraqi Foreign Minister told OPEC, "We are sure some Arab states are involved in a conspiracy against us." The next day, in a speech to a Baghdad crowd, Hussein threatened war. It was clear that Hussein was moving towards a military solution to the squeeze being put on him.

What was the U.S. reaction to all this war talk, which could conceivably affect U.S. oil control in the Gulf? Did Washington warn Hussein to keep his hands off Kuwait?

Back on April 12, 1990, Bush's Senate leader, Robert Dole, led a delegation of U.S. Senators to Baghdad, where he assured Hussein that neither a recent Voice of America attack on Hussein, nor a Congressional move to institute sanctions on Iraq, were policies of the Bush Administration. In fact, Dole told Hussein, Bush would oppose and veto any sanctions.

When Dole returned to Washington, he told Bush to be patient with Hussein. Bush was ready to listen. Bush rejected any moves to end the "tilt" towards Iraq (now that the war with Iran was over). He argued that critics who condemned Hussein for "human rights" abuses and development of chemical and nuclear weapons "were shortsighted....were refusing to see the long-term positive role Iraq might someday play in the Middle East." (*Village Voice*, January 22, 1991)

Then on April 26, 1990, Assistant Secretary of State John Kelly told the House Foreign Affairs subcommittee on "U.S.-Iraqi Relations" that the White House still opposed sanctions against Iraq and praised Hussein for "talking about a new constitution and an expansion of participatory democracy."

On July 24—just a week before Iraq's invasion—State Department spokesperson Margaret Tutwiler was asked at a press briefing whether the U.S. was committed to defend Kuwait militarily. She replied, "We

do not have any defense treaties with Kuwait and there are no special defense or security commitments to Kuwait."

That position was underscored the very next day in the now famous face-to-face meeting in Baghdad between Hussein and April Glaspie, U.S. ambassador to Iraq. As reported in a transcript of that meeting obtained by *ABC News*, Hussein told Glaspie that Kuwait was already at war with Iraq, given its "planned and deliberate policy [forcing] the price of oil down without good commercial means." Hussein made it known that if he invaded Kuwait, it would be his answer to Kuwait's "aggression." and that he did not fear U.S. intervention with aircraft and missiles.

Did Glaspie warn Hussein the U.S. would not accept an Iraqi invasion? On the contrary, she sympathized with his position! First, on the price of oil, she told Hussein that, "We have many Americans who would like to see the price go above \$25 [per barrel] because they come from oil-producing states." Secondly, on Iraq as a victim of colonialism, Glaspie declared, "We studied history at school. They taught us to say, 'Freedom or death.' I think you know well," Glaspie continued, "that we as a people have our own experience with colonialists."

There can be no doubt that Hussein understood Glaspie was comparing the fight of the 13 U.S. colonies against British colonialism to Hussein's position: that British colonialists had artificially carved Kuwait out of a province of Iraq. And, to clinch it, she went on to say that, "We [the U.S.] have no opinion on the Arab-Arab conflicts, like your border disagreement with Kuwait. I was in the American embassy during the late '60s. The instruction we had...was that we should express no opinion on this issue, and that the issue is not associated with America. James Baker [Bush's Sec. of State] has directed our official spokesmen to emphasize this instruction."

And still more: "I have a direct instruction from the president to seek better relations with Iraq," pointing out that Bush and his administration "reject the suggestion of implementing trade sanctions."

Here was Hussein moving his troops towards the Kuwait border and the U.S. ambassador was telling him her country would remain neutral, had the utmost respect for Hussein and wanted "closer relations!" (She was later to tell the *N. Y. Times* that, "We never expected he would take all of Kuwait.")

If Hussein needed any more proof of Bush's "sincerity," he got it two days later. On July 27, Congress voted limited sanctions against Iraq,

prohibiting further agricultural credits (Hussein had already received \$4.5 billion in such credits from the U.S., largest of any country in the world, plus a \$214 million shipment of U.S. helicopters.) *But Bush mounted a campaign against these proposed sanctions and defeated them. Could Saddam take this as anything but a green light to invade with no fear of U.S. retaliation?*

On July 28, CIA chief Webster arrived at the White House to tell Bush that an Iraqi invasion was imminent. He had CIA satellite photos showing Iraqi troops massed near the Kuwait border. Webster felt Hussein would only take the rest of the Rumaila oil fields and two islands off the coast for use as an Iraqi seaport, but he said he couldn't be sure. Yet at that very moment, Asst. Secretary of State Kelly was telling a Congressional Foreign Affairs subcommittee, "Historically, the U.S. has taken no position on the border disputes in the area, not on matters pertaining to internal OPEC deliberations."

Now, if Hussein was such a "brutal butcher," another Hitler, and he had troops on the border massed for an invasion, and the Bush administration had absolute proof of this, why didn't the White House alert the world and publicly warn Hussein *before* the invasion that if he moved militarily against Kuwait, the U.S. would oppose him by force? Why did Bush, his ambassador to Iraq, his Secretary and Assistant Secretary of State all give obvious signals to Hussein that, on the contrary, the U.S. was neutral and would *not* intervene?

Is it possible that the Bush Administration wanted Hussein to invade Kuwait? Whether or not that is true, it certainly has provided U. S. imperialism with the pretext to send a massive military force to the Middle East, at the "invitation" of Saudi Arabia, something it had always wanted but had never been able to get in that region. Its only answer to the economic power of Germany and Japan is to try to control the supply and price of Middle East oil on which both of its main competitors depend to varying degrees. Since the Persian Gulf countries contain 70% of the world's known oil reserves, whoever controls Middle East oil has a big leg up on world-wide power.

For the U.S. bosses to achieve this control they are prepared to kill tens of thousands of workers all over the Middle East as well as those being shipped over as cannon fodder from the U.S. Every death in the Gulf war can be traced directly to the maneuvers of the Bush Administration and the U.S. ruling class it represents. All the hypocritical hype about Hussein being "worse than Hitler," all the post-invasion indictments of this fascist dictator (which he is) cannot hide the fascist

policies being pursued by Bush and the imperialists he serves.

After all is said and done, it was the U.S. who encouraged and helped Iraq to invade Iran; it was the U.S. who loaned Hussein billions; it was the U.S. who prevented sanctions from being enforced against Hussein; it was the U.S. who gave Hussein a virtual green light to invade Kuwait. The profit motives of U.S. imperialism, determining the above moves, made the Gulf War inevitable.

Marxism-Leninism in general, and PLP specifically, have long maintained that imperialist war is inevitable, and that, therefore, war can only be eliminated if imperialism is eliminated. Events in the Middle East over the past 15 years certainly bear that out.

Oil—its control, price and profits—is what all the world's bosses are after in the Middle East. Once the Shah of Iran was overthrown, the U.S. had lost its strongman in the region (the Shah had the world's fourth largest military force). Then Iran, ruled by the anti-Western Khomeini (another fascist), became a threat to the Arab oil billionaires and to the U.S. and other Western imperialists. They all sicced Iraq onto Iran, producing an 8-year war. The imperialists tried to insure that neither side won, selling arms to both sides in the hope that they'd bleed each other dry.

That war increased Hussein's debt—mainly to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia—by \$60 billion. Since the Iraqis had done the dying for the Arab oil bosses, Hussein demanded debt forgiveness. He was refused. Instead, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia drove oil prices down, reaping billions from their increased production. But lower oil prices made it even harder for Iraq's bosses to pay back those debts from their own oil revenues. As a capitalist, Hussein *had no choice* but to invade Kuwait and seize its oil or go under economically. The squeezing of Iraq's bosses made that invasion inevitable, unless Kuwait and the Saudis would give in to Hussein. But it's not the nature of capitalists to give up profits peacefully.

Once Hussein invaded, U.S. rulers saw the balance upset. Hussein could control too much of the oil reserves, even if he never invaded Saudi Arabia. So, despite all the contradictions U.S. bosses faced in attacking Iraq, if they wanted to maintain control in the Persian Gulf, they *had no choice* but to send a massive military force to the Middle East. This meant all-out war. Again, the profit motives of imperialists made war inevitable.

Once Hussein was attacked, naturally—like any capitalist hell-bent

to protect his profit position—he will take any measure to gain an advantage ("all's fair in war..."); therefore, bomb Israel and Saudi Arabia, dump oil into the sea, burn oil wells, etc. All these actions, and many more to follow, including U.S. massacre of Arab civilians, are direct outgrowths of imperialist war.

When capitalists and imperialists fight to re-divide the world's markets and resources, they do so over the dead bodies of the world's workers. All the flag-waving, all the racist, anti-Arab jingoism, cannot be allowed to hide that one simple fact. But, as all these contradictions between bosses begin to emerge, the workers of the world can have the final say. We must free ourselves of any loyalty to one's "own" bosses and use the guns the bosses' have put in our hands to destroy all of these oppressors, from Bush to Hussein, from Gorbachev to Kohl, from Mubarek to Shamir. Only with the triumph of communist revolution can a system which trades oil for workers' blood be buried.

FORMING A FASCIST MASS BASE BY ORGANIZING 'SUPPORT FOR THE U.S. TROOPS'

The bosses and their lap dog controlled media have engulfed the country in a tidal wave of patriotism. The display of yellow ribbons or even flags are claimed by the bullies in Washington to prove support for the war. But often it is merely an expression of hope by family and friends for the safe return of a loved one.

Among many that initially supported the war, it didn't take an all-out effort to convince them that the war was not in the interest of workers. Often patriotism was skin deep. However, we are sure that many workers and others support the fascist activities of the imperialists. This development answers the question people often ask about the Germans: where were they during the Hitler atrocities? Those that support U.S. imperialism are the bosses' mass base for fascism. However, fascism is a sign of weakness not strength. Fascism is the only way a weak and dying ruling class can hold power, and possible reverse its decline. To those that support genocide we can only point out how the Germans who supported Hitler had to pay the price. The U.S. is no exception!

PATRIOTISM IS DEADLY FOR ALL WORKERS

It is claimed by the U.S. chieftains that 85% of U.S. workers support the U.S. war of extermination in Iraq. There is some support, but we see little evidence of this. Most workers who we in PLP work with are

opposed to the war. Of course, many of these workers have friends and relatives in the Persian Gulf. They don't want these friends and relatives to kill and be killed for the profits of the oil bosses. Certainly, this is a far cry from supporting the war. However, many workers and others do support the war. This support is a serious weakness. Support for this war, as for any imperialist war, is similar to Germans who supported the ambitions of the Nazi-Hitlerites. In the end tens of millions of Germans paid with life and limb for their foolish, racist support of the Nazis.

It is good to be loyal. But to whom should we be loyal? The rulers want us to be patriotic to them. But their greedy profit goals are not ours. We should only be loyal to our class. We should fight only for the interests of our class. In this war the needs of our class is to "turn the guns around," and to turn imperialist war into class war for communism. Advancing U.S. troops in the Persian Gulf should fraternize with Iraqi soldiers and unite to crush Hussein and Bushitler.

U.S. TROOPS OPEN TO COMMUNIST ORGANIZING



A brief comment on the U.S. troops: It is claimed they performed masterfully. We doubt this. At the outset, all of our experience, and that of many others, showed a low morale in the military. Workers did not join the military out of patriotism. A U.S. Army poll showed only 10% joined "to defend their country." Many joined because this racist society couldn't provide a job. The Army seemed a way to secure an education and possibly a job.

It's hard to say they fought well for imperialism. They didn't have to fight because the morale and commitment in the Iraqi Army was even worse. The military is a weak spot for imperialism and is open to our efforts.

However, the pilots, like the Nazi pilots of the Stukka bombers in WWII, are the new Nazis. These, usually upper- or middle-class

people, college-trained in all the refinements of Western culture, killed with impunity. These monsters wantonly snuffed out tens of thousands of lives. They even mowed down fleeing, unarmed Iraqi troops like they were involved in a "turkey shoot." This is not to mention the mass terror bombings of millions of civilians, and civilian targets. Included among these war criminals are Hussein and his gang. However, the biggest war criminals are the pilots and their leaders like Bush, Field Marshals Schwartzkkkopf, Powell, Reichsfuhrer Cheney, and the rest.

KISSINGER ON U.S. IMPERIALIST WEAKNESS

Henry KKKissinger (who was the first to call for U.S. obliteration of Iraq) recognizing, in part, the U.S. weakness, had these comments:

Henceforth the United States will not be in a position to supply the vast preponderance of military force for security missions far from its shores. Therefore, neither the United States nor foreign nationals should treat the concept of the new world order as an institutionalization of recent practices.

Economic rivalry among Japan, which is growing into superpower status, the European Community, which is becoming increasingly assertive, and the United States will no longer be restrained by overriding security concerns.

The confluence of these elements will characterize the new era as one of turmoil. (*New York Post*, February 26, 1991)

WHAT THE POOREST NATIONS PAID FOR THE WAR

Intensifying the desperate competition for markets is the fact that this war has already cost \$25 to \$30 billion to the poorest ten countries who supply labor to Kuwait and Iraq: the Philippines, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, Jordan, Somalia, Sudan, Tunisia and Morocco. (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, February 14, 1991) In addition, the *Wall Street Journal* (February 1, 1991) estimates Egypt has lost between \$8 and \$11 billion and a further \$18 billion in Kuwait (taking into account the \$7 billion in forgiven debt by the U.S.).

WHY DID SADDAM LOSE SO BADLY?

The simple fact is that Iraqi soldiers did not fight. Almost all of them surrendered without firing a shot. The Iraqi working class refused to fight. They were fed up with the brutal thugs who wanted them to die as cannon fodder for a cause that was not their own. Saddam Hussein

kept proudly proclaiming that Iraqis would die to the last person to stop the invasion ordered by the U.S. bosses, but the Iraqi working class said, "Screw him. We do not want any part of this fight."

Saddam thought he could get soldiers to fight and die by the thousands for Iraqi nationalism and for the Muslim religion. He was wrong. Nationalism and religion can mislead a lot of workers for a lot of the time, but you cannot fool all the workers all of the time. After an eight year war with Iran, the Iraqi working class was tired of war to support the state capitalist group represented by Saddam. Saddam thought his secret police could force workers to fight for him. Wrong. The secret police was powerless when tens of thousands of workers decided to abandon Saddam. The secret police can only torture a few people at any one time; they cannot stop mass desertion.

The tragedy of the recent war is that the Iraqi soldiers only went half way. What they needed to do was to start fighting the real enemy, namely, their own leaders—the officers and big wheels in the ruling class behind them. The only way that the Iraqi soldiers can be sure they will never again be sent to die for some bosses' power grab is if they get rid of the capitalist ruling class. They should not be fooled by the pro-Iranian Shiite fundamentalists supposedly now rebelling against Hussein in Basra.

Because the communist forces in Iraq are weak, because of the confusion created by the fakes in Moscow and Beijing who still (sometimes) call themselves "communist," the Iraqi working class has not yet made its own revolution. But let's keep working for that goal. (March 13, 1991)

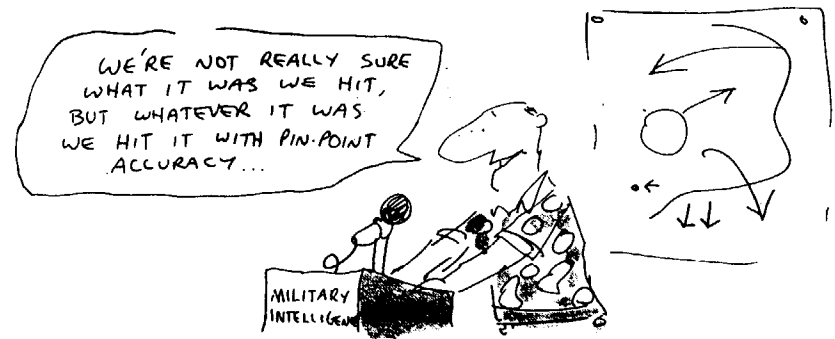
POLITICS WINS WARS, NOT WEAPONRY

Weapons, even if they are terrifying, are not the decisive factor in most wars. After all, the U.S. imperialists used everything they had during the Vietnam war except nuclear weapons (which they were afraid to use because it could have led to war with the Soviet Union and China) and still the U.S. lost the war because of the political commitment of the Vietnamese guerrillas and North Vietnamese army against whom they were fighting.

We don't know whether the Iraqi army has the commitment to put up a strong fight against a ground assault by U.S. imperialism. And we doubt U.S. troops and their allies have the commitment for a long bloody ground war. Recent experiences in Vietnam showed that U.S.

troops are not very loyal to their commanders when they see they are going to die just to defend the profits of the same bosses who exploit them back home. A half million U.S. troops deserted during the Vietnam war. Hundreds preferred to "frag" (kill) their own officers rather than face "the enemy."

We in PLP have the duty to show soldiers (on both sides) that this is not their war, that this is a war to decide which set of bosses will control oil prices, profits and supplies. We must show the soldiers that Bush, Major, Mitterrand, King Fahd, Mubarak, the Emir of Kuwait, Assad, Hussein, Exxon, Aramco, Colin Powell, Field Marshall Schwarkkkopf, etc., are all their enemies. The best way to come out of this imperialist holocaust alive is to turn the imperialist war into a war to smash the warmakers with communist revolution.



CAPITALISM STILL DEPENDS ON WAR

Capitalism is shaped by military force, war and plunder. The last ten years has witnessed military operations on a scale not seen for 40 years. The Iran-Iraq war slaughtered over one million, and featured the biggest tank battles since World War II, with arms supplied to both sides by all the Western powers, the Soviets, the Israelis and the Chinese, "peace-love" all.

During the 1980s, Thatcher's Britain dispatched the then biggest naval armada since the Second World War to fight Argentina in the Falklands-Malvinas War. We also saw many "little wars:" in Angola, Mozambique, South Africa, Ethiopia, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Cambodia, Northern Ireland, etc. In the last week of the decade (Dec. 20, 1989), Bush ordered the invasion and occupation of Panama, where U.S. bombers obliterated the black-mestizo working class neighborhood of Chorillo, faster than Franco's fascist pilots (many of

them German Nazis) destroyed Guernica in the Spanish Civil War. And now U.S. warplanes have unleashed more explosives over Iraq and Kuwait in three weeks than was dropped in all of World War II!

Whoever controls the supply of oil and its profits out of the Middle East has power over the capitalist countries who depend on oil and its profits to run their industries and their war machines. This brings us to Bush's "New World Order." What was the old "Order?"

First there was the World Order agreed to in the Treaty of Versailles at the end of World War I. This was broken by its victim Hitler's Germany, who conquered nearly all of Europe in his attempt to establish what he called the "New Order." This led to World War II, which led to the shortest world order, the one growing out of the victorious armies of the Soviet Union, the U.S. and Britain, agreed to at Yalta in 1945. This was replaced by the Cold War world order led by U.S. imperialism directed against the Soviet Union.

Now we have Bush's "New World Order" which appears to be directed at an emerging alliance of a new Axis Germany, Japan and the Soviet Union and will produce another world war. (U.S. rulers see control over Mid-East oil and oil profits as the most important bargaining chip they could have in combating that Axis and its emerging economic superiority read control of profits.) In short, talking about a New World Order is a code word talking about a World War. Under capitalism that's how World Order is established.

This is how capitalism reacts in a period of deepening economic crisis. Consider the pilots of U.S. B-52s, as they carpet bomb Iraq's cities, as "professors of imperialist economics." Consider the Iraqi Soviet-made Scud missiles, aimed at civilian houses, as "textbooks in nationalist economics." (By the way, the anti-Scud Patriot missiles have also caused a lot of damage since many of them have missed the Scuds and fallen back to earth, exploding on Israeli and Saudi cities). What else is it but mass murder and mass destruction, a waste of resources. Imperialism and nationalism are two sides of the same capitalist coin. Each bomb and missile are advertisements for the best that capitalism has to offer!

For all intents and purposes, World War III has begun. World War II started with a year of phony war, when little or no fighting took place. It's possible the present war will end in some sort of peace settlement. But the underlying crisis that caused it the collapse of capitalist markets has only sharpened. No peace treaty can solve that.

Capitalist "peace" is built on the domination of rivals and the exploitation of workers. No one "agrees" to be dominated and exploited. War and fascism decides who is dominated, who is exploited. Only communist revolution can liberate us from that.

The world's working class doesn't need Stars and Stripes patriotism or Islamic or Zionist nationalism or capitalist glasnost. We need communist revolution and workers' power. We need equality and internationalism.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF THE WAR

Saudi Prince Al-Walced just invested \$590 million in the floundering Citicorp Citibank. that is what this racist war is all about: profits.

Without the steady flow of oil profits from the Mid-East into the banks and industries of the U.S., and to a lesser extent into Great Britain and France, these tottering economies would be in their death throes, ready to be buried in worker-made communist revolution.

Mid-East oil profits were threatened by the rise of the two bit nationalist dictator in Iraq. Hussein endangered U.S. control of the Mid-East oil fields. This raised the specter in U.S. ruling circles that investments from oil profits would be diverted to Germany, Japan and the Soviet Union.

These were the circumstances which prompted Bush to declare that Saddam Hussein was "worse than Hitler." The loss of billions maybe trillions of petrodollars was a worst case scenario for the U.S. bosses. They care nothing about how many Iraqis and others are killed in their "just" war needed to save their floundering empire.

GENOCIDE AND WAR = CAPITALISM

The U.S. refusal to accept the Soviet-arranged surrender of the Iraqis only proved to the world's workers that the U.S. was bent on the complete destruction of Iraq. Once again, as in Vietnam, the U.S. has proven that genocide is the key weapon of U.S. imperialism. Not only does capitalism make war inevitable, capitalism makes genocide inevitable .

WORLDWIDE OPPOSITION TO U.S.

The genocidal goals of the U.S. bosses isolate and expose them to the workers of the world. The U.S. oil-profit grab in the Persian Gulf creates deeper contradictions among the ranks of the world's rulers.

Recently, we have seen more clearly the emergence of a new Mid-East axis of the Soviets, Iranians, Iraqis, Jordanians and others. The U.S. is now more hated and despised by workers of the world, especially by the people in the Mid-East. By trying to preserve the Saddam regime, the Soviets will come out of this war smelling like roses. As a matter of fact, if the Soviets had succeeded in boxing the U.S. into their proposed peace plan, they might have won the war without firing a shot!

It is also very clear that the Germans, Japanese, and Italians, among others, are not in the U.S. camp. Huge anti-war demonstrations rock Germany. These anti-U.S. actions are a sign of things to come. Remember, it was Chancellor Kohl of Germany who fronted for the Soviet-proposed surrender by Iraq. The bottom line of the U.S. war against Iraq is really the start of the war against the Soviets, Germans and Japanese.

THE WAR'S IRONICAL RESULTS

Newspapers, magazines, and the broadcast media throughout the United States are filled with triumphant stories about the U.S. military victory over the Iraqi army, with Bush proclaiming that the "Vietnam syndrome" has been kicked. With signs of social and economic failure all around, and future wars certain, Bush's need to proclaim victory and maintain patriotic fervor is perfectly understandable.

The question remains, however, how extensive a triumph is it? The answer can be found in the events that immediately followed the end of fighting. At least five political ironies of the U.S. military victory reveal that the United States continues to work from a position of weakness in the Persian Gulf area. The victory is already unraveling before the cease-fire is even finalized.

The First Political Irony: Saddam Hussein: The demonization of CIA accomplice, Saddam Hussein, began in the spring of 1990, increased in August after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, and reached a fever pitch once the air war began in January 1991. Bush and his political and journalistic lieutenants made it repeatedly clear that Saddam Hussein was the problem, and they wanted Iraq's president out.

Now, after all, British and American agents had never had trouble before in eliminating previous Iraqi rulers. This time, however, they could not achieve their end through economic sanctions, or with a major war, or through CIA schemes.

So what happened? In order to avoid the direct U.S. occupation of

major Iraqi population centers, such as Baghdad or Basra, and to maintain the U.S. coalition, the U.S. military offensive needed to stop far short of its ultimate political goal of eliminating Hussein. Despite all the fighting and all the huffing and puffing, Saddam Hussein and the Baath party remain solidly in power (March 4, 1991).

At this point, the United States faces a number of dilemmas. If it is able to maintain economic sanctions, it might be able to force the Baath party to sacrifice Saddam Hussein in order to allow economic and military sanctions to be lifted. This, however, could hardly help the United States. The Baathists would stay in power, international and domestic hostility to Saddam Hussein would be deflected, and Iraq's new leader could harness the bitterness caused by \$200 billion in damages and an estimated 300,000 civilian and military deaths. (Casualty information from the International Red Cross, as reported March 4, 1991, on KPFK-FM, the Los Angeles Pacifica affiliate.)

Saddam Hussein's continued political role creates a second dilemma, as well. U.S. support for Iraq in the Iraq-Iran war was based on the need to eliminate any Iranian/Shiite influence in the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf. Nevertheless, with the conclusion of the U.S. war against Iraq, the U.S. finds itself uncomfortably watching the Shiites in southern Iraq rebelling against the existing Iraqi government, that is, against Saddam Hussein and his Baath Party. What is the United States to do? If the Shiites are successful in taking over southern Iraq or even the whole country, it substantially increases the influence of an anti-U.S. Iran, a U.S.-Kuwaiti-Saudi nightmare considerably greater than Saddam Hussein and the Baath Party. How ironic, then, that within a matter of days after the fighting stopped, the U.S. again needs to have Saddam Hussein's Iraq as its buffer against pro-Iran Shiites. More to the point, the United States position is based on the hope that Iraq's Republican Guard will defeat the pro-Iranian Shiite rebels in southern Iraq (*BBC*, March 6, 1991).

In short, after enormous amount of death and destruction, the United States was not able to get rid of Saddam Hussein and has discovered it actually needs him and the Baath Party as a balance to Iran.

The Second Political Irony: Linkage: The major reason the United States gave for avoiding a negotiated settlement with Iraq — between August 12, 1991, when Iraq made a settlement offer, up to the start of the air war in February 1991 — was that the United States rejected Iraq's call for "linkage" to United Nations resolutions on the Israeli-Arab-Palestinian conflict. Nevertheless, in order to maintain the U.S.

led coalition in the Middle East, the United States must now take the diplomatic initiative, in particular on relations between Israel, the Arab states, and the Palestinians.

The linkage which the United States purportedly fought a war to avoid is now the price it needs to pay to solidify its influence in the Middle East. The U.S. now finds that it must aggressively adopt a diplomatic position which it had thoroughly rejected throughout the entire crisis. In fact, the primary theme of Bush's March 6 address to Congress was no different than Tarik Azziz's remarks to U.S. Secretary of State James Baker when the two met in Geneva in January 1991. That theme was the need for Israel to implement United Nations resolutions 242 and 336 by trading land for peace.

The Third Political Irony: Arms Sales: George Bush's address also indicated that part of the U.S. diplomatic initiative which Secretary of State Baker has begun in Europe and the Middle East must include a reductions of arms sales to all Middle Eastern countries.

But despite these words, most countries in the area have already begun a major new arms race, with the U.S. as the major arms seller. The hardware for the next Middle East war is already being ordered before the battlefield booty of last week's war is salvaged (with Egypt and Syria to get much of workable Iraqi equipment). Iran is sending naval officers for training in the Soviet Union. The United States engineered a \$1 billion Saudi military grant to Syria, which the Syrians are reportedly using to buy Soviet arms. The United States has announced a new \$1.6 billion arms deal with Egypt. The Saudis have announced plans for \$20 billion in new arms, including \$14 billion from the United States, and the smaller Gulf states are following the Saudi lead.

Egypt and Syria have announced agreements to permanently station 100,000 troops in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to augment an increased U.S. military presence.

As for Israel, it has gotten Patriot missiles from Germany, Holland, and the United States, a \$750 million military grant from Germany, and a \$650 million grant from the United States. In the satirical words of *Newsweek* magazine (March 11, 1991), "The West will never sell guns to Third World nuts again. Sure."

The Fourth Political Irony: Oil: Despite disclaimers that the U.S. was not spilling blood for oil, oil did play a major role in precipitating this war. Throughout the spring and summer of 1990 the Iraqis

presented bitter complaints about Kuwaiti slant drilling into the Rumaila oil field straddling their border, as well as over Kuwaiti over-pumping. The latter was depressing the price of oil and, as a result, decimating the Iraqi domestic economy and its ability to pay off Kuwait and Saudi Arabia for loans made to wage the Iraq-Iran war. The unresolved dispute over oil pumping levels and pricing forced Iraq to invade Kuwait once the U.S. State Department "gave them the green light" in July of 1990. Up to that point Iraq was holding out for OPEC pumping levels which would set the price oil in the \$25 per barrel range. At the same time consistent Kuwaiti over-production had suppressed the price of oil from \$28 to as low as \$11 barrel. (Ralph Schoenman, *Iraq and Kuwait: A History Suppressed*, October 1990.)

Once war began, the Bush administration pressed the oil issue and the need to support an American way of life defined in terms of cheap oil. When that argument failed to convince the public, in part because oil production soared through out the crisis and the war, the White House and the press dropped it. By the time the war ended, there was a glut of oil on the international oil markets, with the pump price of gasoline cheaper than on August 1, 1991.

Once Kuwait and Iraq are again exporting oil, this glut will turn into a flood. The U.S. will have no choice, at that point, but to agree, in principle, to the rejected Iraqi proposal of OPEC production quotas to raise prices. Without it, Texas, Oklahoma, and Louisiana would again be thrown into depression; the Kuwaitis would not have enough money to hire Bechtel to rebuild their country; and the Saudis might not be able to buy arms!

To resolve this problem, the U.S. government might as well dust off the old Iraqi proposals for OPEC pumping quotas and replace the cover page.

The Fifth Political Irony: Democracy: All Arab members of the U.S. alliance have despotic, right-wing governments, either monarchies or secular fascists. The "liberation" of Kuwait involves little more than placing the Sabah royal family back on its throne, despite demands from Kuwaiti liberals and some American politicians to re-establish the Kuwait parliament and establish other democratic freedoms. The response of the royal family, returning to power through the auspices of the U.S. military victory, is to announce three or more months of marshal law and to leak a hit list of democratic opponents. The dilemma of the United States is what to do with its loyal flunky, the Emir of Kuwait.

The tactic of using outside power to democratize Kuwait is not much different from Iraq's January cease fire proposal, which was rejected by the United States. It is still another irony of the U.S. victory that the victory is an immediate catalyst for the erosion of the Kuwaiti regime the U.S. went to war to save. It would be a further irony if those Kuwaitis who fought against the Iraqi occupation will now be further suppressed by both the Sabah family and the United States army of occupation.

Conclusion: A review of these five political ironies all reveal that after the war the United States did not have a victory sufficient enough to topple the Iraqi government and leader, to constrain Iran's growing influence, to stop military preparations for the next Middle East war, to eliminate German and Soviet influence, to stabilize the price of oil, or to keep the Emir of Kuwait's government solidly in power. All of this suggests that the underlying contradictions of the Middle East, such as rivalries among outside powers, will swamp the U.S. military victory. The vague outlines of the next Middle East war can, in fact, already be seen in the political ironies now being privately faced by the United States government as it publicly celebrates its military victory. (March 8, 1991)

A LITTLE PERSONAL FOOTNOTE:

Ever hear about the Bush-Baker-Scowcroft-oil-Kuwait connection? Read on.

President George Bush has long been deeply involved in Texas oil politics. In 1953, Bush and J. Hugh Liedtke, owner of Pennzoil, formed the Zapata Petroleum Co. which later became Pennzoil. "Hugh Liedtke, Bill Liedtke and Bush arranged the division of Zapata....The Liedtke-Bush friendship endures to this day. The Liedtkes...unobtrusively labored to get their former partner elected president." *George Bush: An Intimate Portrait*, by Fitzhugh Green)

Bush's former partner and bosom buddy Liedtke won a suit against Texaco; his Pennzoil Co. was awarded \$3 billion. Liedtke used \$2.1 billion to buy nearly 9% of the stock of Chevron/Standard Oil of California/Gulf. Chevron's Gulf Oil subsidiary has long been the U.S.-based transnational oil company with the biggest special interest in Kuwaiti politics.

In a Pennzoil Stock report, dated Nov. 13, 1990, Standard & Poors said: "Revenues and profits in the near term could be highly volatile

owing to the uncertainties following the Aug. 2, 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait." It appears Bush set out to eliminate those "uncertainties."

Ford, replacing Nixon after Watergate, named Bush his Ambassador to China and later the head of the CIA. Guess who was the first U.S. oil man invited to drill for oil in China? None other than J. Hugh Liedtke, Bush's old oil partner and continuing friend. Who said oil and politics don't mix?

So what's Baker's relationship to Bush, and to Kuwaiti oil? Baker had become head of the Houston law firm Baker & Botts, inherited from three generations of Bakers. Baker & Botts helped three young oilmen out in West Texas George Bush and the Liedtke brothers build up the Zapata Petroleum empire" and, after Zapata became Pennzoil, "for 25 years the internal legal department at Pennzoil" has "been almost indistinguishable from Baker & Botts." (*Oil & Honor*)

Baker's family assets exceed \$7,000,000 and include stock in Exxon, Mobil, Standard Oil of California and of Indiana. (*Reagan's Ruling Class*, Brownstein and Easton), just an extra added incentive to become the architect of Bush's Middle East invasion.

Completing the Bush-Baker-Kuwaiti oil connection is Brent Scowcroft, who serves as Bush's National Security Affairs advisor.

From 1984-1986 Scowcroft was hired as a director of Santa Fe International, an oil exploration firm worth \$2.5 billion. What is Santa Fe? Merely Kuwait Petroleum's subsidiary in the U.S. KP is wholly owned by the Kuwaiti government and its ruling Al-Sabah family. KP, 12th largest oil company in the world owns U.S. corporate stock worth \$20 billion (GE/NBC, AT&T, Proctor & Gamble, Phillips Petroleum, Conoco Oil, Eastman Kodak, IBM, Ford and DuPont) and, in the early 1980s, \$12 billion in U.S. Treasury bonds, as well as 275 oil and gas leases on 252,000 acres of U.S. government land.

This is what Scowcroft represents in the White House. This is the same Scowcroft who was a business partner of Henry Kissinger, both advocates of a massive military attack on Iraq to "liberate Kuwait." Coincidence?

CHRONOLOGY OF IRAQI POLITICAL HISTORY

FROM THE INVENTION OF THE COUNTRY, TO THE START OF THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR

THE MANDATE YEARS (1918-32)

October 3, 1918: Ottoman rule over the Arabs symbolically ends as the Bedouin army of Faisal, the son of Sharif Hussein of Hijaz, and leader of the Arab revolt against the Turks, enters Damascus.

June 2, 1920: Widespread tribal uprising in Iraq against British military rule.

July 24, 1920: French forces oust Faisal and occupy Damascus. The French Mandate over Syria begins.

August 27, 1921: The British install Faisal as monarch in Iraq under Mandate from the League of Nations. He is accompanied by an entourage of Iraqi supporters from the days of the Arab revolt. Satia' al-Husri, a Syrian pan-Arabist thinker, arrives with Faisal and gradually takes over the educational system.

October 20, 1922: The Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, which gives Britain complete control over Iraqi affairs, is signed.

November 26, 1930: The Iraqi parliament ratifies a new Anglo-Iraqi treaty, which sets a date for the termination of the British Mandate over Iraq on conditions favourable to Britain.

THE MONARCHY (1932-58)

October 3, 1932: The independent state of Iraq is formally admitted to the League of Nations.

December 13, 1932: The first communist proclamation appears in Iraq written in longhand by "Fahd," the future leader of the illegal Iraqi Communist Party(ICP).

August 1933: The Assyrian Affair. The army under General Bakr Sidqi initiates a murderous pogrom against the Assyrian community with the support of the government and against the express wishes of Faisal. Sidqi becomes a national hero.

September 8, 1933: King Faisal dies to be succeeded by his son Ghazi, a keen supporter of the army's pogrom against the Assyrians. *October 29, 1936:* Bakr Sidqi overthrows the government in the Arab world's first military coup. He promises widespread social reform. The left-wing Ahali group enters government.

April 28, 1937: Saddam Hussein is born in the desert town of Takrit.

August 11, 1937: Sidqi is assassinated by army officers. Six more coups follow in quick succession ending in 1941.

April 1, 1941: Four pan-Arabist generals proclaim a state of emergency. A government of National Defence headed by Rashid 'Ali al-Qaylani and the generals is formed and immediately supported by the Axis powers. Pro-British Iraqi politicians flee.

May 1941: Fighting breaks out on May 2 between British forces newly landed in Basra and the Iraqi army. On May 19 the Iraqi army is routed. Rashid 'Ali and the generals escape to Tehran on May 29. The regent and pro-British politicians are reinstalled.

June 1, 1941: Several hundred Iraqi Jews killed in riots involving disgruntled junior officers of the Iraqi army.

July 24, 1943: A group of less than ten people, calling themselves The Arab Ba'th [Renaissance] movement, issue their first programmatic statement in Damascus.

April 1947: The first congress of the Ba'th party is held representing a membership of a few hundred. In Iraq, Ba'thist ideas are brought by Syrian teachers in 1949, and the first organizing efforts begin in 1951.

January 20-27, 1948: Massive urban uprising against the proposed Portsmouth treaty with Britain. The ICP emerges as the main organizing force, and the largest political movement in the country.

February 14-15, 1949: Fahd and two other leaders of the ICP are publicly hanged in Baghdad.

1956: Nasser nationalizes Suez, and Egypt is invaded. Soon after, the young Saddam joins the Iraqi Branch of the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party (ABSP) as it is now called.

MILITARY RULE (1958-68)

July 14, 1958: A secret organization of two hundred "Free Officers" overthrows the monarchy and kills the royal family in a coup acclaimed throughout Iraq. The populace fills the streets hours after the first shots are fired. Discovering the prime minister (the man who was Britain's main agent throughout the period of the monarchy) to flee, the demonstrators kill him. Parliament is abolished and the army purged. A People's Court under Colonel Fadhil Abbas Mahdawi is set up to try the members of the ancien regime. Brigadier 'Abd al-Karim Qassem, who carried out the coup, emerges as prime minister and commander in chief.

July 24, 1958: Michel 'Aflaq, founder of the Ba'th party, arrives in Baghdad calling for instant unity with the newly formed United Arab Republic. Opposing this, the ICP projects Qassem as the sole Iraqi leader.

September 30, 1958: 'Abd al-Salam 'Aref, a Free Officer of pan-Arabist persuasion and organizer with Qassem of the 1958 coup, is removed from his posts as deputy premier and minister of interior. He fails in a personal attempt on Qassem's life and is arrested on November 4. In December 'Aref is publicly tried in Mahdawi's court. The falling out between Qassem and 'Aref draws attention to the irreconcilability of the pan-Arab and Iraqi nationalist trends among the coup makers of 1958.

March 1959: Disaffected pan-Arabist Free Officers from the Mosul garrison organize a revolt against Qassem, which is crushed. Supporters of Qassem go on a rampage. Hundreds of suspected Arab nationalists are killed and bodies mutilated. The conflict takes an ethnic and communal character. In its wake Qassem purges more pan-Arab nationalists and Ba'thists.

May 1, 1959: Historic demonstration in Baghdad of about a million people (largest ever in Iraq) calling for Communist representation in government.

July 1959: Turcomans rumored massacred by Communist Kurds in the city of Kirkuk. Qassem now launches a wave of arrests of ICP members that continues through August.

October 7, 1959: A Ba'thist hit team fails to assassinate Qassem. A member of the team, twenty-two-year-old Saddam Hussein, escapes to Syria and then goes to Egypt. Seventy-eight Ba'thists implicated in the incident are brought before Mahdawi's People's Court. Their defiant militancy leaves a deep impression.

January 2, 1960: Qassem announces that all political parties will be legalized, but ICP is rebuffed. Anticommunist measures continue until the end of the regime.

March 1962: Ba'thi agitators lead important demonstration against the Qassem regime.

September 1961: The Iraqi army launches its first major offensive against the Kurds in mountainous terrain. By the spring of 1962 a costly full-scale guerrilla war had developed, which Qassem could not win.

December 24, 1962: The Ba'th successfully organize a nationwide strike of all secondary-school and university students, which continues until the fall of the regime.

February 8, 1963: A Ba'thist coup overthrows Qassem amidst several days of terrible street fighting. The first Ba'thi regime is installed. Its nine-month rule is marked by a relentless murderous settling of accounts with communists and their supporters. 'Abd al-Salam Aref becomes President.

November 28, 1963: Following bitter infighting between moderate and radical factions of the Ba'th, 'Aref overthrows the first Ba'thi regime. He is supported by moderate Ba'thist officers. The Ba'thi militia controlled by the civilian wing of the party takes to the streets and is crushed by the army. 'Aref appoints Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr, a former Free Officer and long-standing Ba'thi, vice-president. But gradually all Ba'this are eased out of the new military regime, which leans towards Nasserism.

February 1964: Michel 'Aflaq recommends the elevation of Saddam Hussein to the Regional Command [which is what the Ba'th calls the national leadership group] of the Iraqi branch of the ABSP.

July 24, 1964: Comprehensive nationalization laws are promulgated

as a step towards Arab socialism and unity with Egypt.

April 28—August 6, 1966: Prime Minister 'Abd al-Rahman al-Bazzaz negotiates a temporary end to the Kurdish war, tries to curb army privileges, and bring about an atmosphere reminiscent of the old regime.

June 1967: The six-day war with Israel brings military catastrophe to the Arab world. All of officer-led regimes are discredited.

September 6, 1967: The Ba'th lead a large demonstration against the new 'Aref regime. They call for action against the hidden traitors 'responsible' for the June defeat.

September 27, 1967: The ICP splits into two organizations: the larger "Central Command faction" led by 'Aziz al-Haj and the pro-Soviet "Central Committee faction."

July 17, 1968: In alliance with non-Ba'thi army officers, the ABSP organizes a successful coup that overthrows the 'Aref regime.

THE SECOND BA'THI REGIME (1968-80)

July 30, 1968: The Ba'th dump their allies in a second coup. Supreme authority passes to the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) chaired by Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr, secretary-general of the ABSP, who also becomes president and commander in chief of the army. Saddam Hussein, already assistant secretary-general of the party, becomes deputy chairman of the RCC in charge of internal security.

February 1969: 'Aziz al-Haj, leader of the "ICP Central Command," is arrested and horribly tortured. He makes a public confession, which leads to the capture of the whole politbureau. The "ICP Central Command" is destroyed.

August 8, 1969: The Kurdish village of Dakan in Mosul is the scene of a major army atrocity. The war against the Kurds is being stepped up.

October 1969: Former prime minister, 'Abd al-Rahman al-Banzan, is tortured and imprisoned for fifteen years on charges of being a Zionist agent.

December 24, 1969: Iraqi television presents graphic details of an alleged Zionist spy ring involving Iraqi Jews that had been broken up in Basra.

January 5, 1970: The new regime's first batch of "spies" are brought

for a public trial. Seventeen defendants, including thirteen Iraqi Jews, are hanged in Liberation Square amid speeches and much fanfare. Hundreds of thousands of people attend the spectacle.

January 21, 1970: The regime reports that a new conspiracy is foiled. Within a week forty-four people have been executed.

March 22, 1970: A Manifesto on Kurdish autonomy is published amidst much fanfare. On paper the Kurds are granted more rights as a nationality than ever before. The fighting stops and the Ba'th government gains time to consolidate.

July 10, 1970: The ABSP announces conditions for the remaining pro-Soviet Communist party to join it in a Progressive National Front. The "ICP Central Committee" insists on negotiating the conditions.

August 1971: 'Abd al-Karim Nasrat, early Ba'thi and organizer of the militia that was used in the overthrow of the Qassem regime in 1963, is stabbed to death in his house.

October 15, 1970: Hardin al-Takriti, prominent officer Ba'thi and former member of the RCC and deputy premier and minister of defence, is gunned down in Kuwait.

September 1971: Iraqi state security fails in an attempt to assassinate the Kurdish leader, Barazani.

November 1971: Fuad al-Rikkabi, the leader of the Ba'th from the inception of an Iraqi organization until 1959, is murdered in prison.

April 1972: Iraqi-Soviet Friendship Treaty is announced.

May 1972: The pro-Soviet ICP enters the Ba'thi government.

June 1972: The Iraqi Petroleum Company is nationalized.

July 8, 1973: Nadhim Kzar, chief of internal security, is executed along with at least thirty-five others in the wake of an attempted coup.

July 1973: A National Action Charter first announced in 1971 is signed by the ABSP and the "ICP Central Committee", in which the latter accepts all the original July, 1970 conditions.

March 1974: Following the collapse of the 1970 Kurdish Autonomy accords, all-out war breaks out. The Kurdish towns of Zakho and Qala' at Diza are razed to the ground. Hundreds of thousands of

Kurds flee the cities. Brutalities break all previous records.

December 1974: Five Shi'i 'ulama' are executed for unknown reasons.

March 6, 1975: The Algiers agreement between the Iraqi Ba'th and the Shah's regime in Iran is promulgated. Iraq formally concedes to Iranian territorial demands in return for the Shah's support against the Kurds. The Kurds' lines of supply are cut off. Kurdish resistance crumbles. The government launches its policy of mass Kurdish deportations and resettlement.

February 1977: Shi'i clergy head a demonstration on the religious occasion of 'Ashura' in the city of Karbala. Some two thousand people are arrested and eight more 'ulama' executed. Mass deportations into Iran of Iraqi Shi'i fifth columnists commence around this time. By the late 1970s some two hundred thousand Iraqis have been dumped inside Iran, stripped of their nationality and property.

October 1978: Khomeini expelled from Iraq.

February 1979: The Islamic revolution in Iran.

June 1979: Saddam Hussein becomes president. Ahmad Hasan Al-Bakr is stripped of all positions and placed under house arrest.

July 1979: Massive purge of top Ba'thi command. Muhyi Rashid, secretary of RCC, forced to confess and then shot along with whole family. One-third of the members of the RCC are executed. By August 1, some five hundred top-ranking Ba'thists are said to have been executed.

April 9, 1980: Mohammed Baqir al-Sadr and his sister Bint al-Huda, symbols of the Shi'i opposition in Iraq, are executed.

September 22, 1980: Saddam Hussein launches full-scale war operations against Iran.

OIL AND THE FOUNDING OF IRAQ

□ Three weeks after the end of World War I the French Premier, Georges Clemenceau visited British Prime Minister David Lloyd George in London. Oil was now inextricably linked to postwar politics. Britain wanted to assert its influence over what was loosely known as Mesopotamia, the Arab provinces of the now defunct Turkish Ottoman Empire that would later be known as Iraq. The area was thought to be highly prospective of oil. But France had a claim to one part of the region—Mosul, northwest of Baghdad.

What specifically did Britain want? That was the question Clemenceau asked.

Would France give up its claim to Mosul, Lloyd George responded, in exchange for British recognition of French control over neighboring Syria?

France would, Clemenceau replied—so long as it received a share of the oil production from Mosul.

To this Lloyd George assented.

This agreement was the beginning of the great postwar struggle for new oil sources in the Middle East.

□ Mesopotamia was the focus of the struggle, and had already been the object of intricate diplomatic and commercial competition for oil concessions. One player in the prewar years was a German group, led by the Deutsche Bank. Arrayed against it was an English group, eventually merged into the British government-owned Anglo-Persian Oil Company. Yet another competitor was the Turkish Petroleum Company, which, it turned out, was 25% owned by Deutsche Bank. Another 25% was owned by Royal Dutch/Shell. But 50% was owned by the Turkish National Bank, which happened to be (despite its name) a British-controlled bank set up in Turkey to advance British economic and political interests. It became British government policy to force Turkish Petroleum to amalgamate with Anglo-Persian and jointly pursue a Mesopotamian concession. This combination was agreed to

in March, 1914. And in June, 1914 the Ottoman Grand Vizier promised the Mesopotamian concession would be granted to the now-reconstituted Turkish Petroleum Company.

□ During the First World War the secretary of the British War Cabinet wrote that getting Mesopotamian oil under British control “becomes a first-class war aim.” But the Foreign Secretary, worried about the powerful appeal of Bolshevism, felt that explicitly pronouncing this war aim would seem too old-fashionably imperialistic. Instead, he said, Britain must be “the guiding spirit” in Mesopotamia. Britain therefore invaded Mesopotamia, and captured Mosul, then the center of the oil trade, after the armistice was signed with Turkey.

□ During the war, London had encouraged Hussein, Sharif of Mecca, to take the lead in raising an Arab revolt against Turkey. This he did, beginning in 1916, aided by a few Englishmen, of whom the most famous was T.E. Lawrence—Lawrence of Arabia. In exchange, Hussein and his sons were to be installed as the rulers of the various, predominantly Arab, constituents of the Turkish empire. Faisal, the third son, was generally considered the most able. The British put Faisal on the throne of the newly created nation of Syria, one of the states carved out of the extinct Turkish empire. But a few months later, when control of Syria passed to France under the postwar understandings, Faisal was abruptly deposed and turned out of Damascus. He showed up at a railway station in Palestine, where, after a ceremonial welcome by the British, he sat on his luggage, waiting for his connection.

But his career as a king was not yet over. The British needed a monarch for Iraq, another new state, this one to be formed out of three former provinces of the Turkish empire. Political stability was required not only by the prospect for oil, but also for the defense of the Persian Gulf and for the new imperial air route from Britain to India, Singapore and Australia. The British did not want to rule the region directly; that would cost too much. Rather what Churchill, then the head of the Colonial Office, wanted was an Arab government, with a constitutional monarch, that would be “supported” by Britain under League of Nations mandate. It would be cheaper. So Churchill chose the out-of-work Faisal as his candidate. Summoned from exile, he was crowned King of Iraq in Baghdad in August 1921. Faisal’s brother, Abdullah—originally destined for the Iraqi throne—was instead installed as king “of the vacant lot which the British christened the Amirate of Transjordan”

Faisal had not inherited a well-defined nation, but rather a collection of diverse groups—Shia Arabs and Sunni Arabs, Jews and Kurds and Yazidis—a territory with a few important cities, most of the countryside under the control of local sheikhs, and with little common political or cultural history. The minority Sunni Arabs held political power, while the Shia Arabs were by far the most numerous. To complicate things further, the Jews were the largest single group in Baghdad, followed by Arabs and Turks.

Faisal depended on Britain to support his new kingdom, but his position would be gravely impaired if he were seen as being too beholden to London. Britain was all for oil development, hoping the potential oil revenues would help finance the new Iraqi government and further reduce its own financial burdens.

(Adapted from *The Prize, The Epic Quest for Oil, Money and Power*, by Daniel Yergin, New York, 1991)

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SCIENCE AND IDEOLOGY

Stephen Hawking

A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes
(Bantam Books, 1988)

I. Introduction

The science of physics was one of the great triumphs of capitalism. As a system of methods, theories, and institutions, it substantially deepened knowledge of the natural world. It sharply limited the role of idealist metaphysics (for example, religion) in intellectual life. Capitalism needed (and still needs) an increasingly sophisticated natural science in order to revolutionize production, not once, but continually. Only thus can individual capitalists (or a national bourgeoisie) hope to win in the constant competition of the marketplace. So there is still a progressive element in natural

science, even in the present period of capitalist decline.

But science is not just a collection of usable results. It is a more or less coherent body of knowledge, a way of seeing the world as a whole. In other words, it has an ideological dimension as well. Scientific theories incorporate aspects of the ideology of the scientists and the society of which they are part. These theories themselves, interpreted for a general audience, help to shape ideologies. Stephen Hawking's popular book *A Brief History of Time* is a good example of how bourgeois ideology undermines science today, even to the extent of turning it into its opposite.

Most workers are taught as children that science is "too hard" for them—or that they are "too stupid" to learn it. Even most non-scientist intellectuals get this message. We are

supposed to "trust the experts," and some of us do, especially if we are fascinated by the results of scientific work. Others have learned to be suspicious of bourgeois experts, and end up ignoring science altogether. Both responses are wrong. All of us—yes, including you—can learn to understand capitalist science well enough to separate out what is useful from what is harmful to the interests of the working class.

A Brief History of Time is one of the most widely disseminated popular works on science in English in our time. True, the book is not as readable as a Tom Clancy thriller or a Melody Beattie tract. But it was on best-seller lists for nearly three years, and has been a featured selection of book-buying clubs.

Hawking has appeared on radio and television; like Carl Sagan, who wrote the introduction to the book, he is a "celebrity". The kind of publicity Hawking gets serves to emphasize the bourgeois-idealist content of his work: his very capable "mind" is contrasted with his physical disabilities in a way that conveys the message that only the mind really counts.

The useful part of the book is that it outlines the basic ideas of the theories of relativity and

quantum mechanics, the two main pillars of twentieth-century physics. You do not need much technical background to read the book: just interest and a fair amount of patience. And, as the next section of this review will show, there is much to be learned here about dialectical materialism, although Hawking (of course) does not point it out.

Then Hawking shows how theoretical physicists are attempting to unify these apparently contradictory theories by constructing a mathematical theory that would account for the historical development of the universe as a whole. Here his ideological bent begins to get him into trouble.

Bourgeois science has eroded many of the idealist myths of traditional religion, but—as Hawking's book shows—it has not broken decisively from them. One of his main concerns—highlighted in Sagan's introduction and in the short concluding chapter, so no one will miss it—is where "God" fits into the physicists' picture of the universe. This is no accident. Section III of this review will show how Hawking's interpretation of the goals and methods of science is at its core idealist and metaphysical. We will see how bourgeois ideology has been incorporated into his scientific theory.

II. Dialectical Materialism and Physics

The physical science that developed mainly in capitalist Europe between around 1600 and 1900 marked a great leap in the development of a materialist world view. But this was, overall, a very mechanical materialism. Even Engels' pioneering work on the Dialectics of Nature was limited by the physical knowledge available to him. In the early twentieth century, however, physicists began to make the next leap, from mechanical to dialectical materialism.

For example, nineteenth century scientists were puzzled by the nature of light. Sometimes it seemed to be a wave, acting like sound waves or the ripples you see when you throw a rock into a lake. But at other times light seemed to be made up of a stream of little particles.

The quantum theory solved this puzzle by showing how light could be both a wave and a particle. It explained how the contradiction between the wave aspect of light and its particle aspect is central to the very nature of light.

Through the nineteenth century, matter and energy had seemed to be absolutely distinct

polar opposites. The theory of relativity showed how they are actually contradictory aspects of a single thing. It further enriched dialectical materialism by destroying the old notions of absolute space and absolute time: now we speak instead of "space-time."

And this space-time is itself relative to matter-energy. As Hawking puts it, "space and time are now dynamic quantities: when a body moves, or a force acts, it affects the curvature of space and time—and in turn the structure of space-time affects the way in which bodies move and forces act. Just as one cannot talk about events in the universe without the notions of space and time, so in general relativity it became meaningless to talk about space and time outside the limits of the universe." (33)

Another way to put this is that matter doesn't exist "in space" or something else; matter is what exists, period. Motion is not something that happens to matter when "outside forces" act on it: it is a fundamental characteristic of matter, period. In this sense, the extensive experimental evidence for the theory of relativity is also evidence for the much broader theory of dialectical materialism.

III. Another Example of Dialectics: The Life History of a Star

Hawking's description of the life cycle of a star (here slightly abridged) gives a clear picture of how a thing's nature and development arise from its internal contradictions. He writes: "A star is formed when a large amount of gas starts to collapse in on itself due to its gravitational attraction. As it contracts the gas heats up. Eventually the gas will coalesce to form helium."¹

Hawking continues: "The heat released in this reaction is what makes the star shine. This additional heat also increases the pressure of the gas until it is sufficient to balance the gravitational attraction, and the gas stops contracting. Stars will remain stable like this for a long time, with heat from the nuclear reactions balancing the gravitational attraction." (82-83)

But a contradiction is a struggle (not just a unity) of opposites, and this produces change: "Eventually, however, the star

will run out of its hydrogen and other nuclear fuels. When a star runs out of fuel, it starts to cool off and so to contract." (83) So gravity has become primary; but now a new contradiction develops.

"When the star becomes small, the matter particles get very near each other, and so according to the Pauli exclusion principle [don't worry about the details of this] they must have very different velocities. This makes them move away from each other and so tends to make the star expand. A star can therefore maintain itself at a constant radius by a balance between the attraction of gravity and the repulsion that arises from the exclusion principle, just as earlier in its life gravity was balanced by the heat." (83)

But, Hawking continues, "there is a limit to the repulsion that the exclusion principle can provide. When the star got sufficiently dense the repulsion caused by the exclusion principle would be less than the attraction of gravity." (84) So a star below a certain size (known as the Chandra

[1] This, by the way, is a nice example of how quantitative change (increasing heat) can result in qualitative change (hydrogen to helium.)

sekhar limit) can stabilize as a small "white dwarf" or as a neutron star. But a larger one will either explode or collapse into a black hole. And that is not the end of the story, either. In his next chapter Hawking describes how he and other scientists are studying how black holes also change.

This example shows that while there is plenty to criticize in *Brief History of Time* — and in bourgeois science as a whole — there is also much to learn.

IV. Bourgeois Science and Metaphysics

Hawking's remarks on the philosophy of science are inspired largely by the influential anti-communist Karl Popper, a fact that should in itself inspire distrust. But this review will concentrate on chapter 5 of Hawking's book, "Elementary Particles and the Forces of Nature." Here we can see some effects of bourgeois ideology in his own words.

Hawking explains how scientists have, over the last few centuries, identified level after level of the "elementary" building blocks of all matter—only to discover each time that these particles are made up of still more "elementary" ones. From

dialectical materialism we would expect that any particle, however small, would embody a contradiction and could therefore be analyzed further. However, Hawking believes that we now "have, or are very near to, a knowledge of the ultimate building blocks of nature." (p. 66)

This is part of Hawking's claim that there is an ultimate theory that, once found, will tell us everything there is to know about how the universe works. The only thing left for scientists to do would be to work out approximation methods to make specific predictions—there would be no more need for theorizing. From this idea of a "master plan," it is no big jump to the idea of a "master planner"—God. The eighteenth century scientist Laplace was once asked by Napoleon where god fit into his mechanical picture of the universe. "Sir, I have no need for that hypothesis," Laplace reportedly replied. Not Stephen Hawking!

Even if there is only one mathematically consistent unified physical theory, he argues in his conclusion, "the usual approach of science . . . cannot answer the questions of why there should be a universe for the model to describe. Why does the universe go to all the bother of

existing?" he asks. "Is the unified theory so compelling that it brings about its own existence? Or does it need a creator, and, if so, does he have any other effect on the universe?" (p. 174)

Hawking assumes the universe has a purpose, that it somehow intended to be the way it is. Do rocks have intentions? Does the universe have a mind of its own? No. Scientific research has shown clearly that human beings and our ability to think evolved from other life forms with precious little capacity for thought. We know that life itself arose from non-living matter. What we call "mind" is a very late development in the history of the universe. In one bold anti-scientific stroke, Hawking has thrown all this out the window.

Consider the only two alternatives he proposes. One is that a theory (the unified theory of physics he hopes to find) created the universe: secular idealism. The other is a "creator," presumably a non-material god: religious idealism. Either way, Hawking assures us that the material world was brought into being by the non-material. The celebrated scientist has turned into his opposite. For him, physics is just a prelude to the "real" issues of metaphysics. He starts the book with a

discussion of matter, but ends it with the hope of someday knowing "the mind of God." (p. 175)

Thus *A Brief History of Time* promotes religion and actually subverts public understanding of science. It does so far more subtly than the so-called "scientific creationists" who want to throw out the theory of evolution and, with it, most of modern biology. But it does so more dangerously, as well, because it appeals to a pro-scientific audience.

V. Another Example: Elementary Particles as Little Capitalists

Idealism is as old as class society, but modern physics has a specifically bourgeois form. As Hawking describes it, the universe is made up of irreducible individual particles of matter and force. Matter particles interact only by "exchanging" force particles.

The word "exchange," which Hawking uses constantly, is revealing. Some of the interactions he describes, for example, consist of one matter particle emitting a force particle that is then absorbed by a different matter particle. This is not an exchange but a transfer, so why use the word "exchange"?

Hawking and his fellow

bourgeois physicists apparently represent the physical world as a miniaturized version of a market economy. Matter particles are individual buyers and sellers; force particles are commodities and therefore must be "exchanged."

This model is useful, up to a point. But Hawking is not at all up-front about its limits, if he even sees them himself. Not all the kinds of particles predicted by the theory have actually been observed (even indirectly). The ones that haven't are called "virtual particles." That would be okay: after all, one of the main characteristics of a scientific theory (as opposed to religious dogma) is that it makes predictions that can be tested by experiment. Many previously unseen phenomena predicted by modern physics were later observed, strengthening the credibility of the theory.

Hawking points all this out, but downplays the fact that scientists have been looking for some of

these virtual particles for many years now and have not found them where they are "supposed" to be. Why does he obscure this? Probably so we will be quicker to join him in his belief that "we may now be near the end of the search for the ultimate laws of nature." (156)

VI. Conclusion: Physics and Communism

Workers, especially communists, should learn more about modern science as it now exists, the better to understand dialectical materialism and how we can apply it in our political work.² But bourgeois natural science cannot be taken mechanically as a model for a scientific approach to political work. Communist science will build on the progressive aspects of capitalist science—and these are stronger than in most other forms of culture—but it will transform it in the process.

Science under communism will be very different, not only in the

[2] David Bohm's book *Causality and Chance in Modern Physics* is an excellent example for those who are not intimidated by some technical language. It is discussed in "Can History Be A Science?", *PL* magazine, vol. 12, #4 (Fall, 1979); originally in *PL* vol. 6 #2 (1967).

way scientific work is organized but in the way theories are formulated. All children will learn the basics of science: not just answers scientists have found, but how to work scientifically. The working class, not the bourgeoisie, will pose the problems to be solved. Scientific workers trained in dialectical materialism will have a powerful set of intellectual tools at their disposal. Of course, they will still have to do research: the general principles of dialectical materialism alone cannot give us the particularities of the origin or probable course of development of the universe.

New forms of social organization will provide new models for

conceptualizing the natural world. Communism will liberate and mobilize the workers' great untapped creative potential, magnifying it with collective habits of work and thought.

And even so—contrary to Stephen Hawking's pitifully limited imagination—there will always be more questions to answer and more profound theories to explore. We are no nearer to the end of physics than to the end of history; we are nearer only to the end of bourgeois domination of both.

By W.T.

4,000 YEARS OF SEXIST CLASS RULE

**Monica Sjoo and
Barbara Mor**
**The Great Cosmic Mother:
Egalitarianism and the Fight
Against Sexism**
New York

The Great Cosmic Mother shows in great depth that fighting sexism is the key to developing egalitarianism. According to the

authors, humanity's first 300-500,000 years were organized into egalitarian hunting and gathering societies. Women, as childbearers, were the primary inventors, developers and transmitters of culture. They developed culture and religions based on nature, lunar and menstrual cycles. The contributions of women included fire, tools, language, pottery, clothing,

medicine and domestication of plants and animals.

In the Bronze Age, 3,000—2,000 B.C., meat and grain surpluses dislocated men's function as hunters and gatherers. Hunting parties became raiding parties on neighbor's herds, grain and land. Private property, slavery, the ownership of women, and war as a way of life developed as warrior societies and aristocratic classes developed. The religions of Hinduism, Buddhism and Judeo-Christianity developed to perpetuate patriarchal class society.

The authors focus on the cattle breeding Indo-Aryan (Indo-European) migrations of conquest as extremely significant. The light skinned cattle breeding patriarchal warriors conquered India, the Balkans, Mesopotamia and Europe. In India, darker skinned peoples were driven south and became "untouchables." The Indo-Aryans became Brahmans and warriors as Hinduism developed. Along the northern shores of the Mediterranean this process of domination of darker people was repeated, giving the early origins to racist ideology and practice.

In Greece and Rome the descendants of these conquests became the aristocrats, citizens and warriors; while slaves,

foreigners and women had no power in society. Trade and conquest became a way of life.

In the Mesopotamian area various patriarchal, animal herding, mobile warrior societies developed alongside other matriarchal, agrarian, egalitarian societies. Most patriarchal and war-loving were the Hebrews, who waged relentless holy war for their male god, Yahway/Jehova, and who called for the destruction of all other idols and "false" gods. These other idols were mostly the snakes, calves, bulls and other symbols of more ancient worship of nature cycles and the cosmos in the more egalitarian and peaceful societies nearby. The Old Testament raves against women. In particular, Babylonian women, who had considerable power and equality, were called whores. Even today, orthodox Jews say a daily prayer thanking their god they are not women.

Hinduism and Buddhism enforce male domination, with males being more pure and spiritual. The hierarchical arrangement of the gods mirrors the misery of the caste system. The concept of Karma blames the victims low position in society on their behavior in previous lives instead of on the land-owning rulers.

Christianity spread during and after the Roman conquest of Europe. The male hierarchy of the church waged holy war against the more egalitarian tribes and peasant communities. The church's focus was on the female tribal and village leadership, both of the barbarians and of the peasants. These women were sometimes chiefs, and usually they were practitioners of herbal medicine and many handicrafts. Often they were the recognized dispensers of wisdom which was central to the tribe or village. All of this made them the arch enemies of the priests and Inquisitors of the church. To the church they were witches—the devil's agents. The authors declare that an immense number of women were burned as witches by the church.

For communists, this whole inquiry raises important questions: How long will it take to achieve egalitarianism? Just how stubborn and deeply ingrained is sexism? How important is the fight against sexism to achieve egalitarianism? What kind of cultural revolution will it take to really build an egalitarian philosophy among the world's people?

Humans and human consciousness are products of the evolutionary process. The au-

thors propose that we have respect for this process and establish a world without profit and exploitation. We should struggle for a communal society with reverence for the earth, a society which sees women as active principals. We must use our consciousness to facilitate evolution of the universe, not to destroy life and glorify death for the profits of a few, as our present culture does.

The type of philosophical view the authors propose is a radical departure from the previous Communist movement's focus on productive forces and material incentives. They criticize the past communist movement for reducing the complexity of human relationships and of nature to mechanical, economic determinism.

In my opinion, the authors' vision of a globally conscious, egalitarian, organic, evolutionary society is valid. Our Labor of Hercules will be to keep this compassionate vision while we are up to our necks in the blood of fascism, war and revolution. We don't want to end up as another patriarchal, state-capitalist war machine. Let's keep our eye on the egalitarian prize. I urge all our members and friends to read this important book.

By Q.L.

THE GREAT FRAUD IN HOW A WRITER BECOMES "GREAT"

Lawrence S. Schwartz
Creating Faulkner's
Reputation: The Politics of
Modern Literary Criticism
(Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988). 286 pages.

Bourgeois literary critics are fond of proclaiming that certain writers are simply "great"—as if the criteria for "greatness" are self-evident, unproblematic, and above all beyond politics. Lawrence Schwartz's study effectively exposes the myth of artistic "greatness," for it demonstrates that the literary reputation of the American novelist William Faulkner is a historical and political construct. As Schwartz puts it, "Literary reputations rise and fall dramatically because the critics reflect not universal, but relative literary values which are, in large measure, historically determined" (2-3).

Schwartz argues that Faulkner's canonization as a literary genius—a state of affairs established by his reception of the

Nobel Prize for Literature in 1950—cannot be understood apart from the emergence of the "new conservative liberalism of postwar America" (p. 28). In particular, the "revised political position of the United States and the new hegemony of its corporate interests" meant that the U. S. government wanted to lead in the cultural as well as the economic and political spheres.

Accordingly, Schwartz demonstrates, ruling-class talent-scout forces undertook a quite deliberate search for a writer who could "represent" the U. S. as a world-class cultural power. Faulkner fit the bill. For one thing, he was one of relatively few American writers of status who had not had some sort of friendly relationship with the Communist-led left during the 1930s. (In this decade the CP organized widely among writers, drawing them into its Popular Front organization, the American Writers Congress.) Yet neither had he openly expressed reactionary ideas (as had T. S.

Eliot) or played footsie with the fascists (as had Ezra Pound, who did broadcasts on behalf of Mussolini during the war). Faulkner thus had a "clean" political bill of health.

What is more, Faulkner's writing was very difficult and opaque, full of confusing temporal perspectives, interior monologue, and two-to three-page long sentences. It thus proved that an American writer could play the modernist game as well as any of the British or European writers who had previously been seen (by European and British critics, of course) as the world-class literary "greats." Faulkner's style had distinct elitist appeal.

Schwartz reveals that Faulkner was by no means always viewed as a "great" writer. During the 1930s and 1940s, largely because of the influence of Communists in the cultural sphere, literary tastes were different. Critics generally favored works that were, if not precisely radical, at least straightforwardly realistic in their mode of representation and generally progressive in their politics. At this time, Faulkner was viewed—by mainstream critics, not just the left—as a talented but idiosyncratic and second-rate writer. Even though by 1936 he had written most of

the novels that would subsequently be praised to the skies, he had to wait for over a decade for recognition.

Schwartz argues that this recognition came through the agency of the Humanities Commission of the Rockefeller Foundation. This Commission worked closely with two allied groups of cultural anti-Communists. One of these was the so-called New Critics, who championed Southern conservatism in politics and paradox, irony and ambiguity in aesthetics. The other was the so-called New York Intellectuals, defenders of modernism and (for the most part) former Trotskyists virulently opposed to the entire platform of literary progressivism espoused by the CP. Through sponsoring elitist journals (such as *Kenyon Review*, *Sewanee Review*, and *Partisan Review*) and conservative literature graduate programs (such as at Princeton) these three forces together set the agenda for literary criticism in the United States for decades to come. The "discovery" of Faulkner's "greatness" was part and parcel of this more general campaign to expunge all traces of leftism from American literary culture.

While *Creating Faulkner's Reputation* effectively demonstrates how Faulkner's

works were mobilized to serve ruling-class interests, Schwartz is by no means crudely conspiratorial. He also exhaustively details the multiple factors—aside from the direct intervention of the Rockefeller Humanities Commission—that positioned Faulkner for his role as literary superstar. Among these factors are the specific economics of the book trade in the postwar era (especially the emergence of mass paperback marketing) and the tireless publicizing efforts of Malcolm Cowley. Cowley's role, Schwartz shows, was particularly significant. For, as literary editor of the *New Republic* during the 1930s, Cowley had been a fellow-traveler of some note. After his defection from the left, Cowley had a substantial reputation that was crucial in winning support for Faulkner as the "great" (if previously neglected) writer of his generation.

Schwartz's book is about how Faulkner got to be "great," not about his books themselves. Still, one wishes (at least this reader wishes) he had said a bit more about the *content* of Faulkner's novels. It is certainly true that the stylistic features of Faulkner's work—its obscurantism and density—endeared him to the elitist postwar critical arbiters. But his world-view was

also doubtless appealing. Faulkner's novels are full of denigrating portraits of black people; while he clearly opposes many aspects of racism and racial violence, he also finds white people more complex and intelligent. His female characters very rarely rise above the level of stereotype, and several of his portraits of women are openly misogynist. Above all, Faulkner holds a highly pessimistic and antiprogressive view of historical process. In his major novels he resorts to myth, symbol and archetype as a means of accounting—and compensating—for the tragedy of human existence. He views the human situation as pathetic and ironic. His works are full of paradox and irony (cherished values of the New Criticism) precisely because they view as shallow and simplistic any program for changing people through changing the social order.

In other words, Schwartz could have pointed out more forcefully that Faulkner's elitist form is accompanied by a politics that is, while contradictory, largely reactionary. Faulkner's ascension to the literary pantheon in the 1950s involved an endorsement of both his technique and his ideas.

On the whole, however,

Schwartz's book is a brilliant expose of the politics of literary reputation. Communists and others who wish to understand the complex process by which

"great" authors are not born, but made, will have much to learn from *Creating Faulkner's Reputation*.

By N.N.

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