

DIVIDED WORLD DIVIDED CLASS

Global Political Economy and the Stratification of Labour Under Capitalism

Reviewed by Michael Novick, Anti-Racist Action L.A./
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Divided World, Divided Class: Global Political Economy and the Stratification of Labour Under Capitalism, written by Zak Cope. ISBN 978-1-894946-41-4. Published by Kersplebedeb, CP 63560, CCCP Van Horne, Montreal Quebec H3W 3H8 Canada leftwingbooks.net. Also available from AK Press akpress.org.

“Divided World Divided Class,” as its subtitle implies, is an effort to understand capitalism in its totality as a global system and the class structure that results. It focuses primarily on a class analysis of what it terms the “core capitalist countries” (the U.S., western Europe, Japan, Canada, Australia and New Zealand). It puts forward the view that broadly speaking, workers and employees in those countries form a global “labor aristocracy,” a petty bourgeois middle class between the ‘haute’ bourgeoisie and the global proletariat located in the ‘periphery’ (colonized and neo-colonial countries in Africa, Asia/Oceania and Latin America).

The author draws his conclusion from a mathematical analysis of the super-exploitation of the labor force of those Third World countries. He also quantifies the exploitation of their natural resources, primarily through “unequal exchange” (purchase of commodities from them for less than their true cost, and sale of commodities to them for more than their true value). Cope bases this math on the underlying Marxist assumptions of the labor theory of value. He says the only workers who are “exploited” are those who directly produce ‘surplus value’ in agricultural and industrial production of commodities. Through sometimes hypothetical formulations of what the value and price of that labor ‘should’ be, Cope concludes that **all** imperialist profits are derived **exclusively** from the super-exploitation of Third World labor in the periphery.

He judges that workers and employees in the imperialist core countries actually receive pay in **excess** of the value they produce, even where they are engaged in commodity production. Thus, he finds that the pervasive racial, cultural and national chauvinism of these workers is rooted not in false consciousness, ignorance, or misleadership, but in their material economic interest in the exploitation and repression of the periphery and the proletarians there, which they share with ‘their’ bourgeoisie. Cope’s book is a very difficult “read” because of the long sections of abstract mathematical calculations. I believe he overstates his case to the detriment of a true understanding of class structure and revolutionary potential in both the core and the periphery. Nevertheless, I think the book is required reading for would-be revolutionaries.

Anyone interested in ending capitalism, imperialism, racism, exploitation and oppression must grapple with the analysis Cope presents. First of all, Cope provides insights into the nature and functioning of capitalism/imperialism as a global system that are vital to understand and incorporate. These are an important corrective to narrow social-chauvinist views that use the nation-state

as their frame of reference for class analysis or strategic formulations for class struggle. Additionally, Cope recuperates essential elements of Marx’s own analysis of the functioning of capitalism, and of class society generally. He tries to incorporate Lenin’s understanding of imperialism and the contradiction between oppressor and oppressed nations. He reminds us of the contributions of revolutionaries throughout the colonized and semi-colonized “periphery,” such as Kwame Nkrumah’s trenchant explication of neo-colonialism and the welfare state.

However, by overstating his case, Cope essentially liquidates or obliterates class contradictions within both core and peripheral states. Also, because his orientation and experience is primarily European, his understanding of settler colonialism and the existence of oppressed and colonized peoples within such so-called “core” countries as the US, Canada, etc. is limited. All this serves to overestimate the strength of capitalism/imperialism within the “core,” to underestimate the obstacles to revolution



in the “periphery,” and to misapprehend the full dialectical relationship between the two. Like other European Marxists, Cope’s analysis tends to abstract from the issue of privatization of land and exploitation of ‘nature’ in the development of capital and capitalism.

What is the purpose of a revolutionary class analysis? First of all, it should enable us to correctly identify friends and enemies. Second, it can identify our own strengths and weaknesses as well as those of our enemy. Finally it should help us to ascertain how we can use our strengths to overcome our weaknesses, and how we can best take advantage of our enemy’s weaknesses to undermine their strengths. Classes and class relationships are based on material realities but they are social phenomena based on the element of consciousness and practice as well.

A sounder analysis is required to illuminate the weaknesses of the bourgeoisie that we can intensify and use to overcome and overthrow them. It will also enable us to define a sound basis for overcoming class collaboration and identification with the oppressor, which have hamstrung revolutionary developments in the periphery as well as in the core. It will enable us to wage the fight necessary for human and planetary survival in the growing ecological crisis of global warming.

In that light, we have to ask ourselves: Are there really no revolutionary, irreconcilable class contradictions inside so-called “core” or oppressor nations, such as the US, Canada, western Europe and Japan? If so, how is it that the US must incarcerate over 2.3 million people, and hold more than three times as many more in some form of custody like parole and probation? Why does

imperial rule inside the metropole still require millions of troops, law enforcement and prison guards, and private security forces? Why do the US, western Europe and other advanced industrialized nations continue to import, legally and illegally, millions of workers from the “periphery” into their borders? More importantly, why do the NSA and its parallel agencies across Europe hack and spy on all telephonic and electronic communications? Why have the rulers created a vast non-profit industrial complex to channel and contain dissent and community organizing? Why did the US carry out the COINTELPRO domestic war strategy against the Black Panther Party and other Black liberation and communist organizations and against the American Indian Movement?

When COINTELPRO was exposed, why did they continue domestic war and counter-insurgency through genocidal chemical and biological warfare, such as the CIA crack cocaine epidemic, and why are they continuing such domestic psy-ops and repressive strategies to this day against insurgent elements such as the Black Riders Liberation Party? We must recognize, as the imperialists clearly do, that because of the existence of oppressed and colonized people inside the militarily imposed borders of the US, and because of the continuing existence of exploitative social relations and class contradictions inside the metropole, that the Empire does not have a reliable rear area in the US itself. Maintenance of the US as an empire state requires a constant state of war by various means against oppressed and exploited people “within the belly of the beast.”

Conversely, how is it that in “Latin” America (for example Venezuela or El Salvador) and Africa or Asia (for example, Libya or Indonesia) there have been large-scale reactionary or fascist formations pushing counter-revolution in the interests of imperialism? Seeing whole nations in the “Third World” as oppressed and exploited ignores the growth of private and state capital within China, Russia, India, Brazil, South Africa, South Korea, and other societies. The US and EU continue their hostility to Russia, despite the liquidation of the Soviet system. The US is preparing for war with China, despite the triumph of capitalist economic relations there. These developments attest to the fact that inter-imperial rivalries between states in the so-called core and periphery continue to exist.

Furthermore, a thorough class analysis of the periphery also must be global. We must recognize the important role in maintaining colonialism and domination played by the export of labor, especially women in the current period, to both the core and to certain subaltern exploiters within the so-called periphery, such as Saudi Arabia and the Emirates. Also, remittances – money sent by such ‘exported’ workers back to their home countries – now exceeds all governmental aid and private capital investment from the “North” to the “South.”

Welfare state programs have also been used in the periphery, as in the core countries, as part of a carrot and stick strategy to maintain imperial domination. For example, British-style labor parties ruled most of the English-speaking Caribbean, and food stamps and other transfer payments from the US government are used to control the population in its classic colony of Puerto Rico. Their existence in either the periphery or the core does not mean that class contradictions have been eliminated. The “welfare state” needs to be understood as the ‘velvet glove’ draped around the ‘iron fist’ of the “warfare state.” Each requires the other to function and both are based on maintaining exploitative class relations in both the core and the periphery.

The arrival of capitalism didn’t eradicate pre-existing forms of oppression and exploitation such as patriarchy or slavery. Similarly, its transformation into necrotic monopoly capitalism, imperialism, doesn’t eradicate the pre-existing class contradictions of earlier stages of capitalism. We can’t ignore the continuing exploitation of labor and nature that goes on inside the so-called “core” capitalist countries, and the irreconcilable contradictions that continue to exist behind the façade of ‘democracy’ and ‘development’ where we live.

If we do so, we will be attempting to wage the class war necessary to overturn capitalism and imperialism with one arm tied behind our backs. We can ill afford to do so when continued imperial rule means condemning future generations and the planetary eco-system to genocidal climate change, water wars and food shortages. We must unite all who can be united as a great clenched fist against the common enemy of humanity and “Mother Earth” itself – imperialism!

VENEZUELA: COUP PART TWO

[column written 3/21/14] © 2014 by Mumia Abu-Jamal

The United States has tried, several times, to stage a coup against Venezuela, especially during the outsized life of the late Presidente, Hugo Chavez. It was April of 2002, when U.S. backed corporate and military forces ousted Chavez, and tried to install a puppet regime.

Within days, the streets of Caracas came alive to bring back Chavez, and restore him to the presidency.

Here we go again.

Right wing and corporate backed forces are now trying to spark popular revolts against the Bolivarian successor to Chavez: Nicolas Maduro. And guess who’s backing them?

Members of America’s millionaire -Congress. Using right wing claims of government attacks on peaceful protests, and on a free press, members of the U.S. corporate Congress are trying to scare up sanctions against the socialist government of Venezuela.

We saw no congressional action when peaceful protests were waged in cities across America. The Occupy Movement, peacefully protesting corporate greed

and the brutal tyranny of the 1%, got, first, slimed in the corporate press, and when the media turned out the lights, they got beaten by police, their tents and property seized and destroyed.

Mayors across America conspired with Homeland Security to run their encampments off the streets. Some protestors were shot by cops, and injured badly.

From Congress came nothing – but silence.

Now, the 10% Congress, at the behest of several anti-Castro Cubans, are attacking Venezuela’s democracy –again, on behalf of the 1%.

This is nothing but another attempted coup, with American money and backing.

Their noses are so busy poking into other’s business, that it ignores the cancer at home, which may explain its now epic low levels of support – 10%.



Defeating Fascism Before It's Too

by James Petras

<http://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/10529> (excerpts)

Capt. Jose Guillen Araque of the Venezuelan National Guard recently gave Pres. Maduro a book on the rise of Nazism, warning that “fascism has to be defeated before it's too late!” In retaliation, the captain was shot by a US-backed assassin on the streets of Maracay on March 16. The killing of a prominent, patriotic officer in a provincial capital is one more indication that the Venezuelan fascists are on the move, confident of support from Washington and from a broad swath of the Venezuelan upper and middle class. They constitute a minority of the electorate and have no illusions about taking power via constitutional democratic means. Guillen Araque had stepped forward to remind Pres. Maduro that the road to power for Nazi and fascist totalitarian groups has been littered with the corpses of well-meaning democrats throughout contemporary history because of their failure to use their constitutional powers to crush the enemies of democracy.

The term “fascist” in Venezuela is appropriately applied to organized violent political groups engaged in mass terror in a campaign to destabilize and overthrow the democratically-elected Bolivarian government. The Venezuelan brand of fascism is dependent on, and acts as a proxy for, US imperialism and their Colombian warlord allies. Venezuelan fascism's racism is directed against its multiracial African-Amerindian Venezuelan working and peasant classes. The essential connection with earlier fascist movements is found in **1)** profound class hostility to the popular majority; **2)** visceral hatred of the Chavista Socialist Party, winner of 18 of the last 19 elections; **3)** resort to the armed seizure of power by a minority; **4)** its intention to destroy the democratic institutions it exploits to gain political space; **5)** targeting working class institutions – communal councils, neighborhood associations, clinics, trade unions and peasant co-operatives; and **6)** support of banks, commercial landed estates and manufacturing firms.

In Germany, Italy, Spain, and Chile, fascist movements began as small terrorist groups. They gained the backing of the capitalist elite because of their violence against working class organizations and democratic institutions. Tragically, democratic leaders tended to regard fascists as “just another party,” refusing to crush the armed thugs, who combined terror in the streets with elections to gain state power. The democrats refused to send out their multi-million mass supporters to face the fascist hordes. Thus the fascists easily moved from the streets to state power. The people's right to armed defense of their democracy

had been subordinated to upholding ‘democratic norms.’ Constitutional democrats failed to recognize how drastically politics had changed. They were not dealing with a parliamentary opposition; they were confronted with armed terrorists and saboteurs committed to the seizure of power by any means. To fascism, democratic conciliation is a weakness and an invitation to escalate violence. This is how they came to power in Germany, Italy and Chile, while the constitutional democrats refused to arm the millions of organized workers who could have throttled the fascists, saved democracy and preserved their own lives.

Fascism in Venezuela: A Mortal Threat Today

Capt. Guillen Araque's warning of an imminent fascist danger in Venezuela has a substantive basis. The subterranean organizations financ[e] the flow of arms to fascists-in-waiting. Political opposition leaders are duplicitous, moving from legal forms of protest to sub-rosa complicity with armed terrorists. In a fascist putsch, the oligarchs will emerge as the rulers – and will share power with leaders of the fascist organizations. Their ‘respectability’ provides political cover; their campaigns to free thugs and arsonists earn international support while they serve as intermediaries between US funding agencies and the terrorist underground. To ‘defeat fascism before it is too late’, the government must assess the resources [and] organization of the fascist command and reject overly ‘upbeat’ pronouncements from some ministers and legislators.

Fascists are not simply a small band pounding on pots and attacking municipal workers in upper-middle class neighborhoods of Caracas. The fascists are organized on a national basis. They target vital institutions in strategic locations. Their financing, arming and actions are planned. Their demonstrations are not spontaneous, responding to government ‘repression’ as depicted in the bourgeois media. The fascists bring together different violent groups, combining right-wing professionals, gangs and drug traffickers, paramilitary groups, mercenaries and felons. These are financed by currency speculators, protected by local officials, and offered sanctuary by real estate investors and university bureaucrats. They include thugs and students from upper-middle-class families, paramilitary Colombians, mercenaries, ‘contract killers’ from US security outfits, and fascist ‘internationalists’ recruited from Miami, Central & Latin America and Europe. The terrorists have two sanctuaries, Bogota and Miami, where prominent political leaders provide political support. The convergence of criminal economic activity and political

terrorism presents a double threat to the Venezuelan economy and state. Criminals and terrorists find a common home under the US political tent, designed to overthrow Venezuela's democratic government and crush the Bolivarian revolution.

The targets of terrorism are the strategic programs that sustain democratic administration; mass social institutions forming the base of the government. This [is] why terrorists bomb clinics, public schools and centers for adult education, state subsidized food stores and the public transport system. Terrorists target the police, National Guard, judges, prosecutors and other authorities in charge of safeguarding citizens to create a climate of fear and demonstrate that the state is incapable of protecting the life of its citizens. The terrorists want to project an image of ‘dual power’ by seizing public spaces, blocking normal commerce and ‘governing the streets through the gun.’ The terrorists want to curtail popular counter-demonstrations by blocking streets and sniping at activists. They count on their ‘legal’ opposition allies to provide them with a mass base via public demonstrations, which can serve as a shield for violent assaults and a pretext for sabotage.

The challenge is to cut-off the economic and political basis of fascism. Until recently the government has been over sensitive to criticism from overseas and domestic elites who defend fascists in the name of “democratic freedom.” Venezuela has resources at its disposal to root out the fascist threat. Even if action causes an outcry from overseas, it's incumbent on the government to act against opposition officials who incite armed rebellion.

The National Assembly has voted to strip Congresswoman Corina Machado of her immunity so she can be prosecuted for inciting violence. President of the National Assembly Cabello has presented detailed evidence of her role in organizing and promoting armed rebellion. Several opposition mayors, actively involved in protecting snipers, thugs and arsonists, have been charged and arrested. The majority of Venezuelans confronted by fascist violence support the punishment of officials engaged in or supporting sabotage. The most significant advance toward stopping the fascist threat lies in the government's recognition of the links between the parliamentary and business elite and the fascist terrorists. Financial speculators, smugglers and big-time hoarders of food and other essential commodities are part of the fascist drive for power with the terrorists who bomb food markets and attack trucks transporting food to poor neighborhoods. One revolutionary worker said to me after a street skirmish: “*Por la razon y la fuerza no pasaran!*” (Through reason and force they will be defeated)...

RACISMO SIN VERGÜENZA DE LOS CONTRAS VENEZOLANOS

by Arlene Eisen

<http://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/10547> (excerpts)

It's late morning in Caracas, Feb. 12. From the restaurant in the hotel around the corner from Plaza Venezuela we can hear chanting. Are they yelling “Maduro/burro Salida”? We see smiling white people, streaming down the street in the first huge anti-government demonstration that signaled the onset of the current outrages in Venezuela.

Olga, the restaurant manager, has tan skin, died blond hair and brown eyes. She's one of the 42% of Venezuelans who self-identified as white in the Census. She barks orders to the Indigenous woman in the kitchen. She's laughing as she glances at a cartoon in an anti-government Caracas newspaper. I ask if there are interesting stories. She unleashes a tirade about how she hates Chavismo. She says it brought “riff-raff, brutes, thugs and criminals into the city.” She's emphatic. “Caracas is flooded with uncultured animals who make life miserable for civilized people.” She concludes, “Look at the crime, insecurity, murders!” It's likely Olga is influenced by cartoons by Kiko Rodriguez. One of his more repulsive depictions of Chavez expresses time-worn racist contempt for people of African descent, but also foments fear and hatred. The title is “Miko Mandante”, meaning “Ape Commander,” to mock the affectionate title “Mi Comandante” used by masses of Venezuelan people.

Olga never mentioned the race of Venezuela's poor. The extreme poor in 2003 were 30% of the population and by 2011 only 6.8%. Chavismo's accomplishments in reducing poverty are significant because of the near total correlation between class and race in Venezuela. Nearly all the wealthy people are phenotypically European, while nearly all those in poverty are Black and Brown. Treating people of African and Indigenous descent as animals or criminals is flagrantly visible in Venezuelan institutions. White supremacy in Venezuela resembles the US and other settler colonial countries.

The roots of white supremacy run deep, yet the Boli-



Racist political cartoon representing Hugo Chavez as a murderous ape.

varian Revolution has improved the lives of Venezuela's majority—who are people of color, unlike during the old dictatorships who served Standard Oil and the US State Department. Legal tools—including Land Reform, a new Constitution written by a Constituent Assembly, the Organic Law Against Racial Discrimination—chip away at discrimination and promote mass participation in government, and in communes, councils, collectives and cooperatives. These are the structures of peoples' power—including 30,000 communal councils designed to ensure that once-marginalized people become protagonists of their futures and nurture their dignity. Between 1997-2011 the portion of Venezuela's wealth going to the richest 20% decreased from 53-44%. At the end of 2013, the poverty rate

had dropped by 20%, the largest decline in the Americas, and one of the largest in the world. Oil revenue pays for homes for the poor, schools where every primary student gets a free laptop, universities with open admission, health clinics, and jobs. It also funds programs against domestic violence, transgenic seeds and other campaigns.

Hugo Chavez, Venezuela's first President with African and Indigenous ancestors, spoke proudly about his thick lips and kinky hair. Chavez practiced solidarity with Black and Brown people on a world scale. He provided aid with no strings attached to Black and Indigenous people in the US, Haiti, Colombia and elsewhere. In 2011, a joint Cuban-Venezuelan project opened the first high school in Western Sahara refugee camps. A project in Palestine provides free eye surgery.

The counter-revolutionary movement in the streets has become the darling of the corporate press, who never mention that the racism pervading this movement could rival that in the KKK. Racism is one of the main engines of the counter-revolution.

1. Destroying progress by African Descendants and Indigenous People

The counter-revolutionary movement in the streets has as one of its main objectives restoring white privilege. Cartoons, editorials, posters, graffiti blame Venezuela's economic problems on “squandering” the nation's oil resources on the “rabble.” Racist cartoonist Weil is one of Venezuela's most widely reproduced. He has 155,000 Twitter followers to whom he tweets militant support for Maria Corina Machado (a right-wing extremist leader reminiscent of Sarah Palin) and other extremists promoting anti-government lies, racism and violence.

2. Anti-communism, Xenophobia and Racism in an anti-Cuban Stew

Graffiti, twitter, TV and print media perpetuate racist, anti-communist, xenophobic lies that Black Cubans have invaded Venezuela. Photos of Black people in military

First Person Personal: Encountering Racism on the Road

by Max Hodes

I woke up in Virginia. I was on tour in a six-piece band with which I'd been working as a producer, audio engineer, singer and/or tenor-guitarist. We each came from different classes and countries. Most of us had joined the band recently, but had toured the country twice together. I was in the band for three years, and didn't know then that I would be quitting in three days.

We were heading to Durham to play the Pinhook. We stopped an hour out of town to visit and pick up the drummer's sister. She lived in a vinyl-sided two-story on a cul-de-sac. Big front yard and sparse woods behind the house. Dog. Cookies in the kitchen she was saving for somebody. She called her neighbor's kids "niglets."

She had been talking with four of us for an hour. The drummer was showering and she teased him in his temporary absence. She talked about her kids, their video games, her husband's job. It was a recognizable, and seemingly predictable, kind of boring. I tuned in and out, absorbing enough conversation to speak up in context and then watching the details of her kitchen go by until I thought more silence would be rude.

She said "niglets" like we all agreed with her; like everyone is racist about the neighbors. I reacted with an instant of stupefied denial preceding understanding and total disgust. I felt a multitude of connections made to people and places I knew: fascist pigs in suits and ties and the comrades they sought to capture and kill; black and white faces, enemies and allies, strangers, family; history I'd read. A sudden urgency and a kind of blindness. I feared and thus felt a total lack of allies. In my self-protection I barely registered anyone else's discomfort or protest. Someone said "That's racist." I stood there in silent, open-mouthed rage. "If you lived here, you'd say the same thing," she said, forced a laugh and was met with silence. The drummer said "look at Max. He's fucking speechless!" I grabbed my jacket with "All Power To The People" written on the back and walked out.

I was as much dumbfounded as angry, slowly realizing the opportunity to voluntarily and easily remove my body from a situation I found disagreeable was a privilege I had not turned to revolutionary action. But in so doing I met no resistance from my bandmates. They were fine with silent exit as protest. I was standing in her driveway next to the tour van when she came out of the house for a minute and called down. "Are you in shock?" "I don't want to talk to you about anything at all," I responded. I got the feeling that her sense of entitlement to feelings of dominance and hatred was still in place.

Our keyboardist, who was dating the drummer, volunteered to ride to the show with the racist woman, and talk along the way about why "niglet" is a bad thing to say. The rest of us rode in the bus where the drummer explained that his sister was so intractable that fighting her would be useless. She wouldn't give details about their conversation, but the keyboardist said it was generally about how words can have an impact on people, and implied that the drummer's sister simply didn't understand her racism. I thought I was being kept from a confrontation.

I went after my bandmates, angered by our fearful collective response. To say nothing was to permit future racist speech, and to belabor the point with an argument, the necessity of even having one, showed our bad politics. I thought we had been weak. I argued that we should have attacked, shamed her, broken her will. One argued back, justifying a lack of further response with a cost/benefit analysis as part of a larger systemic problem of politicized communication in the context of our band. What's the use of changing a single mind? What's the use of a politics that permits paralysis, I returned. We argued for an hour, coming to no real conclusion. I was seeing how deeply fragmented we could be by seemingly small political differences.

The singer had decided on his own to confront the drummer's sister and we opted to do it together after the show. She was indeed intractable, and looked at us blankly while we spoke, waiting for us to finish. The singer said he was offended by her words. I told her I was offended by her existence, not merely her word choices. In response to a short explanation in which the singer connected her casual racism to massive systemic violence, she argued we were telling her how she felt. She placed primary importance on herself as an individual, and the uniqueness of her experience. She only spoke that way to her immediate family so her independence from others made her racism harmless, she argued. She had never noticed massive systemic violence. And she hadn't driven two hours in the snow to be told what she could or could not say in her own home. Wasn't she entitled to her own thoughts and opinions? In her own home?

She's not. Her collection of synaptic happenstance, organized as it is by her appropriation of white supremacy, deserves no protection. Racism is violence, and when invoked as a conquering force, should be wholly opposed. We should have, could have demonstrated that her feelings were irrelevant in the face of centuries-long struggles for liberation. I got bogged down, concerned with changing a small group

of minds more than subverting or resisting the system that produced them. We never acted or thought as a group with revolution in mind. This was evidence to me that everyone involved, myself included, was harboring concern for their own well-being as aided by that system. We even resembled the system: we were concerned with, and resentful for, the keeping of an established internal social order; we internalized a political fight, arguing from many sides about its uses and appropriate tactics, instead of actually having the fight. Together we made a quagmire in which oppressive ideologies, both those expressed by the drummer's sister and those we unconsciously reproduced, were given space. It seemed to me that fully fighting a system so enmeshed in our relationships to one another might be destructive enough to break up the band. We certainly didn't have a collective politics; we came from different classes and different countries, and had different ends in mind.

I quit in Georgia. Told the band in New Orleans.

A paragraph about that jacket: It's a black biker jacket. It said "All Power To The People" on the back, handwritten in white acrylic paint. I'm 6'1", white, bearded and keep my mostly-bald head shaved to the



Photo: Sarah Martinez

skin. I wear big, black boots, and look like a politicized roadie. I got a lot of attention for this jacket, much of it very weird, and, with few exceptions, from white men. In Athens, GA, a man stopped me while pissing to laude the jacket's patriotism.

In at least three truck stops, the jacket received patron hails with no explanation. In Austin, TX, an enormous and equally shorn white man grabbed me during a heavy metal show to shout over the music at me that he was a cop, would never enforce an anti-gun law if such a law could be passed, and that not all cops are douche bags. I can only speculate about what kind of trust I stirred in these men, but they offered me access to their strange fright and uncurious ignorance. The Texan Heavy Metal Pig indicated suspicion with his assurance that only some pigs are bad, but wanted to get closer despite his perception of my opposition.

SHAMELESS RACISM IN THE VENEZUELAN COUNTER-REVOLUTION

uniform are retweeted thousands of times to arouse fear of Black people, especially Cubans. March 16, Alexandra Misel tweeted a photo with the caption, "Are these pure Afrodescendants from Barlovento (region of Venezuela with high concentration of African Descendants) or are they from Havana?" The next day, she tweeted the same photo, with a more alarmist caption, "Invading troops dressed like National Guard." From the comments under the tweets, it's obvious Venezuelan white supremacists have no way to distinguish an African descendant who's Cuban from one who's Venezuelan. They claim their violent intentions are aimed at Cubans, but their practice of decapitating motorcyclists and shooting Bolivarians indicates that the racism that fuels anti-Cuban threats is also harnessed to their terror campaign against Chavistas.

3. Criminalizing African Descendants, Indigenous People and their Organizations

White peoples' criminalizing of Black and Brown-people dates back to the first rebellions by Indigenous and enslaved people in the 1500s. African Descendants and

Indigenous people have been invisible on privately-owned TV, except as servants or criminals. The Bolivarian government disbanded local police forces that used to racially profile, murder and harass African Descendants. It has also taken steps to reform prisons, establish alternatives to incarceration and mobilize local communities to prevent crime. However, Venezuela's privately-owned media and the US corporate press echo that fear of crime and government "inaction" in the face of crime motivates people to demand that Maduro resign. They claim that Chavista grassroots collectives—that provide a space and structure for previously marginalized people to lead and participate in political education, cultural work and sports—are paramilitary arms of the "Maduro Dictatorship." This racist myth undermines a revolutionary institution, the communal council, that, for the first time, gives people of color a voice in how resources will be spent. It blames the "colectivos" for intimidation and violence, rather than the middle class youth who vandalize public property, build barricades, and have killed those who cross or dismantle them.

4. Distortion and Glorification of Gochismo

During the '30s, white Venezuelan intellectuals promoted exclusion of all but European immigrants. They pointed to the Andes and Mérida as "the grand reservoir of the white race for the Republic." For some, Gocho identity as hard-working mountaineers emerged in direct contrast to the perceived "laziness" of coastal slaves. Seven of Venezuela's recent presidents (including dictators) came from the Gocho region. The epitome of these, nicknamed "El Gocho," was Carlos Andres Pérez, who imposed the 1989 neo-liberal program that forced 70% of Venezuelans into poverty. All residents of the Andean states are sometimes referred to as Gochos. However, the counter-revolutionary Gochos are concentrated in San Cristobal and Mérida while rural residents form the majority of the states' voters and have elected Chavista governors.

Images of white people, outfitted with makeshift rifles, pistols, Molotovs, slingshots and military equipment fill the screens of tweeters. Others feature flaming barricades with captions like, "Release the Gocho inside you." Right-wing extremists like Maria Corina Machado have hyped the Gochos for their own political purposes. At rallies and press conferences, she never fails to associate herself with the Gochos of San Cristobal and Merida—the first barricaders and most persistently violent. Her poster features her wearing a white t-shirt claiming "we are all Tachira." It labels her, "The Lady of Iron"—the woman who aims to overthrow the government and expel Cubans from Venezuela so real (white) Venezuelans may recover their dignity.

So far, the vast majority of Venezuelan people, especially African Descendants and Indigenous people, have rejected both the politics and strategy of the counter-revolutionary movement. A Bloomberg News article reported a bus driver's observation, "It's rich people trying to get economic perks. The slums won't join them." It's time we stand in solidarity with the majority in Venezuela and voice strong opposition to US-sponsored coups or intervention on the side of the counter-revolution.



Street art in Venezuela: "IMPERIALISM OUT! Only the people can save the people".

Statement on the "Armed Self-Defense"

by the State Committee of the Popular Democratic Revolutionary Party (PDPR) Command Area of the Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR-Ejercito Popular Revolucionario)



Editor's Note: Last issue TTT published an analysis of the armed self-defense groups in Michoacan Mexico that portrayed them as a revolutionary anti-statist development rooted in indigenous armed self-defense against colonialism, along with links to alternative views in Mexico. Here we are printing a contrary analysis by a clandestine Mexican revolutionary formation.

To People of Michoacán:
People of Mexico:
The People of the World:
National and International
Communications Media:
Non-Governmental Organizations Of
Human Rights Defenders:
Revolutionary Popular Political
Organizations:
To the Michoacan Agricultural Proletariat:
To the Communists of the World:
BROTHERS, SISTERS, COMRADES!

In almost a year since the emergence of so-called guards or community self-defense, the true character and nature of these groups has been shown. Eleven months and some days have sufficed to remove the popular clothing that covered their true skin as gatekeepers of capital. Today in light of the events and analysis of objective reality, the patent and workmanship with which these paramilitary groups are sealed is evident.

The agreement between the groups of "self defense," and the state and federal governments on Monday January 27, means in fact confirmation and legalization of paramilitary groups in Michoacán, as a "new" form of institutionalized paramilitary in Mexico, active components of the counterinsurgency strategy and plans for Low Intensity Warfare (GBI - Guerra de Baja Intensidad). This checked for the umpteenth time the nature and essence of these groups, who from the beginning were organized and structured from the paramilitary counterinsurgency logic; they have always rendered part of different subsidiaries and headquarters of the XXI and XLIII military zone located in Morelia and Apatzingán respectively.

It is the "decent" legal - legal solution which gives the paramilitaries as part of the strategy of a military-police state that guarantees militarization across the country. Under this argument and media masquerade the aims of State terrorism prevailing in the country as part of the war against the people are justified and legitimated. All policies deployed under this argument, either in Michoacán or other states of the republic, bear the stamp of this strategy.

It is false that its origin is in the social weariness and the need to defend the people. It is true that they are a genuine expression of popular protest. It is false that have arisen independently of the state. It is false that they are "liberating" territory in Michoacan from the power of "organized crime." It is false that they have popular support, it is true that they are peasants with rifles in their hands. It is true that they are day laborers in the region of Tierra Caliente of Michoacán

and Guerrero. It is a vicious lie and part of the media landscape that they are restoring the lands that were removed by the narco farmers.

The actual workers, laborers, peasants and workers, are those who have been killed and disappeared as part of social cleansing. Antunez is a clear example, where crimes against humanity were perpetrated by military, police, navy and paramilitaries.

It's a grotesque circus..., whereas those who maintain the offensive and subjugate the people are the army, federal police and navy. These paramilitary groups such as the repressive apparatus troops the media only screen to hide state crimes and crimes against humanity that are being committed daily against the Michoacan people. These groups are in charge of social cleansing and coercion of people, if they fail to assassinate them, or disappear them

We are talking about the creation and performance of a mercenary army nurtured by former police officers at all levels, former military demobilized ex-professional military and federal police on



Guerrilla Fighter of the Ejercito Popular Revolucionario (EPR).

active duty, underclass subjects, for whom the only thing that motivates them is the monetary interest that encourage them. Although claiming to be defenders of the people it is evident that they originate in their own state police and military structures. Their operational, technical handling of weapons and the impunity with which they operate alone speak of their origin and patent.

The thesis that they are a genuine expression of the people has been reinforced and propagated by the media monopolies who have made a media campaign on behalf of the paramilitary under different masks. [The corporate media] have been commissioned to provide coverage, voice and image to the phenomenon. They are portrayed as having been outraged by the crimes committed by the notorious criminals. Regarding illegal and legitimate community guards or defenses, they have been pouring reviews, comments, analysis and coverage of the whole war front.

But what about the persons threatened, intimidated, tortured, killed, missing and displaced [on] account [of] self-defense or community guards? The [media] ... omit these crimes against humanity, say nothing of the terror that has been commissioned to be implanted in the region of the Michoacán coast and lowlands, or about the abuses perpetrated daily as part of their paramilitary ideology, committed in joint military checkpoints between the navy and paramilitaries.

Nothing is said, far less questions raised, about the illegal practice of fascist video recording, photography and force at checkpoints to get address, identification and any information of a personal nature. This becomes part of the database that is applied to the social cleansing, and so impunity for military, navy and community guards is guaranteed. Because for these "ombudsmen," in their eyes, we are all criminals and if you're not with them then otherwise you are a "Knight Templar" [member or supporter].

Make no mistake, in Michoacan so-called self-defense or community guards, paramilitaries are obeying the logic of the dirty paramilitaries of the century, promoted and sponsored from the bowels of U.S. imperialism in its counterinsurgency strategy and permanent aggression against the peoples of Latin America and the world.

What is happening in the region of Tierra Caliente and the Michoacán coast is part of a military-police and paramilitary offensive against the Michoacan people that has not stopped since the installation of the illegitimate Felipe de Jesus

bourgeois state with its particular feature of military-police state subservient to the local bourgeoisie, oligarchs and imperialists. What is really at stake is the raw material for the mining and defense industry, and the geo-strategic location that the port of Lazaro Cardenas represents to the realization of the good not only of national origin, but the goods manifests itself as a form of international monopoly capital.

There are multiple linkages between the case of Michoacán and the rest of the country from north to south with international events that have "shaped the world," in Syria, Libya, Iraq, the Middle East and North Africa. These linkages are the primitive accumulation of capital, expansion and dominance of transnational monopoly capital on small producers, which implies concentration and accumulation of capital in the imperialist oligarchy, supported by national bourgeois politicians and chiefs who are threatened by the structural crisis of capitalism. The hallmark is the imperialist strategy and tactics being applied internationally with particular specificities of Michoacan.

This is a socio-economic and political phenomenon, however, we identify those who are directly responsible, specifically the current individuals from the current regime, Enrique Peña Nieto, Miguel Angel Osorio Chong, Fausto Vallejo Figueroa, Alfredo Castillo Cervantes, Manlio Fabio Beltrones and the crowd of politicians that applaud and seconded them, all ardent apologists for violence and state terrorism, faithful watchdogs of imperialist interests.

Michoacan, Mexico, is part of the class struggle, and the enemy has focused its forces to defend and perpetuate their interests. Within this context the people and their organizations, to set the oppressed and exploited corresponds as sibling classes, must close ranks around the revolutionary forces if bloodshed was not in vain! That is for the common interest that concerns us all in this country, it is for the total emancipation from the bourgeois dictatorship and the yoke of capital, that is for the socialist revolution!

To all those in Michoacan who have been swept away by the cloud of confusion created by the media's binomial communication - whipping up wills that want to see their people truly emancipated and revolutionary forces in action and direct confrontation with the state, all of them, we call on you to leave the ranks of the paramilitaries, to straighten your rifles against the class enemy, join the ranks of the socialist revolution.

The ranks of progressives and revolutionaries need to be vigilant about the events in Michoacan, to our members, partners and supporters, we urge you to be alert forces! In this new increasingly repressive state terrorism, to take appropriate measures to apply objective reality within the context of the war against the people, to continue to develop strategic and tactical forms of underground organization.

Close Ranks Against State Terrorism!
Foster Real People's Self Defense!

Demand the Living Presentation of All Those Arrested or Missing of Yesterday and Today!

For the Socialist Revolution!

Unite or die! Workers for our comrades! Determined to win! For People's War! The EPR will triumph!

STATE COMMITTEE, POPULAR DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTIONARY PARTY (PDPR)
COMMAND AREA of the POPULAR REVOLUTIONARY ARMY (EPR) Year 50.
- From somewhere in the state of Michoacan de ocampo January, 2014

On the Black Riders and Revolutionary Intercommunalism

By Michael Novick, Anti-Racist Action Los Angeles/
People Against Racist Terror

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) is a Southern-based non-profit research and advocacy organization that targets “hate groups” and works closely with law enforcement across the US. It’s best-known for winning civil damages cases against the KKK and Tom Metzger’s “White Aryan Resistance,” but behind the scenes, it maintains intelligence files on more radical anti-Klan and antifa groups and various Black militants, and shares them with police and intelligence agencies. Recently, without providing a shred of evidence or documentation, or any verbal explanation, the SPLC categorized the Black Riders Liberation Party in Los Angeles and Oakland CA as a “Black separatist hate group.” This can only be seen as part of a concerted state attack against the BRLP, a new, repressive COINTELPRO operation aimed at discrediting them, perhaps even setting them up for assassinations, as were the Black Panthers by similar propaganda.

If you read *Turning the Tide* or the SF Bay View the Black Riders’ own African Intercommunal News Service paper, you know the SPLC is lying. Far from being a hate group, they are class-conscious anti-capitalist revolutionaries who preach and practice solidarity. But the SPLC doesn’t dare to admit that, or to express the true reasons for their opposition to the BRLP, since that would expose the non-profit as a counter-insurgency force in its own right. The Black Riders consider themselves to be the new generation Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. They’ve been in existence longer than the original Black Panthers sustained themselves as a viable organization. They continue to be the target of vicious government repression and new COINTELPRO-style attacks, and commonly appear publicly in paramilitary uniforms and formations, with black or camouflage clothing, combat boots and black berets. But they have never been either the beneficiaries of the kind of romanticism, media glare or movement focus that the Panthers were back in the 1960s.

This has been the case for several reasons. First of all, the Black Riders and their leadership learned lessons from the arc of development and decay of the original BPP. They wanted to avoid the uncontrolled growth and notoriety that allowed the state to infiltrate and stigmatize the Party, by admitting anyone off the streets without security measures. The BRLP chose instead to build at the base, under the harsher and more militarized conditions of today’s “total surveillance state.” They built locally in southern California and have been expanding steadily into other areas, especially Oakland, with trusted cadre, and are building a prison chapter, 1000 strong, nationally as a key priority of re-establishing a radical Black communal base.

Second, corporate media are far more monopolized and tamed today than they were in the 1960s. Coverage of the Panthers was mostly sensationalistic pro-government propaganda aimed at portraying the BPP as thugs and criminals. But the necessity to cover their activities, and the possibility of airing alternative views, occurred in the context of a large, militant, and dynamic popular movement, that grew from a non-violent civil rights struggle to armed self-defense and Black Power. Those conditions no longer prevail. Corporate media today defuse opposition to the system through the pretense that it’s non-existent. When forced to abandon that strategy, they turn to ridicule and calumny as Plan B. The SPLC disinformation campaign can be seen in that context, of open attempts to disrupt and smear the Riders.

The fact that the Black Riders Liberation Party has been building up its forces from a base in southern California and on the West Coast also partially accounts for the tame left’s lack of awareness of their significance and progress., particularly in the era of a “non-profit industrial complex” as a substitute for a real revolutionary left movement. Many of the most significant political and cultural developments of the past decades have come out of California and specifically southern CA. Think about the 1965 Watts “riot” that launched the era of Black urban rebellions. Look at the original Black Panthers themselves. After their destruction, LA was the origin point for the Crips and the Bloods and for the CIA crack cocaine epidemic, as well as being a major progenitor of hip-hop and rap. LA was home to the first gang truce and peace accord, and the site of the 1992 “inter-communal” Black, Brown, white and Asian uprising after the acquittal of the cops who brutalized Rodney King. Yet the reformist left in the US continues to think in terms of “influencing policy decisions” in Washington, DC, or getting Obama and the Democrats to demonstrate “backbone.” Revolutionaries arising from grassroots ghettos in Watts, Compton or Oakland, who stand for the right to armed self-defense, make such reformist forces very uncomfort-

able.

But if you’re revolutionary-minded, if you’re fired up with a sense of urgency to resist genocide, ecocide, oppression and exploitation, you’d better pay close attention to the Black Riders Liberation Party. Their writings and practice are a weapon in the hands of those who choose to resist and fight for a new way of life, regardless of “race” or nationality. If you don’t shrink from the understanding that we will need more than words as weapons, the BRLP is for you. The Black Riders have important lessons to teach of how to withstand repression and build revolutionary unity and principled alliances across national, religious, racial, gender and other divisions. The Black Riders have directly challenged police terror on the streets. They have withstood political arrests and trials, incarceration and even assassination. They’ve confronted organized white supremacists including the Minutemen and the National Socialist Movement, stood up for Black-Brown unity and opposed anti-immigrant forces. They have built alliances with Occupiers, sex workers, and LGBTQ people, developed AIDS awareness and prevention programs in their community, started the George Jackson Freedom School for Black youth, built gang truces, and committed themselves to serious ongoing political study and struggle.

There’s no other current formation in the U.S. that has been targeted for more consistent and protracted repression than the Black Riders, including frame up arrests, massive police/FBI raids with tanks, helicopters and armored personnel carriers, constant surveillance and harassment by local police. Yet they persevere and grow. Some years ago, I was out for the Martin Luther King Day parade in Los Angeles, passing out copies of *Turning the Tide*. I turned a corner and there were 30 or so Black Riders in uniform, marching along, trailed by a phalanx of cops, numerous patrol cars and a helicopter overhead. The state clearly understands and fears the threat that the Black Riders Liberation Party represents to the system of oppression and exploitation that police departments, espionage and counter-insurgency agencies are designed to serve and protect.

That the SPLC attack took place in the midst of a series of arrests and police raids directed against Black Rider leaders, members, and their families in L. A. and Oakland, is no coincidence. There is clearly high level coordination of attacks on the Riders. When Gardena police made a recent unjustified address of General T.A.C.O. (Taking All Capitalists Out) of the Black Riders, LAPD Chief Charlie Beck was called almost immediately to “consult.” When Shango Abiola, Field Commander of the Black Riders Oakland chapter, returned from a visit on behalf of the party to the Movimento Sem Terra (landless peasants) in Brazil, he was held for fruitless questioning by the Feds for hours at the airport. Etana and Mecca Shakur, two women leaders of the Party, are currently facing trial for defending themselves against a racist, sexist assault by an Inglewood cop.

The Riders combine youth and experience, militance and long-range strategic thinking, anti-capitalism and serve-the-people survival programs. They include people formerly in street ‘tribes’ or organizations, and others who were collegians. Many of their leading members are young mothers, confounding multiple stereotypes. They work primarily among the poor, the incarcerated, the youth, victims of police abuse, and the growing ranks of the marginalized masses of their people. This also helps explain their low media profile, because they operate without the resources enjoyed by those who have made their peace with state subsidies or grant-writing foundations. Despite setbacks, they continue to push hard for a Black united front, Black-Brown unity, and inter-communal solidarity across racial, national, gender and ideological lines.

The Black Riders led the only militant mass action that shut down a CDCR office in solidarity with the prisoner hunger strikers. They led the outrage of the Black community and others on the streets of LA after the acquittal of Trayvon Martin’s killer, which led to people closing the freeway. Black Riders defended themselves against an assault by law enforcement outside the trial of the cop who killed Oscar Grant, and their leader General T.A.C.O.’s home was raided by law enforcement the night before the slap-on-the-wrist verdict on killer cop Meherle was announced. The BRLP led protests that kicked Nazis off the lawn of L.A. City Hall, and kept racist Minutemen out of Leimert Park in L.A.’s Crenshaw District. The Black Riders helped build the “Four Winds” May 1 General Strike convergence by Occupy L.A., connecting the occupiers to grassroots forces in South and East L.A. The Black Riders led the Los Angeles effort to free the SF Eight former Black Panther members and associates, and rebuilt the L.A. chapter of the Jericho Movement to free all political prisoners. The Riders launched the Intercommunal Solidarity Commit-



STRAP UP! ARMED STRUGGLE 4 LIFE!!!
ATTENTION!! ATTENTION!! URGENT
MESSAGE -- PLEASE READ!! BLACK
RIDERS ARE UNDER ATTACK!!! HELP
KEEP GENERAL T.A.C.O FREE ON THE
STREETS!

“So the so-called liberal/progressive Southern Poverty Law Center has listed the Black Riders Liberation Party as one of the 71 hate groups in California alongside the kkk, skinheads, right wing crazy christian groups etc. WTF?! They will definitely will be hearing from this Black/New Afrikan and hopefully others. Again, WTF?!”
- by Bilal Ali

Their trying to isolate us! Yes and they have slandered us. They are staffed and led by federal Agents! In the last few weeks, we have suffered two massive pig police raids in L.A and Oakland! Also, General T.A.C.O was arrested on numerous miscellaneous trumped up charges, he was released, and still face political charges! Stay in contact for further info! We are under attack! We will meet each attack head on, wave after wave! We will win!

THE REVOLUTION HAS COME!!!

They are also mad at our nationwide call out for All New Panther formations and RBG Soldiers to Unite around the Country!!! Let's avenge Jordan Davis with our Powerful Black Unity!!!

Black Riders- New generation Black Panther Party for Self-defense!

tee, working with radical elements from other communities. The Black Riders have risked their lives for 18 years for peace among the Bloods and Crips street ‘tribes,’ against set trippin’ and for revolutionary consciousness. They’re standing up for the need to ‘cease hostilities’ on the streets as the hunger strikers did behind bars, and opposing imperialist intervention in Africa and around the globe. The Black Riders have connected militant revolutionary Black liberation struggle in the US with forces in Africa and elsewhere in the Black Diaspora such as Brazil, for the first time in decades.

There’s simply no other formation that can lay claim to this record of commitment and resilience in the face of non-stop political repression. Get to know the Black Riders yourself, and support them. If you appreciate the contribution they’re making towards bringing down the Empire and freeing us all, stand with them against repression and fascism! They’re facing numerous political trials. Look out for more info and pack the courtrooms in solidarity!

Declaration of Internationalists

War on war! Not a single drop of blood for the “nation”!

The power struggle between oligarchic clans in Ukraine threatens to escalate into an international armed conflict. Russian capitalism intends to use redistribution of Ukrainian state power in order to implement their long-standing imperial and expansionist aspirations in the Crimea and eastern Ukraine where it has strong economic, financial and political interests.

On the background of the next round of the impending economic crisis in Russia, the regime is trying to stoke Russian nationalism to divert attention from the growing workers’ socio-economic problems: poverty wages and pensions, dismantling of available health care, education and other social services. In the thunder of the nationalist and militant rhetoric it is easier to complete the formation of a corporate, authoritarian state based on reactionary conservative values and repressive policies.



In Ukraine, the acute economic and political crisis has led to increased confrontation between “old” and “new” oligarchic clans, and the first used ultra-rightist and ultra-nationalist formations for making a state coup in Kiev. The political elite of Crimea and eastern Ukraine does not intend to share their power and property with the next in turn Kiev rulers and trying to rely on help from the Russian government. Both sides resorted to rampant nationalist hysteria: respectively, Ukrainian and Russian. There are armed clashes, bloodshed. The Western powers have their own interests and aspirations, and their intervention in the conflict could lead to World War III.

Warring cliques of bosses as usual, force us to fight for their interests, us ordinary people: wage workers, unemployed, students, pensioners... Making us drunkards of nationalist drug, they set us against each other, causing us forget about our real needs and interests: we don’t and can’t care about their “nations” where we are now concerned more vital and pressing problems – how to make ends meet in the system which they found to enslave and oppress us.

We will not succumb to nationalist intoxication. To hell with their state and “nations”, their flags and offices! This is not our war, and we should not go on it, paying with our blood for their palaces, bank accounts and the pleasure to sit in soft chairs of authorities. And if the bosses in Moscow, Kiev, Lviv, Kharkiv, Donetsk and Simferopol start this war, our duty is to resist it by all available means!

No war between “nations” - no peace between classes!

Signed by:

KRAS, Russian section of the International Workers Association
Internationalists of Ukraine, Russia, Moldova, Israel, Lithuania
Anarchist Federation of Moldova
Fraction of the Revolutionary Socialists (Ukraine)

Declaration was supported by:

Workers Solidarity Alliance (North America)
Anarcho-Syndicalist Initiative of Romania
Libertarians of Barcelona
Left Communists & Internationalists from Ecuador, Peru, Dominican Republic, Mexico & Venezuela
Workers-Communist Initiative (France)
Leicester group of Anarchist Federation (Britain)
French-speaking Anarchist Federation (FAF)
International of Anarchist Federations (IFA)
... and many others.

The statement is open for signature.

From <http://www.aitrus.info/node/3608>
To sign, email KRAS at comanar30@gmail.com



Denis Pilash on the Left Opposition in Kyiv

INTERVIEW WITH DENIS PILASH OF THE LEFT OPPOSITION IN KYIV: UKR-TAZ

by SYRIZA (the Greek “Coalition of the Radical Left”) [excerpts]

Question: The European Union has started a game that it is not able to finish. It (EU) couldn’t predict the reaction of Moscow?

Pilash: People of Ukraine are trapped between Western and Russian imperialism but Ukrainian elite is itself an enough cynical player at this chessboard. And I’m not sure the EU started this game on its own.

The ousted president Yanukovich, just as president Kuchma a decade ago, hesitated between pro-Western and pro-Russian orientation, but generally was convenient to both sides (for instance, his legacy includes endorsing Shell for eco-dangerous shale gas drilling in Ukraine). His Party of Regions went on elections with slogans oriented on pro-Russian electorate, but in 2013 his government switched to an official campaign in favor of the free trade / association agreement with the EU. While finances and debt were deteriorating, Ukraine found itself under pressure of both IMF and Kremlin. Its leadership (Yanukovich and prime minister Azarov) canceled the signing of the EU agreement hoping to get money from Russia.

This is the point when the so-called ‘Euro-Maidan’ protests started. Two decades of brainwashing about the ‘paradise in the EU’ created in many clusters of Ukrainian society an idealized view of European integration as a solution to all problems (but some support it from a quite pragmatic point – huge amount of unemployed Ukrainians work in the EU). It was paradoxical how protestors, many of whom were driven by rage caused by social injustice and economic inequality, manifested under EU banners while throughout the EU people protesting for similar reasons burn these flags!

However, it seemed like the Euro-Maidan would decline on its own until the government showed itself foolish enough to disperse it with brutal force thus shifting the main message of anti-government protests from enthusiasm for EU association to condemnation of police violence and Yanukovich’s arbitrary rule. However, there wasn’t some steady ‘EU plan’ behind the events, and their proposals were rather moderate compared with the final outcome.

And since the protests turned to violent clashes with riot police after the adoption of repressive 16 January laws limiting freedom of speech and protest then, events in Ukraine were surely out of control of EU, Russia, US, or any other. Russian TV channels can be full of commentaries from Western fascists and conspiracy theorists (from Marine Le Pen to Lyndon LaRouche) claiming contrary but people on Maidan weren’t mobilized and controlled by the EU.

Question: Even if the EU was able to “play stronger,” it seems to be trapped between its geopolitical and economic interests? (Because of its economic relations with Russia, the EU is not willing to oppose harder to Putin).

Pilash: Exactly. The reason why the EU (especially its main powers, Germany and France) is delaying the moment to impose economic sanctions is because they will affect its economic ties with Russia. Russia may be not the main trade partner but it’s important in supplying gas and oil. Ironically, it’s precisely Gazprom that makes the most obvious gains in Crimea – it’s going to privatize the local petroleum resources.

Question: How does Washington see its role in Ukraine (and the region in general) at this moment? What are the differences between the Republicans and the Democrats (concerning the US policy towards Ukraine)?

Pilash: Being a staunch opponent of the US foreign policy, especially of their intervention to Latin American affairs, I have to notice that Washington didn’t play any important role in Ukrainian regime change, contrary to widespread cliché. Obama and Kerry seem to combine seeking for diplomatic resolution with play on oil prices and other economic parameters sensitive to Russia. I’d attribute this not only to the Democratic administration but also to the crisis of the US global hegemony. In the 2008 Russian offensive, Republicans were unable to effectively back their Georgian clients, so Democrats try to be less belligerent in their speeches but more clever in actions.

Ultimately, the main points of the 2 parties are pretty the same. Lots of observers, in Ukraine and abroad, spoke extensively on John McCain visit to Maidan in December; however, few noticed that the old Republican warmonger was, in full accord, accompanied by another US senator – Chris Murphy – who is considered one of the most liberal Democrats.

In more general approach towards the region, that Republicans are eager to rely exclusively at pro-American East European governments to counterweight both Russia and Germany/France while Democrats agree at more complex solutions satisfying interests of multiply powers. Therefore during ongoing crisis even Brzezinski, the hawkish advisor to Democrats, warned Ukrainians from joining NATO and proposed Finland-style neutrality instead. I’m afraid, however, that new Ukrainian establishment facing Russian military threat will intensively pull Ukraine towards NATO membership. So it’s an important task for anti-war activists to prevent Ukraine’s submission to any military bloc.

Question: How important for Russia are Crimea and eastern Ukraine? How far do you believe that Putin will go?

Pilash: Putin is quite hypocritical when claims Russian troops in Crimea are defending Russian-speakers, compatriots etc. It’s an open intervention, and a very adventurous one. Yes, Ukrainian ultranationalists’ activity and failures of new Kiev leadership (like revoking the almost nonfunctional bill on regional languages – but not ‘banning Russian’ as is reported in pro-Kremlin sources) contributed to counter-protests in the (Russian-speaking) Southern and Eastern Ukraine. But the formal pretext of Russian invasion was forged and it’s a clear violation of international law. I support the right of self-determination but I can’t support a referendum carried out in a rush and at the point of bayonets.

Previously, many saw a war between Russians and Ukrainians less possible than, say, US and Canada. We used to be fraternal peoples but these actions seriously raise the menace of a war. In my opinion, the unanimous voting in the Federation Council providing President Putin the right to deploy Russian forces in Ukraine, was the major step towards this disaster. What’s even worse, nobody can predict how far the situation will deteriorate; violent clashes between Russia’s supporters and opponents occur in eastern regions of Ukraine. On the other hand, interests of Russia’s ruling class correspond with a relatively smooth capture of Crimea (with its Russian community and Sevastopol naval base) not a full-scale war for eastern Ukraine.

Industrial cities of Kharkov, Donetsk and Dnepropetrovsk located there still have lots of Soviet-era factories (owned mainly by Ukrainian bourgeoisie) but, in reality, Ukraine, one of the poorest countries in Europe, isn’t too economically attractive for any foreign power. Russian intervention in Crimea seeks rather symbolic and irrational long-term aims of ‘re-establishing Russian empire’, and leads to dangerous race of nationalisms in both states. In Ukraine it gives even more legitimacy to the far right and its paramilitaries, in Russia thousands are forcefully driven to pro-intervention rallies while socialists and pacifists (even an old Leningrad siege survivor) are attacked and arrested for attending anti-war rallies. That’s why we need an international anti-war solidarity campaign like in 2003 against US-led invasion to Iraq.

Question: What are the latest reactions of the people in Kiev towards the temporary government? Who is winning in Ukraine: one group of oligarchs, fascists, EU, USA, Russia...?

Pilash: Nazis have repeatedly attacked left-wing activists and venues in last years, the previous government turned blind eye on their violence and even promoted Svoboda as a counterweight to mainstream opposition; in fact, nothing has changed dramatically for anti-fascists. Ukrainian people shouldn’t side with governments neither in the West nor in the East; instead, they have to find their own way. But first, they need to overcome the vicious circle of oligarchs and fascists (both Ukrainian and pro-Russian).

All Ukrainian parties are on the right; they are economically pro-capitalist, socially conservative and try to draw the social unrest away from the enormous cleavage between the narrow group of oligarchs and the working majority to different identity conflicts on the ground of language, ethnicity or historical memory. The trade unions are weak, and there is no genuine left force to represent the working class. Parliamentary ‘Communist’ party, a recent loyal satellite of the bourgeois Party of Regions, is communist in name only. It’s time for new left initiatives like Left Opposition, Direct Action student union or Commons journal to propose a clear socialist alternative, so that Ukrainians could join SYRIZA and other left movements throughout Europe against neo-liberal austerity and nationalist prejudice. As to the international support, as Nikolas Kozloff, a progressive expert on Latin America, pointed out: ‘The left must continue to critique U.S. foreign policy while seeking out, identifying, and providing solidarity for progressive elements which are resisting Putin in both Russia and Ukraine’.

And this is the point where Greeks could give Ukrainians a good lesson of class solidarity and struggle.

Social Control and Political Chicanery

by Keith 'Comrade Malik' Washington, Capt. Of Information, New Afrikan Black Panther Party (Prison Chapter)

In the state of Texas, there are so-called community leaders who dwell in urban areas yet fail to grasp the concept of social control as it relates to gentrification of our neighborhoods or how it contributes to mass incarceration. Social control is systematic oppression of an oppressed nation or minority group. It manifests itself in many ways. In Texas, there are many policies, laws and programs geared toward sabotaging a particular oppressed nation's path to self-determination, such as the crack law, stop and frisk, voter ID laws, ICE and DHS agents targeting undocumented workers, etc. These are initiated by an elite ruling class that has no interest in the success of urban dwellers. The goal is to manipulate disadvantaged minorities to keep "undesirables" out of the path of "progress." The question is, who determines when "progress" is made, and who benefits from such "progress"?

Search & Destroy in Houston Inner-City Schools

Houston, TX is the 4th largest city in the US and the classroom to penitentiary pipeline is running smoothly. Houston Independent School District Superintendent Terry Grier has implemented programs that promote the destruction of schools that educate inner-city youth. Few community leaders or activists have pinpointed the wrong that is being done to our communities. Grier is cooperating with developers who have their eyes on inner-city real estate, a hot commodity as Houston's population has exploded in the last five years. Schools are a big part of any community, and if one wants to change a community's demographic, schools are a good place to start.

A case in point is Ryan Middle School, located in Houston's predominantly New Afrikan Third Ward. Ryan was targeted for closure by Grier and HISD last year. One of the reasons given

was under-enrollment; however, there were programmatic changes that could have made Ryan a more attractive school for New Afrikan families to send their children to. But the plan was not to serve that community better. It was to create a different school that would attract another type of community – more affluent, and less Black and Brown! The new Ryan was given millions by donors who wanted to establish a magnet focused on a science or medicine career path, with Latin, Neuro-science and Biology being some of the core courses. Ryan reopened earlier this year. Only 11% of the students live in the Third Ward!

Inner-city schools, not only in Houston but across the US, are being turned into militarized police zones. Black and Brown young men and womyn are being targeted. Laws have turned frivolous infractions into criminal offenses. This introduces our children to the criminal injustice system and often removes them from the educational environment entirely. It's hard to ignore the disproportionate number of Black and Brown humyn beings housed in the TX Dept. of Criminal Injustice as a result.

As urban real estate becomes more valuable, large corporations along with legislators have a vested interest in seeing 'minority' city dwellers carted off to prisons by super-militarized police forces. This social control destroys our political and economic power and tears the moral fabric of our families and society as a whole. It's imperative that we educate our leaders about the deleterious effect this social control has on Amerikkkan society.

Chicanery is defined as the use of underhanded actions to achieve an end; see trickery. This is a main tactic used by law enforcement and lawmakers in their blatant attacks on our communities. Political chicanery is connected to social control, as the following example will illustrate.

In 2009, the US Dept. of Justice ended an investigation of the overcrowded Harris County Jail in Houston. The DOJ laid out recommendations for reducing overcrowding. Five years

later, few have been implemented. Furthermore, jail officials recently requested expansion of the facility to accommodate an increase in prisoners! The county spends \$59 a day to house 2500 mentally-ill prisoners at an annual cost of \$54 million. Pretrial, Harris County bond schedules allow rich people to make bail, and force poor people to languish in jail awaiting trial, increasing their chance of conviction. Most poor people in Harris County are Black and Brown.

When a Federal investigation of a local agency is conducted, and you do the exact opposite of what they recommend, that's a violation of the public trust. When you trick the public into spending hard-earned tax dollars to attack the most vulnerable members of society and steer large numbers of Black and Brown men and womyn to jail, that's political chicanery.

Recently, there have been articles in corporate newspapers highlighting the need for TX Dept. of Criminal Justice to cut its solitary confinement population. But there's no mention of the abuse and even murder of prisoners on TX Death Row and numerous Ad-Seg units. In 2013, SB 2013, authored by Sen. John Carona (R-Dallas), was passed, requiring the Legislative Oversight Committee to "appoint an independent party to review the use of administrative segregation, also known as solitary confinement, in state juvenile and adult facilities." No money has been allocated for this much needed study. Larance Coleman, policy director for the TX Senate Criminal Justice Committee said: "The oversight committee is not funded or active." This is chicanery.

TX has the second largest ad-seg population in the US. A quarter to a third of the people in solitary are mentally ill. TDCJ continues to cover up heinous acts of abuse and answers to nobody. There is no realistic commitment to change this culture of abuse. To top it off, on March 4, a Tea Party-backed Dallas businessman unseated incumbent Sen. Carona, who at least proposed reform of the barbaric TX solitary confinement policy. The public is blinded and lied to.

A PASSION FOR PEACE WITH JUSTICE: THE GRASSROOTS COMMUNITY RADIO COALITION

KPFK and Pacifica are in a high-profile struggle over management and personnel issues, with mudslinging going on involving various current and former managers, programmers and board members. But the issues are larger than choosing sides between Ian Masters or Gary Null, Summer Reese or Alan Minsky. The critical choices that will affect the survival of the station and the Foundation have to do with whether grassroots voices from communities of color, communities of resistance, will continue to be heard on Pacifica. Will the stations and network embrace the many-to-many ethic of inter-activity that characterize social media?

The Grassroots Community Radio Coalition is seeking to build an alliance of all those who want to build on KPFK's strengths as a community-oriented, free speech, democratic communications medium. It wants to unite people inside the station and in the larger community of listener-members. The goal is to use those strengths to overcome real weaknesses, to attract new listeners and fulfill Pacifica's mission with a new generation.

Media attention focused on Pacifica infighting and the rule-or-ruin tactics of former interim Executive Director Summer Reese ignores the deeper issues. It's blind to the key question of access to the airwaves for diverse, cutting-edge, activist-oriented perspectives accountable to Black, Brown, Asian, indigenous and other communities of resistance. Pacifica's web-sites are woefully out of date, incapable of serving as platforms for communication among listeners and between listeners and programmers. A quick glance at KPFK's programming grid will show large blocks of time occupied by (aging) white male commentators and personalities, and strip programming by gatekeepers who jealously guard their control of the time and the content. Having lost its edge and its audience, KPFK and the other Pacifica stations have resorted to endless infomercial-style on-air fund drives, past the point of diminishing returns.

Pacifica once committed itself to a national Spanish-language newscast, but never followed through. KPFK's show on prison issues, "Think Outside the Cage," is on only twice a month. Its youth-oriented "Soul Rebel Radio" show is also intermittent. A show developed by Occupy activists has had a couple of mini-series runs. Most of the community oriented Black and African programming and Spanish-language shows are replaced during fund-drives with pitching for food supplements and "how to get rich" offers. Where is programming oriented towards southern California's large diverse Asian communities? The one hip-hop show is on during the middle of one night a week.

Where is the dialogue with listeners, either on-air or through the website? Where is the training in radio for passionate and principled young activists like the Black Riders, the Youth Justice Coalition, Idle No More or Mujeres de Maiz? How often do you hear the voices of indigenous resistance to global warming, African resistance to Obama's military and economic interventionism, or Palestinian advocates of boycott, divestment and sanctions?

Grassroots Community Radio Coalition believes KPFK and Pacifica must establish their relevance to growing younger demographics, mostly in communities of color, with more youth-oriented programming and greater interactivity. KPFK must provide training in radio production and journalism to socially and culturally engaged community residents and listeners. KPFK should continue its unique role as a broadcaster of progressive Spanish language programming to reach primary Spanish speakers, and as an educational offering for those learning Spanish. KPFK must commit to more remote broadcasts from events, protests, and campuses. KPFK must give voice to the priorities and concerns of the vast majority, who are young, poor and of color.

Management and governance must collaborate in engaging listeners in critical reflection about the programming. Management must commit to training in on-air and other

fund-raising and outreach via social media, and in high quality radio production. There should be an advisory council for the Program Director from different communities and programming sectors. Regular procedures for program evaluation and improvement are needed. There must be more opportunities for listener input and feedback on air. Nationally Pacifica must produce long form documentaries, investigations exposing the national security state, the pretexts for imperial war, the epidemic of police terror against Black, Brown and other youth, and similar issues.

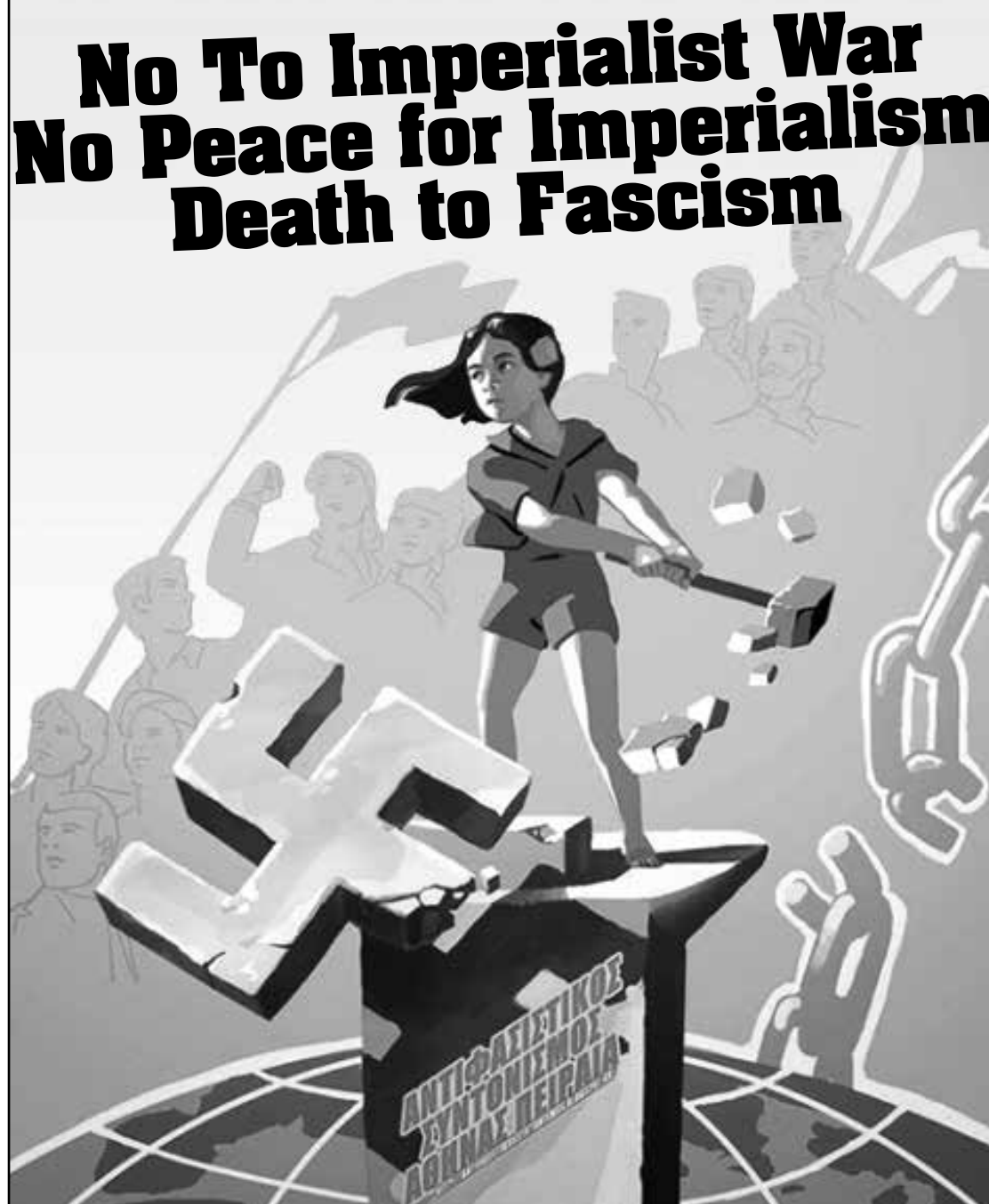
Grassroots Community Radio Coalition believes KPFK and Pacifica need effective, collaborative, and courageous management committed to community outreach and training, and to working with democratic governance. Greater ethnic diversity in management is needed (not through tokenism, but rooted in communities). The General Manager, as a key public face of KPFK, should be willing to participate at community events and KPFK "give-back-to-the-community" activities. Fresh voices, programmers, and co-hosts should be sought from among engaged community activists and cultural figures with influence and respect in diverse communities.

We've seen the sorry results of the strategies by Summer Reese's faction over much of the last decade to subvert Pacifica's commitment to be a democratic information medium, and dull the cutting edge of its journalistic, educational, and cultural programming. This has manifested in a "whitening" and graying of its programs and audience. We must reverse the loss of credibility, silence in the face of "humanitarian" war, and timidity in the face of repression. That's been a lose-lose proposition reflected in the absence of investigative journalism, deficits, layoffs, and factions within staff, management and governance. It's past time for a passion for peace and justice to be restored. That can lead the way forward to a Pacifica and KPFK that can help make history!

Learn more at www.gcrc-socal.org

TURNING THE TIDE

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- ★ April 5, 4:30 PM Jericho Movement/Break the Lock campaign letter writing to political prisoners, Southern California Library, 6120 S. Vermont, Los Angeles
- ★ April 13, Marcha Por Zapata, Parque Mexico, Mission & Main, East Los Angeles
- ★ May 1, International Workers Day, Migrant Rights Rally, downtown L.A. Southern CA Immigration Coalition
- ★ June 21-23 Jericho Movement national conference, Omaha Nebraska
- ★ Check us out via <http://tideturning.org> or facebook.com/intercommunalsolidarity

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- MUMIA ABU JAMAL

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