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UPRISING

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WHERE THE PROLETARIAT?

The Specter that Still Haunts

Locating a Revolutionary Class within Contemporary Capitalism-Imperialism

Class Analysis and Class Structure in Canada

A Framework for Developing a Program of Revolutionary Multinational Struggle

Revolutionary Feminism

Economic Transformation and Women's Liberation

Volume #7 of

Where the Proletari-At?

Introduction to Uprising *Volume 7*

by Comrade Amil K.

We cannot maintain a pretense of being revolutionary without defining a revolutionary subject. We cannot objectively *be* revolutionary unless we have: (1) located those sections of the masses with the latent potential for taking up a revolutionary initiative; and on that basis, (2) begun to conduct our work with strategic clarity. To do this we must answer questions like: What are the classes, the social groupings, the strata within Canada whose historical experience as well as present circumstances and future trajectory appear to be one of inescapable consignment to the miseries, depredations, humiliations, and deprivations of capitalism (i.e. the objective conditions of the masses)? And upon this objective basis, we must also be able to identify what sections of the masses have the sharpest consciousness of their place in history, and organize this section to play a leading role in a revolutionary united front (i.e. the subjective conditions of the masses)? In short, *where the prolerati-at?*

This issue of *Uprising* contains three essays that attempt to begin answering these questions at the level of the general (within the imperialist world system as a whole) as well as at the level of the particular (within colonial Canada), as well as offering ways to view the proletariat in terms of its motion and location.

Our first essay from Kenny Lake -- the first in a four-part series entitled *The Specter that Still Haunts* -- attempts to locate a revolutionary subject in the world today through an analysis of the transformations that the imperialist world system has undergone in recent decades. Kenny Lake returns to some of the core theses of Marx and Engels' analysis of the process of proletarianization in order to provoke a reconsideration of where a revolutionary class can be located in the world today. In examining the ever-growing tides of humanity being pushed from the countryside into urban slums, export processing zones, refugee camps, and across borders and seas a few steps closer to the imperialist centers, Lake narrows in on sites where humanity is in the process of, or has recently been, *dispossessed.* Lake challenges revolutionaries to look beyond struggles around the remuneration of surplus-value and to consider how ongoing processes of dispossession and marginalization may be critical sites of organizing for revolutionary communist forces and the emergence of new waves of communist consciousness in history. As Lake writes,

> In returning to Marx and Engels, we find that the fundamental contradiction of capitalism [-- between socialized production and private appropriation --] dons a variety of forms and the accumulation of capital moves through several different processes... Engels privileged the 'separation of the producer from the means of production' rather than exploitation, and treats the latter as flowing from the former... Thus dispossession is the defining act that constitutes the proletariat as a class and is crucial for understanding who is a part of this class at any given historical moment.[1]

The central thesis in Lake's *Specter* series is that:

> It is in the process of dispossession, including the casting off of people into the reserve army of labour, and through the volatile effects of the social anarchy of capitalist production that masses of people most receptive to the aims of and immediate need for communist revolution can be found.[2]

Lake substantiates this thesis in Part II of his series by examining how the unpredictably brutal fluctuations of financialized global capitalism wreak havoc on whole countries and peoples; and in Part III, he looks at how the major people's wars of the past three decades (Peru, Philippines, India) have advanced in large part through the organization and mobilization of those recently dispossessed or those facing dispossession within the imperialist world system.

If it can be said that Kenny Lake's analysis narrows in on the *motional* aspect of proletarian existence, those moments of violent dislocation that make the proletarian "free" to sell her labour for a pittance or free to starve and die, the framework of a class analysis offered in Stella B.'s article "Class Analysis and Class Structure in Canada" offers a long-overdue snapshot that is a first attempt to

1 Kenny Lake, "What it is, what it ain't," in *Uprising*, Vol.7 (Fall 2015), 10-11.
2 *Ibid*, 14.

understand the *locational* features of the proletariat, and other classes, in Canada. If we are going to develop a revolutionary strategy that can contend with Canadian imperialism we must be able to first describe correctly the positions and relations of the various classes and strata in relation to one another (*locational*), as well as the past and future fate of these classes and strata (*motional*). This document has developed over the course of months of discussion throughout 2015 in our organization, it reflects a number of changes of position within our organization,[3] and it has significantly contributed to a process of beginning to theorize revolutionary strategy (the details of which are being debated internally and will be published in forthcoming issues of *Uprising*).

Specifically concerning how different strata or sections of the proletariat are subordinated or marginalized to the lowest *positions* in society, our organization's theorizing on patriarchy has made major advances over the positions it held a few years ago by identifying how the historical and present patriarchal processes faced by many women, especially those of oppressed nations, facilitate their entry into the proletariat and the super-exploitation they experience therein. In continuing to chip away at this theoretical work, Comrade Stella B brought forward "Revolutionary Feminism: Economic Transformation and Women's Liberation" in the second half of 2014 as a discussion document that is the second installment in a series that began with her article "Super-exploitation of Women...."[4] There's much to be said about the article "Revolutionary Feminism" that is beyond the theme of this introduction. But on the question of super-exploitation in particular Comrade Stella advances on her previous theorizing by zeroing in on how the lack of formal "freedom" characteristic of the rest of the working class (labour mobility), made possible by patriarchal and national oppressions, place and maintain super-exploited proletarians in their stratum of the working class. In other words, patriarchal and national forms of oppression must be looked at for how they both produce the proletariat and facilitate its exploitation We can see this point captured in this particular passage from "Revolutionary Feminism":

> Becoming proletarian is a two-fold occurrence. On the one hand, to be proletarianized people must be cut off from independent means of subsistence, which historically has meant being pushed off the land or dispossessed of independent means of survival. To be "freed" from the means of production in the Marxist sense meant free to be exploited, which is the second condition of being proletarian. In order to be a proletarian one needs to be free to sell labour power to the capitalists in exchange for a wage. But some people are less "free" than others. This is the importance of understanding how patriarchy and national oppression work to exert certain downward pressures or limitations on the freedom of wage labourers in order to extract maximum surplus.[5]

The complimentarity of the theses of Comrades Stella B. and Kenny Lake are found in the common political position that struggles against the processes that dispossess or redispossess the masses as part and parcel of ruling class strategy for maintaining and reproducing the proletariat are key struggles for revolutionary communists to take up and may be ripe sites for the reemergence of communist consciousness. And the specific ways in which patriarchal and national oppressions facilitate super-exploitation are illuminated by narrowing in on how these oppressions deny or restrict the formal freedoms available to much of the rest of the working class.

The concept of super-exploitation is sharpened further in "Class Analysis and Class Structure in Canada," which was published in the first quarter of 2015:

> The dividing line between the exploited proletariat and the super-exploited proletariat rests not only on economic rates of exploitation over and above costs of reproduction, but also on a) very real constraints on the ability of workers to "freely" sell their labour power (varying forms of bondage on the continuum of freedom), and b) how much unpaid labour one is providing to capitalism. I personally believe a deeper examination of the role of this continuum of **unfreedom -> freedom** has far greater potential for explanatory power than any simple financial or functional demarcation. We must also understand the economics and dynamics of national oppression and patriarchy in this analysis.[6]

The explanatory power in the *unfreedom/free-*

3 Among the changes of internal positions that this document publicizes include: our concept of the *labour aristocracy* has been modified by and is now differentiated from the concept of the worker elite; we have scrapped the concept of the *lumpenproletariat*; we are using the concept of the *semi-proletariat* to analyze many Indigenous people's continued productive/living connection to their land base; and our thoughts on the concepts of *buffer class* and *swing class* have shifted dramatically.

4 Stella B., *Uprising* , Vol. 5 (Summer 2014), 5-21.

5 Stella B., "Revolutionary Feminism: Economic Transformation and Women's Liberation," *Uprising*, Vol. 7 (Fall 2015), 45.

6 Stella B., "Class Analysis and Class Structure in Canada," *Uprising*, Vol. 7 (Fall 2015), 26.

dom continuum is in its directing of our attention onto the mechanisms of class domination that facilitate super-exploitation, which in the case of Canada have taken on very formalized and expanding systems of indentured labour that include (but are not limited to) the Live-In Caregiver Program, the Temporary Foreign Worker Prgoram, and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program.

In order to understand how these proletarians have found themselves *situated* in these programs, we must trace the processes in the imperialist world system that have dispossessed peoples and hurled them into proletarian existence onto other sides of the world. The *locational* and *motional* approaches to viewing the proletariat must go hand in hand, especially when in the life of a given proletarian, or his/her family history, all these moments make up the basic consciousness of the proletarian.

How many of the millions of migrants on the move today, squeezed between reactionary political Islam and new imperialist conquests, from Mali to Iraq and Syria, will, *at best*, end up as fresh supplies of super-exploited labour for the globalized monopoly capitalism? And those remaining in the limbo of permanent marginalization in new slums and permanent refugee camps: what will become of them? Will they be added to the ranks of surplus humanity, the ever swelling reserve army of labour? Asylum and workers rights for these millions are a chimera. If revolutionary communists do not take root in the swelling ranks of dispossessed humanity, then the historical dead-end of religious fundamentalism will, as it evidently is already doing.

A fundamental law of dialectics is that all matter is in motion. All things change. Stasis is relative, but it is nonetheless the opposing aspect to motion, making up a unity of opposites with it. The articles in this volume of *Uprising*, I believe, hang together in way that demonstrates the explanatory power of a dialectical and historical materialist analysis of the proletariat. We can't know how the super-exploited end up in their structural location without knowing the processes that placed them there. Arguably, we can have no success in revolutionary struggle unless communists unite with the masses in organizing revolutionary struggle on the basis of resisting processes of national oppression, patriarchy, imperialist wars of aggression and economic dislocation.

In our own context in Canada, one of the most urgent tasks of Revolutionary Initiative is to apply these concepts to the overwhelmingly evident oppression and super-exploitation we see faced by Indigenous peoples, the Afrikan population, and the rest of the multinational proletariat. These are core questions our organization is tackling internally at this moment; hence, the theme of Volume 8 of *Uprising* will likely be focused on the question of national oppression.

As always, we welcome critical feedback on our theoretical works, either by way of email at **revintcan@gmail.com** or in the comments section of our website, at **ri-ir.org**.

This picture from Jan 2014 shows Palestinian Refugees of the besieged Yarmouk refugee camp queuing to receive food supplies in Damascus, Syria.

The Specter that Still Haunts

Locating a Revolutionary Class within Contemporary Capitalism-Imperialism

by Kenny Lake

a four-part series

What It Is, What It Ain't

Part I of IV in *The Specter that Still Haunts* Series

by Kenny Lake

Revolutionary Initiative is pleased to announce a new four-part series from Comrade Kenny Lake that will be published over the next four volumes of Uprising, *Volumes #7-10. In "The Specter that Still Haunts," Kenny Lake attempts to locate a revolutionary class today in consideration of transformations that the capitalist-imperialist world system has undergone in recent decades. Our readers may remember Kenny Lake from his piece in Vol. 5 of Uprising (Summer 2014), "Gramsci and Gonzalo: Considerations on conquering combat positions within the inner wall of hegemony," wherein he analyzed how Peru's Maoists in the 1960s and 1970s were able to read their historical conjuncture in order to effectively accumulate revolutionary cadre at the National University of San Cristóbol de Huamanga in Ayacucho, the ranks of which would eventually launch the people's war in the 1980s.*

In Part I, Kenny Lake draws upon the analyses of Marx and Engels concerning the multifaceted process of proletarianization in order to provoke a reconsideration of where a revolutionary class can be located in the world today. Lake challenges revolutionaries to look beyond struggles around the remuneration of surplus-value and to closely consider how ongoing processes of dispossession and marginalization (in the global reserve army of labour) could be critical sites for the emergence of new waves of revolutionary proletarian consciousness. In Part II, Lake examines how the uprooting of hundreds of millions of people by speculative, financialized, and increasingly extractive capitalist-imperialism is transforming the material basis for future people's war. In Part III, Lake explores the Maoist-led people's wars since the 1980s in Peru, the Philippines, and India for links between the emergence of a revolutionary subject and processes of dispossession (such as the Dandakaranya forest region of India). Lake narrows in on the significance of Davao City, Mindanao, Philippines and Lima, Peru as critical urban centers within the wider people's wars in those countries at the time, provoking considerations concerning the significance of global slums in the future of people's wars. Comrade Kenny Lake's essay will conclude in Part IV with an examination of what these global transformations may mean for parts of the US today, from the formerly-industrialized regions now swollen with massive reserve armies of labour to the global cities reproduced by an expanding immigrant proletariat alongside the internal colonies and oppressed nations within America's borders.

While Lake's analysis concludes with a focus on the U.S., this comrade's theoritical work concerning how the proletariat is being reproduced in the world today compliments RI's intellectual-political task of identifying and organizing a revolutionary subject withinin Canada's colonial borders.

-Uprising Editors

First, to put aside some objections...

Looked at through the prism of the postmodernist philosophy that is so popular among the petty bourgeoisie at present, the elevation of the proletariat to a leadership role in the path towards human liberation presents itself as privileging one particular struggle and one specific social formation over others. Objections abound to what is seen as putting the question of class and the oppression faced by a particular class over the questions of "gender," "race," etc.[1] But from the communist perspective, locating a revolutionary class has never been about prioritizing one social group, form of oppression, or particular struggle over others. The question communists ask is what social force can pave the way in radically changing all existing oppressive production and social relations. Therein lies the significance of the proletariat. While the postmodernist objection will remain, let it do so as opposition to any and all universalist projects that would dare to transform today's decrepit society from top to bottom, for communists have no team to root for in a moral contest over what form of oppression is the most important.[2] That contest never gets beyond, in politics, what the independent producer never gets beyond in their daily life—exchanging commodities on the market in order to advance their own position in opposition to others.[3]

1 Race and gender are in quotation marks because these terms and the way they are used approach the question from the standpoint of identity categories rather than social relationships of oppression—i.e., patriarchy, racism, white supremacy and the oppression of nations. For a critique of "race" as a concept, see Karen E. Fields and Barbara J. Fields, *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life* (New York: Verso, 2014).

2 Though strategically, communists do need to make assessments of what social antagonisms are most defining of a given society historically and at the present moment and make decisions about where to focus our efforts in such a way that will contribute most to the revolutionary struggle.

3 Here I am borrowing from Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (New York: International

Proletariat, a French word for propertyless, connotes a class unique to recent human history in that it is formally free—that is, not subject to the coercion of forced labor—yet has no choice but to enter into and be subjugated by and exploited in a set of production relations that are beyond its control. The proletariat's formal freedom and lack of power in the production relations it must enter into are bound up with another essential condition of its existence: *dispossession.* The proletariat is dispossessed of any means to make wealth of its own, i.e., it does not possess any means of production except for its labor power. Consequently, while the proletariat is no longer tied to land, owned by other human beings, or in other ways forced to work at a specific social position, it is at the same time obliged to sell its labor power—if anyone is willing to buy it—because it lacks any other means to sustain itself. In selling its labor power, the proletariat enters into production relations that involve socialized production, on a world scale, of all that human beings use and consume for their existence and enrichment. This is because the means of production that capitalism has brought forth can only be put to use in that way, regardless of the intentions or desires of any classes or individuals. Though the production process is socialized, it is at the mercy of private accumulation rather than serving human needs and the mutual benefit of society.[4]

It is these essential conditions—dispossession, socialized production processes, and formal freedom—that make the proletariat a unique class in history which is capable of leading humanity into a new era—communism—precisely because the proletariat can only liberate itself as a class through free association—that is, exercising collective mastery over the vast means of production that human societies have brought forth. Any reader even vaguely familiar with Marxism shall by now realize that I have left out exploitation from the above list. Exploitation of human labor, however, is nothing new to capitalism—only the form it takes (wage-labor) is. Moreover, while the degree of exploitation faced by the proletariat certainly makes it prone to resistance and radical ideology and politics, communist revolution is motivated by and aims at far more than righting the wrong of exploitation.

Beyond the struggle for the remuneration of surplus-value

Here it is necessary to critique what is at this point conventional wisdom for most people who in one way or another consider themselves Marxists. In opposition to bourgeois political economy, Marx spent considerable effort proving that wealth, or, more specifically, value, is generated by human labor, and that in capitalist society, wage-workers were generally paid only what was necessary for their subsistence, while what they produced above and beyond the value of their subsistence (surplus-value) was appropriated by the capitalist. Much of the first volume of *Capital* is indeed dedicated to revealing this truth that bourgeois economics continues to deny. Marx, however, did not view this as a matter of "unfairness," but as an exchange of commodities in which the wage-worker sells their commodity, labor-power, to the capitalist. Describing the struggle, between wage-workers and capitalists, over the length of the working day, Marx wrote:

> There is here, therefore, an antinomy, right against right, both equally bearing the seal of the law of exchanges. Between equal rights, force decides.[5]

Failing to comprehend Marx's radical critique of commodity production and exchange, many so-called Marxists have since limited the horizons of the proletariat to a narrow struggle over the distribution of surplus-value. To cite one recent example, Zak Cope, in his important analysis of the parasitism of imperialism, speaks of "class struggle as such, which principally revolves around the exploited working class' retention or otherwise of the surplus-value it creates."[6] While Cope's work is invaluable in revealing how superexploitation of "Third World" labor—that is, paying wages below subsistence—materially provides the majority of the population of imperialist nations with a privileged lifestyle, he approaches "class struggle"

Publishers, 1998), 50–51.

4 For an early and concentrated exposition of what the proletariat is as a class, see Frederick Engels, *Principles of Communism*, in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works* vol. 1 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1973), 81–85.

5 Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy Vol. 1* (New York: The Modern Library, 1906), 259.

6 Zak Cope, *Divided World Divided Class: Global Political Economy and the Stratification of Labour Under Capitalism* (Montreal: Kersplebedeb. 2012), 304.

from within the bounds of bourgeois right—that is, individual ownership of and fair exchange of commodities. The proletariat is thus confined to demand a better price for the sale of the only commodity that it possesses: its labor power.[7]

For communists, the aim of class struggle is not for better terms in the exchange of commodities, but to get beyond the production and exchange of commodities. This means that all the things humans use for their needs and enrichment will no longer be owned by individuals as private property and bought on the market of commodity exchange by whoever possesses the money power to do so, but instead will be freely available and produced and distributed according to rational social plans. Advancing this process after the revolutionary seizure of power involves moving towards not the distribution of surplus-value according to the individuals who produced it (even though this will be necessary to some degree during the initial stages of the socialist transition to communism), for that would maintain society in a state of commodity exchange. Rather, this process involves the free and collective provision of the means of subsistence and the social allocation of surplus-value for the social needs and wants of humanity. In short, from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs.

It is with this aim in mind that the proletariat is so crucial because it is the first class in human history that produces by entering into collective processes that today often span the globe. This is because the means of production it works with are *social* in character—they can only be put to use through the collective labor of many. Unlike members of all previous classes, proletarians cannot take a portion of the means of production they work with and make that portion their individual property with which to advance their individual positions. Moreover, the very products the proletariat makes are the result of its collective labor—as Engels put it, no proletarian can say "I made that, this is *my* product."[8] This is what distinguishes the proletariat from the petty-bourgeoisie. The aspirations of the latter are always bound up with its position as individual commodity producers with ownership

7 Myriad examples can be found in the writings of Marx, Engels, and Lenin that critique this view of class struggle as being the proletariat fighting for the remuneration of the surplus-value it creates. See, for example, Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, in Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader*, second edition (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978), 528–532; and Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?*, in *Selected Works* vol. 1 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), 127 (footnote), 135, 138.

8 Engels, *Anti-Dühring* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1976), 346.

The proletariat is the first class in human history that produces by entering into collective processes that today often span the globe. Examples: a shipping yard in China and a Foxconn sweatshop making iPhones (next page).

of means of production (or professionals who have received education that enables them to provide specialized, skilled labor) who advance their position through selling the commodities they produce (or the skilled labor they provide) on the market. Understanding the class position of the proletariat in relation to contemporary society's social means of production points to the revolutionary transformation of society the proletariat can lead, which is something far beyond the remuneration of the surplus-value that the labor of individual proletarians produces.

Distinguishing expressions of from essence

That the proletariat enters into collective labor processes but the fruits of its labor beyond its means of subsistence are appropriated, in large part, by the bourgeoisie points to the fundamental contradiction in capitalist society: between socialized production and private appropriation. However, the exploitation of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie in the production process is but one expression or form of motion of this fundamental contradiction. It is to the great detriment of the revolutionary struggle that exploitation has too often been treated as identical to this fundamental contradiction, or as the principal form it takes.

In returning to Marx and Engels, we find that the fundamental contradiction of capitalism dons a variety of forms and the accumulation of capital moves through several different processes. If we reduce these forms and processes down to the question of exploitation, we fail to understand the dynamics of capitalism as they manifest in the world around us, miss potential paths through which to prepare and organize the proletariat and its allies for the seizure of power, and fall short in apprehending the radical aims of communist revolution. Engels' discussion in *Anti-Dühring* of the forms that capitalism's fundamental contradiction takes and moves in is instructive in this regard.[9]

First, in explaining the antagonism between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, Engels privileged the "separation of the producer from the means of production" rather than the question of exploitation, and treats the latter as flowing from the former. In other words, the "condemna-

9 Engels' choice of words is likewise instructive. He consistently referred to the fundamental contradiction as manifesting in, reproducing itself in, or giving rise to the various forms and antagonism in which it is expressed, rather than equating these forms and antagonisms with the fundamental contradiction as such.

tion of the worker to wage-labour for life"—exploitation—is only possible as a consequence of being deprived of ownership over the means of production.[10] Thus *dispossession* is the defining act that constitutes the proletariat as a class and is crucial for understanding who is a part of this class at any given historical moment.

Second, the "contradiction between social organization in the individual factory and social anarchy in production as a whole" assumes increasing importance as the capitalist mode of production develops.[11] Engels here demonstrated that while capitalist production compels the individual proprietor towards the most efficient, and thereby profitable, organization of production, exchange on the commodity market, despite all bourgeois worship of supply and demand, renders rational social planning of production impossible.[12] As Engels put it, "no one knows how much of the article he produces is coming onto the market or how much will be wanted, no one knows whether his individual product will meet a real need, whether he will cover production costs."[13] Thus rather than mutual human needs and improvement, production is guided by the capitalist's best guess as to what will be most profitable. Consequently, the proletariat and the masses as a whole confront not just their exploitation in the labor process, but all the myriad ramifications of this social anarchy of production, from environmental devastation, forced migrations, to the squandering of labor on production of commodities that cannot be profitably sold. (On the latter, think, for example, of the recent boom in housing construction followed by the housing crisis that has created, on the one side, newly constructed empty homes, and on the other, homeless people.)

However, the proletariat is in the unique position of being able to exercise *mastery* over social production rather than allowing social anarchy to reign. As Engels put it, "every society based on commodity production has the peculiarity that the producers in it have lost command over their own social relations."[14] But with the development of *socialized* means of production, "once their nature is grasped, they can be transformed from demoniacal masters into willing servants in the hands of the producers working in association."[15] In this way, the revolutionary aims of the proletariat as a class go far beyond righting the wrong of exploitation, since the proletariat, as *collective* producers, can place the

10 Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, 368.

11 Ibid., 368. We can broaden "individual factory" to individual enterprises of various types and sizes.

12 For an excellent discussion of the realities of and bourgeois fairy tales about supply and demand, see Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* vol. 3 (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 287–96.

13 Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, 350.

14 Ibid., 349–50.

15 Ibid., 361.

That monstrosity of finance capital known as the New York Stock Exchange, an extreme expression of the social anarchy of capitalist production.

vast means of production human societies have brought forth under social control and in service of social needs and benefits. Furthermore, under *social* planning, production can be carried out in a way that no longer destroys the environment and instead begins to repair the damages done.

Resolving this social anarchy of production through rational social planning is something that only the proletariat, as a class, can carry out. This is because individual commodity producers, no matter how well-intentioned they may be and even if they do not exploit the labor of others, relate to society from the standpoint of their individual activity and advancement. Furthermore, since they must sell the commodities that result from their individual activity, they are at the behest of the market and its imperative of profit rather than serving human needs. The bourgeois ideal of individual autonomy, which unfortunately is the guiding principle of most movements of opposition today, emerged in relation to the elevation of the individual commodity producer as the ideal state for humanity.[16] But autonomous individuals—i.e., individual commodity producers—meeting in the market of fair exchange can never make a collective assessment of humanity's needs and mobilize the productive forces of society to meet those needs. Indeed, how could the slums that one billion people dwell in today be replaced with housing fit for human beings, how could the environment be repaired, and how could epidemic diseases be cured *without* social planning on a massive scale? Even the syndicalist strategies so popular today that extend the ideal of individual autonomy to the factory, enterprise, or locality would not be able to address these problems because, as a result of approaching the world from the position of their productive enterprise or locality, they must still enter into commodity exchange and with it the social anarchy of production.

A third antagonism arising from capitalism's fundamental contradiction that Engels prioritized is "*here, superabundance of means of production and products—there, superabundance of workers* without employment and means of existence." This antagonism comes about through a process in which the "unlimited expansion of production" is based on the "perfecting of machinery, which competition makes a compulsory commandment for each individual manufacturer, and which is equivalent to a constantly increasing displacement of workers: *industrial reserve army.*"[17] The urban wasteland that is present-day Detroit is a quintessential example of just how the perfecting of machinery results not in social enrichment but in unemployment and desperate poverty. With the advent of robotization in auto production and the organization of a global assembly line, Detroit, formerly a center of car manufacture, witnessed a sharp rise in unemployment, and with it, the economic devastation of those who had counted on stable employment in the auto industry.

The industrial reserve army—unemployed proletarians—demonstrates that the driving force of capital accumulation is not only or even principally exploitation, even though exploitation is the generator of surplus-value and thus the capital and wealth of the bourgeoisie. As Marx put it, "a point is reached at which the development of the productivity of social labour becomes the most powerful lever of accumulation."[18] In other words, the advances in technology, including in the organization of production, so celebrated by the bourgeoisie become more important for capital accumulation than the degree to which it exploits human labor. That

16 For a thorough critique of the bourgeois ideal of individual autonomy as it relates to both commodity production and exchange and the concept and practice of democracy, see Bob Avakian, *Democracy: Can't We Do Better Than That?* (Chicago: Banner Press, 1986), chapter 2.

17 Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, 368.

18 Marx, *Capital* vol. I, 681.

The urban wasteland that is present-day Detroit.

The industrial reserve army standing in the unemployment line.

capitalism not only exploits people but also squanders human potential by leaving, *as a consequence of technological advances*, so many people without the means to productively contribute to society, and thereby, under commodity exchange, without means of subsistence, is another stunning indication that it has outlived any progressive purpose.

Moreover, it signals that defining the proletariat by its exploitation in the labor process is woefully inadequate, and the term "working-class" should no longer be equated with proletariat. The fact is, much of the proletariat *does not work* at any given time, and, even when it does, its conditions of employment are unstable and subject to termination by technological advances and a host of other factors. In the first volume of *Capital*, Marx's vivid descriptions of the proletariat in nineteenth-century England never portray people in stable, well-paid, salaried jobs with insurance benefits, substantial savings accounts, and home ownership. Yet this is how much so-called Marxist analysis conceptualizes the "working-class," and indeed, owing to the parasitism of imperialism, there is a large segment of the population in imperialist nations living in this condition.

Thus the proletariat is defined not only as those that the bourgeoisie can profitably exploit as wage-laborers, but also as those the bourgeoisie has no use for. The casting off of proletarians into the industrial reserve army is like a second act of dispossession on top of the original sin, and can be seen, by communists, as heightening revolutionary potential among those subjected to it.

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So far we have treated the proletariat, for the most part, not as real people existing in the real world, but as a theoretical abstraction. This is necessary if we are to go beyond the immediate conflicts between groups of people and their oppressors and understand the significance of the proletariat to revolutionizing human society in all its dimensions. For this reason, it was Marx *the philosopher* who discovered the historic import of the proletariat and pointed to the radical transformation of society it could lead. Marx did so applying materialist philosophy, thereby abstracting from reality the theoretical postulates he arrived at. However, even with a consistently materialist approach, theoretical abstractions will always be ideal states which never line up one-

to-one with reality as it is.[19] There will always be a gap between such theoretical abstractions and the realities they seek to explain. This is fine so long as we continually traverse the gap, stepping back and forth between our theoretical abstractions and the practical manifestations of them in the real world, and, as we do so, correcting our theoretical abstractions with the practical knowledge we gain and transforming the real world through subjective actions guided by our theoretical abstractions. The task of this essay is to go from the proletariat as a theoretical abstraction, as it has been elucidated above, to the proletariat as real people to be prepared and organized, by communists, for revolution and the socialist transition to communism.

In carrying out this task, it is crucial to treat the forms of or antagonisms arising from capitalism's fundamental contradiction not as fixed objects but as *processes*.[20] The proletariat, thus, is not a static group of people but a class whose members change over time and whose social entity—the places it lives and works (or doesn't work) and its cultural life—changes with the perpetual self-revolutionizing of capitalism. The argument of this essay is that *it is in the process of dispossession, including the casting off of people into the reserve army of labor, and through the volatile effects of the social anarchy of capitalist production that masses of people most receptive to the aims of and immediate need for communist revolution can be found.* Thus in seeking to locate a social base for revolution, we must look to those strata undergoing proletarianization with the radical transformations that entails, both in their modes of life and even in their geographical location; those most dispossessed, including of their ability to sell their labor-power; and those confronting the most brutal and dislocating motions of capital accumulation. The latter may not, technically speaking, be proletarians, but are nonetheless set in motion against the anarchic movements of capital.

In subsequent parts of this essay, this thesis will be pursued through examining changes in the capitalist-imperialist system over the last several decades (part two), drawing lessons from the experiences of Maoist-led people's wars since the 1980s (part three), and finally in a class analysis of those sections of the proletariat in the contemporary US which are the most likely foundation for communist organization and revolutionary struggle (part four). But before we can move forward, we must answer one more potential opposition to this thesis.

Not from concentrate

If the fundamental contradiction of capitalism is between socialized production and private appropriation, does it not logically follow that those proletarians working in the most highly socialized labor processes will be the most potentially revolutionary? Certainly a number of quotations from Marx and Lenin can be marshaled to answer in the affirmative.[21] But this question can be answered in the negative on theoretical, historical, and practical grounds.

In nineteenth-century Europe, as capitalism was only just maturing and becoming dominant over the previous modes of production from which it had emerged, large, machine-driven factories with socialized labor processes were a relatively new phenomenon, and those who worked in them generally lived in impoverished and unstable conditions. These factories and the proletarians exploited in them showed, in form, the more general condition of socialized production that capitalism would go on to impose on the world economy as a whole. They were but a microcosm and concentrated expression of this general condition. If we understand the difference between the forms that a contradiction takes and the essence of that contradiction, we need not privilege the most immediately palpable form that the contradiction manifests itself in. In this case, to do so would be narrowly treating productive forces—and not the

19 This can be seen in how throughout Capital, even while Marx drew from real-world examples and historical processes, he always made necessary reductions to demonstrate how capitalism functions in its ideal state—an ideal state which, while revealing more about reality than empirical evidence alone, nonetheless never exists in the real world.

20 David Harvey writes that he "increasingly see[s] Marx as a magisterial exponent of a process-based philosophy rather than a mere practitioner (albeit 'right side up with feet upon the ground') of Hegel's *Logic*." *The Limits to Capital* (New York: Verso, 2006), xv.

21 For example, Lenin referred to the small number of proletarians in large-scale machine industry as the "corner" which "embodies the quintessence of modern social relationships, and the population of this 'corner,' i.e., the proletariat, is, in the literal sense of the word, the vanguard of the whole mass of toilers and exploited." *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), 591.

overall productive forces of society, but those immediately before a particular group of producers—as directly determining consciousness and activity.

I would argue that the general condition of socialized production is of far more importance than its most concentrated forms both in the overall sense of society's functioning and in the constitution of classes. Moreover, what aspects of that general condition come to the fore, both as a consequence of the capital accumulation process and as most significant for the revolutionary struggle, are contingent on particular historical moments.

In this regard, it is instructive to recount how Lenin conceptualized the development of socialized labor under capitalism as a number of processes rather than the emergence of one distinct social entity of laborers in large, machine-driven factories. These processes centered on:

- The destruction of small economic units and the drawing together of local markets into "an enormous national (and then world) market," whereby "production for oneself is transformed into production for the whole of society."
- The replacement of "the former scattered production by an unprecedented concentration both in agriculture and in industry."
- The elimination of "the forms of personal dependence that constituted an inalienable component of preceding systems of economy" in favor of formally free wage-labor.
- The creation of "mobility of the population, something not required by previous systems of social economy and impossible under them on anything like a large scale."
- The reduction of "the proportion of the population engaged in agriculture" and the increase in "the number [and, we may add, size] of large industrial centres."
- The increase in "the population's need for association" while at the same time splitting "the whole of society into large groups of persons occupying different positions in production" and giving "a tremendous impetus to organisation within each such group."
- "A change in the mentality of the population" based on the above changes in the nature of society.[22]

Aside from providing a framework of socialized labor as a set of processes rather than a fixed social formation, Lenin's conception can also be applied to contemporary circumstances in order to comprehend which among these processes are most defining of society and who constitutes the proletariat. Included in this conception is the "mobility of the population," and thus migration is one such process that

22 Lenin, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, 604–5.

Riding "the Beast"—immigrants from Central America take this train through Mexico to sneak across the border into the US.

An appendage to the recycling industry.

has come to the fore in recent decades with the drastic increase in the mobility of labor across the globe. The massive movements of people in search of employment wherever, under the social anarchy of production, capital is in need of labor constitute one pivotal process of *proletarianization* today and one crucial form of the socialization of labor. It makes the proletariat, not just theoretically but also *practically* in its conditions of life, an *international class*.

Another indication of the general condition of socialized production is the many people who work independently but as *appendages* to larger production processes. As Lenin put it, "under manufacture, side by side with the mass of dependent workers, there always remains a more or less considerable number of quasi-independent producers."[23] In the imperialist citadels, a daily reminder that we are living in the past is the sight of a seventy-year-old immigrant woman rummaging through the trash for plastic bottles and aluminum cans to deposit for a pittance, thereby eking out a desperate and labor-intensive existence and supplying recycling facilities with a cheap means of acquiring raw materials. In the oppressed nations, this sight is multiplied with, for example, the thousands of slum residents in Indian cities who work, if sifting through squalor can be called work, as rag-pickers. That in many cases such appendages to production no longer produce items to be assembled into finished products in factories but instead seek out scraps in the garbage to be re-used in production is further evidence of capitalism's even more intensified squandering of people's productive potential. Though these human appendages often work independently, they are nonetheless tied to and part of socialized production, and, especially given their desperate conditions of life, constitute an important segment of the proletariat.

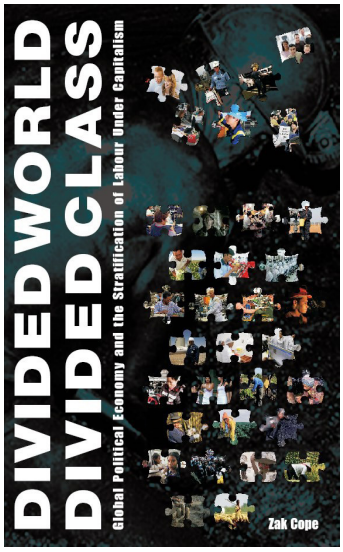
In part two we shall further explore these and other processes of socialized labor at the fore of global capitalism today in order to zero in on key sections of the proletariat. But we must nevertheless keep in mind that with the transformation of capitalism, around the end of the nineteenth century, into imperialism, understood as a socio-economic system that today encompasses the entire planet,[24] the *macro-level* of socialized production is far more important to shaping revolutionary possibilities. Lenin described the imperialist stage of capitalism as leading "directly to the most comprehensive socialisation of production" in which even "the process of technical invention and achievement becomes socialised."[25] Thus we can say that the basis exists, on a global scale and in each link in the chain of the imperialist system, for the seizure of power by the proletariat and its allies and for beginning the socialist transition to communism *even if* in a particular link in the chain the level of productive forces and proletarians working in conditions of socialized labor is far lower than the general level in the system as a whole. As far as I am concerned, the idea that under capitalism-imperialism some requisite level of socialized production and number of proletarians matching an ideal type corresponding to it is required in a particular country before embarking on proletarian revolution was laid to rest with an icepick in Mexico City many years ago.[26]

23 Ibid., 440. See also 434, 444–45, 539, and 541. Marx's description, in *Capital* vol. 1, 603–5, of piece-wages as a means for particularly egregious exploitation is also relevant.

24 Lenin, in his typical discomfort with giving fixed definitions, described imperialism as "capitalism at that stage of development at which the dominance of monopolies and finance capital is established; in which the division of the world among the international trusts has begun; in which the division of all territories of the globe among the biggest capitalist powers has been completed" *Imperialism*, in *Selected Works* vol. 1 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), 700. For Lenin's insistence on distinguishing capitalism-imperialism from prior imperialisms and as a socio-economic formation rather than a particular policy of a particular section of the ruling class in a given moment, see *Imperialism*, 695.

25 Lenin, *Imperialism*, 649.

26 Besides Mao Zedong and the Chinese Revolution having proved this idea wrong in theory and in practice, such a viewpoint is all the more absurd at present even for those who equate the proletariat solely with industrial wage-workers. Zak Cope notes that "as its most novel and defining feature, imperialism today entails the globalisation of production processes relying on the superexploitation of Third World labour" and that over 80% of world's



Zak Cope's *Divided World Divided Class* provides a thorough analysis of the parasitism of imperialism and the labor aristocracy.

A further problem arises with fetishizing the micro-level of highly-socialized production when we consider the position many workers in this micro-level occupy within the imperialist system as a whole. The fact is, many of those working in the most socialized labor processes with the most advanced productive forces have, over the last century or more, increasingly become part of what Lenin identified as the *labor aristocracy*. These are workers in the imperialist countries who receive super-wages (that is, wages whose value exceeds the value these workers produced) based on the super-profits extracted from the oppressed nations through super-exploitation (paying wage-workers below subsistence level) as well as theft of resources.[27] This labor aristocracy, as a numerically significant segment of the population, holds stable, often salaried jobs with retirement and health benefits, often owns their own homes, cars, and numerous trinkets afforded by the parasitism of imperialism, and, consequently, far from being or acting like a dispossessed, exploited class, it has been an enthusiastic junior-partner of the bourgeoisie, including in its support for imperialist wars of aggression. As a class, it is a stunning refutation of the notion that working on advanced productive forces in highly socialized labor processes results in revolutionary class-consciousness.

Where, then, in imperialist countries, do we look to find a real proletariat? Lenin's answer was to go "*lower* and *deeper*, to the real masses,"[28] and this has generally been taken to mean to those sections of people whose life conditions, owing to instability of employment, poverty, and lack of property, exemplify having nothing to lose but their chains. While this is certainly part of the answer, it is not adequate in understanding the forms of *motion*, rather than the *locational* position implied by "lower and deeper," that enact dispossession on, proletarianize, and cast off from employment increasing sections of people. To put it in Maoist terms, if reality consists of matter in motion, motion is the principal aspect.

The Russian Revolution is instructive in this regard. No less an advocate of deterministic conceptions of the productive forces in the revolutionary process as Leon Trotsky wrote:

> In correspondence with this general course of development of the country, the reservoir from which the Russian working class formed itself was not the craft-guild, but agriculture, not the city, but the country. Moreover, in Russia the proletariat did not arise gradually through the ages, carrying with itself the burden of the past as in England, but in leaps involving sharp changes of environment, ties, relations, and a sharp break with the past. It is just this fact—combined with the concentrated oppressions of tzarism—that made the Russian workers hospitable to the boldest conclusions of revolutionary thought—just as the backward industries were hospitable to the last word in capitalist organization.
>
> The Russian proletariat was forever repeating the short history of its origin. While in the metal industry, especially in Petrograd, a layer of hereditary proletarians was crystallized out, having made a complete break with the country, in the Urals the prevailing type was half-proletarian, half-peasant. A yearly inflow of fresh labor forces from the country in all the industrial districts kept renewing the bonds of the proletariat

industrial workforce is now in the "Global South" (Cope, 122).

27 For an analysis, including empirical data, on how the labor aristocracy has been constituted as the main social prop of imperialism, see Cope, *Divided World Divided Class*. Cope is entirely correct to identify the parasitism of this labor aristocracy as giving it a material class interest in maintaining imperialism, though his class analysis tends to be rather static, and while he recognizes the oppressed and exploited position of Black and immigrant proletarians within imperialist countries, he fails to see how these not numerically insignificant sections of the proletariat could constitute themselves as the backbone of communist revolution. Moreover, as a result of analyzing imperialism and making class analysis principally through the prism of the exploitation of labor, the program Cope puts forward (see pp. 212–14) centers on a "global living wage" and necessary stages of global anti-imperialist revolution rather than the aims of communist revolution and finding the possibilities for it in the different conditions around the world.

28 Lenin, *Imperialism and the Split in Socialism*, in *Collected Works* vol. 23 (Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1977), 120.

The factory isn't the only place where you can find high concentrations of proletarians. From top to bottom: New York's Queensbridge housing projects, a supermax prison, and a Mexico City slum.

with its fundamental social reservoir.[29]

By this account, it was the ongoing process of proletarianization and transience between urban and rural life, in contrast to settling into a permanent position as wage-workers, that made the Russian proletariat more amenable, ideologically and practically, to communist revolution.[30] Many historical accounts have emphasized the greater degree of exploitation of labor and higher proportion of workers in large factories in Russia, in comparison to Western Europe, as being decisive factors in the proletariat's readiness for revolution. Undoubtedly these also played an important, though I would argue still secondary, role. Trotsky exclaimed that "the giant enterprises, above 1,000 workers each, employed in the United States 17.8 per cent of the workers and in Russia 41.8 per cent!"[31]

Such enthusiasm for the concentration of a large number of proletarians in a single space of production is merited in so far as it presents communists with a practical opportunity to reach and organize many in a single effort, binds these proletarians together through common direct experience of exploitation, and facilitates communication and collective struggle among them. However, to fetishize the bind of daily experience of exploitation and collective struggle as automatically portending to class-consciousness would be to narrow the aims of communist revolution to that which serves the immediate struggle of those particular proletarians. As Lenin made clear in *What Is To Be Done?*, proletarian class-consciousness requires an all-around understanding of the relationship of all the various classes in society and a revolutionary aim beyond the production and exchange of commodities.

Moreover, large industrial factories and mines are far from the only places with a high

29 Leon Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1967), 11.

30 In *Class, Race, and Labor: Working-Class Consciousness in Detroit* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), John C. Leggett identifies similar processes among proletarians in Detroit. In particular, he finds heightened class-consciousness among Black workers recently uprooted from agrarian working and living conditions in the US South, as well as among formerly agrarian Polish immigrant workers (see in particular chapter four).

31 Trotsky, 10.

concentration of proletarians sharing common experiences of oppression and with the potential for collective struggle. Housing projects, prisons, the slums that have engulfed cities in the oppressed nations, and export processing zones stand out as other sites with these features. The question for communists, however, is not merely the immediate possibilities for collective struggle, but more importantly, how proletarians in such conditions can potentially more readily come to understand the need for and be organized to accomplish communist revolution.

In this regard, what is most crucial to understand about "conditions" is that, under capitalism, they are always changing. As David Harvey puts it, "powered by the engine of accumulation for accumulation's sake and fuelled by the exploitation of labour power, it [capital] constitutes a permanently revolutionary force which perpetually reshapes the world we live in."[32] As anarchic and perpetual as capitalism's dynamic transformations may be, this does not mean that finding footholds from which to bring forward a social base for revolution is impossible. On the contrary: it is precisely this perpetual reshaping of the world in ways that propels masses of people into antagonistic conflict with the motion of capital and constitutes new sections of the proletariat that creates potential footholds.[33] But since the ground is always shifting, communists must carry out the analytical work necessary to figure out where to build an organized pole *within* changing conditions. To that end, in part two we will turn to an overview of transformations in the capitalist-imperialist system over the last several decades, with particular attention to the motions of capital as they relate to class formation and the creation and intensification of social antagonisms.

32 Harvey, *The Limits to Capital*, 156.

33 This is in contrast to postmodernist notions that see, in capitalism's perpetual self-revolutionizing, only a fractured social reality and a power of hegemonic co-optation that is impervious to any universalist challenges.

Class Analysis and Class Structure in Canada

A Framework for Developing a Program of Revolutionary Multinational Struggle

by Comrade Stella B.

With contributions from Comrade Pierce and insights from comrades of the KM unit of Revolutionary Initiative.

Introduction by Amil K.

Advancing our analysis of class, national oppression, and the overall structure of Canadian society has been a long-time coming for Revolutionary Initiative. It's safe to say that elements of our preliminary "Theses on the Party-Building Movement in Canada"[1] document concerning the class structure of Canadian society and RI's early reflections upon how these classes could be united for socialist revolution (see "On the United Front in Canada"[2]) have been superseded by the combination of practical experiences, historical developments and perspectives brought forth by new waves of comrades.

The following document proposes a framework for analyzing class and national oppression that RI will be using to develop a draft Party Program. The ideas in this document, while not a strict line document, are informed by exchange and discussion within the organization and represent ideological struggle and unity achieved within the Central Committee of RI. This is a *guide* to the development of our Party Program. Class analysis is a process, therefore further theoretical consideration and empirical social investigation will sharpen our class analysis. However, it should be emphasized that this framework is informed by decades of collective experience of our comrades.

While this framework positively advances our categories of class analysis in a number of ways, we should highlight in particular where we are making significant points of departure from previous public documents or internal positions within RI:

- We are scrapping the concept of the *lumpen-proletariat* as a meaningless if not value-laden term. It confuses more than it clarifies. Though we have no public documents utilizing the "lumpen" concept as a class category, the lack of clarity on its meaning (or lack thereof) for us has left many comrades routinely deploying the concept as an element of their class analysis in the course of their mass work. In lieu of this ill-defined term, we must replace it with a class analysis of:

  1. Criminalized industries;

  2. Indigenous communities and the variegated ways that these communities are experiencing distinctly colonial forms of oppression, marginalization, and ongoing land dispossession and resource plunder that amounts to genocide; and

  3. Those remaining in the reserve army of labour who are not counted in the

1 "Theses on the Party-Building Movement in Canada," in Vol 1. of *Uprising* (2009), p.4-9.
2 *Ibid*, p.12-19.

first two categories.

We propose theorizing the *labour aristocracy* as a section of the petty-bourgeoisie and distinct from the worker elite *(see notes below on the role of the buffer strata)*. The role of the labour aristocracy, which includes the leadership structure within and functionaries of unions, the NDP, and the various institutions they control, is to *negotiate the worker elite's inclusion into imperialist society*, while containing, controlling and diverting proletarian struggles from developing into in a revolutionary direction. There is a growing contradiction between what we are calling the labour aristocracy and the worker elite, based on the inability of the labour aristocracy to renegotiate even the status quo – let alone make gains – for the worker elite. We believe that it is dangerous and politically juvenile to *not* distinguish between those workers who receive back a large portion of their surplus value by virtue of living within imperialist society and being situated in the upper stratum of an imperialist center's working class – what we call the *worker elite* – versus the officialdom and functionaries of social democracy within the bourgeosified "labour movement" and the New Democratic Party.

We must differentiate the non-exploited strata of the working-class (the *worker elite*) from the exploited and super-exploited strata of the proletariat, as well as Indigenous semi-proletarians who still have some access to independent production (hunting, fishing, land rights). We must analyze the methods and means by which the worker elite is won over to support imperialist policies, wars, colonialism and generalized Canadian chauvinism, and why and how or if these methods equally apply to or exercise hegemony over the rest

Paul Moist of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (left) and Jerry Dias (right) of UNIFOR together preside over almost a million union members in Canada in their respective unions. While they pose as defenders of "working people", the political program of the labour aristocracy really only bargains for the "middle-class" status of the upper stratum of union members - ***the worker elite*** - while younger workers, women, and industries occupied by people from oppressed nations and national minorities, find themselves getting paid between half or a quarter of what the worker elite takes home. By projecting worker elite aspirations onto the whole working class -- directly through their unions, indirectly through their campaigning and political wing, the NDP -- they misguide the proletariat as a whole. They also maintain labour peace by keeping the working class within the boundaries of bourgeois labour law. In 2013 BASICSNews.ca revealed that Paul Moist got paid $160,000 in 2012, not including benefits and a travel budget for his office of $370,000. Jerry Dias has been estimated by the Toronto Star to make about $140,000 annually. So they're paid like petty-bourgeois and they manage the lives of proletarians in the interests of the bourgeoisie like petty-bourgeois, which is why we advocate for viewing the labour aristoracy as part of the petty-bourgeoisie.

of the working class. What proportion of the working-class is covered by pension funds, and to what extent? What proportion of the working-class is invested in the inflated real estate markets in and around Canada's major urban centers? What are the demographics and geographical spread of the growing non-unionized proletariat, which is more exploited, has fewer benefits, and is living far more precariously? Just a few questions among many more that we will have to answer in trying to sketch out the stratification of the working-class in Canada. If we are to prioritize the organization of the proletariat, then Revolutionary Initiative and the Party form that will follow from it must be able to define it.

We refute the notion that the petty-bourgeoisie in an imperialist country like Canada can be "vacillating" class, or that it can be seen as a "swing-class." This was an erroneous position previously held by our organization. Rather, the petty-bourgeoisie should be seen as a class whose bourgeois aspirations are to be neutralized in a revolutionary situation. Revolutionaries from petty-bourgeois class backgrounds can only be brought into revolutionary struggle as *individuals* and only through a process of committing class suicide. Instead of the petty-bourgeoisie being seen as "vacillating", we believe that we must rather analyze the potential for the downwardly mobile worker elite to be a "swing class." That is, in a revolutionary situation, can the organization of the proletariat "swing" the worker elite in a revolutionary direction? This will not happen out of sheer spontaneity. Ultimately, the proletariat must be able to build organizational forms both inside and outside the structure of existing unions, build red unions and turn yellow unions red, so that the worker elite's allegiance, however waning, can be decisively won over to a socialist and anti-colonial vision of society through revolution.

It should also be mentioned that an analysis of national oppression and genocide in Canada, while aided by components of the above framework, still requires significant work on our part.

Part One: Why do revolutionary organizers need to know how to engage in the practice of class analysis?

There are three major reasons why RI members must engage in an active practice of class analysis:

Leadership development

The first step in building RI as a revolutionary fighting force is our cadre development. But the process we go through in developing new cadre requires that *we as cadre* understand the class structure of our society. Class analysis isn't some dry intellectual exercise for armchair Marxists or academics sitting in wide-windowed offices. Only through cadre-led social investigation will we be able to promote a living, active engaged-in-struggle revolutionary Marxist class analysis.[3] Our class analysis must provide an analytical framework to reflect and then explain in plain proletarian language how our experiences in the hood and on the rez are a result of the exploitation and national oppression in Canadian society and in the imperialist world system. Class analysis should allow us to see our shared stake in common class experiences and figure out how to best fight back. Class analysis is a weapon in the class war, and we need to learn how best to wield this weapon.

We must not use vague words or speak in generalizations to cover up our lack of basic understanding. It takes practice to push people along a trajectory of class consciousness through organizing conversations, but we need to learn these skills to effectively do our mass organizing. Can all of our Cadre all explain how they're exploited and oppressed? Can they explain the difference between exploitation and oppression? Can we speak to proletarian people and help them identify the answers to these questions in their own lives? These are major challenges we face. We must struggle for unity in our own understanding and not assume we all know and agree on shit or that we have some heroic leader who's got all the answers. It's up to us.

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3 Social investigation precedes class analysis. Do we learn our class analysis just from theoretical works? Hell no!

Mass Organizing

The basic building block of a mass movement[4] are people's organizations that move proletarians into mass democratic practice to envision a classless society, and struggle against the bourgeoisie and their hegemonic institutions.

Who we fight with, what we fight for, and how we fight is shaped by our understanding of society. Literally. To deny this is to side with the petty-bourgeoisie who would try to convince us of the neutrality of organizational structures and methods. Class analysis can only be tested through mass democratic practices. Dry ideas do not a revolution make. We need active social investigation to test and concretize and substantiate our overall class analysis. What does the evidence on the streets, in our workplaces, in our homes, and on the reserve, tell us?

The concept of buffer strata is strategically significant at the mass level. We are advancing the *super-important* concept of a buffer strata – *super-important* because exposing the buffering of class tensions helps us identify contradictions, correct methods of class struggle, and who our principle alliances are within our context. To describe a particular strata as a buffer strata is an attempt to analyze the role of that strata, or central elements of that strata, in maintaining bourgeois hegemony in the superstructure and lay bare that both the use-function (things that appear to help us) and the control-function (things that police us) of this strata serve the upper classes and not the working class.[5] Does a professional role actually dampen or derail proletarian class struggle? And can adopting strategies, such as legal strategies, that put people of the buffer strata in the leadership actually lead us astray?

Regarding **petty-bourgeois professionals**, they play a critical role in maintaining the bourgeois ideological superstructure. They function as a buffer or protective layer between the bourgeoisie and the working class. They are what Marx called the "surplus class" who "perform functions that make sense only in within the structure of capitalism."[6] Lawyers, doctors, police, academics… who do they ultimately serve? We must accept that they play important control functions in state and government apparatuses (as well as our lives) but ultimately their role is to reproduce the bourgeois superstructure.[7] The petty-bourgeois professional is in charge of "planning, managing, and rationalizing capitalist institutions and ideologies."[8] The skills they learn and the institutions they work within don't ultimately serve working class needs and purposes. We must not adopt petty-bourgeois methods of work.

Regarding the distinction between the **labour aristocracy** and the **worker elite**, these are *two discreet groups*. I diverge from bromma and propose that the ideological and political role of the labour aristocracy, as well as the knowledge and skills they employ, place

4 The mass movement is just one of the three-four magic weapons of a Maoist revolutionary strategy, along with revolutionary Party, united front, and army. Stay tuned for strategy documents coming in the Fall / Winter 2015.

5 See Amil K on Gramsci to grasp the importance of the superstructure and see Stella B on dual power for an explanation of use and control functions of the petty-bourgeoisie and the state.

The concept of buffer attempts to sharpen our understanding of the dialectic between the mode of production and the superstructure. For "in class societies, state forms will be both involved in the coercion of the majority and appear (phenomenally, i.e. in the immediate experience) as separate from day-to-day production, but we shall generate both partial history and distorted socialism if we take one set of activities and their immediate appearance as total explanation." Corrigan et al, 1980 (see reading list provided at the end of this article).

6 As quoted in Henry Veltmeyer, *Canadian Class Structure,* Garamond Press, 1986.

7 This includes analysing the social relations shaped and enforced by the bourgeois nation-state, neoliberal containment policies and practices, philanthrocapitalism, the institutions of organized Zionism, major religious institutions such as the Christian Church establishment, and hetero-patriarchal social norms including the social organization of work deemed valueless by capitalism. This point is of particular salience when analyzing the historical process of bourgeois capital formation and the imposition of capitalist class relations onto Indigenous nations and modes of production. It is also equally crucial for a material analysis of hetero-patriarchy and gender as the basis for production, reproduction and total material social organization.

8 I would argue this is a great way to look at many medical/legal/scientific/educational professions – under a Maoist commune system how would we organize: healthcare, education, science, justice? And advertising, insurance and all that bullshit would be gone. COPS!! And social workers, welfare state upper management, teachers, and those who function to manage poor people. Fuck that.

them in the petty-bourgeois professional buffer strata. They play a pivotal role in "planning, managing, and rationalizing capitalist institutions and ideologies" in state-sanctioned unions which have become major investors in imperialism.[9] Overall upper union brass do not represent proletarian interests. How do we define the labour aristocracy? Just look at what they're doing on the ground. The material basis for the labour aristocracy is not their role in production, but rather the money they live off of that flows through unions from dues automatically deducted from workers' wages. "As long as the bourgeoisie and the workers are tangled in the government legislated labour-relations process (are in a kind of stalemate) money will continue to flow to the union"[10] *and the use-function of the labour aristocracy continues* – they are petty-bourgeois in *essence*. Further, there exists an important punitive *control*-function of the labour aristocracy that warrants examination. The **worker elite**, however, are *working class* – they experience class conflict at the point of production (and reproduction). They are *not a revolutionary strata* of the working class, but they can swing, as Amil begins to suggest above in the *Introduction.*

Revolutionary strategy

What binds the mass movement as a whole is a revolutionary strategy.[11] If we don't have revolutionary strategy, at least a beginner-level plan of how we think we can achieve advance a revolutionary struggle towards communism, then we're sunk before we've started. This is not to say that we need to have a final plan – that would be un-dialectical and idealist! But if we're unable to articulate the framework for a plan, we're not serious revolutionaries. The following proposed class structure has significant implications for a mass movement strategy, for revolutionary strategy and for a principled and transparent revolutionary united front with the forces of Indigenous national liberation.

Part Two: Outline of the Proposed Class Structure

Bourgeoisie
- Monopoly
- Lieutenants

Petty-Bourgeoisie
- Professionals *(buffer strata, includes the labour aristocracy)*
- Business
- Management

Working Class
- Worker elite (buffer strata)
- Exploited proletariat
- Super exploited proletariat

Semi-Proletariat

We must take the following into account when analyzing class relations under imperialism:

- Those with property in the means of production: legal ownership or even access to and control over
- Those with state-legislated professional designations and a significant role in the political-ideological superstructure
- Those who can purchase versus those who sell their labour power
- Those living on capital, those living on wages, and those living on supplemental government income
- Those exploited at the point of production or reproduction
- Those who do not control their own labour

9 Union pension management are literally major financial investors in imperialism. I'm not speaking purely ideologically. For example: http://www.bnn.ca/News/2014/12/16/Pension-funds-eye-energy-companies-hurt-by-oil.aspx there are many, many more examples which are outside the scope of this framing document.

10 To quote Comrade Pierce from a conversation we had.

11 Revolutionary strategy can only be synthesized by an organization that is consciously committed to and acts out its plans for revolution. Some comrades outside RI have misinterpreted our strong emphasis on the role of mass organizations as somehow indicating that we believe that revolutionary strategy or a revolutionary Party will emerge out of mass organizations. RI's eight years of theoretical advances, organizational unfolding, and the development of cadre, attests to our position that a Party must be independently developed – even if with very close ties to mass work amongst the proletariat.

Part Three: Commentary on our Proposed Class Structure

The Bourgeoisie & Lieutenants of Capital

It is essential we know who the bourgeoisie are and to put names and faces to our enemies at a national, regional, and local level. It also means that we know who the lieutenants of capital are, and that we analyze bourgeois democratic formations and engagement in bourgeois political and organizational forms correctly. This analysis is critical to counter the claims of social democratic forces that there is potential for social justice in struggles to expand the state provision of services and for state-led wealth redistribution under capitalism when we, as revolutionary communists, know that this is not the case.

Having a material analysis of the bourgeoisie in Canada also means having an analysis of class stratification within all sectors of the people that we identify as having significance for a mass revolutionary united front: Indigenous nations, women, historically-oppressed nations or national minorities, etc.

The Petty-bourgeoisie: not a swing class!

Working class people have class conflict at the point of production, but increasingly people's class conflict within the imperialist countries becomes engagement with the state and the bourgeois ideological superstructure. Class conflicts are appearing as: police violence and harassment, unjust immigration policies and practices, rising housing prices and the lack of cost controls, the lack of state-funded childcare and inequitable tax systems, failing public transit systems, failing education systems. Poor people are fighting against the petty-bourgeois professional buffer strata. We cannot ask for the return of the welfare state, nor look to the petty-bourgeoisie to guide or fund class struggle.

We need to strengthen our analysis of the petty-bourgeoisie and their role in reproducing the bourgeois superstructure and maintaining conditions of bourgeois hegemony. The petty-bourgeoisie work within the system "designed to maintain the culture and reproduce the ideas that legitimate capitalism and help it survive" and with the purpose of "perform[ing] functions that make sense only within the structure of capitalism."[12] Thus

12 Veltmeyer, H. (1986). *The Canadian Class Structure.* Toronto: Garamond Press.

Ruling elite: is a highly influential subsection of the bourgeoisie: concentrated in "old money", influential families, and monopoly capitalists who have a tremendous political influence (to generate favorable conditions in the superstructure: legislation, financial incentives, trade policies, etc. Included in this elite are important lieutenants.

From top left moving to the right and down, here's the wealth held by the ruling men or families among Canada's monopoly capitalists:

- David Thompson of Thompson Reuters - Net worth of $20 billion
- Galen and Hilary Weston of Weston/Loblaws/Holt Renfrew - Net worth $8.2 billion
- James, Arthur, and John Irving of Irving Oil - Net worth of $8+ billion
- Edward Rogers III - Net worth of $6.41 billion)
- Jimmy Pattison of Pattison Group - Net worth of $6.14 billion

they become a target other than the bourgeoisie for unorganized expressions of class anger. This includes state-legislated self-regulating professionals such as physicians and lawyers, the police,[13] tenured academics, elite private school teachers, upper management of the welfare state who engage in "planning, managing, and rationalizing capitalist institutions and ideologies"[14] and so on.

An important strategic implication is that when we're talking about building institutions of working class power, we don't look to petty-bourgeois knowledge or forms of organization as our model.[15] This means, for example, that bourgeois-dominated legal struggles, bourgeois-dominated academic work, bourgeois-dominated union movements, bourgeois-dominated health movements are seen for what they are: expressions of a particular form of class power which is not rooted in the working class. This is not to say we don't engage these bourgeois political expressions and their work, but this is definitely not our starting place. We recognize the class character of these professional roles and look beyond these ideological and political class expressions and forms of organization for how we can do things differently. **We look to examples from revolutionary movements for how they have built popular power, people's organizations, and people's institutions which strive to generate new knowledge and expertise in an ongoing processes of transfer of power and control to the exploited masses**, and what organizational forms these struggles have taken.

A final strategic implication is that we don't view the petty-bourgeoisie as a vacillating class to be brought into the united front since they overwhelmingly adopt and adhere to their professional standards, values, ideals, practices, and class privileges. We can organize petty-bourgeois individuals but not the petty-bourgeoisie as a class.

13 Except those who fit into the bourgeois class as lieutenants of capital such as Chiefs of Police.
14 Veltmeyer.
15 See Comrade Amil's essays on Gramsci, which appeared in Volume 4 of *Uprising* (Fall 2013).

The Working-Class: worker elite, the exploited proletariat, and the super-exploited proletariat

We propose new analytical categories to analyze the stratification of the working class in Canada, namely: the worker elite, the exploited proletariat, and the super-exploited proletariat. We find bromma's substantiation of the worker elite compelling, and draw heavily on this analysis.[16] However, to simply group the remainder of the proletariat together as an amorphous category of the "hard core" that the PCR-RCP uses in its program and other documents lacks explanatory power.

The Worker Elite: Not Proletarian!

As a revolutionary pre-party formation whose strategy rests on the development of a mass movement and a revolutionary united front, our focus is the development of mass line organizing and institutions of proletarian power amongst the exploited and super-exploited strata of the working class. While we propose that the worker elite may be at some juncture a swing strata that will be required to win the proletarian revolution, at this point we do not view the worker elite to be a revolutionary force. The worker elite are invested in imperialism, quite literally, through home ownership, pension funds and other investments. The worker elite are bound to the stability of capitalism by housing prices, oil prices, and the value of the Canadian dollar on the international market. This is of particular salience for military production. Jobs for this strata are tied to oil and other extractive industries, military occupation, and imperialist wars of aggression. Even while the worker elite may be coming under fire in some industries and in the public sector unions, new groupings of worker elites are growing in the resource extraction industries, especially in the Prairies.

The Proletariat

The proletariat can be divided into the exploited and super-exploited sections. The conditions of being proletarian rest on the dispossession of people from any form of

16 See bromma's *Worker Elite: Notes on the "Labour Aristocracy"*. Certainly, a more comprehensive treatment of bromma's text and the general theory of the labour aristocracy is required of us.

Fort McMurray's worker elites gets to buy homes like this with the money they earn in one of the world's most destructive industries. Just as all sections of the worker elite serve as a social base for bourgeois rule, Alberta's worker elite serves as a critical social base for Canada's extractive industries -- uniquely, without social democracy as the main mediating force.

self-sufficient and independent production (namely the land as the primary force of pre-capitalist production) and the freedom of workers to sell their labour power for a wage (i.e. not be slaves). But the question of freedom needs much deeper exploration and consideration.

We have witnessed in the development of capitalism in the imperialist countries a continuum of **unfreedom** [typified by antebellum slavery, but also including the use of Chinese indentured migrant labour in Canada] **to freedom** [typified by the worker elite]. Freedom is relative, not neat and tidy.[17] The dividing line between the exploited proletariat and the super-exploited proletariat rests not only on economic rates of exploitation over and above costs of reproduction, but also on a) very real constraints on the ability of workers to "freely" sell their labour power (varying forms of bondage on the continuum of freedom), and b) how much unpaid labour one is providing to capitalism. I personally believe a deeper examination of the role of this continuum of **unfreedom -> freedom** has far greater potential for explanatory power than any simple financial or functional demarcation. We must also understand the economics and dynamics of national oppression and patriarchy in this analysis.

But for now we are using costs of reproduction[18] versus rates of wage remuneration as our delineation noting the following:

Understanding the super-exploited proletariat

Super-profits are an economic marker.

It is important to state that rates of exploitation are a proxy for a deeper process, but they are a place to begin our organizing work. From looking at rates of exploitation in contrast with costs of economic survival, we can begin to organize those whose basic rate of reproduction is higher than their remuneration in the form of wages i.e. the super-exploited.

In my experiences of organizing women, linking the provision of unpaid and paid labour is a critical component of our struggle. The abandonment of proletarian women by the bourgeois state in the era of neoliberalism has led to the increase of unpaid use values, which is indirectly increasing the total expropriated surplus from proletarian women and reducing the variable labour costs of this section of the proletariat. Naming women's unpaid labour to the capitalist-imperialist system is of particular salience for raising the class consciousness of women and finding critical strategic battle-ground unity between, say for example, proletarian women who are unable to find childcare and super-exploited migrant women from oppressed nations who provide childcare for privileged majority-white

17 And oppressive conditions which exert binding or limiting conditions on working class people of colour, women, Indigenous folks because of national oppression, colonialism, and patriarchy impact people across classes to varying degrees = oppression defined as "difficulty and hardship."

18 There exists historical precedence for this in both Marxist and bourgeois economic traditions. Reproduction is economically and politically significant, and costs of worker reproduction played a major role in the end of slavery.

petty-bourgeois and worker elite women. In the words of my sister comrades "you cannot buy liberation on the backs of other women."[19]

Understanding mechanisms of power and control.

From economic proxies we start to delve deeper into the social processes that perpetuate the divisions across the proletariat and start to move from economic equations into examining the **social relations of exploitation as complex processes.**[20] There is an important power differential at play in the process of super-exploitation that strikes at the material intersections of national oppression and patriarchy. Super-exploited workers are bound to employers, work places, or contractual or legal obligations in ways that deny certain "freedoms" available to the remainder of the proletariat.[21] And in the case of the sex industry, the topic many fear to analyze through a Marxist materialist[22] analysis is that national oppression and patriarchy intersect in the form of a modern day sexual slavery, with the extreme taking the form of human trafficking that disproportionally impacts Indigenous women.[23] Because of the central roles of national oppression and patriarchy in the generation of surplus value and capital, super-exploited proletarians experience greatly limited relations of production so that their labour isn't free to be just exploited at the average rate or at a rate above the cost of reproduction. This is not an aberration of capitalism but a financial imperative of imperialism, and a reality for much of the global proletariat.[24]

Informal workers, criminalized workers, and the reserve army of labour.

These are not strata but conditions of the exploited proletariat. Workers move in and out of these categories in a fluid and dialectical dance between law and economics, between state-legitimated employment and often rapidly changing economic needs.[25] In fact, we need much "lower and deeper" social investigation and class analysis into the intermingling of criminalized workers (formerly called "lumpenproletarians") and the reserve army of labour. *When workers are unemployed, how do they survive?* Who is profiting from these methods of survival? Where is our class analysis of informal and criminalized economies? This is not to deny the important function of the reserve army of labour within the capitalist mode of production, for a ready source of workers is integral to imperialism and many have theorized the importance of the global reserve army. Furthermore, the downward pressure that the reserve army exerts on formally employed workers is also central to maximal surplus value.

Comrades know from our own lives and communities that the neoliberal containment state wreaks havoc on the lives of women forced into the margins of proletarian existence. There is a downward spiral of abandonment by the state, super-exploitation, and criminalization that positions proletarian women in the neoliberal economy at the crux of national oppression and patriarchy.[26] It is

19 Revolutionary feminism lies at the core of my analysis, an analysis that is rooted in collaborative praxis.

20 Kenny Lake's discussion on imagining social relations of collaboration at the macro-level is important. It isn't just about ending exploitation! It's about reimagining the totality of society, including how we determine social value. It's no joke that my perfect world doesn't include plastic rubber duckies that poison future generations, let alone children who are forced to live in institutions or on the street because their families are separated from community, individualized, alienated, and shattered by imperialism.

21 Temporary foreign workers, farm workers, prisoners, etc. We should deeply analyze both the role of financial debt and the role of marriage. Another important way we can learn about this differential power and control is to examine how attempts to build communist societies have failed to address certain forms of exploitative relations, such as reproductive labour.

22 It appears to me that many fear analyzing the sex industry because it threatens heterosexual male sexuality, male power, petty-bourgeois notions of individual autonomy, and the valorization of individual identity.

23 http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/05/24/trafficking-native-communities-160475

24 Whether we call this sub-structural or superstructural – see my article on "Revolutionary Feminism" in this issue (pp. 37-55) for more discussion of these concepts.

25 The new "just in time" methods of production have some workers fluctuating from formal employment to reserve army at rapid pace, even within the imperialist countries, Walmart being the most notorious.

26 This analysis of the differential impacts of neoliberal containment strategies on women's lives (abandonment on one hand and heightening policing on the other) and the direct connections to the flexibilization, contractualization and the deskilling of (in particular migrant) women's labour comes from collective analysis of a group of women comrades in my region. Watch these young women tell their stories, though not our context, still insightful: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LAWUchjlyUM

imperative we hone our class analysis of the lived experiences of these women or we will never achieve revolutionary proletarian unity!

The Semi-proletariat

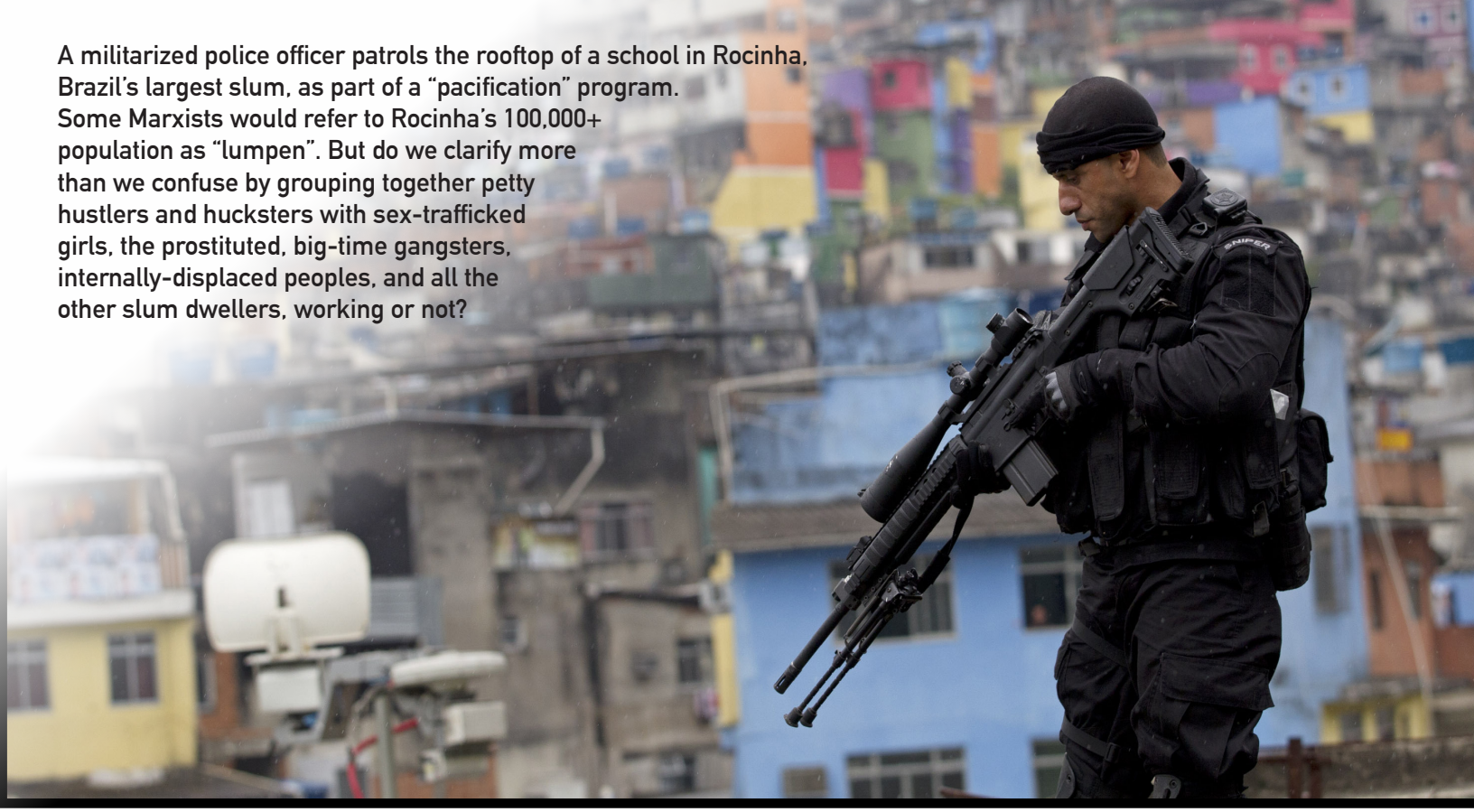
We are advancing the concept of the semi-proletariat in Canada in recognition that colonialism is a central question for revolutionaries and the national/land struggle predominates in Indigenous communities. Indigenous people may not view or even in some instances experience the capitalist mode of production as predominant or class struggle within capitalism as the strategic point of entry into revolutionary struggles. This is not to say that what is happening on the ground in Indigenous communities isn't because of capitalism and ongoing imperialist economic expansion and land dispossession. What I am saying is that the debates taking shape around decolonization don't necessarily revolve around economic questions of mode of production or fighting capitalist exploitation either off reserve or on reserve, but rather revolve around ownership and control of the land. We must conduct significant principled social investigation and class analysis, and listen to these perceptions and experiences.

It is worth exploring the concept of semi-proletariat in regards to segments of Indigenous society. This makes conceptual sense, in that Indigenous dispossession from the lands is not complete, and the collective ability for independent production exists where the land remains as a force of pre-capitalist production. To some degree the semi-proletariat is a suspended reserve army of labour, where the bulk of the costs of social reproduction fall back on the colonized nation in a context of a land base too small to adequately support the size of the population allocated to that land-base. Subsequently this creates the conditions for partial or majority integration into the capitalist economy due to suppressed economic conditions and for comprador political representation within the bourgeois state. This creates two major contradictions: a)

Young women form the basis of a new revolutionary force, and if we can't harness this anger into skilled leadership and a fighting force we're not effective at our mass work!

An image of a pithouse under construction at the site of the Unist'ot'en Camp, a site of major resistance to pipeline development through unceded Wet'suwet'en Nation territory.

The land question is central to the outstanding national question(s) of Indigenous nations, which exist as internal colonies within Canada's colonial borders. This point cannot be overstated. The land question has as its material basis the reality that a large proportion of the population of Onkwe:honwe [original peoples] remain on and in control of their ancestral lands, from which they derive some degree of material sustenance and a massive degree of legitimacy for their struggles. This is a very a dangerous reality to Canadian imperialism that the neo-colonial process of modern treaties is trying to "extinguish". The project of colonialism is not complete, and thus neither is the process of proletarianization. Hence, the concept 'semi-proletarian'.



A militarized police officer patrols the rooftop of a school in Rocinha, Brazil's largest slum, as part of a "pacification" program. Some Marxists would refer to Rocinha's 100,000+ population as "lumpen". But do we clarify more than we confuse by grouping together petty hustlers and hucksters with sex-trafficked girls, the prostituted, big-time gangsters, internally-displaced peoples, and all the other slum dwellers, working or not?

struggles against colonial land theft, national genocide and extinguishment, and to develop Indigenous productive forces (which does not preclude exploitative social relations nor integration into capitalism), and b) working class struggles against capitalist exploitation and oppression. Revolutionary formations which unite these two struggles are imperative for any revolutionary struggle to significantly advance on Turtle Island.[27]

What is required is an accurate material analysis of the stages of transformation from the traditional modes of production into forced dependence on the capitalist economy through the process of colonization, land theft, dependence on the money economy, and repressive and racist state legislation. What are traditional modes of production (hierarchal clan systems, original communistic societies) and how are these modes of production still practiced or forming the basis of Indigenous social organization today? Or do we analyze that class stratification in Indigenous nations is complete and divided into the above strata?

Re-theorizing the location of Indigenous nations and communities in the class stratification in Canada is recognition of the historical relationship to colonial Canadian state and the colonial bourgeoisie, and an acknowledgement of the revolutionary position of Indigenous communities and nations outside of the capitalist mode of production: i.e. the centrality of national liberation and the imperative of the multinational united front for revolution.

27 See the Indigenous People's Liberation Party-Kanada at https://indigenousliberationkanada.wordpress.com/

"Lumpenproletariat"

The concept of lumpenproletariat is archaic and in practice plays out as an avoidance of a more accurate and relevant, and yet challenging, class analysis of both criminalized industries and chronically unemployed and underemployed workers. The concept of the lumpenproletariat as a parasitical class (differentiated from the bourgeoisie) is un-reflexive, moralistic, and analytically limiting.

Workers are not in fixed positions within capitalist production. Some workers move, often rapidly between or simultaneously within, legal and criminalized industries and formal and informal employment. Unemployed workers participate in the peripheral or informal economy. Do we not consider this productive work? To say it isn't is to hive off a great deal of capital accumulation from our analysis. Further we need to strategize on organizing criminalized workers, for there are serious and usually violent consequences for workers and

their communities for enforcing exploitation outside of the parameters of bourgeois law. How do we understand this situation? Who is this situation benefiting? How do we analyze the prison-industrial complex and the neoliberal mass incarceration agenda in relation to criminalized industries?

Finally, we need to engage in an analysis of the class stratification of criminalized industries. It will be revealing to dig into the overlap between the bourgeoisie and profit extraction from illegal (by bourgeois law) trade and industry. We must expose the thin line between the legal and the illegal within bourgeois legality, and also seriously question the whole framework of using bourgeois law to determine who is considered parasitical on workers. Parasitism is more accurately applied to the bourgeoisie as a whole. It is likely if we were to take stock of the sum total of work people are actually *doing*, a lot of workers' labour bleeds the working class of physical, social, and economic resources. Much within capitalist production is detrimental to human health and well-being. This is a direct result of the bourgeois need to extract surplus value (i.e. to be parasites). We must avoid moralistic arguments. Is slinging dope as a low level dealer worse than selling legal psychotropic pharmaceuticals? Or fitting oil pipes? Or working in a factory that produces poisonous baby toys that leak VOCs and causes cancer in our children?

In light of the above arguments, we will be:

- Eliminating the "lumpen-proletariat" as a category of analysis: and

Rethinking the people who operate in criminalized industries based on their relationship to production: drug industry, sex industry, human trafficking, racketeering, gambling, etc.

Part Four: Class Analysis Framework

Now to put it all together.

Notes of explanation: the **green main boxes** in the chart below delineate the class and the breakdown underneath each green box are the strata of that class.

The **yellow boxes** signify what elements of this class are critical for developing and maintaining hegemony. For the bourgeoisie it is the ruling elite. For the petty-bourgeoisie it is the professional strata. For the working class it is the labour aristocracy – and for sure I believe that the labour aristocracy can no longer be accurately considered as either materially or ideologically falling within the working class, but I understand this needs to be further debated.

Bourgeoisie (in economic terms) / Ruling elite (in political terms)

1. Has property in the means of production: owns or controls major units of the country's economy including major corporations and chartered banks.

2. Purchases labour power

3. Control over their own and others labour

4. Source of livelihood is capital: stocks, bonds, rent, interest payments, so on

Strata	Defining Features	Forms of Ruling and Hegemony
Monopoly bourgeoisie: *could be sub-divided as follows…*	• Capital size • Control major sectors of the economy, *including criminalized industries*, though increasingly they share corporate control in a complex web of ownership • Monopolize markets • Control prices • Top 100 control 50% assets; top 1% controls majority of corporate stocks and bonds *(i.e. the Financial Post 500: a club of mostly men who control the corporate economy)* • Sectors work in concert	• What are the forms of organization for the bourgeoisie? Both *formal* (boards, organizational leadership roles, memberships, etc.) and *informal* (schools, social clubs, etc.) (elite education is the main way people are recruited as lieutenants) • How does this organization overlap with the super-structure? • How do the ruling elite control state apparatuses? What are the implications? Another way to conceptualize it: 1. Anglo-Canadian capitalists: Canadian controlled corporations (see below for top 5) 2. Foreign capitalists: serve in Canada as delegates from abroad (military tech, oil, etc.) 3. Canadian capitalists involved in foreign-controlled corporations (as above)
Industrialists: industrial production		
Financiers: investment and financial accumulation		
Entrepreneurs: work with other people's money		
Managers: do they differ substantially from industrialists? Often the same people! Have been identified as the "most active and influential part of the propertied class"		

Ruling elite: is a highly influential subsection of the bourgeoisie: concentrated in "old money", influential families, and monopoly capitalists who have a tremendous political influence (to generate favorable conditions in the superstructure: legislation, financial incentives, trade policies, etc. Included in this elite are important lieutenants.

TOP 5:David Thomson III (Reuters/media, Woodbridge/ finance), Galen Weston (largest national employer, grocery/food/retail), Arthur Irving (Oil), Jim Pattison (Canada's largest privately held company/entrepreneur), Edward Rogers III (telecom)

Class Stratification	Defining Features	Forms of Ruling and Hegemony
Small Capitalists and the Lieutenants of the bourgeoisie: agents and functionaries of capital	• Ownership in the means of production, but not at the monopoly size • Political and economic influence on a regional or provincial level • Power can be directly delegated from the big bourgeoisie: Board Chairmen, CEOs, Presidents, top managers • Includes those who wield central state power without great wealth or economic power: Prime Minister, Cabinet members, directors of Crown Corporations	• University presidents and other major directors of ideological institutions • Presidents and ideologues of major professional associations • Professionals who are also bourgeoisie in their own right – established legal firm/medical clinic owners, etc.

Petty Bourgeoisie

has substantially less economic and political power than the bourgeoisie

1. Has property in the means of production: owns or controls major units of the country's economy including major corporations and chartered banks.

2. Purchases labour power

3. Control over their own and others labour

4. Source of livelihood is capital: stocks, bonds, rent, interest payments, so on

THEY ARE NOT EXPLOITED, and are generally not alienated or oppressed

FOR THE BUFFER STRATA: Reproduction of bourgeois hegemonic power and control, reproduction of state apparatuses whose main purpose is management of the proletariat/semi-proletariat and maximum extraction of surplus value

Strata	Defining Features	Forms of Ruling and Hegemony
Professionals BUFFER STRATA	• Professional training • Advanced technical training • Independent fee-for-service or salaried work • Fulfil reproductive super-structural roles • May have SciTech roles (RND) Work within **"the system designed to maintain the culture and reproduce the ideas that legitimate capitalism and help it survive"**	• "Buffer" between the bourgeoisie and the working class – what Marx called the "surplus class" who "perform functions that make sense only in within the structure of capitalism" • Play important control functions in state and government apparatuses (and beyond…) **"planning, managing, and rationalizing capitalist institutions and ideologies"** If in addition to professional skills and independent income they also earn income from capital investments they are bourgeois
Management	• Mid-range corporate management • Or delegated state management authority (through legislation or policy) • Insignificant economic power • Usually men	
Business & Proprietors	• Own businesses with insignificant labour force • Lack power or economic influence • "corner stores, beauty parlors, fix-it shops, cafes, truckers, carpenters, plumbers" • This is often the major avenue for income earning left open to people from oppressed nations • Administrators who work on salary for larger firms	• Can contribute to class tensions within communities, increased demands for vigilante policing through Business Improvement Associations

The Working Class

1. No property in means of production and
2. Lacks skills/training/control function sufficient to place them in the PB
3. Sells own labour power
4. Lives on wages
5. Exploited at the point of production
6. Does not control their own labour

Strata	Defining Features	Forms of Ruling and Hegemony
Worker Elite: Major role is working class base for pro-capitalist social democracy Bromma mostly good on worker elite – good international perspective	Also a buffer strata in objective roles: buffer proletarian struggle, protect bourgeois interests • **Material interests become bound to capitalism** through home ownership, pension funds, housing market, oil prices, value of the dollar, etc. • Family wage (above living wage) • Political power: carry a social democratic line within working class • Ideological orientation toward petty bourgeoisie	**What does this mean for our strategy?** • Group of people we don't' organize based on their class position but rather on their ideological perspective • At this juncture we don't view this class as revolutionary • *MAY* be a swing class / vacillating strata under conditions of proletarian struggle • At this conjuncture we don't view union organizing (incl. radical union organizing) as a revolutionary strategy
Exploited Proletarians	• No material means of production (capital/skills), works for wages • Lives at cost of reproduction but unable to build up savings • Examine relationship to substructures of imperialism • Has debt but also access to credit at the normal rate of exploitation	• This is our organizational focus • Engaging in our sectorial class analysis along these lines will assist in our material analysis of class stratification in Canada
Super-Exploited Proletarians	• Lives below cost of reproduction • Precarious legal-criminal/citizenship status • Face racism and patriarchy in the labour market which increase rate of exploitation • Low education credentials / access to credentials • Lack of job experience that can go on a resume • Access to credit only at a high rate of interest • Provides the bulk of reproductive labour / unpaid labour	• As above: This is our organizational focus

The semi-proletariat		
1. No property in the capitalist mode of production		
2. Some claim to communal lands and subsistence from traditional (non-capitalist) modes of production		
3. Lacks skills/training/control function sufficient to place them in the PB		
4. At times required to sell own labour power		
5. Don't live purely on wages		
6. Exploited at the point of production within capitalism		
Strata	**Defining Features**	**Forms of Ruling and Hegemony**
Semi-proletariat	• "for a colonized people the most essential value, not because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity" Fanon • Societies, nations, or communities where communal land, other forms of communal property, and communal production forms the basis of some degree of subsistence survival • Recognizes that the process of class divisions and the development of the capitalist mode of production is not complete • Dialectic of material basis in pre-capitalist mode of production and political connection to Indigenous national struggle	**What does this mean for our strategy?** • Group of people we don't' organize based on their class position but rather on their ideological perspective • At this juncture we don't view this class as revolutionary • *MAY* be a swing class / vacillating strata under conditions of proletarian struggle • At this conjuncture we don't view union organizing (incl. radical union organizing) as a revolutionary strategy

A few words on readings by way of a conclusion

How much book study do you need to be an authority or an expert on a topic? What is the role of lived experience and revolutionary praxis in this expertise? Who do we look to to advance our theory? What constitutes breakthrough revolutionary theoretical advancements in our conjuncture? These are interesting questions. We should be challenged for where we draw our analysis and our theory. But I think the more relevant question for our cadre is, "why are you reading?"

We read to change the world, and this requires reading relevant to our work. Read -> practice -> theorize -> test -> read more to answer relevant questions on primary contradictions in your work. Read with a purpose in mind, not just for the sake of reading. This way we will grow stronger.

What is the reference list for this article?

I can't answer that question. Central texts I'm drawing on and responding to are:

1. Veltmeyer, H. (1986). *The Canadian Class Structure*. Toronto: Garamond Press.

2. bromma. (2014). *The Worker Elite: Notes on the "Labour Aristocracy"*. Montreal: Kersplebedeb.

3. bromma. *Exodus and Reconstruction: Working Class Women at the Heart of Globalization*.

4. Lee, B. & Rover, R. (1993). *Night-Vision: Illuminating War & Class on the Neo-Colonial Terrain*. New York, NY: Vagabond Press.

Other stuff I've looked at recently which informs this work which isn't in the reference list for my Revolutionary Feminism can be found in the bibliography on the following page.

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REVOLUTIONARY FEMINISM

Economic transformation and women's liberation

by Comrade Stella B.

Sep 2014

A mural in occupied Der-

The following document is part two in a two-part series: the first of which was "Super-exploitation of Women and Developing a Revolutionary Mass Line."[1] This is the second version of this particular document, which has been revised for Volume #7 of *Uprising*.

In Part I of this series, I critique the labour theory of value and limitations in the Marxist concepts of value, production, and exploitation from a revolutionary feminist perspective. That analysis centers the particular forms of gendered exploitation experienced by women. It is important to understand the process by which surplus value is extracted from both waged productive labour and unwaged reproductive labour. Exploitative social relations under capitalism mean the capitalist class appropriates wealth in a double-form: surplus drawn from the exploitation of wage labourers and surplus produced by the majority of women from oppressed nations who do the bulk of un-valued labour in society.

1 Stella B., "Super-exploitation of Women and Developing a Revolutionary Mass Line," *Uprising* , Vol. 5 (Summer 2014), 5-21.

The intention of this second part is to contextualize super-exploitation within monopoly capitalism, patriarchy, and national oppression, and to focus in on the importance of a revolutionary feminism for achieving proletarian class unity in our context.[2] This article has three sections. The point of departure is to question the assumption that the socialization of all forms of labour under capitalism is both a progressive and a necessary step toward socialist revolution.[3] The second section looks at how inequitable social relations are

2 This analysis emerges through discussion and debate with RI comrades and is supported by intensive study of anti-capitalist feminist authors as well as over two decades of living with and struggling with working class women. In particular I acknowledge the contributions of Comrades Zoraya, Pierce, Selena, Zakiya, Azaad, Esprit, and Jameel. We must continue to build on our revolutionary social investigation and class analysis, rather than relying on dry academic theorizing that few can understand and even fewer relate to. I encourage other revolutionaries to make contributions to our collective understanding concerning the material basis of patriarchy and national oppression on Turtle Island and across the globe.

3 See the accompanying Glossary p. 52-54 for definitions of the *forces of production* and *relations of production*.

shaped by imperialism, or how the expansion of global monopoly capitalism uses patriarchal and nationally-oppressive economic and political mechanisms to maximize profitability. We must have some degree of agreement on understanding how these processes work internationally, for I believe building proletarian unity along fault lines of super-exploitation is necessary for the advancement of revolution in the 21st century. Finally, I conclude by proposing that revolutionary feminism has a great deal to offer toward organizing women who are strategically placed to envision new concepts of value that include reproductive labour and how we can build a society based on reciprocal relations of collaboration.

Part I: Socializing Labour versus Reciprocal Relations of Collaboration

What do we mean by socializing reproductive labour?

Marx predicted that capitalism, more than feudalism, would help speed the revolutionary project of socialism by bringing workers into socialized production. Socialized production in this case means that the working class is cut-off (*dispossessed*) from non-capitalist modes of production, no longer owning land or the ability to produce for their own needs on their own terms. In order to survive, the working class, *as a class*, must sell their labour to capitalists in exchange for wages. Labour is socialized in that the working class works together as a social class under similar conditions in factories and workplaces to produce commodities (clothes, etc.) or provide services (retail, etc.) for the economic benefit of the bourgeoisie. However, the reproductive work that goes into preparing labourers for the working day or raising a whole new generation of workers is seen as unproductive labour in that no commodities for exchange are produced. Under capitalism, reproductive labour is viewed as work only useful for individual families, and is performed by women in private homes. Since women who work in the home are not producing commodities through socialized labour *as a class*, women performing reproductive labour are not viewed as part of the proletariat: they are not selling their labour for a wage and therefore they are not considered to be exploited through this work. Many Marxist revolutionaries follow the line that entrance into socialized production, into waged labour "*as a member of the working class*," is the main road to equality for women, for this is how women will be revolutionized.

Engels argued in *Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State* that if women left the home and got waged jobs this would proletarianize women as a class and create an impetus for women to be involved in class struggle. And since working for wages would reduce the time women had to provide private reproductive labour in the home, Engels thought that if women went to work in factories, the state would be required to provide some of the reproductive work women left undone, such as childcare or help with food production. Those who argued this position didn't seem to grasp the scope and volume of women's reproductive work, for it is true that "a woman's work is never done."[4] Second, it underestimates the reliance both of the bourgeoisie and the capitalist state on this work being done *for free*. Thirdly, off-loading unprofitable labour onto the state is not a solution to the problem of women's exploitative double work burden. In our context, as elsewhere, the state provision of services under neoliberalism is moving in the direction of a regressive taxation that further hurts the working class, as in the current child tax credit system in Canada. Finally, Engels' solution for the gendered division of

4 Revolutionaries must be reading Marxist feminist theorists, frequently and seriously.

labour overlooks the sheer volume of political will and class struggle that would be required to achieve substantive equality for women *both* in production *and* in the state provision of and/or funding for reproductive services. The lion's share of this class struggle is already done by women in political campaigning and class struggle as a 'third shift.'[5]

The situation today is no different. In Canada, women continue to be both segregated into waged "women's work" in the service sector and to do the vast majority of the reproductive and supposedly "voluntary" labour. When reproductive work is socialized through the neoliberal state, it takes the form of super-exploited, cheap, and flexiblized labour, since the return on investment remains low. This means working class families must rely on poorly-funded, over-crowded daycares, schools, community programs, and elder care. Long wait-lists create a backlog of demand so great that families register their children for daycare before they are even born; and families have to predict when illness will strike an elder. Workers in the caring industry are disproportionally women, who not only are underpaid and overworked, but also often can't afford to provide care for their own family members. It is only families from the middle-to-upper petty-bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie that can afford in-home and private care while women from oppressed nationalities comprise the bulk of the workers: for example, the highly exploitative Live-In Caregiver Program. Neoliberal attacks on publicly funded and socialized caring work (home care, child care, health care, and education, to name a few) leave women vulnerable to doing additional work for free. This is what Sylvia Federici calls the "enclosure of the reproductive commons": the privatization and commodification of work formerly in the public sector.[6]

Revolutionaries must investigate how the socialization of certain forms of labour generates a super-exploited workforce, both in the imperialist countries and the Third World. A mechanical position that in order to be revolutionary women must first be exploited as workers overlooks how deeply dependant the necessary and continual expansion of capitalism is on women's unpaid service work in private homes.[7] Further, women's cheap and flexible productive labour is integral not only for capitalism, but in sustaining production during the transition to socialism. Women from oppressed nationalities have borne the heaviest burden in these transformations.

5 Thank you, to RI's Comrade Zoraya, for this excellent description of the material realities of working class women: first shift is paid labour, second shift is reproductive labour in the home and community, and third shift is our necessary engagement in class struggle for survival under capitalism.

6 Citing Silvia Federici, Esquerra writes that the current economic system "does not recognize the production and reproduction of the worker as a social-economic activity, and a source of capital accumulation, but mystifies it instead as a natural resource or a personal service, while profiting from the wageless condition of the labor involved." See Esquerra in "Spain, Economic Crisis, and the New Enclosure of the Reproductive Commons," Monthly Review, April 2014. Maria Mies has called this "colonization of women's generative capacities." See Mies, M. (1986). *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the international division of labour*. London, UK: Zed Books, p.25.

7 Reproductive labour isn't the only form of unfree labour capitalism has integrated into the economic system. For total economic transformation and the development of communism, these forms of highly exploited but yet supposedly non-exploitable labour must be investigated and better theorized.

What are the limitations of state-provided or state-funded reproductive services?

Let's look to an example from a revolutionary context. During the revolutionary process in China, great gains were made in the state provision of socialized reproductive services. More was done in the commune system in China to reallocate reproductive work than in any other revolutionary society. For example, "nurseries, kindergartens, community dining rooms, grain mills, etc., were set up. According to an estimate in 1959, 4,980,000 nurseries were set up in rural areas and 3,600,000 public dining rooms."[8] These are significant strides. The achievements of the commune system toward transforming exploitative social relations into reciprocal relations of collaboration were tremendous. However, looking deeply at women's role in this process reveals that women were often segregated into lower paying service sector jobs, while men dominated the more lucrative industrial jobs. Relegating reproductive labour as a state responsibility under socialism as a form of social wage to support women workers continues to leave these services highly vulnerable to budgetary restraints. Collective advances were not sustained; reproductive services were first to be eliminated on the road to capitalist reforms.[9]

Oppression or exploitation? Superstructural changes or changes in economic structuring?

Moving reproductive labour out of the home and into the State in bourgeois society has not only not been sustainable, but further it has failed to liberate women from the double-burden of work and has not tackled gendered divisions of labour build into the economy.[10] As Batya Weinbaum reflects on the process of proletarianization in China:

The relationship between the organization of consumption through the household and the sexual division of labor in production as it is organized on a social basis limits the nature of women's relation to production from the start."[11]

So what does this mean? It means that women are screwed both at the point of consumption and the point of production. Family households are the basic unit of consumption under capitalism. It's where we eat, rest, and play. The organization of consumption-based activities depends largely on women's work.[12] Because consumption is seen as a private affair outside of collaborative economic planning, the sexual division of this labour is largely untouched by socializing some forms of reproductive labour. At best, particularly within progressive communities, a sexual re-division or sharing of this labour between men and women is individualized and voluntary.[13] Women are also screwed at the

8 Croll, 1979, as cited in Mies, M. (1986). *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the international division of labour*. London, UK: Zed Books.

9 Ching, P. (2012). *Revolution and Counterrevolution: China's continuing class struggle since liberation.* Manila, Philippines: Institute of Political Economy.

10 This is also the material basis for heterosexist gender roles. This means that without substantive changes in the organization of the economy we will never rid ourselves of a gender binary.

11 Weinbaum, B. (1976). "Women in Transition to Socialism: Perspectives on the Chinese case," Review of Radical Political Economics, 8(34), 41.

12 Anyone who has spent significant time caring for children or running a household for a family will get what I mean. Think about consumption in your own households. Who organizes that? Who does the shopping? Not just food shopping, mind you. All the shopping. The economic activity of the household falls on women's shoulders. We have a laugh in our women's organization that men are seen as the economic head of the household, but under the surface there is the work of women.

13 Further, challenging gender norms or claiming to be gender-neutral in appearance does not go far enough. In essence, in the analysis of the totality of human society, women still form the basis of capitalist expropriation even

point of production, paid less, segregated into highly demanding and yet flexible work that is heavy in the emotional service to others, such as childcare, nursing, etc. It's a double-whammy since it is women[14] who become the cheap labour in socialized reproductive work. The cycle of production and consumption within capitalism is based on a gendered division of labour. How can we possibly talk about women's equality or the end of structural racism without talking about the overthrow of bourgeoisie? These roles are deeply engrained in economic structures.

Maria Mies gives an example of the interconnection of base and superstructure from China in 1950's (pre-cursor to the Great Leap and the development of the Commune System):

> The new Marriage Code of 1950 was combined with the Law on Land Reform. The Chinese leadership took the decision not to distribute land to families, which would have meant to male heads of households, but to those who de facto worked on the land. Thus, also women who worked on the land were given land titles. Even when families as a unit were given land rights, a special clause provided that women had the same rights as men, even the right to sell the land, which was a truly revolutionary measure because it rooted the emancipatory demands in the change of the basic production relations between men and women.[15]

It wasn't enough to free women from marriage by allowing divorce. What good is divorce if women don't have a material basis for their survival? To enact divorce laws without this material basis would be in appearance only. To redistribute land to anyone who works the land, rather than by gender, is the material basis, the essence, of freeing women from the bondage of marriage and limitations imposed by gender.

as some supposed progressives are claiming that women as a category is no longer of relevance to our struggles. This is a reactionary view, in my opinion. True efforts toward ending gender-based exploitation is the real work of smashing hetero-patriarchy.

14 Some women, to be more specific. To be sure, bourgeois and petty-bourgeois women, who are disproportionately white, purchase their freedom through the super-exploitation of women from oppressed nations.

15 Mies, 182. Marx recognized the patriarchal family as a form for the management and inheritance of private property, in particular in the Communist Manifesto. Italian feminists such as Dalla Costa critiqued the typical Marxist division of productive and reproductive labour by arguing that women are producing commodities for exchange when they reproduce labour power itself. Whether or not we adopt this position, the fact remains that the nature of capitalist social relations within as they pertain to the production of immediate use values in the family and the community is an integral area of social investigation and revolutionary feminist theorizing.

Fired cleaners of the Greek Finance ministry occupying the ministry's entrance and shouting slogans for the implementation of an Athens court ruling that ordered their re-hiring in Athens, Greece, 22 May 2014. The court recently ruled that the jobs of 393 cleaners, who had lodged an appeal to keep their positions, were 'obviously necessary' and ordered their reinstatement, terming the procedure implemented for the women unconstitutional and therefore null. EPA/SIMELA PANTZARTZI

Women can't be sent to the front to fight for liberation, and then relegated back to the home once the military battle is won; we must deeply analyze what happened for women in liberation struggles such as Vietnam, where women were pushed out of industrial jobs and back into small crafts and caring work once the heavy fighting was over. How are we going to change this? What are our demands as revolutionary women? Revolutionaries should neither call for the socialization of production while leaving reproductive labour (or women's participation in other forms of subsistence non-capitalist production[16]) in the realm of the superstructure nor call for the complete socialization of reproductive labour without insisting on transforming social relations. Both of these calls have the potential to lead women back into exploitation.

Does state ownership and expansion of production equate to communism?

Historical caricatures of Soviet socialism show smiling blue-clad male industrial workers and women agricultural workers cheerfully bringing in the harvest. At best we are taught to imagine massive mechanisms of centralized production and distribution of goods. Yet, the debate surrounding prioritizing rapid expansion of existing productive forces (as represented in these images) over transforming productive relations played a key role in both the diverging paths of China and the Soviet Union, and disagreements between Chinese revisionists and those who supported the advancement of the Cultural Revolution.[17] If we're going to tackle the role of national oppression and patriarchy as sub-structural or super-structural forces that are in dialec-

16 Women are involved in many forms of non-capitalist production which support their families and communities. For some examples of this, refer to the EZLN's *Participation of Women in Autonomous Government: First Grade Textbook for the Course "Freedom according to the Zapatistas*. Available at: http://dorsetchiapassolidarity.wordpress.com/2014/05/11/new-escuelita-textbook-now-available-in-english-participation-of-women-in-autonomous-government/.

17 "The development of the productive forces necessitates the destruction of old relations of production that are not compatible with their development and their replacement by new relations of production that are compatible with the development of the productive forces. But the process of disintegration of old production relations and the emergence of new production relations cannot be a smooth one." See Lotta, R. (ed). (1994). *Fundamentals of Socialist Political Economy: the Shanghai Textbook.* New York: Banner Press. Reprinted by Popular Book Store, Manila, Philippines.

In April 2013, a building housing over 2500 textile workers collapsed, killing over 1200 of those workers in Savar, an industrial suburb of Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh.

tical interplay with existing social relations of exploitation -- which *de facto* take on the appearance of the source of the exploitative relation itself -- then we're going to require a fundamental reorganization of social relations in society.

Communism is about transforming the way we relate to each other as human beings at the core, and in order to do this we need to transform the material organization of society. If we continue to base our society on remuneration for productive work without challenging the basis of how we determine said productivity, dependence on unpaid and cheap labour is inevitable. If socialist societies simply socialize existing productive forces (both productive means and the people involved) without striving to conscientiously transform the relations of production, gains for women will be minimal. Marx argued that "for society to advance beyond its capitalist forms, new social relations would have to be formed that did not rely solely upon a crude, alienated formation of value."[18] How do we decide as a collective what our needs are? How can we enact reciprocal relations of collaboration? As revolutionaries we must struggle with the tensions between developing the necessary forces of production, meeting the material needs of society, and transforming the relations through which those forces are organized: the shared ownership of the means of production, the equitable distribution of the products, communal consumption, and the reciprocal relations of those involved in production, distribution, and consumption. These are significant tasks.

Part Two: Imperialism and the International Division of Labour

Looking at the global economic forces that push women into super-exploitative working conditions is a point of departure for devising a revolutionary strategy in the imperialist countries, and for breaking the ground to unify the super-exploited proletariat. Lenin's work on imperialism helps us understand the global economic and political processes of capitalism, and remains critical today to enrich the loose political language of empire, insubstantial references to neoliberalism, and elusive cultural critiques of imperialism. Lenin is a good departure point for insights into how our lived experiences relate to the mechanisms of global exploitation under monopoly capitalism.

Lenin defined imperialism in five components: capitalist monopolies that control world-scale industrial development; the merging of industrial capital with banks to facilitate the export and control over finance capital; the increasing export of finance capital over commodity capital and the suppression of national productive forces; the complete territorial division of the world and the highest form of national oppression through nominal independence and economic domination; and the growth of international monopolist capital associations for negotiation and control over markets.

Lenin's definition of imperialism helps us see the mechanisms by which the bourgeoisie in the imperialist nations dominate and control Third World and Indigenous nations. The Los Angeles-based Program Demand Group wrote a description of imperialism that extends Lenin's economic analysis of imperialism to describe how national oppression and patriarchy generate conditions of super-exploitation. I think it worthwhile to quote the Program Demand Group description in full here:

> We understand imperialism to be an advanced form of capitalism in which all corners of the globe are integrated in an economy driven by finance capital to scavenge the globe and exploit every opportunity for maximization of profit and domination.
>
> We reserve the term "imperialism" to refer to this late monopoly stage of capitalism as a global economic system when it is most far-reaching but also in crisis. Under imperialism, transnational financial oligarchies join together to monopolize not just national markets, but global markets as well. In this integrated economy, imperialists seek superprofits. Under monopoly capitalism, the exploitation of the working class at home intensifies and the subordination of women into an invisible economy maximizes their superexploitation. As this system is driven to conquer foreign markets, exploitation takes the form of oppression of whole countries and the superexploitation of colonial and female labor in an internationalization of a shadow economy comprised of cheap labor, slave labor,

18 Ibid, p. 49.

and "free" labor".[19]

This description of imperialism captures both the mode of production of capitalism and the concept of exploited wage labour, but also how the continual expansion of capitalism requires special forms of super-exploitation which are guaranteed by oppressing entire nations, including colonies internal to the imperialist countries, and gendered violence against women, in particular Indigenous women, which creates the conditions for economic exploitation.[20]

National oppression and patriarchy are two mechanisms the bourgeoisie use to expand and consolidate monopoly capital. This is an ongoing process that has included the enslavement of millions of Africans, the partitioning of Africa and Asia in favour of the European bourgeoisie, the colonization of the Americas and the murder and enslavement of Indigenous nations, millions of peasant and proletarian women burned at the stake in Europe and the Americas, the economic exclusion and persecution of women, and the legal and often violent enforcement of patriarchal social relations, including the rise of the nuclear family which continues to draw free labour from women and children. This chronology is significant to illustrate that the very foundation of the capitalist mode of production is reliant upon unpaid and slave-like devalued labour of oppressed nationalities and women.

We can see these processes at play in the world today, where the economy of entire nations like Bangladesh or the Philippines are brought under control of monopoly capitalists like the Walton family who own Walmart. Giant multinationals like Walmart rely on factories in oppressed nations such as Bangladesh to produce their clothes as cheaply as possible. These factories don't buy their inputs, such as fabrics, from Bangladesh, but rather import them. The same goes for Coca Cola in the Philippines: they don't use sugar cane syrup from Negros, but rather import corn syrup. Coca Cola just bottles their beverages in super-exploited conditions of assembly production. All inputs are imported. This makes it almost impossible for national industries, such as the jute industry or the sugar cane industry, to compete; there is no longer a role for this industry. This type of situation leaves entire oppressed-nation economies dependent on the import of international finance and industrial capital in order to maintain productive industry and provide employment and a tax-base. In order to drive down production costs, textile industries such as those that produce American Rag and other Walmart brands hire women as a cheap and highly exploitable workforce that functions in a highly oppressive and patriarchal structure and environment. Build a factory, import all the necessary components of production from other countries, pay your workers next to nothing while threatening them, and the kicker, all the goods produced and the lion's share of wealth leave the country and winds up in the Walton's and other bourgeois hands. Former jute and sugar cane agricultural workers move to the cities, crowded in urban poor slums to form the new super-exploited workforce, while those with class privilege migrate abroad.

Substructures of capitalism: national oppression and patriarchy

Developing an analysis of how national oppression and patriarchy underpin capitalism and generate these material conditions for the super-exploitation of proletarians, and proletarian women, is strategically significant for revolutionaries. Addressing the reliance of capitalism on national oppression and patriarchy is a necessary step in advancing proletarian unity.

While Marx himself makes reference in several places to the concept of *substructure*, he uses this term mostly to refer to the mode of production as the foundation for the ideological, political, and social superstructure. It seems as appropriate to apply the concept of substructure to critique how patriarchy and national oppression interdependently help the bourgeoisie extract super-profits through flexible, cheap, migrant, and slave-like labour through not only waged labour, but also through peripheral, informal, and unpaid

19 Program Demand Group, 2001, p.5

20 See Part I, "Super-exploitation of Women and Developing a Revolutionary Mass Line," *Uprising* , Vol. 5 (Summer 2014), 5-21.

labour, and through the state and the ideological superstructure. The bourgeoisie use their legal framework, which Marx refers to as the personification of the economic structures of capitalism, and the perpetuation of racist and sexist culture and ideology to divide the working class, avoid economic crisis, and sustain and justify their gross exploitation and subjugation of the masses of the world's people.

Becoming proletarian is a two-fold occurrence. On the one hand, to be proletarianized people must be cut off from independent means of subsistence, which historically has meant being pushed off the land or dispossessed of independent means of survival. To be "freed" from the means of production in the Marxist sense meant free to be exploited, which is the second condition of being proletarian. In order to be a proletarian one needs to be free to sell labour power to the capitalists in exchange for a wage. But some people are less "free" than others. This is the importance of understanding how patriarchy and national oppression work to exert certain downward pressures or limitations on the freedom of wage labourers in order to extract maximum surplus. **Exploitation appears as an economic fact and can be calculated mathematically, but exploitation is in essence a social relationship, and understanding forces that create conditions of privilege and domination within that social relationship are essential for figuring out our path to true liberation.**

National Oppression

Historically, the last 500 years have been defined by conquest, colonization, partition, and exploitation of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas, Asia, and Africa by the European and later white nations.[21] Thus the concepts of racism and national oppression are inseparable within our historical context. Racism, white identity and privilege, and national chauvinism serve to integrate the working-class of the oppressor nations into the 'national project' of national oppression through wars of aggression abroad and the ongoing colonization, occupation and exploitation of nations across the globe. This is reinforced by material benefits for the white working-class which trickle down from the ruling class, though these benefits vary greatly.

Without the historical processes of colonization, the use of slave labour to extract material wealth and the export of this appropriated wealth to the European nations, the capital necessary for the enclosure of the common lands, to drive former peasant labourers into wage-labour, and to stifle peasant rebellions would not have been realized. While it is true that in the later stages of the development of capitalism the land of the colonies was particularly important for the overflow of surplus labour out of Europe, in the early stages of development the slave labour in the colonies was decisive for the growth of capital.

As industrial capital grew in Europe, bringing the colonies into the capitalist mode of production became integral to the export of surplus commodities. This is the premise of Rosa Luxemburg's argument that capitalism generates self-destructive tendencies; in order for people to be able to consume commodities, they must be engaged in a market economy, which precludes the expansion of the use of slave labour. You need people to depend on a money economy, as with the peasants-now-workers in Europe. How this has played out on a world-scale is a matter of considerable debate.

However, a basic fact remains that the colonized are often forced into waged labour, and the conditions of allocating commodity value to labour power itself must remain favorable for the maximum extraction of surplus value. Marx states that this negotiation over how much money value labour should be allocated is "a social process that goes on behind the backs of the producers, and, consequently, appear to be fixed by custom."[22] This is the material importance of racism and white supremacy; to ensure the lowest possible cost of production to maximize exploitation. As an extension of the economic necessity of maintaining white supremacy, white workers gain privileges over workers from the oppressed nationalities, both in the Third World and

21 Credit for this paragraph goes to Comrade Pierce and comrades in mass organizing projects, thank you.

22 Marx, K. (1867). *Capital* Volume One: A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production [1967 Edition]. Edited by F. Engles. New York: International Publishers. 50-51.

within the imperialist countries. This applies to Indigenous workers in Canada and the supposed 'racial' divisions between colonized and settler workers. Natalie Knight illuminates how systemic racism has broken the working class when she states:

> Whiteness is not an identity; it is a power position that people get smoothly socialized into, one that produces individualism and non-action as well as unawareness to the lines of real class solidarity.[23]

Land

For the process of proletarianization to be fully realized, people are required to be pushed off the land; for free labour to exist at all, people must ultimately be dependent upon commodity consumption to sustain them.[24] In 2003, Samir Amin estimated that there were over three billion people engaged in peasant farming and that their continual movement into precarious (and super-exploited) labour is forced by the steady rise of agri-business in the Third World driven by global capital.[25] This is not a process unknown to the imperialist countries, both in Europe, where the slow process of primitive land accumulation by the emerging bourgeoisie saw to the proletarianization of millions of peasants, and in the Americas where genocide through war and disease gave way to genocide enacted in large part through the continued appropriation of land and resources by capitalists with legal and political backing of the bourgeois state.[26]

I witnessed first-hand in the Philippines how this ongoing process of pauperization and proletarianization is connected with the appropriation of land through violent dispossession, through war and direct capital appropriation. It is women who bear the heaviest burden of both individual land dispossession and the break-up of communal properties, contributing directly to the feminisation of labour and the super-exploitation of women, as illustrated below.

Patriarchy

The patriarchal divisions of productive and reproductive labour, reinforced by the violent and gendered processes of capital accumulation, disproportionately locate women from oppressed nationalities amongst the super-exploited, bearing a grossly unequal burden of cheap paid labour and unpaid labour.

Common property resources are particularly critical for women, as we are the ones primarily responsible for providing for the day-to-day needs for our families. When common properties are appropriated for capital expansion, through agribusiness, mining, land speculation and the like, women are forced to traverse wider and wider scopes of terrain to seek water, fuel, fodder, and other necessary inputs. As this pool of available resources continues to shrink, women are increasingly dependent upon the market for immediate sustenance of their families and drawing into dependence on the cash economy which requires participation in some form of waged or paid labour.[27]

This highlights two material facts. The first is that women are involved simultaneously in paid work and unpaid subsistence work in a continuum, and not necessarily dependant exclusively on one or the other. In fact, the two often overlap, as is illustrated in Custers' case studies of women's labour and capital accumulation in Asian economies. Capitalists rely on women's devalued, cheap labour to lower the price of commodity production.

23 Knight, N. (2014). "'Building rage': Decolonizing class war." Available here: http://rabble.ca/blogs/bloggers/mainlander/2014/06/building-rage-decolonizing-class-war.

24 Rosa Luxemburg argued that capitalism was self-destructive in that while it relied on non-capitalist forms of production, such as peasant farming, to fuel its continual expansion, the process of exporting capital and commodities to the economic periphery in fact proletarianizes the peasantry, in a self-defeating and unsustainable cycle of destroying the material basis of economic expansion. What are the reasons this prediction has not fully materialized?

25 Amin, S. (2003). *World Poverty, Pauperization, & Capital Accumulation*. Monthly Review, October, 2003.

26 I am not arguing here that genocidal policies and practices are exclusively material, for it is most certainly an ideological, cultural, social and political process – often vicious and violent. Rather my point is that the ultimate goal is material appropriation without resistance. The extermination of Indigenous nations through death or treaty law has the result of ending any claim to land or resources.

27 Chapter 10 in Custers' book *Capital Accumulation and Women's Labour in Asian Economies* is an excellent discussion of the differential impacts of proletarianization on women, as well as the continuum of productive and reproductive work, and this section in my article draws heavily on his critique of the German Feminist School, as well as on my experiences with women's work internationally.

The second fact is that for countless marginalized women, the greater the reliance on waged labour, the heavier the burden of reproductive labour. When women are forced into a reliance on waged labour their work exacts lower wages; cheap labour increases capital appropriation of surplus value while increasing the amount of time a woman must work to sustain herself and her dependants. Being forced to work for low wages means women are less able to hire help to manage their own household and familial responsibilities, and are also less able to purchase labour-saving household devices. Furthermore, women are grossly disproportionately represented in paid reproductive work which is low-paid on the basis that surplus value is not generated and little skill above human caring is required. Indeed, the capitalist epoch sees a heightening of the sexual divisions of labour for working class women while opening opportunities for middle class and bourgeois women to lay the burden of their reproductive labour on a super-exploited and often migrant workforce.[28]

Part Three: Revolutionary Feminism and Strategies of Resistance

The central political and strategic implications of the analysis presented above are that the super-exploitation of working class women and oppressed nations provides the grounds for a significant historic revolutionary unity. The strategic implication of this unity is that only with combined efforts will a revolutionary struggle for a classless and truly communal society be achievable. This is not just a theoretical intervention, but a strategic one.

Challenging Other Theories, Other Strategies...

Maoist Third Worldists point out that the level of comfort and security of waged labourers in the imperialist countries is appropriated through the super-exploitation of both waged and non-waged labourers in the Third World and internal colonies. Their arguments follow that this large pool of privileged workers is essentially bought off by capitalism to remain complicit with super-exploitation, including the passive condoning or the active participation in imperialist wars of aggression and counter-revolution. Hence, the prospects for revolution lie exclusively in the Third World. The weaknesses of this argument include the fact that super-exploitation exists in the imperialist nations as well, with significance in the Americas with ongoing colonization, exploitation, and genocidal policies toward internally-colonized peoples. In addition, capitalist growth relies on the super-exploited labour of migrant workers, including women who migrate to perform cheap and deskilled reproductive labour in private homes.

No One Is Illegal (NOII) theorists propose that an alliance of racialized migrant communities and Indigenous peoples' has the potential to build a movement with enough power to decolonize Turtle Island. While this seems appealing on the surface, in essence the mechanics of this process and the end result remain extremely vague. Further, this strategy is almost completely devoid of a material analysis of bourgeois economic domination and the might of the bourgeois superstructure. A class analysis of the economic control of settler society no longer breaks down neatly on racialized lines: NOII is using race as a proxy for a deeper process they have yet to name. The focus on Indigenous solidarity in the practice of NOII is commendable. However, we need a substantive materialist analysis of class divisions in the totality of society, including within Indigenous communities. In my opinion the lack of substantive class analysis and the lack of strategy to build working class power across bourgeois-enforced racial divisions will fail to lead to any form of mass-based revolutionary struggle.

Is a revolutionary class alliance possible in Canada?

If our economic analysis of imperialism is international in scope and multinational at the material base, then so must be our analysis of revolutionary fault lines. The class structure of imperialism does not divide workers neatly on lines of oppressor/oppressed nation nor settler and Indigenous workers. In contrast to

28 For an overview of what Zuhal Yeşilyurt Gündüz refers to as global care chains, see "The Feminization of Migration: Care and the New Emotional Imperialism," *Monthly Review*, December, 2013.

the Maoist Third Worldists and anarchists, I argue that the super-exploitation of working class women and oppressed nations provides the grounds for a significant historic revolutionary unity. In my opinion, both perspectives are accurate in dialectical fashion: privileged waged workers, who are predominantly white and men, are bought off, but that doesn't mean that the conditions for revolutionary struggle do not exist in the imperialist countries or among any white workers. The working class is divided. But accurately identifying the fault lines of this division is critical for the formation of a truly revolutionary alliance in the imperialist countries and the provision of the sharpest weapon of solidarity to revolutionary movements in the Third World: hitting imperialism hard at home to generate the greatest disruption possible to the bourgeoisie, and ultimately advancing a movement for socialism in the imperialist center of Canada.

I believe a materialist economic analysis of capitalism points to a critical revolutionary fault line in the experience of super-exploitation and the existence of forms of appropriation over and above waged labour which divide the working class into two. This division is not based upon national lines, on mythical race lines, or on gender lines, but rather on a deeper analysis of the production and reproduction of super-exploitative capitalist relations.[29]

We can't just be "allies," we have to be comrades. What it means to be a revolutionary feminist must be a commitment to total liberation from exploitation, and this demands an end to colonialism, national oppression, structural racism, patriarchal domination, and hetero-sexist structural violence. Revolutionary feminists stand for the creation of a society based on reciprocal relations of collaboration: *communism.*

We are bound together in the struggle for liberation. The material foundations of solidarity lie in our joint struggle.[30] Women's liberation is tied to the elimination of exploitative ongoing colonial and neocolonial relations, to the end of national oppression, and to the end of class exploitation and the transformation of the economic system reliant upon the super-exploitation of women and entire nations. Revolutionary transformation is a dialectical process, whereby the fruition of revolution builds on our interpretation and enactment of the wonderful, inspiring, and yet also troubled and often violently repressed revolutions and revolutionaries that precede us. Communists have a momentous task, one which inspires great repression from the state, but also great feelings of passion, commitment, dedication, and love from the people. With all our heart and might we must press forward in this struggle, together and in true solidarity.

The Process of Revolutionary Feminism

First we must grasp that revolutionary feminism is not just a theory, but a vibrant collective process that involves all proletarian revolutionaries, not just women, or super-exploited racialized women. Petty-bourgeois individualism and the valorization of leaders over strong mass practice will fail us. Collective force is the power of the mass line; this must never be forgotten!

Principles of Revolutionary Feminism

Revolutionary Feminism:

- Is necessarily internationalist and anti-racist
- Is necessarily materialist and looks to the economic roots of how inequitable social relations manifest in the lives of the super-exploited
- Functions on the basis that the super-exploitation of working class women and oppressed nations provides the grounds for a significant historic revolutionary unity

29 Walia's *Undoing Border Imperialism* (AK Press, 2014) reads as a description rather than an analysis of settler society, lacks any form of class analysis, and fails to explain the root of exploitation and oppression under capitalism. To cite Federici once again "If capitalism has been able to reproduce itself it is only because of the web of inequalities that is has built into the body of the world proletariat, and because of its capacity to globalize exploitation. This process is still unfolding under our eyes, as it has for the last 500 years" (from *Caliban and the Witch*, p.19.).

30 We're not just allies, we're comrades. We're revolutionary feminists, and we're committed to total liberation from exploitation which demands an end to structural racism, national oppression, patriarchal domination and violence. We stand for the creation of a society based on reciprocal relations of collaboration; we stand for communism.

- Builds a revolutionary movement that strives to surmount the barriers that super-exploited women face to their leadership in revolutionary struggle
- Means that all revolutionaries must participate in mass survival and economic struggles of working class women and their communities, and they must continually strengthen our class analysis based on the material realities that surround us
- Has as its ultimate goal the development of a society where those who are currently super-exploited are in power and benefit from an equitable distribution of wealth.

The Practice of Revolutionary Feminism

Building revolutionary organization and mass line practice are critical to revolutionary feminism. We move together through analyzing our experiences, synthesizing material reality and strengthening our theory, and applying this through mass practice for social transformation.

1. Support and Strengthen Women's Political Leadership

It is critical that we put exerted organizational efforts into strengthening the leadership of super-exploited proletarian women. Nationally-oppressed women must be in the leadership and engage in social investigation and class analysis of the material basis of super-exploitation and to propose campaigns that speak directly to those material realities. The way we do this has to be revolutionary in appearance as well as in essence. By this I mean that barriers to working class women's participation must be honestly criticised and solutions collectively strategized, put into practice, assessed, and corrected as needed; this is an ongoing and dialectical process.

> What is difficult for us as compañeras is learning to talk, to decide, to state opinions, and to propose new things so that they may take us on a new path.[31]

> The questions to be clarified are not only whether women, after a national liberation struggle, have more access to political power than before, but also whether the socialist goal of a classless society was achieved and an abolition of an exploitative and oppressive sexual division of labour took place.[32]

As a revolutionary organization we must dedicate material resources towards working class women's political involvement. We have identified that women's leadership is critical: working class women, and especially Indigenous women and women from oppressed nationalities, should be prioritized to receive organizational material resources and subsidies. Women are often the primary breadwinners for their families, and carry the heaviest burden of paid (productive) and reproductive (non-paid, private) labour. Women need financial compensation as well as practical assistance to fully participate in political work: *looking and thinking and analysing is political work, and women must be encouraged to participate in this work.* Wages for organizational political work and childcare, food, and other financial / material subsidies will assist women in taking theoretical and ideological leadership.

These are pressing revolutionary tasks and difficult challenges; we must struggle to collectivize these challenges or our words turn to ash in our mouths.

2. Launch Sustained Social Investigation and Class Analysis

The current international division and feminization of labour demands immediate and sustained social investigation, class analysis, and mass work in the realm of the concrete economic and social conditions of working class women, with a particular emphasis on immigrant, migrant, and Indigenous women who form a mass base of super-exploited women. We must investigate and analyze where women are disproportionately represented in productive labour, what are the conditions of this work, and what are their current issues and struggles. We must simultaneously investigate the breadth and depth of women's unpaid work under capitalism: in the home, in the community and within the supposed voluntary sector.

Revolutionaries must consciously and

31 EZLN, 7.

32 Mies, 177.

methodically engage with the writing, thinking, and organizational campaigns of Indigenous, anarchist, and radical feminists who hold critical insights into the material realities of oppressed and exploited women and the material basis of patriarchy.

We also require ongoing study, discussion, and revolutionary feminist analysis on the historical and current economic and social transformative processes of socialist and revolutionary movements. There are keen insights into the failures of socialist transformation to address the material foundations of women's super-exploitation. There are also examples from current movements on how women are struggling to surmount these historical shortcomings.

3. Engage with women where they are involved in class struggle

Women are already engaged in class struggle, against the feminization of poverty, against the flexibilization of labour, in defense of or for the expansion of childcare, in support of public services, in front-line anti-violence struggles, for the end to sexual commodification and exploitation, and for reproductive justice. Where women are concretizing women's experiences of super-exploitation, we should be present in solidarity, learning with them and sharing our class analysis informed by our revolutionary social investigation of issues.

Radical and anarcha-feminist organizations have important contributions to make to our understanding of women's struggles and have analysis which may be informed by years, or even decades, of involvement in autonomous women's organizations. The lessons women draw from these years of social investigation should be analyzed through the lens of a revolutionary feminist analysis and a revolutionary and internationalist perspective promulgated through respectful dialogue and discussion in practice.

We must also simultaneously support women within the revolutionary organization to spearhead women's mass organizations which take leadership in campaigns identified through sustained social investigation.

4. Oppose Ongoing Colonial Control of Indigenous Territories & the Appropriation and Destruction of Land and Communal Resources

This history of all peoples involves connection to land, farming, fishing, mining, animal domestication, and the many other forms of the transformation of nature to satisfy human needs and visions. The grotesque exploitation of the earths' resources for limitless, grossly unequal, and unsustainable economic growth and development must cease. Increasingly both left and bourgeois scientists are documenting and popularizing the unsustainable nature of extraction and pollution, both intimately tied to capitalist plunder and the appropriation of land and resources from Indigenous nations.

Additionally, the expansion of land privatization and the accelerated proletarianization of Indigenous women must be exposed and opposed. a Mi'kmaq lawyer and academic Pamela Palmater's analysis of the potentially devastating implications of the Nisga'a Treaty in British Columbia are worthy of study and analysis.

It is critical for revolutionary feminists to stand in solidarity with Indigenous women who call for the protection of their traditional lands against imperialist plunder, and to directly connect these experiences to both historical and current experiences of the proletarianization women internationally and

a comprehensive materialist class analysis of how the bourgeoisie profits both from plunder of mineral and petroleum wealth, but also from the cheap labour of women as they are pushed off the land and literally to the factory doors and into a dependence on cheap, flexible, and highly-exploited labour.

5. Stand Against All Forms of Sexual Oppression and Violence

Revolutionary feminism seeks to identify the material basis for the sexual oppression of human beings, and the important role that sexual oppression and patriarchal and heterosexual violence play in the perpetuation of the super-exploitation of women and nations. Through over a decade of research and study on the proletarianization of women and nations, Silvia Federici states, "sexual hierarchies, we found, are always at the service of a project of domination that can sustain itself only by dividing, on a continually renewed basis, those who it intends to rule."[33]

As Marxists and materialists, we must reject any argument that limits gendered experiences of oppression to cultural, social, or ideological forms. We begin with an economic analysis of how capitalism reinforces gender norms and expectations of women's traditional reproductive and productive roles *as women.* We identify how capitalism actively perpetuates patriarchy and gendered culture to propagate the super-exploitation *of women* to maximize of capital growth for an international bourgeoisie.

We must stand against the gross structural violence against women, and incorporate a strong analysis of the role that violence against women, in particular Indigenous women and women of colour, plays in the continual expansion of capitalism.

As revolutionary feminists we reject a rigid gender binary and embrace true expressions of human love and sexuality that are non-exploitative and non-subjugating. We must stand against heterosexism and violence against LGBTQ individuals and communities.

However, we also analyze that sexual liberation and the dismantling of an oppressive and often violent gendered binary will not dismantle capitalism. Human sexual and reproductive freedom from subjugation and violence is necessarily bound to economic transformation. Our demands for sexual and reproductive freedom must be connected to a struggle for total economic and social transformation and for a society based on reciprocal relations of collaboration. As is demonstrated by this complex example of the interconnection of national oppression, patriarchy, and a fundamentally unjust global division of labour capitalism from Angela Gilliam's article "Women and National Liberation," where learning the physiology of the menstrual cycle as liberating knowledge is connected to a fundamentally unjust global chain of labour exploitation:

> I want my daughter to take part in what is taking place in this country. If she gets married now, she will never participate in the change. I don't want her to be like me. I am married to a good man. As you know, about 40 percent of Cape Verdian men are laborers in Europe, and my husband is in Holland. That house over there that we are building brick by brick right next to this little cabin is being made with the money he sends home. Every two years he gets one month's vacation, and comes home to meet the baby he made the last time, and to make a new one. I don't want that for my daughter. I've heard that it is possible to prevent pregnancy by knowing the calendar. Please teach our girls how to count the days so that they can control their pregnancies.[34]

Our demands as revolutionary feminists must include an analysis of the material basis of women's subjugation. This is the first step in identifying and strategizing the revolutionary process.

6. Stand Against Sexual Commodification and Sexual Exploitation

Revolutionary feminists must recognize and speak out against the violent and super-exploitative nature of the sex industry, and oppose and expose the role that sexual commodification and sexual violence has in perpetuating proletarian women ås cheap and highly exploitable labour. A materialist and systematic analysis of the totality of, and class differentiated experiences within, the sex industry is imperative to counter the individu-

33 Federici, S. (2004). *Caliban and the Witch*. Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, p.2.

34 Gilliam, A. (1995). "Women's Equality and National Liberation," in, C.T. Mohanty, A. Russo & L. Torres (Eds.) *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*. Indianapolis, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

alistic claims of autonomy for petty-bourgeois women in the sex industry that are promulgated by the forces who ultimately profit from the commodification of proletarian women and children in or from oppressed nations.

Revolutionary feminists can both oppose the criminalization of women in the sex industry and call for the abolition of prostitution and an end to the sex industry which profits from human trafficking, the sale of women and girls grossly disproportionately from oppressed nations, and close ties with the ability of the extractive industries and the military to recruit and retain their disproportionately male migrant workers. Structural violence against women serves only to benefit the capitalist classes, and we must speak out and challenge the notion that the sex industry is work like any other, for it is without a doubt that a thorough materialist analysis of the international industry as a whole will reveal very few, if any, benefits for working class women in stark contrast with an almost unimaginable history of violence, degradation, and death.

7. Challenge Bourgeois Professionalism

Working class women, in particular Indigenous and migrant women, experience very high levels of bourgeois and state management and control over every aspect of their lives, including from state-funded non-governmental organizations who claim to be advocating for marginalized women. Previously I have argued that any provision of *use function* by the bourgeoisie by necessity contains an oppressive *control function*, and that building institutions of working class power and de-professionalizing politics, law, medicine and economic and social management is critical to revolutionary transformation.[35]

Breaking bourgeois domination in our lives opens our eyes to our power and potential. Historical and current revolutionary struggles, in particular in Cuba and in Venezuela, put the lie to the claim that people are only motivated to gain highly specialized skills if a higher level of remuneration and social status will follow. Social relations must be consciously rebuilt as a collaborative practice before the mode of production can be revolutionized. Bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ownership and control over ideology, social organization, and science and technology must be opposed and all social relations radically transformed.

Further, the history of revolutionary economic transformation shows that allowing ongoing patriarchal and professional management over the collectivization of service and reproductive work guarantees that these elements of collectivization will be the first to be cut under neoliberal economic retrenchment.

Conclusion

There is a rich and diverse history of revolutionary feminist struggle that we must learn about and draw inspiration from as we struggle to engage working class women with revolutionary praxis in our own context and conjuncture. We strive to not repeat previous errors, but we do strive to surpass historical achievements. The mythical Greek goddess Hygeia is credited with the concept that the wound reveals the cure. We must comprehend the full depths of the wounds of imperialism before we can plot the most effective and strategic revolutionary response. It is only through the honing of the revolutionary feminist weapon of theory and unwavering dedication to organizing, uniting, and mobilizing the super-exploited working class toward communist revolution that we can achieve genuine women's liberation.

35 Stella B., "The Institutions and Elements of Working-Class Power," in *Uprising* , Vol. 3 (April 2013), 3-7.

Glossary

FORCES OF PRODUCTION: Consist of all of the elements necessary to generate wealth in society; under the capitalist mode of production, the forces of production are what are necessary to produce profits (or surplus value):

a. Labour Power: the working class who must sell their labour power to survive

b. Means of Production: capital assets, machinery, tools, factories, land, etc.

MODE OF PRODUCTION The totality of the *forces* and the *relations of production.* The mode of production is the economic base of society "which determines the general character of the social, political, and spiritual (ideological) processes of life" (Marx).

RELATIONS OF PRODUCTION: Relations of production are "the way people are formally and informally associated within the economic sphere of production, including as social classes" (Wikipedia). Under capitalism the relations of production refers to the relationship between the bourgeoisie who own the means of production and the workers who must sell their labour power.

Marx defined two forms of the social relations of production:

1. Relations of exploitation: a) slavery, b) servitude, and c) capitalist relationships. This is a very important point: Exploitation is a relationship! Where workers are exploited, the bourgeoisie prosper!

2. Relations of reciprocal collaboration: relationships developing under socialism and realized under the communist mode of production characterized by the lack of domination and exploitation.

SOCIAL PRODUCTION Refers to the production of commodities by labour power that has been brought together to collaborate across time and space in the production process. For instance, consider the many stages of production across the world that goes into the production of a laptop computer or a car today. Social production is very different from the type of individual reproductive labour that happens in individual homes and for free in the community.

NATIONAL OPPRESSION National Oppression is a broad, historical and materialist analysis of the bourgeois subjugation of nations for the purposes of extracting wealth, acquiring land, and generating class exploitation through creating dependence on the capitalist economy. This includes for example, American, Canadian and European oppression of the Third World through military intervention, colonization, and control over international trade institutions, debt peonage and corporate investment. It also includes the oppression and exploitation of entire peoples *internal* to the imperialist states (such as Indigenous people in Canada or Indigenous, Black and Latino/a people in the U.S.) as well as the oppression of people of colour generally within the 'white' nations.

Historically, the last 500 years have been defined by conquest, colonization and exploitation of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas, Asia, and Africa by the European and later white nations. Thus the concepts of RACISM and NATIONAL OPPRESSION are inseparable within our historical context. Racism, white identity and privilege, and national chauvinism serve to integrate the working-class of the oppressor nations into the 'national project' of national oppression (war, colonization, occupation and exploitation). This is reinforced by material benefits for the white working-class which trickle down from the ruling class, though these benefits vary greatly.

RACISM is the oppression and exploitation of people of colour based on the pseudo-scientific ideology of race. Historically racism has been used to justify war, colonization, plunder, genocide, slavery, and a racialized class structure.

Within the imperialist countries racism makes the super-exploitation of communities of colour possible by concentrating working-class people of colour, particularly women of colour in the low-wage, unregulated and informal sectors of the economy. However, all people of colour, even those with class privilege are impacted by racism in the form of bigotry, discrimination, stereotyping and social exclusion. Racism manifests in both systemic and interpersonal forms

SYSTEMIC RACISM exists where policies of the state and major institutions which have a disproportionate negative impact on people of colour or disproportionate benefit to white people. Such policies are often not framed in terms of race but serve to perpetuate and exacerbate the exploitation of communities of colour based on their position in the class structure. For example, the cuts to night owl buses in 2001 in Vancouver was not consciously aimed at communities of colour but had a disproportionate impact on communities of colour because of the concentration of working class people of colour among low-wage night workers.

INTERPERSONAL RACISM The individual actions of white people that reinforce and perpetuate the oppression and exploitation of people of colour. This includes racial slurs, violent attacks, discrimination, prejudice, etc. In a racialized social and class structure where white people hold most positions of power and authority interpersonal racism also takes on a systemic character. For example discrimination in the areas of hiring, promotion, firing, grading, etc., have a cumulative negative impact on people of colour and reinforce existing patterns of national oppression, exploitation and control.

PATRIARCHY Refers to the subjugation, objectification and domination of women by men based directly on the double (or super-exploitation) of women. Women's gendered productive and reproductive labour provides the surplus value necessary to sustain capitalist-imperialism. While the subjugation of women is based in the exploitation of women, and the need for reproductive and cheap labour, women experience as well discrimination, violence and exploitation that go beyond any economic rationale. Patriarchy is best conceptualized as a structural foundation institutionalized in capitalism based on the invisible labour and low wages of women reinforced by systemic and interpersonal violence, sexual commodification, denial of reproductive control, and exclusion from political participation.

IMPERIALISM "We understand imperialism to be an advanced form of capitalism in which all corners of the globe are integrated in an economy driven by finance capital [and backed by the imperialist states] to scavenge the globe and exploit every opportunity for maximization of profit and domination." (L/CSC Program Demand Document). Imperialism is manifest in the intersection of capitalism, national oppression, and patriarchy whereby super-profits are extracted from Third World nations, working class people and oppressed nations within imperialist countries, in particular Indigenous peoples, and the subjugation of women. At its imperialist stage, capitalism is over-extended and profits must be maximized through neoliberal policies such as liberalization, deregulation and privatization.

COLONIALISM Social, political and economic control of Indigenous land and people through the plunder of natural resources, land theft and genocide of Indigenous people by imperialist nations.

FORCED MIGRATION The intersection of race and class rooted in the hegemony of imperialist nations over the Third World, exerted through neoliberal economic policies under the IMF/WB, WTO and the US military create the "push" factors causing people to leave their home countries to survive.

PRIMITIVE ACCUMULATION Has also been called "accumulation by dispossession" by feminists such as Sylvia Federici. Marx explained primitive accumulation as a "process by which large swaths of the population are violently divorced from their traditional means of self-sufficiency. This process, unlike the bloodless version told by classical political economists, was one where common lands were closed to those peasants who used them." Feminists have applied the concept of primitive accumulation to women's unpaid and unvalued work, and reference the "enclosure of the commons" in neoliberal attacks on public services which disproportionately impact working class women.