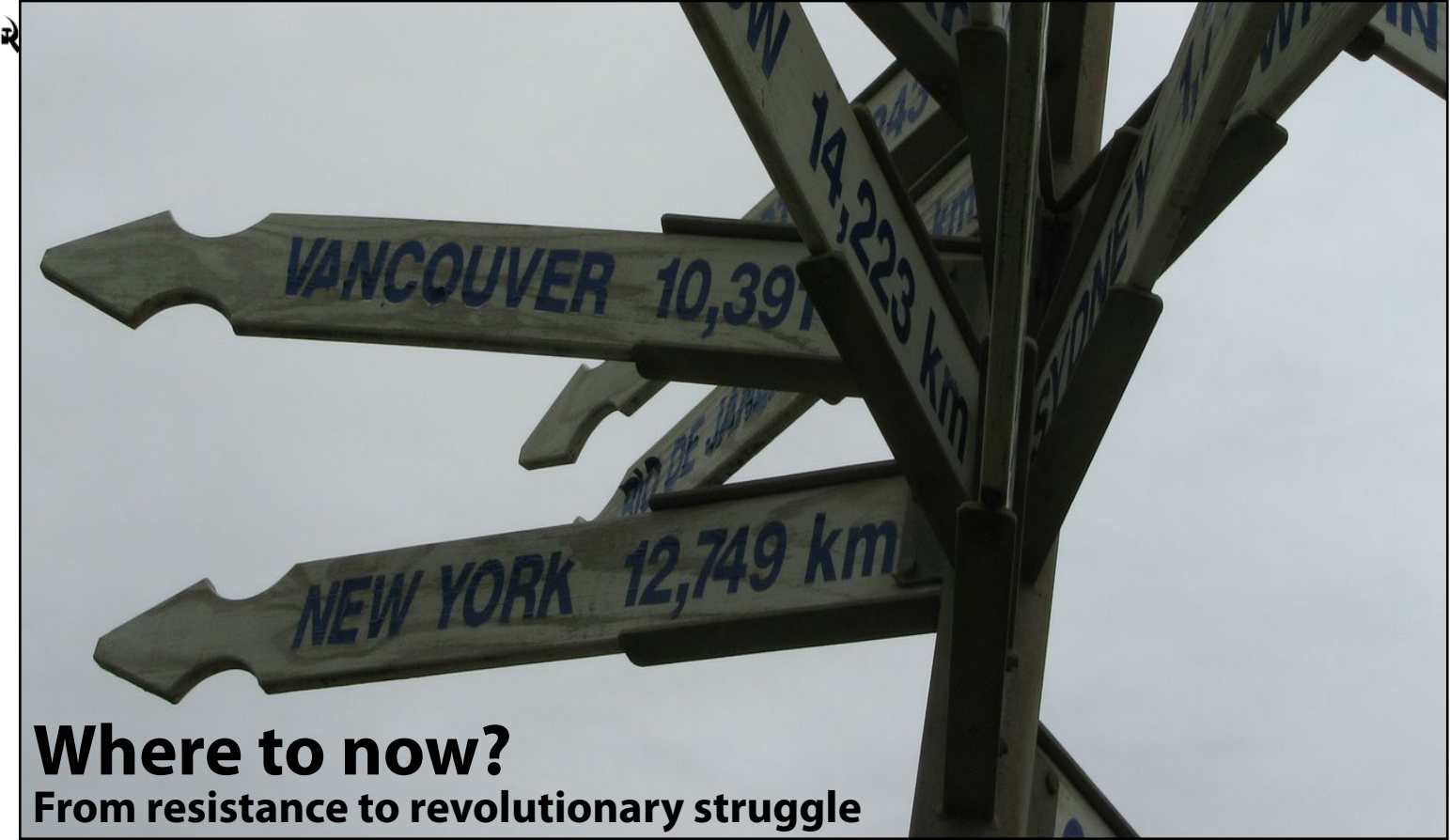


# Together, or Not at All Indigenous Liberation & the Struggle for Communism

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## Where to now? From resistance to revolutionary struggle

In the last issue of *Uprising* (Vol. 2: 2012), we focused on the question of building 'dual power' in large urban capitalist centers. This is the process of building a popular counter-power in opposition to that of the Canadian state and its institutions. The ultimate task of such a power would be the liberation of all those oppressed and exploited by the Canadian state and the big capitalists that control it, replacing this ruling class with the rule of the peoples organizations and its revolutionary leadership. In this issue, Comrade Stella B's article 'The Institutions and Elements of Working Class Power' carries forward the discussion on dual power from the last issue.

*Uprising* Vol. 2 was published in the wake of the historic Quebec student strike that demonstrated the power of building popular institutions outside of 'official' bureaucratized structures that hold the people back, displaying to the world some of the basic elements of popular power.

Then, shortly after the publication of *Uprising* Vol. 2 came the rise of 'Idle No More', which spread like wildfire throughout Canada and captured the imagination of people all across the world. From early December 2012 until the end of January 2013, the movement organized countless actions, round dances, protests, marches, and a number

of country-wide days of action. Even if Idle No More could not achieve its formal objectives – such as having Bill C-45 repealed – its attempt to do so by 'peaceful means' has left an impression upon wide masses of people. Idle No More and Indigenous peoples' struggles have unquestionably secured the moral high-ground against the Canadian state, from which more militant tactics can be applied to advance the struggle. In their March 19, 2013 joint statement, Idle No More and Defenders of the Land have called for the next phase of the struggle – 'Solidarity Spring and Sovereignty Summer' – to include non-violent direct actions.

This call for a tactical escalation still remains framed by calls to "deepen democracy in Canada" and rebuild the "nation-to-nation relationship that is the foundation of this country." However, it is the very "foundation of this country" that is the problem. Capitalism requires colonialism in this country. Any attempt to do away with colonialism must of necessity do away with the economic system that requires colonialism.

Indigenous peoples' struggles in Canada today contain elements of dual power in the making. This is a latent dual power that resides at the core of Canadian society, a dual power that has as its basis an anti-colonial conscious-

ness that has been cultivated by centuries of colonialism and genocide. This is a power that has been gathering its strength for decades, especially since the events at Oka in 1990, and a power that has begun to express itself in new ways with Idle No More.

From Idle No More to the hundreds if not thousands of militants who are ready for war, Indigenous peoples' struggles are at the forefront of resisting Canadian imperialism and building a counter-power to it. Non-Indigenous revolutionary communists working to develop dual power in our neighbourhoods, cities, and towns should not only pay close attention to this power, but ask how our liberation struggles are intertwined.

This issue, *Uprising* Vol.3, hopes to contribute to this debate that Indigenous peoples' struggles have long ago started. Specifically, we seek to address some of the main strategic considerations for a joint liberation struggle of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous oppressed and exploited peoples in Canada. Addressing these points are Comrade Amil K's contribution on Indigenous liberation and communism, and a discussion document republished from the Two Row Society for Socialism and Decolonization.

- Central Committee of R.I.

# The Institutions and Elements of Working Class Power

by Comrade Stella B.

## Introduction

*"We can learn what we did not know. We are not only good at destroying the old world, we are also good at building the new." – Mao Zedong, "Report to the Second Plenary Session of the Seventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China", 1949.*

In 'Breaking the Illusion of Liberal Democracy and Building 'Dual Power' in the Urban Setting' Comrade Victor Hampton raises several critical questions facing Communists today. In order to engage and expand upon the central question of dual power this article will focus on the following three questions:

- What is our analysis of the capitalist superstructure and how does this analysis shape our strategy for social transformation?
- What is dual power? More pointedly, what are institutions of working class power?
- How do we use dual power as a strategy for mass organizing?

It is these three critical questions I hope to address in my response to Hampton's timely article.

## *Transforming the Capitalist Superstructure*

If we're to avoid getting mired in ceaseless defensive struggles and to start building a working class movement dedicated to seizing state power, transforming the relations of production, and building a people's democratic power – what is to be done? What steps can we take now as Communists in our movement-building and mass organizing to start to raise the question of how the state could be transformed under socialism? The answers to these pivotal questions must flow from our sharpest analysis of the capitalist superstructure, as only

through a critical dissection of the superstructure and the state can our strategies push us forward.

A very basic conception of the superstructure is popularly illustrated as a house, where the capitalist mode of production (comprising the means of production and the relations of production) is the foundation or the basement, and the superstructure is the upper floors.

Marx describes it thus:

"In the social production of their life



## Capitalist Superstructure at work

men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure, the real basis on which rises a legal and political superstructure" -Karl Marx, Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy Introduction

The superstructure includes the polit-

ical, legal, and organizational apparatus of the state, as well as major organizational and ideological institutions such as universities, organized religion, and so on. Gramsci described the superstructure as the 'servant of the dominating classes', as under the capitalist mode of production all institutions which organize modern society are controlled by and serve the interests of the capitalists.

It is important to grasp that until the mode of production is transformed to communism, it is impossible to completely transform the superstructure. Indeed, even after a communist revolution, it will remain a challenge to transform the sum total of human society; we certainly see this in the historical lessons of the Chinese Cultural Revolution.

Must we wait until after the revolution to build socialist practice? How can we struggle when we're mired in the ideas of the enemy?

The institutions of this capitalist state exert almost total control over the minds and lives of working class people. From the moments leading up to our conception to our last breath, we are completely immersed in and shaped by the value systems and ideas of the bourgeoisie. How many times each day do bourgeois professionals make decisions that impact our daily lives? How much trust do we put in the lieutenants of capital to make decisions about our finances, our health, our education, and our reproduction? Workers sell their labour power in exchange for a wage, and the rest of our lives are handed over to bourgeois institutions: our education, our health care, and even our faith.

It was most apt that Comrade Hampton raised the question of the war of position; this is a crucial discussion. There has been a long-standing debate amongst Left forces as to whether economic struggles at the point of production or political and ideological struggles to control and transform bourgeois superstructure and challenge bourgeois cultural and ideological

hegemony take precedence. Gramsci proposed a two-step process to smashing bourgeois hegemony and replacing it with working class power and control: a 'war of position' as the working class engages the battle of ideas to build class consciousness and revolutionary organization, and the 'war of manoeuvre' in transforming the economic relations.

Whether we analyze that dual power and institutions of working class power are necessary to bolster the working class for the war of position or we analyze dual power as the bridge between the war of position and the war of maneuver has yet to be determined; either way I postulate that they are a primary component of a sustainable and effective offensive struggle. Until the working class can break the illusion of bourgeois democracy and develop ideological independence, until the working class can decide as a 'class-for-itself' what institutional structures are necessary for organizing society to serve our needs, it will be very difficult indeed to sustain these defensive struggles and not repeat the errors of capitulation and collaboration with the bosses for the scraps of capitalism. (see Mao, On Practice)

*One Divides into Two: 'Use' Function Versus 'Control' Function in the Superstructure*

Hampton describes how the orientation of the state has shifted from Keynesianism to neo-liberalism in the last four decades. Folks on the Left witness the increasing criminalization of migrants and the poor with the growth of the prison-industrial complex and the mass

incarceration agenda, punitive welfare and social services policies such as prolonged wait times, and the psychiatric agenda of the pharmaceutical companies which is turning our health care system into a project to medicate the masses into compliance. What we are witnessing is an increase in the control function of capitalist institutions, and a steady chipping away at the use function of those same institutions workers have come to rely on as a social wage.

Hampton recognizes some of the services and institutions under the capitalist superstructure will be necessary under socialism, and I agree. It is important now more than ever that communists discuss and analyze the control function of the state down to the essence of how the superstructure serves capitalism through managing surplus labour, extracting maximum value from and super-exploiting women and migrant workers through regressive and oppressive state policies, and so on. We must be able to engage in discussion and debate on the use function of institutions that we seek to maintain and transform versus the control function of institutions that must be done away with if we're to give birth to a new society based on the material needs of working class communities.

*Lieutenants of the Bourgeoisie: the Professionalization of 'Use' and 'Control'*

Finally, we've got to know who possesses the skills and know-how to operate major capitalist institutions and figure out how to address this major gap in working class knowledge and power.

Indispensable to any bourgeois institution are those professionals, those "lieutenants of the bourgeoisie" who provide the technical knowledge and skills necessary for the operations of major capitalist institutions (Navarro: Marxism, Radicalism, and Medicine).

Lawyers, professors, doctors, engineers, architects, technology specialists, high-level business administrators, CEOs, military officers, and high-level state bureaucrats have the

specialized skills and technical know-how to manage the operations of the superstructure and maintain order within capitalist society. Professionals exert the control function of the state through their use function. Their highly specialized knowledge ensures a niche market for their skills. The technical and academic language and culture which surrounds their practice effectively shuts out any opportunity for lay folks to participate in the generation of knowledge and science in the professions. And finally, years of extremely expensive and competitive education in conservative educational institutions effectively ensures that those who reach professional stature represent the material interests of the ruling classes and remain their ideological and political lieutenants.

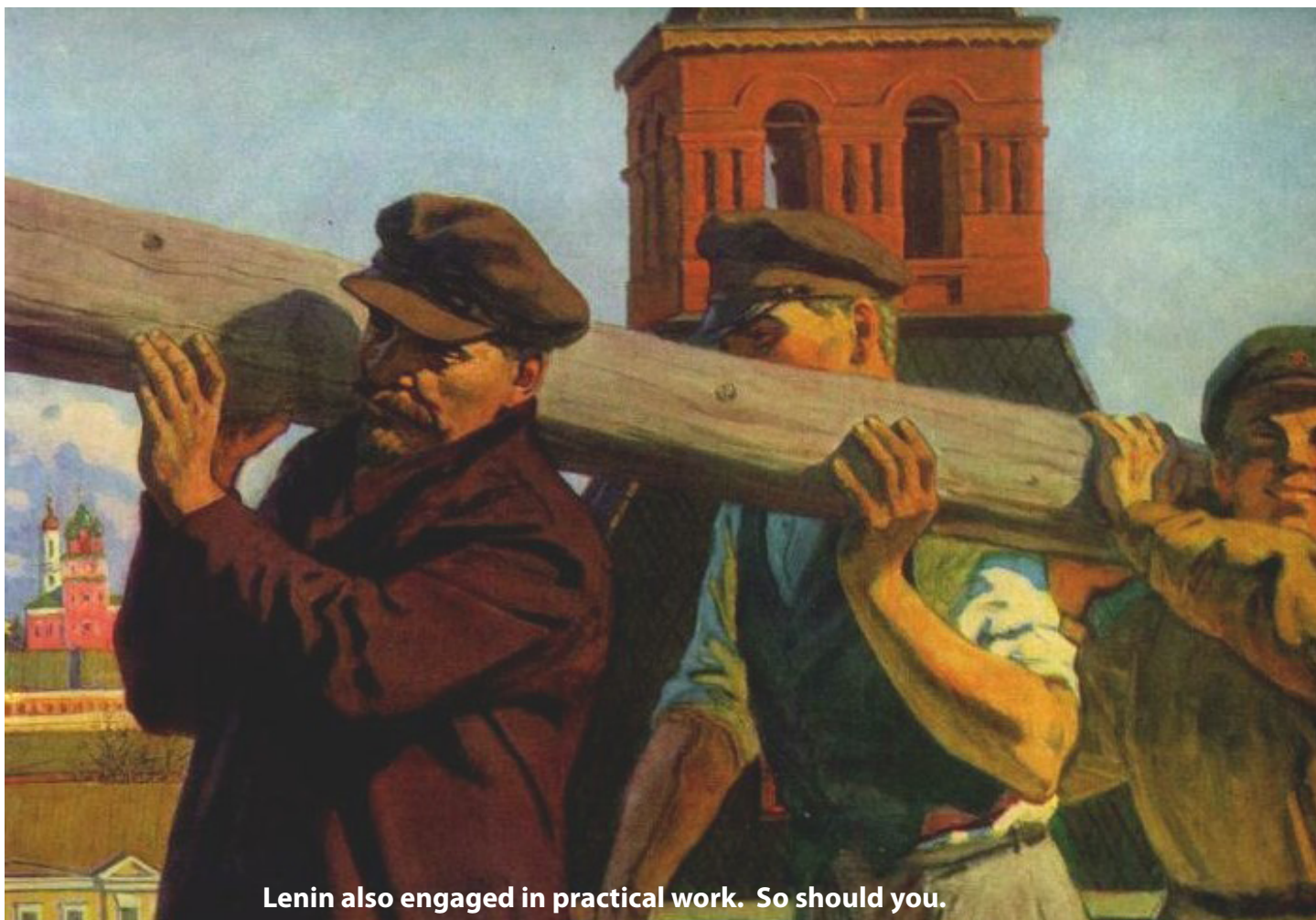
It is important to mention here that the bourgeois state protects the privileged position of these professionals; legislation which restricts the practice of professional skills, and professionals demand the state apply legal punitive measures for those who do not comply with professional registration. This gate-keeping is fundamental to the protection of bourgeois domination, shutting out both the working class and 'foreign-trained' professionals, who are more inclined to serve the needs of community over capital. In many liberation movements the united front struggle for a new democratic society is inclusive of progressive middle class, professional, and semi-professional elements. This question of the role of the professional in the seizure and transformation of institutions which have essential use functions in our society is critical for communists to consider, and there are excellent examples of communist doctors and lawyers who serve the people in advanced revolutionary movements. But this discussion is beyond the scope of this article.

*What is Dual Power? What are Institutions of Working Class Power?*

"Do we want them to devote their strength to the front? If so, we must be with them, arouse their enthusiasm and initiative, be concerned with their well-being, work earnestly and sincerely in their interests and solve all their problems of production and everyday life — the problems of salt, rice,



**One divides into two**



**Lenin also engaged in practical work. So should you.**

housing, clothing, childbirth, etc. If we do so, the masses will surely support us and regard the revolution as their most glorious banner, as their very life.” – Mao Zedong, “Be Concerned with the Well-being of the Masses, Pay Attention to Methods of Work”

During the struggle that birthed the Soviet Union, Lenin described how, in the course of the national struggle against the Czarist regime, there was also arising another struggle within a struggle, that of the peasants and the workers against burgeoning economic and political domination by the elite, the bourgeoisie. Lenin described this struggle within a struggle as dual power. After walking the reader through Lenin’s definition of dual power, Hampton brings this definition down to our current context, and declares that “building dual power by way of building people’s institutions (I call them institutions of working class power) challenges the necessity and thereby legitimacy of the state, at the same time preparing the people – both ideologically and practically – to

replace it” (Hampton, p. 6).

Mao said that “the enemies in the minds of the people are often more difficult to combat than the enemy himself”; we see this daily in our organizing work and in an examination of our own lives. In order to wage an effective struggle for social transformation we have got to break, even in a small fashion, the strangle-hold of bourgeois domination over our communities. We postulate that by building democratic participation and some degree of economic control over the functioning of our communities we take giant steps towards realizing that another world is possible. By supporting and advancing the development of working class expertise, and a new working class knowledge and science of social organization, we begin the task of realizing that world.

*Build an Understanding of Institutions*

Ultimately it is the institutions of capitalism that comprise this amorphous state that we struggle to seize

and transform. Hampton states, “We must continue to build the institutions among the masses that can continue their preparation for revolutionary class struggle” (p. 3). Hampton further urges revolutionaries to move beyond the confines of the bourgeois democratic process (i.e. electoral politics) and reject the limitations on class struggle imposed by those historic forces of the working class (i.e., the labour aristocracy) who have abandoned the class struggle in favor of collaboration with the bosses.

*Democracy = people power!*

But a major gap in this discussion of dual power is what a Marxist definition of an institution would be. What is the difference between mass organization and institution of working class power?

Analysing the breadth and depth of bourgeois institutional control helps Marxists distinguish between the mass organization and the institution. Institutions structure and shape our society to perpetuate and reinforce the mode of production. This is a different concep-

tion than the mass organization on a number of levels.

What if we were to apply an 'I.P.O.E.' analysis?

And here I present an initial and somewhat crude summation:

Institutions have ideological use and control functions. Definition of ideology: a system of ideas that represent the interests of the class propagated through culture, writing, education, philosophy, theory, and explanation. Bourgeois ideological institutions include: churches, schools, think-tanks, the family, heterosexual marriage, and cultural forms and norms such as biomedical views on medicine, a gender binary, racist views on 'natural' traits and much more.

Institutions have political use and control functions. Definition of politics: the conscious, organized struggle to achieve the unity and dominance of a 'class for itself' (see Mao). Bourgeois political institutions include bourgeois political parties, NGOs, certain university departments, state committees, international political agencies, and more.

Institutions have organizational use and control functions. Definition of organization: structure designed to facilitate the process of building class unity and defending class struggle. Bourgeois organizational institutions often overlap with political institutions, and include many arms of the state infrastructure as well as exclusive bourgeois financial organizations.

Institutions have economic use and control functions. Definition of economics: structures erected to maximize concrete gains and control material resources. Bourgeois economic institutions include state treasury, banks, conglomerates, trade agencies, and much more.

*Institutions Meet Ideological, Political, Organizational, and Economic Structural Needs: Let's Talk Institutions of Working Class Power!*

Another essential way to analyze institutions is to break each institution down into its IPOE constituent parts. In 'Marxism, Radicalism, and Medicine' Vicente Navarro does a brilliant job of breaking down the constituent elements of the

bourgeois medical-industrial complex and discussing how Marxists could begin to conceptualize dual power in medicine = a pre-socialist practice to fundamentally transform medicine in the service of the people.

Institutions of working class power can include 'serve the people' programs, but go much further than to meet basic human needs.

Here I take a stab at a definition of an institution of working class power:

An institution of working class power is a community-owned and controlled organizational structure that meets human need and performs the necessary tasks of organizing our communities and our society while generating new values, belief-systems, knowledge, and norms from the perspective of the working class. Through the building of institutions of working class power we learn as a class how to organize our communities from the basis of justice and equality. Through these institutions working class people reclaim skills traditionally dominated by the bourgeoisie, replacing bourgeois knowledge with working class knowledge, and increasing capacity for the exercise of power through direct democratic participation. Our alternatives are a beginner's model of the new social relations and a new society; they inspire and motivate us to struggle for a new world.

We shouldn't (and likely do not) have illusions that we will replace bourgeois institutions in the near future. Many of us still have bank accounts and family doctors. But we should be brave, tireless, and relentless in our drive to move beyond our own limitations, and challenge ourselves to view our projects as the very beginnings of institutions of working class power.

*Dual Power in a Mass-Based Communist Movement: a Road Map to Revolution*

Lenin postulated:

"a gigantic replacement of certain institutions by other institutions of a fundamentally different type ... instead of the special institutions of a privileged minority the majority itself can directly fulfill all these functions, and the more the functions of state power are performed by the people as a whole, the less need there is for the existence of this power" (State and Revolution).

Where have such institutions of working class power taken hold? What are some current examples to incite and inspire the power of the masses? What are the essential elements of such projects?

The Serve the People programs of the Black Panthers and the Young Lords are common examples of oppressed and exploited communities taking strides



towards institutions of working class power. In discussing municipal state power, Hampton postulates the neighbourhood council as an institution of working class power: “the primary purpose of building neighbourhood councils should be to build alternate, organic institutions where revolutionaries can organize” (Hampton, p. 7).

But there are other examples we can look to in order to illuminate our path as we struggle to build our pre-socialist practice. There is rich revolutionary history of dual power; from the Chinese barefoot doctors to the Cuban Committees for the Defense of the Revolution – valuable lessons await. I am hoping that the future of our discussions on dual power can break down and dissect some of these examples for our mutual learning and development – but for now this is beyond the scope of this article.

*Avoid the Trap of Economism, NGOism, and Charity Work*

What is necessary for an effective institution to provide a useful function in our communities while remaining true to the revolutionary spirit and intention? How can we avoid falling into the trap of economism or charity – providing handouts to the masses devoid of revolutionary methods of work, devoid of class struggle?

What could working class hegemony look like? Who gets to decide? Again let us turn to an ‘IPOE approach’:

**Ideology:** institutions of working class power develop the knowledge and know-how of working class communities, support the development of advanced ideas, and advance working class hegemony. Example: rather than simply medicating poor people, a working class health institution could develop a new framework for understanding historical trauma, oppression, and mental health, and encourage organizational activities as a new form of cognitive behavioural therapy.

**Politics:** institutions of working class power redefine democratic process as building popular power from below. Rather than simply voting for delegates, popular power includes dissemination of information around important decisions, participatory decision-making processes, new methods of social

organization based on common need and experience, and transparency in the political process. Example: a neighbourhood council might host discussion circles to engage a community brain-storm, develop several possible solutions based on working class experience, and present a synthesis of popular opinion to a public forum prior to a vote on an important decision.

**Organization:** institutions of working class power provide avenues for the participation of all individuals, generate new roles and opportunities for the masses to participate in social production, and break the cycle of bourgeois domination of skills and expertise. Example: a mass anti-poverty organization could request that progressive lawyers provide training for their advocates and popularize knowledge on the policy framework of social services ministries; a community-based health program could request physicians train their community health workers in important diagnostic skills.

**Economics:** institutions of working class power provide material resources to individuals, communities, and the movement for social and economic transformation. We must increase the ability and capacity of the most marginalized, oppressed, and exploited members of our society to participate to their fullest potential in our revolutionary process. Through our economic programs we must be addressing the super-exploitation of women, people of colour communities, and migrant workers. This necessitates that needs for childcare, food, transportation, and clothing be addressed by institutions of working class power. This also means that methods of collectivizing economic resources must be developed.

*From Here to There: Roadmaps of Revolution*

I end this article with a long quote from Che Guevarra:

“In this period of the building of socialism we can see the new man and woman being born. The image is not yet completely finished – it never will be, since the process goes forward hand in hand with the development of new economic forms...

Some experiments aimed at the grad-

ual institutionalization of the revolution have been made, but without undue haste. The greatest brake has been our fear lest any appearance of formality might separate us from the masses and from the individual, which might make us lose sight of the ultimate and more important revolutionary aspiration: to see human beings liberated from their alienation.

Despite the lack of institutions, which must be overcome gradually, the masses are now making history as a conscious collective of individual fighting for the same cause. The individual under socialism, despite apparent standardization, is more complete. Despite the lack of a perfect mechanism for it, the opportunities for self expression and making oneself felt in the social organism are infinitely greater.

It is still necessary to deepen conscious participation, individual and collective, in all structures of management and production, and to link this to the idea of the need for technological and ideological education, so that the individual will realize that these processes are closely interdependent and their advancement is parallel. In this way the individual will reach total consciousness as a social being, which is equivalent to the full realization as a human creature, once the chains of alienation are broken. This will be translated concretely into the reconquering of one’s true nature through liberated labor, and the expression of one’s own human condition through culture and art.” -Che Guevarra, *Socialism and Man in Cuba*, March, 1965

Comrades, I know this to be true, only by taking a giant leap towards building institutions of working class power amongst the masses can we fully integrate ourselves into the revolutionary process. The road is long and wrought with challenges, but the liberation of self and society that Che Guevarra speaks to in his famous letter requires we face this momentous task.

Let this discussion continue, comrades.

Unidos Venceremos!

# After #IdleNoMore: How Can We Unite the Struggle for Communism with the Indigenous National Liberation Struggles?

by Comrade Amil K.



The 'Spectre of Communism,' 'Eagle and Condor' and other prophecies

Despite the unprecedented mobilization of Indigenous peoples against the Canadian state under the banner of Idle No More (INM), this mass movement has been unable to achieve even the very limited and modest objective of having Bill C-45 Omnibus Bill repealed, which was only the most immediate cause for the two-months of mobilizations. However, despite its inability to move the Canadian state on any fundamental issues, there are definite victories to be claimed for Indigenous people's struggles. These victories include some of the important observations and conclusions that can be drawn from, and that have been made possible by, the upsurge and of Idle No More.

The first observation is the unwillingness – or inability – of the Canadian state, and the big capitalists it serves, to make any substantial concessions to Indigenous peoples. In the face of the most extensive mass mobilizations by Indigenous people ever, Canadian imperialism is aggressively pushing ahead

with the next stage of colonialism in Canada. This next stage of colonialism in Canada is what Russell Diabo, Mohawk policy analyst, has carefully analyzed and termed the "Termination Plan" in analyses published prior to the emergence of Idle No More (discussed further below). The inability of Idle No More to budge the Canadian government one bit suggests how limited the options are for Canadian imperialism. The extermination of Indigenous peoples as such is the best option available for Canadian capitalism to mitigate the economic crisis and strengthen Canada's monopoly capitalists.

The second observation, for those paying close attention to the internal dynamics of INM, is the further exposure of the neo-colonial elites within Indigenous communities (AFN, many Band Councilors, and the "Oily Chiefs"), and their reliance upon Canadian colonial system. Rather than using the upsurge of INM and all the latent energy that had yet to express itself – in part

because of these neo-colonial elites' own balking – they often distanced themselves from the militant grassroots actions.

The third observation that can be taken from INM is the existence of a strong national consciousness amongst Indigenous peoples. This is a national consciousness that is both assertive of its Indigeneity, but also of the specificity of the national identity of any given nation of Indigenous people. This fact sharply contradicts Canada's attempts to strip Indigenous peoples of their specific national identities and reduce them to an undifferentiated "Aboriginal" ethnicity. Even the "allies" of many Indigenous struggles are ignorant to the national specificity of any given Indigenous people, either viewing Indigeneity in some generalized romantic fashion, or erroneously confusing the concept of the nation with the nation-state. This article argues that what we have seen through INM in particular, and the resurgence of Indigenous peoples' struggles in general, is the reassertion of nationhood as a matter of fact.



A fourth observation that can be made from INM, but was apparent to anyone who was paying attention to Indigenous people's struggles prior to that – is that Indigenous liberation must be viewed as the sum of all the particular struggles for national self-determination of any given Indigenous people. There is not merely a generalized "Aboriginal," nor solely an Indigenous struggle. There is a Haudenosaunee struggle, an Algonquin struggle, an Anishnaabe struggle, a Dene struggle, a Cree struggle, an Innu struggle, a Miq'mak struggle, etc; and all these particularities entail a resurgence and reclamation of their particular nationhoods. Therefore, the fourth observation is that these struggles constitute national liberation struggles. We must recognize these for the national liberation struggles that they are, and draw the correct conclusions for the liberation of all oppressed and exploited peoples in Canada.

Based on these observations, and in the context of the general analysis of Canadian society that Revolutionary Initiative has been developing and that I am trying to advance in this article, I believe that two important strategic points for proletarian revolution become clear at this period of time. (1) Proletarian revolution in this period requires the Indigenous liberation movement; and (2) that the Indigenous liberation movement also requires the proletarian revolution. The question of what particular form an alliance can take between Indigenous peoples and other oppressed and exploited classes and social groups in Canada is a question to be answered in the actual process of building a revolutionary united front against our common enemy, Canadian imperialism. But it is the very necessity of this revolutionary alliance that we must be clear about that will inspire our drive to build it in the coming years and decades. To put it in the clearest of terms, this is the unity between the struggle for communism and the Indigenous national liberation struggles.

Let us now turn to analyze in greater depth each of the four observations that can be made coming out of INM, as well as the two strategic points that can be made upon these observations (when considered alongside RI's developing strategic formulations and working

understanding of the crisis of imperialism); and a few immediate tactical considerations that follow:

1. *Canadian Imperialism Must Exterminate Indigenous Peoples*
2. *Neo-colonial Indigenous elites and Canadian Imperialism*
3. *National Consciousness and Indigenous Liberation*
4. *The Indigenous Liberation Movement as a Converging Unity of Many National Liberation Movements*
5. *The Proletarian Revolutionary Movement Requires the Indigenous Liberation Movement*
6. *The Indigenous Liberation Movement Requires the Proletarian Revolution*
7. *Immediate Tactical Considerations*

#### *1. Canadian Imperialism Must Exterminate Indigenous Peoples As Such*

How can we ask a government to abolish a colonial relationship that has been foundational for Canada's capitalist economy, an economy that is only becoming increasingly reliant upon its plunderous resource extraction in the context of a broader crisis in the whole capitalist-imperialist world system? Abolishing colonialism will not occur by the stroke of a pen; it actually requires the dispossession of the ruling classes of all the productive wealth it has gained through colonial theft and capitalist exploitation.

In the current period of economic stagnation in the world economy, especially in the manufacturing sector, the Canadian state and its oligopolistic strata of capital has turned to a sure-fire approach to profitability: pump the world economy with its abundant supply of natural resources and energy, and get rich. The Harper government has told us that he is making Canada into an "energy super-power". Demanding of the Canadian state to put an end to colonialism is actually to demand that they abandon the most optimal strategy for the accumulation of capital and profits that the imperialists have at their disposal in the current period. This they will never do because the colonial relationship between Canadian

society and Indigenous nations is driven by the need to exterminate Indigenous peoples as such. This extermination plan will literally "pave the way" for the coming years and decades of survival of Canada's biggest corporations, even if that survival means the destruction of whole nations and the land, life forms, and water upon which we all rely.

What Russell Diabo has called the "termination plan" would consist of forcing First Nations bands and communities into land claims and self-government agreements that liquidate their claims to self-determination over their lands by transforming their communities into municipalities and their lands into "fee simple" private property (see Endnote 1). This would rapidly accelerate the assimilation of Indigenous peoples and effect the complete dispossession of their lands in all "finality," leaving a small elite of Indigenous people quite rich and most others dispossessed. This phase of colonialism in Canada, if it comes to pass, will remove the principal barrier to the plunder of the natural resources by monopoly capital: Indigenous nationhood. To do this, the Canadian state and monopoly capitalism requires the collaboration of a class of bought-off and structurally-compromised Indigenous "leaders" who can divert the resistance and opposition of the masses into compromises with Canadian imperialism.

#### *2. Neo-colonial Indigenous Elites and Canadian Imperialism*

These neo-colonial elites consist principally of most of the Band Council leadership, who are controlled and contained by the Indian Act, Canada's apartheid-like racist and colonial legislation. This particular section of neo-colonial elites can be thought of as bureaucrat capitalists, since they derive their wealth by serving the colonial bureaucracy. This includes the Band Councilors and Chiefs who have much to gain by selling off their lands to resource extraction companies. Current provisions within Bill C-45 will make it possible to drastically lower the threshold required for voting on reserve land surrenders. Instead of a majority of all Band members being required to participate in an election, new voting rules will allow for a simple majority of only those who show up to vote to constitute the passage of a land



**Troops worthy of support**

surrender. This new legislation will make it far easier for corrupt Band leaders to alienate reserve lands (see Endnote 2).

The other stratum of the neo-colonial elites consists of the comprador capitalists, which have a great degree of overlap with but are distinct from bureaucrat capitalists. Comprador capitalists get rich and secure their position with imperialism by directly working for the big capitalists, and often in turn becoming capitalists. But these capitalists are still subordinate to the interests of Canadian imperialism, as the expressions of capitalist accumulation and investment that they are able to develop are ones that are articulated to serve the imperialists. So while collaborating with pipelines, developing gas and oil fields, and participating in mining projects are all ways in which a comprador bourgeoisie is developing within the neo-colonial Indigenous elite, any forms of investment that would come into competition with Canadian monopoly capital would be met with resistance.

The bureaucrat and comprador capitalists have a high degree of overlap be-

tween one another, as often one passes from one category to another, serving the bureaucracy for some time and then becoming a capitalist, and vice versa. Take for instance Phil Fontaine, who went from being the head of the Assembly of First Nations to taking on a plum position with the Royal Bank of Canada as a 'Special Advisor' on how to deal with natives.

Prior to the emergence of INM, Russell Diabo had analyzed how the government's strategy for pushing First Nations communities into land surrenders and "fee simple" agreements would be to starve their national and regional organizations, as well as Tribal Councils and band councils, of resources. Starving these organizations of resources would drastically limit their ability to advocate and litigate, thereby ratcheting up the pressure to surrender lands as a means to acquire resources.

Since the very start of INM, Kwakwakw'wakw blogger and warrior Ziz Zag has been warning about the AFN "snakes in the grassroots" who had a very different set of interests from

grassroots protestors and who would use the mass mobilizations to their own advantage to secure more funding.

Zig Zag has also perceptively pointed out how many grassroots people have become frustrated with the direction of the presumptive leaders of a supposedly leaderless movement and the actions of the neo-colonial elites. As Zig Zag wrote in his January 30, 2013 piece, "Idle No More starts to idle...":

Many Natives may have also felt frustrated by the circular trajectory the movement had taken, that after weeks of rallies, flash mobs and blockades, the end result was another government meeting with the chiefs.... In addition, there were mixed messages coming out of Idle No More. While it was proclaimed that INM was a grassroots movement with no official leaders or spokespersons, the "official" founders of INM continually issued statements about how the movement was to conduct itself, and distanced themselves from any "illegal" actions (such as the symbolic blockades).

Yet it was these militant actions – the road and rail blockades – that caught the imagination of Indigenous and many non-Indigenous people. It is these actions that haunt the Canadian state. When in early January 2013 Grand-Chief Derek Nepinak of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs warned the Canadian state that "The Idle No More movement has the people and the numbers that can bring the Canadian economy to its knees. It can stop Prime Minister Harper's resource development plan and his billion-dollar plan to develop resources in ancestral territories," this was not so much of a threat as it was Nepinak brandishing the sword of grassroots Indigenous militancy as a way to bolster his legitimacy and gain leverage in the chiefs' own bargaining with the Canadian state. Yet, it was this grassroots militancy that made the huge success of the cross-country day of action on January 11, 2013 what it was.

Yet, for years now the AFN officials have been collaborating with the RCMP in surveilling and targeting Indigenous militants and activists, as the AFN knows the power that the grassroots people have to derail the lucrative deals that the neo-colonial elites benefit from.



**Chief Teresa Spence: The existence of Idle No More raised questions about movements and leadership**

This collaboration between the AFN and the RCMP is what has made possible the vast surveillance program put in place by the Conservative government shortly after coming to power in 2006. Russell Diabo and Shiri Pasternak exposed the vast spying program in early 2011, which they revealed to be a massive surveillance operation targeting Indigenous activists taking action outside of official negotiation processes (See Endnote 3).

The collaboration of the neo-colonial elites with the frontline armed agents of Canadian imperialism attests to their stance on the Indigenous liberation movement. Their role is to broker compromise with Canadian imperialism, not defeat it. They have not and will not form the leadership of the Indigenous liberation movement, which has persisted in spite of their efforts to derail and subvert it.

### 3. National Consciousness and Indigenous Liberation

The hundreds upon hundreds of land claims that cover the majority of Canada are not just about the land. They are about preserving the nationhood of the peoples who have lived through those lands for thousands of years.

Land – and all the cultural, linguistic, and spiritual connections that arise therefrom – is at the core of national consciousness of any given Indigenous nation today. The question of

the ancestral territories of Indigenous nations is not merely some academic matter for historians or anthropologists to think on. Ancestral territories are a driving force of Indigenous Peoples' struggles as nations today. Many land-based Indigenous peoples know that the land, the waters, and everything that lives through them, constitutes the lifeblood of their nations. This is what many Indigenous people are fighting for. The upsurge of the INM movement has confirmed this point, which the casual observer would have noted from the flying of flags previously unknown to them. The energy under the INM movement was characterized not by a homogeneous Indigenous or 'Aboriginal' people, but a multitude of distinct peoples, or nations, who understand themselves as Indigenous in relation to colonial society, but who uphold their own national identities.

#### *Isn't 'nation' a Eurocentric concept?*

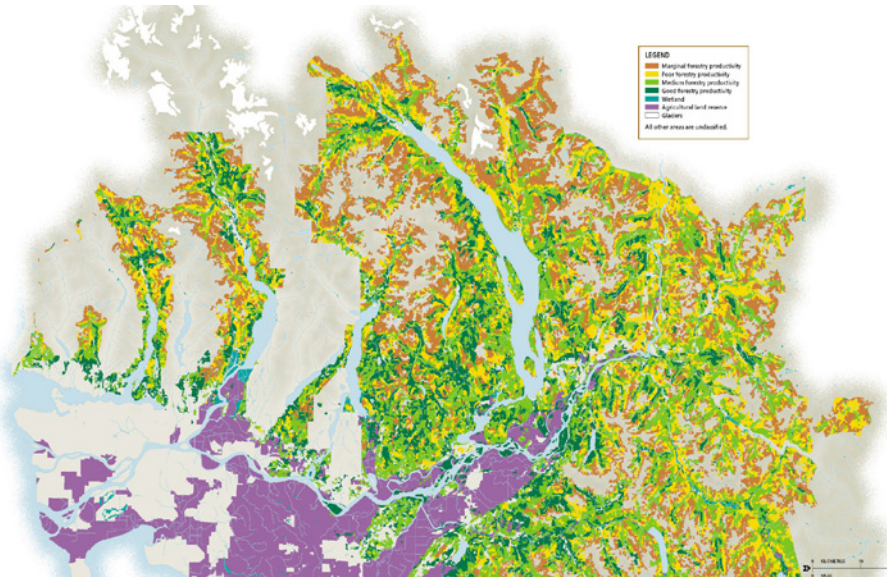
Some argue that Indigenous people are not nations, viewing the concept of a "nation" in a rather Eurocentric way. As the argument goes, the concept of the nation is inextricably bound up with the rise of capitalism and the creation of the nation-state. The nation-state arises through the violent process of subjugating and assimilating whatever subject peoples happen to live in a given territory by the rising capitalist class to create an integrated domestic market for the goods produced

by the capitalists. This nation-state is then given unity by clear and definite borders and defended by the growing state bureaucracy and all its repressive apparatus.

But is capitalism the only economic system throughout history to have given internal coherence to a set of people sufficient enough to be able to call them nations? I would argue not (see map of the Stó:lō Nation of the Fraser River Valley).

All Indigenous peoples were defined by forms of national coherence that developed on the basis of the economic modes of production that allowed them to thrive long before the arrival of Europeans. Examples of these include: the Algonquins of the Kiji Sibi (Ottawa River), the Haudenosaunee around Lake Ontario and parts of the St. Lawrence River in upstate New York; the Wendat on the southeastern shores of Georgian Bay; or the Sto:lō Nation in the Fraser River Watershed. All these peoples constituted internally coherent societies, with distinct languages, customs, technologies, and political structures that developed upon the basis of united economies. Further, many of these societies, traded and interacted with one another, as the Wendat did with the Haudenosaunee to the south of them and the Anishinaabe peoples to the north. What is incredible is that after hundreds of years of genocidal violence by the European colonizers that these nations still exist and are still struggling for national self-determination, even in places where independent economic livelihood has been destroyed or disrupted by colonialism. Most Indigenous resistances, and certainly every land-based resistance, demonstrate strong national consciousness. And since each of these expressions of national self-determination understand themselves to be part of a larger Indigenous Liberation movement – as INM has demonstrated – we can say that there exists a unity of these struggles at an ideological level, a subjective outlook whose material foundations is Canadian imperialism.

So the question that follows from this observation is: Do these struggles constitute a movement for national liberation?



Stó:lō Nation Ecological Productivity Map: This map shows the ecological productivity of the Stó:lō Nation's ancestral territories in the Fraser River watershed in lower mainland British Columbia. The ancestral territories of indigenous nations were not defined by borders as we know them today, but more like as ecological spaces, sometimes with overlapping "sovereignities" between distinct Indigenous nations.

## Idle No More: not just a hashtag



### 4. *The Indigenous Liberation Movement as a Converging Unity of Many National Liberation Movements*

One way of dismissing the question of national liberation of Indigenous peoples is by erroneously associating them with the national liberation movements of colonized peoples throughout the world in the 1960s and 1970s. By arguing that Indigenous peoples' struggles lack certain features of the Third World's national liberation movements decades ago – particularly the aspiration for independent statehood as part of an overall project to break the hold of the imperialists – one can presumably reject the concept of national liberation. Some also object to formulating Indigenous people's struggles in terms of national liberation lest we encourage Indigenous peoples to fall into the trappings of neo-colonialism that most national liberation movements were pulled into. But this is a sweeping historical generalization that suffers from the error of empiricism – i.e. it can only see the historical outcome of national liberation movements in superficial terms without analyzing their inner contradictions and what conditioned the development of neo-colonial regimes. The national liberation movements that went the furthest to achieving genuine self-determination and substantial materials for the broad masses of people were those that actively mobilized and empowered the combined force of the peasants and workers and placed them in a position of leading the movement. These were mostly movements led by Marxist-Leninist and Maoist revolutionary organizations. However, arguably this particular form of national liberation – i.e. independent statehood – is not what Indigenous peoples' struggles

are fighting for today.

It is erroneous to assume that a national liberation movement must have as its objective the nation-state formation with its own defined borders and seats at the U.N. It is understandable that many national liberation movements took this path to “decolonization” after the Second World War. Although most Third World countries were internally composed of many subject peoples – many of which were arbitrarily divided by colonial borders – the anti-imperialist nation-state was a legitimate object of political conquest for colonized peoples. The colonized vastly outnumbered the colonial agents and their small retinue of settlers. National liberation movements often united many peoples or sub-nations by giving them a higher cause for unity over the fractious divisions that colonialism has always used to divide them. But the struggle for statehood need not necessarily be considered an essential criterion for national liberation of Indigenous nations within Canada, at least not if there is a unity with a broader revolutionary movement... but more on this question further below.

The argument is also sometimes made that First Nations “communities” are too small to be nations. This view, even when it acknowledges that the current state of precariousness and fragmentation of many Indigenous communities is the result of a deliberate genocidal plan by Canadian colonialism, would argue that this is an historic fait accompli that cannot be reversed. Yet, the assertion of national consciousness and identity continues in many of these communities.

The essence of national liberation is

genuine self-determination, the specific form of which will be determined by the various Indigenous nations in the course of their own struggles. All Indigenous nations and confederacies had political formations prior to the colonial invasion and occupation, but these political structures did not constitute State structures, which is to say private bodies of armed men, police, judiciaries, prisons, and the whole bureaucratic apparatus that protects the economic ruling class. They did not have states because they did not have the class divisions that necessitate a state to protect the “haves” from the “have-nots”.

Therefore we should not assume that the national liberation struggle of Indigenous peoples in Canada would necessarily aspire for the constitution of statehood. This does not seem to be the aspiration of Indigenous peoples today, which is perhaps structured by the fact that Indigenous peoples constitute less than 5% of the population in Canada. However, it should be noted that this numerical minority is spread across the vast and vastly different territories claimed by Canada. This persistence of these distinct nations all across Canada renders Canada's claim to sovereignty over these lands tenuous at best if not wholly illegitimate. Political legitimacy aside, there is a military-strategic aspect to this land / national question as well. When OPP Commissioner Chris Lewis publicly acknowledged in early January 2012 that “First Nations have the ability to paralyze this country by shutting down travel and trade routes,” he was conceding that Indigenous people have this strategic advantage over the Canadian state. This is a fact that the masses on reserves and Indigenous militants have already known for some time; and it's a fact that the Canadian state has known well since it's concerted attempt to colonize and settle all lands west of the Red River and drive Indigenous people onto reserves from the mid nineteenth century onwards.

As Canadian imperialism grows increasingly reliant upon resource extraction to drive capital accumulation, it becomes increasingly urgent to liquidate Indigenous peoples as such; that is, to do away with their distinctive nationhoods by separating them from

their lands into a generalized 'Aboriginal' ethnic group.

Ever since Samuel de Champlain commenced his military reconnaissance of the St. Lawrence River in the early seventeenth century to make way for French military conquest and to open up trade routes, the colonizers of northern Turtle Island have been trying to reduce Indigenous nations to an easily defined and contained entity: "Les sauvages" in Champlain's day, "Indians" later, and "Aboriginals" today. But despite the racist framing and reduction of Indigenous nations broadly into singular ethnic categories, Canadian imperialism and its French and British parents were never stupid enough to overlook the fact that in reality they were dealing with distinct nations.

But becoming an ethnic group is something that most have always fought and resisted. The assertion of Cree, Anishnaabe, Algonquin, Innu, Stó:lō, Dene, and Haudenosaunee national identities today – to name just a few – attests to the strong national consciousness in existence.

The rise of grassroots Indigenous Peoples under the banner of INM has surely demonstrated this: the persistence of Indigenous peoples' nationhood. This nationhood has haunted Canada's ruling classes for centuries, and that it refuses to go away demands recognition of the importance that the Indigenous liberation movement will bring to bear on the struggle to bring down Canadian imperialism. If it was not clear before INM – for those who could not read the countless Indigenous struggles developing across Canada as an expression of a developing Indigenous liberation movement – it should be clear now, after the unprecedented convergences of late 2012-early 2013, that Indigenous peoples within Canada's colonial borders are fighting to protect and defend their nationhood.

We revolutionary communists in Revolutionary Initiative, who have since our founding upheld the creation of a multinational revolutionary communist organization, absolutely support this struggle for Indigenous nationhood and should encourage its development. It is not the place of non-Indigenous comrades to interfere in the precise national

configurations that the Indigenous liberation movement will give rise to. It is our responsibility, however, to fight alongside Indigenous nations for a form of "decolonization" that realizes a genuine self-determination, which is to say, fundamentally anti-imperialist and in harmony with the development of a broader socialist liberation project.

The strategic points that follow from the observations above pertain to the question of how and why revolutionary united front can be developed.

#### *5. The Proletarian Revolutionary Movement Requires the Indigenous Liberation Movement*

First of all, we should emphasize that the Indigenous liberation movement – the sum of all the national liberation struggles within Canada's colonial borders – is fundamental to socialist revolution in Canada. Genuine self-determination of Indigenous nations would dispossess the imperialist bourgeoisie of major sources of its capital accumulation in the world today. Furthermore, the dispersal of Indigenous struggles throughout all of "Canada" are strategically advantageous to resisting a strong, centralized army like the Canadian Armed Forces, and the other repressive arms of the Canadian state. The proletarian revolutionary struggle of the urban centers require the unification with this movement to succeed in defeating Canadian imperialism.

Furthermore, as the Leninist aspect of our Marxism-Leninism-Maoism informs us, the working-class is and has always been divided between those sections that are corrupted by the profits and "good jobs" reaped through colonialism and imperialism – what we call the labour aristocracy – and those sections that are super-exploited, racially/nationally oppressed and/or marginalized in some way. Without the Indigenous peoples' struggles achieving a genuine form of national self-determination, the Canadian state will still be able to lure a strata of the working class (usually white) to colonize native lands and dampen class contradictions. This is the process that has been playing out in the Tar Sands for years, as some of the country's most marginalized workers from the Maritime Provinces have been lured to

Alberta with the promise of "good jobs". The promise of good jobs (on stolen land and with plundered resources) is also the program being taken up by the PQ Premier of Quebec, Pauline Marois, a program known as 'Plan Nord' under Marois' Liberal predecessor. 'Plan Nord 2.0' is being held out as a 25-year project that will assure \$80 billion in investments and will create 20,000 jobs. The government scheme is being used to turn working-class people in Quebec – especially in rural and northern regions – against indigenous people's struggles and those concerned with the ecological damage of such a massive resource extraction project. To oppose Plan Nord, the Tar Sands, and all other expressions of plunderous extraction is to also resist the fragmentation of the working-class into bought-off pro-imperialist sections and the super-exploited and marginalized rest.

Acknowledging the existence and necessity of Indigenous nationhood leads to the conclusion that a new society will have to take the form of a multinational socialist confederacy that upholds and defends the genuine self-determination of Indigenous nations as equal partners in a new society. Production for profit will have to be abolished, and any and all economic activity will prioritize the health of the people, aim to meet everyone's genuine social and physical needs, halt the destruction of land, water, and life, respect Indigenous self-determination, and find all possible means to reverse the course capitalism has set us upon. None of these goals are in contradiction to one another, but can only be realized when the masses of people who do not have a future in



capitalism bind themselves together for revolutionary struggle for a society that abolishes production for profit and all class distinctions that have historically arisen on that basis.

Finally, the strength of Indigenous people's struggles and their success also constitutes a tremendous ideological contribution to the articulation of the communist view of the world and history. Indigenous societies prior to the arrival of the colonizers were communist societies. Revolutionary communists must be clear about this amongst Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike: that what we are fighting for is the development of an egalitarian society like those of Indigenous peoples prior to colonialism, albeit in our contemporary context of the forces of production that will be at our disposal after we eliminate capitalism. Non-Indigenous comrades who do not fully appreciate this should do more to study and understand the ways of life and values of Indigenous people prior to colonization and up to the present. The social equality in almost all Indigenous societies prior to and persisting for centuries after European colonization stands out as a concrete expression of "human nature" based upon solidarity and egalitarianism, which contrasts sharply with the bourgeoisie's mythical view of human nature as universally greedy, selfish, and individualistic. Hence, the defence and restoration of each nation's ways of life and culture will be more than a strong compliment to the struggle for communism; it is a struggle for communism and it is essential for advancing the communist struggle on Turtle Island.

#### *6. The Indigenous Liberation Movement Requires the Proletarian Revolution*

For some of the reasons already mentioned above – small populations dispersed over very wide and diverse territories – the Indigenous liberation movement also requires the energy and force of the proletarian revolutionary struggles in the urban centers and small towns, in the unions and schools, in the rest of Canadian society at large. A decisive victory for the Indigenous self-determination struggles is only realizable if the rest of the proletariat is also making a revolutionary offensive, and is united

with the Indigenous Liberation movement in a revolutionary united front.

So who are these allies exactly? Certainly not the Council of Canadians, the NDP, or the current leadership of the 'labour movement', who, like the Assembly of First Nations chiefs, have pretended to be friends of INM, but who are just looking for a new division of the spoils within the overall capitalist system. But other allies are out there.

Potentially, these could include:

- The growing proportion of the working-class with little or no prospects of a decent, stable job, let alone social mobility;
- The rest of the working-class that is coming under attack by the austerity offensive of imperialism;
- The hundreds of thousands of students with no job prospects and tens of thousands of dollars in debt;
- The millions of working-class immigrants who are seeing their own ancestral lands plundered by imperialism overseas while they slave away in Canada with bleak prospects for themselves and their children; and
- All others who in some way, shape, or form, are also a victim of this imperialist world system in decline and can or can come to understand their relationship to imperialism.

But these allies have yet to be organized, they have yet to break with the hegemony of the bourgeoisie in their day-to-day lives and in the organizations that are supposedly there to defend them. This, we believe, is the role of a revolutionary communist organization. It is the task of a genuine revolutionary communist movement to break the hegemony of the capitalists over the lives and political struggles of the people, and reorganize ourselves for genuine liberation. At this stage, we must demonstrate not only that capitalism is unsustainable, or that colonialism will not be abolished by a decision in Parliament; we need to form concrete alliances amongst all (potentially) revolutionary sections of the population.

R.I. does not presume to know, as of

yet, precisely what configurations such a revolutionary united front should or will actually take. When we feel we have confidently attained this understanding, we will present our Programme for revolutionary struggle and hold a Founding Congress to constitute ourselves as a multinational revolutionary cadre organization – "a Party". But our understanding on this question is advancing. Up to just before the upsurge of INM, it was the position of Revolutionary Initiative that:

Internal colonialism is one of the basic problems of Canadian society, which is to say one of the basic fault-lines, with the struggle for Indigenous nationhood in an antagonistic contradiction with Canadian imperialism;

Indigenous nations have the right to self-determination; and



**Indigenous struggles show that th**

The national struggle must be united into a common project of universal emancipation within Canada for all oppressed and exploited people.

Theses points – # 1 being a point of analysis, #2 being a point of principle, and #3 being a point of strategy – have been confirmed or strengthened INM. But INM has also provided us with the historical opportunity to clarify certain additional strategic points, which is that the proletarian revolution requires Indigenous liberation movement (which is not distinct from it, but part of it) just as much as the Indigenous liberation movement requires the support of the

broader revolutionary movement of non-Indigenous proletarians.

This strategic point should not be interpreted as an interference in the self-determination struggles of Indigenous peoples by non-Indigenous peoples, like a bunch of solidarity activists flooding a front-line Indigenous struggle and then moving out after a week or so.

Quite to the contrary, the role of non-Indigenous proletarian revolutionaries is to primarily develop new fronts of militant mass struggle that can begin to approach the militancy and strength that Indigenous peoples have been able to muster for the better part of two decades. This is part of the work that Revolutionary Initiative has been advocating for and involved with for more than six years, which includes:

- The construction of militant mass



**The Canadian State is a papertiger**

struggles; and

- The accumulation of revolutionary communists and their consolidation into a strategically-united revolutionary cadre formation.

As the crisis of the imperialist world system deepens, this work becomes ever-more urgent and necessary. As we advance this work, non-Indigenous communists must both humble themselves to learn from Indigenous brothers and sisters while sharing our perspective that we can find common liberation in the struggle for communism. Such exchanges are not missionary acts, and any comrades with this mindset should check themselves. Our

task is not to “teach Marxism” to native folks, but share with one another the lessons, experiences, and examples in the struggle for liberation, as well as to come to an appreciation of the extensive overlapping of values between what we call communism and what many Indigenous peoples know to be the original values of their societies.

#### *7. Where do we go from here? Some Immediate Tactical Considerations*

If the liberation of Indigenous peoples and the liberation of all those non-Indigenous people in Canada under attack by imperialism is bound up in one another’s struggles, as the above points have argued, then what tactical considerations follow from the points and arguments made above?

It stands to reason that our members and supporters across Canada should be linking the mass struggles of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, wherever and whenever possible. While this has to a certain extent been our practice until now, the emergence of INM has certainly broadened the scope of possibilities for concrete solidarity and reciprocity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people’s struggles. We must seize upon these opportunities to the best of our abilities and as energetically as possible.

While non-Indigenous comrades have the important work of building militant mass struggles along anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist, anti-colonial and pro-socialist lines in non-Indigenous working-class communities, workplaces, and schools, non-Indigenous comrades now have a “golden opportunity” to find concrete expressions of solidarity between their sectors’ / communities’ struggles and Indigenous peoples’ struggles. The emergence of INM has facilitated the ease of raising and confronting Canadian colonial policy. Concrete expressions of solidarity when such opportunities arise or where they can be created will make way for invaluable opportunities for ideological and political struggle towards higher levels of unity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples’ struggles in the coming years.

Indigenous comrades, on the other hand, have the equally important task

of imparting their own experiences and knowledge onto non-Indigenous comrades, especially as it pertains to their first-hand experiences in confronting the genocidal policies of the Canadian state, but also the knowledge of their traditional cultures – which we see as expressions of communism and from which we all have much to learn.

While the strength of the INM movement has subsided, we know that the militancy and activity of Indigenous people’s struggles at the grassroots will not. Therefore, revolutionary communists must continue to advance the unity of Indigenous and non-Indigenous struggles that can be united for a common program of liberation. Day by day the urgency is increasing to pose these problems in a revolutionary way, and to challenge the dead-end options of looking to the enemy for solutions. Finding concrete forms of solidarity, reciprocity, and ideological struggle are the immediate tasks that can be taken up to unite Indigenous and non-Indigenous comrades today and pave the ground plant the seeds for a strong revolutionary united front in the coming years and decades.

From rez to rez, building to building, hood to hood, and town to town, we can bring Canadian imperialism to it’s knees by building a proletarian revolutionary counter-power today for a revolutionary offensive and a new society tomorrow.

–Comrade Amil K., February 2013

1. See Russel Diabo’s article “Harper Launches Major First Nations Termination Plan” in *First Nations Strategic Bulletin*, Volume 10: Issues 7-10 (June-October 2012). Available at: <http://intercontinentalcry.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/FNSB-July-Oct-12.pdf> For the same analysis from Diabo alongside Mi’kmaq lawyer and professor Pamela Palmater listen to the podcast “Russell Diabo and Pam Palmater on the Canadian Government’s Suite of Bills Targeting First Nations” on [IndigenousWaves.com](http://IndigenousWaves.com) (December 4, 2012).

2. Search Division 8, Section 206 ‘Indian Act’ in Bill C-45: <http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?Language=E&Mode=1&DocId=5942521&File=194#6>

3. See Russell Diabo and Shiri Pasternak in “Canada has had First Nations Under Surveillance” in *First Nations Strategic Bulletin* Volume 9, Issues 1-5 (January-May 2011).

# RI's Greetings to CPN-M's 7th Congress

## Central Committee of Revolutionary Initiative (Canada)

*Solidarity greetings to the 7th Congress of the Communist Party of Nepal – Maoist*

Revolutionary Initiative sends warm internationalist greetings to the Communist Party of Nepal – Maoist on the occasion of your 7th Congress.

The CPN-M Party has been a source of great inspiration to us revolutionary communists in Canada and throughout the entire International Communist Movement since the launch of the People's War in Nepal. Your bold and great example in carving out a new power for the people in Nepal stimulated the new vitality of the International Communist Movement throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s, when oppressed and exploited peoples of the world were being told that communism was a failure and that capitalist was the "end of history".

The CPN-M's creative approach to Maoism, your firm basis amongst the masses, your reliance on concrete study of concrete conditions, and the very open manner in which your Party has conducted its two-line struggle has provided an invaluable examples of how revolutionaries around the world can work to break with both dogmatism and revisionism in their many forms and carry the revolution forward. We also recognize the great sacrifices that your Party has had to make and we pay homage to the great comrades and fighters that were martyred or

injured during the People's War.

We have watched for years with profound sorrow and concern as some of your former comrade leaders of the United Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist capitulated to imperialism and Indian expansionism; but we were are greatly inspired by your Party's ability to reconstitute itself on a revolutionary basis. It is our great hope that your Party will be able to emerge from the current crossroads and lead the transformation of Nepalese society and by doing so greatly advance the cause of revolution in South Asia and around the world.

As this statement is being read here in Nepal today, one of the most significant movements in decades is developing within Canada's borders right now, a movement spreading as fast as the Occupy movement and the "Arab Spring" before it. This is a movement encompassing the dozens of nations of Indigenous peoples that long preceded the European colonization of the Americas and by any means necessary will long outlive this past five hundred years of European colonization of the Americas up to the present day imperialist world system.

The spontaneous movement that is known as 'Idle No More' has captured international headlines since early December 2012, shattering the illusions of Canada as a country of peace, multi-

culturalism, and opportunity for all. Quite to the contrary, however, Canada has for centuries been a cauldron of colonial occupation and genocide against the first nations and peoples of what can be alternatively called Turtle Island [the name by which many nations referred to North America before the arrival of Europeans].

Although this is a spontaneous mass movement, with leadership elements of bureaucrat capitalist "Indian chiefs" very closely tied to Canadian imperialism and colonialism, this movement has set off the long pent-up fury of Indigenous peoples who have suffered decades and centuries of genocidal policies all the way up to the present day. In the past month alone, road and railway blockades, mass protests, and direct actions all across the country have been led by grassroots Indigenous people ready and willing to fight Canadian colonialism head on.

Although the "first nations" within Canada's colonial borders make up perhaps only a small fraction of the total population, their ancestral lands cover the land mass of the entire country, ancestral lands that many nations are fighting resolutely to defend as their very survival as nations is threatened by Canadian imperialism's constant and now intensified attempt to eliminate Indigenous peoples.

We firmly believe that the national liberation struggles of indigenous peoples is not only complimentary to the proletarian





revolution in Canada, but more importantly, it is necessary for it, and indeed for the advance of proletarian revolution on a world scale.

Since the spectacular financial collapses of 2008 revealed the crisis of capitalism to be endemic and structural to the imperialist world system, Canadian bourgeois politicians have suggested that Canadian economy is exceptional, and that Canadian finance capital is unaffected by the sorts of crises being experienced in the U.S. or Europe. What is not said in these pronouncements is the extent to which Canadian imperialism and monopoly capital is reliant upon the plunder of the world's natural resources through Canada's monopoly capitalist extractive industries, much of which comes from the internal colonies encompassing Indigenous peoples ancestral lands.

The struggle of Indigenous peoples' for genuine self-determination to break Canadian colonialism would not only be a contribution to liberation of struggling peoples everywhere but indeed all humanity. Canada's spoilation of the environment and these resources is driving our world closer to, and arguably even beyond, the brink of irreversible ecological collapse; and the Indigenous peoples in Canada are without a doubt on the frontlines of militant struggle against this plunder.

Yet, as significant as the Idle No More movement is – and we believe that we are only seeing the beginning of this upsurge – it comes not even a year after another one of the greatest upsurges in Canadian history, the great student strike of Quebec, which as you may know brought hundreds of thousands of students and popular masses into the streets every week for months and months. Every single day there were between one and three rallies running into the thousands somewhere in Montreal alone. At its height, the mobilization reached 400,000 people. This student strike approached insurrectionary proportions at certain points, with thousands of people facing off with heavily-armed officers who are among the most brutal in North America. Not only did this upsurge refuse to be quelled through violence and draconian emergency laws (Law 79), it was ultimately victorious in halting the tuition fee increases that sparked this movement to

begin with. This makes it one of the few struggles in the imperialist countries in recent years to halt an “austerity” attack. Yet, all throughout the strike and especially as it grew, a growing proportion of the striking students began taking up anti-capitalist and anti-colonial slogans and recognized that the strike amounted to so much more than the economic struggle of tuition fees.

These two events in the past year in Canada are mere signals that not only is Canada fully embroiled in the crisis of the imperialist world system, but more importantly, the people are beginning to fight back.

While being humbled by and sometimes even overwhelmed by the power of the people's struggles, our task, like yours, is to give the greatest possible unity to all the just struggles of the people through the consolidation of a genuine proletarian revolutionary vanguard Party. We hope and are planning for this event in the immediate years.

Without being self-satisfied we can claim with confidence that our efforts at party-building are making strides towards the constitution of a new revolutionary party guided by Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. Although there is currently at least two Marxist-Leninist-Maoists currents within Canada, we are confident that the force of history will unite all possible revolutionary communist forces within Canada along correct lines in the coming future.

The task of Revolutionary Initiative in the coming three years is to meet all possible necessary preconditions for the foundation of a genuine revolutionary communist party in Canada, including a sufficient basis amongst the proletarian masses, with representation from the many nations within Canada and across the many sectors of oppressed and exploited people; and finally, with a draft Party program based upon a comprehensive historical materialist summation of Canadian history, society, and the subjective conditions of the revolutionary struggle, past and present.

We cannot have made it as far as we have without the example and guidance of the people's wars in countries like Nepal, India, Philippines, and elsewhere. More importantly, the masses in the

imperialist countries will not be able to make revolution unless the most exploited and oppressed peoples of the world hasten and intensify the crisis of the imperialist world system, while inspiring us with a living example of a much better world awaits us all, a world beyond capitalism and imperialism, a world of socialism on the path to communism.

There's much more that can be said about Canadian imperialism and its place in the world today, this country that is the most vocal supporter of Zionist Israel in the world today, that is unabashedly enthusiastic about its part in bombing Libya and the new wars brewing that menace the world, such as in Syria and Iran. There's much more than can be said about this country where so many migrant workers from around world come to in order to find a better life only to meet intensified exploitation, racism, precariousness, and often a worse future for their children. Much more can be said, but we know that you comrades have much work to do; and our time here is limited and your tasks are many.

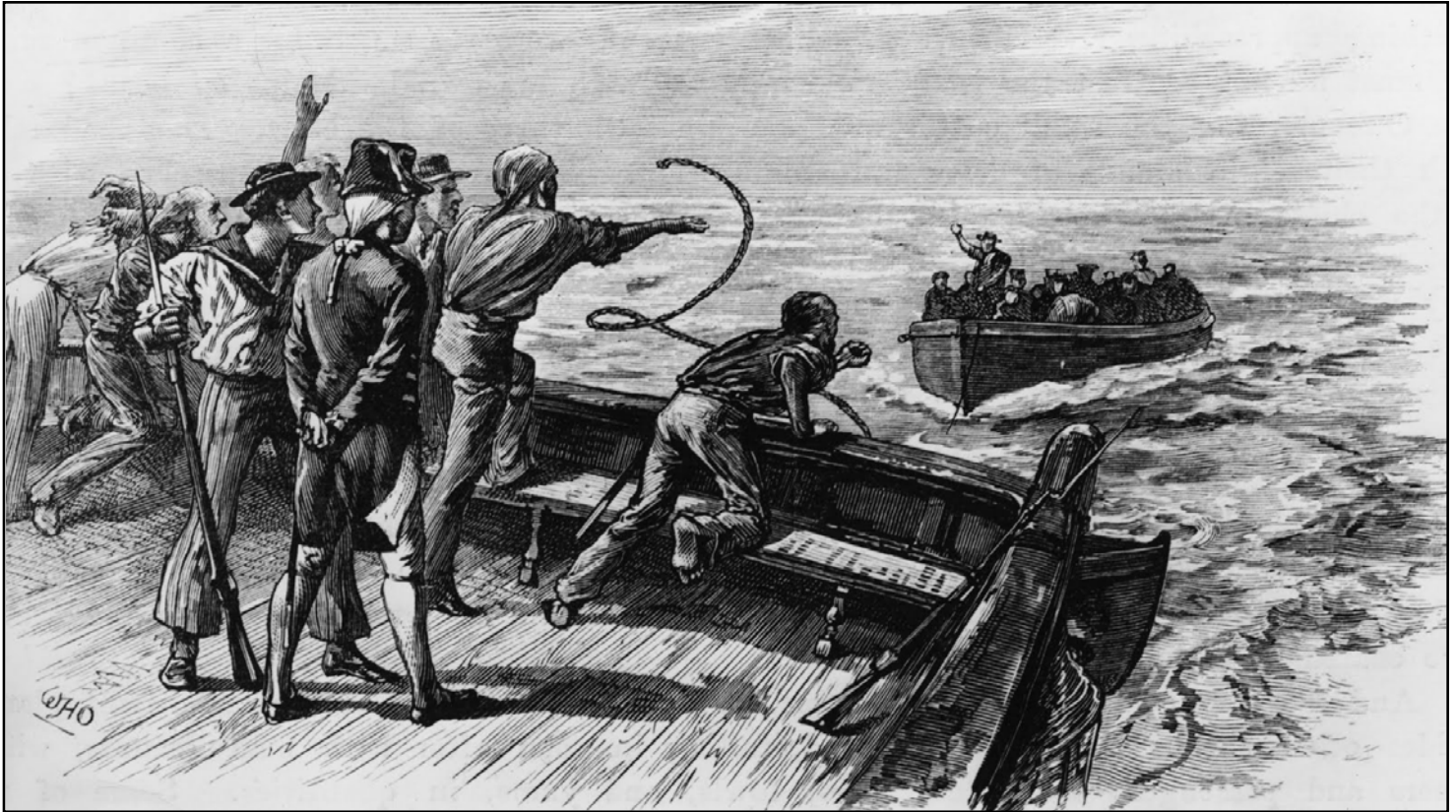
Long the Communist Party of Nepal – Maoist!

Long live the revolution!



# Mutiny on the HMS Capital: The Two Row Wampum as a Guide to Decolonization and Social Transformation on Turtle Island.

By Tom Keefer of the Two Row Society for Socialism and Decolonization



*R.I. Editorial Note: The following document is reproduced here with permission from the author. We thank the comrades of the Two Row Society for this important contribution, a welcome break from the identity politics that generally dominates "indigenous solidarity work".*

*The principles of the Haudenosaunee Guswentah (or the Two Row Wampum) overlap to a large extent with internationalist principles in the tradition of revolutionary communism, just as many of the values of revolutionary communists are essentially identical as that of Indigenous nations.*

*This article brings forth the argument for the necessity of communist politics on both sides of the proverbial river, Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, and the impossibility of the colonizing impulse of capitalism to ever respect the Guswentah, and thus the necessity*

*for the people on both sides of the 'Two Row' to reclaim this historic treaty and implement it by any means necessary.*

**Author's Abstract:** The Two Row Wampum is the foundational treaty agreement between European and Haudenosaunee peoples on Turtle Island. The Two Row articulates the coexistence of two very different socio-economic systems traveling down the same river of life side by side. The egalitarian society of the Haudenosaunee is represented by a metaphorical canoe, and the colonial capitalist system of the Europeans by the symbol of the ship. By examining the historic relationships between these two societies, I make the argument that the Two Row offers a coherent vision for the decolonization of Turtle Island. The repeated failure of Euro-American capitalist societies to live according to the Two Row suggests that a social revolu-

tion or "mutiny" must take place upon the ship in order to transform the vessel and its relationship to the canoe and the river of life.

## *The Two Row Wampum*

The Two Row Wampum is one of the oldest treaty relationships between the Onkwehonweh (original people) of Turtle Island and European immigrants. This treaty was made in 1613 between the Dutch and the Haudenosaunee as Dutch traders and settlers moved up the Hudson River into Mohawk territory. The Dutch initially proposed a patriarchal relationship with themselves as fathers and the Haudenosaunee people as children. The Haudenosaunee rejected this notion and instead proposed that:

We will not be like Father and Son, but like Brothers. [Our treaties] symbolize

two paths or two vessels, travelling down the same river together. One, a birch bark canoe, will be for the Indian People, their laws, their customs and their ways. The other, a ship, will be for the white people and their laws, their customs and their ways. We shall each travel the river together, side by side, but in our own boat. Neither of us will make compulsory laws nor interfere in the internal affairs of the other. Neither of us will try to steer the other's vessel (Fadden).

Well aware of the political and military strength of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Dutch agreed with the principles of the Two Row. As was their custom for recording events of significance, the Haudenosaunee created a wampum belt out of purple and white quahog shells to commemorate the agreement (Powless, 2000: 20-21). The legal scholar John Borrows described the physical nature of the Two Row Wampum as follows:

The belt consists of two rows of purple wampum beads on a white background. Three rows of white beads symbolizing peace, friendship, and respect separate the two purple rows. The two purple rows symbolize two paths or two vessels traveling down the same river. One row symbolizes the Haudenosaunee people with their law and customs, while the other row symbolizes European laws and customs. As nations move together side-by-side on the River of Life, they are to avoid overlapping or interfering with one another (Borrows, 2010: 76).

The Two Row Wampum treaty made with the Dutch became the philosophical basis for all future Haudenosaunee relationships with European powers. The principles of the Two Row were consistently restated by Haudenosaunee spokespeople and were extended to relationships with the French, British and Americans under the framework of the Silver Covenant Chain agreements. It was understood by the Haudenosaunee that the Two Row agreement would last forever: "as long as the grass is green, as long as the water flows downhill, and as long as the sun rises in the east and sets in the West" (Powless, 2000: 22).

While 2013 marks the 400th anniversary of the introduction of the Two Row

to Europeans, it is important to note that the concept of the Two Row and the idea of reciprocal relationships of peace, friendship and respect between different entities has a much deeper connection to the Haudenosaunee world view.

The Two Row is a foundational philosophical principle, a universal relationship of non-domination, balance and harmony between different forces. In some ways it is comparable to the Taoist notion of Yin and Yang. The Two Row principles of peace, respect and friendship can be extended to any relationship between autonomous entities working in concert. These include nation to nation relationships, dynamics between lovers and partners, and the metabolic relationship between human beings and our environment.

While the Two Row Wampum that was created to commemorate the introduction of the Dutch Republic to the Haudenosaunee world view is derived from Haudenosaunee traditions and philosophy, it is also consistent with the outlooks of many other indigenous peoples seeking to accommodate themselves to the sudden arrival of Europeans on Turtle Island. Almost universally, indigenous peoples extended their hands in peace and friendship to the newcomers to their lands, and sought to improve their lives through trade and friendship with these newcomers. At the same time, indigenous people were intent upon maintaining the integrity of their own ways of life.

The Two Row can function as a framework for decolonization right across Turtle Island, since holding true to the Two Row means supporting the right of Onkwehonweh people to maintain themselves on their own land bases according to their own systems of self governance and self organization. These traditional indigenous systems are opposed to the values of the capitalist economic system. Rather than being driven by notions of "profitability" and production for world markets, traditional indigenous economics are based upon localized subsistence production taking place in harmony with nature. In this framework, people do not "own" land, but belong to the

land as a part of creation and safeguard it on behalf of the coming generations. In most traditional indigenous societies, resources and wealth were shared, and production was geared towards the creation of use-values to meet human needs, rather than the creation of exchange-values to be bought and sold on the market.

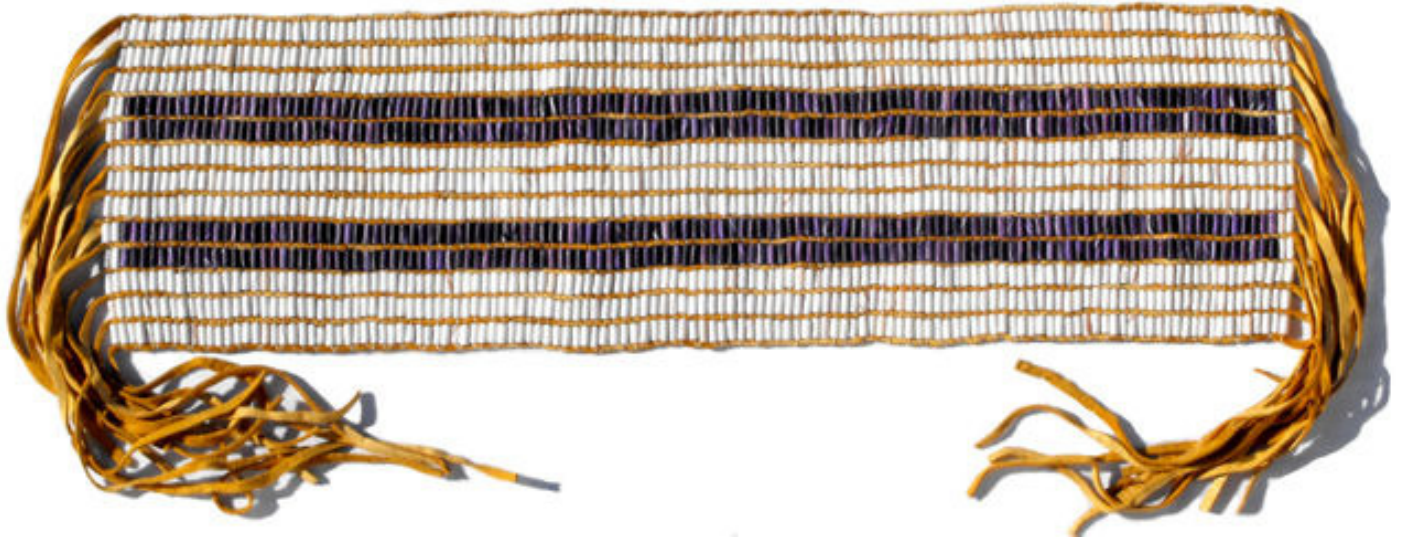
The Two Row was accepted by the European nations who entered into nation-to-nation relationships with the Haudenosaunee. Respect for the Two Row is thus the fundamental precondition for the presence of non-Onkwehonweh peoples on Turtle Island. The fact that the Two Row was initially respected by European colonialists due to the military and political power of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy does not mean that the Two Row became invalid once Europeans became strong enough to ignore the original agreements they made with the Onkwehonweh people of this land.

In order to understand why the colonial authorities failed to uphold their obligations under the Two Row agreement, we need to look more closely at the very different characteristics of the societies which produced the ship and the canoe.

### *The Ship and the Canoe*

The ship and the canoe which the Two Row declared should share the river of life together were vessels built by two very different kinds of society. The canoe was a small lightweight vessel made of birch or elm bark designed for carrying small numbers of people and their goods along the internal waterways of Turtle Island. While it required much skill and know-how to build, it was a democratic technology and could be readily assembled by a handful of people working together for a day or two. Its contents could be ascertained at a glance – its structure was not designed to keep secrets.

The vessels in which Spanish, Portuguese, English, Dutch, and French explorers crossed the Atlantic were a very different kind of boat than the canoe. They were built for the purpose of acquiring commodities – slaves, spices, furs, and precious metals – for sale on



the world market. Loaded with soldiers and cannon, they were designed for plunder and war as much as for trade. Built on behalf of European sovereigns and joint stock corporations hungry for profits, these vessels were complicated machines which required an elaborate and brutally hierarchical division of labor for their day-to-day operation. As Peter Linebaugh and Martin Rediker point out in their history of the revolutionary Atlantic, the European sailing ship embodied a crystallization of early capitalist social relations.

The ship... provided a setting in which large numbers of workers cooperated on [IN?] complex and synchronized tasks, under slavish, hierarchical discipline in which human will was subordinated to mechanical equipment, all for a money wage. The work, cooperation, and discipline of the ship made it a prototype of the factory. (Linebaugh & Rediker, 2000: 149-150)

The sailors who laboured on these vessels were often kidnapped and press ganged into service. In the late 17th century, life expectancy for those forced to serve on the ships of the British Royal Navy was brutally short: three out of every four sailors pressed into service died within two years (Linebaugh & Rediker, 2000: 151). Those who survived suffered under military discipline with captains who regularly condemned men to death or to terrible whippings for "insubordination." Wages owed to sailors often went unpaid, sometimes for as long as a decade. As Dr. Samuel Johnson famously said, "No man will be a sailor who has

contrivance enough to get himself into a jail; for being in a ship is being in jail with the chance of being drowned.... A man in jail has more room, better food, and commonly better company" (Boswell, 1859: 199).

The European sailing ship was a conflicted and highly stratified vessel. Operating in the interests of aristocrats and corporate entities, it was commanded by ruthless representatives of this elite. Often times its hold was crammed full of African slaves, some 12 million of whom were transported to the Americas in sailing ships in order to work on sugar, tobacco, and cotton plantations (Blackburn, 1998). Many of the European migrants arrived in North America after being forcibly thrown off land they were indigenous to so that it could be "enclosed" by capitalist agriculture. Those shipped off to labor in the colonies were often forced to pay their way through forms of indentured servitude – essentially personal slavery for a set period (usually between five and ten years). Others were packed onto boats against their will as prisoners sent to do time for crimes against property (there were over 200 such crimes worthy of the death penalty or transportation in 17th century England.)

In such conditions it is no surprise that there was a constant class struggle taking place on board these ships. Not only did slaves regularly rise up against their captors, but mutinies and rebellions led by the combative and multi-ethnic crews of the ships themselves were constantly breaking out – a fact

well documented in Linebaugh and Rediker's book *The Many Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic*. The most comprehensive form of resistance to the imperialist forces on the Atlantic came in the form of piracy as multiethnic crews of rebels mutinied and took over the ship, and created what were often democratically operating centers of military resistance to the early capitalist order (Rediker, 1981).

The canoe and ship are thus social artifacts of a fundamentally different nature. The canoe represented the organic and harmonious creation of an egalitarian society while the ship was a social institution locked in conflict and struggle, a dynamic which remains in effect today. While the materials used to construct canoes has changed, their form and function have remained unchanged for 500 years. In the case of the sailing ship, capitalist technology has replaced the Spanish and Portuguese caravels used to cross the Atlantic with massive new cargo ships, oil tankers, and aircraft carriers. While the form of the ship has changed, its purpose – projecting military power on a global scale and transporting large amounts of commodities for sale on the world market – hasn't.

The captains and owners of the ship represented themselves to the Haudenosaunee spokespeople they made treaties with as the lawful and righteous representatives of the whole of their society when in fact their power was contingent upon their brutal and ongoing

ing repression of the lower orders of their society. The captains of the ship indicated their intention to abide by the Two Row Wampum, but they only honoured the agreement for as long as Haudenosaunee military power protected it. Rather than upholding the Two Row and allowing an alternative indigenous “mode of production” based upon its own independent land base to survive, European colonial powers used every chance they could to undermine any alternative to the capitalist system they had imported to Turtle Island. They did this not out of any individual moral failing, but rather because the system they represented could brook no alternatives. To this system, indigenous polities were obstacles and impediments to be destroyed in order to successfully impose a capitalist social order on Turtle Island.

### *Haudenosaunee Society*

The Two Row Wampum proposed the continuation of two very different socio-economic systems within a common geographical space. Two very different vessels would travel down the river of life together, with neither seeking to steer or control the other one.

The Haudenosaunee, through their system of governance known as the Great Law of Peace had an egalitarian social system with no rich, no poor, and no state to create or enforce relations of inequality. Whatever else you might want to call it, this was a communist society marked by relationships of economic equality and political democracy, based upon a mixed system of horticulture, hunting and gathering. Women leaders held positions of political and social power, and the member nations of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy were multi-ethnic nations into which members of many other nations were adopted – including people of African and European descent.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, Europeans on Turtle Island developed acquisitive, expansionist, class-stratified societies marked by ideologies embracing severe racial and gender inequality. Let us consider the underlying socio-economic basis of these two different societies.

The name “Haudenosaunee” translates

as “the people of the longhouse,” for the Haudenosaunee lived in large communal dwellings in fortified villages containing up to 2000 people. Some longhouses excavated by archaeologists in New York State were more than 400 feet long – longer than a football field (Engelbrecht, 2005: 70-71). Each longhouse housed an extended family organized by shared descent from a common female ancestor. The women were in charge of domestic affairs in the longhouse and the village and were responsible for allocating and cultivating the community’s farm land. The men for their part hunted, fished, and engaged in warfare and “external” politics. The people of the longhouse ate and lived together communally.

The importance of the women’s role was underscored by the fact that the Haudenosaunee derived about half of their nutritional needs from the cultivation of the “three sisters” – corn, beans and squash. In consultation with female title holders, the women of each long house selected a clan mother who was responsible for picking the chiefs who would act as spokespersons to represent the interests of the people of their clan. Should the chiefs not adequately represent the wishes of the people, the clan mothers had the power to “dehorn” or remove them from office (Garlow, 2013: 6-7).

The “Great Law of Peace” – the political system of the Haudenosaunee – worked through consensus and through a system of checks and balances which required the five nations of the Confederacy – the Mohawks, the Oneida, the Onondaga, the Cayuga, and the Seneca – to become of “one mind” on a given question in order to take action together. Individual rights were protected, woman played a central role in determining the agenda of Confederacy meetings, and social equality was maintained (Mann, 2006: 369-378).

From an economic standpoint, Haudenosaunee society could be described as a communist society. Land was held in common and allotted within the clan system. There was no state enforcing the rule of one group over another. Personal property could not be inher-

ited. Anything that was not buried with the dead as a personal good reverted to the ownership of the clan as a whole (Morgan, 1877). Nobody went hungry as long as anybody else had food. An ethic of sharing prevailed and social status – as in many other indigenous cultures – was influenced by how much of one’s wealth one could give away. As the Jesuit Simon Le Moyne noted after living in Haudenosaunee communities in the mid 17th century:

They still possess virtues which might cause shame to most Christians. No hospitals are needed among them, because there are neither mendicants nor paupers as long as there are any rich people among them. Their kindness, humanity, and courtesy not only make them liberal with what they have, but cause them to possess hardly anything except in common. A whole village must be without corn before any individual can be obliged to endure privation. They divide the produce of their fisheries equally with all who come (Arthur, 2008).

Early European social scientists came into contact with Haudenosaunee society while the memory of its governing institutions were still fully operational. The existence of a politically sophisticated yet technologically “primitive” society with clan-based structures designed to avoid intermarriage within families shed a lot of light upon debates concerning the cultural and social evolution of European societies (Engels, 2004). The Haudenosaunee also inspired American rebels in the structuring of their new state which arose in opposition to the British Empire. In 1751, inspired by the idea of a confederacy which would maintain the rights of individual states while allowing combination for mutual self-interest, Benjamin Franklin advocated the formation of a union of English colonies, observing that

It would be a strange thing if Six Nations of ignorant savages should be capable of forming a scheme for such an union, and be able to execute it in such a manner as that it has subsisted ages and appears indissoluble; and yet that a like union should be impracticable for ten or a dozen English colonies, to whom

it is more necessary and must be more advantageous, and who cannot be supposed to want an equal understanding of their interests (Franklin, 1751).

Louis Henry Morgan's 1854 study of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy had a great impact on contemporary communists in Europe such as Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. They saw the sophisticated political system of the Haudenosaunee as providing living proof that human beings had lived together in a state of political and social equity before the rise of class society. The example of the Haudenosaunee indicated that people might again be able to live in egalitarian communist societies. As Marx's close friend and collaborator Frederick Engels put it:

[The Haudenosaunee have] no soldiers, no gendarmes or police, no nobles, kings, regents, prefects, or judges, no prisons, no lawsuits – and [yet] everything takes its orderly course. All quarrels and disputes are settled by the whole of the community affected . . . decisions are taken by those concerned, and in most cases everything has been already settled by the custom of centuries. There cannot be any poor or needy – the communal household . . . know their responsibilities towards the old, the sick, and those disabled . . . All are equal and free – the women included (Engels).

Even though the Haudenosaunee lived in large fortified villages – termed “castles” by 17th century European visitors, their political structures inhibited the creation of a “hierarchically stratified society with a centralized state and an exploitative economic redistribution system” (Arthur, 2008). This is quite historically significant because most densely settled agricultural societies do lead to stratification and tend to produce exploitative economic systems. It would appear that the democratic, egalitarian and consensus based system of the Great Law of Peace played a role in slowing down or halting this process towards state formation and class division (Arthur, 2008).

Lest we think that these historic accounts simply romanticize indigenous life, it is instructive to note that many

of the thousands of Europeans who were adopted into indigenous communities showed no sign of wanting to return to the colonial societies of the ship. As the writer and surveyor Hector St John de Crevecoeur noted in 1782, “thousands of Europeans are Indians, and we have no examples of even one of those Aborigines having from choice become European” (Hall, 2003: 382). After engaging in discussions with some former Europeans who had lived in indigenous societies and chose not to return to their biological Euro-American families and shipboard life, De Crevecoeur concluded that their reason for remaining within their adoptive indigenous societies, was the existence of

the most perfect freedom, the ease of living, the absence of those cares and corroding solitudes which so often prevail with us; the peculiar goodness of the soil they cultivated, for they did not trust altogether to hunting; all of these, and many more motives, which I have forgot, made them prefer that life of which we entertained such dreadful opinions. (Hall, 2003: 382-383)

#### *Growing Capitalism on the Turtle's Back*

The capitalist societies of Europe which were forcibly implanted on Turtle Island operated under very different economic and political logics than did the Haudenosaunee. Arising in a context of constant warfare between rival feudal societies, European expansion across the Atlantic was driven by military competition, a search for new trade routes, and most importantly – as world systems theorist Jason Moore argues – by the search for natural resources which could address the ecological crisis of 14th century feudalism (Moore, 2003). Faced with a growing population, diminishing returns in agriculture, and an energy and financial crisis arising from wood shortages and the exhaustion of key mineral resources, European powers ventured onto the Atlantic ocean in the late 15th century as a means to overcome this crisis (Moore, 2000). In the process, they laid the groundwork for the future development of the global capitalist system. While, lacking large numbers of wage labourers and capitalists, these

European societies were not yet fully capitalist in nature, they did create the preconditions for the emergence of capitalism through a violent and genocidal process that Marx termed “primitive accumulation.”

For Marx, primitive accumulation consisted of the large scale acts of theft, plunder and genocide which occurred before the de facto establishment of the capitalist system. These acts of violence generated both the preconditions for the introduction of capitalist social relations and the initial wealth which was then invested in the first major capitalist enterprises. As Marx pointed out, the methods used in the colonies and elsewhere were based upon the deployment of “brute force” by the state “to hasten, as in a hothouse, the process of transformation of the feudal mode of production into the capitalist mode, and to shorten the transition” (Marx, 1990: 915-916).

Capital, as Marx argued, is a social relationship between human beings rather than a “thing.”<sup>2</sup> In order for a specific means of production (a set of tools, a factory, a ship, or some land) to become “capital”, there must exist a certain kind of relationship between human beings to make it so. In Marx's understanding, capitalism is a social relationship between two different economic classes whose members exchange fundamentally different kinds of commodities. The commodities owned by the capitalist are money and the means of production. The only commodity owned by the free labourer is his or her body, or more specifically, the labour power that resides within it. Because “free” labourers have had their own independent relationship to the land taken from them by processes of primitive accumulation, they are in a position of forced dependency vis a vis the market. They are compelled to work for a capitalist, because they and their family will starve if they can't find a buyer for their labour power. As Marx notes:

The capitalist system presupposes the complete separation between the labourers and the ownership of the conditions for the realization of their labour. As soon as capitalist production is once on its own legs, it not only main-

tains this separation, but reproduces it on a continually extending scale. The process, therefore, that clears the way for the capitalist system, can be none other than the process which takes away from the labourer the possession of his means of production; a process that transforms, on the one hand, the social means of subsistence and of production into capital, and turns the immediate producers into wage labourers. The so-called primitive accumulation, therefore, is nothing else than the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production (Marx, 1990: 874).

Those compelled to sell their labor power do so in order to receive wages with which they can purchase the commodities sold by other capitalists (food, clothing, housing, etc.) which they need in order to survive. Those with capital at their disposal have money to pay for their own personal needs, but they purchase the labor power of others so that they can employ their fixed capital (the means of production they monopolize) for the purposes of generating more value and wealth for themselves. The system works because capitalists are purchasing the temporary use of a very special commodity – labour power – which has the very special characteristic of being able to produce more value than it costs to reproduce (Marx, 1990: 300-301). This is the secret as to why capitalists can accumulate and their economic system can grow – the labor power that is purchased generates significantly more money for the capitalist than the capitalist pays out in wages – otherwise, the capitalist would not hire the worker in the first place. The wages paid to the worker go towards realizing the sale of the commodities sold by other capitalists, thereby furthering the cycle of capitalist growth.

When European aristocrats and capitalists arrived on the shores of Turtle Island, there were no unemployment lines filled with free labourers looking to sell their labour power. Indeed, there were no “workers” per se on Turtle Island, since the indigenous people who lived here had a relationship with the land and to their communities which provided for all their basic needs. Work was not a separate, alienated part of

life and the idea of selling one’s labor power to others in order to purchase the requirements for life seemed ridiculous. Food, clothing, and shelter did not require money for purchase as they were not commodities to be bought or sold on the market and money didn’t exist. Why work for someone else to acquire money for basic necessities when these necessities were free for the taking and regulated by egalitarian societies that made sure no one went hungry?

The initial attempts to turn indigenous people into a labor force for capital were thus not very successful.<sup>3</sup> Indigenous people fought back against their exploitation or simply vacated the areas of land controlled by the Europeans. Consequently, the emergence of capitalism on Turtle Island required the importation of millions of workers from Europe and Africa – some free, and others enslaved (Blackburn, 307-315).

But these African and European workers were not simply waiting on the shores of their respective countries ready to go work for capitalists in North America. They too had their own relationship to the land in the territories they were indigenous to, and they had their own folk traditions and customs which inhibited the introduction of capitalist social relations. Brutal acts of violence by a range of different state actors were required to displace European peasants from their land and to turn African peasants into slaves who were captured and sold by African elites for European trade goods.

Silvia Frederici argues that the witch-hunts of the 16th century which saw the murder of over 100,000 European women were a crucial component of breaking peasant resistance to the new capitalist order, increasing patriarchal domination, and reducing the common lands that peasants relied upon for subsistence (Frederici, 2006). Robert Brenner and Ellen Wood have described the process of primitive accumulation in the English countryside which they argue was central to the development of capitalism and the imposition of colonialism in Ireland – a framework which was then repeated on Turtle Island by the British (Brenner, 1982; Wood, 2002).

The vast amounts of gold and silver plundered from indigenous communities by the Spanish and Portuguese proved to be a powerful economic stimulus in Europe and encouraged greater trade with India and China (Wallerstein, 1974). The widespread development of chattel slavery was also crucial in providing the necessary raw materials (such as cotton) for the leading industries of the Industrial Revolution as well as providing markets in Africa where European trade goods could be used to purchase more human beings to be used as slaves (Williams, 1994).

It was only by virtue of these genocidal acts of violence that the capitalist system could emerge. In implanting capitalism on Turtle Island, the European colonialists had an unexpected microbiological ally. The germs and viruses brought by Europeans and their domesticated animals to Turtle Island had the effect of killing some 90% of the indigenous population who had no immunity to diseases like smallpox, influenza or typhoid fever.

However, once the rulers of European societies gained control of land, they still had to create the social institution of capitalism. People do not just spontaneously gravitate towards being propertyless wage workers. Rather than continue life as workers, most Europeans imported to the colonies tried instead to grab land they could work for themselves. As Marx reminds us,

...in the Colonies, property in money, means of subsistence, machines, and other means of production, does not as yet stamp a man as a capitalist if there be wanting the correlative – the wage-worker, the other man who is compelled to sell himself of his own free will.... (Marx, 1990: 932)

A good example of this problem was revealed when Thomas Peel attempted to establish an English colony in Swan River, West Australia, in the 1820s. Peel brought hundreds of workers with him, thinking that in doing so he had imported capitalist social relations. However, once they arrived in Australia – a land lacking a state or an established capitalist society – the workers simply left Peel’s service and walked off into the country to establish their own

small farms to provide for their own subsistence. The unfortunate Mr. Peel “was left without a servant to make his bed or fetch him water from the river” (Marx, 1990: 933).

On Turtle Island, the English colonizers solved the problem of having their workers run away by making treaties with indigenous groups so as to make the British Crown the only entity allowed to purchase land from Indians. If all the land belonged to the crown, the poor and exploited could be excluded from land ownership and would be forced to work within the emerging capitalist system. The wage worker – free from any independent relationship with the land that could sustain him or her – could thus come into existence in the new British colonies.

However, the dynamic in the colonies was unlike the one existing in Europe. On Turtle Island, the white working class could escape the territorial boundaries established by the ruling elite by pushing into “Indian country” where they could engage in their own personal form of “primitive accumulation” by stealing indigenous land and engaging in petty commodity production to purchase whatever they couldn’t themselves produce. After a period of time in which both Europeans and Africans were enslaved together on plantations, the colonial ruling elite made dark skin a badge of slavery and in seeking easier social control, freed whites from the burden of slavery and began elaborating a “scientific” theory of racism to justify the enslavement of Africans (Blackburn, 1998).

Europeans violated the Two Row Wampum in two distinct ways. Firstly, the oppressed European peasants who had been torn away from their own lands and transported to Turtle Island sought to escape their own oppression by moving to the frontier and taking land from indigenous peoples. Because of their own interests in maintaining a ready labour supply, the British Crown was formally opposed to this process and consistently made promises to their indigenous allies that they would stop the movement westwards of white settlers. The Royal proclamation of 1763, occurring in the aftermath

of Pontiac’s rebellion, aimed to halt westwards expansion and to control the purchase of Indian land by centralizing all land surrenders and land sales through the British Crown. However, the overwhelming number of new immigrants arriving in the colonies, and their determination to escape wage slavery by claiming indigenous land, proved to be a force that colonial authorities were unable or unwilling to stop.

Secondly, the Two Row was violated by the ruling elite themselves. The capitalist system is based upon constant expansion and the commodification of all forms of human life and natural activity. The system cannot tolerate alternatives that might act as barriers to capitalist accumulation. What Noam Chomsky called “the threat of a good example” – an alternative way of structuring society in potentially non-capitalist directions – has been a fundamental fear to those in power (Chomsky, 1992).

#### *Canajoharie, the Grand River Territory, and the Two Row*

One such threat of a “good example” came from an alliance built between destitute European immigrants and the Mohawks of Canajoharie. From very early on, the Mohawks sought to preserve their way of life and their non-capitalist and anti-statist mode of production by allying themselves with poor and working class labourers of European descent.<sup>4</sup> One important example of this process of social solidarity was the Mohawk relationship with the German Palantines – religious refugees who had been forced into conditions of servitude to produce tar for the British Navy at a site on the Hudson River. In the early 1700s, representatives of the impoverished Palantine community approached the Mohawks of Canajoharie in what is now upstate New York, and a deal was struck to allow the Palantines to lease but not buy lands in a “buffer zone” near the Mohawk community. As Paxton notes:

Listening to the Palantines’ story, the Mohawks sensed an opportunity to pre-empt the fraudulent land claims of arrogant Englishman by planting poor and deserving Germans on the disputed

lands. That the Palantines were isolated, friendless, and distrusted by New York officials meant they would depend on the Mohawks to defend their interests and landholdings. Better to have neighbours of one’s choosing, the Mohawks reasoned, and if those neighbours are also dependents, all the better (Paxton, 2009, 13).

The results of this relationship were beneficial and transformative for both parties involved. The Palantines freed themselves from the British yoke and produced rich agricultural products on the lands leased by the Mohawks. They provided the Mohawks with foodstuffs and technological know-how in methods of European farming, and the communities prospered together in peace and friendship. Contemporary witnesses remarked that the Mohawks were benefitting from this arrangement. During the American Revolution, American Colonel Peter Gansevoort reported that “the Indians live much better than most of the Mohawk River farmers” (Paxton, 2009: 13-14).

The Palantines operated within Mohawk jurisdiction, learned the Mohawk language, and were even taught how to perform important Haudenosaunee ceremonies such as the condolence ceremony. They provided an important barrier to the aristocratic land speculators who wished to buy up Mohawk land and resell it to land-hungry European immigrants. European colonial authorities were not pleased with this arrangement. They openly feared an alliance between poor, potentially “disloyal” Europeans and indigenous nations. The mechanism of this alliance was the leasing of lands by indigenous nations, something that was actively discouraged by the colonial elite as much as it was repeatedly attempted by a variety of other indigenous nations within and beyond the Haudenosaunee Confederacy (Kelsay, 1984).

It could be said that the Palantines followed the Two Row, or more specifically, that they joined the Two Row on the Mohawk side, as they left the ship and entered the jurisdiction of the canoe and the Great Law of Peace.

When the American Revolutionary war



broke out, some 80 Europeans voluntarily chose to serve under the Mohawk war chief Joseph Brant. Recognized as a military unit fighting in alliance with the British crown, “Brant’s volunteers” (which included at least 20 other Mohawks supportive of Brant’s leadership) received no pay, uniforms, or provisions from the British Crown. While they could have fought for the British Crown in military formations led by British officers – where they would receive pay, provisions and the possibility of mercy if captured by the Americans – European volunteers chose to fight under a Mohawk commander, a fact which was much remarked upon by contemporary commentators and which may be explained by the nature of economic and social relationships between the Mohawks and local settlers, including the Palantines.

At the conclusion of the Revolutionary war, the Mohawks were pushed out of their traditional homeland and ended up in communities along what is now the US-Canada border. In the 1784 proclamation made by the British Governor General Sir Frederick Haldimand, the Mohawks and “such others of the Six Nation Indians” were granted 950,000 acres in perpetuity – six miles on either side of the Grand River – in compensation for their loss of lands in the Mohawk Valley. The Six Nations of the Grand River territory composed the largest indigenous community by far in Upper and Lower Canada, and contained over 2000 people as compared to the total population of 7000 loyalists who settled in the whole of Upper Canada after the American Revolution.<sup>5</sup>

Led by a “triumvirate” of Joseph Brant, his wife Catharine Adonwentishon (Clan Mother of the Mohawk Turtle Clan, and Henry Tekarihoga (Catharine’s brother, and the first sachem of the Mohawk nation and a figure of great influence in the Six Nations confederacy) the Six Nations of the Grand River sought to build a trust fund for the “perpetual care and maintenance” of their people by leasing their land to settler allies (Kelsay, 1984: 272-282). Much of the land that Brant leased went to the loyalist soldiers that had fought with him in the Revolutionary war and who remained loyal to him. Many of these white soldiers married

into the Six Nations community and supported the political efforts of the Haudenosaunee.<sup>6</sup>

The Six Nations community was one of the most economically developed in all of Upper Canada. They had the first church in Upper Canada, a school house, sawmills, and rich agricultural land alongside a major waterway. The British colonial authorities were gravely worried that an indigenous-European alliance would challenge their power in Upper Canada, and strenuously objected to Brant’s attempts to lease or sell lands to Europeans who could become allies or dependents of the Six Nations. Not only did they fear a potential uprising against their power (as indeed almost happened in an insurrectionary plot in 1802, in which Brant had some involvement) they were also worried that new economic relationships might emerge on the Haldimand tract which could hamper processes of capitalist accumulation. Evidence for their fears was provided by the yearly military “parades” organized by Brant on May 1st - events which saw European settlers marching with Six Nations warriors in military maneuvers commanded by Brant.

Brant, like a number of other indigenous leaders of this time sought to build an independent Indian Republic in the “middle ground” between the United States and Canada (White, 2010). Brant sought to make the payments created by the leasing of lands along the Grand River available to any indigenous people who settled in the area, and he repeatedly encouraged different indigenous nations to move to the Grand River territory (Kelsay, 1984).

We can imagine that if such a territory had been created it might have developed in a very different way from its capitalistic neighbours. With a sufficient land base, traditional forms of hunting, gathering and horticulture could have sustained a significant indigenous population which would have retained its language and customs. Continued sovereignty would have made the enforcement of the Indian Act impossible and would have also blocked the imposition of residential schools which destroyed cultural

traditions and created so much trauma. The existence of a large territory in which land was held in common and economic treaties such as the “dish with one spoon” predominated, could have had a powerful effect on the “disgruntled lower orders” of Euro-American society.

The crucial issue on the Haldimand tract was the question of whether or not the Two Row Wampum would be honoured. If the Two Row was honoured, then the land would be as Joseph Brant and the Confederacy saw it: Haudenosaunee land under Haudenosaunee control. The land was theirs to do with as they saw fit, and if that involved selling or leasing parcels of land to non-native allies that they thought would be good neighbours and increase the strategic power of their Confederacy, then so much the better.

As far as the colonial authorities saw it, the land should only exist as a reserve, and control over the land and the trust funds established on behalf of the Six Nations Indians should be controlled by the representatives of the Queen. The Six Nations of the Grand River were an important military ally, but they could not be allowed to exercise independent jurisdiction over their own territory. One of the key ways in which the struggle over sovereignty of the Haldimand tract was played out was over the question of whether or not the British Crown had jurisdiction to try capital offences, such as murder, occurring within the territory. Brant and the Confederacy insisted that all such capital offences be handled through traditional means of providing compensation to the aggrieved by “covering the grave” [footnote here?] while colonial authorities sought to extend their rule of law to the territory.

The inherent expansionism of capitalism can’t allow for leaving large land bases where people are free to “do their own thing,” and where alternative governance structures might evolve. If that were to happen, the capitalists could lose their social power, since capitalism can only exist in a context where the great majority of the population is denied access to the means of production. A large indigenous territory in North

America where the inhabitants had access to the means of production (most fundamentally land/nature) and were able to feed and take care of themselves could have allowed the people to exist independently of the colonizer and might thus threaten the system as a whole. Other groups and social forces oppressed by the capitalist system might be inspired by this alternative and be encouraged to find their own way out from the capitalist system.

Had Tecumseh and Brant not died when they did, or had different accidents of history occurred, the Indians north of the Ohio River might have gained their own independent state. Division between the Americans and the British made the establishment of such a territory possible, and as Anthony Hall has argued, the growing unity between Indian nations under the economic and political program of “the dish with one spoon” made the establishment of such a territory possible (Hall, 2003 386-395). Whenever faced with the concrete possibility of such a process, as the British with the Haldimand tract, or the Americans with the emergence of the five “civilized nations” (the Cherokee, Creek, Seminole, Choctaw, Chickasaw) or the young Dominion of Canada when faced with attempts of the Metis to create their own province in 1885, the response was unequivocal. Indigenous societies could not be allowed to exist as they would provide political or economic alternatives to the euro-capitalist social order.

#### *Mutiny aboard the HMS Capital*

It is important to note that despite the best efforts of the captains of the ship, the Two Row has not been completely destroyed. The canoe still exists in the continued operation of some traditional governance structures across Indian country, and a significant proportion of indigenous people in remote areas still live off of the land. Nonetheless, the structure of the canoe is damaged, and the captains of the ship keep interfering with its path as they try to definitively sink it.

It is imperative that those of us struggling for social change within the capitalist system of the ship extend

our full support to our brothers and sisters in the canoe who are trying to live their lives in accordance with their traditional ways – ways which stand in stark contrast to those of the capitalist system. We can build relationships with traditionalists and their institutions based upon the Two Row’s foundation of peace, friendship, and respect.

At the same time, we must realize that the colonial and capitalist system established on Turtle Island has been largely successful in destroying alternatives to its power. The totalizing nature of capitalist production implicates almost all of us within the social relations of this ship. If we have no direct connection to the land and must subsist by selling our labour power in order to buy commodities produced under the capitalist system, then we are caught within the hold of the ship. And there are very few of us who grow our own food, make our own clothes, build our own homes and manage to exist without selling our labor power on the market.

Indigenous peoples have been taken from the canoe and forced into a dank cabin of the ship called a “reserve,” or they have been integrated into the rest of the capitalist body politic within the ship. They disproportionately fill the prisons onboard the ship, and they are discriminated against in countless ways. The social structures of capitalism have ensnared many indigenous people into waged labour, while the majority of those on reserves are a literal reserve army of the unemployed. Thus the indigenous struggle for liberation must involve a mutiny or rebellion upon the ship – not only to escape oppressive conditions and exit the confines of the ship – but also to overcome the capitalist social relations which emanate from the ship and are destroying the world.

Given the dangers of global warming, the environmental devastation of the tar sands, the existential threat posed by nuclear power in general and the Fukushima nuclear disaster in particular, the growing ruthlessness of US and Canadian imperialism, or simply the daily ecocidal disaster that is industrial capitalism, one could say that human-

ity is approaching a massive waterfall on the river of life. The ship and the people tied to it will not make it over that waterfall. Those in canoes might, but it will not be easy for them either. Regardless, we stand together at a true turning point and have a collective responsibility to save humanity and our planet from catastrophe.

As any student of rebellion knows, in order for mutineers to have any chance of success, they need to join forces with others sharing similar grievances. In our era, when non-indigenous working-



class people can no longer escape capitalism by personally appropriating native land, the material basis for a real alliance exists. The massive economic crisis that the capitalist system entered in 2008 has not been resolved, even as austerity measures represent an all out attack against working class people and the environment.

It is true that long-standing divisions based upon race, nation, and gender continue to divide and stratify the working class both locally and globally. At the same time, the significance of the systemic crisis facing capitalism lays the groundwork for new forms of alliance building. Such processes are strengthened by the very capitalist system itself as it socializes labor to unparalleled degrees and gives birth to new forms of communication and social organization

which allow for unprecedented global cultural exchange and grassroots coordination of activities.

Over the course of the past 500 years of capitalist history, those stuck living in the ship's hold have tried in many different ways to rebel and either steer the ship in a different direction, escape from the confines of the ship, or try and build a different kind of vessel all together. Capitalism needs to be overcome, but this will require us collectively creating egalitarian and communistic societies in harmony with nature.



This means that those holding to communistic ideals and traditions from both sides of the Two Row need to come together and learn from each other as we figure out how to effectively overcome capitalism together. There is much within the revolutionary anti-capitalist traditions of those people who have long been struggling aboard the ship that can be of use to indigenous struggles for decolonization on Turtle Island. Just as significantly, there is much in the nature of indigenous traditionalism that the would-be mutineers aboard the HMS Capital need to understand if their struggle is to succeed. As John Mohawk wrote in 'A Basic Call to Consciousness: The Haudenosaunee Address to the Western World',

The traditional Native peoples hold the

key to the reversal of the processes in Western civilization that holds the promise of unimaginable future suffering and destruction. Spiritualism is the highest form of political consciousness. And we, the Native peoples of the Western Hemisphere, are among the world's surviving proprietors of that kind of consciousness. We are here to impart that message. (Mohawk: 2005, 91)

The way out of the global crisis here on Turtle Island thus requires the coming together in peace, friendship, and respect of the many different traditions which have resisted capitalism and its various oppressive structures. Let us join together in a mutinous rebellion to take control of the ship. Once we do, we might realize that our revolution needs to build new kinds of vessels to travel down the river of life in harmony together, and new systems to mutually assist each other so that real peace, freedom and equality may again be known upon these lands and waters.

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