

# V. COLONIALISM, IMPERIALISM & LABOR ARISTOCRACY

## 1. The "Bourgeois Proletariat"

Communism has always had to fight against not only the bourgeoisie, but also the very real opposition of some strata and masses of workers who have become corrupted and reactionary. Thus, the hostility revolutionary trends face here is neither new nor a puzzle for communist theory. In England, South Afrika, etc. the communist forces have had to recognize this opposition. **Marx**, **Engels**, **Lenin** — all emphasized how important this question was. It is an essential part of the world fight against imperialism.

To begin with, our criticism of the historically negative role of the settler masses here is no more pointed than **Friedrich Engel's** statements a century ago about the English working class. Communists have never believed that the working class was some "holy," religious object that must be enshrined away from scientific investigation. **Lenin** on his own part several times purposefully reminded his European comrades that the original "proletariat" — of Imperial Rome — did not work, but was supported by the surpluses of slave labor. As the lowest free class of Roman citizens, their only duty was to father new soldiers for the Roman Legions (which is why they were called "proletarii" in Latin) while they lived off government subsidies. (1) The political consciousness and material class role of the masses of any given nation cannot be assumed from historic generalizations, but must be discovered by social investigation and scientific analysis.

The phenomenon of the various capitalist ruling classes buying off and politically corrupting some portions of their own wage-laboring populations begins with the European colonial systems. The British workers of the 1830's and 1840's were becoming increasingly class-conscious. An early, pre-Marxian type of socialism (Owenism) had caused much interest, and the massive Chartist movement rallied millions of workers to demand democratic rights. Alarmed at this — and warned by the armed, democratic insurrections in 1848 in both France and Germany — the British capitalists grudgingly decided that the immense profits of their colonial empire allowed them to ease up slightly on the exploitation at home.

This tossing of a few crumbs to the British workers resulted in a growing ideological stagnation, conservatism and national chauvinism. **Engels** was outraged and disgusted, particularly at the corrupt spectacle of the British workers slavishly echoing their bourgeoisie as to

their alleged "right" to exploit the colonial world "...There is no workers' party here...and the workers gaily share the feast of England's monopoly of the world market and the colonies."

In 1858 **Engels** sarcastically described the tamed British workers in the bluntest terms: "The English proletariat is actually becoming more and more bourgeois, so that this most bourgeois of all nations is apparently aiming ultimately at the possession of a bourgeois aristocracy and a bourgeois proletariat alongside the bourgeoisie. For a nation which exploits the whole world this is to a certain extent justifiable." (2) Britain was the Imperial Rome, the Amerikan Empire of that day — a nation which "feasted" on the exploitation of colonies around the entire world. **Engels**, as a communist, didn't make lame excuses for the corrupted English workers, but exposed them. He held the English workers accountable to the world proletariat for their sorry political choices.

This was not a matter of English factory hands suddenly wearing gold jewelry and "designer jeans." The change was historic: it raised the English masses past the bare floor of survival. As we discussed earlier, in the early stages of capitalist development the bourgeoisie exploited the English workers to the point of early death. Workers, women and children in particular, were overworked and starved as disposable and easily replaced objects.

The change didn't mean that English workers as a whole weren't exploited — just that their exploitation was lightened in the golden flow of colonial profits. In 1840 the wages of an "ordinary laborer" in England were 8 shillings per week, while it cost some 14 shillings per week to live on a minimal but stable basis. By 1875 both the common wages and the cost of living were up to 15 shillings per week — an event that historian **Arnold Toynbee** points to as the first time in British capitalist history that unskilled laborers earned enough to survive. At the same time reform legislation sponsored by the big factory owners placed restrictions on the use of child labor. The length of the working day declined. At both Jarron Shipyards and the New Castle Chemical Works, for example, workers succeeded in lowering the work week from 61 to 54 hours. (3)

In 1892 **Engels** explained that the prolonged conservatism of the English workers was due to this generaliz-

ed bribery: *"The truth is this: during the period of England's industrial monopoly, the English working class have, to a certain extent, shared in the benefits of monopoly. These benefits were very unequally parcelled out amongst them; the privileged minority pocketed most, but even the great mass had, at least, a temporary share now and then. And that is the reason why, since the dying out of Owenism, there has been no socialism in England."* (4)

Engels divides the workers into two groups — the "privileged minority" of the labor aristocrats, and the "great mass" of common wage-labor. While the labor aristocracy engages in wage-labor and grows up out of the working class, it is no longer exploited. Rather, the bourgeoisie shares with this privileged layer a part of the superprofits from colonial exploitation. Typically, these labor aristocrats are trade-union officials, certain white-collar employees, foremen, the well-paid members of the restrictive craft unions, etc.. They often supervise or depend upon the labor of ordinary workers, while they themselves do little or no toil.

This stratum can also include groupings of workers who are employed directly by the state, who work in the colonial system, in war industries, etc. and who therefore have a special loyalty to the bourgeoisie. The aristocracy of labor have comfortable lives, and in general associate with the petit-bourgeoisie.

The "great mass" of English workers were, in contrast, certainly exploited. They lived lives of hardship. Yet, they had in their own lifetimes seen an uneven but upward trend in their wages and working conditions — a rise dependent upon the increasing profits of the overseas em-

pire. Under the leadership of the aristocracy of labor — who were looked up to as the most "successful," best-organized and most unionized layer of the class — these ordinary laborers increasingly indentified their own progress with the progress of "their" British empire.

Engels felt in the late 1890's that this might be only a temporary phenomenon — and one limited to England by and large. He thought that with the growth of rival industrial empires and the sharpening of European capitalist competition, the super-profits that supported this bribery might dwindle. Exactly the reverse happened, however. With the coming of imperialism and the tremendous rise of the most modern colonial empires, the trend of social bribery of the working classes spread from England to France, Germany, Belgium, etc. Between the fall of the Paris Commune of 1871 and the eve of World War I in 1913, real per capita income in both England and Germany doubled. (5)

In 1907 Lenin wrote:

"The class of those who own nothing but do not labor either is incapable of overthrowing the exploiters. Only the proletarian class, which maintains the whole of society, has the power to bring about a successful social revolution. And now we see that, as the result of a far-reaching colonial policy, the European proletariat has partly reached a situation where it is *not* its work that maintains the whole of society but that of the people of the colonies who are practically enslaved. The British bourgeoisie, for example, derives more profit from the many millions of the population of India and other colonies than from the British workers. In certain countries these circumstances create the material and economic basis for infecting the proletariat of one country or another with colonial chauvinism." (6)



Imperialism allowed the European workers — once much more exploited and revolutionary than their Amerikan cousins — to catch up in privileges and degeneracy. Lenin said that imperialism gives the bourgeoisie enough "super-profits" to "devote apart (and not a small one at that!) to bribe their own workers, to create something like an alliance...between the workers of a given nation and their capitalists..."

The pro-imperialist labor aristocracy — which in 1914 Lenin estimated at roughly 20% of the German working class — were the leaders of the German trade-unions, the "socialist" party, etc.. Using their state-sanctioned positions they led millions of workers in the more proletarian strata. This labor aristocracy succeeded in sabotaging the revolutionary movements in Western Europe, and disrupting unity between the anti-colonial revolutions and the workers of the oppressed nations.

We can sum up key lessons in this theoretical development of analyzing social bribery in the imperialist oppressor nations:

1. Lenin's insistence on a total break with those "socialists" who were unwilling to support the anti-colonial revolutions in deeds was proven correct. The shallow argument that "racist" European workers would be brought to revolutionary enlightenment by union activity and reformist economic movements (the same arguments preached here in Amerika) was proven to be totally untrue.

**While in every mass there are those who have backward or chauvinistic prejudices in the yet-to-be-cleaned corners of their minds, Lenin insisted that this was not the primary problem. Under imperialism "racist" politics were an outward manifestation of a class "alliance" with the imperialists.**

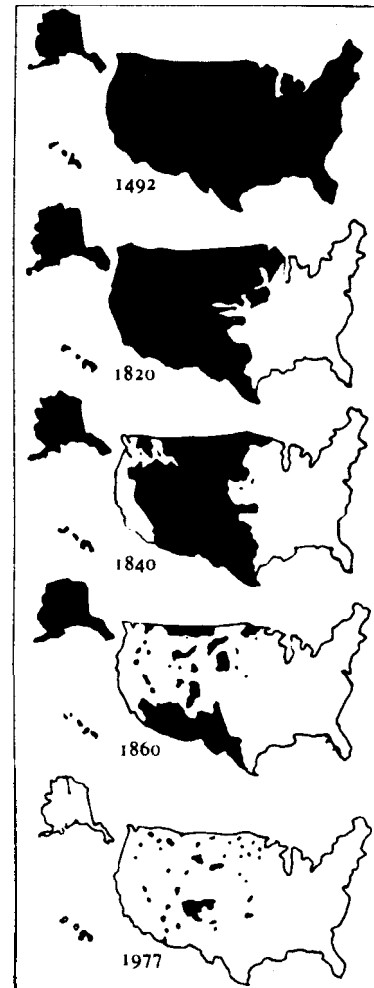
2. This labor aristocracy of bribed workers is not neutral, but is fighting for its capitalist masters. Therefore, they must be combatted, just like the army or police (who are the military base of the imperialists, while the labor aristocracy is its social base). Lenin told his comrades: "No preparation of the proletariat for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie is possible, even in the preliminary sense, unless an immediate, systematic, extensive and open struggle is waged against this stratum..."

3. When the new communist movement was formed, it was greatly outnumbered and out-organized everywhere in Europe outside of Russia. Lenin's answer was concise: Since the bribed, pro-imperialist masses were primarily the upper, privileged layers of workers, the communists in order to combat them had to "go down lower and deeper, to the real masses." And again he noted: "...the sufferings, miseries, and revolutionary sentiments of the ruined and impoverished masses"; he pointed to "...particularly those who are least organized and educated, who are most oppressed and least amenable to organization." (We might say that he shared the same perception that Malcolm X had of where to find a base for revolution.)

On the global scale Lenin's strategy of "go down lower and deeper, to the real masses" meant that the communist movement became truly internationalist, organizing the masses of Asia, Latin Amerika and Afrika — the

#### INDIAN LAND WITHIN UNITED STATES

**In 1492, 541 Indian nations**  
 — approximately 10 million people —  
 lived in what is now the United States.  
 The U.S. government ratified 371 treaties with these Indian nations between 1776 and 1871.  
 Chief Red Cloud of the Lakota said:  
 "They made many promises to us,  
 but they only kept one: they promised  
 to take our land, and they took it."  
 The modern American Indian Movement  
 has sought to restore the Indian land base  
 by demanding that the United States honor  
 its treaty obligations with the Indian nations.



"real masses" of imperialism. Near the end of his life, noting the unexpected setbacks in revolutionizing Western Europe, Lenin remarked that in any case of the future of the world would be decided by the fact that the oppressed nations constitute the overwhelming majority of the world's population.

4. The analysis of the labor aristocracy under imperialism helps deepen the understanding of our own varied struggles, and the evolution of the U.S. Empire in general.

As the U.S. Empire jumped into the imperialist "scramble" for world domination at the turn of the 20th century, its Euro-Amerikan workers were the most privileged in the entire capitalist world. In 1900 labor in Amerika was sharply divided into three very separate and

*nationally-distinct* strata (literally, of different nations — Euro-Amerikan, European and oppressed nations).

On top was the labor aristocracy of **Euro-**Amerikan workers, who dominated the better-paid craft trades and their restrictive A.F.L. unions. This "privileged stratum" of "native-born" citizens comprised roughly 25% of the industrial workforce, and edged into the ranks of their petit-bourgeois neighbors, (foremen, small tradesmen, and so on).

Below them was a new proletarian stratum just imported from Eastern and Southern Europe, who comprised 50-75% of the Northern industrial workforce. They were poorly paid and heavily exploited, the main factory production force of the North. Largely unorganized, they were systematically barred from the craft unions and the better-paying factory jobs. This stratum was composed of non-citizens, was only a generation old here, and had no previous existence. The very bottom, upholding everything else, were the colonial proletariats of Afrikan, Mexicano, Indian and Asian workers.

Even as modern industrialization and the Northern factory boom were in full swing, it was still true that the "super-profits" wrung from the oppressed nations (plus those wrung from imported labor from Asia) were the foundations of the Empire. Everything "American" was built up on top of their continuing oppression.

In the Afrikan South cotton was still "king." The Afrikan laborers (whether hired, renter or share-cropper) who produced the all-important cotton still supported the entire settler economy. Between 1870-1910 cotton production had gone up by three times, while domestic cotton usage had gone up by 600% — and "king cotton" still was the leading U.S. export product (25% of all exports). The number of Afrikan men in agriculture had increased, and in 1914 some 50% of all Afrikan workers labored in the fields. Afrikan women not only worked in the fields, as did their children, but they involuntarily continued cleaning, cooking, washing clothes and child-raising for the upper half of Euro-Amerikan families. Over 40% of the entire Afrikan workforce was still bound into domestic labor — maintaining for the Southern settlers their conquest lifestyle.

The growing Euro-Amerikan masses in the South had benefited from the fact that Afrikans had been gradually forced out of industry and the skilled trades. While roughly 80% of all skilled workers in the South had been Afrikan in 1868, by 1900 those proportions had been reversed. In the more localized construction trades Afrikans still hung on (comprising 15% of carpenters and 36% of masons), but in the desirable mechanical trades, associated now with rising industry, they were excluded. Only 2% of machinists in the South, for example, were Afrikan. On the Southern railroads, where Afrikans once predominated — and as late as 1920 still accounted for 20-25% of all firemen, brakemen and switchman — the 1911 Atlanta Agreement between Southern railroads and the A.F.L. Railroad Brotherhoods called for the gradual replacement of all Afrikans by settlers. (7)

Even the jobs in the new textile mills were reserved for "poor whites" forced off the land. So that settler labor in the South — however exploited — was grateful to the

bourgeoisie for every little privilege they got. The settler masses of the South, in the tradition of the slave patrols, the Confederate Army and the K.K.K., were still in the main the loyal garrison over occupied New Afrika.

Even though the Empire tried to use industry to build up a settler occupation population, Afrikan labor was necessary as the super-exploited base of Southern industry. In lumber they made up the bottom half of the workforce. In the coal mines of Alabama they were 54% of the miners at the turn of the century. In the Southern iron and steel mills we find that in 1907 Afrikans still made up 40% of the workers. (8)

In the Mexicano Southwest the same basic foundation of oppressed nation labor was present (together with Asian labor). Native Amerikan workers were present throughout the region — on cattle and sheep ranches, in the fields and in the mines. Navaho miners, for example, played an active role in building the Western Federation of Miners local at the great Telluride, Colorado mines. Asian labor played an equally important role. Although much of the Chinese national minority had been driven by repression out of the U.S. or to retreat into the "ghetto" economy of laundries, food service, etc., new waves of Asian workers were being recruited from Japan, the Philippines and Korea. By the many thousands they toiled on the railroads, the urban "service" economy, in canneries, and above all, in the fields.

Much less industrialized and economically developed than the North (or even the South), the Southwestern economy rested on agriculture and mining. The migrant farm laborers of the "factories in the fields" were not marginal, but the economic mainstay of the Southwest. In the key agricultural area of Southern California the majority of farm labor was Chicano-Mexicano.

Because the Southwest was much more recently conquered than other regions of the continental Empire, the labor situation was far less developed in a modern industrial sense. Armed Chicano-Mexicano resistance organizations against settler rule continued well into the 1920s. The Euro-Amerikan settlers were in general wary of concentrating masses of Mexicanos, and long into the 20th century the main interest of many "Anglo" settlers was the continuing, terroristic seizure of the remaining lands and water-rights of the Chicano-Mexicano and Indian nations. Thus, the settler economy in the Southwest even in the imperialist era was still concentrated in the conquest and looting stage. Here the conquered Chicano-Mexicanos were necessary to the settlers as ranch labor and domestic labor (just as in the rural South with Afrikans).

But at the turn of the century the development of railroad systems, of large-scale commercial agriculture, and of extensive mining were also creating the imperialist need for increased masses of cheap laborers. Thousands and then tens of thousand of Mexicano workers were brought Northward to fill this need. By 1909 on both the Santa Fe and Southern Pacific railroads some 98% of the crews working west of Albuquerque were Chicano-Mexicano. While varying mixtures of Mexicano, Indian, and immigrant European nationalities were used in the mines. Mexicano labor played the largest role. In mines

closest to the artificial "border," Mexicano workers were often a large majority — such as in the major copper center of Clifton, Arizona. Once driven out of much of the West by settler terrorism, Mexicanos were now being brought back to their own national land as "immigrant" or "contract" labor. Mexicanos became 60% of the miners, 80% of the agricultural workers, and 90% of the railroad laborers in the West. (9) Thus, in the West the importance of colonial labor was rapidly growing.

In terms of income and lifestyle it is easy to see the gulf between the labor of the oppressor nation of settlers, imported European national minorities, and the colonial labor of the oppressed nations and minorities. The Afrikan tenant family usually lived in debt slavery, laboring as a family for little more than some food, a few clothes and use of a shack. Those Chicano-Mexicano families trapped in the Texas peonage system earned just as little.

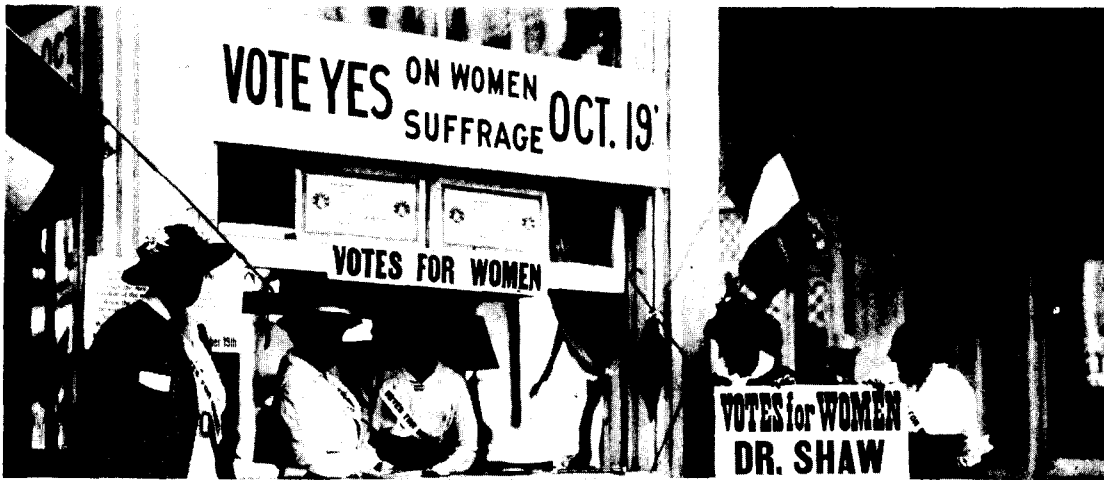
One Texas rancher testified in 1914: "I was paying Pancho and his whole family 60 cents a day... There were no hours; he worked from sun to sun. .. As late as the 1920s Afrikan farm laborers in the South earned 75 cents per day when employed. For both Afrikans and Mexicanos at the turn of the century, even in industry and mining it was

common to earn one-half of "white man's pay."

One step up from this was the Northern industrial proletariat from Eastern and Southern Europe — newly created, heavily exploited, but whose ultimate relationship to the imperialists was still uncertain. The "Hunky" and "Dago" commonly earned \$6-10 per week in the early 1900's, for six and seven day work weeks.

One giant level up from there was the "privileged stratum" of Euro-American labor aristocrats (skilled workers, foremen, office staff). They usually earned \$15-20 per week, with the majority being homeowners and voting citizens of the Empire.

This top stratum dominated the trade unions and the socialist organizations, consistently supporting the U.S. Empire. Bribed and helped to be the imperialist leadership of all white workers as a whole, they sabotaged any militant outbreaks in the industrial ranks. Always they prevented any internationalist unity between white workers and the colonial proletariats. It is with this background (and being able to trace the continuing role of social bribery) that we can begin to examine settler mass politics in the imperialist era.



## 2. Settler Opposition To Imperialism

There have always been significant contradictions among the settlers, and even in the earliest stages of imperialism we have seen conflicts between the monopoly capitalists and their settler base. While the U.S. was an empire just as soon as it started to breathe, the "Spanish-American War" of 1898 marked this early settler empire's transition into Imperialism. The pivotal nature of this imperialist war was well-understood by the settler citizenry of that earlier day, and it caused not only a great public debate but an angry split in the settler ranks. The well organized mass movement of settlers opposed to imperialism then foreshadowed the Anti-Vietnam War movement of our times. These are important contradictions.

In the brief 1898 war, the U.S. easily removed Puerto-Rico, the Philippines, and Cuba from the feeble hands of the aging Spanish Empire. This armed robbery was so effortless because the Spanish bourgeoisie had already lost most of their former power over these colonies. due to both their own weakness and to the rise of national liberation movements. On Sept. 23, 1868, at Lares, Puerto Rican patriots proclaimed the first Republic of Puerto Rico amidst an armed uprising against the Spanish occupiers. Although crushed, the "cry of Lares" marks the start of an unbroken history of patriotic warfare by the Puerto Rican people.

Increasingly, the Puerto Rican forces controlled not only the mountains, but also the rural areas right up to the towns of the isolated Spanish garrisons. Finally, in 1897, the desperate Spanish empire agreed in negotiations with Puerto Rican representatives to a Charter of Autonomy. This recognized the power of the Puerto Rican nation to set up its own currency, fix tariffs on imports, negotiate trade agreements with other nations, and veto if they wished any Spanish diplomatic treaties applying to Puerto Rico. The end of Spanish rule was evident. (10) Similar concessions were won by Cuban and Filipino rebels.

The U.S. bourgeoisie had to move quickly if it was to annex these colonies. In addition to the possibility that Britain or some other great power would make a grab for them, there was the certainty that the oppressed nations of the Spanish Empire were raising the beacon of National Independence and anti-colonialism — as had Haiti a century before. So that on April 25, 1898, the U.S. declared war on Spain while moving to invade Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines. It was just in the nick of time as far as U.S. Imperialism was concerned.

In the Philippines the liberation struggle had already reached the formation of a new Filipino Government. spurred on by the Katipunan, the secret armed organization of workers and peasants, the revolutionaries had created a large peoples' army. By the time the first U.S. troops landed on June 30, 1898, the Filipino revolutionaries had already swept the Spanish Colonial Army and administration out of virtually the whole of the Philippines, besieging the last isolated holdouts in the old walled city of Manila. Under the pretext of being "allies" of the Filipinos, U.S. troops landed and joined the siege of the Spanish remnants. It is a fact that in the siege the Filipino patriots held 15% miles of the lines facing the Spanish

positions, while the U.S. troops held only a token 600 yards of front line. (11) More and more U.S. troops arrived, even after the hopeless Spanish surrendered on Dec. 10, 1898. Finally, on Feb. 4, 1899, the reinforced U.S. "allies" moved to wipe out the Filipino forces, even ordering that no truces or ceasefires be accepted.

The Filipino people defended their nation with the most heroic and stubborn resistance. It took over three years of the most bitter combat before the guerrilla patriots were overcome. And defeated then only because: 1. The bourgeois nationalist Filipino leaders had treacherously purged the armed movement of the most advanced proletarian elements, while they themselves vacillated in trying to reach an accommodation with the U.S. invaders. 2. Over half of the total U.S. Army (1.2 million troops) were eventually poured into the Philippines, with weapons and organization far advanced over the former Spanish foes. 3. The Filipino people were unprepared for the brutal effectiveness of the genocidal strategy used by the U.S. invaders.



The last became an international scandal when the full details became known, shaking even some settlers. Unable to cope with the guerrilla tactics of the Filipino revolutionaries, the U.S. Army decided to starve them into disintegration by destroying their social base — the Filipino population. The same genocidal "Population Regroupment" strategy (as the C.I.A. calls it today) that settlers first used against the Indian nations was revived in the Philippines — and would be used again in Vietnam in our times. The general outlines of U.S. strategy called for

destroying all organized social and economic life in guerilla areas. Villages would be burned down, crops and livestock destroyed, diseases spread, the People killed or forced to evacuate as refugees. Large areas were declared as "free fire zones" in which all Filipinos were to be killed on sight. (12)

Of course, even Euro-American settlers needed some indoctrination in order to daily carry out such crimes. Indiscriminate killing, looting and torture were publicly encouraged by the U.S. Army command. American reporters were invited to witness the daily torture sessions, in which Filipinos would be subjected to the "watercure" (having salt water pumped into their stomachs under pressure). The *Boston Herald* said:

"Our troops in the Philippines...look upon all Filipinos as of one race and condition, and being dark men, they are therefore 'niggers', and entitled to all the contempt and harsh treatment administered by white overlords to the most inferior races." (13)

U.S. Imperialism took the Philippines by literally turning whole regions into smoldering graveyards. U.S. Brig. Gen. James Bell, upon returning to the U.S. in 1901, said that his men had killed *one out of every six Filipinos* on the main island of Luzon (that would be some one million deaths just there). It is certain that at least 200,000 Filipinos died in the genocidal conquest. In Samar province, where the patriotic resistance to the U.S. invaders was extremely persistent, U.S. Gen. Jacob Smith ordered his troops to shoot *every* Filipino man, woman or child they could find "over ten" (years of age). (14)

**The settler anti-imperialist movement that arose in opposition to these conquests focussed on the Philippines. It was not a fringe protest by a few radicals. Many of its leaders were men of wealth and standing, many of them old veterans of the abolitionist cause. The author Mark Twain, Gov. Pingree of Michigan, former U.S. Secretary of Agriculture J. Sterling Morton, and steel magnate Andrew Carnegie were but a few of the "notable" settlers involved.**

From its center in New England, the movement spread coast-to-coast, and then organized itself into the American Anti-Imperialist League. The League had over 40,000 members in some forty chapters, with hundreds of thousands of settler supporters. (15) It was also closely tied to the reform wing of the Democratic Party, and to the Presidential election campaign of William Jennings Bryan. Just as Senator George McGovern would run against President Nixon on an anti-war platform in 1972, Bryan was running against the entrenched Republicans with a platform calling for an end to Asian conquests.

The politics of the League were well developed, with an explicit class orientation. The League opposed imperialism in the first place because they correctly saw that it represented the increased power of monopoly capital. When they raised their slogan — "Republic or Empire" — they meant by it that Amerika should be a republic of free European settlers rather than a world empire, whose mixed populations would be subjects of the monopoly capitalists. They feared that the economic power gained from exploiting these new colonies, plus the permanent armed force needed to hold them, would be used as home to smother the "democracy" of the settler masses. (16)

The atrocities committed by U.S. troops in the Philippines were denounced on moral and humanitarian grounds. But the League was very careful to point out that their support for Philippine independence did not mean that they believed in any equality of colonial peoples with Europeans. Congressman Carl Schurz, the German immigrant liberal who played such a prominent role in supporting Reconstruction during the 1860s and 1870s, was a leading spokesman for the League.

In his speech "The Policy of Imperialism," Schurz began by defining Filipinos as "*the strongest and foremost tribe*" of the region. He then said: "We need not praise the Filipinos as in every way the equals of the 'embattled farmers' of Lexington and Concord...but there is an abundance of testimony, some of it unwilling, that the Filipinos are fully the equals, and even the superiors, of the Cubans and Mexicans." The patronizing arrogance of even these settlers showed that it was possible for them to be against the new imperialism — and also be white supremacists and supporters of capitalism. That this was an impossible contradiction didn't occur to them.

The class content of the League becomes very clear as Schurz continued: "Now, it may well be that the annexation of the Philippines would pay a speculative syndicate of wealthy capitalists, without at the same time paying the American people at large. As to the people of our race, tropical countries like the Philippines may be fields of profit for rich men who can hire others to work for them, but not for those who have to work for themselves." (17) In other words, the League was articulating the interests of the liberal petit-bourgeoisie.

Settler labor was appealed to on an explicitly white-supremacist basis. Congressman George S. Boutwell, the President of the League, reminded the white workers that they had just finished robbing and driving out Chinese workers — a campaign that he had supported. Now, he told white workers, a new menace had arisen of "half-civilized races" from the Philippines. If their land were to be annexed to the U.S. Empire, then in the near future these Asians would be brought to Amerika by the capitalists. He said:

"Does anyone believe, that with safety, we can receive into this Union the millions of Asia, who have no bonds of relationship with us...The question before this country shall be this: Should the laboring and producing classes of America be subjected to a direct and never-ending competition with the underpaid and half-clad laborers of Asia...?" (18)

The politics of the League did not support national liberation; they were not anti-capitalist or even anti-racist. The heart of their movement was the appeal of a false past, of the picture of Amerika as an insular European society, of an economy based on settlers' production in small farms and workshops. They feared the new imperialist world of giant industrial trusts and banks, of international production where the labor of oppressed workers in far-flung colonies would give monopoly capital a financial whip over the common settler craftsman and farmer. They believed, incorrectly, that the settler economy could be sustained without continuing Amerika's history of conquest and annexation.\*



We can see the very sharply defined case the League made for counterposing the interests of settlers vs. their bourgeoisie. In his convocation address at the University of Chicago in 1899, Carl Schurz takes up the issue of explaining why the old conquests of the U.S. Empire were so "good," while the new conquests were "bad":

*"Has riot the career of the Republic alrriost from its very beginning been orie of territorial expansion? Has it not acquired California, Florida, Texas, the vast countries that came to us through the Mexican War, and Alaska, and has it not digested them well? If the Republic could digest the old, why not the new?"*

Schurz then gives five reasons why the old annexations worked out so well for the settlers: 1. They were all on this continent 2. They were not in the tropics, but in temperate climates "where democratic institutions thrive, and where our people could migrate in mass" 3. They were virtually "without any population" 4. Since only Euro-Americans would populate them, they could become territories and then states and become fully integrated into White Amerika. 5. No permanent increase in the military was needed to defend them from "probable foreign attack."

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\*Lenin commented: "In the United States, the imperialist war waged against Spain in 1898 stirred up the opposition of the 'anti-imperialists', the last of the Mohicans of bourgeois democracy, who declared this war to be 'criminal'...But while all this criticism shrank from recognizing the inseverable bond between imperialism and the trusts, and, therefore, between imperialism and the foundations of capitalism, while it shrank from joining forces engendered by large scale capitalism and its development — it remained a 'pious wish'." (*Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*. Peking, 1970. p.134)

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His political thought was that whereas the old annexations of settlerism provided land and resources for the invading Europeans to occupy and become the dominant population (with the aid of genocide, of course), these new annexations in Asia and the Caribbean brought only new millions of colonial subjects into the U.S. Empire — but in distant colonies that the Euro-American masses would never populate.

Schurz continues: *"The scheme of Americanizing our 'new possessions' in that serise is therefore absolutely hopeless. The immutable forces of nature are against it. Whatever we may do for their improvement, the people of the Spanish Antilles will remain...Spanish Creoles and Negroes, and the people of the Philippines, Filipinos, Malays, Tagals, and so on...a hopelessly heterogeneous element — in some respects more hopeless even than the colored people now living among us."* (19)

These settlers were opposing imperialism from the ideological standpoint of petit-bourgeois settlerism. It is significant that the League refused to take a stand on the Boer War going on in South Afrika, or on the dispatch of U.S. Marines to join other Western Powers in crushing the "Boxer Rebellion" in China. And, obviously, the League had no objection to colonialism "at home," in the annexed and settled territories of Mexico, the Indian nations, and New Afrika.

By 1901 the American Anti-Imperialist League was a spent force. Bryan and the Democrats had lost the 1900 elections by a large margin. More decisively, the Filipino, Puerto Rican and Cuban patriots had been defeated, and the issue of the U.S. expanding from a continental North American empire into a world empire had been decided.

There were other waves of petit-bourgeois settler reaction against the domination of monopoly capital. The most significant was the Populist Party, which **broke the "color line"** in the South uniting "poor whites" and Afrikans in voting for new government programs of reform. With heavy strength in the rural counties, the Populist Party got almost one-third of the vote in eight Northern states west of the Mississippi in 1892; in the South its strength was less but still important. (20) Led by the demagogue Tom Watson of Georgia, the Populists proposed that Afrikan sharecroppers should unite with small white farmers in forcing Big Business to give them both a better economic deal. It was the "bread and butter" coalition of two exploited forces from different nations.

But frustrated at their inability to reach their goals through this electoral coalition, the Populist leadership sharply shifted course after 1902. Watson and his cronies had discovered that the tactical position of the "poor whites" in the bourgeois elections might be improved if they drove out Afrikan voters (a conclusion the imperialists were glad to encourage). C. Vann **Woodward** comments: "With the Negro vote eliminated Watson and the Populists stood in much the same relation toward the two factions of the Democratic Party as the Negro had occupied towards the Populists and the Democrats: they held the balance of power." (21)

Watson himself, still the captivating spokesman of the "cracker" and "redneck," therefore moved rapidly to



the right. He encouraged new waves of terrorism against Afrikans: "Lynch law is a good sign: it shows that a sense of justice lives among the people." In 1904 Watson started campaigning for disenfranchisement of the one million Afrikan voters in Georgia. With flamboyant rhetoric, Watson supported the 1905 Russian Revolution at the same time he swore that the key to a movement of "poor whites" in Amerika was disenfranchising Afrikans: *"The white people dare not revolt so long as they can be intimidated by the fear of the Negro vote."* (22)

Not surprisingly, these stands only increased Watson's popularity as a leader of the "poor whites." In 1920, shortly before his death, he was finally elected to the U.S. Senate. At his death Eugene Debs, leading figure of the Euro-Amerikan Socialist Party, hailed Watson as a true hero of the white workers:

*"He was a great man, a heroic soul who fought the power of evil his whole life long in the interests of the common people, and they loved him and honored him."*

By that time, naturally, Watson had become a wealthy plantation owner and publisher. The Populists had faded away as a party, to become just another "pressure group" lobby within the Democratic Party.

### 3. The U.S. And South Afrikan Settlerism

The same contradictions between imperialism and its settler garrison troops appeared elsewhere, most strongly in Afrika. At the same time as the American Anti-Imperialist League was denouncing the annexation of the former Spanish colonies, the Boer settlers in South Afrika were being invaded by the forces of the British Empire. The 1899-1902 Anglo-Boer War became a political issue among settlers in Amerika.

**There is a historic relationship between Euro-Amerikan settlers and the colonization of South Afrika. Amerikan mercenaries, engineers and technologies played a major role in the European exploitation of South Afrika — and, obviously, still do. The diamond and gold mines which were the economic center of British South Afrikan colonization were virtually run by the experienced Euro-Amerikans from California and Colorado.**

Gardner Williams, the U.S. consular agent in Kimberley, was the manager of the DeBeers Diamond mines. John Hays Hammond was the chief engineer for the British South Africa Corporation. By 1896 one-half of all the mines were run by Euro-Amerikan mine experts. Much of the equipment, as well, came from the U.S. Empire. One U.S. company alone — Fraser & Chalmers — supplied 40% of the machinery at the Rand gold fields. (24) When the second and decisive war broke out between the Boer South African Republic and the British Empire, Euro-Amerikans became heavily involved.

The difference in Amerika over the Anglo-Boer

Just as in the anti-imperialism of the League, the settler-Afrikan coalition of the Populists had nothing to do with any real unity of settlers with the oppressed. Rather, these poor but still-privileged settlers were tactically maneuvering to improve their position relative to the monopoly capitalists — and recruiting Afrikans to give their settler party a boost. Historian Michael Rogin points out: "Populism, however, was a movement of the farm-owning proprietors, not property-less workers. It attempted to reassert local community control against the economic and political centralization of corporate capital..." (23)

These two movements did not cross the lines of battle between the empire and the oppressed nations; their limitation — and their special importance — is that they represented the eruption of class contradictions within the camp of the enemy. The Vietnam War controversy of the '60s, the strange Watergate scandal that forced President Nixon out of power, are both evidence that the effects of these contradictions are considerable. And will be in the future. **If we become confused about their basic nature, we damage our strategic self-reliance. If, like the Vietnamese comrades, we can make these contradictions serve us, we will have seized an essential element of revolution.**

War definitely reflected the existing strains between the monopoly capitalists and their own settler base. The U.S. bourgeoisie and its political agents were strongly pro-British. Allied to the British mining interests, they supported British imperialism as the power that would open up Southern Afrika for imperialist exploitation in general. And, like the British, they saw the backward South African Republic of the original Boer settlers from Holland as an obstacle to profits. The Boer society stressed settler family agriculture, and opposed any proletarianization of the Afrikan peoples — while it was only with mass, enforced integration of Afrikan labor into the corporate economy that the Western imperialists could fully exploit South Afrika. The British imperialists had to take state power out of the hands of those narrow, theocratic Boers and bring all of South Afrika into their colonial empire.

Euro-Amerikans were heavily involved in the 1895 Jameson Raid, the "private" British military expedition of imperialist Cecil Rhodes. In the aftermath of the Raid's well-publicized failure at overthrowing the Boer Government, the facts of Euro-Amerikan involvement came out. The weapons used had been smuggled into South Afrika by Euro-Amerikan mining executives, seven of whom were arrested by the Boers.

The defense of the seven became big news back in the U.S. Mark Twain visited them in jail, afterwards supporting them as men who were innocently trying to bring about "reform." Eventually, due to diplomatic pressure, the seven were freed. Gardner Williams simply paid his

fine and resumed his post as U.S. consular agent. John Hays Hammond was ousted from the colony, however, and returned to a hero's welcome in the U.S. He later became National Chairman of the Republican Party. (25)

When the war broke out in 1899 the U.S. Government openly sided with the British. The Republican McKinley Administration approved the sale of much-needed provisions and munitions to the British forces. Permission was even given for the British to recruit mercenaries here. (26) Just as, covertly, the white "Rhodesians" obtained military reinforcements here in the 1970s.

But many Euro-American settlers identified with the Boers — who were, after all, just fellow European settlers ruling occupied lands like themselves — and saw the Boers as losing their "rights" to greedy monopoly capital. The parallel to the U.S. was very close in many minds. And if the Republican Administration in Washington was publicly championing the British side, still there were others who identified with the Boer "Davids" against the British "Goliath." There was so much popular sympathy for the Boer settlers among the U.S. settlers that the 1900 Democratic Party platform saluted: "...the heroic Burgers in their unequal struggle to maintain their liberty and independence." (27)

Much of the most impassioned support in the U.S. for the Boers came, to no surprise, from the Irish community. They saw the Boers not only as fellow European settlers, but as fellow rebels fighting for nationhood against British colonialism. An "Irish Brigade" was actually assembled and sent to the Transvaal to join the Boer army. (28)

As the eventual defeat of the Boers loomed closer public settler sympathy for them only increased. The states of Texas, New Mexico and Colorado formally offered their welcome and free land (stolen from the Indians and Mexicanos) to any Boers who wished to immigrate (just as the Governor of South Carolina in 1979 officially invited the losing "Rhodesian" settlers fleeing Zimbabwe to come settle in that state). (29) So the present U.S. imperialist involvement in South Afrika has a long history — as does the Euro-American settler solidarity with their "Afrikaner" counterparts. Once these two trends were counter-posed, now they are joined.

South Afrika played out, in a form much condensed, the same pattern of relations between settler workers and Afrikan labor as in the U.S. Afrikan laborers not only conducted strikes, but starting with the July 1913 mine strike Afrikans tried honoring the strikes of the white workers. Indeed, in the mines a strike by white workers alone would hardly have stopped production. But in every case the white workers themselves refused in return to support Afrikan strikes, customarily serving as scabs and "special constables" (volunteer police) to put down Afrikan struggles. The December 1919 Cape Town strike by Afrikan longshoremen and the Feb. 1920 Afrikan miners strike were both broken by the authorities with the help of white labor. (30) One Afrikaner radical comments:

*"But the white workers believed that they had nothing in common with the blacks...the white miners earned ten times as much as the blacks, that many of them employed black servants in their homes, that a victory of*

*the black miners would have increased the desire of the mine-owners to reduce the status of the white miners, since any increase in black wages would have to be met either by a reduction in white wages or by a reduction of profit. Such was the reality of the situation which the white workers, consciously or not, understood very well."* (31)

Imperialism knows no gratitude, not even towards its servants. From 1907 on the mining companies kept pushing at the white miners, kept trying to gradually replace white miners with low-paid Afrikans, to reduce white wages, and to reduce the total numbers of expensive white miners. In response, from 1907-1922 there was a series of militant white strikes. Finally, in 1922 the Chamber of Mines announced that the companies had repudiated the existing labor agreements and had decided to lay off 2,000 white miners. (32)

This touched off the great Rand Revolt of 1922, in which an eight-week strike escalated into a general strike of all white workers, and then into a week of armed revolt with fighting between the "Red Guards" of white miners and the imperialist troops. The main slogan of this amazing explosion was "For A White South Africa!" The white "communists" marched through the streets with banners reading *"Workers of the World Fight and Unite for a White South Africa!"* (33) The main demand was obvious.

The white miners (who were Boer, British, Scottish and Welsh) gained the support not only of the other white workers, but of the whole Boer people as well. As the strike grew, the armed "Red Guards" of the miners started attacking Afrikan workers. Between the production halts and the attacks thousands of Afrikans had to evacuate the Rand. In recognition of the reactionary character of the revolt, all the leading Afrikan political organizations, churches and unions denounced it. (34)

The violent upheaval of settler discontent corrected the erring course of imperialism in South Afrika. In 1924 the rigidly pro-company Smuts government was voted out by the settler electorate. The new "Afrikaner" government granted the white workers all they wanted, except for driving out the Afrikan population wholesale. The "Color Bar" act was passed, which legally enforced the settler monopoly on highly-paid wage labor. Toil was now to be reserved for the Afrikan proletariat. "Afrikaner" wage-labor had stabilized its position as a subsidized, non-exploited aristocracy of labor.

The main function of the "Afrikaner" masses was no longer to produce and support society, but only to serve as the social base for the occupation garrison that imperialism needed to hold down the colonial peoples. Indeed, today it is evident that South Afrikan mining, industry and agriculture are all the products of colonial Afrikan labor alone. "Afrikaner" workers, far from supporting society, are themselves supported by the super-exploitation of the oppressed nation of Afrikans. There is no longer, in any meaningful terms, any working class struggle within settler society there.