

# **The Communist Manifesto: A clarion call full of ideas**

written by Struggle - La Lucha

February 21, 2023



*The Communist Manifesto was first published 175 years ago on Feb. 21, 1848.*

*The following is from notes written in 1983 by Sam Marcy, a leading Marxist thinker*

*and fighter of the second half of the 20th century.*

Of all the great classics in the treasury of Marxism, [The Communist Manifesto](#) unquestionably stands out as the most popular and widely read throughout the world. Bourgeois ideologists, even the most virulent opponents of Marxism, never fail to be astonished by the persistent attraction the Manifesto has for each new generation of revolutionary militants.

The Manifesto, written by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels in 1848, is a creative revolutionary synthesis of propaganda and agitation, as these terms were originally defined by George Plekhanov when he was still a revolutionary Marxist.

“Propaganda” was then understood as the presentation of many complex ideas to a small group of people, while “agitation” was conceived as the presentation of a few ideas or a single idea to a large audience. Of course, there’s no wall between the two.

The Manifesto illuminates a great number of complex ideas.

It presents the materialist conception of history in clear, brilliant language. It traces the history of the class struggle from its earliest days to 1848. It analyzes the rise of the bourgeoisie, explains its revolutionary role — and not only analyzes the intermediate classes in bourgeois society, but also mercilessly exposes the nature of capitalist exploitation and oppression as it had never been done before.

The Manifesto’s diagnosis of capitalist society is at the same time a prognosis of the destruction of capitalism at the hands of what the Manifesto calls the “grave diggers” of capitalism — the revolutionary proletariat.

### **Not just a critique but a guide to action**

Far from being merely a criticism of feudal and bourgeois society, the Manifesto

thus unequivocally points the way to the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeoisie.

Furthermore, the Manifesto subjects to critical analysis the nature of the capitalist state, as well as the role of the family, religion and culture.

Above all, in tracing the development of the proletariat from its earliest days in mere handicraft production to its role in large-scale industry by 1848, the Manifesto points to the “proletariat alone as the really revolutionary class” and the historic agent for constituting a new social order, free of exploitation or oppression.

All of this is *propaganda* — irreplaceable working-class propaganda. Yet at the same time it is also revolutionary *agitation* of the highest order. It fans the flames of revolution.

On the one hand, the Manifesto directs itself toward presenting a succinct, coherent and lucid exposition of the basic principles of Marxism. To that extent, it directs itself to “the few” — not necessarily the middle class, but the advanced sections of the working class.

On the other hand, with its ringing call to overthrow the oppressors and exploiters, the Manifesto addresses itself directly to the broadest and widest sections of the working class.

It is this dialectical unity of opposites — propaganda and agitation — so skillfully blended together that makes the Manifesto such a monumental achievement.

Nothing could be a more crystal-clear call to the proletariat than the final paragraph of the Manifesto.

It ends with this ringing call to action:

“Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their

ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communistic revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win.

“Workingmen of all countries, unite!”

Such a mighty clarion call for revolutionary worldwide action by the proletariat has yet to be surpassed.

Marx and Engels were not unaware that the working class was a narrow segment of society at the time the Manifesto was written. As Engels said in the 1890 preface to a Polish edition of the Manifesto, “Few voices responded to ‘Workingmen of all countries, unite!’ when we proclaimed these words to the world ... on the eve of the first Paris revolution in which the proletariat came out with demands of its own.”

However, wrote Engels, “On Sept. 28, 1864, the proletarians of most of the Western European countries joined hands in the International Workingmen’s Association.” And even though that International — the first attempt at a world organization of the proletariat — lasted only a few years, said Engels, it left a glorious heritage.

### **National chauvinism vs. internationalism**

Just prior to the start of World War I, the working-class movement in Europe, under the leadership of the Social Democratic parties, reached the zenith of its authority over the broadest masses on the continent. Immediately after the outbreak of the war, however, the movement was virtually smashed as a result of the betrayal by the Social Democratic leadership.

The adherents of revolutionary Marxism — in reality the adherents of the principles enunciated by the Manifesto — were temporarily reduced to a small minority. The majority had succumbed to chauvinism. They had forgotten one of the principal tenets in the Manifesto: that the workers in a capitalist country have no fatherland.

"The workingmen have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got."

The Social Democratic leaders' surrender to chauvinism cost the proletariat dearly in World War I: millions upon millions of lives lost and untold devastation and destruction.

Nothing so much arouses the prejudices of the bourgeois ideologists, nothing so much enrages them and exposes their deep-seated chauvinism, as the question of "patriotism," the "defense of the national interest." Today, more than ever, this invariably means the defense of the capitalist state and giant finance capital.

Any lie, any falsification will do to corrupt, vulgarize and distort the real meaning and significance of the defense of one's country, as it was understood both in Marx's time and in the imperialist epoch.

Marx and Engels had written extensively about the autonomy and unity of each nation. It is well known that they had fought for the independence of Poland, Hungary, Ireland and Italy. Engels wrote in 1893 in a preface to the Italian edition of the Manifesto that the defeat of the 1848 revolutions resulted in "the fruits of the revolution being reaped by the capitalist class."

"Through the impetus given to large-scale industry in all countries," he wrote, "the bourgeois regime during the last 45 years has everywhere created a numerous, concentrated and powerful proletariat. It has thus raised, to use the language of the Manifesto, its own grave-diggers."

Engels then added this remarkable thought, as pertinent today as it was then: "Without restoring autonomy and unity to each nation, it will be impossible to achieve the international union of the proletariat, or the peaceful and intelligent cooperation of these nations toward common aims."

The progressive epoch of the bourgeoisie in the struggle against feudalism — especially the period when Marx was writing — demonstrated a trend toward diminishing national differences and antagonisms. It was due to the development of the bourgeoisie, to freedom of commerce, to the world market.

The subsequent evolution into monopoly capitalism diverted this trend. Indeed, capitalism has not been able to carry out a single one of its economic trends to its ultimate conclusion.

The classical example of this is the failure of the various trusts and combinations, through the process of competition, to be converted into total monopoly and become a worldwide trust or “super imperialism,” which Karl Kautsky thought would abolish the anarchy of capitalism.

As industrial and technological development grows by leaps and bounds, monopoly capitalism, rather than narrowing national differences and ameliorating national oppression, exacerbates them. It is no wonder that the bourgeois world is literally divided into oppressing and oppressed nations.

But this does not at all disqualify the class struggle. It merely imparts a greater urgency for the revolutionary cooperation and solidarity of all the workers in both the oppressing and oppressed nations — in a common struggle against imperialism, capitalism and all forms of bourgeois reaction and feudal rubbish left by centuries of oppression.

The revolutionary contribution of the bourgeoisie, as Marx explained, was in developing the world market, which has “given a cosmopolitan character to production.” This has greatly increased the strategic role of the working class in production and in relation to the class struggle.

Marx’s words are even more true today: “In place of the old local and national

seclusion and self-sufficiency,” the bourgeoisie has tremendously enhanced “intercourse in every direction, universal interdependence of nations.”

The bourgeoisie cannot create even the semblance of world unity, despite the obvious foundations laid by the gargantuan growth of the productive forces and the ensuing economic interdependence.

Only the proletariat in alliance with the oppressed peoples and the socialist countries can lay the political and social foundations for worldwide solidarity. This is precisely because only socialism, which is based on planning and the common ownership of the means of production, can purge the worldwide market of its imperialist chaos, its unpredictable crises, and the reign of the arbitrary based on superprofits.

Indeed, the world market, as Marx said, “makes national one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible.” It inevitably generates proletarian class solidarity — the truest basis for bringing about the solidarity of the human race.

Source: [Marxists Internet Archive](https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1875/communistManifesto/ch01.htm)



---

# **Socialist Unity Party honors Sam Marcy**

written by Struggle - La Lucha

February 21, 2023

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the death of the noted revolutionary leader, Sam Marcy. He is well known for his penetrating Marxist analysis of world events.

Based in the revolutionary conceptions of Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, and V.I. Lenin, Marcy began his many writings on the true nature of the global class war following the end of World War II.

Following the defeat of Hitler in the war, the U.S. and Western Europe turned their sights on the Soviet Union. Marcy clarified that with the buildup to the Korean War, the world had now fallen into two class camps. The Soviet Union and the recent Chinese communist revolution headed the socialist camp. The U.S., Western Europe, and Japan led the imperialist camp. His analysis spelled out how the two class camps were irreconcilable.

“It is not a war between the nations, but a war between the classes. In this war, the geographical boundaries are social boundaries, the battle formations are class formations, and the world line of demarcation is the line rigidly drawn by the socialist interests of the world proletariat,” Marcy wrote.

Marcy presented many writings and speeches that showed the many mechanisms of the class struggle outlining the role that capitalist exploitation of the working class plays in everyday life. He analyzed developments in the U.S. and in so many countries abroad throughout Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Marcy stressed the need for complete international solidarity with other socialist countries that fell under the military and economic attacks of the imperialist apparatus. He was a strong supporter of the many revolutionary liberation struggles.

In his book “High Tech, Low Pay,” Marcy showed how the scientific-technological changes in the structure of capitalist industry brought with it a change in the social character of the working class. There was a massive general shift of workers away from relatively high-skilled, high-paid jobs into lower-skilled, lower-paid service jobs.

The working class in the U.S. was opened up to include more women in the workforce as well as people of color. There was a growing proportion of Black, Latinx, Asian, Indigenous, women, and undocumented workers. Marcy saw the fight against racism and oppression as pivotal to the struggle for socialism. He boldly broke tradition by coming out in support of the early Gay Liberation movement in the U.S. He was the first socialist leader to do this in the early 1970s.

One of his last major writings was the book “Perestroika: a Marxist Critique” in which he foresaw the pending disaster of Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev’s policies as a complete capitulation to capitalism and imperialism. Gorbachev’s

policies led to the dismantling of the Soviet Union and its allies in Eastern Europe.

Sam Marcy was a fearless fighter on behalf of the working class against capitalism. He firmly believed in the ability of the working class to act in unity to overcome our oppression and to abolish the capitalist class on the way to building worldwide socialism.



---

## Movement must analyze catastrophe in USSR

written by Struggle - La Lucha

February 21, 2023

*Sam Marcy, a leading Marxist thinker and fighter of the second half of the 20th century, died 25 years ago on Feb. 1, 1998. To mark the occasion, Struggle-La Lucha is publishing a selection of Marcy's articles that demonstrate the breadth and depth of his analysis and strategic thought on behalf of the workers and oppressed, while also providing insight into today's struggles.*

*Marcy delivered the following statement on May 4, 1994, to a session of the*

*International Seminar of Marxist-Leninist Parties and Organizations in Brussels, Belgium.*

We are submitting this statement in the hope it will contribute to a fuller discussion of the basic issue for our epoch — namely, what is the meaning of the collapse of the USSR?

There can be no question that this is the most important of all political issues. It would serve no purpose to shove it under the rug, even if that could be done, because the imperialist bourgeoisie and their kept press and media will invariably bring it up again and again. The movement would be defenseless without a thought-out approach to combat the propaganda of the bourgeoisie and their social-democratic helpers.

It is first necessary to understand that the contemporary struggle reduces itself in essence to a struggle between two diametrically opposed social systems based on two mutually antagonistic class structures.

It is impossible to have a discussion about the class struggle and the road to socialism unless we have some definite, although unfinished, view of Russia today and of how the greatest and most profound social and political revolution has been undone.

It would be most unfortunate if the discussion reduced itself to merely a defense of the positions of Stalin, Trotsky, Mao or others. Their importance in the historic evolution of the communist movement will not suffer if we proceed according to an evaluation of political and theoretical concepts, rather than the individual leaders who may stand for them. To do otherwise is not worthy of revolutionary communists who are seriously attempting to find their way out of the catastrophic predicament in which all socialists and revolutionary Marxist-Leninists in particular find themselves today.

Attributing the catastrophic destruction of the USSR solely to the policies of individual leaders, or even to a collection of them, is contrary to the materialist interpretation of history.

The ancient slave system, for example, produced many brilliant leaders. The bourgeois historians attribute the decline and fall of the Roman Empire to the fault of these leaders.

But what do Marxists say about the relation of these leaders to the ancient Roman and Greek empires? That slavery was becoming an outmoded social system. It was not the leaders who caused the collapse of these empires. It was the decay of slavery.

Bourgeois historiography puts the subjective causes first. They regard slavery, feudalism and especially capitalism as eternal categories. But the internal struggles of the leaders, the murders, the poisonings, all this symbolized the decay of the institution of slavery.

Nevertheless, we don't want to deny the role of leadership. Leadership is crucial when the objective situation is ripe.

But leadership is not a substitute for the class. All history attests to that.

According to Marxist doctrine, no social system ever passes away without first fully exhausting its possibilities. The USSR had not exhausted its possibilities for growth. Its growth was aborted by a combination of internal corrosion and external pressures.

Does the collapse of the USSR undermine the nature of the contemporary struggle in capitalist society?

Of course, the overthrow of the Soviet Union enormously strengthened the power of

capital all over the world, if only by virtue of the fact that it removed an enormous source of revolutionary energy, encouragement and material aid to the proletariat, oppressed peoples and all socialist countries.

Nevertheless, it must be very clearly affirmed that the nature of the class struggle as outlined by Marx in the Communist Manifesto remains wholly valid today.

The inevitability of the dictatorship of the proletariat on a world scale remains valid, despite the defeat in the USSR.

The main thing is to identify the basic forces in contemporary society. These still are the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. And what Marx said about them in 1848 is still basically true.

Should we return to Marx's concept of the class struggle as outlined in the Communist Manifesto? That would also entail and fortify an understanding of the dictatorship of the proletariat as the rule of the workers and oppressed masses.

The need is for all revolutionary communists to unite on the basis of a common struggle against capitalist exploitation and imperialist oppression. It is not necessary for any grouping to abandon its propaganda in support of the views of individual leaders.

What is needed is the broadest united front of revolutionary communist groupings, as long as they adhere to the spirit of revolutionary class struggle as generally promoted by Lenin in his writings on admission to the Communist International.

In the course of further discussion, we will surely find out where we stand and how to continue the struggle for revolutionary Marxism-Leninism in this very difficult period.

The name of Lenin is a kind of synonym for revolutionary class struggle. The failure

to agree on that is in reality a line of demarcation between communism and social democracy, with its various hues.

It would be a great achievement to be able to set aside secondary aspects and unite on the general understanding of the nature of our epoch and the tasks of the working class and the oppressed masses.

We must affirm in the strongest terms that the present expansionist period of U.S. monopoly capital is the most dangerous and aggressive since the collapse of the USSR. But the disintegration of the socialist camp does not necessarily add up to permanent stability for imperialism. It is unable to stabilize itself and the unbridled forces of capitalist production lead it inevitably into a new crisis.

What the collapse of the USSR confirms is that the world center of economic activity is and has remained in the imperialist countries — the “West” — whereas the revolutionary center of gravity has been in the “East” — the oppressed nations of the world, the bulk of humanity.

But today the material foundations are being laid for a return of revolutionary activity to the West.

The further development of monopoly capitalism in this stage will inevitably produce devastating convulsions within the imperialist system.

The present so-called capitalist prosperity in the United States, which the Clinton administration in particular is so boastful of, rests on a decrepit foundation. It conceals the extent of capitalist overproduction and the enormous debt that U.S. capitalist expansion has incurred.

For the moment, the analysts of imperialist finance capital have neglected to call this to the attention of the broad public. Such revelations coming at a time of high confidence could prove devastating to the so-called financial community.

It may be 1929 all over again. Whether this period is of a shorter or longer duration is impossible to say. What we have to prepare for is the next phase in this development. We must not be caught off guard.

Holding a firm position on the nature of monopoly capitalism — which, as Lenin pointed out, is really the precursor for socialist revolution — we can only view the future with confidence.

Source: [Marxists Internet Archive](#)



---

## Marxism and mass action: Strategies for the struggle ahead

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
February 21, 2023

*Sam Marcy, a leading Marxist thinker and fighter of the second half of the 20th century, died 25 years ago on Feb. 1, 1998. To mark the occasion, Struggle-La Lucha is publishing a selection of Marcy's articles that demonstrate the breadth and depth of his analysis and strategic thought on behalf of the workers and oppressed, while*

*also providing insight into today's struggles.*

Dec. 15, 1994 — The movement of the working class originated more than 150 years ago. We are the inheritors of not only the ideology but also the traditions of revolutionary Marxism.

Our basic aim since the formation of the party has been to resuscitate, revive and continue under new conditions the struggle against capitalism and imperialism.

In this historic struggle for socialism, there have been two great and undeviating tendencies. They become evident, in one form or another, in every continent and every country.

This struggle is over what tactics and strategy to employ. In Europe, one tendency in the socialist movement was led by Auguste Blanqui in France. The other was carried out later and with great success by Karl Marx.

The proletarian movement has to review its historical heritage and go back to its roots to understand the complexities of modern imperialism.

There are new forms of colonialism, a new rise of all sorts of oppression under capitalism, and a growing inevitability of imperialist conflicts, not only against the proletariat and oppressed peoples, but also among themselves.

## **Theory and action**

Blanqui, unlike Marx, believed it wasn't necessary to theorize. Theoretical conceptions are fine, he said, but are not the motor force of the struggle. He stood for action — not by the masses but by a small group of knowledgeable, dedicated and revolutionary leaders intent on overthrowing the capitalist system.

His view was that all the workers' struggles, some of which Marx had already

explained and written about, ended up in failure because of the leadership's lack of determination and ability to master the art of conspiracy against the capitalist class.

The masses are great, he said, but need leaders. Sometimes what has to be done to overturn the capitalist class need not necessarily be explained to the masses. Small groups of dedicated and revolutionary leaders must be educated and prepared; and it is they who, by their vision and ability, will overturn the capitalist system.

This view is sometimes popularly known as "getting a few good men together" — never even thinking of mentioning women. The view may sound archaic, but nevertheless, it has prevailed for a long time. Think of the many coups d'etat of both a progressive and reactionary character that have taken place in our epoch.

But even progressive coups, with all their fervor, their dedication, have been unable to overturn the capitalist system in any modern capitalist country.

Blanqui would have been regarded as ridiculous were he not such a capable organizer. His "man of action" became a symbol for struggle rather than for prayer or theorizing.

### **Lenin on Blanqui**

It was in the struggle between Marxism and Blanquism that Bolshevism was born. The old socialist movement had completely discarded any aspect of Blanqui's teaching on organizing smaller groups or differentiating between the great mass of the people and the more educated, developed smaller groups.

In the old socialist and working-class parties in Europe, there was no clear-cut difference between the leadership and the masses. The leaders were selected from the masses. Blanqui's view was that it was a task of the small group not only to give leadership but to do it with firmness, not to hesitate.

Blanquism was the theory of readiness, the vision of overthrowing capitalism not by legal or electoral means but by conspiracy.

Any number of conspiracies took place in old Europe. They overturned this or that government. But they didn't overturn the system.

Marxism had to take from Blanquism everything that was progressive and necessary and discard what was not useful. At the same time, it had to discard what was old and inapplicable in the old socialist movement.

This was the task of Lenin and the Bolsheviks. They took the theoretical basis of Marxism and used it to educate the masses on the necessity for insurrection.

Before Lenin, insurrection was not regarded by the socialist movement as either necessary or desirable. The social-democratic parties were dependent exclusively on the electoral process.

Blanquism has to be distinguished from the old utopian movement, which was also fervently for socialism and for the masses — but had no vision of how it could be won, except by convincing the individual capitalists of the need to discard the system of capitalist oppression and institute the socialist system.

The ideas of the old utopian socialists were not practical. The ideas of Blanquism were more attractive to the young. But at the same time they could not overturn the capitalist system.

We have to bring this up because of the way the modern capitalist system is developing at this time.

## **What's next in the U.S.?**

In the modern-day U.S., what prevails is not the ideology of Blanqui or of Marx, but

outright bourgeois ideology.

But the system is rapidly coming to a point of great crisis, and it is necessary for us to review our heritage to understand the forthcoming period. It is necessary not merely to anticipate a revolutionary struggle but to prepare for it.

In Marx's time, and even in Lenin's, the trade unions were considered the fundamental organ whereby the working class could organize itself. But the intervention of the world war showed that the slow process of winning the allegiance of the working class was illusory.

No matter how dedicated or strong, a party like the German Social Democratic party would fail in the end, unless it had a revolutionary perspective of overthrowing the capitalist system, not hesitating to use force and violence when that became necessary. That aspect was not well understood by the other European parties in Lenin's time — only after the October Revolution in Russia.

Today, many of the ideas proposed to solve capitalism's ills sound utopian in the old sense. They cannot overcome the system.

It is quite likely that as soon as a struggle breaks out, it will produce a modern version of Blanquism, not only among the youth but in major organizations of the working class. One must consider the devastating and annihilating violence the state could conduct against the working class, and most often against Black and Latino and other oppressed nationalities.

Our movement has to go back somewhat to an earlier epoch in order to understand what is developing in capitalist society today. We are witnessing a slow and gradual development. It seems that the revolutionary struggle is distant.

But we know that a capitalist crisis, especially a severe one, immediately brings into being dozens of organizations with the most fantastic ideas on how to undo the

capitalist crisis. Some lead to attempting a violent overthrow without the necessary preparation of the working class as the principal instrument for overcoming capitalist exploitation.

In the coming struggle, we would have to pay attention to a possible Blanquist variant. But we would not be able to influence it unless our party itself is most vigorous, most relentless and most uncompromising in the struggle against capitalism and imperialism, of which, of course, racism is such a fundamental aspect.

We have to prepare ourselves not only in the sense of gathering more forces but seeing what the future may hold ideologically. Our party has to restudy the basic classics of Marxism and go back to the theory and tactics that Lenin employed.

### **What to do next**

The art of revolutionary politics is knowing what to do next. It is okay to theorize about fascism or the strength of the right-wing. But our organization differs from a debating society. We must take a firm, indeed revolutionary, stance.

We are faced with the growing prospect of right-wing conspiracy on the part of big business and multinational corporations. They have taken the first step. This Rep. Newt Gingrich is a representative of it, and there are others — but that's not the main thing.

Individuals can change, but the ruling class's trend is toward repression, solidifying in the most undemocratic way possible its control over the resources of the country and indeed of the globe. U.S. imperialism is on the march everywhere. The devastating results fall on the backs of the workers at home as well.

What do we do? We know the right wing is moving, and that there is only a thin difference between the right and the ultra-right.

One of the great lessons of the 1930s was Leon Trotsky's writings on the question of how to fight fascism. He stressed how important it is not to overlook what is happening, how it is possible to lose the historic moment and allow the ruling class to be victorious.

He delineated in a dramatic and readable way the steps that led to the victory of fascism in Germany.

In the U.S. at that time, there were only the beginnings of fascist groupings. No sooner did the wave of reaction sweeping Europe reach these shores than the great sit-down strikes among the workers wiped them out completely.

They were never able to get a foothold among the workers. The myriad of small fascist groups were washed away by the upsurge of the working class.

That is the surest way to end any fascist attempt to establish itself as a political force over the working class.

There's been no experience here with fascism on a mass scale. So we are basically looking at a theoretical and ideological discussion.

Our task is not to wait until things happen, in which case you can be absolutely sure the liberal bourgeoisie as well as certain sections of the big bourgeoisie will get into it. Right now, the working class is either indifferent or apathetic in this great struggle.

The possibility for the growth of neofascism, if you can call it that, and for political reaction generally is in the soil because monopoly is growing. The contradiction between the forms of capitalist production and the forms of capitalist distribution grows wider and wider.

The struggle among the imperialist nations grows sharper. There is no tendency

toward political equilibrium there.

None of the small countries that were actual colonies and became independent has shown any move toward economic independence. They would like to do it but cannot because of the monstrous growth and position of the big banks and corporations over the entire planet.

It is impossible for a small country to attain complete independence and at the same time grow economically strong and powerful. Not even Cuba can do that. We are all happy at the way it has conducted itself and won a position in world affairs and at home, but it is at great economic cost. Trying to get out of it little by little is difficult.

Cuba should be able to look toward an emancipated working class in the U.S. to help it. That's our job.

### **Opportunity for a mass struggle**

The right wing is on the march in the United States. But we now have a golden opportunity to intervene in the capitalist political process in a way we never have before.

We can become the most formidable representatives of the working class in the struggle against political reaction, if we build beginning with what we have.

A whole world of struggle awaits us. The false opposition, the false messiahs of struggle who are actually capitulators, are not yet on the scene. We have a clear road.

We are on the right path if we undertake a genuine, broad national opposition to the right wing and political reaction in general. It doesn't mean we leave the liberals off the hook. It doesn't mean we concentrate only on Gingrich or the others. It means we intensify our theoretical and political work.

We need to show where this country is moving, where the capitalist class is leading it, what the tendencies in it are, what the dangers are. We need an outpouring of the workers and oppressed masses. We need to prepare for that.

And we're in better shape because the liberal bourgeoisie is asleep and afraid. A part of it becomes ultra-militant and revolutionary after we start doing things, but for the time being they are asleep.

We need to organize ourselves and make this the top priority in the organization and for our party.

We cannot start a serious campaign in the struggle against the far right without funds. We need full-time organizers, foot soldiers who can leave their jobs and go places and do things. The struggle can only come as a result of deeper self-sacrifice. The party needs a fighting fund of hundreds of thousands of dollars.

We have to expand before the storm comes. Our own resources are relatively small but will grow as the struggle widens and deepens.

We can go to the masses and promote tremendous activity to challenge the capitalist class. We needn't be fearful about going beyond the legal limits that the bourgeoisie constrains us to. On a picket line you never know when you're going to get arrested, but you don't say, "Don't have the picket line." That kind of talk leads to failure.

We are taking on the greatest capitalist enemy. They have a president but they are having second thoughts about him.

Clinton isn't any different than earlier Democratic presidents. What is different is the situation of the bourgeoisie. They push one right-wing economic and political measure after another. And he is not a president to resist.

Should a capitalist economic crisis break out, it would accentuate the political crisis.

If it catches us by surprise and we do not have an apparatus out in the field, then our hopes for building a strong and revolutionary organization will be considerably diminished until the next opportunity comes.

In the 1930s, the Communist Party and other organizations were very conscious of the growth of fascism. But to a large extent they were trying to win the big bourgeoisie to support the struggle against it.

There is nothing wrong with asking them to support the struggle against fascism, but it's another thing to expect it from them. We have to explain this to the most oppressed and persecuted people, in the Black and Native and Latino districts. Fascism should not be an after-dinner conversation with bourgeois liberals.

The struggle against the far right and the struggle against racism are intimately interlocked.

We have to get our paper and our literature into the hands of thousands of workers. And to do that we need organizers.

We have to counteract the inroads of the capitalist monopolies. We have to support strikes and fight lockouts by employers. We have to redouble our activities on all fronts.

Marxism is as Marxism does. It is not merely an exposition of the tendencies in capitalist society that inevitably lead it to destruction. It is also a means for arming the workers and oppressed people on how to proceed in the next period.

Are we mainly directing our attention to the program of the right-wing Republicans? No. We shouldn't leave the other Republicans and the Democrats off the hook.

To make it very clear, our struggle against the right wing is an extension of our general program and not some new development on our part. We are going to

conduct a revolutionary and working-class struggle in the way we have conducted them before, with greater emphasis on developing an initiative in the struggle against the right wing and the neo-fascist tendencies that may spring up now and then.

Source: [Marxists Internet Archive](#)



---

## China's Cultural Revolution and the Fall of Lin Biao

written by Struggle - La Lucha

February 21, 2023

*Sam Marcy, a leading Marxist thinker and fighter of the second half of the 20th century, died 25 years ago on Feb. 1, 1998. To mark the occasion, Struggle-La Lucha is publishing a selection of Marcy's articles that demonstrate the breadth and depth of his analysis and strategic thought on behalf of the workers and oppressed, while also providing insight into today's struggles.*

**Editor's introduction from '[China 1977: End of the Revolutionary Mao Era](#)'**

“The Cultural Revolution and the Fall of Lin Biao” was written by Sam Marcy in August, 1972, after the appearance of the official version of the death and purge of Lin Biao. This event signaled a struggle over policy in the highest levels of the Chinese leadership, particularly over the Nixon visit and the rapprochement with U.S. imperialism.

The suppression of the Left in China begins with the fall of Lin Biao and Chen Boda. These articles offer a broad historical overview of the Cultural Revolution — the blocking of capitalist restoration and the safeguarding of the new social relations established by the Chinese Revolution of 1949 and deepened by the Great Leap Forward and the Commune movement of 1958-59.

Sam Marcy makes extensive use of Engels' analysis of earlier great revolutions to show how, the Cultural Revolution grew from historical necessity but that once that historical task was fulfilled in China, the base of the revolutionary left was eroded and the ideas of “storming the heavens” and creating a new Paris Commune-type of state were jettisoned. Subsequent events have confirmed this analysis.

## Part 1

August 4, 1972: The public confirmation of the tragic end of Lin Biao and some of his collaborators ends a momentous inner struggle over the future course of the Chinese Revolution and, in particular, of China's foreign policy. The defeat of Lin Biao, Chen Boda, Huang Yongsheng, Wu Faxian and others means that the Chinese Revolution has, to a considerable degree, run its course. From now on, the word is stability at home at the expense of revolutionary policy abroad.

Lin Biao, it will be remembered, was the author of the theory of encircling the imperialist powers — the “cities” — with global guerrilla war. Whether the theory was right or wrong, it had a revolutionary perspective in foreign affairs. As has become evident in the last few years, Chairman Mao and his supporters devised a

different foreign policy. Theirs is symbolized by the invitation accorded Nixon to visit Peking and the accommodation that the Chinese leaders have been developing with the U.S.

The Chinese Revolution, however, is by no means finished. It has been the longest, most protracted, and, and in many respects, the profoundest social upheaval in history. It spans well over half a century and is full of the most remarkable revolutionary feats. It is no wonder that so many of its leaders have become genuinely legendary figures.

### **Effect of international situation**

At each stage of its development the Chinese Revolution was profoundly influenced by the nature of the international situation. The Chinese Revolution caught fire on the basis of the conflagration, which commenced with the October Revolution in 1917. The false policies of Stalin inhibited and protracted the character of the Chinese Revolution. The 1927 defeat of the Revolution and Stalin's promotion of the theory of the block of four classes, which meant subordination to the Kuomintang, retarded the development of the Chinese Revolution. It was Mao's resistance to Stalin's policies that, in the long run, enabled him to save and fortify the revolution.

But again, the attempt of Japanese militarism to colonize China, in turn, served as a spur to the revolution. The preoccupation of U.S., British, and French imperialism with the struggle against Hitler for a time had a favorable effect on developments for the Chinese Revolution. Finally, the victory of the Soviet Union in the war and the defeat of the Japanese imperialists helped tremendously to pave the way for the victory of the Chinese Revolution in 1949.

Unquestionably China is again being profoundly affected by the international situation. Faced with the threat of U.S. and Japanese imperialism — a threat which daily demonstrates itself in the genocidal aggression against a socialist ally on its

very doorstep — and the hostility of the Soviet bureaucracy on the other hand, Chairman Mao and his followers have decided to come to terms, in large measure, with the U.S.

### **Cultural Revolution blocked capitalist restoration**

The ouster of the Lin-Chen grouping also signifies the end of that phase of the Chinese Revolution, which has become known to the world as the Great Cultural Revolution. The lasting significance of the Cultural Revolution is that it reversed a tidal wave of bourgeois reaction and set back a process of development that would have ended up in capitalist restoration.

The Lin-Chen grouping can, with qualification, be called the radical or left faction, which was in alliance with Chairman Mao and his supporters during the Cultural Revolution. Together they led the struggle against Liu Shaoqi, who then represented the neo-bourgeois restorationist movement. The defeat of Liu Shaoqi cleared the road for the commencement in earnest of the socialist transformation of China. Naturally, not all the claims made for the Cultural Revolution are valid. Certainly, there has been a great deal of exaggeration. But none can deny that, in essence, the Cultural Revolution marked a turning point in the historical evolution of China.

It prevented, at its barest minimum, capitalist restoration and ushered in a new stage in the building of a socialist society in China. Of course, no revolution is ever accomplished without a great deal of excess, without serious setbacks and errors. Once the Cultural Revolution was launched, it involved huge masses of people and set forces in motion that could not be controlled, even under the best of circumstances.

To some observers on this continent, the Cultural Revolution reduced itself to a mere factional dispute between Chairman Mao and his supporters, Lin, Chen, and others, against Liu Shaoqi and his formidable right-wing forces. In the view of these

observers, such a dispute should have been carried out by literary and polemical methods in the classical style in which Lenin polemicized against his opponents in the Bolshevik party. Of course, winning a revolutionary victory with polemics alone is more desirable than a violent struggle.

But what if the character of the adversary and the historical context in which the struggle is opened up, both at home and abroad, makes this impossible? What if the struggle for a neo-bourgeois restorationist course has already been started and has already taken on flesh and blood in leading cadres of the party and the mass organizations? What if this grouping has, in fact, already reached such dimensions that practically all the significant political currents of the imperialist bourgeoisie are already aware of it and are, in fact, applauding and egging it on?

What if the weight of the entire Soviet Union, through its leadership, particularly in the case of Kosygin and Brezhnev, is openly supporting the neo-restorationist elements? What if, in the given historical context, there is no other way but to openly appeal to the party and to the masses to commence the struggle against the right-wing restorationists?

### **Class interests versus legal norms**

From the point of view of pure formal procedure, the Cultural Revolution may have been a violation of democratic centralist principles, but only if we forget that the party as a whole was already shattered by the course of events: deep incursions had already been made into the body-politic of Chinese society by the Liu Shaoqi forces. Marxism teaches that where fundamental class interests are involved, class interests must not be subordinated to purely formal or legalistic norms. To make the outcome of the class struggle dependent on formal procedures at the expense of class interests is the height of folly.

Certainly, it would have been preferable to have a literary and polemical debate end

in a victorious decision by a party congress. But in the case of the Cultural Revolution, the struggle had spilled over from the party ranks and from the bourgeois intelligentsia into the general mass of the population before the discussion could get under way — assuming it ever could have been done that way in the first place.

At any rate, once the struggle started, the only correct position for progressive and revolutionary workers throughout the world was to support the proponents of the Cultural Revolution. All the more so because in a revolution, just as in a workers' strike, the first and most important element to consider is the determination of which side to support. In the course of a strike, there may be any number of formal violations of the democratic rights of those who promote crossing of the picket line, but as long as the strike is on, every worker is duty-bound to support it.

It was quite clear during the entire course of the Cultural Revolution that the bourgeoisie and the Soviet bureaucracy were openly supporting Liu Shaoqi and the restorationists. There is no question that the Soviet leadership would prefer a bourgeois restorationist regime over a revolutionary socialist regime, especially if the bourgeois restorationists would be on friendly terms with the Soviet bureaucracy and retain the governmental and party facade of "socialism."

### **Belated charges**

Is the elimination of Lin Biao to be regarded in the same way as the ouster of Liu Shaoqi? By no means.

The neo-restorationist tendency in China has made itself quite evident, so much so that even foreign observers could see its slow but sure development. It was a formidable force. The struggle that was fought by Chairman Mao and his supporters was an open revolutionary struggle. It is an incontestable fact that Chairman Mao openly appealed to the masses to participate in the struggle. Events soon

demonstrated that the masses vigorously responded to the call and overwhelmingly supported it. It was particularly evident in the tremendous enthusiasm exhibited by the youth. This had worldwide repercussions in the movement of the youth all over the world.

The recent indictment against Lin Biao charges that he "attempted a coup d'etat and tried to assassinate Mao Zedong." After the plot was foiled, it is said, "he fled on September 12 toward the Soviet Union in a plane which crashed over the People's Republic of Mongolia." It is also charged that "he undertook anti-Party activities in a planned, premeditated way with a well-determined program with the aim of taking over power, usurping the leadership of the party, the government and the army." But, "Mao Zedong unmasked his plot and blocked his maneuver. Mao Zedong made efforts to recover him, but Lin Biao did not change his perverse nature one iota."

So reads the first official confirmation from China of the many rumors which have circulated in the imperialist press for many months, rumors which were based on leaks from Chinese officials to the capitalist world.

The dimensions of the "plot" indicate it could scarcely have taken place in secrecy. The very fact that the Chinese leadership waited so long to divulge it lends itself to extreme incredulity. And the fact that so many rumors could be floating in many capitalist countries while the mass of the people at home was not at all informed about the "plot" completely differentiates this type of struggle from that launched in the Cultural Revolution.

During the Cultural Revolution, Chairman Mao and the leadership confined themselves to enlisting the revolutionary support of the masses. It was the restorationists who maintained contact with and gave leaks to the imperialist bourgeoisie. But in the present case, the very fact that Chairman Mao himself first gave the news to the world through Ceylonese Prime Minister Bandaranaike and French Foreign Minister Schuman, leaders of bourgeois states, speaks volumes in

itself.

### **Accommodation with U.S. is real answer**

There is no way to verify any of the allegations concerning the bizarre plot of Lin Biao. Even if we take everything at face value, the allegations in themselves are internally contradictory. The only truth that emerges from the statement issued by the Chinese Embassy in Algiers is that Lin opposed “the revolutionary foreign policy worked out by him (Mao Zedong).” But the essence of this “revolutionary foreign policy” is pointedly illustrated by the invitation to Nixon and the pursuit of an accommodation with U.S. imperialism.

The indictment against Lin and the others smacks of a police version of a great historical event. If Lin Biao was opposed to “the revolutionary foreign policy” — that is to an accommodation with the U.S. — it doesn’t necessarily follow that he is a Soviet revisionist and on such friendly terms with the Soviet Union as to be able to flee there. Rather, this opposition appears to verify the existence of a progressive opposition to the new foreign policy followed by the CPC.

If speculation about this opposition is rampant, the CPC leaders have only themselves to blame. It is not likely that the party and the state in China are so weak that they could not possibly bring the nature of this dispute to the attention of the party and the public, that is, to bring the masses into the struggle. Was it not really fear of the masses, or fear of the response the masses would have to the new foreign policy that made the CPC leaders keep everything secret so that only the bourgeoisie in the West and the revisionists in the Soviet Union knew about it?

The ouster of Lin bears a remarkable resemblance to Stalin’s purge of the Red Army general, Tukhachevsky, et al. They were executed in secret and it was only afterwards that Stalin was able to make a deal with Hitler — the Stalin-Hitler pact. But even Stalin did not tell the then-French Premier Daladier about the executions

and ouster of the generals before at least informing the Soviet public.

Lin's ouster also bears a strange resemblance to Khrushchev's elimination of the Molotov-Kaganovich group from the Central Committee on grounds that are again similar to the hints that the CPC is making about Lin Biao. Molotov and Kaganovich, two of the oldest members of the Bolshevik party and two of Stalin's closest supporters, were indicted by Khrushchev on grounds that they were opposed to peaceful coexistence with the West.

The Western imperialist press showed unconcealed glee at the expulsion of Molotov and Kaganovich. All those who were following events in the Soviet Union knew that Stalin, as well as Kaganovich and Molotov, who was Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union for a long time, had been preaching and practicing peaceful coexistence for years. The indictment had no basis in fact. The real issue was that Khrushchev was taking a course in foreign affairs which was so far to the right — so much further than Stalin had gone — that they, in a measure, opposed it.

The fundamental turn in foreign policy initiated by Mao is the very type of turn which Mao so vehemently and correctly fought against in Khrushchev — the turn towards peaceful coexistence, a phrase which symbolizes abandonment of the revolutionary struggle abroad, support of the nationalist bourgeoisie in underdeveloped countries, and friendship with the imperialist West, particularly with the U.S. Moreover, the turn comes at a time that could scarcely hurt the world struggle more, when the beleaguered Vietnamese people are spilling their blood to get the U.S. imperialists off their backs.

### **Frank appeal to masses or secrecy**

The CPC was duty-bound to present its position frankly and publicly to the masses — not a year after it all happened, and not through the mouths of Bandaranaike and Schuman, but through party documents and party discussion. Lin, as well as his

collaborators and allies, are not just a few accidental individuals. They constituted an entire stratum in the leadership of the party and the revolution. Lin, as everybody knows, was considered to be the successor to Mao. In fact, his succession was even put into the constitution. To remove a leader who is constitutionally destined to succeed Mao without informing the masses, let alone obtaining their approval, is a sharp break from the earlier revolutionary practice of the CPC.

We draw a sharp line between support for the Cultural Revolution and support for unverified, unfounded, and concocted fabrications against Lin Biao. Even assuming that Chairman Mao and his supporters are correct in their charges, it is also clear by now, according to Chairman Mao's own words, that Lin opposed the turn to peaceful coexistence with the imperialist bourgeoisie.

Any attempt to apologize for the handling of the Lin Biao ouster will not hold water. Even assuming that it was not possible to openly conduct a struggle over foreign policy, it points up a tremendous weakness in the present political structure of People's China. Even if we were to agree that it was not possible to conduct an open struggle, the Chinese Revolution is by now strong enough to call a weakness by its right name, rather than to embellish it by calling it a virtue.

At the present time, the U.S. ruling class is most eagerly seeking an accommodation with People's China because it hopes that the CPC leadership will help it out of the abysmal military and diplomatic crisis in which it finds itself. Vietnam is, of course, at the very heart of the U.S. crisis. The capitalist media, too, is taking its cue from the needs of U.S. imperialist strategy. In contrast to the way the media handled the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution — which they maligned and misrepresented — they are very discreetly handling the Lin Biao affair.

### **Engels on revolution: Analogy with two tendencies in Cultural Revolution**

"All revolutions of modern times," wrote Engels, "beginning with the great English

revolution of the seventeenth century, showed (certain) features which appeared inseparable from every revolutionary struggle. They appeared applicable, also, to the struggles of the proletariat for its emancipation."

What are these features?

"As a rule," Engels goes on, "after the first great success, the victorious minority [here Engels speaks of the bourgeoisie which is a minority in their revolution — S.M.] became divided; one half was pleased with what had been gained, the other wanted to go still further, and put forward new demands, which to a certain extent at least, were also in the real or apparent interests of the great mass of the people.

"In individual cases these more radical demands were realized, but often only for a moment; the more moderate party again gained the upper hand, and what had eventually been won was wholly or partly lost again; the vanquished shrieked of treachery, or ascribed their defeat to accident. But, in truth, the position was mainly this: the achievements of the first victory were only safeguarded by the second victory of the more radical party; this having been attained, and with it, what was necessary for the moment, the radicals and their achievements vanished once more from the stage."

"The achievement of the first victory" in China, the ouster of Chiang Kai-Shek, and the destruction of the bourgeois-landlord state machine, "was only safeguarded," according to Engels' analysis, "by the second victory," the Cultural Revolution. "This having been attained, and, with it, what was necessary for the moment, the radicals and their achievements vanished once more from the stage." This is what happened to the left faction in the Cultural Revolution.

One part of the leadership of the Cultural Revolution was, in the words of Engels, "pleased with what had been gained," the other section of the leadership, Lin, Chen Boda, and others, "wanted to go still further, and put forward new demands, which

to a certain extent, at least, were also in the real or apparent interests of the great mass of the people."

Many radical demands were made during the Cultural Revolution, some were wild ones, but on the whole, they were healthy. "In individual cases, these more radical demands were realized." But, "the more moderate party again gained the upper hand and what eventually had been won was wholly or partly lost again; the vanquished," whom Mao now calls ultra-lefts, "cry treachery or ascribe their defeat to accident, where in truth their position was mainly this: the achievements of the first victory were only safeguarded by the second victory of the more radical party."

What does this mean? It means that the real lasting achievements of the Cultural Revolution were not the idealistic and occasionally ultra-revolutionary proposals made by the more radical elements in the Cultural Revolution, of whom there were many, especially among the youth. The real achievement was the safeguarding of the new property relations, of blocking the road to capitalist restoration. That could "only have been done with the aid of the more radical party" leaders, as Engels says. "This, however, having been attained, and with it what was necessary for the moment," — the stabilization of the new class relations in China — "the radicals and their achievements vanished once more from the stage.

This really explains the elimination of the Lin Biao-Chen Boda group. "Their real work was done." Their participation and leadership in the Cultural Revolution helped block capitalist restoration and to safeguard the new property relations established by the revolution.

A proletarian revolution, however, differs, among other things, from a bourgeois revolution, in that a proletarian revolution organically tends in the direction of worldwide proletarian revolution. It also needs a revolutionary worldwide perspective for its further socialist development. A bourgeois revolution, on the other hand, is nationalistic in character and subordinates everything to the material

interests of the national bourgeoisie.

Peaceful coexistence and accommodation with the West is what Mao proposed as the new foreign policy. This is what the “radical faction,” as Engels would call it, rejected and opposed. They were vanquished as earlier opponents of peaceful accommodation with the West were vanquished in the long period following Lenin’s death in the Soviet Union.

But the decay of the worldwide system of imperialism daily brings in its train economic, social, and political catastrophes for the masses as well as genocidal imperialist wars. This makes the worldwide proletarian revolution all the more imperative and inevitable, and peaceful accommodation with the West a reactionary utopia.

Source: [Marxists Internet Archive](https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1972/08/25/index.htm)

## Part 2

August 25, 1972: No social revolution has ever coincided with the conception entertained by the ideologists of its time or its leading participants. Probably the Russian Revolution comes closest to conceptions that were held by its principal leaders. So many misconceptions of the Chinese Revolution prevailed that years after the triumph of the Revolution and the ouster of Chiang Kai-Shek, the class character of the Chinese Revolution was still shrouded in confusion.

Just as the West European social democrats and the Mensheviks in Czarist Russia could not believe that a proletarian revolution was possible in a backward country overwhelmed by a huge preponderance of the peasantry and an ill-developed bourgeoisie, so Western scholars and Marxists to boot, went even further in the case of China and even denied that a proletarian revolution had taken place. They advanced substantially the same erroneous theories as their colleagues in the earlier

era and compounded them.

The long years in which the Chinese Red Army, led by the CPC was conducting the struggle against the bourgeois-landlord regime of Chiang Kai-Shek was characterized as agrarian in its class nature. The CPC itself, regardless of its advocacy of Marxism-Leninism, they explained, was merely promoting an agrarian revolution. This view was particularly rampant in the United States and vigorously pushed by the liberal bourgeoisie, including some of the highest-ranking State Department officials, not to speak of the influential liberal publicists such as Owen Lattimore and others.

Some organizations which proclaimed themselves Marxists were particularly stubborn in promoting this view, and even the CP leaders in this country, undoubtedly getting their cue from the Soviet leaders while expressing solidarity with a fraternal party, nonetheless conveyed the impression that they, too, in a large measure, regarded it as basically an agrarian revolution successfully carried out. Whether this objectively reflected the arrogance implicit in the attitude of an imperialist ruling class toward a formerly colonial country, only history will be able to confirm. It is at least as likely that the reservations of the Western CP leaders, generally, reflected the fear of the Soviet bureaucracy of the consequences that a proletarian revolution in China would entail in the struggle for leadership over the Communist movement and of the world working class.

As we have seen, the Chinese Revolution can be divided into two great phases. The first one — we are still using the words of Engels — “displaced one definite class rule by another” — in this case the ouster of the bourgeois-landlord class from power and the establishment of what was in essence a Proletarian Dictatorship. But this victorious revolution, like all previous victorious revolutions (at least in European history), became endangered by restorationist elements. What was needed historically, was a second, supplementary revolution, in order to fortify, consolidate,

and safeguard the fundamental accomplishment of the first revolution, the new class dictatorship. Hence the Cultural Revolution.

In the minds of its participants, it might have been conceived as an entirely new revolution, a revolution that had far loftier objectives than the mere safeguarding and securing of new property relations which had already been won more than a decade ago. But the subjective desires of the participants and the objective historical result, while not completely at variance, certainly did not conform with reality as it has unfolded.

## **Historical parallels**

What was the historical mission of the Jacobin dictatorship? It was to clear the road for the rule of the French bourgeoisie. In France, more than anywhere else, feudalism had been extinguished, cut root and branch, by the Revolution. Yet the bourgeoisie did not, until late in the nineteenth century, hold exclusive political power. It, again and again, fell back to sharing it with other class formations. Even more so in England. The bourgeoisie there never held undivided sway.

"Even after the victory of 1832," says Engels, "the bourgeoisie left the landed aristocracy in almost exclusive possession of the leading government offices." It took Bismarck to unify Germany. He swept away the feudal obstructions to the development of German capitalism. He himself was, of course, a junker, and it was the junker feudal landed aristocracy that dominated Germany. Indeed the German bourgeoisie did not rule directly until the Weimar Republic (after World War I).

The basic reason why it is possible for the bourgeoisie to share power with segments of the older feudal classes, such as the aristocracy, is, of course, that they are both possessing classes, both exploiting classes, and they share a common hostility to the exploited. Their interests, nevertheless, are antagonistic.

This is equally well demonstrated by the Civil War in the United States. What was the historic mission of the North's struggle against the South? In order to arrive at a conclusion, we ought to view the entire period of the Civil War and Reconstruction as two phases, two great historical turning points, just as in the Chinese Revolution.

What was the objective of the struggle? The Northern ruling class and the Southern ruling class, as we said, were both possessing, oppressing, and exploiting classes. But the North based itself in and had its origin and development in the modern capitalist mode of production, which is based on the private ownership of the means of production and on wage labor.

The Southern ruling class was also an exploiting, oppressing, possessing class no more avaricious than the Northern ruling class. It, too, based itself on the private ownership of the means of production but on chattel (slave) labor, not on wage labor. Slavery in the U.S. was an integral part of the bourgeois mode of production in the system of commodity production.

But whereas the North based itself on the modern capitalist industrial form of wage exploitation ("free labor"), the South was based wholly on slave labor. The two systems were economically incompatible. A struggle between them became inevitable because the slave system could not adequately compete with the wage system of exploitation and was doomed to destruction.

In the minds of its progressive participants, the struggle was between "freedom and slavery." But the struggle of the Northern bourgeoisie against the slave-owning aristocracy was not out of any regard for freedom as such but was pursued because the slave system of exploitation was inhibiting the expansion of the modern capitalist system of wage slavery, capitalist production, and accumulation.

Four years of Civil War proved inadequate to firmly establish the capitalist wage system and the economic framework necessary for its functioning or to completely

root out the remnants of chattel slavery which later took the form of a feudal type of peasant-landlord relationship on the land (peonage). This tended to reduce the mass of the emancipated slaves to second-degree citizenship, devoid of the rights of emancipated wage labor in the North.

The period in history known as Reconstruction was a great effort by the Radical Republicans to bring about full freedom ("free labor"), full political equality for all (all males). This was the second phase of the revolution. It was historically needed, not as it was conceived in the minds of many who participated in it, to bring about full political equality of all citizens, but merely to secure, as Engels would say, "safeguard, the achievements of the first revolution."

The historic mission of the second revolution was to complete the destruction of chattel slavery, to destroy the power of the former slave-owning aristocracy, and to safeguard the revolution against any restoration.

Having achieved that, the conservative wing of the second revolution "was satisfied." The other wing, the Radical Republicans, which wanted to go further and bring about complete equality in political life, "vanished from the scene." Finally, the revolution ended in the shameless episode of the betrayal of 1877, which gave the Southern ruling class complete sway over the emancipated Black masses. The Southern ruling class was rearmed to protect its newly regained power.

Full political rights to the Black masses, as the bourgeoisie saw it, were not necessary for the functioning of their capitalist industrial system of exploitation. The maintenance of the Black masses in a subjugated and politically expropriated status served the Northern ruling class' ability to expand capitalist accumulation but only in alliance and partnership with the Southern ruling class.

As can be seen, the Northern capitalist class made an accommodation with the Southern ruling class with whom it shared power rather than to leave them

powerless by a continuation of the revolutionary struggle. To this very day, Northern capitalists share power with their Southern colleagues because of, among other reasons, the compromise that they made a century ago, which smoothed the way for capitalist expansion and accumulation and the ultimate conversion of the competitive stage of capitalism into monopoly capitalist imperialism.

Therein lies the origin of the super-exploitation of the Black masses and the reason why the Northern bourgeoisie did not fully emancipate the Black people. Only a proletarian revolution can fully emancipate all the oppressed, Black and white.

### **Sharing of power between hostile classes**

As we have seen, the bourgeoisie as a class has not always been able to rule exclusively without sharing power in a coalition with other classes or their representative factions. It has been able to rule exclusively only since the late nineteenth century. Only the North American bourgeoisie has held exclusive power — but only because feudalism was unknown on this continent. The settlers who ventured to the shores of the new world were not confronted with an entrenched feudal social order.

How different it was with the establishment of the two great socialist states, the Soviet Union and China. In both countries, there was a huge preponderance of peasant masses, an ill-developed bourgeoisie that had not bequeathed the necessary industrial and technological framework to enable the proletariat to commence an easy transition to socialism. In both countries, the legacy that the former possessing classes left was one of backwardness in industry, in technique, in education, and practically all fields of social development.

Moreover, an imperialist bourgeoisie, which had survived numerous social catastrophes and attempted proletarian revolutions (in Europe at least), still dominated over the major portion of the human race. Its industrial, technological,

and military power stood, and still stands, as the greatest threat to the socialist development of the USSR and China, other socialist countries, and the liberation movements.

### **Basic historical factors behind Soviet foreign policy regression**

Almost a quarter of a century after the Chinese Revolution and more than half a century since the October Socialist Revolution, the factors of industrial backwardness, preponderance of a huge peasantry, and the strengthening and revival of the imperialist system after the Second World War are still the basic factors that account for the eagerness, particularly on the part of the Soviet and Chinese leadership, to make an accommodation with the imperialists and renounce revolutionary internationalism.

There are those who see the regressive policy of both the Soviet Union and China as emanating almost exclusively from treachery and conspiracy. Others attribute it solely to mistakes in policy, the victory of reactionary over revolutionary leaders and the absence of proletarian democracy. Even taking all this into account, these policies can only be understood in the light of the broader perspective of objective circumstances of which they undoubtedly are the result.

However, if we view the problem in the light of half a century of experiences and in the light of the earlier experience of the bourgeoisie in the struggle against opponent possessing classes, we see that at certain stages in its development, as a ruling class, they were forced at various times and under varying circumstances to share power with opponent possessing classes. We see now that it is also characteristic of proletarian dictatorships established in backward countries.

The same tendency toward accommodation evidenced by the bourgeoisie before it attained full, exclusive political power is also common to the governing groups representing the socialist countries. There is however a fundamental difference

between the objective historical result obtained by the bourgeoisie as against that obtained by the governing leadership in the USSR and China.

The alliance that the bourgeoisie made with the older class formations, such as the landed aristocracy, had thus indubitable advantage which enabled it ultimately to conquer the feudal classes and take them completely in tow. The feudal system is a basically static system. The bourgeois system is dynamic. The bourgeoisie must constantly revolutionize its methods of production, speed development, improve technology, and adapt itself to the changing needs of the capitalist market. This is the law of life for the bourgeoisie.

The development of the productive forces in the imperialist epoch is, of course, retarded if compared with what a social system will do, but within the framework of capitalist production, the bourgeoisie continues the pursuit, with breakneck speed; of the development of technology. The feudal classes were not only static but they based their existence, as Marx pointed out as early as the Communist Manifesto, on the preservation of the old methods of production.

The bourgeoisie bases itself on constantly revolutionizing the method of production. The old mode of feudal production (or chattel slavery as it existed in the United States) having been destroyed, the bourgeoisie by the mere automatic processes of capitalist production and the blind forces of the market was ultimately able to reduce all previous social classes to its sway. Thus, elements of the landed aristocracy in Britain ultimately became bourgeois industrialists.

The bourgeoisie for a long time used a feudal monarchy and was able to convert it into a bourgeois monarchy. And the former parties of the feudal classes were absorbed into the bourgeois political system and became bulwarks of reaction on behalf of the bourgeois ruling class against revolutionary threats by the proletariat and oppressed peoples.

## **Difference between bourgeois and socialist systems**

The socialist system, at least in its initial formative stages, does not develop automatically; by its very nature, it has to be consciously planned and organized. And in this respect, it differs vitally from the bourgeois mode of production which is regulated by blind economic forces.

Because the first two great socialist proletarian revolutions took place not in the industrialized capitalist countries, but in underdeveloped countries, they faced some of the same problems that the early bourgeoisie faced in its struggle as a nascent ruling class.

Every political upheaval at the summit of governmental leadership is a symptom of social disturbance below.

An attempted coup, such as is attributed to Lin Biao, can only be a reflection of serious instability in the social and political relations between the basic classes in contemporary Chinese society.

According to the official statement issued by the Chinese Embassy in Algiers on Lin Biao, the explanation for Lin Biao engaging in a plot to assassinate Chairman Mao and seize power through a coup can be understood in a large measure from (1) "his underhanded nature" (2) "he was a two-faced man" who in reality was opposed to the "revolutionary foreign policy of Mao," and (3) "did not change his perverse nature one iota."

Acceptance of such an explanation for an enormous historical event does violence to history itself, especially if one examines the array of leaders involved.

These include: Lin Biao, the Defense Minister, Politburo member, and military leader since the early Thirties; Chen Boda, a member of the standing committee of the Politburo, a leader of the Cultural Revolution and for many years Mao's personal

secretary; Huang Yongsheng, former chief of the general staff of the armed forces; Wu Faxian, commander of the air force; Li Tsopeng, deputy chief of staff and political commissar of the navy; Chiu Huitso, deputy chief of staff of the army and head of the logistics department; Yeh Chun, a member of the party Politburo and director of the administrative office of the party military affairs committee; and Lin Liguo, Lin Biao's son who was deputy director of the air force operations department.

Such a conception brings us back to pre-Marxist notions of history where good men and evil fought plots and counterplots and where the reign of the arbitrary was the supreme rule of history.

But Marx's development of the materialist conception of history demonstrates conclusively that all political phenomena have a class base. It is especially true of political events of such enormous historical import as this elimination of an entire stratum of leadership. They not only were most prominent during the Cultural Revolution, but some of them spent their entire lifetime in the midst of the leadership of the CPC throughout the course of the Chinese Revolution.

Lenin wrote on December 24, 1922, in one of his last letters, regarding "grave differences in our party" which might cause a split. He went on to say: "Our party relies on two classes (workers and peasants) and therefore its instability would be possible and its downfall inevitable if there were no agreement between those two classes. In that event this or that measure, and generally all talk about the stability of our Central Committee, would be futile. No measures of any kind could prevent a split in such a case. But I hope that this is too remote a future and too improbable an event to talk about."

## **Collectivization in China and the Soviet Union**

Lenin wrote this, of course, before collectivization in the Soviet Union took place.

But even a collectivized peasantry is by no means a proletarian class. Collectivization sets the framework, and the socialist future depends on a multitude of factors in which a thoroughgoing industrialization and rationalization based on the most modern technique is most essential. The gap between rural life and life in the city is a great factor. It cannot be easily overcome even under the best of conditions.

The political denouement of the Lin-Chen grouping is the objective result of the instability of class relations in China, following upon the heels of the Cultural Revolution. Of course, they are immeasurably more stable than the relations in any of the bourgeois countries. The political crisis resulting in the Lin-Chen ouster reflects the true dimensions of this instability, and of Chairman Mao's quest for a resolution of it by fundamental changes in the foreign policy.

The extraordinary degree to which the Chinese peasantry was receptive to the revolutionary propaganda of the CPC and the PLA is often attributed solely to the tactics and strategy pursued by the leadership. This, of course, was very important and decisive.

But what is often lost sight of are the objective conditions that enabled the masses to respond to a revolutionary call to arms from a Marxist-Leninist party.

The Chinese peasantry, unlike peasants in Western Europe or in other semicolonial countries, had a great deal more in common with the Chinese proletariat. As Engels says in *The Peasant Wars in Germany*, concerning events more than four hundred years ago, "the German peasant of that time had this in common with the modern proletariat: that his share in products of the work was limited to a subsistence minimum necessary for his maintenance." (International Publishers, 1926)

The protracted character of the Chinese Revolution and the ruthless war upon the Chinese people conducted by the Japanese imperialists, which had caused such

unspeakable havoc, economic dislocation, ruination and destruction of lives and property, reduced the bulk of the Chinese peasantry, not only to the level of subsistence of the Chinese proletariat, but way below it, making the peasant far more susceptible to the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeois landlord regime.

The dictatorship of the proletariat has the economic and political problem of how to share, not only the work of socialist construction, but the distribution of the income between the classes, the workers, the peasants and all intermediate strata of the population.

Moreover, there is still the bourgeois intelligentsia, which, although shorn of its power, has not been destroyed but in the process of being reeducated, necessarily plays a key, if not central role in the economic, industrial, scientific and other phases of life.

More than in any other socialist country, the gap between the privileged and the ordinary worker or peasant has been narrowed and material inequality reduced, certainly by comparison with the Soviet Union. But the social contradictions continue, and are exacerbated, among other things, by the ever-increasing need of scientific and technological resources diverted for defense needs, which consume no small portion of the fruits of socialist construction.

Collectivization in China has made truly remarkable accomplishments. This is accounted for particularly by the participation of the masses, and the enthusiasm it evoked in the course of such a radical transformation. It took place without pushing, in fact avoiding, the type of material incentives which break up the solidarity of the masses, which was the practice in the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, the peasantry as a class is distinguished from the urban proletariat.

Both China and the Soviet Union have had to resort to huge purchases of wheat from the imperialist countries. This is only one aspect of an internal contradiction in

socialist countries which manifests itself in the form of some dependence on the West. Some of the more sophisticated technology developed in the capitalist countries is needed for socialist construction both in the USSR and in China. This is another aspect of dependency.

Finally, the productive forces, which are restricted by the character of having national states in the socialist bloc, with just bare economic ties between the countries, and lacking the necessary comradely economic cooperation, is another drawback.

The socialist camp, economically speaking so far as China and the Soviet Union go, is merely a potential. Great power chauvinism shown by the Soviet leaders since the death of Lenin in relation to the other socialist countries has alienated them, forced each to seek its “own” road to socialist construction, which, from the point of view of Marxism, is a reversion to anachronistic national self-sufficiency in the socialist camp.

### **COMECON and socialist cooperation**

Although the Soviet Union has somewhat relaxed its rigid dominant economic control over COMECON (which is the USSR’s answer to the imperialist Common Market) in Eastern Europe, it is nothing like the necessary socialist cooperation between socialist countries which respect each other’s sovereignty and are all pledged to socialist construction for the common good of all.

Romania is a classic example of a small socialist country that ordinarily has everything to gain by economic cooperation with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries in a common bloc or socialist federation. Ceaușescu’s half-turn to the West can only be explained on the basis of the Soviet leaders’ shabby treatment of the People’s Republic of Romania. What the Soviet Union tried to do or force upon Romania was the kind of division of labor in COMECON which would leave Romania

underdeveloped, economically deformed, and an appendage to Soviet needs rather than on the basis of the common needs of all the socialist countries.

The PRR has no fundamental political differences with the Soviet leaders and its overtures to the West are based strictly on economic considerations.

### **Lin Biao case flows from combination of historical forces**

These then are some of the fundamental factors that lie behind the latest phase of developments in both China and the Soviet Union.

The Lin Biao affair must be seen in that historical perspective, as China's and the Soviet Union's eagerness to make an accommodation, some sort of more or less stable detente, with the imperialist West at the expense of the Vietnamese people and the world revolution flows from the constellation of historical forces.

Any number of erroneous conclusions can be drawn from this, especially in this land of classic rabid anticommunism. In a recent issue of the New York Review of Books, the well-known liberal publicist I.F. Stone, writing about the capitulation of both China and the USSR on the Haiphong crisis, said, "Brezhnev and Zhou Enlai have become the running dogs of the U.S. imperialists."

Certainly, the conduct of the Chinese and Soviet leaders in the Haiphong crisis can evoke an easy protest and utter disgust. I.F. Stone is angry at the Nixon administration for its imperialist brinkmanship and is frustrated, as are millions of others throughout the world, that neither the Soviet nor the Chinese leaders should pick up the challenge (not necessarily in a nuclear confrontation). Stone's characterization of the leadership of China and the Soviet Union cannot, however, be taken for a serious appraisal. Stone will take comfort from his frustration in joining the McGovern campaign.

Revolutionary Marxists cannot for long afford the luxury of pessimism. The need is

to chart a course for the revolutionary struggle against imperialism based upon an accurate appraisal of the position and orientation of the Soviet and Chinese leaders as well as the domestic situation.

## **Two types of accommodation**

The Soviet leaders (and the Chinese leaders to a lesser extent) have renounced the perspective of world revolution and have abandoned the liberation struggle. But by no means have they galloped into the arms of imperialist policy and stabilized their relations with the U.S. on the basis of carrying out Washington's orders.

Such mistaken conclusions have been made with regard to the Soviet Union in the late thirties during the Stalin-Hitler pact period which swung an entire generation back into the camp of social democracy.

Regardless of any and all attempts at accommodation, the two social systems — that of the imperialist system and the socialist system prevalent in the Soviet Union and China — are diametrically opposed to each other and are based on antagonistic class structures.

Any accommodation, any secret arrangements that have been made can only be of a temporary character. They will, of course, hurt the world movement. They are not however like the accommodations and alliances made between the bourgeoisie and the feudal classes or between the North and the South in the United States.

The accommodations made between those classes were viable accommodations because the bourgeoisie, by virtue of the automatic processes of capitalist production, was able to assimilate whatever class fragments of the feudal classes were left into the bourgeois order of society and actually strengthen the system against the exploited classes. There was a common denominator between those classes. They were both possessing, exploiting social formations and had a common

hostility to the oppressed.

It is otherwise with the socialist states. The class differences between them and the bourgeoisie are of an utterly irreconcilable character. Neither system can long endure, as Lenin so well said in 1921, without there being a funeral for one or the other.

The fundamental basis for the revival of the capitalist system of exploitation, as particularly evidenced following the Second World War, lies in the fact that contrary to Marx's original prognosis, the socialist revolution came first not where conditions were most favorable for the development of socialist society, but where the imperialist system was weakest. The failure to overthrow the capitalist system in Western Europe, aside from fundamentally false policies, indicates that the task of proletarian revolution is an immeasurably more difficult one than had been conceived prior to World War I.

On the other hand, the imperialist system in the epoch of its general decline cannot go on without enormous economic crises, political catastrophes, counter-revolutionary coups, subversion of socialist countries, and the prosecution of imperialist wars. This alone makes the proletarian revolution necessary and inevitable.

Source: [Marxists Internet Archive](https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1921/theses/)



---

# Marxism and insurrection: In defense of the LA rebellion

written by Struggle - La Lucha

February 21, 2023

*Sam Marcy, a leading Marxist thinker and fighter of the second half of the 20th century, died 25 years ago on Feb. 1, 1998. To mark the occasion, Struggle-La Lucha is publishing a selection of Marcy's articles that demonstrate the breadth and depth of his analysis and strategic thought on behalf of the workers and oppressed, while also providing insight into today's struggles.*

May 5, 1992 — The brutal suppression of the Los Angeles insurrection offers a classic example of the relationship of bourgeois democracy to the capitalist state. The statistics most eloquently demonstrate the relationship.

The number of arrests in Los Angeles County alone as of May 5 is 12,111 and still rising. The number of injuries has reached a staggering 2,383. Several hundred are critically wounded. Thus the number of dead at present will undoubtedly continue to rise.

All this has to be seen in light of the repressive forces amassed by the city, state and federal government: 8,000 police, 9,800 National Guard troops, 1,400 Marines, 1,800 Army soldiers and 1,000 federal marshals. (Associated Press, May 5)

At the bottom of it all Marxism differs from all forms of bourgeois sociology in this most fundamental way: all bourgeois social sciences are directed at covering up and concealing — sometimes in the most shameful way — the predatory class character of present-day capitalist society. Marxism, on the other hand, reveals in the clearest and sharpest manner not only the antagonisms that continually rend asunder present-day bourgeois society but also their basis — the ownership of the means of production by a handful of millionaires and billionaires.

Bourgeois sociology must leave out of consideration the fact that society is divided into exploiter and exploited, oppressors of nationalities and oppressed. The basis for both the exploitation and oppression is the ownership of the means of production by an ever-diminishing group of the population that controls the vital arteries of contemporary society. They are the bourgeoisie, the ruling class. At the other end of the axis is the proletariat of all nationalities, the producer of all the fabulous wealth. Material wealth has been vastly increasing along with the masses' productivity of labor. But only 1% of the population amasses the lion's share of what the workers produce while a greater and greater mass is impoverished.

### **Flattering 'the people'**

Especially during periods of parliamentary elections as in the U.S. today, bourgeois sociologists are full of effusive praise for "the people." Each and every capitalist politician embraces "the people" with what often becomes disgusting flattery. The people are everything during periods when the bourgeoisie needs them most of all, as during its many predatory wars. Indeed, at no time is the bourgeoisie so attached to the people as when it is in deepest crisis.

But the people — the unarmed masses — become nothing, not even human beings, when they are in the full throes of rebellion against the bourgeoisie's monstrous police and military machine. Does not the Los Angeles insurrection prove all this?

No amount of praise, no amount of flattery, can substitute for a clear-cut delineation of the class divisions that perpetually rend society apart.

To the bourgeois social scientists the masses are the object of history. Marxist theory, on the other hand, demonstrates that the masses are the subject of history. Where they are the objects of history they are manipulated as raw material to suit the aims of ruling class exploitation. They become the subject of history only when they rise to the surface in mass revolutionary action.

Their rising as in Los Angeles is what Karl Marx called the locomotive of history. Their revolutionary struggle accelerates history bringing to the fore the real character of the mass movement.

To speak of the people in general terms, without cutting through the propaganda to reveal the relations of exploiter to exploited, of oppressor to oppressed, is to participate in covering up the reality.

### **Oppression of a whole people**

Most indispensable for an understanding of contemporary society is the relation between oppressor and oppressed nationalities. One cannot apply Marxism to any meaningful extent without first recognizing the existence of national oppression — the oppression of a whole people by capitalist imperialism. This is one of the most characteristic features of the present world reality.

This concept above all others must be kept foremost if we hope to understand what has happened in Los Angeles and in other major cities of this country.

The insurrection and the way it is being suppressed closely follow the exposition by Frederick Engels in his book "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State," and later brought up to date by Lenin in "State and Revolution."

### **What is the state? What is democracy?**

Bourgeois sociologists and scholars and above all capitalist politicians always confound the relationship between the two. They often treat them as a single phenomenon. In reality, the relation between democracy and the state is based on an inner struggle — between form and essence.

The state can take on many different forms. A state can have the form of a bourgeois democracy; it can be a monarchy; it may be ruled by a military junta. And in modern society, on the very edge of the 21st century, it may have a totalitarian or fascist form.

Whatever its form, its essence is determined by which class is dominant economically and consequently also dominant politically. In contemporary society, this means the rule of the imperialist bourgeoisie over the proletariat and the oppressed nationalities.

### **Bourgeoisie needs different forms of rule**

The bourgeoisie cannot maintain its class rule by relying solely on one particular form of the state. It can't rely only on the governing officialdom — even those at the very summit of the state, even when they are solely millionaires and billionaires. Under such circumstances, should there be an imperialist war or a deep capitalist crisis that leads to ferment among the masses, the bourgeois state would be vulnerable to revolutionary overthrow.

But the state is not just the officialdom — who presume to govern in the interest of all the people. The state in its essential characteristics is the organization, to quote

Engels, of a “special public force” that consists not merely of armed men and women but of material appendages, prisons and repressive institutions of all kinds.

The decisive basic ingredient of the state is the armed forces with all their material appendages and all who service them. Most noteworthy are the prisons — more and more of them — calculated to break the spirit of millions of the most oppressed while pretending to some mock forms of rehabilitation. All the most modern means — mental and physical — are used to demoralize and deprave the character of those incarcerated. These repressive institutions, this public force, appear so omnipotent against the unarmed mass of the oppressed and exploited.

But it stands out as the very epitome of gentility and humaneness when it comes to incarcerating favored individuals, especially the very rich, who have transgressed the norms of capitalist law.

In general then, the Los Angeles insurrection shows that democracy is a veil that hides the repressive character of the capitalist state. The state at all times is the state of the dominant class. And the objective of the special bodies of armed men and women is to secure, safeguard and uphold the domination of the bourgeoisie.

### **Growth of the state**

Engels explained that in the course of development of capitalist society, as the class antagonisms grow sharper, the state — that is, the public force — grows stronger.

Said Engels, “We have only to look at our present-day Europe where class struggle, rivalry and conquest has screwed up the public power to such a pitch that it threatens to devour the whole of society and even the state itself.”

Written more than 100 years ago, this refers to the growth of militarism. The sharpening of class and national antagonisms had even then resulted in larger and larger appropriations for civilian and military personnel employed for the sole

purpose of suppressing the civil population at home and waging adventurist imperialist wars abroad. The state grows in proportion as class and national antagonisms develop. Democracy is merely a form that hides the predatory class character of the bourgeois state. Nothing so much proves this as the steady and consistent growth of militarism and the police forces in times of peace as well as war.

The ruling class continually cultivates racism to keep the working class divided, in order to maintain its domination. This is as true at home as it is abroad. The forces of racism and national oppression have been deliberately stimulated by Pentagon and State Department policies all across the globe.

### **Marxism on violence**

After every stage in the struggle of the workers and oppressed people, there follows an ideological struggle over what methods the masses should embrace to achieve their liberation from imperialist monopoly capital. There are always those who abjure violence while minimizing the initial use of violence by the ruling class. They denounce it in words, while in deeds they really cover it up. That's precisely what's happening now.

Yes indeed, they readily admit the verdict in the Rodney King beating was erroneous and unfair. But — and here their voices grow louder — "The masses should not have taken to the streets and taken matters into their own hands." Their denunciation of the violence of the ruling class is subdued and muffled — above all it is hypocritical, a sheer formality. It's an indecent way of seeming to take both sides of the argument when what follows is, in reality, a condemnation of the masses.

In times when the bourgeoisie is up against the wall, when the masses have risen suddenly and unexpectedly, the bourgeoisie gets most lyrical in abjuring violence. It conjures up all sorts of lies and deceits about the unruliness of a few among the

masses as against the orderly law-abiding many.

Marxism here again cuts through it all. The Marxist view of violence flows from an altogether different concept. It first of all distinguishes between the violence of the oppressors as against the responsive violence of the masses. Just to be able to formulate it that way is a giant step forward, away from disgusting bourgeois praise for nonviolence. It never occurs to any of them to show that the masses have never made any real leap forward with the theory of nonviolence. Timidity never made it in history.

Indeed, Marxists do prefer nonviolent methods if the objectives the masses seek — freedom from oppression and exploitation — can be obtained that way. But Marxism explains the historical evolution of the class struggle as well as the struggle of oppressed nations as against oppressors.

### **Revolutions, force and violence**

As Marx put it, “force is the midwife to every great revolution.” This is what Marx derived from his study of the class struggle in general and of capitalist society in particular.

None of the great revolutions has ever occurred without being accompanied by force and violence. And it is always the oppressor — the ruling class and the oppressing nationality — that is most congenitally prone to use force as soon as the masses raise their heads.

In all the bourgeois revolutions in Europe, this new would-be ruling class used the masses to fight its battles against the feudal lords. Then, when the masses raised their heads to fight for their own liberation against the bourgeoisie, they were met with the most fearful and unmitigated violence. All European history is filled with such examples, from the revolutions of 1789 and 1848 to the Paris Commune of

1871.

Does not the bourgeoisie, once it has tamed the proletariat at home, use force and violence through its vast military armada to more efficiently exploit and suppress the many underdeveloped nations throughout the world?

It is so illuminating that Iraq, the nation subjected to the most violent, truly genocidal military attack in recent times, has taken upon itself to press a formal complaint in the UN Security Council on behalf of the embattled masses in Los Angeles and other cities. Iraq called on that body to condemn and investigate the nature of the developments here and the irony is that the head of the Security Council felt obligated to accept the complaint. Not even the U.S. delegate, obviously taken by surprise, objected.

How much real difference is there between the suppression of the Paris Commune in 1871 and that of the revolutionary rising of the masses in Los Angeles in 1992? The brutal suppression differs only in magnitude and not in essence. While it might seem that in Los Angeles national oppression alone is involved, in reality it derives from the class exploitation of the African American masses dating back to the days of slavery.

### **Watts and social legislation**

Following the Watts insurrection the bourgeoisie made lofty promises to improve the situation. The Watts, Detroit, Newark and other rebellions did win significant concessions that eventually were enacted into law. They became the basis for a temporary improvement in the economic and social situation of the oppressed people.

None of the progressive legislation, up to and including affirmative action, would have been enacted had it not been for the rebellions during the 1960s and the

1970s. Yet now, almost three decades after the Watts rebellion, the masses are in greater poverty and the repression is heavier than before. The fruits of what was won have withered on the vine as racism and the deterioration of economic conditions took hold once again.

Once more the bourgeois politicians attempted to mollify the masses with endless promises of improvements never destined to see the light of day. This evoked a profound revulsion among the masses. It took only an incident like the incredible verdict of the rigged jury that freed the four police officers in the Rodney King beating to ignite a storm of revolutionary protest.

If revolutionary measures are ever to have any validity, doesn't a case like this justify the people taking destiny into their own hands?

### **Less workers, more cops**

How interesting that technology everywhere displaces labor, reducing the number of personnel.

There was a time when it was hoped that the mere development of technical and industrial progress, the increase in mechanization and automation, would contribute to the well-being of the masses. This has once again shown itself to be a hollow mockery. The truth is that the development of higher and more sophisticated technology under capitalism doesn't contribute to the welfare of the masses but, on the contrary, throws them into greater misery.

What has been the general trend? The growth of technology, particularly sophisticated high technology, has reduced the number of workers employed in industry as well as in the services. The introduction of labor-saving devices and methods has dramatically reduced the number of workers in all fields.

But the opposite trend prevails in the police forces. This is an absolutely

incontestable fact.

At one time the police patrolled the streets on foot. Maybe they used a public telephone for communications with headquarters. Today they are equipped with sophisticated gear. They ride either on motorcycles or in police cars or helicopters. They communicate by radio.

All this should reduce the number of police. But the trend is quite the contrary: to increase the forces of repression. This is not geared to productivity as in industry. Their growth is geared to the growth of national antagonisms, the growth of racism, and the bourgeoisie's general anti-labor offensive.

In Los Angeles, the bourgeoisie is forced to bring in federal troops to assist city and state authorities. The social composition of the Army is not just a cross-section of capitalist society. The Army and Marines, especially the infantry, have a preponderance of Black and Latino soldiers. What does this signify?

The U.S. imperialists had to wage a technological war against Iraq out of fear that the preponderance of Black and Latino soldiers could end up in a disastrous rebellion; they might refuse to engage in a war against their sisters and brothers in the interests of the class enemy. That's why the armed forces never really got into the ground war that seemed at first to be in the offing.

In Los Angeles the local police and state forces were inadequate. Only because the masses were unarmed was the bourgeoisie able to suppress what was in truth an insurrection — a revolutionary uprising. Spontaneity and consciousness as Marx would put it, such a rising is a festival of the masses. The incidental harm is far outweighed by the fact that it raises the level of the struggle to a higher plateau. The wounds inflicted by the gendarmerie will be healed. The lessons will be learned: that a spontaneous uprising has to be supported with whatever means are available; that a great divide exists between the leaders and the masses.

No viable class or nation in modern capitalist society can hope to take destiny in its own hands by spontaneous struggles alone. Spontaneity as an element of social struggle must beget its own opposite: leadership and organization. Consciousness of this will inevitably grow.

Source: [Marxists Internet Archive](#)



---

## What the banks did to Poland

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
February 21, 2023

*Sam Marcy, a leading Marxist thinker and fighter of the second half of the 20th century, died 25 years ago on Feb. 1, 1998. To mark the occasion, Struggle-La Lucha is publishing a selection of Marcy's articles that show the breadth and depth of his analysis and strategic thought on behalf of the workers and oppressed, while also providing insight into today's struggles.*

### **Editor's introduction to 1988 pamphlet**

In April 1988, thousands of workers in steel, shipbuilding, and transport went on

strike in cities throughout Poland. The strikers demanded higher wages to keep pace with price increases that had been imposed on food and other basic items as part of a new economic reform package introduced by the Polish government.

The article featured in this pamphlet was written by Sam Marcy while the strikes were still in progress. Marcy contrasts the 1988 strike wave, which he characterizes as a spontaneous movement of workers seeking economic relief from regressive price hikes, to the rightwing, pro-imperialist “Solidarity”-led movement of 1980.

While noting vast differences between the movements of 1980 and 1988, Marcy explains that the cause of both crises stems from the “profound and decisive influence on the Polish economy of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank ... and most importantly of the government of the United States.”

How could a socialist country, a neighbor and ally of the Soviet Union, come under the “decisive influence” of the capitalist countries and international finance capital?

Part of the problem comes from the fact that Poland sought massive loans from Western capitalist banks and turned to the capitalist world market in an effort to accelerate its industrial development.

The big capitalist banks and the U.S. government, in spite of their hatred for socialism, eagerly granted \$35 billion in loans to Poland. Their goal was not to “help develop” socialism, but to ensnare Poland in the same neocolonial vise, popularly known as the “debt trap,” that has taken hold of Brazil, Mexico, Egypt, and other developing countries today.

The capitalist banks first granted massive bank loans and then, a few years later, pushed the Polish government to impose austerity plans designed to raise capital to meet the debt payment, including extortionate interest.

The debt service to the banks is paid for by lowering wages, raising prices, and

cutting social programs in the debtor country. It wasn't the failings of socialism, as the Western media claims, but the imperialist-mandated reforms that caused the economic hardship prompting the Polish workers to fight back.

Marcy writes that the strike struggle was the consequence of the relationship between imperialist neocolonialism and a weakened socialist state, and he asserts, "the two cannot peacefully coexist for any length of time ... one or the other will have to give way."

Marcy wrote extensively about Poland for over three decades. A more comprehensive collection of his writings appears in "[Poland — Behind the Crisis](#)."

## **Causes and consequences of the Polish crisis**

May 19, 1988 - It's about time that the public in the world and in the United States be told the truth about the crisis in Poland.

What needs to be revealed is not some deep, dark secret fortified by unpublished documents or unavailable data. It's all in the public record here and in other leading capitalist countries as well as in Poland. The fundamental problem is to distinguish the causes of the crisis from its effects.

The cause of the crisis lies in the profound and decisive influence over the Polish economy of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, several hundred West European and Japanese banks, and most importantly, of the government of the United States.

## **Last October's reforms**

The most recent problem convulsing Polish society arose from a series of economic reforms and some political changes announced by the Polish government on Oct. 10, 1987. Details of these reforms were reported in the New York Times on Oct. 11, 14

and 17 of 1987. In the Oct. 11 article, the Times characterized the reforms as a "package of far-reaching governmental and economic changes mixing capitalism with socialism which would bring higher prices and increased unemployment, but would also create the conditions for advance."

But it didn't say how the advance would take place.

"The measures," wrote the Times, "appear destined to change Poland's centralized communist economy drastically and many economists and officials say they pose a crucial test for the government of General Wojciech Jaruzelski."

Not reported in this account, however, is that these reforms as they are called were tailor-made to meet the demands of the international capitalist bankers and the government of the United States. That's the cause of the crisis.

The strikes of the Polish workers and the social chaos are the social effect of the Polish government's attempt to implement the arrogant demands of the imperialist banks. To blot out this truth, to obscure it with a heavy volume of anti-communist capitalist propaganda completely covers up the real situation in Poland.

Of course, the Polish People's Republic has made a gross miscalculation, first in going along with the demands and then by trying to implement them in a way that has caused deep social and economic chaos and forced the workers out on strike.

Let us see precisely what these reforms are and just how the government is trying to implement them.

### **Breakup of Poland's banking system**

The first and most important reform, which is made little of in the capitalist press, is the breakup of the Polish national banking system. Assuming the plan goes through, it would put Poland's banks on the road to a return to capitalist competition and free

them from virtually all government control.

As is well known, each one of the imperialist states has a centralized monetary and financial system which the imperialist governments control on behalf of the bankers. There are also, of course, independent banks, some small, some large, that compete with each other as part of the capitalist system.

Under imperialism, the banks are so tightly linked to industry and agriculture that Lenin defined this complex intimately tied together by the banking system as "finance capital."

The Polish banking system had been tied to the development of socialist industry and agriculture. The attempt to break it up into small competing units more or less independent of the government divorces it from industry, from the socialist sector, and gives it the upper hand in relation to the socialist sector of the economy, particularly the heavy industries which are its core in Poland.

The second aspect of this breakup of the banking system is to permit the banks to lend more liberally to the private sector, which has grown enormously in the last few years.

Another aspect is to make access to foreign currency more easily available to borrowers, especially the independent entrepreneurs. This will multiply the links between Polish banking and finance and the private, so-called independent sectors of the Polish economy, on the one hand, and foreign capital.

In a socialist economy, the banks merely make credit available to the industrial sector in accordance with an economic plan. It is purely a financial and bookkeeping matter, rather than one conveying economic and political authority. The banking officialdom in Poland have generally been considered lower-ranking government officials, not invested with a great deal of either political or economic power.

However, the reform intends to create competitive commercial banks. It will also facilitate companies (it doesn't say which ones) which seek cheap sources of capital. Thus, it seeks to elevate the banks to a dominant role in relation to industry.

### **What bankruptcy means to the workers**

The reforms will for the first time permit bankruptcy of industrial establishments. There are two kinds of bankruptcy under U.S. capitalist law.

In the first, there is a reorganization in which an understanding is arrived at with the creditors on how to continue management and operation of the company after writing off the losses and putting the reorganized company on a solvent basis. Usually, the smaller creditors lose out and the larger, more important ones reap the harvest.

Almost always the burden of the reorganization is put on the backs of the workers (witness what has happened at LTV, Bethlehem Steel, Continental Airlines, Chrysler, etc.). The plants continue operating but with a much smaller workforce.

The second type of bankruptcy brings outright liquidation, which means closing the plant altogether.

Who has the authority to close the plants or reorganize under the Polish reforms? Not the workers councils. Not the trade unions. All this is vague and left up in the air. But it is being pushed through and the implication is that the reorganization will fall on the backs of the workers.

The next aspect of the reforms is a very familiar one in capitalist economies, especially during the Reagan years. It is to link wages to productivity, which means speedup and promoting a rat race among the workers instead of working-class solidarity.

Another one is to sell company shares to the workers. This means to put a company strictly on its own as sort of a caricature of a large corporation. We know what turning workers into shareholders has meant in the U.S. — the collapse of the union and fraudulent manipulation of the remaining assets, ultimately ending in bankruptcy anyway.

The most important change, of course, whose effects are immediately apparent to the workers, is the institution of wage and price controls. Price controls in the years since the reformers have been in power have resulted in scarcities and a burgeoning black market. As in the capitalist countries, however, the control of wages is carried out very effectively by the administrators and is the cause of the strikes. The wages don't keep up with galloping inflation.

Another of the reforms dear to the heart of the IMF and the Western bankers is to slash government subsidies in public housing and transportation. Some forms of rent control will be abolished. There is already a significant real estate market in private housing.

These then are basically what the reforms are about. The particular regulations which would concretely implement them are not available and for the most part have not been published here.

## **What happened with the referendum**

What has the government done with respect to these onerous banker-imposed reforms? The government leaders were fearful of enacting them without in some way submitting the reforms for public approval. So they hit upon the idea of putting them in the form of a referendum. Like most referendums of that character, it did not tell the masses much but was high on promises of great advances and alleviation of the economic situation.

It is interesting that the pro-imperialist leadership of Solidarity didn't know quite what to do about this. First they got the high sign that the Western imperialists were for the reforms. They were made aware that most of the capitalist newspapers, especially in the U.S., looked favorably on them as great steps forward.

Apparently the imperialists forgot that Solidarity also has to answer to its own constituency, which contains many workers. This forced Solidarity to become evasive and ambiguous about what to do. First they said no to the reforms, but after seeing what the imperialists were for, they changed their mind to indifference and then halfheartedly and ambiguously said they were boycotting the referendum.

Also, the militant and enlightened working class elements schooled in socialism either didn't vote or gave the reforms unenthusiastic support out of loyalty to the government. While the vote was for the reforms, not enough people participated in the referendum for the government to get a majority of the eligible voters, as required under Polish law. (No capitalist government makes that requirement of a referendum, it is to be noted.)

This should have been very disappointing to the government but it went ahead with implementing the reforms anyway. Now the most outstanding feature of the Polish economy is the continuing rise in prices and the inability of the workers to catch up with the cost of living.

In order to soften the pro-capitalist character of the reforms and the belt-tightening austerity measures that were causing hardship for the workers, the government attached to them certain language to convey the impression, as the Times put it, of mixing capitalist with socialist reforms. This didn't please the bankers.

## **Banks demand austerity**

In an article headlined "World Bank Urges More Austerity by Poland," the New York

Times reported on Oct. 27, 1987, that "The World Bank has urged Poland to speed up the pace of economic change and enact even tougher austerity measures than Warsaw is planning." The bank reportedly had said that the rates of growth in consumption and income expected by the Polish government were not austere enough.

How incredible that a socialist government could let itself be lectured, even commanded, by an arm of the imperialist governments to enact tougher austerity measures! But that is precisely what happened.

The banks read the riot act to the government. "The World Bank warned that Poland's foreign debt ... would grow from \$34.5 billion this year to \$37.35 billion in 1992. It warned that further debt relief measures would be needed from creditor nations."

So what did the World Bank recommend? Cancellation of several large-scale Polish public projects that it considered wasteful. These included a new coal mine at Stefanow, two nuclear power stations and an extension of the Warsaw subway system.

How can a socialist government let itself be lectured about what is wasteful and what public projects it should cancel?

What did the bank want? That Poland "relax central planning and encourage more private initiative." Could anything show more clearly what it means to become so heavily indebted to imperialist banks?

These reforms, the banks say, will help Poland's competitive position in the world market. What hypocrisy and deceit! How could the socialist leadership swallow this?

Poland's chief export is coal. Are the Western bankers really interested in improving Poland's competitive position? What about the British banks, for instance, which

have one of the leading roles in the IMF? They not long ago tried to break the coal miners' union in Britain after forcing the workers out in a long and bitter strike, all in order to improve Britain's competitive position through modernization and restructuring, which means layoffs and wage cuts.

Does France want Poland to modernize and improve its economy so it can compete more effectively with the French capitalists who own the coal fields in Alsace-Lorraine?

What the bankers want is not to make Poland's socialist economy more competitive, but to get the interest payments on Poland's debt. And the debt is the result in the first place of an attempt to impose a capitalist economy on the socialist foundations of Poland.

### **Capitalism in agriculture**

In demanding that subsidies on goods and services for the mass of the people be abolished, the bankers were careful to avoid cutting subsidies to the decollectivized, that is, the "free" agricultural sector. This rarely gets mentioned in the capitalist press. The Polish government subsidizes private farmers, although at one period the farms were collectivized and did well for their time, until a counterrevolutionary insurrection in 1956 led to their downfall.

All the efforts of the government since then have been to try to win back the individual farmers, the bourgeois sector of the economy, by granting them concessions. These, however, have strengthened capitalism in the agricultural sector.

Marx and Engels had suggested, long before there was any socialist revolution, that the best way to win over the bourgeois farmers was to show them the advantages of large-scale agriculture, that in this way the farming sector would become socialized

along with industry.

What has happened in Poland is a corrupt form of trying to bribe the farmers. However, they are politically dominated by the Catholic hierarchy. The reformist elements of the government have extended great privileges to the Catholic hierarchy, that is, to clerical reaction. The church has far more privileges in Poland than in capitalist Italy or Spain, where the Catholic hierarchy is continually under political attack by progressive and working-class organizations.

### **All-Poland Trade Union Alliance**

In attempting to rebuild the workers' movement after the collapse of Solidarity, it appears that the government encouraged the formation of the All-Poland Trade Union Alliance (OPZZ).

It is incorrect to call this organization a state-sponsored union. Abraham Brumberg, an observer of the Polish scene who is certainly not a friend of the Polish government, wrote in the New York Review of Books, Feb. 18, 1988, that "The new trade union organization OPZZ is now seven million strong and still growing." This is a significant revelation.

Brumberg doesn't call the alliance a state-sponsored organization, although of course it has received the encouragement of elements in the government. Unfortunately, the government hasn't shown any inclination to heed the union's counsels.

According to Business Week of Jan. 19, 1987, "Jaruzelski's government gets harsh criticism, even from the All-Poland Trade Union Alliance. ... At last month's trade-union conference in Warsaw, the chairman of the alliance denounced the "level of social benefits and workers' housing," which he said were "much lower" than in other socialist countries.

It was therefore not surprising that when the bus drivers in Bydgoszcz went out, sparking the recent wave of strikes, the OPZZ represented the workers and won a settlement from the government. But this set up other strikes, particularly in the Nowa Huta area, which the government decided to crush by force. At any rate, it is very plain that the OPZZ has been disregarded.

### **How Solidarity got back in the picture**

This gave Solidarity the opportunity to reemerge, after it had been considered almost defunct except perhaps in the Gdansk area. It tried to turn the just economic demands of the workers into political channels, compounding the government's problem overall.

The reemergence of the pro-imperialist leadership of Solidarity can only lead to further deterioration of the economic problems in Poland and ultimately to a forceful resolution of the crisis in one way or another.

In the midst of all this, the U.S. government was forced to publicly reveal its hand. Forgotten by the press was Reagan's breaking of the PATCO union and his administration's ensuing virulent anti-labor offensive. Instead, there were headlines when the U.S. made a loud outcry against the use of force by the Polish government.

Almost totally lost was what the Reagan administration spokesman, Deputy Secretary of State John C. Whitehead, said about the economic reforms in a May 7 interview with the New York Times. After going through the routine of denouncing the use of force, the lack of freedom, etc., he made sure to weave into his interview that "the economic program of the government strikes us as being a basically sensible program."

There you have it! He approves of the reforms, but their consequences — that's for the Polish government to deal with!

Furthermore, he said, "In due course we would hope the U.S. would take a constructive attitude with the IMF, World Bank loans and Paris Club rescheduling." What hypocrisy to give the impression that the IMF and World Bank are independent organizations! If they were fully independent, he wouldn't be talking for them.

If the Polish government behaves itself in accordance with the rules laid down by Wall Street, Lombard Street and the Bourse, according to Whitehead, "commercial bank lending from U.S. banks is a possibility" and further down the road there may be "some kind of direct U.S. government assistance." Such is the real relationship between the Polish economic reforms and the imperialist banks and U.S. government.

The strike struggles are the consequence of this relationship of imperialist neocolonialism to a faltering socialism. The two cannot peacefully coexist for any length of time. One or the other will have to give way. The present chaos consists almost entirely of this untenable relationship.

### **Relation to reforms in USSR**

In earlier years, the Soviet government was denounced regularly in the imperialist press for encouraging and assisting the Polish government in socialist construction. These attacks are always couched in such terms as the "imposition of a regimented economy," etc. Now that the Soviet government has embarked upon a series of bourgeois reforms of its own, it has encouraged the Polish leadership to do likewise and, given the circumstances in Poland, to go much, much farther.

The capitalist press has been heaping praise on the Gorbachev reforms and is regarding his relations with the Polish government, at least at this stage, as wholly beneficial for the future of the Polish reforms. Some of the Solidarity leaders are openly jubilant about perestroika. Lech Walesa himself has said it is too bad that Brezhnev didn't die two years earlier, meaning before the government showdown

with Solidarity.

What ultimately happens in Poland is bound to decisively influence events in the USSR. The outcome of the situation will not only affect the socialist countries but also the movements in the oppressed countries and events in the West as well.

### **Poland a halfway house**

Over the years we have characterized Polish society as a halfway house. The heavy industries, transportation, communications and utilities were nationalized by the government and are the social property of the working class. They make up the socialist sector, however badly or well it may be managed.

Matters are different in agriculture. Right after World War II the large estates were expropriated from the landowners and collectivized, which is a semi-socialist form of ownership. But then in 1956, after a counterrevolutionary insurrection, the collectives were returned to private hands.

Over the years since then, there has been a considerable growth of the private sector. The door was opened up to the imperialist West. This laid the basis for the developing economic and financial stranglehold by the imperialist banks and their governments.

The series of rebellions and strikes, which started in 1956, ushered in a new first secretary of the Communist Party, Wladyslaw Gomulka, who decollectivized many of the farms. In 1970, after workers rebelled in several cities protesting price increases and incentive wage rules, he was ousted and replaced by Edward Gierek. In 1980 Gierek was replaced by Stanislaw Kania. A year later Kania was dismissed and replaced by Jaruzelski.

What does this series of political eruptions and swift changes of government and party personnel indicate?

It indicates that the government has moved from one that represented, at least objectively, the general socialist interests of the workers and the masses, to a Bonapartist form of regime. What does that entail?

### **A Bonapartist regime**

A Bonapartist regime is a regime of crisis that tries to balance itself on antagonistic classes or social systems. It tries to straddle two opposing social camps. Ultimately, it has only the support of the police, the state apparatus, and the military.

Jaruzelski is also trying to balance the Catholic hierarchy, which is pro-bourgeois and pro-imperialist through and through. The Catholic hierarchy has the dominant ideological influence with the decollectivized and atomized peasantry. It carries in its van a substantial segment of the new bourgeois intelligentsia and the leadership of the Solidarity movement.

It goes without saying that this camp is the promoter of the bourgeois reforms of links with the imperialist governments and the banks. It covers itself with demagogic, however, whenever the government attacks the masses in its effort to overcome the abysmal crisis.

The Jaruzelski regime tries to hold onto and secure the socialist foundations of the economy, that is, the ownership of the basic industries. But the means used continually weaken the class camp of which the regime is the sociological protector. It is continually giving way to the enemy camp.

A Bonapartist regime of this type is like a person whose legs are in two different rowboats, each moving in an opposite direction. Maintaining one's balance under these conditions, especially in stormy weather, becomes virtually impossible. It is characteristic of Bonapartism, going back to Napoleon III, to resort to referendums that superficially show popular support for the regime but cover up the acute class

and social antagonisms.

In the year since martial law ended, the government should have known that it had to win over the workers. When the OPZZ succeeded in signing up as many as 7 million union members, it appeared there was a sufficient foundation to start on a new working class course. Difficult though that may be, it is far preferable to going hat in hand to the bankers begging for their panaceas — which every worker in Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Brazil, or Nigeria has learned to despise.

### **The nouveau riche**

The bankers' reforms, of course, are wonderful for the imperialist bourgeoisie and for the nouveau riche in the entrapped countries.

A disillusioned former cheerleader for Solidarity, Daniel Singer, described in frightened tones in *The Nation* of March 5, 1988, what he saw both on the right and also in the government. "Watching the situation in Poland now is a painful exercise. There are moments of near despair," he wrote. "In a country that before the war had a strong lay left, the ideological domination of the Catholic church is now overwhelming. Red is a dirty word. Reagan is a hero and Milton Friedman provides food for economic thought."

Singer quotes from *Polityka*, a weekly magazine put out by the reformist element in Poland. An article in the January issue entitled "The Poor and the Rich" created a stir, according to Singer. It described the new bourgeois element that has grown up as a result of the reform policy of the government: "winter skiing in the Alps, summer on the Riviera, a BMW, jewels from Gucci, children in a French kindergarten and an American school, provisions from West Berlin."

That's the nouveau riche. That's the product of the decay of socialist construction and the westward orientation. As for the poor, they would be on the picket lines if

they knew who could lead them to what.

Neither Brumberg nor Singer remotely suggested in their articles that a spontaneous eruption of the mass movement of the workers would be taking place now. Each of them bemoaned the loss in standing and disintegration of Solidarity, but neither foresaw that the workers themselves would move on their own. It would be most unfortunate if Solidarity's pro-imperialist leadership were again to take over the movement of the workers.

Jaruzelski cannot long have his feet in two boats as the storm signals grow. Only a clear working-class revolutionary socialist perspective can bring economic security and socialist fraternity in the population and chart a path to genuine communism. The halfway house means peace with the exploiters and poverty for the masses.

Source: [Marxists Internet Archive](#)



---

## USSR at 100: Lessons of the Soviet

# of Nationalities

written by Struggle - La Lucha

February 21, 2023

*Dec. 30 marks the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1922, the first attempt in history to build a multinational socialist society. Although the USSR was destroyed by a U.S.-backed counterrevolution in the early 1990s, its groundbreaking achievements still hold important lessons for the global working class and oppressed peoples.*

*This piece by Sam Marcy, one of the foremost Marxist thinkers and fighters of the second half of the 20th century, was originally published in 1988 as "The Structure of the Soviet State" and included as chapter 16 of ["Perestroika: A Marxist Critique."](#)*

## **How imperialists switched tactics in regard to Soviet nationalities**

The attitude of the ruling classes of the capitalist countries with regard to the national question in Russia underwent an extraordinary change when the Bolshevik Revolution triumphed in 1917.

At first the international bourgeoisie attempted to malign the new republic by proclaiming that the revolutionary leaders, in particular the members of the Executive Committee of the Soviets, were not really representative of Russia. Dzerzhinsky was a Pole, Stalin was a Georgian, Trotsky was a Jew, other leaders were Ukrainian, Armenian and so on. It was the same tactic they used to bait communists in this country when the left movement had many members and leaders who were Jewish, Black or foreign-born.

However, as the revolution progressed, and as Soviet power took hold over larger and larger sections of the country, sweeping all the provinces and nationalities within its fold, it became clear that it was an all-national revolution. The

international bourgeoisie thereafter took another tack and began to malign the USSR in a new way. Now it was said that the Great Russians were oppressing all the other nationalities.

Next came a long silence about the revolutionary role of the formerly oppressed nationalities in the formation of the Soviet Union and particularly in the Bolshevik leadership. Researchers in the recent period seem to have had difficulty finding out what role, if any, the formerly oppressed peoples had in the Bolshevik Revolution. This tendentiousness of the imperialist bourgeoisie and their silence on the role of oppressed nationalities in the Bolshevik Revolution finally attracted the attention of at least one researcher, Andrew Ezergailis, who felt impelled to write a book about it.

This book does more than just describe the role of the Latvians in their own revolution. It puts forth the view that a division of Latvian soldiers not only aided the Bolshevik Revolution and won significant battles, such as the Battle of Rostov, the Battle of Archangel and the Battle of Rogachov, but it virtually saved the Soviet Republic from a counterrevolutionary insurrection in Petrograd in 1918.

Even if one regards this view – that one division saved the republic – as somewhat far-fetched, his book nevertheless has the great merit of putting before the U.S. public the revolutionary role of at least one of the constituent republics of the USSR. This could interest the reader to see how many other republics were formidable pillars in erecting and sustaining the Soviet Union, not only in its early days but also in the Second World War.

### **Planned economy requires voluntary association of equal nations**

If it is true that the construction of a socialist society is impossible without a planned economy, it is equally true that a planned economy is impossible in a multinational country without the equality of all the nations and their free, voluntary association

within the framework of a union of all the socialist republics. It was precisely to this question that Lenin devoted the last days of his life.

How could the interests of a planned economy be reconciled with the apparently contradictory need for the equality of all the nationalities in the USSR? What kind of a state structure should be developed to give full vent to the workers and peasants and conform to the revolutionary reconstitution of Soviet society as it emerged from the overthrow of the czarist autocracy and the sweeping away of the bourgeoisie and the landlords?

At first, the Bolsheviks raised the slogan, "All power to the Soviets!" And, indeed, power was fully taken by the First Congress of the Soviets of Workers, Peasants and Soldiers Deputies. When the Congress of Soviets was not in session, the Executive Committee of the Soviets carried out the functions of the Congress.

In 1918 this slogan was translated into the celebrated decree, the "Declaration of Rights of the Working and Exploited People," which embodied the fundamental state program and structure of the USSR. The leading ideological and political role taken by the Communist Party was the central factor in making the Soviets a living reflection of the interests of the exploited and oppressed masses of Russia.

### **Transition from Congress of Soviets to union of equal republics**

While the Congress of Soviets was revolutionary in form as well as in content, it still had some inadequacies. The problem of how to perfect the state structure covered many weeks and months of discussion, both during the periods of relative peace as well as during the war of imperialist intervention and the civil war. It was not until 1922-23 that the new structure of the USSR was to emerge, after intense if not heated discussions.

This structure was the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and it differs from that of

any capitalist government in two fundamental ways.

In the first place, it is based not on the landlords and capitalists, not on the existence of private property in the means of production, not on wage labor employed by private enterprise, but on a new social system where the means of production are socially owned and the economy is planned. Bourgeois politicians, ideologues and philosophers will accede to that much, at least in the formal sense, although they completely deny the validity of socialism or go on to exaggerate its defects and shortcomings to the extent that the USSR is depicted as totally devoid of any significant progressive social and political features.

There is another feature of the state structure of the USSR which is just as fundamental, yet the bourgeois ideologues and their myriads of apologists and historians rarely refer to it. It is even neglected in much of the progressive and radical literature of the workers' movement. To understand this second feature, it would be helpful to first look at the innumerable capitalist state structures, whether their form be democratic, monarchical, military or even fascist.

The most democratic form of the capitalist state may be unicameral, that is, having one body which enacts all legislation, plus an executive arm of the government. Or, as in the United States, it can have two legislative bodies, such as the House of Representatives and the Senate. However, not one of the capitalist governments, whatever its constitution may be, has an arm built into the framework of the state to deal with the national question and make sure that the nationalities within the country are represented in all important decisions.

There may be references in the constitution to equal protection of the law, due process, and so on. There may be special legislation regarding civil rights. There may be this or that agency dealing with complaints or enforcement. But there is no specific arm within the constitutional structure of any capitalist state which deals specifically with the question of nationalities. This differentiates the USSR from all

the capitalist countries.

## **USSR's bicameral system and the Soviet of Nationalities**

From the point of view of its external characteristics, the USSR has this in common with some of the capitalist states: it has a bicameral system. In this sense, it seems like the U.S., but the two arms of its legislative structure are very different from the two houses of Congress here.

This bicameral system is found in the highest governing body, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, which consists of the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities. The Soviet of the Union is chosen on the basis of proportional representation - each deputy represents an equal amount of people. In the Soviet of Nationalities, each nationality is guaranteed a set number of deputies.

The members of both chambers serve equal terms, and no bill can become law unless adopted by a majority of both chambers. This all-important second arm is of extraordinary significance, particularly in the epoch of imperialism, in which national oppression is a characteristic feature. It is the kind of structure which, if incorporated into a bourgeois state, would tremendously assist the struggle of the oppressed nationalities against the dominant nationality.

In constructing this mechanism for governing, the Soviet Union accorded recognition to the existence of nationalities in a revolutionary way which had never been done before. It created an equality between the two chambers, one based on representation according to the proportion of the population, the other on guaranteed representation for every nationality. In this way, not only the general interests of the working class are reflected, but also the very special and important interests of all nationalities.

These structures are defined under the Constitution of the USSR. Chapter XV,

Article 109 says:

The Supreme Soviet of the USSR shall consist of two chambers: the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities. The two chambers of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR shall have equal rights.

Article 110 says: The Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities shall have equal numbers of deputies. The Soviet of the Union shall be elected by constituencies with equal population. The Soviet of Nationalities shall be elected on the basis of the following representation: 32 deputies from each Union Republic, 11 deputies from each Autonomous Republic, five deputies from each Autonomous Region, and one deputy from each Autonomous Area.

The voting age in the USSR is 18, and was so long before it was ever lowered here. Of course, voting there is irrespective of race, nationality, religion, gender and property rights.

It should be remembered that the U.S. Constitution, while it contained no language about qualifications for voting, allowed the states to limit voting to the landowners, bankers, merchants and capitalists. Only property owners could vote. Women, Black and Native people and indentured servants were all deprived of the right to vote. And even after many of these restrictions were lifted, there were poll taxes, literacy requirements and complicated registration forms. Women got the right to vote only in 1919, and the Equal Rights Amendment has still not been adopted to this very day.

In addition to according universal suffrage, the Soviet Constitution gives greater representation to the various nationalities, making it possible for even the smallest of the republics to have additional leverage over and above its proportion in the population. The Soviet of Nationalities was designed to overcome the predominance of the large nations and give additional weight to the smaller ones.

## **U.S. 'democracy' and the case of Puerto Rico**

Is there a constitution anywhere in the bourgeois world that even bears a resemblance to such an effort as that incorporated in the Soviet state structure? The significance of the chamber of nationalities is completely overlooked elsewhere, precisely because of the racist and chauvinist character of the imperialist countries.

When in July 1988 the Democratic Convention nominated Dukakis and Bentsen, there was a great deal of oratory on prime-time television and the capitalist media boasted about how democratically the meeting was conducted. But completely unnoticed was that while there was a delegation from Puerto Rico participating in the "democratic process," the people of Puerto Rico have no representation in the Congress of the U.S.

Would even one politician get up and object to the fact that the people of Puerto Rico, even though they are considered citizens and are subject to be drafted into the U.S. Army, cannot vote in congressional elections? Nor are they allowed to secede and declare themselves an independent republic. The same could be said for Samoa and Guam.

Notwithstanding the vigorous support of a whole host of countries, a resolution supporting the self-determination of Puerto Rico has been pigeonholed in the Decolonization Committee of the United Nations for years and years. The U.S. makes absolutely sure that it rarely sees the light of day, even though most of the countries in the U.N. regard Puerto Rico as a U.S. colony that should by right be independent.

## **Self-determination part of Soviet constitution**

Of course, there is nothing in the U.S. Constitution or its amendments on the right of nations to self-determination. The USSR, on the other hand, has a specific constitutional provision which not only guarantees the right of its constituent

nations to self-determination, but also specifies the unequivocal right to secede.

Thus, in considering the national question in the USSR, it is very important to contrast it with the imperialist countries. The comparison shows the tremendous amount of progress made by the USSR and the truly revolutionary structure it has developed. It stands head and shoulders above any capitalist government.

While a great deal of literature can be found describing the social character of the USSR, little of it deals with the structure of the state, particularly as it pertains to the Soviet of Nationalities, the arm which oppressed peoples throughout the world would be most concerned with.

The English historian E.H. Carr, in his three-volume work on the USSR, went into considerable detail on the formation of the USSR and the union republics, but without illuminating the nature of the struggle within the USSR over the relationship of a planned economy to the equality of nations. Even where he does occasionally refer to the bicameral system of government, he never once mentions what a revolutionary departure this was.

He had a good reason for avoiding any comparison with, say, the English system of parliamentary government. There he would have to refer to the existence of such an honorific cabinet post as the Colonial Secretary, the superintendent of imprisoned colonial peoples. Or, for that matter, the existence of the Prince of Wales, who is not a person from Wales but a member of the hereditary English bourgeois monarchy. Not to speak of Britain's role in Ireland.

The objective of constructing the Soviet of Nationalities as one of the bicameral arms of the Soviet government was not to divide the nationalities but to strengthen proletarian class solidarity and to unite the mass of the people in the struggle for socialism on the basis of the equality of all nations.

All this notwithstanding, it is especially important in light of the centrifugal forces of national sovereignty to consider the planning principles of a socialist country. How was it possible, for instance, to construct a five-year plan while guaranteeing the equality and sovereignty of the union republics, the autonomous republics, the autonomous regions and the national districts?

### **Relation between planning and national sovereignty**

One gets a measure of the problem if one considers the complexity of carrying out a vast, comprehensive plan of economic and industrial development on the basis of achieving the agreement of the various nationalities of the USSR.

Of course, it is conceivable that it could all get done by administrative measures, while riding roughshod over the heads of the nationalities, that is, over the mass of the people. There are few historians or analysts of the USSR in the West who venture to explain the intricacies of achieving a five-year plan without the tumult, disorder and rebellion which would accompany a capitalist government's attempt to carry out a plan, were it to embark on one.

The history of capitalist expansion in the U.S., for instance, shows that even the development of a transcontinental railroad was accompanied by the worst corruption and bribery, the use of virtual slave labor of Asian people, an onslaught against the Native peoples, and skullduggery in forcing or tricking independent small farmers to sell their land cheap. It's a history full of crime.

Or what about opening up the criminal files held by the city of San Francisco in its famous indictment and ultimate conviction of General Motors? These show that, in order to expand automobile use on a national basis, GM tried to destroy San Francisco's trolley car system and other forms of transport in many other cities.

For all the high-handed and command methods that were employed in the USSR,

especially during the Stalin era, it nevertheless was a truly historic achievement that such widespread industrialization could be carried out at all in a country with over 100 nationalities.

At first, many of the territories held under the former czarist autocracy were amalgamated, so that in 1923 there were only four union republics. Today, however, there are 15 union republics, 20 autonomous republics, eight autonomous regions and 10 national areas. What this signifies is the greater attention given to each nationality. Further demarcations, not only geographical but cultural, helped social as well as economic development.

Genuine socialist construction, by its very nature, tends to unite not only the working class, not only the exploited masses, but the people of all nationalities. It must nevertheless be recognized that there is an inherent contradiction between the economic tasks of socialism, which demand centralization, and the needs of the nationalities to develop their culture, language, etc. on the basis of equality.

It is for this very reason that the Soviet of Nationalities was constructed. It was conceived not as a ceremonial institution but as an effective and functioning one, where all the nationalities could express their needs and their aspirations more fully than in any other institution. However, there are significant defects and shortcomings in how all this has been carried out, which we have analyzed in our articles on Kazakhstan, Armenia and Azerbaijan, and the Baltic republics.

### **Need to harmonize contradictory forces through democratic centralism**

Perestroika, or restructuring, which General Secretary Gorbachev has characterized as a qualitative turn to rebuild the whole country, necessarily will affect the nationalities. The enormous restructuring envisioned calls for a vast scientific and technological revolution in the industrial structure of the USSR. Such a plan cannot be effectuated without the most scrupulous attention to the national question.

As has been demonstrated, first by the Alma-Ata rebellion in Kazakhstan and later in Azerbaijan and Armenia, the economic reforms have influenced and encouraged the disorders. One might be tempted to ascribe this to the peculiarities of these republics, which historically were less developed. This, however, is a spurious argument and is totally without foundation. This is shown by the disorders in the Baltic republics - Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia - at the other end of the USSR, which historically have been more industrially and technologically advanced.

In loosening centralized control of the economy, the restructuring has encouraged many national aspirations to surface, while at the same time giving a freer rein to bourgeois trends which accentuate privilege and inequality.

We have shown that while the reforms are moving to decentralize the economy, there has been a tightening of the reins in terms of political control by the center over the nationalities. In Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Latvia, party leaders were removed from their posts in a way that offended the sensibilities of these nationalities.

Notwithstanding the fact that there are pro-imperialist tendencies in the Baltic states, all the more must their national rights be scrupulously observed.

It must be noted that there is an inherent contradiction between the centripetal needs of socialist planning and the centrifugal forces contained in greater national sovereignty. These forces have to be harmonized and unified on the basis of socialist centralism in the economy and socialist democracy in the center's dealing with the nationalities.

Of course, democratic centralism is an indispensable ingredient in all relationships in the USSR, but the area that needs particular sensitivity, and to which Lenin referred again and again, particularly during the last days of his life, is the national question.

The historic significance of the 12th Congress of the Communist Party held in April 1923 is that it recognized the necessity of a firm and continuing struggle against "the relics of great-power chauvinism" and urged a consistent struggle against the economic and cultural inequality of the nationalities within the Soviet Union. It also called for a struggle against the relics of nationalism of all kinds, but the emphasis was on eradicating the heavy legacy of czarist oppression. All this may be regarded as part of a history more than six decades old, decades of stupendous economic, social and political development.

Nevertheless, certain aspects of the national question have to be reviewed in light of the contemporary situation. It is impossible to avoid the question if one is to take seriously the resolutions on restructuring of the 27th Congress of the CPSU and of the 19th Party Conference in June 1988.

---

## References

Andrew Ezergailis, *The Latvian Impact on the Bolshevik Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964), Vol. 26, pp. 423-425.

The Europa Year Book 1988, a World Survey (London: Europa Publications Ltd., 1988), Vol. II. This version of the Constitution was adopted at the Seventh (Special) Session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, Ninth Convocation, on October 7, 1977.

E.H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-1923* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1966), three vols.



---

# **Pentagon mania 1992: Bush disowns but won't denounce plan for world domination**

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
February 21, 2023



*The following article by Marxist leader Sam Marcy was first published on March 19, 1992. It gives crucial background to the expansion of a “U.S.-led” NATO over Europe with the Pentagon at the head.*

On March 8, the New York Times published excerpts from a 46-page secret Pentagon draft document that it said was leaked by Pentagon officials. This document is truly extraordinary.

It asserts complete U.S. world domination in both political and military terms, and threatens any other countries that even “aspire” to a greater role. In other words, the U.S. is to be the sole and exclusive superpower on the face of the planet. It is to exercise its power not only in Europe, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America, but also on the territory of the former Soviet Union.

The position laid out in this document is so extreme that it must have terrified the governments under U.S. pressure. Telephone calls must have poured into

Washington from around the world after its disclosure.

Yet it took several days for the White House to finally comment on it. And even then, the language used only disowned or dismissed the document, but **did not denounce it.**

## No official comment

First the Times published a second article datelined March 10 citing “senior U.S. officials” as critical of the document. However, they are not identified. Pete Williams, a Pentagon spokesperson, disavowed some parts of the document, but no “senior officials” with the stature of the Secretary of Defense, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Secretary of State, CIA Director, or the President would comment on it.

At a news conference the next day, however, President George Bush responded to a question about the document by claiming he hadn’t seen it and hadn’t read the press accounts about it. Instead of attacking the very idea of such a plan, he emphasized that “we are the leaders and we must continue to lead.”

A Pentagon official tried to pass off the document as “couched in language that is a little like the bluster of the officers’ club.” But this document doesn’t come from the officers. Rather, it was written by civilians in the Pentagon.

This document surpasses in importance the Pentagon Papers, which the New York Times, followed by the Washington Post and other papers, published in 1971. At that time a considerable section of the ruling class, under the pressure of the massive anti-war movement in the United States and the unrelenting determination of the Vietnamese people to free themselves from colonial tutelage, had become convinced of the hopelessness of the U.S. imperialist adventure in Southeast Asia.

It should be noted that at the time the USSR was a formidable military power, a

superpower if you will, and was giving political and military support to the Vietnamese war effort, as was the People's Republic of China. The case is otherwise today.

The ruling class this time is solidly for maintaining, strengthening and invigorating the U.S. military position worldwide in order to regain its economic superiority against its imperialist rivals, principally Japan and Germany.

It is one thing for the Pentagon to assert in a document that it plans to exercise domination over the entire globe. It is another matter altogether to brazenly announce this to the public in such terms as to threaten not only its alleged foes but its allies as well.

Considering the worldwide repercussions that the publication of such a document would have, one would have expected an outburst of open protest — from abroad but most particularly from here at home. What is really astonishing about the publication of this document is how little public response there has been to it, although there certainly must have been private ones.

## **Not suppressed like Pentagon Papers**

There's no question that this leak to the Times for publication had the blessing, to one degree or another, of the Pentagon and the Bush administration. Otherwise the White House would have quickly set in motion the kind of attack mounted by the Nixon administration against the publication of the Pentagon Papers. It ordered the Justice Department to obtain an immediate restraining order after the first installments of the Pentagon Papers began to appear in the New York Times. But the Supreme Court upheld the press at the time and overruled the Nixon administration.

Isn't it obvious that the disclosure of this Pentagon plan for world domination, coming almost at the climax of the presidential primaries, could have become a

principal issue for public debate? However, as of this writing, it has been virtually ignored. Perhaps it will be picked up later, but right now the momentous issues raised by this document seem headed for the dead-letter department, if the capitalist media and politicians have their way.

And even where the capitalist newspapers did subject it to some criticism, as have the Boston Globe, the Times itself and a few other newspapers, this has been directed not at the substance of the document, which concerns the domination of the world by U.S. military might, but at the way in which it was so brazenly and publicly expressed.

## **‘Prevent re-emergence of a new rival’**

Precisely what does this draft document, called in Pentagonese the “Defense Planning Guidance,” have as its aim?

“Our first objective,” it states, “is to prevent the re-emergence of a new rival, either on the territory of the former Soviet Union or elsewhere, that poses a threat on the order of that posed formerly by the Soviet Union.”

This is aimed not only against a new revolutionary government or a new socialist revolution in the world. It is also aimed at any potential new capitalist rival to the U.S. In fact, one wonders whether this document is not really intended to let the imperialist competitors know that they should not even dare to aspire to a greater role, let alone attempt to surpass the U.S.

The document says that to achieve this objective, “First, the U.S. must show the leadership necessary to establish and protect a new order that holds the promise of **convincing potential competitors** that they need not aspire to a greater role or pursue a more aggressive posture to protect their legitimate interests.” (Our emphasis.)

There is no question that this is a message to the imperialist rivals — Japan, Germany, France, perhaps even Britain. The language is so rude as to be unprecedented in a public document.

Next, says the document, “we must account sufficiently for the interests of the advanced industrial nations to discourage them from challenging our leadership or seeking to overturn the established political and economic order. Finally, we must maintain the mechanisms for deterring potential competitors from even aspiring to a larger regional or global role.”

This is meant for Japan, China and India in Asia; certainly for Germany and other imperialist countries in Europe; and for countries like Brazil and Argentina or a new revolutionary government in Latin America.

Later on, the document speaks specifically of Europe: “[I]t is of fundamental importance to preserve NATO as the primary instrument of Western defense and security, as well as the channel for U.S. influence and participation in European security affairs.”

But then it adds: “While the United States supports the goal of European integration, we must seek to prevent the emergence of European-only security arrangements which would undermine NATO, particularly the alliance’s integrated command structure.” The latter, of course, is led by the U.S.

So, while on the one hand it seems to support NATO, it only does so as a channel for “U.S. influence,” as it says so crudely.

Elsewhere in the document, it says that what is most important is “the sense that the world order is ultimately backed by the U.S.,” and “the United States should be postured to act independently when collective action cannot be orchestrated.”

This indicates frustration by the Pentagon. Its allies appear to be quite openly

disappointed with the results of the war against Iraq and the benefits accruing to each of them. It indicates the U.S. reneged on the promises it made when rounding up their support.

Of singular significance is the scorn and contempt this document demonstrates for the United Nations. It says it is for NATO and the UN, as long as they will follow U.S. military orders. If not, it will act without them.

## **How will Japan and Germany react?**

How the Japanese and German imperialist governments react to this remains to be seen. The document cannot be very comforting, coming at a time when Japan has now followed the U.S. into a deep economic crisis. Britain is also in economic turmoil, while Germany has begun closing down shipyards in what was originally the GDR, a measure it would rather have avoided had not the signs of economic recession already begun to appear.

It should be plain that the publication of this document is not likely to soften the sharp economic rivalry between U.S. finance capital and its imperialist allies. On the contrary, this will sharpen it.

The document is not directed solely at the imperialist rivals.

“Defense of Korea will likely remain one of the most demanding major regional contingencies. ... Asia is home to the world’s greatest concentration of traditional Communist states, with fundamental values, governance, and policies decidedly at variance with our own and those of our friends and allies. ...”

“Cuba’s growing domestic crisis holds out the prospect for positive change, but over the near term, Cuba’s tenuous internal situation is likely to generate new challenges to U.S. policy. Consequently, our programs must provide capabilities to meet a variety of Cuban contingencies which could include an attempted repetition of the

Mariel boatlift, a military provocation against the U.S. or an American ally, or political instability and internal conflict in Cuba.”

Translated, this means that the Pentagon is already planning new attacks on Cuba and the DPRK. This should be of fundamental importance for us in the anti-imperialist movement and signal the need to plan for major activities to counter-act this danger not only to Cuba and the DPRK but to the oppressed people all over the world.

## **New world order**

The Pentagon document is one more example that, notwithstanding all the talk of a “new world order” and a cooperative world commonwealth of freedom and peace, etc., etc., these phrases are only calculated to deceive world public opinion, and in particular the broad working class and the oppressed masses.

In the criticisms that have appeared thus far, only Patrick Buchanan — Bush’s ultra-right opponent in the primaries — has dug up the old isolationist rhetoric expounded by Sen. William E. Borah (R-Idaho) in the 1920s and Sen. Robert Taft (R-Ohio) in the 1950s.

According to Buchanan, “This is a formula for endless American intervention in quarrels and war where no vital interest of the United States is remotely engaged. It’s virtually a blank check given to all of America’s friends and allies that we’ll go to war to defend their interests.” (New York Times, March 10)

Such is the criticism of the extreme right-wing of the ruling class. It’s a fraud from beginning to end. The inference from all this is that the U.S. is intervening to help foreign powers at the expense of American taxpayers, and that the U.S. ruling class has no vital interests abroad. Of course it’s a lie.

The tremendous weight of the U.S. transnational corporations, especially the giant

banks like Citicorp, Chemical, Manufacturers Trust and BankAmerica, is spread all over the world. It is to defend these interests that the Pentagon has conceived this monstrous picture of a world they totally dominate.

Yes, the document says the U.S. military machine will defend its European military allies. It will defend them against the oppressed countries in which they operate and garner vast profits, should there be an insurrectionary movement against their overlordship.

The U.S. military machine will also defend its allies against the working classes of their own countries. But it will in no way defend the imperialist rivals against the interests of U.S. finance capital. And it would certainly never extend any lavish aid to them without a quid pro quo.

The right-wing demagogic of the Buchanans and others actually aids Bush in this way: it inevitably creates fear in large masses of people of the specter of fascism, of a right-wing political assault upon the progressive movement, which can push them toward Bush and his cohorts.

In the current situation as it is unfolding, however, the conservative constituency in the Republican party is really narrow by comparison to the broad mass of the workers and oppressed masses. Together the latter constitute an overwhelming progressive force, vastly superior to the ultra-right and its fascist tail in the form of David Duke, whose followers are scurrying to the Buchanan camp.

The workers will not be easily fooled to go over to the Bush camp solely as a reaction to the fear raised by Buchanan's racist, reactionary, anti-lesbian/gay and anti-Semitic propaganda.

Candidates Paul Tsongas and Bill Clinton were also interviewed by the Times about the Pentagon document. They took the standard Democratic Party approach that the

U.S. should not engage in these military hostilities without first attempting to get the UN to support it. They also questioned the magnitude of the expenditures, but not the overall purpose.

## **Document written by civilian sector**

This document is the product of the civilian leadership in the Pentagon and not the military camarilla, as one might assume. It is, according to the New York Times, written by Paul D. Wolfowitz, who is described as the Pentagon's Under Secretary for Policy. Wolfowitz also represents the Pentagon on the Deputies Committee (deputies to the secretaries of State, Defense, Treasury, etc.) which formulates policy in an inter-agency process dominated by the State and Defense departments.

It is impossible to properly decipher exactly what is meant by this. Suffice it to say that they are civilians, and not the military staff.

These civilians are mostly the representatives of the military-industrial-technological complex — the military contractors and the banks that support them.

It is often assumed in literature written by bourgeois liberal critics that the military is autonomous, more often dictating policy to the industrialists and the government than the other way around.

Of course, there have been times when the military did assume an independent role or tried to in times of great international crises, as MacArthur did during the Korean War. He was fired by Truman for advocating the invasion of China.

The reaction to this Pentagon document is more reminiscent, however, of Carter's dismissal of Gen. John Singlaub after he criticized plans to withdraw U.S. troops from Korea, or of Bush's retirement of Air Force Gen. Paul Dugan last year after he disclosed the plans to bomb Iraq. In both cases, the reprimand was because these officers acted out of turn, making public what the capitalist government wanted kept

secret. But the policy pursued thereafter was exactly in step with what these top brass had advocated.

Overall, the military is an instrument of class rule. Nowhere is that better demonstrated than in this document written by the civilians in the Pentagon — copies of which were sent to the military chiefs and to the White House.

It is clear from this document that it is the industrial half of the military-industrial complex that is speaking here. It is they who are most in need of expanding the military establishment and continuing to build weapons of mass destruction in the face of a looming economic debacle. But this doesn't mean that the military is indifferent or opposed to it. Far from it.

However, to build more nuclear weapons at this time, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, is superfluous. The nuclear weapons program has cost hundreds of billions of dollars. Now that the military struggle with the USSR is over, the entire military-industrial-technological apparatus faces a diminished exchange value, or market value. It shrinks particularly in relation to the industrial-technological apparatus of the Japanese and Germans, most of all because they have no military baggage.

This will be reflected in the daily currency wars between these capitalist countries. The exchange value of military items, in terms of world currencies, has sunk sharply. But their capitalist production continues to mount.

## **Criticism skirts issue**

Such criticism of this document as has appeared to date doesn't go to the essence of the matter. It is narrow, very mild, and would scarcely raise an eyebrow in the military-industrial complex.

Leslie Gelb, in his column in the New York Times (March 9), pretends to criticize the Pentagon plan but in fact goes along with the whole program. The only fault Gelb

finds is that the document makes no mention of Israel! He is appalled by this without really analyzing why Israel does not appear under the umbrella of U.S. protection.

The U.S. genocidal war against Iraq demonstrated one thing: with the absence of the USSR as a protagonist against U.S. imperialism (the Gorbachev regime collaborated with the U.S.), the Pentagon did not need Israel very much. Israel has really served as a super-giant military base for U.S. military operations.

However, when the Pentagon assembled a vast armada in the Mediterranean and the Gulf area, it made Israeli military support superfluous.

Furthermore, the U.S. also demonstrated its military prowess when it air-lifted in tens of thousands of soldiers and their military gear, allowed them to directly attack Iraq.

The new Pentagon strategy, which reflects the new position of the U.S. since the collapse of the USSR, diminishes the significance of Israel. This is especially true in light of the fact that the U.S. cowed and subjugated countries in the Middle East like Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and even Syria, Iran and others. The Israelis can now play a role only in minor skirmishes that the U.S. encourages.

The fact that the U.S. told Israel it would not guarantee a \$10-billion loan (a piddling sum when you consider the many billions used to build up the Israeli military machine), so that now Israel is on the verge of withdrawing its request for the loan, reveals an altogether different situation in the Middle East. Unfortunately, it does not at this particular historical conjuncture necessarily help the Palestinians in their struggle. But that will come as surely as the rising sun.

## **Monstrous growth of Pentagon**

Before World War II, the U.S. War Office occupied a modest building in the heart of Washington, D.C. It soon felt compelled to change its name from War Office to

Defense Department — an attempt to take into account the anti-war sentiment of the masses while at the same time retaining the essence of its function.

It then went on to build the largest office building in the world — the Pentagon — where it resides to this date. While utilizing pacifist phrases, it was at the same time preparing for war. What need was there to go from a modest structure in downtown D.C. to a metropolis packed into one building?

It was necessary because of the vast increase in the military-industrial-technological complex. War has become a function of the capitalist state on such an enormous scale that it virtually threatens to swallow up all of society.

How is it possible that in the midst of what is admittedly the worst capitalist crisis since the early 1930s, with almost 10 million people unemployed, the Pentagon planners betray such utter disregard for the needs of the masses of people, let alone their aspirations for a better life?

One tends to ponder this when one reads that the Pentagon is demanding \$1.2 trillion over five years to promote the program outlined in this infamous document.

That's \$1,200,000,000,000.

For the ordinary worker a million is a lot. A billion is phenomenal.

A trillion — which is a thousand billion — is out of sight!

Compare this to the paltry demands made by authentic popular organizations, which are resisted down to the last penny.

It is impossible for this to go on for any length of time. Sooner or later there will be a reckoning. What the military leaders, the industrialists, the bankers, the politicians, propose, the masses will ultimately dispose.

It's still premature to speculate whether the publication of this document represents a split in the ruling class regarding the economic prospects of the military-industrial complex. Its economic and political weight has been so great up until now that it may be in for a readjustment at a time when it is demanding greater, not less, financial support. It is inevitable that some fissures will arise in the course of the struggle.

The working class movement must have an independent position in this and not be beguiled by fraudulent promises of a peaceful conversion of the capitalist economy, as happened right after the Vietnam War.

Source: [Marxists Internet Archive](#)



---

## Behind NATO's war on Yugoslavia

written by Struggle - La Lucha

February 21, 2023

*On March 24, 1999 - 23 years ago - the U.S./NATO armed forces started a [78-day long aerial bombing campaign](#) against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The brutal bombing campaign targeted civilians, city centers, public transportation,*

*schools, hospitals, hotels and even the Embassy of the People's Republic of China.*

*More than a thousand aircraft were used to drop more than 3,000 cruise missiles and about 80,000 tons of bombs. More than 3,000 people were killed, and up to 20,000 seriously injured.*

*NATO flattened 25,000 residential buildings, 300 miles of roads, almost 375 miles of railroads, nearly 40 bridges, 100 schools and childcare facilities, 30 hospitals and 14 airfields.*

*The bombardment ended June 10 with the declaration of a "NATO victory," as Wikipedia puts it. The real background to NATO's war on Yugoslavia can't be found on Wikipedia, however.*

*Reprinted below is an article by Marxist leader Sam Marcy, originally published in 1992. It also appeared as a chapter in the book "NATO in the Balkans," published in 1998, only months before the bombing began.*

*NATO is a U.S.-commanded military alliance established in 1949 as a military force aimed against the Soviet Union and the Eastern European socialist states. NATO now acts to enforce Washington's dominance in Europe and to intervene in other parts of the world. NATO's war on Yugoslavia asserted suzerainty over the Balkans.*

*After the overturn of the Soviet Union, NATO was expanded to every country of Eastern Europe to lock in place capitalist restoration of the formerly socialist countries. The threatened expansion of NATO's military force to Ukraine, on the border of Russia, along with NATO naval operations in the Black Sea, are direct provocations of Russia. As Leon Panetta — White House Chief of Staff under Bill Clinton, CIA Director and Secretary of Defense under Barack Obama — explained, the conflict in Ukraine is a NATO "proxy war" against Russia.*

# How imperialism broke up Yugoslav Socialist Federation

By Sam Marcy

June 11, 1992

It is impossible to seriously consider the Yugoslav situation without first taking into account some pertinent aspects of history and politics.

The imperialist conspiracy to break up the Socialist Federation of Yugoslavia didn't start yesterday. It didn't start with the U.N. Security Council voting for sanctions. It didn't start with the earlier meeting of the European Economic Community in Spain.

It started a long time ago, when the Anti-Fascist Council of National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ), led by Tito (Josip Broz) and the Communist Party, defeated the royalist, reactionary and pro-fascist forces of Col. Draza Mihajlovic and his Chetniks.

The front mobilized the workers, peasants, progressive intellectuals and thousands of middle class people in the Partisan guerrilla army that defeated the German Nazi and Italian fascist invaders and their quisling regimes.

The U.S. and the British until 1943 recognized Mihajlovic and his Nazi-sympathizing coalition and refused recognition to the representatives of the Yugoslav people organized in the AVNOJ.

Then, seeing that the progressive and revolutionary forces were on the verge of scoring a historic victory, the imperialists suddenly changed sides and began to give token support to the Partisans. They did so largely to disrupt the socialist solidarity between the Yugoslav leaders and the Soviet Union.

The very same forces which fought in Yugoslavia against the revolution, particularly the royalist riff-raff and pro-fascist groupings, have all these years been promoted,

secured, cultivated and supported financially by the U.S. and European imperialists. Now they are being pushed forward as an authentic leadership to replace the Yugoslav government in Belgrade.

### **Monarchist democrats?**

In recent days, the imperialist press have written about a “democratic opposition” in Serbia. Who are they?

There is “the Democratic Movement of Serbia, which embraces the old monarchy and enjoys the support of many Serbian traditionalists.” (Washington Post, May 31, 1992)

What are these monarchist traditions? Suppression of the Serbian people! These idle rich have for decades been living it up in the decadent casinos and watering places of Europe.

The Post continued: “Crown Prince Alexander — the son of the last king of Yugoslavia who was forced into exile during World War II — met recently in Washington with senior White House and State Department officials. This week he expressed his willingness to preside over a constitutional monarchy in cooperation with the democratic movement and spoke of a coalition government that would fall into the mainstream of European democracy. It seems likely that the opposition will win the backing of the Serbian Orthodox Church, which reportedly has dispatched senior clerics to meet with the prince.”

This stooge, who is ordered around by U.S. imperialism like an errand boy, has expressed his willingness to head up a “democratic government.” And giving him their blessing are the reactionary clergy that supported the Mihajlovic forces. This “Democratic Movement of Serbia” is nothing but the old reactionaries in a new form.

They are now boycotting the elections in Serbia because they haven’t got the forces

to contest them. The sanctions against Serbia just passed by the U.N. Security Council (the same council that okayed sanctions and then outright imperialist war against Iraq) are timed to coincide with and disrupt the elections.

An editorial headed "Popular Opposition" (!) in the Financial Times of London (June 2, 1992) calls for the isolation of Serbia: "The demonstration inside Belgrade by some 50,000 anti-war protesters was an indication that popular opposition to [Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic's] policies is growing, at least in the capital. However, the peace movement in Serbia is mainly middle-class based."

In other words, it's a bourgeois, pro-capitalist, pro-imperialist opposition. The demonstrations seem to be precisely timed to undermine the government of Milosevic.

"It would be an illusion to believe," concedes the London big business paper, "that it finds much of an echo in the rural Serb and Montenegrin population, not least the Serbs in Bosnia who look on the Belgrade government as their main protector and champion."

A valuable admission from the mouth of the enemy.

What's missing here is any word on the attitude of the workers. Notwithstanding the political confusion caused by the maneuvers of the principal imperialist powers involved in the current struggle, the workers of these areas support the Yugoslav government.

Most deeply involved among the European imperialist powers are the Germans and Austrians and, to a lesser extent, France and Italy. That's who dominated the European Community conference on the Balkans held recently in Spain. ...

Germany made it clear it would recognize Slovenia and Croatia. By Dec. 23, 1991, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia indicated they too were moving toward

secession.

## **Imperialism and self-determination**

What is the Leninist point of view in a case like this? Is the secession of these republics from Yugoslavia an example of self-determination?

Each and every nation has a right to determine its destiny. This can mean integration; it can mean joining in a federation; it can also mean exercising the right to leave, to secession. In any case it has to express the will of the nation or nationality.

But when the choice is the product of external imperialist pressures of an economic, political and even military character, that is another matter.

Was the president of Croatia defending genuine self-determination when he openly called for the U.S. Sixth Fleet to come to Dubrovnik? (CNN Prime News, May 29, 1992; the president spoke in English.)

The strategy of the imperialists has been to lure the republics away from the Yugoslav federation.

But they are not united. There is a struggle between Germany and the U.S. over who will get the dominant position in the entire Balkan area. Each has its own forum. Germany has used the European Community as its instrument. The U.S. is using the United Nations.

Germany and the U.S. are both seeking to make pawns of the republics. The U.S. may at one time support the Yugoslav Federal Republic and later come out against it; Germany may support Croatia and Slovenia at one point and later change. It all depends strictly on the military and political exigencies of the situation. But each is attempting to win overall control for itself.

## Rich vs. poor republics

As in so many other areas of the world, there is a more developed so-called northern part of Yugoslavia where the bourgeoisie is stronger, and a southern, poorer part. Slovenia and Croatia are more developed, whereas Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia and Montenegro, as well as the province of Kosovo in Serbia, are less developed.

As of 1975, Croatia was the most industrialized and prosperous. Said the New Columbia Encyclopedia of that year: "More than one-third of Croatia is forested and lumber is a major export. The region is the leading coal producer of Yugoslavia and also has deposits of bauxite, copper, petroleum and iron ore. The republic is the most industrialized and prosperous area of Yugoslavia."

Since then, Slovenia has overtaken Croatia as the most developed.

Henry Kamm wrote in the New York Times on July 13, 1987, about the rich-poor split in Yugoslavia. "The southern republics — Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro as well as the province of Kosovo — are subsidized by the more prosperous areas through a federal fund and direct contributions. ... Slovenia [is aware] that its 2 million people have the highest level of economic development among the republics and provinces that make up the federal country of 23 million. Slovenia is a small Slavic republic. The economic crisis has sharpened the contrast between the rich and the poor."

Kamm interviewed people in Slovenia who resented the southern republics. Milos Kobe said, "Fantastic sums go to the south and they don't know how to use them economically." A man named Kmecl told the U.S. reporter, "We cannot invest in renewal because our capital is going for the development of the underdeveloped. A small country like this cannot afford this. After 40 years of this policy, [the southern republics] are still not developed and we can't maintain the pace. We're immobilized. A technologically highly developed society like Slovenia always needs

more for its own science and culture while the underdeveloped need more for social protection than they produce."

We have heard this refrain before. It sounds just like the rich bourgeois elements in any capitalist country who complain that they have to subsidize the poor. They forget that their riches come from the sweat and blood of the workers in every one of these republics and that they became industrialized only because of the socialization of the means of production and centralized planning. This is what protected them from the ravages of imperialist penetration. The federation was like a security blanket that helped them develop.

The imperialists have lured the bourgeois elements of Slovenia and Croatia in particular with the promise of becoming an integral part of the European Community and sharing in its alleged prosperity. They think they'll get a market for their products and be able to deal with the West Europeans on an equal basis, without being "encumbered" by the poorer republics in the federation. All of them, including Serbia, are being lured to invest their foreign exchange in Europe or America and thereby become (they hope) a prosperous part of the imperialist system. ...

### **Socialist federation a great breakthrough**

It is impossible to understand the situation in Yugoslavia if we accept the imperialist premise that what has happened is merely the surfacing of national antagonisms that had been smothered or driven underground following the Yugoslav Revolution.

The establishment of the socialist federation of Yugoslavia was a historic victory. For the first time, a united front of the Balkan countries was formed that was able to detach them from imperialist domination, either Allied or Axis. It was the product of a revolutionary upsurge that engulfed the working class movements of Europe.

The federation developed over a period of years. Its collective presidency was a progressive new political conception. Each republic had an opportunity to run the federation for a specified time and in rotation. The same concept prevailed in the structure of the communist parties. They were also organized on the basis of the collective principle that the party in each republic had an opportunity to run the federated communist party.

What opened the gates to imperialism? Unquestionably, a contributing factor was the unfortunate and ill-considered split between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. Yugoslavia was expelled from the Cominform in 1948 and thereafter isolated from the socialist camp. Years later an attempt was made by the USSR leadership to repair the situation so Yugoslavia could exist without leaning on or getting aid from imperialism. But the socialized, centralized economy of Yugoslavia had already been damaged.

The gates to imperialism opened wide when Yugoslavia established its so-called workers' control of management. This sounded highly democratic — a step away from the rigid, centralized control that stifled the creative energy of the working class. Now the workers' talents and abilities to manage Yugoslavia's affairs would be utilized.

Workers' control as a step away from capitalism is progressive. But it's a backward step when it leads away from centralized socialist planning. The concept of workers' control soon degenerated into managerial control and the abandonment of centralized planning. Yugoslavia fell into the coils of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. By 1981, it was completely dominated by world finance capital. It had opened wide the gates to so-called free enterprise.

### **Decentralization, then dismemberment**

This intensified competition among the various enterprises in each republic and

among the republics themselves in a thoroughly bourgeois manner. Under such conditions, socialist solidarity was lost and more significantly the standard of living plummeted to such an extent that workers were no longer able to purchase basic necessities.

By 1991, the new government had acquired a debt of \$31 billion. Unemployment was over a million and inflation was 200% .

From free enterprise, the necessity arose for free, sovereign, independent republics. Economic decentralization soon led to political decentralization. The dismemberment of Yugoslavia had already begun.

This was not an automatic, spontaneous development. No sooner had there developed the greater autonomy of the republics than the imperialists began to funnel funds into the republics with a view to encouraging and promoting separatist and secessionist objectives. It is they who unloosed the forces of virulent national hatred.

The stimulation of national hatred is a byproduct of imperialist finance capital's investment in Yugoslavia.

Slobodan Milosevic, the Serbian leader, is also a product of that tendency. From the earliest days of his ascendancy to CP leadership, the imperialist press played him up as a "charismatic personality." They supported his nationalist demagogic. It was only later that they found it might become disadvantageous to them if he went too far.

It must be taken into account that there was no unified policy of the imperialists in Yugoslavia. Germany, Italy, France and the U.S. had divergent views on how to approach the situation. Each had its own sordid material interests, which often are hidden. Their policies can also be mistaken. It is not an easy task to stimulate, promote and finance nationalist tendencies in the republics and then get them to

carry out the wishes of individual imperialist countries without arousing all sorts of internecine struggles.

The very forces that they stimulated and brought into motion got out of control.

Each imperialist power, even if it has no direct economic interest in Yugoslavia, is inevitably drawn into the struggle so as not to be left out of the picture. Each tries to find a basis for a relationship with Yugoslavia that will bring it advantage.

It is no wonder that the U.S. State Department did not always know what to do. But one thing they were expert at: financing the counterrevolution.

It is true that earlier they had tangentially supported the Yugoslav regime. They felt a so-called nonaligned entity was useful in the struggle against the USSR. But after Tito died there was no basis for tolerating any remaining communist experiments. Then the dismantling began in earnest — not overtly, but covertly.

Secret diplomacy is one of the most important weapons of imperialism. But the different imperialists often find themselves at loggerheads. While each of the imperialists would want to outdo the others in exerting influence over a dominant Serbia, they are not in favor of a Milosevic who postures as an extreme nationalist and who occasionally flouts European and U.S. intervention.

### **Role of Milosevic**

Milosevic is not very different from any bourgeois nationalist in the oppressed countries. Certainly we are opposed to the ideology of a Bonapartist, especially if he has degenerated with the abandonment of communism. But that's no excuse for supporting imperialist intervention.

Really, Milosevic is not much different from Saddam Hussein. His espousal of bourgeois nationalism is no reason for us to fall on all fours and allow U.S.

imperialism to run roughshod over the country.

It reduces itself again to the U.S., Britain and France, notwithstanding their differences, attempting to do what they did in Grenada, Panama, Iraq, Nicaragua and elsewhere. The fact that it is taking place in Europe does not change the situation at all.

It is not impossible that Serbia or a coalition of some of the republics will reunify on the basis of socialist conceptions. In any event, a federation, even on a bourgeois basis, is bound to be more progressive and productive, more independent of imperialism, than if they are cut up into small principalities with no real power in the world community.

We in this country tend to think of the oppressed nations as mainly those in the less developed world — Latin America, the Middle East, Africa and most of Asia. Of course, the bourgeoisie will turn heaven and earth to deny that there is national oppression in the U.S. From kindergarten on, they drum it into the heads of everyone that this is “one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”

But not well publicized is the fact that national oppression exists also in Europe.

Just saying that one nationality in the Balkans is more developed industrially than another blurs the relationship of oppressor to oppressed. For instance, Slovenia may be more developed with a higher standard of living, but once it is involved in an internecine war and becomes completely dependent on imperialism, it may well find itself in a position of subordination and potentially of oppression.

The tendency in the capitalist press is to obliterate the relationship between oppressor and oppressed and present the internecine struggle as a purely Balkan affair between the nationalities. Overlooked entirely is that for a period of time there existed a federation that not only increased the standard of living but was able on its

own to play a more or less important role, even on the international arena.

Under present conditions, particularly if the war continues, all the nationalities risk being reduced to pawns of the imperialist powers. It may be true that the Yugoslav regime can hold out for a considerable period against imperialist sanctions, but even should it come out victorious it will have been drained of much of its life blood and material resources, assuming it is able to overcome overt and covert imperialist domination.

Bourgeois radicals tend to neglect the class essence of the struggle in Yugoslavia. No matter how carefully they may try to analyze the relations among the nationalities, if they leave out the relation between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, between the national bourgeoisie and the imperialist banks and industrialists, they are left completely at the mercy of monopoly capitalism.

### **Proletariat is leaderless**

Of course, the most important aspect of the situation in Yugoslavia is the position of the proletariat itself. The proletariat at the present time is leaderless, the Communist Party having abandoned its vanguard role as leader in the struggle for socialist construction.

Only the proletariat can play a consistent internationalist role. The bourgeoisie, on the other hand, by virtue of its overriding interest in overturning socialist and state property and promoting private property, not only sharpens its class relations with the proletariat but promotes and stimulates antagonisms between the nationalities.

No nation in modern times is free from class rule. Every state rules in the interests of either the workers or the bourgeoisie. The mere fact it is small or exploited by an imperialist power may obscure that fact but does not invalidate it. This must be borne in mind in approaching the national question. One can easily get lost in the

struggle for nationality, for freedom from oppression, and forget the existence of an exploiting class within the nation.

In the epoch of the bourgeoisie, a nation is merely an instrument of domination by the propertied and exploiting class. Of course, the struggle against the imperialist oppressor must be led by a proletarian vanguard to be effective and the duty of the vanguard is to mobilize all the progressive elements in society on a democratic and anti-imperialist basis. An excellent example of this was the Yugoslav struggle for liberation.

The current Yugoslav regime is in large measure a product of the events in the Soviet Union, beginning with the Gorbachev administration. His reactionary program accelerated all the social antagonisms in Yugoslavia as elsewhere in Eastern Europe. Certainly the sweeping bourgeois restorationist measures taken by the new regimes in the East and particularly the swallowing up of the German Democratic Republic could not but have a detrimental effect on class and socialist consciousness in Yugoslavia.

The leadership, such as it was, panicked under the impact of these events. They not only changed the name of the party, they began to compete with each other over who would go further in bourgeois economic reforms.

The monolithic imperialist press have never had such a clear field to lie and deceive the masses, now that they are no longer restrained by the existence of a socialist camp. The absence of a strong and vigorous working class press also facilitates the task of the bourgeoisie. They are riding high.

But then comes one of those elemental and spontaneous risings, as in Los Angeles, which demonstrate the fragility of bourgeois rule over the working class and the oppressed masses.

Truth crushed to earth will rise again, and with it so will the working class.

