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# ***FORWARD MOTION***

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A Marxist Newsletter  
organized by the  
Proletarian Unity League

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Chinese politics in the 1970's. At a time when more and more Westerners visited China again, many Marxists found it increasingly difficult to gain and keep a perspective on the building of socialism in that country. For that section of the left - including our editors - which owed a good part of its original identity to the Chinese critique of Soviet-style politics and theory, the result seems to be less discussion of China altogether. But China continues to be important--to world politics today, to the struggle of the Third World, and, one way or the other, to the future of socialism. We are pleased to be able to open this issue with two short interviews recently conducted by an American political activist visiting China. Many of us have gotten used over the years to reading these unofficial interviews and assessing them against other sources: we invite readers to comment on the historical and political judgments offered here. We'll print them.

Readers will recall last year's brutal assault and murder of Willie Turks, a black NYC transit worker by a racist gang in Brooklyn. The trial of the first of the assailants is just getting underway as this issue of FM is being prepared. Among the Black community and other city groups challenged to respond to this murder was the transit workers union, one of the key public employee unions in the city and one with an important recent history of union politics. Here a friend from the RWH presents a summary of work done through the union around Turks' murder.

Also in this issue, a friend from St. Louis has sent us a thoughtful vignette on "Leaving the Night Shift." We think you'll enjoy it.

Finally, comments on two important struggles internationally -- for different reasons, both not well understood in this country. Our earlier pieces on the recent war in Lebanon apparently provoked some discussion among our readers. We would like to hear from you in writing! In the meantime, we offer some background to these events in the form of an interview on the history of the Palestinian struggle in this century. We also are reprinting some remarks written to introduce a new pamphlet from United Labor Press on the New People's Army of the Philippines.

This is the first issue of our second year. We think it is a good issue. But you should know that PUL has been preparing for an important internal conference on its future as a Marxist group, including big questions of our strategy and policies, and all of us -- editors and contributors -- have been a little distracted. Future issues will present some statements of the issues that have been under discussion and their resolution.

--Forward Motion staff



# China Today:

## Two Interviews

### Introduction

These interviews were conducted in Summer, 1982. The first interview is with a high-ranking member of the Communist Party of China (CPC) who was active in the debates surrounding the Sino-Soviet split; he represented China in international socialist forums on the subject and helped author some of the polemics published in the early '60's. He presents a context within which to understand China's retreat from its earlier analysis of Soviet social-imperialism.

The second interview is with a party historian who answers a wide range of questions regarding the Cultural Revolution and its aftermath.

Both interviews represent the views of the individuals rather than an official party statement. But of course they do suggest trends within the CPC. (All editorial notes by the interviewer.)

### PART I: The Sino-Soviet Split and the Nature of the Soviet Union

Q: Where do you think Soviet hegemonism came from?

A: We trace the roots of Soviet hegemonism to the time of Stalin. Actually you could define the great nation chauvinism which developed under Stalin as a Czarist remnant.

Q: In retrospect, how do you see the Sino-Soviet split?

A: Well, as you know, Khrushchev denounced Stalin and many key elements of the Soviet system. China, of course, could not agree. Hence the theoretical debate which ensued in the 20th Party Congress in 1956. But this was a debate within and between parties, not the two states. State-to-state relations continued normally.

What was more important in creating the split was the Soviets' great nation chauvinism which today we call hegemonism. Let me give you some

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examples of acts of great nation chauvinism in which the Soviet Union engaged at that time:

\* In 1958-59, the Soviets proposed a joint fleet to the Chinese which meant merging the Chinese navy into the Soviet. The Soviets also proposed a nation-wide radio surveillance system to be built in China under Soviet supervision. Mao categorically refused -- the issue being the relation of the Soviet Union to other socialist states, and in particular, the right of socialist states to maintain autonomy.

\* Also, in 1959 Khrushchev, on coming to China, accused the Chinese of being cocky -- of attempting to test the stability of capitalism. Khrushchev continued on to make an agreement with the United States to the detriment of the other socialist countries. This made the situation more difficult.

\* Then in 1960 at an international communist conference in Bucharest, Khrushchev attacked the CPC in front of other parties.

\* It was shortly after this that Khrushchev advised Nehru to go ahead with the border fights which caused the Sino-Indian conflict. The Chinese, Khrushchev told Nehru, were noisy and belligerent but powerless.

These incidents are what strained state-to-state relations between the Soviets and China. Thus, from its inception the Sino-Soviet conflict had elements of struggle against great nation chauvinism and hegemonism.

In the course of this struggle the Central Committee of the CPC wrote nine articles and two or three open letters to the Soviet party's Central Committee.

Q: How do you now see this debate? Do you still agree with the stands you took then?

A: The debate was necessary to stimulate the thinking of the CPC and that of communists and progressive people around the world. In this sense it was helpful. But we don't think every point was 100% correct. Some points were correct; some needed and still need further study. But as the temperature of the debate went up, the language became less scientific and precise. I would still say though the nine articles were helpful and thought-provoking.

Then began the long separation between China and the Soviet Union. Since the split, and especially during the Cultural Revolution, we haven't had enough contact with the Soviets to fertilize theoretical work regarding the nature of the Soviet Union. During the last fifteen years, the Soviet Union has undergone considerable change. Thus we are even more hesitant to use twenty year old debates now.

Also, since the Cultural Revolution our main emphasis has been on summarizing our own experiences. We haven't had time to study the Soviet Union's domestic situation.



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This is not to say that there isn't something wrong internally with the Soviet Union, but rather, I don't know what it is.

We're going cautious in casting judgment upon the internal affairs of other parties or other countries. Now we criticize external policies but reserve internal criticism --

1. Because we're not knowledgeable enough.

2. Because we've become aware of the need to let every party, country, people determine their own ways of working things out.

During the Cultural Revolution, our policies were characterized by a certain "center of the worldism": "We, the Chinese, have the criteria by which to judge."

We now have a more protracted historical perspective on socialist development; socialism may take centuries to move beyond the embryonic stage. We would like others to respect our own way (to construct socialism) as we respect theirs.

If we had had this new attitude during the 1960's, we would not have launched the criticism of Tito and Togliatti.

Q: Do you find this discouraging?

A: No. Consider the alternative. If we had chosen capitalism in 1949 we would be an appendage of the United States and/or Japan. In the last thirty years we have made several major achievements:

\* We have established a stable and dignified nationhood.

\* We eliminated class exploitation and national oppression.

\* We greatly expanded the productive forces.

In fact, before 1949 virtually every manufactured product was foreign made and subsequently named in Chinese, "foreign nail," "foreign match," "foreign umbrella." Now we have a rather complex and complete national industrial structure and overall economy. We can feed our own people. The breakthrough in the development of the productive forces was key to overcoming feudalism. It was the most important leap in 2000 years.

Q: What effects of the Cultural Revolution are you now combatting?

A: Slowly over the years we had been developing a set of socialist moral virtues or values. This moral standard was damaged during the Cultural Revolution and in the past few years has deteriorated even more as a reaction against the previous left tendency. If I were to summarize the factors negatively affecting the socialist morality, I would say--

\* The Cultural Revolution itself (lack of education for the young

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with schools closed, etc).

\* An anti-political reaction (the ultra-left tendency of the Cultural Revolution turned many people off).

\* Outside bourgeois influences.

\* In some cases, internal decadence.

Q: Are all bourgeois influences "foreign"?

A: This may be a partiality. Of course many bourgeois ideological values still remain among the petty bourgeoisie. I once surprised myself when passing a boy being taken for a stroll by his grandparents. I patted him on the head and said, "Good boy, grow up fast, make money and give your grandparents a good life." The solution is to continue Marxist-Leninist education which has been neglected in the past few years.

## PART II: The Cultural Revolution and Beyond

Q: How would you now evaluate the Cultural Revolution?

A: The Cultural Revolution was launched with such an ultra-left cast that I would say it resulted in no good benefit. Its overall thrust was permeated with ultra-left assumptions, and its negative impact was profound and long-lasting. Let me give some examples.

The Cultural Revolution harmed the economy in that if focused on transforming social relations to the exclusion for the most part of production. Furthermore, the overemphasis on struggle in social relations led to an atmosphere filled with tension, factionalism, and constant criticism. For instance, many average citizens were subjected to serious criticism purely on the grounds that they had relatives abroad. Many people who had always supported socialist construction were harshly treated. This and other such errors created a distance between the party and the masses, a distance which previously had not existed.

Another example is provided which stated, "Inside the party, there is a bourgeois class." This again was an ultra-left idea which resulted in the loss of some very good intellectuals and other party leaders.

While things within the party began to improve after the fall of the Gang of Four, some ultra-left problems remained and right ideas rose as well. But the way of handling contradictions has changed. Now, unlike then, discussion is allowed as long as it is within the framework of support for China, the socialist system, and the Communist Party of China. This means that the rate of change is slower but the change itself is more certain.

Q: The Cultural Revolution emphasized the importance of mass line. What do you think of the use of mass line?



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A: Let's review what we mean by mass line: Believe in the masses, depend on the masses. We must (1) INVESTIGATE; (2) PLAN; and (3) PROPAGANDIZE AND MOBILIZE.

The theory is correct. The question is, how to implement it. The masses vary greatly as do their demands. How to tell what the people want, and what is correct -- this isn't easy. Which masses? Who is the main force? When are they correct?

The Cultural revolution misapplied mass line. It organized the masses against the capitalist class in the party. But the idea that there was a bourgeois class within the party was ultra-left. In the course of over-emphasizing struggle between classes, an atmosphere of reticence developed where people were afraid to speak the truth. You cannot practice mass line if people do not tell you their real views. The upshot was that the mass line in the Cultural Revolution was based often not on what the masses of people really thought, but on what they thought they might say safely.

To practice the mass line cadres should mix with the people, live among the people. Let me give you a couple of examples of how we are now practicing mass line:

\* The current campaign, the "Five Stresses and the Four Beautifuls," was based on an analysis of the remaining effects of the Cultural Revolution. Trust was broken down between people during the Cultural Revolution via unfounded attacks, factionalism, etc. Young people received little training regarding social responsibilities and basic courtesy. So the campaign, the "Five Stresses and the Four Beautifuls," was launched by nine mass organizations (like the Women's Federation, the Communist Youth Organization, etc. -- Ed).

\* The masses called for redress of the Cultural Revolution's lack of economic development. The examination system for students was one response to the demand. Its intent was both to encourage students to study hard by setting clear standards and to select the best students for more advanced study. (Developing new generations of technical experts was seen as crucial for economic development -- Ed.)

Students are not accepted for admission to key middle schools (examination schools like prep schools -- Ed) or to colleges exclusively on the basis of examination grades, however. The student's social morality is evaluated (as evidenced by an interview and remarks from the student's teachers). Physical fitness is also considered.

Students who have high social morality, good grades and good health can be selected as "Three Goods Students." A "Three Goods Student" will be accepted to a key middle school without having to pass an examination.

This is an attempt to avoid overdependence on grades or exam scores. Previously, during the Cultural Revolution, the educational

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policy was too "left," ignoring academic ability. But introducing an examination system allows for abuses from the right. For example, some people study language fanatically so as to pass the language exam and get a chance to go abroad. In doing so they neglect their work. To prevent this excess, a departmental recommendation is now required.

Measures like the Three Goods and departmental recommendations are attempts to balance the exam policy. You will not see the quick changes encouraged during the Cultural Revolution. Now the Party gives advice, thinks, and encourages feedback. Change is slower but also we're not putting hats on people.

\* Or take the People's Constitution or the Party's new constitution. These have been under discussion for one year now to allow proper use of mass line. Also newspapers now print letters to the editor.

Q: How would describe the atmosphere since the fall of the Gang of Four?

A: Careful. And more democratic. The party Central Committee weighs all decisions carefully. The general atmosphere is more open. There is a lot of debate though not everything is open for debate (the socialist road, role of the CPC). For example, we are discussing what is it about capitalist technology we want; what don't we want? We cannot copy. We have to find our own way. For example, the use of advertisements has been problematic although not seriously so. We're exploring ways to improve this.

Q: What do people now think of Mao Zedong thought?

A: By Mao Zedong thought we mean the collected knowledge of Mao, his colleagues and the masses. After the Cultural Revolution there was a tendency on some people's parts to look down on Mao Zedong thought. But Mao's overall thought guides China. His thought still forms the direction of the Chinese Revolution even if Mao himself made big mistakes.

We now encourage Party members to study his works systematically. Before quotes were often pulled out of context and used for wrong purposes.

Q: Could you describe how political education is done?

A: Political education is planned for one half day each (6-day) work week. One effect of the leftists' wrapping themselves in the banner of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong thought is that people are not interested in political education. People ask, "Who knows what is right?" (Others would add, "Even if we knew what to do, we are often not in a position to do it. Problems are often national or regional, not local in scope." -- Ed.)

The Gang of Four's exceptionally harsh criticism meant that people,



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in particular with a less than clear past...intellectuals, small storekeepers, landlords and their families were especially fearful of looking bored during political education, much less of raising unpopular opinions. Thus, in this way the attitude toward political education was damaged by the Gang of Four even though those of you abroad heard that political education was stressed in this period.

(Notes: Another group of people described how during the Cultural Revolution political education leaders would ask each person's opinion supposedly in the spirit of practicing the mass line. In fact, though, going around the room and soliciting each person's views was a method not to brainstorm but to isolate those thinking differently so as to subject them to group pressure and criticism.

A "clear past" is the term used to describe someone with a class background that included no one from an exploiting class. To have a "clear past" you, your parents, and grandparents must all have been from exploited classes, be this as peasants or workers. -- Ed)

Political Education in College: After the Cultural Revolution it was very difficult to teach political education in college. Now it is getting easier. The students during the Cultural Revolution didn't take political education seriously because they didn't believe it. For example, the Gang of Four taught party history saying that Mao was responsible for all major contributions. True, Mao was great, but he didn't do it all. Now, the students are given a more factual account and are more interested. Political education on a university level is now divided into two parts: party history and political economy.

Political Education in the Party: Courses are given for party members depending on their positions and needs. Some courses just study one book -- all cadre study Mao's thought -- of Marx; others are focused around a problem; still others are survey courses to help cadres develop an overview. The Central Committee runs high cadre institutes for training of cadre with every city or county having such an institute. Some cadre come for short courses (a week) while others may be assigned to the Institute for a year of study.

Q: Has the party been able to develop working class intellectuals? In other words, within the party, is theoretical work done by workers?

A: There are some political theoreticians whose parents were workers. But I don't know of any famous theoretician who previously was a worker. Most of those theoreticians over fifty were not from workers' families. Many more younger theoreticians come from workers' families but are not workers themselves.

It is more common to see workers rise to become intellectual/mental workers in technical fields; workers who become inventors, engineers, textile experts, or workers who become leaders of the All China Workers Union (trade union).

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You must remember that during the Cultural Revolution there was little incentive for workers to become intellectuals. Intellectuals were listed among the nine Stinks (capitalists, landlords, etc). To encourage intellectuals and demonstrate the party's support for their contribution, intellectuals are now considered part of the working class.

Q: What would provide the material basis of revisionism in China?

A: During the Cultural Revolution we said the bourgeois headquarters was in the Party. Now we think this was all wrong. We thought that bourgeois right provided the material basis of revisionism. Now we think this theory was too "left." At present, we're discussing revisionism -- what is it? What causes it?

We don't have an answer. It is hard to make sweeping statements about what is right or wrong in a country that is so big, so backward in some areas, and with such an enormous population.

To continue our revolution we need to sum up our experience to date. But that is no easy matter in a country as complex and varied as China.

There are problems with regard to how to continue a revolution after socialism is established. What other steps are needed, for example, besides state control of property? Our experience has raised many problems which we're analyzing.

But we don't have answers yet. Socialist construction is a relatively new problem.

The source of revisionism may vary from circumstance to circumstance. The organization of the economy in the Soviet Union, for example, was not the same as that of China, so we shouldn't be surprised if problems develop differently.

Q: How do you now perceive the articles written by China during the Sino-Soviet debates regarding the nature of revisionism, etc?

A: During the late 1950's and 1960's when these articles were written a specific situation existed; relations between the two parties were very bad principally due to actions by the Soviets. Regarding some of the theoretical issues, we would feel the same today as we did then. For example, we still think peaceful transition to socialism is impossible. But on others, we now say that these are internal problems regarding which other socialist countries shouldn't interfere. For example, Yugoslavia must decide its own path and solve its own problems.

The debate was especially heated because China was surrounded, isolated, and attacked (as orchestrated by Khrushchev). The contradictions between China and the Soviet Union should have been non-antagonistic but Khrushchev acted like an authoritarian father, so we didn't obey. Our



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contradictions could have been resolved but Krushchev put on pressure. He recalled Soviet technical experts working in China, etc.

An underlying theme throughout this debate is that a socialist country like the Soviet Union shouldn't force its views and plans on other parties. Other parties have a right to decide their path. This behavior is at the core of why we call the Soviets "hegemonist."

Q: Why have you moved away from characterizations of the Soviets as having restored capitalism?

A: After the breakdown of relations between the Soviets and the Chinese research on Soviet revisionism broke down as well. We couldn't do the kind of scientific research which needs to be done. Before liberation labels like "semi-colonial," "semi-feudal," were chosen with great care after investigation and study of the concrete conditions in pre-liberation China.

Without such careful study, it is difficult to say, "You are capitalist,"... "And you are socialist." Our policy is to be careful regarding labeling international developments. We all should allow different countries to search for their own way.

It is ultra-left to say that China is the center of world revolution. We see ourselves at present as trying to study other socialist roads, investigate and then sum-up.

"Classes don't exist, but class struggle does." It is a theoretical problem how to clarify this. At present class struggle is occurring mainly in the economic arena -- thus the movement to punish economic criminals.

We cannot tell others what to do but we need discussion; we can have this discussion without forcing people toward certain views. We have to clarify what makes socialism a superior system.

Q: What do you see as the basis of the Soviet Union's current hegemonist moves?

A: The Soviet Union's current hegemonism is related to Stalin's chauvinism. Stalin's foreign policy was to place the interests of the Soviet Union first in every decision. For example, Stalin pressured the Chinese Communist Party to settle with Qiang Kai Shek when the Chinese Communists had only reached the Yangtze River. This would have left the Southern part of China, one-half of the mainland, in the hands of the Nationalists. China would have been left divided like North and South Vietnam, North and South Korea. Stalin ignored the Chinese Communists assertions that they could beat the Nationalists, basing his proposals instead on the Soviet priorities for 1948-49. If the Chinese had obeyed Stalin, we would still be split in two today like North and South Korea.

The Comintern's role vis-a-vis international developments was also

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a mixed one. For example, the Comintern in the 1930's ignored the Japanese invasion of Northeast China, stressing instead defense of the Soviet Union.

Q: What dangers does China currently face?

A: We're still trying to undo a lot of damage done during the Cultural Revolution. The efforts to rectify the "left" errors of that period have led to some right errors which we're now attempting to rectify. For example, after the Cultural Revolution the policy of cadre doing physical labor was stopped. Now it has been restored and students are beginning to go to the countryside and to factories again for limited periods of time. Or another example, as I mentioned before, there is an over-reliance on exams as a basis for entrance to key schools and colleges. So now we have instituted the "Three Goods Student" policy. The number of students accepted from the countryside vis-a-vis the city has gotten unbalanced (city outnumbering the countryside despite the fact that over 80% of the population is in the countryside -- Ed). So we're taking measures to rectify this.

The population explosion has hurt our development and is a major problem to be resolved. The basic level of economic development is low too. So some people in China say "After so many years of socialism, is this ALL?"

Human history is not controlled by "oughts." Its twists and turns cannot be controlled easily by thoughts. Socialism will be built different ways under different conditions.

--November 1982

Is Everybody Busy?

— Ye Chunyang

This cartoon criticizes over-staffed organizations and ineffective work. (The words on the envelope are "urgent dispatch.")



Contemporary Chinese cartoon: struggle against inefficiency, corruption, etc.



# Transit Workers Respond To Turks' Murder

This is a summation of work, and lack of work, among transit workers around the racist murder of Willie Turks, a black transit worker, and the brutal beating of two other black co-workers, Denis Dixon and Donald Cooper. They were attacked after stopping for bagels and beer on their way home from working the 4PM to 12 midnight shift at the Coney Island Yard. They stopped at the bagel shop at Avenue X and East 1st Street where a number of racist attacks have occurred over the past two years. A mob of 12 to 15 white youths attacked Turks, Dixon and Cooper with sticks and bottles as the workers returned to their car.

The Coney Island Yard, the second largest shop in the Transit Authority is situated in the largely white, Italian, Gravesend/Bensonhurst community. Black and Latin workers, who make up a very small percentage of the Coney Island yard workforce have been harrassed going to and from work and on lunch breaks. In addition to these workers, the residents of the Marlboro housing project (a predominantly black housing project in the midst of the white community) have suffered numerous racist attacks as they pass through the white community to go to school, to shop and to take the subway. There have also been fire bombings of black-owned houses in the community. A friend of mine who is white was attacked a few years ago for no apparent reason. He later found out that they thought he was Puerto Rican. Most of these incidents have gone unreported in the mass media.

The brutal murder of Brother Willie Turks was an exception. It was widely reported and a city-wide coalition of predominantly black political and religious groups was formed to organize a demonstration. One thing in the white community's favor was they turned in the few arrests that were made, they cooperated with the police and some whites were outraged at the brutal murder.

I feel this summation says a lot about the strategic approach and attitudes of rank and file activists and goes deeper than this one issue. Some background is needed here. Myself and two people I've worked with in the rank and file movement and others have been disturbed for about two and a half

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years by the work of the dominant force in that movement--the "Transit Workers Coalition" (TWC) led by Arnold Cherry, a black worker.

We have seen what we believe to be pretty much a straight up electoral strategy instead of a strategy based around rank and file mobilization, education and organization along with electoral work. Besides politically disagreeing with a straight up electoral strategy, I think it pretty much doesn't work. If you're not opposing the incumbent and his clique around the important issues all along and going to the membership and mobilizing them, come election time workers scratch their heads and say, "That's news to me," when you announce, "I'm/We're the opposition to John Lawe (President of the Transport Workers Union Local 100). Workers think: "So where have you been? Some opposition. Opposition at election time." That's pretty much what happened in the past TWU elections last December. People can perceive this kind of opposition as ego tripping and a power grab.

A progressive candidate needs mobilization of the membership in order to win an election. You don't get people excited about you as an alternative if you haven't shown to them that your relationship to them will be much different than the incumbent bureaucrats. In sum, I would say a progressive or Left person needs a movement to win an election or people remain apathetic or go along with the present b.s. Cherry, who has run for local president twice, seems to have a problem of half-stepping things, afraid of calling things out for what they are. I think the struggle or work around Willie Turks' murder der bore this out.

Turks was murdered a few days before the regularly scheduled union meeting in the local. Resolutions were passed in a few divisions demanding that the union take action and have a rally in the areas around the Coney Island Avenue X shop where the murder happened and to reach out to the community in opposition to lynch mob violence. The only response John Lawe made to this was, "We feel that this would just add more fuel to the fire and would be of no benefit to our deceased brother or his family." The statement from the International TWU didn't even acknowledge the racist character of the murder.

We also heard the "fuel to the fire" argument from Arnold Cherry and Communist Party activists closely allied with Cherry in the Transit Workers Coalition. I picked up the Cherry leaflet one night and was disgusted when I read it. I decided not to show it to my co-workers. People know I'm associated with their group since I've organized and taken up stuff in the past. Frankly I didn't want to be associated with this leaflet. I think it stinks. First off, it says "Cherry says Turks' Killing Not Just A Racial Issue" and goes on to talk about everything but the racial issue. For us, the immediate issue was what should be the response of the Union to racist lynch mob violence against one of its members. Cherry's leaflet is reprinted below.

I think the second paragraph in the leaflet misses the point. The attackers didn't know if Turks and his friends were transit workers: they weren't wearing a uniform or any TA insignia; it didn't happen on the job. They were attacked because of their black skins. Their black skins touched off the sick racist hatred of the young attackers. It is true that transit workers increasingly in the past few years are being physically assaulted, but let's



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take it up when it happens that way. That is a struggle in its own right which the Transit Workers Coalition took up in a past case. Later on, Cherry says that Koch and Reagan's lack of leadership on the racial issue creates the fear and hate that leads to these attacks. Need anything be said here? Looking to Koch and Reagan to provide leadership on the racial issue is pretty bizarre thinking, to put it mildly.

**Cherry says:**

### **"Turk's killing not just a racial issue."**

William Turks, a transit worker from the Coney Island Main Shop, was attacked and killed on the way home from work last Wednesday. Two of his co-workers were also brutally beaten and hospitalized by the same mob of youths. The newspapers said that the incident was racially motivated. Certainly, all people of good will, whether Black or white, must denounce this attack. But the racial question doesn't tell the whole story.

All over the transit system, workers are travelling in fear of life and property. In the Station Department assaults and robberies on our mostly female Clerks, are on the rise. Motormen, Conductors and Bus Operators are constantly being attacked, usually by youths both white and Black. Our cars are being broken into around the shops, barns and other work locations. The causes of these conditions must be rooted out and eliminated. All transit workers must go into different racial or ethnic neighborhoods to work. Conditions must be created so that they can do so safely and without fear.

The Koch and Reagan policies of cutting back on social programs and especially the job programs for the unemployed both young and old, contributes to incidents like the Turks killing. Giving big business massive tax breaks equalling billions of dollars at the expense of working people and the poor, creates the economic conditions for these incidents. Their lack of leadership on the racial issue, creates the fear and hate that leads to these attacks.

Extremist groups like the far left Spartacus League, which ran Karstan for President of Local 100 in the last election, are using the death of a fellow transit worker for their own purposes. Their call for the use of guns by transit workers must be denounced.

John Lawe and the rest of the Local 100 leadership must also be denounced for not calling for the unity of all transit workers, Black, white or Hispanic. The membership should have been mobilized using vacation, AVA's or PB's to attend the funeral of William Turks.

Finally, the union leadership should join with Ray Corbett, the President of the N.Y. state AFL-CIO, who has called for a trade unionist rally for jobs at the state Capitol in Albany this Tuesday. The theme for the rally, Jobs for the Unemployed, will help end these attacks. We must put people back to work and denounce racism. If we don't, these attacks will continue and no worker will be safe.

Arnold Cherry, President

Transit Workers Coalition

*Labor DENIED*

Talking about the Spartacus League doesn't need to be in the leaflet. First of all, they are pretty much irrelevant and the way it is in the leaflet may be construed as redbaiting. They're an easy target and in Cherry's quest for votes it's like a wink to the workers: "See, I ain't no red." It belittles the Left and armed self-defense. John Lawe only gets as much space as the

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Spartacus League and once again, jobs.

Cherry raised the question of jobs. (All the people arrested for the murder had jobs.) I'm in no way against fighting for jobs, but in this instance bringing it up like this as the cure-all to racist attacks is trying to play it safe. None of the workers are against more jobs, but many of the white workers are against even hearing some sense on the oppression Black people face, never mind why we as workers must fight it. At the end, Cherry says we must denounce racism. Sure we must. But did the rest of the leaflet do this? I think not.

Once we saw the union leadership would not put the resolutions into practice and the weak stand of the Cherry leaflet, a group of us saw that something else was needed on this issue. We heard the Black United Front (BUF) was having a meeting and speak out of individuals physically victimized in the Bensonhurst/Gravesend area so we went. A Black mother at this meeting described how her 12 year old daughter was beaten on the way home from school. When she reported this to the police they told her there was nothing they could do, and she should just "keep her kids out of that neighborhood." An off-duty black housing cop visiting friends at the Marlboro housing project was attacked when he went out to the same store. In his opinion he saved his own life when he pulled his gun out. From this rally in their Church, the BUF formed a Coalition of over 50 organizations and planned a march and rally from the projects to the murder site and back. The BUF went out across the city to organize a militant response to Turks' murder and created a dialogue with the white community to the best of its ability. It didn't go crazy with rhetoric.

The Transit Workers Coalition didn't even send a representative although we told them about it and urged them to attend. We very much supported this idea of a rally and took it up to have a contingent of transit workers. We urged the Transit Workers Coalition to support a transit workers contingent without success. In phone conversations with a CP supporter in the Transit Workers Coalition, the BUF march and rally was dismissed as "provocative" and that we as "outsiders" had no base in the yard or community and no business there.

Some of us went to the Coney Island yard and talked with white and black workers there. The range of views there was: "This is just another attack on transit workers, it's happening all over the city" and "Why make a big thing out of this, it happens to whites in black areas," or another view, "It's just another crime" to "The Union should take this up and have a big rally in the area. They should stand up to this now, but they will never do it." Some workers were incensed that the union said nothing to them and wouldn't even hold a meeting in the yard about it. Black workers told of never leaving the yard once they got to work, not even for lunch, and told of racist violence they've encountered or narrowly escaped in the area. Many blacks were talking of transferring to different transit shops or yards. We then wrote up a leaflet for the march. There was a time limit on the leaflet and I was dissatisfied with its contents, but went with it because we had to put something out and it was a qualitative advance over the Cherry leaflet.

Our leaflet is basically just a call to the march and if someone doesn't



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already agree, it doesn't give them an argument why they should. It doesn't deal with the specific things being raised by the workers in the Coney Island Yard and around the system. The leaflet doesn't tap the national consciousness of the black workers and it doesn't struggle against the chauvinist ideas of some of the white workers. (See leaflet reprinted below)

### END RACIST VIOLENCE

Join fellow transit workers & community groups to demand:

### JUSTICE FOR WILLIE TURKS

Over three weeks ago three Black Transit workers were attacked by a racist mob of 12 to 20 white youths in Brooklyn. Willie Turks was murdered and two of his co-workers, Denis Dixon and Donald Cooper were brutally beaten. Transit workers were shocked and outraged. They took up collections for the family and passed resolutions in a number of Division meetings demanding Union action to show that transit workers will not be victims and that we will stand united to oppose racist violence against our members and in society. Resolutions also called for the IWW to reach out to the community and join with them in opposition to lynch mob violence.

Although a number of arrests have been made this will not solve the problem. The attacks occurred in an atmosphere created by the Kochs, the Reagan, and the daily media who (with few exceptions) blame minorities, unions, and the poor for the current economic crisis. They have given the green light to racist violence and attacks on workers and poor people in an effort to divide us and take back the gains we have won. A strong unified demonstration of union members and the community is a necessary first step to turn back these racist assaults which claimed our union brother Willie Turks as a victim.

The undersigned members of the TWU have joined with over 50 endorsing organizations and individuals of the Willie Turks Coalition Against Murder, Lynching and Racist Violence for a rally and demonstration. Join with your fellow union members and the community, Black, white and Hispanic. Bring your friends and family. Look for the Transit Workers Contingent.

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL!

**MARCH & RALLY**  
**SUNDAY, July 18th, 4 P.M.**  
**Marlboro Houses Community Center**  
**86th St. & Avenue W**  
(N Train to 86th Street)

Labor Donated

The march was on a Sunday afternoon, July 18th, in the middle of the summer's main heat wave. It drew a crowd of 1500 people, a very good mixture of blacks and whites, and had a good spirit and feeling and received a lot of publicity in the media. Contrary to two demonstrations by CORE, there was an attempt at dialogue with the white community, not rhetoric.

Fifteen transit workers marched in our contingent. One of us joked about it saying, "Fifteen workers from seven different organizations." If the Transit Workers Coalition had supported the contingent there may have been 50-100 workers. If the union had carried out some of the resolutions passed, there would have been 1,000 transit workers there. But we who participated

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felt good about it. We did the right thing and we felt like "Where do you begin? You begin at the beginning." We had only put out a thousand leaflets and also the time gap between the attack and the march dissipated some emotion of the transit workers.

In November, a benefit basketball game was organized by TA workers who had attended the BUF rally. A transit workers' basketball team was assembled to play The Flames, a team from an athletic program started by a young Italian guy five or six years ago to bring white and black youth together. We also received a lot of support from the Unity Club in the school where the game was played. Between transit workers and the community over \$2,500 was raised for the education fund for Willie Turks' daughter. We would like to start a basketball league for Local 100 members, and if the union doesn't sanction it, which seems likely, we're going ahead.

The struggle for prosecution of all those involved in Turks' murder and the assault of Dixon and Cooper must continue. After the initial arrest of three youths, the media dropped the issue. In July, President John Lawe said the union would be monitoring the case. It's December and there hasn't been a word from the union. Dixon, who suffered serious injury from the attack, is still out of work and has yet to receive his first disability check.

Turks' murder and the non-response of the Transit Workers Union raises up a more general issue for TWU activists. The opportunist leadership of our union has shown itself in this case to have a particular character--white chauvinist. Not only do they fail to lead in defence of transit workers' economic interests. They are indifferent or hostile to struggle against the special oppression of black workers and people. This they share with the Transit Authority bosses.

Daniel Scanell, assistant to TA head Richard Ravitch, said during the 1980 transit strike that the reason for the big difference in pay between TA and Long Island Railroad workers was "the nature of the workforce," alluding to the majority black and Latin workers in the TA. A pure racist remark by management which shows their true thinking, passed without comment or response from the union leadership. A real opposition to Lawe & Co. must oppose his white chauvinist practices and those of the TA and work to unite black and white workers around this.

This brings up the question of how could Arnold Cherry, a leader of the rank and file, take such a laid-back approach to the murder of Willie Turks in a union 60% minority? The answer is his electoral strategy. Cherry feels he has the minority vote sewed up and a percentage of the white votes opposed to John Lawe. Now Cherry feels he must appeal to the somewhat backward white workers and soft-pedal an issue like this and other issues touching on black national consciousness. I believe he can soft-pedal things all he wants and cater to this grouping of workers and he still won't get their votes this way. Not this way (although he may find that he loses some of the support of black workers). The approach is wrong. Cherry writes off the white workers off the bat. Why not struggle with them? Unity, struggle and maybe greater unity. Sweeping things under the rug never solved anything. "The basis for unity of black and white workers exists, although it will not occur spontaneously. The



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bourgeoisie is working to promote and manipulate divisions with the vast resources at its control and they have a basis, too, in the history and organization of U.S. society. Change will require the concerted, consistent and conscious efforts of marxists and progressives." (Quoted from Build the Black Liberation Movement, by the Revolutionary Workers' Headquarters, page 46.) Who is going to build this unity? When? Why not struggle against the white chauvinist and white supremacist ideas and practices of some white workers and expose the Kochs and Reagans? Show the white workers that this isn't in their interests.

Some white workers say, "Blacks have it better than us." Is that true? "Massive unemployment, segregation in urban ghettos, systematic disenfranchisement, police brutality, job discrimination, decrepit schools, poverty, racism and social ostracism--this is the assimilation that Blacks have received." (Build the Black Liberation Movement, p. 30.)

This needs to be brought out to people in mass terms. White workers need to hear this and be struggled with to get over the nonsense some of them talk and which is promoted by the bourgeoisie. For leftists and progressives to not be doing this plays into the hands of the ruling class at this early stage of the deepening crisis. I think it's going to get harder to do in the future. Groundwork should be done now. These so-called communists from the CPUSA, self-proclaimed vanguard of the working class, defenders of black people and fighters against racism found all kinds of excuses not to take up the struggle in practice and didn't rise to their party's self-proclaimed billing.

They called us outsiders -- said we didn't have a base in the yard. The BUF was also outsiders. The coalition wasn't broad enough, etc., etc. No base in the yard? Well, how do you get a base? You must begin sometime. Outsiders? That is something the ruling class says in all kinds of struggles. When it comes to struggle against racist violence and the oppression of black people, no one is an outsider who sincerely works for the cause. Malcolm X said the Mason-Dixon line was at the U.S.-Canadian border. If the Klan lynches a Black person in the South, that's an acceptable struggle. But when a Black is killed and two others brutally attacked by white racists in Brooklyn and a righteous angry struggle is waged by a coalition of more than fifty religious and political organizations, these so-called communists stand on the sidelines, belittling the effort.

The CPUSA's trade union line seems to see any liberal break with the union misleaders as a great full-blown trend. The people making these breaks become THE alternative. They then hook their fortunes with the reformer and become their loyal, totally uncritical troops. In this way, the CPUSA hopes to become a legitimate force. In the Transit Authority, Arnold Cherry has some lieutenants and foot soldiers. They won't fight for an open, democratic rank and file organization with open meetings. They don't have a strategy involving the ranks. They follow Cherry's lead. This is not to say they haven't done some good stuff where they are concentrated. They do deserve some credit. But when they go out to the rest of the local, they follow Cherry anywhere.

One last comment. A growing number of public sector unionists talk about the need to build alliances with the communities they serve in order to resist

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effectively the cutbacks in jobs and services. Cherry and the Transit Workers Coalition have criticized Lawe for not doing this. There is a natural link between city workers who want to maintain jobs, pay and working conditions and minority communities hardest hit by service cuts. White working class areas also suffered under these cuts. More and more people see this, but the rulers still manage to set people against each other. The TWU leadership is clearly unwilling to build these links. The Transit Workers Coalition leadership, on the other hand, says in its literature that it is for uniting with communities and the riding public. But its little use to call for this in general at election time and then refuse to build this unity in practice around community issues. Mobilizing the membership against the racist murder of Willie Turks and joining with Black community, religious and political organizations around this was a practical step forward which the TWU and Transit Workers Coalition refused to take.

--December, 1982

John Jameson, member RWH

(with assistance from John Henry, PUL)

(Note: For more information on the Transit Workers Coalition and the 1980 strike see "The New York Transit Strike of 1980: The Story of a Rank and File Disaster," in Against the Current.)



## Leaving The Night Shift

Why would I cry at leaving the night shift for day shift? Why would I cry at severing my right arm, you may as well ask.

To leave these people whom I love and am part of, to no longer be a part of them in the same way I am now a part of them. How can I bear it? It's a loss I'll never regain.

How many times must I leave my world I build? I will never get used to it.

It's an intense love you build with people you spend 10-1/2 hours a day with, people you live with for the major part of your waking day. This fifty-eight hours, this overtime is a killer, of spirit as well as bodies. The only benefit of the line (other than it being a living) is the family you gather to you on the line. Women you love as sisters, men as brothers. Their opinions you come to value highly.

There is a love and nurturing we give each other on the line because we see our families so little and get too little love and nurturing from our homes and loved ones. The people on the line don't replace your family, they become a family away from home.

"Where'd you take your daughter for her birthday?"

"How's the baby's cold?"

"What did your husband say when you told him what I said about him?"

We speak to each other of our spouses, children, parents, our gardens, how we spend the day. We share each other's lives. To leave these good friends is a parting that tears at my heart.

But to have never known them would be a much deeper sorrow. For they lighten my soul, to know such as they exist. They are me and I care about

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them. Yet, they are not so unusual, they are not abnormal. They are like average working people, such as I am.

So how can there not be hope for the world, that oppression and injustice and inequality will someday cease to exist? If these good people, whose motives and hearts are good and kind and loving, if they are normal, how can justice someday not prevail?

Speak of justice! I wish it were now! Economic injustice that has led me to be laid off time and again (and changing shifts is but a part of that) causes me to now be leaving my friends. To spend time with my daughters, I must go on days. I'm leaving my friends whom I left once, thinking for good.

Would that I could settle into a job on one shift and stay. Or will my life forever be a chain of friends and loved ones that I have lost?

--Marion

February 20, 1983



# Tracing The Roots Of The Palestinian Struggle

Note: The following is excerpted from a longer interview. The author lived in the Mideast in the early 1960s. From all sides in the Arab-Israeli conflict today, including Israel and the United States, has come a growing recognition that peace depends on settling with the Palestinians. The Camp David accords acknowledged this and Reagan's new proposals last fall did as well. The Israeli invasion of Lebanon provided a different kind of recognition of the importance of the continuing Palestinian struggle, but a recognition nonetheless. One sign of the problem for us in the West in approaching this complex subject is that discussion often focuses on Israeli history only -- what was wrong or right and what are the alternatives now. There is much less familiarity with Palestinian history. The following article takes a stab at outlining some of this background.

Q: On June 15, 1969, the late Prime Minister of Israel, Golda Meir, said "There are no such things as Palestinians...It was not as though there was a Palestinian people in Palestine considering itself as a Palestinian people and we came and threw them out and took their country away from them. They did not exist." Many people in this country as well do not think that the Palestinians existed "as a Palestinian people" at least up until quite recently. What do you make of this argument?

A: It is true that Turkish and British colonialism -- to say nothing of the Zionist settlers -- truncated the development of the Palestinian nation. Yet various classes of Palestinians emerged: peasantry, laborers, professionals, small shop keepers, landlords and capitalists. In addition, there are the millions of more recent refugees.

I wish to stress that it is not only that they physically existed. As with the rest of Asia and Africa, the early 1900's saw a rise in the national consciousness and struggle for independence amongst the colonial peoples in the Mideast. In the case of Palestine this coincided with the increased Zionist immigration which further spurred the development of a Palestinian national consciousness. In 1920 the first all-Palestinian political congress -- the Palestine Arab Congress -- met in Haifa. This gathering of affluent and professional Palestinians elected a 24 member

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Arab Executive Committee and demanded three things of the British colonial government: an end of British support for Zionism, an end to Jewish immigration, and the formation of a representative government.

Like the colonialists of Africa and Latin America, Zionist spokespersons have dehumanized the indigenous people or made no distinctions among them. They have treated the Palestinians as part of just one Arab mass. These attitudes continue up to today, including Begin calling the Palestinians "two legged beasts" in the Israeli Knesset (parliament) during the recent invasion of Lebanon.

All the same, if the Palestinians never considered themselves a people it is doubtful that so many of the present 4.4 million Palestinians would remain as committed as they are to returning to their homeland.

Q: How else did a Palestinian national identity show itself back in the early years of the twentieth century?

A: Newspapers are one indication. There were about sixty Palestinian newspapers most of which were critical of the British colonial government. Demonstrations, strikes and occasional armed clashes also were common place. Writers, poets, and professionals and people of all classes wrote, sang, and fought for independence. In 1929, three hundred women took part in a Women's Congress in Palestine. Without the traditional veils these women founded the Arab Women's Union and demanded freedom for Palestinian political prisoners, an end to arms purchases by Zionist forces, and independence for Palestine. By the early 1930's, Palestinian groups recog-



Palestinian culture is expressed even by those too young to have seen their homeland. Here a youth organization in a Lebanon refugee camp performs the dabke, a village folkdance of Palestine.

PALESTINE! JANUARY, 1978



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nized they had to fight not only the British but also the Zionist settlers who were streaming in from an increasingly anti-semitic Europe.

Q: What was the nature of the Zionist colonization movement?

A: Unlike other colonial movements, such as those in Algiers or Southern Africa, the Zionists had no interest in the exploitation of the cheap labor of the native people. Instead their goal was dispossession: they wished to monopolize not only the land, but production and the labor market as well. They boycotted firms that employed Arab labor, organized the HISTADRUT, a labor organization that excluded non-Jews until the early 1960's, and formed a secret army. Two dual social structures developed -- one Jewish, one Palestinian.

The British acted as mediators but more often supported the Jewish settlers. The British suppressed Arab resistance and gave 90% of their economic assistance in the area to the Zionists. This aid, along with that from world Jewry, was a boon to Jewish businesses in Palestine, cushioned the Palestine Jewish economy from the Great Depression, and placed the Zionist sector in a dominant position over the Palestinians.

By 1936 as many as 20,000 Palestinian families had been evicted from land purchased by settlers from absentee landlords. The depression forced other Palestinians off the land and drove many into unemployment. Along with increased British repression of any pro-independence demonstrations, these conditions set the stage for a massive Palestinian rebellion over the next three years.

Q: Describe this Palestinian revolt.

A: Between 1936 and 1939 a general peasant uprising took place in Palestine, paralleled by similar smaller revolts in Iraq and Syria. The Arab Supreme Council (of Palestine) demanded a stop to Jewish immigration, prohibition of land sales to Jews and formation of a national government responsible to the representative council. The Council's High Command called a general strike which went on for six months, perhaps the longest general strike in world history.

The revolt erupted within the context of a cultural renaissance on the part of the Palestinians. Palestinian nationalism was evident in the intellectual and commercial centers of Haifa and Jerusalem as well as the smaller villages of the Jordan River valley. The revolt spread among tens of thousands of peasants, and included Arab women and Jewish communists. In the summer of 1938, five major civil centers, including Jericho and the Old City of Jerusalem were captured by Arab forces. It took more than a third of the British army (20,000 troops) plus the British-supplied Zionist army to crush the revolt. Over five thousand Arabs were killed, 2500 were put in detention and 110 hung.

Q: You said Jewish communists participated in the 1936 revolt. What role did the left play in that rebellion?

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A: Very little. It was principally a spontaneous uprising, and to the degree it was directed, it was done so by the Palestinian upper classes. And they quickly got cold feet as the popular masses began to discover the power of armed struggle. They also worried that their own economic enterprises would be destroyed if they didn't cash in on the world shortage of citrus fruits brought on by the Spanish Civil War of those years.

So by the end of 1936, the Arab Supreme Council and other Arab countries were agreeing to mediation, but the popular rebellion continued unabated for two more years.

Q: How did the British come to commit so much of its armed forces to suppressing this Palestinian revolt in the middle of the Spanish Civil War and the growing fascist threat in Germany? Certainly the British imperialists had no history of fighting for Jewish rights.

A: Palestine lies at the intersection of three continents and between two key British colonies -- India and Egypt. It was close to the Suez Canal, which the British had built at the end of the last century at a cost of over 100,000 Egyptian lives. Moreover, the British wanted to counterbalance other European powers, especially France which had a protectorate over Syria and Lebanon. The British also thought that by throwing support to the Jews in Palestine, Jews around the world would pressure their own governments to support Britain's effort in World War I.

Here I am referring to twenty years prior to the rebellion, when Britain's support of Zionist colonization really began. Chaim Weizmann, the single most important Zionist leader, at that time wrote that if the British would help establish a Jewish home in Palestine, the Jews could "develop the country, bring back civilization to it and form an effective guard against the Suez Canal."

Weighing these factors, the British government issued the Balfour Declaration in 1917, stating their support for the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Britain had copies of this declaration dropped from planes over Russian and Eastern European cities which had large Jewish populations in hopes of winning Russian Jews to the war effort and helping to stem the tide of revolution (which was in part a movement against the war). Five days later, however, the Russian working class swept the Bolsheviks into power.

When the war ended, the new League of Nations ignored pleas by Arab spokespersons for independence and granted Britain a "mandate" in Palestine (and Namibia) allowing it rule there for the next three decades.

Q: What exactly was the Balfour Declaration?

A: In 1917 Foreign Minister Lord Balfour wrote to Lord Rothschild, a wealthy English Zionist. He stated that the British cabinet "favor[ed] the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish People and...[that it would] use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object." The letter went on to say that "nothing shall



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be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of the existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine..." This letter became the Balfour Declaration and the semi-official statement of British policy.

Though Jews made up only 8.3% of the Palestine population in 1917, the British saw fit to refer to the 91% Palestinian Arabs only as the "non-Jewish communities." Though the British referred to the rights of the majority population, the Balfour Declaration, like the South Africa Act of Union before it (1909) attempted to justify the creation of a minority-ruled state in violation of those majority rights and aspirations. Once they heard of this declaration, the Palestinians responded with demonstrations and rioting.

Q: But didn't the Jews in Palestine fight against the British too?

A: Britain supported Jewish colonization in Palestine up until the start of World War II. After 1939 they changed their policy. The Arab nationalist movement was growing and the Axis powers sought an alliance by promising an end to British and French colonialism. After allowing nearly 300,000 German Jews to enter Palestine during the 1930's, the British authorities stopped Jewish immigration in 1939.

By then, however, the Zionist settlements were strong enough to start realistically talking about a new state.

Zionist armies ended up fighting the British because they fought against anyone who stood in the way of the creation of an exclusively Jewish state. Noam Chomsky relates how the Hagannah murdered an anti-Zionist Jew in 1924 (see the Progressive, December 1982).

Q: And this came to a head after World War II?

A: Yes. The British threw the Palestine problem into the lap of the United Nations. The forty-member, USA-dominated UN proceeded to ignore the pleas of the Palestinians by approving a plan to partition the country. Strongly opposed by the Arabs, this plan set up two states. At the time, Jews comprised no more than a third of the population and held less than 7% of the land. Yet the Jewish state was to receive 56% of the land while the Arabs would be left only 43%. (The remaining area of Jerusalem would be put under international control, according to the partition plan.) Demanding a referendum, the Arabs said the UN had no right parcelling out other people's lands. But with both US and Soviet support, the partition plan passed on November 29, 1947. It was to take effect the following June.

Q: Granted the plan was unfair statistically, but its approval was set against the horrors of the Nazi holocaust. The US labor movement, the Communist Party and the Soviet Union all supported the creation of Israel. Certainly progressive people around the world supported the creation of Israel out of sympathy with the Jews combined with ignorance about the Palestinians. But how do you explain the Soviet Union's lack of support for Arab nationalism here?

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A: The Bolsheviks had historically opposed Zionism. They held that anti-semitism could only be ended through the general class struggle. By the late 1940's, however, the Soviet leadership under Stalin viewed the Zionist struggle against the British as a way to remove British domination in the area. Czech arms were sent. This position fundamentally underestimated the potential of the Arab national liberation movement. Secondly, Stalin appeared reluctant to displease the Americans on a matter which seemed unimportant. Unfortunately the Communist Parties of the region all followed the Soviet line in supporting the partition plan. This was the death knell of organized communism in the Arab world for some time. (The Iraqi party was the sole exception, organizing against Zionism among the Jewish communities in Iraq at the time.)

Q: This first "two state solution," the 1948 UN partition plan never took effect. When the 1948-49 war ended, where did things stand?

A: The Zionist organizations had been offered 56% of the land by the United Nations. In effect, through the war they turned this down and seized a full 80% of Palestine. They seized an estimated \$12 billion worth of Palestinian property, including half the citrus groves, nine tenths of the olive groves and roughly 10,000 shops. Over three quarters of a million Palestinians became refugees.

As millions of dollars from around the world poured into the new state of Israel, the homeless Palestinians attempted to survive the particularly harsh winter of 1948. The suffering was intense, including much starvation and tuberculosis. Families lived in caves, tents and make-shift camps. At one camp in Jordan, forty people died each day of exposure and starvation the winter. Four out of five babies died before they reached their first year of life. People ate anything that was green.





Finally at the end of 1949 the United Nations established the UN Relief and Works Administration (UNRWA). They took over sixty refugee camps previously run by voluntary agencies. Many of the refugees had no choice but to stay in these wretched camps, subsisting as best they could on ten cents a day -- 1500 calories of food daily -- sometimes in encampments of fifty thousand with only a half dozen latrines.

The United Nations passed Resolution 194 which called for repatriation and compensation of the Arab refugees. This resolution, which has been confirmed every year since, and over 150 other UN resolutions have been ignored by Israel, and often times vetoed by the US in the Security Council.

Q: The refugees were not allowed to return?

A: No. Already in July 1948 the first Prime Minister of Israel David Ben-Gurion stated, "We shall do everything possible to ensure that they never return." And Israel did. The parliament passed the "Law of Return" (July 5, 1950) which stated any person with a Jewish mother had an inherent right to settle in Israel. The same right is denied non-Jews.

This Zionist-type racism allowed Golda Meir, born in Russia and who grew up in Milwaukee, to have more right to live in Palestine than a Palestinian who ancestors had tilled the soil of Palestine for centuries, who was born in Palestine, grew up in Palestine and owned land in Palestine.

Q: Two hundred thousand Palestinians managed to stay in Israel. What was life like for them?

A: Life was very difficult. The Palestinians in Israel lived under military rule through the mid-sixties. The Israeli government passed a series of land acquisition acts in order to expropriate all the territory owned by Arabs who had left during or after the 1948 war as well as most of the land of those Arabs who had remained but had moved (temporarily or permanently) from where they resided on September 1, 1948. These land acquisition laws are detailed clearly in Jiryis Sabris' book, The Arabs in Israel (Monthly Review Press, 1976). The laws were sophisticated and effective. Arabs who remained in Israel lost between forty and fifty percent of their land. According to the 1951 report of the UN Palestine Conciliation Commission, four-fifths of Israel's area and two-thirds of its cultivable land belonged to Palestinian refugees prevented from returning home. Within the first two years of Israel's existence, 350 of the 370 new Jewish settlements were built on land taken from Palestinians.

But it was not only the loss of land that affected Palestinian Arabs. They were not eligible for loans or grants from the Jewish Agency, were paid less for their products by Jewish monopolies, and were deprived of the chance to obtain suitable irrigation and farm equipment. A massive shift in the occupational structure took place away from the peasantry toward day laborers in the cities.

Q: Did the Palestinians resist in those early days?

A: Yes. In 1951 the people of Narareth organized a general strike against the land confiscation. This in turn sparked solidarity demonstrations in other major towns of Galilee. Three years later, Palestinians had organized the Popular Arab Front which demanded equality for all peoples and an end to military rule. This was put down. Later, in the early sixties, Palestinians attempted to organize a political party called "El Ard" (which means "the land") but the authorities banned this as well.

Q: The US press and government -- great experts that they are -- always speak of Israel as a bastion of democracy. Your account of these early demonstrations tends to contradict this idea. Would you consider Israel to be a democracy?

A: Yes and no. For Jews it is similar to a European style parliamentary democracy. Of course, Sephardic Jews -- those from North Africa and Asia -- have been treated and "represented" like blacks and other oppressed nationalities in this country. In the early seventies, a group of Sephardic Jews organized the "Black Panthers" which was summarily repressed by the Israelis. (Note: today Israeli coalition politics is more complicated: Begin's Likud bloc managed to build support among recent Jewish immigrants from other Arab countries, but the basic inequalities remain.)

For the Arabs in Israel, democracy is sharply curtailed. They live for the most part under military occupation, subject to repressive measures. For example, the laws upon which the Israelis first suppressed Palestinian nationalism were the old British Defense Laws. The British had passed these in 1945 to repress Zionist attacks on the mandate government. At the time, a conference of Jewish lawyers demanded their repeal. A spokesperson for this group, Yaacov Shapiro, said then, "The system established in Palestine since the issue of the Defense Laws is unparalleled in any civilized country; there were no such laws even in Nazi Germany...No government has the right to pass such laws." Shapiro went on to become Attorney General of Israel and oversee the use of these laws against the Palestinians. Later he was Minister of Justice.

Through all this history runs one theme: the struggle of an indigenous population against a settler state. Throughout the world, democracy has not flourished under those circumstances.

--December 1982  
Bob Peterson



# Peoples Army In The Philippines

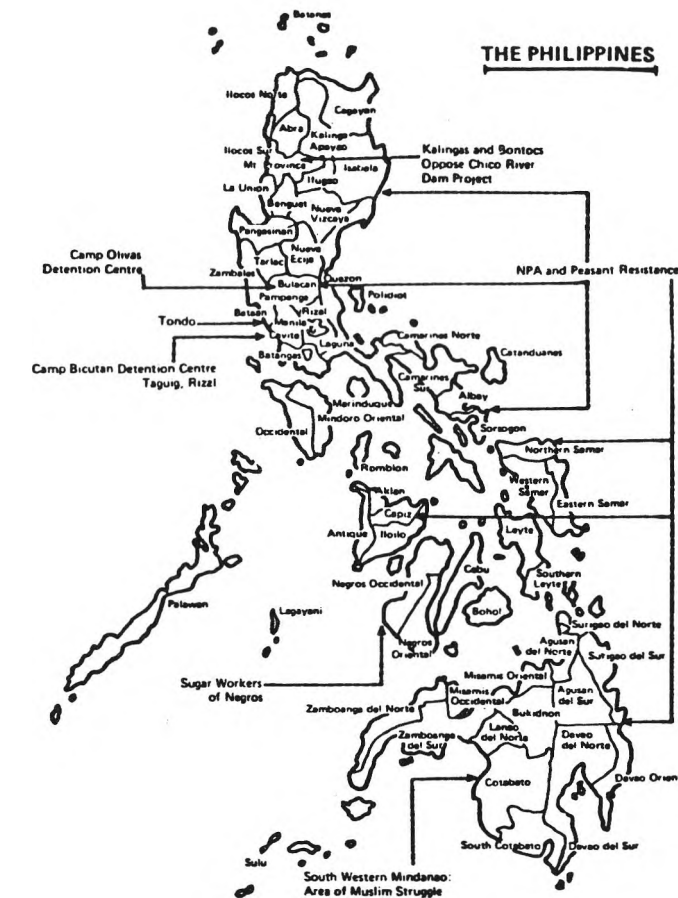
The twentieth century opened on what many observers have since called the first modern imperialist war. Usually known as the Spanish-American war, this conflict should have been referred to as the Spanish-Cuban-Puerto Rican-Filipino-American War since it involved not only the clash of Spanish colonialism and United States imperialism, but also wars of national liberation against Spanish rule. As a result of this war and the efforts which followed to annex Puerto Rico and bring Cuba and the Philippines into a U.S. sphere of influence, an early “anti-imperialist movement” grew up in the United States. Though it generally did not connect the new imperialism to the emerging dynamic of monopoly capitalism, this movement represented an important social force within the U.S. Unknown to many students of U.S. history and literature – and often written off by those who do know – the renowned author and satirist Mark Twain was at the forefront of this agitation against U.S. expansion, reserving some of his most biting attacks for the United States’ war against the Filipino people. A couple of short selections from Twain’s “Comments on the Killing of 600 Moros” offer a vivid description of this first U.S. military “pacification program”:

General Wood was present and looking on. His order had been, "Kill or capture those savages." Apparently our little army considered that the "or" left them authorized to kill or capture according to taste, and that their taste had remained what it has been for eight years, in our army out there — the taste of Christian butchers. . .

Contrast these things [Twain shows the relative similarity in casualty figures in legitimate battles] with the great statistics which have arrived from the Moro crater! There, with six hundred engaged on each side, we lost fifteen men killed outright, and we had thirty-two wounded . . . The enemy numbered six hundred – including women and children – and we abolished them utterly, leaving not even a baby alive to cry for its dead mother. *This is incomparably the greatest*

victory that was ever achieved by the Christian soldiers of the United States. (Mark Twain, available in the paperback collection, *On the Damned Human Race*, edited by Janet Smith, New York: Hill and Wang, 1962, pp. 113-14.)

Until the full development of the movement against U.S. aggression in Indochina in the late 1960s and early 1970s and the spread of literature on U.S. overseas "adventures," many people in this country were completely unaware of the U.S. role in the Philippines, which can only be called criminal. Even today, far too few people in the United States know that between 1900 and 1902, over one hundred thousand troops from this country fought a war of imperialist suppression against the Filipino people. Few people know that through this war, the U.S. perfected anti-guerrilla and anti-people practices which have been universally condemned, such as the practice of physical dismemberment.





United States involvement in the Philippines did not end after the war. The U.S. legally dominated the Philippines until 1946 at which point nominal independence was gained. Then, through economic, political and military maneuvers, the U.S. continued its domination of the Philippines in a barely concealed manner.

During this long period of both direct and indirect rule of their homeland, the Filipino people have continued to resist the United States, the Japanese during World War II, and finally the several pro-U.S. neo-colonial regimes since the war. The papers in this collection come from the present movement for the national liberation of the Philippines. Beginning in 1968, a new generation of revolutionaries reconstituted the Communist Party of the Philippines and began the work of launching a general struggle for national freedom. Through the National Democratic Front and its New People's Army and in alliance with the Moro National Liberation Front, the Filipino people are waging one of the most significant struggles taking place today against imperialism and dominationism.

The United Labor Press is honored to issue this collection. We in the United States have a special obligation to support the struggles for national independence and liberation which have to take on this country's ruling class. Especially given the long and bloody history of the United States in the Philippines, we are duty bound not to shrink from these responsibilities. We are sure that North American readers will find this collection of interest.