

The Shock of Recognition (J. Sakai)

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“Fascism has shown that it can gather mass support. In many nations the far right, including fascism, has become a popular oppositional force to the new globalized imperialism. In many countries the far right has replaced the left as the main political opposition. It doesn’t get more critical than this. This stands the old leftist notion about fascism on its head. It isn’t just about some other country. Without a serious revolutionary analysis of fascism we can’t understand, locate or combat it right here. And if you don’t think that’s a serious problem, you’ve got your back turned to what’s incoming.”

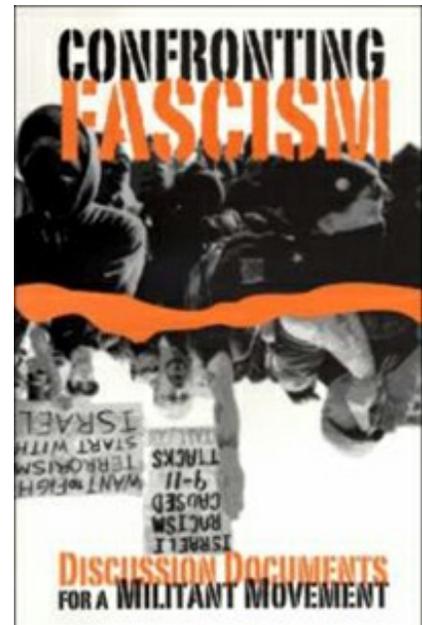
an excerpt from Confronting Fascism: Discussion Documents for a Militant Movement

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The Superman is a symbol, the exponent of this anguishing and tragic period of crisis that is traversing European consciousness while searching for new sources of pleasure, beauty, ideal. He testifies to our weakness, but at the same time represents the hope of our redemption. He is dusk and dawn. He is above all a hymn to life, to life lived with all the energies in a continuous tension towards something higher.

Benito Mussolini¹



We weren’t thinking about fascism while we watched two 757s full of people fly into the ex-World trade Center. And maybe we still weren’t thinking of fascism when we heard about the

first-ever successful attack on the Pentagon. But fascism was thinking about us.

Fascism is rapidly becoming a large political problem for anti-authoritarians, but perhaps moving up so close to pass us that it's in our blind spot. Fascism is *too* familiar to us, in one sense. We've heard so much about the Nazis, the Holocaust and World War II, it seems like we must already know about fascism. And Nazi-era fascism is like all around us still, ever-present because Western capitalism has never given fascism up. As many have noticed, eurofascism even crushed has had a pervasive presence not only in politics, armies and intelligence agencies, but in the arts, pop culture, in fashion and films, on sexuality. For years thousands of youth in America and Europe have been fighting out the question of fascism in bars and the music scene, as a persistent fascist element in the skinhead subculture has been squashed and driven out by anti-racist youth – but come back and spread like an oil slick in the subterranean watertable. It feels so familiar to us now even though we haven't actually understood it.

While the scholarly debates about “classic” 1920-30s eurofascism only increase – and journalists like Martin Lee in his best-selling book, *The Beast Reawakens*, have sounded the alarm about eurofascism's renewed popularity – existing radical theory on fascism is a dusty relic that's anything but radical. And it's euro-centric as hell. Some still say fascism is just extreme white racism. For years many have even argued that no one who wasn't white could even *be* a fascist. That it was a unique idea that only could lodge in the brains of one race! Others repeat the disastrous 1920s European belief that fascism was just “a tool of the ruling class”, violent thugs in comic opera uniforms doing repression for their capitalist masters. Often, both views overlap, being held simultaneously. So we “know” fascism but really we don't know it yet. Once reclothed, not spouting old fascist European political philosophy (but the same program and the class politics in other cultural forms – such as cooked-up religious ideology), fascism walks right by us and we don't *recognize* it at first.

As fascism is becoming a *global* trend, it's surprising how little attention it has gotten in our revolutionary studies. Into this unusual vacuum steps Don Hamerquist's *Fascism & Anti-Fascism*.² This is an original theoretical paper that has in its background not only study but fighting fascists & racists on the streets.

In this discussion of Hamerquist's paper we underline three main points about fascism:

- That it is arising not from simple poverty or economic depression, but from the spreading zone of today's protracted capitalist crisis beyond either reform or normal repression;
- That as fascism is moving from margin to populist mainstream, it still has a defined class character as an “extraordinary” revolutionary movement of men from the lower middle classes and the declassed;
- That the critical turning point now for fascism is not just in Europe. With the failure of State socialism and national liberation parties in the capitalist periphery, in the Third World, the far right including fascism is grasping at the leadership of mass anti-colonialism.

Fascism has shown that it can gather mass support. In many nations the far right, including fascism, has become a popular oppositional force to the new globalized imperialism. In many countries the far right has *replaced the left as the main political opposition*. It doesn't get more critical than this. This stands the old leftist notion about fascism on its head. It isn't just about some other country. Without a serious revolutionary analysis of fascism we can't understand, locate or combat it right here. And if you don't think that's a serious problem, you've got your back turned to what's incoming.

FASCISM IN UNFAMILIAR DRAG

There is one thing we have to confront before we go any further – the political nature of what is known as religious fundamentalism. The stunning attacks of 911 are being assigned to religious fanaticism, an “islamic fundamentalism” that represents all that is backward to the West. Ironically, both sides, both the u.s. empire and the insurgent pan-islamic rightists, prefer to call their movement a religious one. To the contrary, nothing about capitalism's “first World War of the 21st century” can be understood that way. Think it over. A supranational political underground of educated men, organized into cells with sophisticated illegal documents and funding, who are multilingual and travel across the world to learn how to fly passenger jet airliners and then use them as guided missiles, is nothing but political. And modern. Pan-islamic fascism pressing home their war on a global battlefield.

The small but growing white fascist bands here in the u.s. picked up on this immediately. They had political brethren in the Muslim world. Politics is thicker than blood. “Anyone who's willing to drive a plane into a building to kill Jews is alright by me”, said Billy Roper of the National Alliance, the largest white fascist group here. David Michael of the neo-fascist British National Party (which received several hundred thousand votes in the last local elections), was jubilant: “Today was a glorious day. May there be many others like it.”³ As one New Afrikan revolutionary always reminds people: “*Like is drawn to like.*”⁴ Not race and not religion but class politics.

Why do we insist that some religious fundamentalist movements can only be understood as fascists? It isn't that the Taliban or Egyptian Jihad aren't religious groups. They clearly are, in the sense that their ideology and program are couched in an islamic framework. And they are part of broader islamic rightist currents that contain people of differing political programs. Just as the German Nazi Party was part of broader nationalistic currents in Germany in the 1920-30s that shared many of the same racialist views. People have tried to shallowly explain away the Nazis by saying that they were only extreme racists. They were that (which they shared with many other Germans) but they also had far-reaching fascist politics beyond that. In the same way, the hindu far right in India, for example – which contains perhaps the largest fascist movement in the world right now – is not only a religious movement in form but one which has far-reaching fascist politics in essence. There is no natural law saying that men's religions have to be benign or humane or non-political. And they seldom are.

But what the West calls “islamic fundamentalism” is not that at all. First off, like its brother “christian fundamentalism” there’s some kind of relationship to religion but there’s nothing *fundamental* about it. There’s no similar vibe between white racist abortion clinic bombers today and some outcast Jewish carpenter with illegal anti-ruling class ideas in the Middle East 2000 years ago. And the Prophet Mohammad’s youngest wife wasn’t wearing a burka and hiding indoors, she was riding the desert alongside male warriors and disputing doctrine with male preachers as the head of her own religious school.

The modern islamic rightists, who began in 1927-28 with the founding of Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood, took religious ideological form but were started as a *political* movement against British neo-colonial domination. They were backed not by workers or peasants but by the middle-class bazaar merchants and traders. The core of the islamic rightists from the beginning were not theologians but young men who had middle-class educations as scientists and technicians (like today’s Mohammad Atta who supposedly led the 911 attacks), and who used assassinations and trade boycotts. One trend within this broader islamist political movement developed fascist politics and a definite fascist class agenda. The fact that everything is explained in religious ideological terms doesn’t change the fact that their program and class strategy fit fascism perfectly. Perhaps that’s the real “fundamentalism” that they have. ⁵

Throughout the Muslim world, from Saudi Arabia to Egypt to Turkey to Pakistan, Western imperialism has helped maintain militarized neo-colonial regimes that have looted and deadended society. They have destroyed local subsistence economies of self-production for use in favor of globalized export-import economies. The number of the declassed, those without any regular relationship to economic production and distribution, keeps growing. The lower-middle classes keep losing their small plots of land, their small market businesses, their toehold in the educated professions. These are men who are threatened with the loss of everything that defined them, including the ability of patriarchs to own households of women and children.

This is the class basis of today’s pan-islamic fascism, which demands a complete reversal of fortune. Revolutions where today’s Muslim elites shall be in the prisons or the gutter and the warriors of fascism shall be the new class ruling over the palaces, mosques and markets. They are more than national in scope just as all revolutionary movements have been. Because they are in a fluid war of undergrounds and exile, striking from abroad, of retreating from savage military repression in one nation to concentrate on breakthroughs in another nation. And to them, the world citadel of globalization in New York was not an innocent civilian target but a fortress of an amoral enemy.

The key thing about them isn’t that they’re following some old book. It’s that they’re fighting for State power just like everyone else in the capitalist sinkhole. They upfront want to rule, to not work but get affluent and powerful as special classes alongside the bourgeoisie, to hold everyone else underfoot by raw police power. Whether it’s christianity or islam or whatever they claim to be following, these are definitely political movements.

Take another example: There are ultra-orthodox Jews who don't believe in participating in secular politics. There are ultra-orthodox Jews who believe in voting into power conservative pro-religion governments in bourgeois democracy. There are even ultra-orthodox Jews who support the Palestinian liberation struggle and reject the existence of the state of Israel on doctrinal grounds. But while the ultra-orthodox Zionist settlers movement in Palestine claims that it's about nothing but pure Jewish religion, like any other fascists they swagger around with guns, proclaim the right to do genocide to set up their self-identified master race, have an economy based on expansionist war, crime, and enslavement of other peoples. They are publicly proud of such "religious" milestones as their bloody massacre of unarmed people praying in a mosque and even their assassination of the Israeli prime minister. These are only fascists in drag, and we should see that there's more and more of them in capitalism today.

Adding to the confusion is the question of what "crisis" is. We're used to thinking of serious fascism as a product of traditional capitalist economic "Crisis", an economic depression like the 1920s and 1930s. That was true, but it's not the only situation for creating fascism. Because under capitalism the success of one class is the crisis for another class. There is social crisis of capitalist success (as in oil-affluent Saudi Arabia) as well as economic crisis of capitalist smashup.

All through the post-World War II period up to the end of the 20th century, as Western capitalism was in a long rising curve of protracted prosperity and explosive economic growth, fascism was starting to grow, too. Because that period of imperialist economic stability – ultimately leading to today's huge globalized economy of the transnational corporations – was also a time of large scale *transition*, of sudden historical shift that pushed some classes and cultures towards obsolescence as others rose up.

Not Depression but *change* propelled by the development of the world capitalist economy. In the industrial North of England, for example, the entire blue-collar culture of the British working class was transformed as factories, mines and shipyards steadily kept closing year after year. A new white-collar yuppie boom economy produced the Americanized England of Tony Blair just as marginal employment and three generation welfare families living in public housing came to characterize many in the former industrial working classes. Remember that despite well publicized fringe activity, fascism never sank roots in 1930s working class Britain. The British working class back then remained loyal to their colonial empire and their own social democratic Labour Party despite the misery of the Depression. But it's a different world now, of classes feeling abandoned by empire. Widespread "Paki-bashing", fascist marches and now a successful neo-fascist electoral protest party are only small signs of things to come. In a chain reaction, the British town of Tipton that was surprised to find four of its Muslim youth fighting in Afghanistan with Al-Qaeda had given 24% of its vote in the 2000 local elections to the neo-fascist British National Party.⁶ And Britain is only playing catchup, lagging behind as all of Europe is being tugged, pulled by the political shift towards the right in all its forms. Despite historic prosperity.

It is vital to theoretically understand fascism because the general rightist tide from which fascism emerges is the strongest mass political current in the world today, and we need to

delineate one from the other.

HAMERQUIST'S MAIN THESIS

The main thesis of *Fascism & Anti-Fascism* rejects the traditional left view that fascism is just “a tool of big business”, racist thugs in macho costume carrying out repression to the max under the orders of their capitalist masters. Hamerquist sees no short term danger, in fact, of a fascist period over the u.s.a. Or even a significant “racial holy war” led by white fascists against Blacks, Latinos, Asians, Indians, Jews, Gays & lesbians or others anytime in the near term future. Instead, he sees the danger of a new fascism that’s more independent, more oppositional to capitalism. A “*potential ...mass movement with a substantial and genuine element of revolutionary anti-capitalism...The real danger is that they might gain a mass following among potentially insurgent workers and declassed strata through a historic default of the Left.*” He sees fascism not as a brutish prop for major industrial capitalism, but as a possible new form of barbarism. With mass support.

That is the main argument, but the paper is also dense with related insights and questions. Unlike the old left analysis of fascism, this analysis catches the vibe of Ruby Ridge and the Turner Diaries, of Ted K. and the Taliban. But it’s still flipping a new page to think of fascism as a rebellious, oppositional force to u.s. capitalism. We should get used to it – quickly.

This critique cannot deal with all of the ideas in *Fascism & Anti Fascism*. What we can quickly do here is, of necessity, somewhat ragged. We define fascism in relation to other modes of capitalist rule. Major points in *Fascism & Anti-Fascism* are explored, such as the meaning of the “left” anti capitalist fascism vs. “classical” 1930s fascism; fascism’s mass appeal and how “revolutionary” it is; whether fascism is “a tool of the big bourgeoisie” or has its own agenda. Midway into this, we dive into a series of brief historical discussions of German Nazism, since it is the standard case for any analysis of fascism. Throughout, we are looking at Hamerquist’s work, putting out analyses of our own, but most importantly trying to open up more questions. I apologize for whatever difficulties the reader encounters in this preliminary work.

VALUING NEW IDEAS

Fascism & Anti-Fascism brings several important understandings to us. It roots out the unpleasant fact that the movement is still using the old left’s failed theories about fascism & anti-fascism from the 1920s. And that these old left ideas are really dead. This alone would make it worth while. In a movement that is long on stacks of little newspapers and short on new ideas, this is radical theory with an edge. Old failed ideas have their disguises pulled off, while we are helped to refocus on the realities of a post-modern future. What the author intends is to spark off a long overdue housecleaning of anti-fascism’s dusty political attic.

Hamerquist’s second contribution is to emphasize how fascism has its own life, and can be influenced by but is independent of the big bourgeoisie. Fascism is a populist right revolution that has arisen in the past from left sources as well as the far right, Hamerquist reminds us. He disagrees head on with the old left’s position that fascism is just a repressive “policy” or

strategy used by imperialism. In his view, fascism isn't born because some big bankers and industrialists give secret orders from a smoke-filled room. While the bourgeoisie can use or support fascism, the fascist movements are not ever neatly under their control. They're much more crazy-quilt radical, more grassroots oppositional than that. And once a fascist State is raised, this rogue tribe is even less under capitalist influence.

So this is a type of rightist challenge that has been an ultimate danger to us. Because fascism not only is an unrestrained violence against the oppressed & the left, but is a different class politics. One that infects and takes over masses of men that the left once considered safely either in its own camp or on the sidelines.

To me, one reason the left has preferred to think of fascism as only a puppet of the big capitalists is because in a strange way that's reassuring. Since the imperialists aren't really threatened by the tiny left here, they have no rational need to unleash maximum repression. Paradoxically, despite their front of condemning the government for being soft on fascists, the left in its peaceful slumber is actually counting on the imperialists and their State to be rational & keep fascism locked up in the warehouse. Counting on the capitalists to protect us from themselves, in other words. Hamerquist really picks up on this contradiction.

In subsequent sections, Hamerquist develops his argument that the left's smugness about fascism ("*...the unstated assumption that in any competition with fascists for popular support we win by default*") is based on two misconceptions. The first is that fascism only comes in the traditional, opera costume-loving, Hitler-worshipping pro-imperialist type so quick to discredit itself. The second is that fascism can only be white and racist, so that any real fascist outgrowth here will automatically, like an alien cell in the bloodstream, be under mass attack by the New Afrikan, Native American, Latino and other communities of color.

Fascism & Anti-Fascism is valuable here because it opens up, in print, possibilities that have been discussed informally but not publicly dealt with by revolutionaries.

This is especially true when Hamerquist quietly points out that there exists the possibilities that new white fascist groups might well find "*working relationships and alliances*" with "*various nationalist and religious tendencies among oppressed peoples.*" And that "*there is no reason to view fascism as necessarily white just because there are white supremacist fascists. To the contrary there is every reason to believe that fascist potentials exist throughout the global capitalist system. African, Asian, and Latin American fascist organizations can develop that are independent of, and to some extent competitive with Euro-American 'white' fascism. Both points deserve elaboration.*"

Fascism & Anti-Fascism isn't right on everything, but because it insists that our basic theoretical assumptions about the political situation are shaky & need to be questioned it is especially valuable to us right now.

MISUSING THE BUZZ OF FASCISM

The paper starts by stating that the left has no real analysis of fascism. Either it's just a label we attach to anything bad or it's only the repressive policy, the punishing puppet that the real villain, the capitalist ruling class, wields to hold onto power. Notice that in neither case does fascism exist as a real social development in its own right.

“For much of the U.S. Left, fascism is little more than an epithet – simply another way to say ‘bad’ or ‘very bad’ loosely applied...”

This isn't merely an intellectual question. One of the important sub-themes in *Fascism & Anti-Fascism* is the realization that our present left theories and responses to fascism are actually the *same* theories and strategies that the European left used with such spectacular lack of success against fascism in the 1920s-30s.

This new generation of radical activism still has old basic ideas, and failed ones at that. Right now, everyone acts as though the word “fascism” is a free shot. So in our movement talk and propaganda we find racism, dictatorships, neo-colonialism, welfare cutbacks, repressive acts by bourgeois democracies, riot cops actually hurting middle class protesters at Globalization summits – all being wildly described as “fascist”. One important reason that the German working class couldn't focus on Nazism is that the left had effectively watered-down the meaning of fascism, in effect convincing many to ignore the decisive fascist events as just more political musical chairs. Is the same thing happening here, right now? (it certainly has to folks as well intentioned as the anarchist black bloc, who were blindly led in the Anti-Globalization free for all into become the de facto allies of the white racist right. ⁷

DIFFERENT FORMS OF CAPITALIST RULE

This paper does have significant problems. As is very common in our discussions on fascism, *Fascism & Anti-Fascism* has no definition of fascism. So the obsolete old left views on fascism are replaced by good insights but also by a partial formlessness. Things are left hanging in mid-air, unmoored from the class structure and its basis in the means of production. Also, some of Hamerquist's most useful insights are overstated, perhaps underlining the discovery but also adding to the theoretical confusion. There is a relationship between these two problems, as we shall see.

Fascism is the newest of the forms of capitalist rule that we have encountered so far. We need to place fascism in context by first discussing it & other forms of capitalist rule, starting with a baseline of **bourgeois democracy**.

While modern capitalism strives to blur the distinction between two very different things – bourgeois democracy and democratic rights – at its heart bourgeois democracy simply means “democracy for the bourgeois”. Remember, it was alive and robust long before there were any modern democratic rights at all. For several centuries in the English-speaking world, bourgeois democracy with elections, political parties and legislatures co-existed effortlessly with the chattel slavery of tens of millions, genocidal wars and colonial exploitation of indigenous peoples, the subordinate status of all women as an intimate species of patriarchal livestock, feudalistic dictatorial rule over the working class, and a government voted upon by a

small minority of white male property-owners. That was the *pure* bourgeois democracy, the undiluted hundred eighty proof thing.

Back under feudalism, the State was simple. The ruling aristocracy *were* the State, and ruled directly and personally. But this is not practical under capitalism. Would IBM trust Microsoft to make the laws? Both the relatively large size of the capitalist class and its ever-shifting composition, as well as their culture of constant warfare to the death vertically & horizontally within the class, forced the bourgeoisie to create an indirect system of representative government. So bourgeois democracy became the preferred form of government by the capitalists.

Even with all its constant stumbles, feuds and scandals, it is the most effective form of capitalist rule for their entire class. There is nothing new here. The renowned 19th century u.s. statesman Senator Daniel Webster was the open paid representative of the banking industry then, just as another important u.s. politician in the 1960s was actually called by his colleagues and by the press “the senator from Boeing”. Others represent the coal mining industry, the weapons lobby, New York banking and so on. Bourgeois democracy lets capitalists of every geographic region, industry and commercial interest influence State policy, although there is no pretense of equality amongst them. This is the most “normal” form of capitalist rule.

While it is overused as a left explanation, it is also true that bourgeois democracy is important to capitalism for its cooptive features (however, capitalism isn't adopting a form of self-government merely based on what's good propaganda). In an earlier paper on fascism, Hamerquist noted that “...*the mainstream of Marxist tradition which has consistently pointed out that bourgeois democracy is the ideal form of capitalist rule from the capitalist's point of view. Its virtue is that class exploitation and oppression are masked by supposedly objective and neutral institutions and processes: the market, the parliamentary-electoral system, the legal-judicial system...The capitalist ruling class will opt for fascism out of strategic weakness, not strength.*”⁸

The other “normal” form for the capitalist State is **dictatorship**. Which is not really the opposite of bourgeois democracy but rather its sibling. There are frequent situations where bourgeois democracy cannot function. While the bourgeois democratic State uses police and military repression routinely, in a major crisis the mass unrest in society or the breakdown in social order can effectively deadlock or paralyze the legislative State. In the imperialist periphery, in the neo-colonial nations of Latin America, Asia, Afrika and the Middle East where extreme social crisis is just daily life, ineffective bourgeois democracies and bloodthirsty military regimes seem to regularly relieve each other in a revolving carousel. As though their rotation in mock battles was a new institution that is losing potency all the time.

Many people believe that fascism is just dictatorship and vice versa, that the two are the same thing. But while fascism is dictatorial, it is a different type of dictatorship. Capitalist dictatorship can take various forms, from military juntas to clerical capitalist police states to monarchy. But

in general dictatorships use the repressive forces of the State to directly command society, sitting atop of the existing class structure. While fascism uses a violent mass popular movement to both remake the State and abruptly alter the class structure.

Colonialism referred originally to the system of colonies, which were commercial-military outposts of a nation in a foreign land. In Marx's day, "the colonies proper" meant populated settlements abroad still ruled by the mother country. As all major capitalist nations built their rampaging economies on conquest & occupation in the Third World, "colonialism" was used more generally to indicate the ownership of one people or society by another. Colonialism has been a feature of bourgeois democracy, obviously (in the pre-1960s u.s. South there was stable bourgeois democracy for settlers while the New Afrikan population lived under a reign of institutionalized terror). For that reason both the Black Liberation Movement and later radical feminism raised the question of "inner colonies".

Fascism is a relatively new and "extraordinary" form of capitalist rule. It first became a power as a new political movement in Italy in 1919 (Named after the *fasci*, the bundle of rods lashed together with an axe blade protruding from the top, used as the symbol of authority by Roman magistrates and standing for the imperial unity of the diverse classes of Roman citizens. The word "fascism" also had popular Italian connotations then of extraordinary emergency actions, of the Sicilian "fasci" of workers who revolted in 1892, of the democratic "fascio" that stopped the military coup at the turn of the century, etc). **It is the twilight creature of a new zone in history, of protracted capitalist crisis beyond reform or ordinary repression.**

Fascism is a revolutionary movement of the right *against* both the bourgeoisie and the left, of middle class and declassed men, that arises in zones of protracted crisis. Fascism grows out of the masses of men from classes that are abandoned on the sidelines of history. By transforming men from these classes and criminal elements into a distorted type of radical force, fascism changes the balance of power. It intervenes to try and seize capitalist State power – not to save the old bourgeois order or even the generals, but to gut and violently reorganize society for itself as new parasitic State classes. *Capitalism is restabilized but the bourgeoisie pays the price of temporarily no longer ruling the capitalist State.* That is, there is a capitalist state but bourgeois rule is interrupted. As Hamerquist understands, the old left theory that fascism is only a "tool of the bourgeoisie" led to disasters because it way underestimated the radical power of fascism as a mass force. Fascism not only has a distinctive class base but it has a class agenda. That is, its revolution does not leave society or the class relations of production unchanged.

Fascism has definite characteristics that are both so familiar and exotic, because it combines elements from all past human history in a new form that is startlingly brutal and dis-visionary. **Indeed, fascism never appears in public as it's secret parasitic self but always in some other grandiose guise.** Like the original fascism of Mussolini's Italy claimed to be the virile modernist recreation of the ancient Roman Empire . The Nazi Party claimed to be the recreation of the Nordic race of Aryan warriors (that never actually existed in human history, of course). The Taliban – who proudly brought order to the streets just as Mussolini's first fascist regime did – claim to be the recreation of the original islamic followers of the days of the

Prophet Mohammed. None of these guises are in the least bit true, of course, but are closer to political fantasy played with real guns for real stakes.

This fascism has definite characteristics, whether in Nazi Germany or the Taliban's Afghanistan or the u.s. Aryan Brotherhood: It taps into and is filled with revolutionary anger against the bourgeoisie, but in distorted form. There is a supreme leader over a State that is not merely hierarchical but that tries to absorb *all* other organized activity of society into itself. The reason that Mussolini coined the word "totalitarian" to describe his vision of the State-society; and the reason that the Nazi State banned all sports groups, unions, professional associations, women's groups, lay religious societies, youth organizations, recreational groups, etc. except its own National Socialist forms. Same with the Taliban. It exults in the violent military experience that is said to be "natural" for men, while scorning the soft cowardly life of the bourgeois businessmen and intellectuals and politicians (The Italian fascists put a key motto up on billboards and public buildings: "CREDERE OBBEDIRE COMBATTERE". "Believe Obey Fight." ⁹

Along with that it raises repression to a new level by overturning the class structure, recruiting millions of men into new parasitic State warrior and administrator classes that are outside of production but live on top of it. It was early 18th century euro-capitalism itself that first redefined women not as free citizens and "not as patriarchal property of individual men, but as a natural resource of the nation-State". Fascism exalts this, and makes of women a semi-slave resource of the State restricted to the margins of an essentially male society.

One part of this discussion is whether political movements or social phenomenon can be said to have gender. Yes, fascism appeals to women as well as men. Yes, Nazism owed much to German women, no matter how unwilling feminists now are to admit that. But we have said "men" so often when discussing fascism because we are being literal. It is a male movement, both in its composition and most importantly in its inner worldview. This is beyond discrimination or sexism, really. Fascism is nakedly a world of men. This is one of the sources of its cultural appeal.

While usual classes are engaged in economic production and distribution, fascism to support its heightened parasitism is driven to develop a lumpen-capitalist economy more focused on criminality, war, looting and enslavement. In its highest development, as in Nazi Germany, fascism eliminates the dangerous class contradiction of the old working class by socially dispersing & wiping it out as a class, replacing its labor with a new unfree proletariat of women, colonial prisoners and slaves. The "extraordinary" culture of the developed fascist State is like a nightmare vision of extreme capitalism, but the big bourgeoisie themselves do not have it under control. That is its unique characteristic.

Fascism exists in a wide spectrum of development besides the well known State examples of fascist Italy and Germany. From politicalized criminal gangs and far right politicians operating tactically inside the constraints of bourgeois democracy to various nationalist movements and informal ethnic quasi-States. There are a number of examples of the latter just in the u.s., thanks to the u.s. government policy of using seriously fascist groups to control "minorities".

Last year an opportunist merchant in “Little Saigon” in the Los Angeles area tried to cash in on “normalization” of u.s.-Vietnamese relations by putting the communist flag in his video store window alongside the flag of the old Saigon regime. Mass violent protests ordered by fascist Vietnamese General Ky’s subterranean regime/gang-in-exile not only forced the store’s closing but ended the career of California’s newly elected first Vietnamese state legislator (who had to quit politics because he had offended General Ky). General Ky’s informal floating ethnic State may not have a geography or a recognized name, but it enforces laws of its own and regularly collects taxes in the form of mandatory “contributions” (to funds to allegedly fight communism). Incidentally, the video store owner first found his shop set on fire and then was himself arrested by the police for illegally pirating videos – do you wonder what the message was to the community?

And all fascist movements and leaders have their own particularities. The first fascist State of Mussolini was far more tentative and more conservative than Nazi Germany or the Taliban, for example, in part because the younger, less developed Italian fascism was weaker politically (and had to make major compromises with the monarchist army, the Roman Catholic Church, and the industrialists that Hitler for one didn’t have to). The National Islamic Salvation Front that rules the Sudan both welcomed Osama bin Laden and his terrorist operation...and then couldn’t resist robbing him of over \$20 million (by their own admission). Poor Osama later complained to an Arab newspaper that his brother Sudanese fascists were a “*mixture of religion and organized crime*”.¹⁰ So different fascism movements will not look exactly the same and might even conflict (just as the left does).

BEING BOTH REVOLUTIONARY & PRO-CAPITALIST

Fascism & Anti-Fascism has bold conclusions. i think that they are true in essence but not exactly in the way that Hamerquist suggests. A key passage in his paper is: “*The emerging fascist movement for which we must prepare will be rooted in popular nationalist anti-capitalism and will have an intransigent hostility to various state and supra-state institutions.*”

This is really not a guess. Hamerquist is accurately recognizing the reality already on the ground, seeing without any old left ideological filters. This passage describes much of the current fascism that has emerged around the world. Not just small bands of third positionists in the West, but Osama bin Laden and the Israeli ultra-orthodox zionist settlers in the Middle East, the Taliban in Afghanistan, the “Anarchist party” in Russia, etc. New populist neo-fascists in the wealthy imperialist metropolis, such as Jorg Haider in Austria or the rapidly growing British National Party, are already anti-Globalization and anti-u.s. and could easily swerve much further leftward if the social crisis deepens.

But when Hamerquist says that this wave of fascism is both seriously anti-capitalist and revolutionary, i would have to qualify that. His insight is deep, but his exact breakdown is not and i think that serious misunderstandings could arise. Reading *Fascism & Anti-Fascism* too literally could get one disoriented, wondering if fascists are really “revolutionary” and “anti-capitalist” like socialists or anarchists are, then maybe anything can be anything and right could be left and oppressors could be oppressed?

The truth here is startling and it isn't in the least bit vague. **The new fascism is, in effect, “anti-imperialist” right now.** It is opposed to the big imperialist bourgeoisie (unlike Mussolini and Hitler earlier, who wanted even stronger, bigger Western imperialism), to the transnational corporations and banks, and their world-spanning “multicultural” bourgeois culture. Fascism really wants to bring down the World Bank, WTO and NATO, and even America the Superpower. As in destroy. That is, it is *anti-bourgeois* but not anti-capitalist. Because it is based on fundamentally pro-capitalist classes.

Fascism, in this slowly accelerating global crisis of transformation, believes in what we might call basic capitalism, o.g. *capitalism*. It is the would-be champion of local male classes vs. the new transnational classes. Enemy of emigrant Third World labor and the modern supra-imperialist State alike, fascism draws on the old weakening national classes of the lower-middle strata, local capitalists and the layers of declassed men. To the increasing mass of rootless men fallen or ripped out of productive classes – whether it be the peasantry or the salariat – it offers not mere working class jobs but the vision of payback. Of a land for real men, where they and not the bourgeois will be the one's giving orders at gunpoint and living off of others.

Against the ocean-spanning bourgeois culture of sovereign trade authorities, Armani and the multilingual metropolis, it champions the populist sovereignty of ethnic men. The supposed right of men to be the masters of their own little native capitalism. In the post-modern chaos, this part of the fascist vision has class appeal beyond just simple race hatred alone.

Fascism is revolutionary far beyond that, and not as a pose. But by “revolutionary” the left has always meant overthrowing capitalism and building a socialist or communal or anarchist society. Fascism is not revolutionary in that sense, although it may use those words. **Fascism is revolutionary in a simpler use of the word. It intends to seize State power for itself.** Not simply to sit atop the old pile, but in order to violently reorder society in a new class rule. One cannot read “The Turner Diaries” seriously or understand Timothy McVeigh's politics (he was *slaughtering* the federal government not the Black Radical Caucus) without facing this. The old left propaganda that fascism is “a tool of the ruling class” is today just a quaint idea.

WORKING CLASS POVERTY NOT THE ROOT OF FASCISM

This paper raises the danger of potential fascist inroads into the heart of its opposition – the working classes. *We would have to question this.* “Classic” German and Italian fascism demonstrated the ability to win over a mass base. Not just in general, but of a specific class nature: urban small traders and businessmen, craftsmen and foremen, junior military officers, significant parts of the peasantry (small farming landowners), petty government civil servants, the long-term unemployed or declassed out of the working class, the police and criminals. **To sum up, men of the pro-capitalist lower middle classes and the declassed.** Some workers left their class to join the fascists, just as some from the privileged upper classes left theirs to join the revolutions of the oppressed. But there is no evidence yet of significant working class support for fascism. While this question will be answered only in practice, by the struggle, it might be helpful to probe this now.

Fascism hasn't come from working class poverty or oppression. That's a deliberate capitalist intellectual confusion we have to get rid of. The oppression that colonial workers had to endure in Asia, Afrika, Latin America and the Mideast didn't produce fascism but hopeful, radical left movements of liberation that might have been ultimately subverted, but that also contained the constructive efforts of hundreds of millions of ordinary working people. Centuries of lynchings and police state terror and colonial poverty here in the Black Nation never produced anything like fascism, until neo-colonialism and what Malcolm X called "dollarism" took over. New Afrikan colonial oppression produced so many who were internationalist and forward looking, conscious anti-capitalists with integrity and democratic values. That really represented the historic Black Nation. A people that, however poor, however held low, were predominately working class and at the productive heart of the u.s. empire. A working class culture that had a lived belief in the importance of justice for everyone.

So don't be thinking that fascism just comes from poverty or recession, because it's not that way at all. In Euro-America – by far the wealthiest nation that's ever existed since Babylon in biblical times – the growth of white fascism has nothing to do with poverty but everything to do with the crisis of white settlerism. So let's get two concepts overlaid together here. Even the imperialist metropolis is not uniform or homogenous. There are classes and economic sectors and geographic regions that are successful parts of the new globalized corporate economy – and there are those that are obsolete, cut off, part of something like an inner periphery.

For one thing, the u.s. empire is the largest of the historic European settler-colonial societies, but it is rapidly (in historical terms) being de settlerized by imperialism. That's why in the right-wing reign of President "W" (for "White") a Japanese-American general is head of the u.s. army, another Japanese-American is secretary of transportation, while African-Americans are secretary of state and "W"'s national security advisor (did you ever think you'd see a Black woman as the presidential national security advisor?). NASA's chief of the technology applications division is a Black woman scientist and the head of ATF's anti-terrorism division is a white woman cop. In Silicon Valley there are four hundred computer corporations owned by Indian immigrant scientists. Oh, there's tons of white male privilege and white male preference here still and will be for generations, the continuing momentum of "the daily lives of millions". But the big guys are sending a message down to ordinary white men. *It's like a bomb.* In the new globalized multicultural capitalism, in the new computer society, the provincial, sheltered white settler life of America is going to be as over as the white settler life of the South African "Afrikaners" is. Forget about it.

Only, they can't forget it, many of them. It just sticks in their cerebellum. Settler America has never been really lower working class, remember. The mass of privileged white workers have always been in the labor aristocracy, a layer in the lower middle classes (the millions of immigrant blue-collar workers from Eastern and Southern Europe in the early 20th century were not classed as "white" by Americans back then, but were said to be from inferior "swarthy" races).¹¹ And failed farmers like McVeigh's fellow conspirator Terry Nichols haven't been peasants (like in old Europe or Mexico) but a type of small businessmen. Timothy

McVeigh can't be the real white man his father was, because the lifelong, high paying, industrial labor aristocracy of the steel mills and auto plants is shrinking not expanding. And he's not suited to be a software designer or patent attorney or tourist resort manager or any of the other good slots in the new yuppie economy.

Formerly, Tim would have been guaranteed security and respect as white settler policeman or army officer, but he couldn't adjust to being lesser in the "multicultural" age of Colin Powells. McVeigh lost his army career despite being almost exactly the type of gung-ho noncom the military was looking for, because he couldn't stop fighting with his "nigger" fellow officers. Imperialism doesn't care if you are a bigot. Or if you make decisions on that basis just as the big guys do. Only you are expected to not be crudely upfront about it and cause them problems. Be a team player, as they always say. Only the Tims can't swallow the humiliation of not being automatically on top as white settlers always have been before. To them fascism neatly takes over from settler-colonialism.

There can be many different kinds of capitalist crises, social crisis as well as a depression. The key here is the class loss of the role in society, in production and distribution. Men who are robbed of having a place and as a class can't go forward and can't go backward. Who are at an end.

Just as so many white farmers in the Northern Plains states know how to raise commercial crops, run complex farm machinery, juggle agricultural chemicals, negotiate government and bank loans in the hundreds of thousands of dollars for their own lands and business. But they really aren't needed anymore as a small business class (and the State is tired of subsidizing them). Globalized transnational capitalism can get cattle and wheat much cheaper in other countries. Most of those rural white men forced off the land and out of small towns, losing their independence as producers, make the jump to cities and ordinary jobs. Others can't adjust to losing their middle class feelings of independence (government subsidized, of course). However they manage to survive, in their hearts they are drifting to the far right as enemies of the State and the banks and corporations that destroyed them. Like at Ruby Ridge. Like the tax refusers. Like the very successful violent movement to reclaim federal lands for free local settler exploitation.

Even through the difficult poverty and insecurity of the Great Depression in the 1930s, the fascism that was raging in Europe found few followers here. *Because white settler-colonialism and fascism occupy the same ecological niche.* Having one, capitalist society didn't yet need the other. Nazism didn't do anything to Jews that Americanism didn't do first to indigenous peoples. And for the same reasons. **Settlerism has many points in common with fascism as popular oppressor cultures, of course. Which is the reason some Nazi theorists used white settler America as the idealized model for their Greater Germany.** When capitalism has abruptly de-settlerized before in other countries, a populist fascism has been one political result. For instance, when French capitalism decided in 1961 to secure Algerian oil by abandoning the million French colonial-settlers there (at that time colonial Algeria was officially an integral province of France), a popular settler-army fascist movement immediately sprang into life that started bombings and tried to assassinate the French president and militarily

topple the French State. That 1960s French fascism of the “colons” not only had mass support, but it still forms a base for the far right in France today.

Obviously, rightist political views that touch on fascism are held by many white Americans. They're conditionally loyal to the government (and *in* the government) only because their level of prosperity and privilege is so high that why should they lift their faces from the trough? But if the u.s. capitalist class left it to a “democratic” vote of its white citizens, known fascists like David Duke would be in the u.s. senate, there would be no W.T.O. but also no Civil Rights Act, and much of America would proudly fly the Confederate flag of the slavemasters. The imperialist State's largest domestic security priority is not terrorism, the ghetto or the border as they pretend, but restraining and defusing white settler rebellion to the right.

So far we have not seen fascist movements based on oppressed workers (while workers are present in fascist movements, they have been outweighed by the declassed, lower middle class and labor aristocracy). Not only Al-Qaida but the entire Muslim far right has always been centered in the middle classes and declassed, in country after country. Like all mass insurgencies, men from different classes may be drawn in but particular classes dominate the core, the cadres and leadership. In Syria, where a Muslim Brotherhood with a mass base actually conducted a violent terror campaign against the Ba'th Party and the Asad dictatorship in an attempt to seize state power, this class composition was very clear. The movement began in the 1930s with imams, students of the sharia, and small traders of the market. (In fact, just as in the Iranian Revolution these categories overlap, with many clerics earning a livelihood in the market as traders). By the time of Syrian civil war in the 1976-1981 period, an analysis of 1384 political prisoners (most of whom were Brothers) showed that 27.7% were students, 7.9% schoolteachers, and 13.3% were professionals, such as lawyers, doctors, engineers.¹²

It is the classes dislocated out of productive life, the humiliated layers of middle class men who are angry and frightened, who feel they have nowhere to turn to restore their status...except towards fascism. Many unemployed college graduates in the corrupt and stultified Muslim neo-colonial world can always emigrate and become our \$5.35 an hour clerks in the neighborhood convenience stores, or perhaps Western Europe's low-wage street sweepers and factory workers. (Like sons of former stalinist party officials in East Germany who are now prominently found in the nazi youth groups, they might have been on top but just lost history's lottery). Some would rather say no and take the Trade with them. You don't have to like them to understand them.

THE “CLASSICAL” FASCISM WAS RADICAL ENOUGH

The discussion in *Fascism & Anti-Fascism* of the political differences within fascism today is mind-stretching and definitely educational. New fascist politics are being produced. However, the paper's elaborate scenario about the importance of the fight between the old “classical” fascism of the Hitlers and Mussolinis vs. today's seemingly more radical third position fascism seems questionable. Hamerquist writes: “*Obviously, my argument puts a lot of weight on the emergence of an anti-capitalist ‘third position’ variant of fascism.*” To the contrary, i believe

that his take on fascism today is essentially accurate whether third position fascism comes to predominate or not. He might be right about third position fascism – which stresses “socialist liberation” politics and makes a pretense of dropping racism – being the wave of the rightist future. But while a thin scattering of third position fascist commentators are attracting much attention, especially on the internet (and especially from their rightwing enemies in racist groups like the so-called Anti-Defamation League), so far they appear to have few soldiers. Every time we see any number of young eurofascists in public, they’re the swastika-loving types we know so well.

Again, looking at fascism historically shows how it has always been very revolutionary, very radical, although not in the way that leftists are used to thinking of those terms. But radical and populist and anti-establishment enough to draw considerable support as an alternative to bourgeois rule. Which is what the question is here.

Here’s the deal. The supposed importance of the defeat of the Strasser-Roehm “left” within the Nazi Party after 1933 was a big issue to many euro-leftists back then. It is the one slice of the old left position on fascism that Hamerquist still holds on to. But not only is it shaky factually, this view is clearly wrong conceptually. For one thing, the political meaning of that factional defeat has never been established – there is even some evidence that the Strasser-Roehm “left” would have been much *less* radical in power than Hitler and the S.S. proved to be. While intellectual Otto Strasser, who ran the Party’s main press for years, and Captain Roehm of the “Brownshirts” pressed a more “socialist” line than Hitler, talk before taking power is often worth less than the paper it is printed on. Strasser’s “Germanic socialism” seemed to be mostly a collection of petty utopian plans and laws. After the war Strasser claimed that Hitler had only perverted the Nazi ideals, and set up a nationalistic social-democratic party in Bavaria.

Also, for all we know the only historic function of fascist “left” factions is to put on a more convincing public face to better lure embittered, anti-establishment men into the fascist movement.

But the most important reason that this line of thinking has proven to be wrong is because fascism in general – including the “classical” euro fascism – has proven to be violently radical & dangerously capable of attracting mass support far beyond the left’s complacent expectations. Hitler is *still* being underestimated by the left. He was a brilliant, exciting leader who yearned for, fought for, dangerous changes far more radical than anything anyone imagined back then. *That his radicalism was of the right makes it no less radical.* Under his leadership the left was made to look pedestrian, dull, inadequate, as he crash created a shocking techno-culture of mass worship and violent mass re-identification. Hitler made millions of people change who they were. He left the bourgeoisie intact save for the Jews, but diminished its importance. He destroyed whole peoples, relabelled others and even eliminated the old working class. He reshaped Germany as a society for generations to come, and then destroyed an empire in titanic wars of his own choosing.

We forget that fascism has always been mainly a movement of the young. That many youth in 1930s Germany viewed the Nazis as liberatory. As opposed to the German social-democrats, for example, who preached the dutiful authority of parents over children, the Hitler Youth gave rebellious children the power to keep their own hours, have an active sex and political life, smoke, drink and have groups of their own. Wilhelm Reich pointed out long ago that fascism in practice exposed every hypocrisy and internal cultural repression of the old left.

All during the rise of euro-fascism in the 1920s and 1930s, the left dissed & dismissed them as pawns of the capitalist class. Whether in the brilliant German Communist photomontage posters of the artist Heartfield or the pronouncement from Moscow that “fascism is the terroristic dictatorship of the big bourgeoisie”, there was a constant message that Italian fascism and German Nazism were only puppets for the big capitalist class. This has some parts of the truth, but is fatally off-center and produces an actually disarming picture. Not that no leftists saw the problem, of course. In 1922 one German communist writer warned of a “Fascist Danger in South Germany”, and even analyzed the Nazi Party as a highly militarized anti-semitic sect that was based in the petty bourgeoisie but was agitating against big business.¹³ These assessments on the ground were soon swept away by dismissive theories from the big left uberheadquarters in Berlin and Moscow.

Today we think of fascism so much in terms of its repression, that we forget how much Nazism built its movement by campaigning against big capitalism. One famous National Socialist election poster shows a social democratic winged “angel” walking hand in hand with a stereotyped banker, with the big slogan: “**Marxism is the Guardian Angel of Capitalism**”.¹⁴ Hitler promised to preserve the “good” productive capitalism of ordinary hard-working Germans, while wiping out the “bad” parasitic big capitalism of the hidden finance capitalist Jewish bosses. In fact, tens of millions of Americans (and not just white folks) would support such a program right here & now. Fascism blended together a radical sentiment against the big bourgeoisie and their State, together with racist-nationalist ideology, into a political uprising of the middle classes and declassed.

The Nazi Party under Hitler was acting always under the pervasive hegemony of capitalist culture, but it was in no way under the orders of the former capitalist ruling class. It actually pushed the big capitalists away from State power, just as Hitler always promised that it would (Hamerquist strongly emphasizes this point).

The notion that big business interests push buttons to create or disappear fascism at will, as they need it, is an enduring left fable. It sounds so reasonable from a conspiratorial point of view, and generations of leftists have repeated it so often we just assume that it’s true. But, you know, there’s a special hell for movements that fall in love with their own propaganda. *We’re going to dip into a discussion of fascist history to sort out these questions factually.*

It’s true that Adolph Hitler didn’t need a day job. He was the most dramatic new leader on the German political scene; one who had participated in violence himself and whose politics were not only outside of the mainstream but beyond the boundaries of the law. Once he got out of

prison after the failed 1923 Munich putsch, Hitler was personally supported by the Duchess of Sachsen-Anhalt as he began rebuilding his party. ¹⁵ Party gossip then talked about “Hitler’s women” – not mistresses but older, wealthy right-wing women who were charmed to have tea with the poetic, stormy young fuhrer in return for donations. And there were always some businessmen, like the Bechstein family of piano makers, who supported the Nazis. This level of support might square with, say, the support that the 1960s Black Power radicalism got from wealthy white progressives. The militant u.s. Black Power movement received large amounts of money from upper-class sources as diverse as the national Episcopal Church and one of the Rockefellers. Should we think that H. Rap Brown and Amiri Baraka were “puppets of the ruling class”? Or that their nationalist Black Revolution was a ruling class strategy? Fact is, many wealthy people have many different causes and hobby horses to ride.

The major German capitalists didn’t support the excessively unstable, fractious, violent, anti-bourgeois Nazi Party until *after* its 1930 electoral breakout into being the dynamic major party of the Right. That is, after a long decade of difficult fighting and building from tiny, obscure beginnings. ¹⁶ The Nazis were a poor party by bourgeois standards, financed primarily from their own members and followers. Big capitalism in Germany had instead backed a rival party with big cash – the right wing but respectably bourgeois German Nationalist Party, headed by Alfred Hugenberg. (A director of the giant Krupp armaments firm, Hugenberg owned the major UFA film studios, the leading German advertising firm, and a nationwide chain of newspapers. He was supported by Hjalmar Schacht of the Reichsbank and Albert Voegler of United Steel). ¹⁷ This is another way of saying that the major German capitalists themselves long misjudged how to handle the crisis that was destroying Depression-era Germany. This is no surprise, since their misruling class ineptitude was one reason things were in such crisis. The failures and misjudgement of the capitalist class leadership play a larger role in things than we sometimes recognize.

In particular, fascism has always developed a hard radical edge to it that called to the lower middle classes and the declassed to come battle not only the treacherous left but the bosses and their government (in the periphery this same fascist class politics is reshaped to a “anti-colonial” battle against Western imperialism and its corrupt local neo-colonial allied regimes). The “classical” Nazi fascism – which named itself the “German National Socialist Workers Party”, after all – could get roughly a quarter of its votes in 1930 from the working class, although mostly from the long term unemployed strata. ¹⁸ But it was not based in the working class. Nazi Gauleiter Alfred Krebs of Munich reported that the party cadres came almost exclusively from the lowest of the middle classes (office workers, petty civil servants, self-employed craftsmen and traders), not from either the main middle classes or industrial workers. ¹⁹ Nevertheless, these new class fighters numbered in the hundreds of thousands and millions, a powerful political force. And anti-bourgeois politics were music to their ears, just as condemning the corrupt excess of Saudi princes and oil millionaires help attract pan-islamic fascism’s followers. Nazi Gauleiter Krebs reported that *“any attack on capitalism and plutocracy found the strongest echo among the local functionaries [of the Nazi Party- ed.] with their middle-class origin.”* ²⁰

Listen to Daniel Guerin's eyewitness account of a Nazi SA "stormtrooper" rally in Leipzig in 1933:

"Saturday evening at a popular dance hall in a working-class district of Leipzig. Men and women around tables, dressed like petit-bourgeois, like all German workers. There are many SAs and Hitler Youth, but here there is neither arrogance nor starchiness; it's free and easy, noisy laughter – we're among the people. The orchestra, in uniform, plays good classical music: Wagner, Verdi. At the intermission, an orator mounts the stage and harangues the crowd, which is at first attentive and docile. The theme: 'Our Revolution'.

" ' *Our Revolution, Volksgenossen* ["National Comrades"], *has only begun. We haven't yet attained any of our goals. There's talk of a national government, of a national awakening... What's all that about? It's the Socialist part of our program that matters.* '

" 'The crowd emits a satisfied "Ah!" This is what everyone was thinking but didn't dare articulate. Now their gaze passionately follows this man who speaks for them all.

" "*The Reich of Wilhelm II was a Reich without an ideal. The bourgeoisie ruled with its disgusting materialism and its contempt for the proletariat. The 1918 Revolution, Volksgenossen, couldn't destroy the old system. The Socialist leaders abandoned the dictatorship of the proletariat for the golden calf. They betrayed the nation and they betrayed the people. As for communism, it's proven itself unable to get rid of them, since Stalin renounced Leninist Bolshevism for capitalist individualism.* '

"I listen spellbound to this tirade. Am I really at a Hitlerite meeting? But the demagogue knows what he's doing, for the crowd is vibrating around me at an ever-increasing rhythm.

" ' *The bourgeoisie, Volksgenossen, continued to monopolize patriotism, to abandon the masses to Marxism, that dog's breakfast. For our part, we've understood that we had to go to the proletariat and enter into it, that to conquer Germany meant conquering the working class. And when we revealed the idea of the Fatherland to these proletarians, there were tears of gratitude on many a Face...* '

"This emphatic missionary language is followed by diatribe and threats: '*We have now but one enemy to vanquish: the bourgeoisie. To bad for it if it doesn't want to give in, if it doesn't want to understand...*'

"And carried away by his eloquence, he lets the admission slip out: '*Besides, one day it will be grateful that we treated it this way.*'

"But the crowd didn't hear that. It believes only that the revolution has begun, that socialism is on the horizon. And when he has finished, it sings with raw anger:

" 'O producers, you deeply suffer

The poverty of the times.

The army of the unemployed

Relentlessly grows.

” ‘But joyous and free worker,

Still you sing the old song:

“We are the workers,

The Proletariat!”

” ‘You labor every day

For a salary of famine.

But the Tietzs, the Wertheims, and the Cohns

Know neither poverty nor pain.

You exhaust and overwork yourself:

Who benefits from your labor?

It’s the shareholders,

The Profitariat.’ ” ²¹

Is today’s third position fascism more radical than that? I doubt it. Fascism always taps into and channels the raw radical anger and class envy of lower classes against the bourgeois, in order to create a distorted revolutionary instrument. Not just as a trick, either. **This distorted class anger is necessary to sharpen the violent instrument that fascism needs.**

Nor was this true only in Germany. Fascism originally started in Italy among some socialist intellectuals, demobilized *arditi* (the Italian army’s elite assault commando units), avant-garde artists & writers, and then young rural landowners. Their economic program was very “left” and against big business. Even as late as 1921, fascist leader Mussolini (the former pro armed struggle tendency leader of the Italian Socialist Party and editor of the party newspaper) was proposing that the monarchy and parliament be forcibly abolished, and replaced by a joint fascist-socialist-catholic reformist “right-left” rule over the nation. Although Mussolini explored this path towards power, it was too late already – as he spoke, fascist squads were killing leftists, burning whole villages that had gone “red”, and breaking up unions. That is less significant for us than understanding his need to put forward the most “left” face possible on his way to State power. Mussolini even spoke favorably about the spontaneous workers councils movement that was taking over factories and calling for anti-capitalist revolution:

“No social transformation which is necessary is repugnant to me. Hence I accept the famous workers’ supervision of the factories and equally their cooperative social management; I only ask that there should be a clear conscience and technical capacity, and that production be increased. If this is guaranteed by the trade unions, instead of by the employers, I have no hesitation in saying that the former have the right to take the latter’s place.” ²²

Again, does today’s third position fascism sound more radical than that? Not hardly.

It wasn’t just that the early fascists ran under false colors. There was a new militant energy created on the Right by playing “left” off the increasingly stale, dishonest, reformist leanings of organized socialism. Remember that fascism is a movement of the young, and that in Italy it was the fascists not the left that swept the universities with their subculture of dangerous excitement and drama. As Mussolini thundered:

“...democracy has taken away the sense of style from the life of the people. Fascism brings back a sense of style to the life of the people, that is, a line of conduct, colour, force, the picturesque, the unexpected, the mystic; in short, all those things that count in the spirit of the masses. We play the lyre on all its strings: from violence to religion, from art to politics...fascism is a desire for action, and **is** action; it is not party but anti-party and movement.” ²³

In an unpublished manuscript, R. Vacirca explains this:

“Italian Fascism initially positioned itself to the *left* of the Social Democracy, denouncing the bourgeoisification of the socialist movement. Mussolini and other early proto-fascists like the famous futurist artist Marinelli did this, attracting many radical youth to them as a more radical alternative to the mainstream Marxists. This is why Antonio Gramsci and other student socialists idolized Mussolini until he became pro-war in 1914. The bourgeois reformist character of the Social-Democracy played into the fascists’ hands. People in the U.S. have a false picture of the historic euro-left, they don’t realize how big and strong rooted Social Democracy was. How, like our AFL-CIO, the Civil Rights movement, the women’s movement here, how much a part of the establishment it had become. And of course from its beginnings fascism was a fighting force, an armed organization. It emphasized violence and direct, spontaneous action which made them look a lot racier than the broad socialist movement which was de facto pacifist. Just like today the “anti-war movement” Mussolini faced was totally inept and bourgeoisified.

“Up to December of 1920 when the fascists opened up their first big sustained terror campaign against the socialist party, Mussolini presented himself and the fascists as a revolutionary, pro-worker alternative to the increasingly reformist Marxists. Trafficking on his rep as the leader of the most revolutionary faction of the Italian Socialist Party. After all, if he hadn’t broken rightward to make common cause with the nationalists and supported Italy entering World War I to gain more territory, Mussolini would have been the natural leader of a communist revolution in Italy. This is what Lenin himself said at one point! This is how disorienting the new fascist movement was. By the time enough people had figured out what Mussolini was doing he had a lock on power, and gradually washed all the red out of his program.” ²⁴

The “classical” fascism openly despised & promised to supplant the bourgeois culture of

accumulating capital to live off of, the central fixation with money and soft living. **The Nazi cultural model was not a businessman or politician, remember, but the Aryan warrior willing to fight & kill.** Fascism was a movement for failed men: of the marginally employed professional, the idle school graduate, the deeply indebted farmer, the unrecognized war veteran, the perpetually unemployed worker with no chance of work. But failed not because of *themselves* , but because bourgeois society had failed them in a dishonorable way.

So fascism called men from the middle classes to recover their heritage of being holy warriors, to sweep the decayed old bourgeois order away in a campaign against two classes: to seize State power from the bourgeoisie and completely eliminate the working class left. The bourgeoisie would be forced to step back, would fulfill their useful role in the economy and be rewarded as is needful for capitalism to function, but they could no longer control the State or nation. And the State would be made up of real men who wouldn't profit from the petty counting of stocks, but by manfully just taking what they wanted.

This is the truly rightist revolutionary aspect to fascism, as Hamerquist recognizes. **It is capitalism run out of control of the big capitalists.** Which is why the commanding elements of the capitalist class feed fascism and use it in emergencies, but eventually must try to limit, coopt, regularize or militarily subdue fascist states. This new World War by the u.s.a. against pan-Islamic fascism cannot possibly be more violent than the last world war of the imperialist Allies against European & Japanese fascism – in which 60 million people died. What is the attack on the World Trade Center or the recent bombing of Kabul compared to just the one Allied firebombing of the German city of Dresden? An unknown number of persons in the many tens or even several hundreds of thousands died that night as the uncontrolled firestorm from u.s. “anti-Nazi” bombing sucked the oxygen out of the air and swept through whole city blocks in a leap.

BIG BUSINESS DID NOT RUN THE FASCIST STATE

Much of the standard old left analysis of the Hitler regime as essentially acting for big business is based on a vulgar Marxism, and is a fundamental misreading of fascism's character. This pseudo-materialist line of thinking says: the biggest German corporations got bigger and richer, so the big capitalists must have been running the show. How simple politics is to those bound and determined to be simple-minded. While Nazism could be thought a “tool” of the bourgeoisie in the sense that big business took advantage of it and supported it, it was out of their control – in other words, not a “tool” in the usual meaning of the word. Picture a type of power saw that you hoped would cut down the tree stump in your backyard, but that not only did that but also went off in its own directions and escaped your control.

There was a considerable consolidation of German industry under Nazism, particularly once the war was at its peak. Many small factories were ruthlessly taken from their owners by the Nazi state and given, in effect, to the largest corporations. The fascist interest was in greater ease of government supervision and in spreading the higher state of war production techniques of the advanced corporations.

That this completely contradicted Hitler's "socialist" doctrine of "anti capitalism" and preserving the small producers, was so evident that even in wartime the Nazis had to politically defend themselves to the public. Notice that even as late as 1943 the Nazis were maintaining the desirability of "socialism" and "anti-capitalism" even as they said it was impractical in the current situation. The *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* said in June 1943:

"It cannot be denied that in practical life things can work out very differently from the ideal National Socialist economy. We find it hard to reconcile ourselves to increasing mechanization... to the growth of enormous companies, to the decimation of the middle classes which the war has brought about... But that is the way it is; it would be folly to go counter to technical progress... Many an old entrenched doctrine of anti-capitalism, with the feelings it engendered, has had to be thrown overboard... Things are in a state of flux. We should not dread economic concentration." ²⁵

The key misreading is to assume that who made the most profits from business meant anything to Hitler, who personally never cared anything about money and politically hated the bourgeoisie. Wartime focus on productivity aside, Hitler routinely bribed important power elites that he needed to count on. His favorite generals were given whole estates. Even the Prussian aristocracy, whom Hitler personally had contempt for as a decadent elite that had betrayed him in World War I, were given properties as bribes and permitted to rise to high offices in the S.S. In 1942, Prince Salm-Salm was given thirteen mines; Count Asseburg-Falkenstein-Rothkirch got nine silver, mercury, copper, zinc, manganese, lead, iron and sulphur mines; Prince Botho zu Stollberg-Wernigerode received five coal mines, and thirty-nine other mines; etc. ²⁶ The big capitalists, the Krupps, the Flicks, I.G. Farben, General Electric and Ford, obviously profited most of all dollar-wise. But Hitler and the other fascists never gave away any of what mattered to them, control of the State that controlled everything.

To Hitler these bribes were of no more importance than candy passed out to pacify children. As he was reported to have said: "**Why need we trouble to socialize banks and factories? We socialize human beings?**" ²⁷

The previous old left theory that fascism is "a tool of the ruling class", that the capitalists were in effect just faxing their orders in to obedient Adolph every morning, only shows how threadbare left theory had become. Now, generations later, there is no historical evidence that the big German industrial and finance capitalists were dictating Nazi policy on suicidally invading the Soviet Union. Or on putting major efforts into exterminating millions of Jews even at the critical height of the war effort. Or on allying with fascist Japan in an enlarged war bringing the u.s. empire into the conflict. Or the Nazi policy of rigidly dismantling all the conservative lay organizations of the Catholic Church (nonpolitical Catholic women who tried to secretly keep meeting ended up in prisons and concentration camps). And so on.

Hitler even gave early warning that new men remade into Aryan warriors, from classes betrayed by the hated bourgeoisie, would take command of the State to save national capitalist society from the twin evils of the inept capitalists and the left. Fascism, Hitler said, was not another electoral party but a party of warriors who intended to make "revolution":

“On February 24, 1920, the first great public demonstration of our young movement took place. In the Festsaal of the Munich Hofbrauhaus the twenty-five theses of the new party’s program were submitted to a crowd of almost two thousand and every single point was accepted amidst jubilant approval.

“With this the first guiding principles and directives were issued for a struggle which was to do away with a veritable mass of old traditional conceptions and opinions and with unclear, yes, harmful aims. Into the rotten and cowardly bourgeois world and into the triumphant march of the Marxist wave of conquest a new power phenomenon was entering, which at the eleventh hour would halt the chariot of doom.

“It was self-evident that the new movement could hope to achieve the necessary importance and the required strength for this gigantic struggle only if it succeeded from the very first day in arousing in the hearts of its supporters the holy conviction that with it political life was to be given, not to a new *election slogan* , but to a new *philosophy* of fundamental significance...

“...And so, if today our movement gets the witty reproach that it is working toward a ‘*revolution*’, especially from the so-called national bourgeois ministers, say of the Bavarian Center, the only answer we can give one of the political twerps is this: Yes, indeed, we are trying to make up for what you in your criminal stupidity failed to do. By the principles of your parliamentary cattle-trading, you helped to drag the nation into the abyss; but we, in the form of attack and by setting up a new philosophy of life by fanatically and indomitably defending its principles, shall build for our people the steps on which it will some day climb back into the temple of freedom.

“And so, in the founding period of our movement, our first concern had always to be directed towards preventing the host of warriors for an exalted conviction from becoming a mere club for the advancement of parliamentary interests.” ²⁸

The nature of the capitalist State and how it operates is a complex issue. For example, it has not been unusual for the capitalist State to actually be operated by another class. In Great Britain, the feudal State had been administered by the hereditary landed aristocracy, who simply continued to run the government for well over the first century of British industrial capitalism. That was particularly true for the imperial military, traditionally officered by the younger sons of the aristocracy and gentry. Germany had a similar arrangement until the end of World War I, with the military in particular being the domain of the junkers and other aristocrats (Prince Otto von Bismarck, the brilliant founder of the modern German capitalist nation, was himself a noble not a capitalist politician). So in that sense the concept of fascism commanding the State, relegating the capitalist class to the temporary role of passengers not drivers in their own car, is not completely without historical precedent.

A NEW BARBARISM?

Fascism & Anti-Fascism raises the possibility of fascist revolution leading to a de-civilization, of a post-capitalist regression into a new “barbarism”. As Hamerquist writes insightfully: “*Capitalism’s current contradictions provide the potentials for revolutionary fascist*

movements, the basic ingredient, I think, of 'barbarism', just as certainly as they provide potentials for a revitalized revolutionary left."

He might well be right. Although, again, plain vanilla fascism seems to be capable of almost as much barbarism as human society can absorb (if we consider the case of the Khmer Rouge, it might be that such extreme breakdown into a neo-barbarism could come from the authoritarian left more than the right) . When we say that one automatically thinks of the Holocaust, but the "classical" fascism did much more than that alone. Hamerquist notes that while capitalism is supposed to live off of the exploitation of labor power fascism raises the possibility of a "barbaric" mode of surplus value extraction that rests on the actual *destruction* of labor power. This is a terrible thing, but it is not new for capitalism. For that matter, "classical" very capitalist German fascism did exactly that. It dissolved the German proletariat as a class, drafting it into their army or promoting it away, and created a better, disposable, always-dying-off working class that was literally being worked to death.

Even political conquest didn't eliminate National Socialism's constant clashing with their own native industrial working class. As the Party's German Labor Front reported in 1937 over mass resistance to speed-ups and Taylorism: *"Workers, whether of National Socialist persuasion or not, still hold on to the Marxist and union position of rejecting criteria of production...Controls over individual achievement are rejected. Therefore they resist all attempts to time them."*²⁹

Remember that until well after 1933 the Nazis could venture into hard-core proletarian neighborhoods only in large groups. There were large-scale working class sabotage campaigns in the shipyards, docks, railroads and armaments factories (Italian fascism was always plagued by strong working class opposition, and was basically overthrown by the Italian workers).

Fascism de-proletarianized Aryan society. Or to put it more precisely: it *created* an Aryan society that had never existed before by de-proletarianizing and genociding the former German society. The Nazis pursued Adolf Hitler's evolving strategy, which was to simultaneously promote both techno-industrial development and the Aryan re-organization of classes. If it is the superior race man's destiny to be both a fierce soldier and ruler over others – as the Nazis held in a core belief – then how can this superior race man at the same time be packing groceries for housewives at the supermarket or bucking production on the assembly line? In 1940 Nazi Labor Front leader Robert Ley said in an amazingly revealing speech: *"In ten years Germany will be transformed beyond recognition. A nation of proletarians will have become a nation of rulers..."* By the millions, newly Aryanized men were shifted into military & police service and into being supervisors, office workers, foremen, straw bosses and minor bureaucrats of every sort. The new proletariat that started emerging was heavily made up of involuntary foreign & slave laborers, retirees, and – despite Nazi ideology about women's "natural" place in the kitchen and nursery – women.³⁰

Nazi slave labor is seldom dealt with in its class reality. Usually it is mentioned as a side-effect of the Holocaust. Or as a short-lived desperation measure of a tottering regime facing military defeat on all fronts. The truth was that it was much more than that. Slave and semi-slave labor

was a necessary feature of mature Nazi society. If Hitlerism had been successful, slave labor was to have gone on for his entire lifetime and beyond. Even conquered Eastern Europe and Russia, in official Nazi plans, would gradually have given way to the spread of vast Aryan owned agricultural estates, whose rural slave proletariat would have been involuntarily furnished by the inferior races. ³¹

By 1941 there were three million foreign & slave proletarians at work in National Socialist factories, farms and mines. Coincidentally, the Nazi elite S.S. – which had only 116 men at its first public display at the July 4, 1926 Party Rally at Weimar ³² (by happy coincidence the u.s.a. and the Nazi Party celebrate the same founding holiday) – had symmetrically grown to three million as well. A new class of oppressed workers being balanced by a new class of parasitic oppressors. Soon the overrun territories of Europe and the East provided over four million more slave laborers for Nazi industry & the war machine (the majority of whom were used up, consumed, in accelerated capitalist production). Nazism's peculiar class structure was parasitic as a mode of life. One history sums this up:

“The regime's increasing use of concentration camp and foreign forced labour made the working class more or less passive accomplices in Nazi racial policy. ..The first 'recruits' were unemployed Polish agricultural labourers, who were soon accompanied by prisoners of war and people abducted en masse from cinemas and churches. These were then followed by the French. By the summer of 1941 there were some three million foreign workers in Germany, a figure which mushroomed to 7.7 million in the autumn of 1944. ...*A high proportion of these workers were either young or female.* By 1944, a quarter of those working in the German economy were foreigners. Virtually every German worker was thus confronted by the fact and practice of Nazi racism. In some branches of industry, German workers merely constituted a thin, supervisory layer above a workforce of which between 80 and 90 percent were foreigners. This tends to be passed over by historians of the labour movement.

“Treatment of these foreign workers was largely determined by their 'racial' origins. Broadly speaking, the usual hierarchy consisted of 'German workers' at the top, 'west workers' a stage below them, and Poles and 'eastern workers' at the lowest level. This racial hierarchy determined both living conditions and the degree of coercion to which foreign workers were subjected both at the workplace and in society at large.” ³³

The disvisionary fascist social engineering of the Nazi Party several generations ago is echoed by the pan-islamic fascists of the Taliban, who ordered the permanent house arrest and enslavement of all women in society as a gender (as well as the marginalization/elimination of other ethnic groupings). Fascism as we have known it in practice, operating as an “extraordinary” form of capitalist rule, produces shocking barbarism far beyond any normal expectations. In fact, to go much beyond that in this direction would probably produce an unraveling of society itself (as happened under the Khmer Rouge).

FASCIST SUCCESS & THE CAPITALIST STATE

Although the major bourgeoisie itself is not needed to create fascist movements, neither is it true that fascism simply comes in cold from the outside to seize State power. It *is not* like the revolutionary left in that sense. We feel that revolutionaries must make a critical distinction between the various sectors of the capitalist class and the State apparatus that protects capitalism. Fascism has a certain insider leverage in its reaching for State power. In all cases of fascist success so far there has been a complex mutual attraction between elements of the State and fascist movements. Fascism gets important support from operators within the bourgeois State, who recognize their deepest identities and needs in these popular movements of the extreme right. *"Like is drawn to like."*

Big businessmen, the hereditary super-wealthy, financiers, are notorious inept at State decision-making. The capitalist State cannot necessarily survive crises by being bound to their thinking (recall the widespread capitalist opposition to Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal, even to the point of an attempted military coup led by the DuPonts). President Theodore Roosevelt once remarked on this with disappointment: *"You expect a man of millions to be a man worth hearing. But as a rule they don't know anything outside their own businesses"* ³⁴

The infant Nazi Party, for example, might have had no support at all from the big bourgeoisie, but it was carefully fostered for years by elements in the young army officer corps. This was at a time, right after Germany's defeat in World War I, when the German army was politically unreliable from the capitalist point of view. To ensure that some officers didn't try a coup to oust the new social-democratic Weimar Republic government, the enlisted men in many army units had elected socialist representatives to meet in councils. Rebellious army units went socialist or even communist.

Professional officers knew that without a mass base of support, a "workers party" as one captain in the Bavarian regiments put it, they wouldn't be able to repress the rebellious working class left or trust their own troops enough to stage the coup they aimed for. This particular officer had spotted a likely political worker for their conspiracy in his battalion, a corporal named Adolf Hitler who had successfully become the elected socialist representative of his company. This corporal was quickly recruited to be a political agent for the rightist officers conspiracy in the army.

Hitler later said in awkwardly defending Nazis with socialist pasts: *"Everyone was a social-democrat once."* The lesson here is that it's not uncommon in the chaos when regimes fall, when radical discontent is the major drum beat of popular politics, for even rightists to get their early political experience by joining the left for awhile. Sometimes that's the best game in town. Hitler's biographer, Ian Kershaw, points out that the young corporal was far more heavily involved in the left than was earlier realized. Bavaria in South Germany went from overthrowing both the Kaiser and its own principality all the way to its own "Red Republic" when the young communists seized power temporarily. Hitler's 1st Reserve Battalion of the 2nd Bavarian Infantry Regiment took part in the communist revolution, during which he served as the elected Deputy Battalion Representative, probably even marching in an armed workers & soldiers parade wearing a red armband with the rest of his unit. ³⁵

In this he was far from being the only fascist-to-be drawn into rebellious “socialist” activity. The commander of his elite S.S. bodyguard, Sepp Dietrich (later to become an S.S.General and war criminal), had first been the elected chairman of a revolutionary soldiers’ council in 1919. Hitler’s own chauffeur, Julius Schreck, had been in the communist “Red Army” militia, while his first propaganda chief, Herman Esser, had been a socialist journalist. These were men looking for a cause, for change that they could swell into, and with an anger at the smug bourgeoisie (36) The left after all teaches how to conduct political debates, how to organize masses of people around issues, the technique of mass politics.

When the unsuccessful Kapp Putsch broke out in Berlin in 1920, political agent Hitler was even trusted enough to be sent secretly to be the liaison between the Bavarian army units and the mutinous officers.³⁶ By then a full time army political specialist, Hitler was sent undercover to join and report on a small fascist group called the German National Socialist Workers Party (one of many promising rightist and fascist groups the army was encouraging). Hitler had finally found his life’s work, and with army approval and financing Hitler plunged into building the Nazi Party. He was one of many such competing agents, in those chaotic times. The German Army acted autonomously from the rest of the weakened bourgeois democratic State for years, illegally giving the Nazi Party and other far right groups funds, weapons and training.

While there are rogue operations and unofficially approved assistance to fascists, there are also cases where the State on all levels gets involved. Italy was one such case, where the newborn fascist movement in 1919-22 got informal local help from police and army officers as well as official assistance from the highest levels of the State. Arrested with a hundred other fascists after the 1919 elections on charges of flashing guns (Mussolini lost to a socialist candidates by 40 to 1), Mussolini was freed on government orders.³⁷ In 1920, the defense minister ordered that demobilized officers who joined the fascist action squads to give leadership to the mix of inexperienced middle class students and street criminals in them would continue to get 4/5ths of their army pay.³⁸ But it wasn’t the Italian big bourgeoisie who were so enthusiastic about supporting fascism but police officials, army officers, local capitalists and the rural middle class landowners and intellectuals. It wasn’t until the eve of the fascist march on Rome in 1922, when Mussolini was being supported by the heads of the military for the next chief of state, that the major industrial capitalists swung into line.

We can see this pattern over and over on all levels. *Because the potential usefulness of mass volunteer movements of armed men is irresistible to those in the State who actually have to solve capitalism’s crises. (Many within the State apparatus naturally have approximate fascist or “totalitarian” views themselves). And today these mass volunteer movements of armed men are equally irresistible to the small and local bourgeoisie, who feel increasingly neglected by and estranged from the command levels of big transnational capitalism.*

Afghanistan and pan-islamic fascism in that region today are a more recent development that shows how this type of relationship can play out. It is certainly true that the fascist Taliban movement is a by-product of the Reagan administration’s manufactured islamic jihad, in the sense that the c.i.a. set the historical stage for the Taliban to appear. But the fascist movement

known as the Taliban (“the Students”) was primarily an internal development of Pakistani-Afghan society. ³⁹

Pakistani military dictator General Zia took that c.i.a. strategy and ran with it in a strategy of his own, to deliberately create out of the refugee camps and Pakistan’s dispossessed a huge manipulated guerrilla army of jihad. General Zia’s decision is cursed by many in Pakistan today, but it made sense in terms of his class situation. The Pakistani bourgeois officer class was locked into a bitter cycle of losing conflicts with their main enemy, India, which is far larger and stronger. While the cramped, neo-colonial Pakistani economy is in continual crisis, with ever more bitter misery and class conflict.

General Zia envisioned giving Pakistan “strategic depth”, enlarging it economically and militarily by making Pakistan the center and leadership of a new transnational Muslim empire styled after the historic Muslim Central Asian empire of the Tartars. Uniting Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Muslim China, Kashmir and the 150 million Muslims of India itself, with Pakistan as the center. The mujaheddin were to be the Brownshirts, the “Stormtroopers”, the mass popular armed force, acting for the Pakistani army and local bourgeoisie.

When “liberated” Afghanistan disintegrated into mujaheddin looting, mass rapes, killings and ethnic civil war so characteristic of men’s religions, the Taliban became the Pakistan state’s fix-it to unify and hold down the country. Their sponsor was Lt-General Hameed Gul, the c.i.a.’s former chief collaborator in their Afghan operation as head of the feared Pakistan Inter Service Intelligence (ISI). He was the leader overseeing the funding, training and arming of all the various mujaheddin groups, and subsequently became the Taliban’s main sponsor. Providing arms, intelligence and military “advisors” to them.

The Taliban was financially supported by the large Pakistani smuggling mafias (which they became part of). That is, the Taliban leaders are little local bourgeoisie themselves, but of a special criminal kind. Because of its central location and long borders in rough terrain, Afghanistan has always been a hub where commercial traffic goes from Pakistan and its ports across the borders into Iran or China and up into the former U.S.S.R. (via Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan). And back. We’re talking about many hundreds of trucks a day loaded with televisions, computers, silk clothing, food, diesel fuel, rifles and ammunition, and especially drugs. All smuggled, and usually on stolen trucks. Again, a corrosive trade worth billions of dollars a year.

The smuggling mafias are certainly businessmen, but what we’d call small local capitalists. They don’t care too much for NATO, the UN, the multinational corporations and the WTO, for obvious reasons. What they do care about is having a stable corrupt police over Afghanistan’s highways. During the free-for-all period right after the pro-Russian Kabul government fell in 1992 and before the Taliban took over in 1995-96, each local warlord and his gunmen set up roadblocks. A long truck convoy might be “taxed” dozens of times. Violent chaos is bad for real crime.

So the Pakistani smuggling mafias started not only backing the Taliban financially and politically, but helping them join the business. The Taliban, a new fascist movement of Pushtun nationalism, led thousands of fresh but inexperienced fighters in a new jihad to unify all the armies and end the fighting. Like a miracle, the Taliban marched on the capital and beyond, sweeping armies before them by the simple expedient of buying the loyalty of warlord commanders with cash supplied by their mafia backers. Their forces swelled as they incorporated old warlord forces into their new army of Pushtun unity, as well as being joined by some 20,000 enthusiastic new recruits from the refugee camps in Pakistan. This is the clerical fascist military regime that came to temporarily rule Afghanistan.

There is wide-spread class antagonism towards the big transnational bourgeoisie of Western imperialism among Muslim local capitalists and the mafias of criminal capitalism, who see no advantage to their own classes in having the big transnational corporations take over even the smallest corners of the Third World. While modern society in the Muslim world keeps turning out large numbers of declassed, educated and semi-educated young men who have no prospects in their countries. And there are elements in the neo-colonial State apparatus who see in fascism the best solution for their class and social crises. Like Lt-General Gul, formerly the c.i.a.'s "man in Afghanistan".

Lt-General Gul himself is now widely considered a supporter or member of the pan-islamic fascist network. Since helping the Taliban into power Gul has broken with the c.i.a. and the big imperialist bourgeoisie. Now having left the army, General Gul is making well-received speeches against the pro Western Pakistani military regime, calling the u.s. bombing of Afghanistan part of the "Zionist conspiracy" that he alleges did 911. The Trade attack, this former major c.i.a. ally says, was merely a staged Jewish "*pretext for a long-prepared, all-out operation...for subjugation of the Muslim world. Jihad has, therefore, become obligatory on all Muslims, wherever they are.*"⁴⁰ You can imagine the public ripple effect of having Pakistan's connection to the c.i.a. making anti-Western imperialist speeches like this.

The point is that fascism never has to fight alone. Why should it? Since along that road, in the deepening crisis and tumult of transformation, it attracts significant involvement from local or small bourgeoisie and elements of the State apparatus. Whether covert or open, rogue or official. We should see that in fascism now some of the local bourgeoisie, declassed masses of men, criminal elements and part of the State apparatus come together in a new way.

TRENDS TOWARD UNEXPECTED FASCIST INFECTIONS?

One of *Fascism & Anti-Fascism's* conclusions is that the left and the fascists are competing for the same people, especially in the white working class. While this can be questioned, one place this could be most dangerously true is in the Black Nation. Hamerquist's analysis here is controversial. Even the thought of any Black fascism sounds strange, since the traditional humanism of Black politics and any fascism have always been at opposite poles from each other. But in the 21st century everything is transforming. We already have seen a Chicano

nationalist website that defends the “Protocols of the Elders of Zion”, the most important single propaganda writing for world fascism. As well as a Chicano community newspaper in Los Angeles that has similar politics.

No nation in the world has undergone more radical change in the last generation than the New Afrikan Nation. The previous New Afrikan society, which was a semi-colonial one, where a stable Black working class played a central role both in its community and in u.s. industrial production. The democratic and humanist politics that we associate with Black culture were due not only to that Black working class culture but to the unusually democratic gender relationships, with Black women having a power among their own that euro-american women have never known.

A continuing wave of integration has reshaped the class structure and culture. While integration on a social level never happened (or was greatly desired by anyone), integration of middle class employment has created a large New Afrikan middle class. Counter-balancing that has been the squeezing of the traditional New Afrikan working class, which has seen its unionized industrial jobs disappear overseas while much of the New Afrikan lower working class has been displaced by Latino emigrant labor. The class nature of the poor has changed, from lower working class to large numbers of declassed, in particular declassed men.

This has been the setting for the rise of authoritarian male institutions in the old core New Afrikan communities. These authoritarian organizations and subcultures have rightist politics, and are unprecedented in the New Afrikan Nation’s history. We have already seen the rise of various Black rightist-nationalist figures with a mass following, most notably the late Khallid Muhammad. And the regularization of what were once youth gangs, but now are sometimes Black paramilitary mafias with even thousands of soldiers and many millions of dollars in revenues. Who are de facto “Bantustan” subcontractors of the u.s. empire, policing and perhaps semi-governing small territories where poor communities of New Afrikans live. All against the related background of amoral cultural trends where the obsessive gathering of luxuries and violent preying of Black on Black is celebrated.

This is a shock amidst the almost seismic changes in all of the u.s. empire as it sheds its old continental form and becomes a globalized society. It is hard to know at this moment what will eventually result. To illustrate with but one example, the old New Afrikan struggle against police repression and racist brutality has been at least temporarily thrown off balance by sweeping security checks of everyone, as well as widespread “ethnic profiling” in which Black people are for the first time not the designated enemy but among those expected to do the profiling.

Hamerquist starts by pointing out that new white fascist groups might well find “*working relationships and alliances*” with “*various nationalist and religious tendencies among oppressed peoples.*” Here Hamerquist puts his finger on one of the strangest and least explored aspects of Black nationalism. That there is such a pattern of occasional ties to white far rightists.

The most powerful Black nationalist organization in u.s. history, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam in the 1960s, definitely had relations with various white far right and fascist groups. This was public knowledge. Malcolm X himself said that he had been directed by the N.O.I. leader to meet with Ku Klux Klan men to accept financial contributions. One article on the N.O.I. noted that:

“...in 1961 at a NOI rally in Washington, DC, American Nazi George Lincoln Rockwell sat in the front row with a few dozen storm troopers. When it came time for the collection, Rockwell cried out: ‘*George Lincoln Rockwell gives \$20.*’ So much applause followed that Malcolm X remarked, ‘*George Lincoln Rockwell, you got the biggest hand you ever got, didn’t you?*’ In 1962, at the NOI’s annual Savior’s Day in Chicago, Rockwell was a featured speaker. He stated, ‘*I believe Elijah Muhammad is the Adolph Hitler of the Black man,*’ and ended his speech by pumping his arm and shouting, ‘*Heil Hitler.*’ “

It isn’t hard in retrospect to see what Rockwell was up to. At a time when Freedom struggles were sweeping the u.s., when u.s. capitalism was defensively promoting integration, some white fascists like Rockwell pushed the line that a program of racial separatism had considerable support from militant Black leaders. On his part, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad might have viewed Rockwell’s visits as a public lesson: that even those whites who thought the least of Black people were recognizing the Nation of Islam as a power to be respected (to say that such a viewpoint was at best very narrow is an understatement). As early as the 1920s, during the rise of the Ku Klux Klan to the status of a mass nationwide organization of millions, there was a tentative but well-publicized alliance between the K.K.K. and Black Pan-Afrikanist leader Marcus Garvey. There again, the link was a common interest in promoting the idea of national separatism (although the two sides meant very different things by it).

All these were rare episodes, marginal propaganda events as opposed to any actual alliance. So clearly out of step with the humanist beliefs of the New Afrikan people that they quickly passed away into the history books. **But since then a major development has rearranged the New Afrikan political landscape. For the first time, major authoritarian trends have manifested themselves *within* the Black community.**

We are used to thinking of national liberation movements as being pro-freedom, of being a force for liberation. **But all nationalist movements have inherently *both* liberating and repressive possibilities, based on different class politics within a broad mass movement.** It would be a mistake, for instance, to view the historic Nation of Islam as just being around the politics of Malcolm X. He gradually became a radical anti-capitalist, as he himself said many times. He wasn’t a “Marxist” or an “anarchist” in a European ideological framework, but identified with the communal socialist ideas that had grown within many anti-colonial revolutions. Malcolm’s Black nationalism was a nationalism of the oppressed classes, which is to say it was *internationalist* at its heart. When he famously cried out, “The Black Revolution is sweeping Asia! The Black Revolution is sweeping Latin America! The Black Revolution is sweeping Africa!” , it was obvious that to him it wasn’t about a race or a nation but about the world’s oppressed majority. And he lived what he said. While it was the practice for the NOI to operate as a franchised business, with the local minister being given property

and the right to keep all the revenues raised above the quotas assigned by Chicago, Malcolm refused to accept personal wealth.

It is always said that Malcolm's distinction was that he was the hardest on white people. Which is the kind of falsehood that the oppressor culture likes to slyly perpetuate. No, violently denouncing obvious white racism is so easy that anyone can do it & just turn up the volume. His distinction was that he was unrelentingly, harshly truthful about his own people and their situation. For a generation Malcolm was the teacher. When the Los Angeles police invaded the mosque there one night in 1962, the Fruit of Islam security guards fought them at the entrance to uphold the NOI's policy barring the oppressor. Police gunfire killed one man and wounded many others. As criminal trials and national headlines grew, Malcolm X gave a fiery press conference at the mosque with one of the wounded brothers, paralyzed in a wheelchair. After accusing the police of being the only criminals and instigators, Malcolm rebuked the Fruit of Islam. They had fallen down on their oath, he reminded them. The oppressor should enter the mosque only if its defenders were all slain. Resistance to the full, without holding anything back, was necessary for the freedom of their people (soon after that, police departments all over the country, including Los Angeles and New York, quietly ordered that no units attempt to enter a mosque without permission of the minister).

In contrast, some other NOI ministers pursued the development of their church as a business opportunity while helping the u.s. government in the programmed assassination of Malcolm – all covered up by polished anti-u.s. speechmaking. In effect, the pro-capitalist wing of the Nation of Islam became a “loyal opposition” to America. In return, they were allowed to exploit Black people as much as they could. In at least three cities after Malcolm's death, ministers used the mosque and the Fruit of Islam in the drug trade with cooperation from the police. A certain pattern was established, where the u.s. government and police protect and even financially support rightwing Black nationalists who used a pseudo-militance towards White America to build followings.

We have to grasp the fuller pattern. These rightists were not an outright puppet for white interests such as a Clarence Thomas is (although rightwing Black nationalists publicly supported Thomas' Supreme Court nomination in their role as a “loyal opposition”). Their class position is much more complex than that. They are bourgeois nationalists, believing in the salvation of their Race through the rise of a commanding bourgeoisie and its industries. In other words, instead of working for white corporations the Black Man should build his own, as every major capitalist nation had done. The reason that all capitalism has historically been nationalistic is that to rise from nothing, a bourgeoisie needs to start by having its very own people to exploit (how can you exploit other nations if you haven't built some strength by sucking on your own people first?). Most importantly, you need to disempower and oppress women as a gender, to break up the communal culture that is the barrier to capitalist accumulation. And deals and cooperation with more powerful rivals are just business sense to bourgeois nationalism, as when Minister Louis Farrakhan “explained” the divine revelation that

Allah chose Malcolm for death as a warning to the Black faithful not to directly oppose the u.s. government (so the f.b.i./c.i.a. and Minister Farrakhan himself get off for killing Malcolm X, while poor old Allah has to take the rap).

The defeat of New Afrikan revolutionary nationalism after the mass uprisings of the 1960s opened the way for new developments, including a nationalism dominated by rightist politics. These new authoritarian trends manifested themselves most clearly in the rise of male institutions unprecedented in the Black Nation's history. Led by the breakout of Black women, more and more New Afrikans reject a nationalist separatism that would only produce a *more* repressed life than they already had under u.s. capitalism.

But the struggle of oppressed peoples for liberation not only always rises and ebbs, but always takes many new forms. It meets change with change, with rethinking & mass creativity. The 1960s Black Revolution changed the world but then was defeated. But that same spirit and energy reemerged in new people, sidestepped into new cultural fronts. The fight for political awareness vs. misogyny and amoralism in hip hop and poetry slams is only the most obvious example. Davey D, talking about last April's rap concert to raise funds for Jamil Al-Amin's defense, reminded young rappers how the new has many different roots in the old radicalism:

“In the meantime it is only fitting that the Hip Hop community has come out in force to aid Al-Amin. While he is best known for all the work he put in for the Civil Rights struggle, for many H Rap Brown had a profound yet unintended connection to Hip Hop. In his autobiography ‘Die Nigger Die’ H Rap talked about his life and the things he did as a kid growing up. Among the things he spends a considerable time talking about, was the verbal rhyme games he played as a kid. H Rap got his name because he had a gift for gab. In his book he showed that he was a master rhymers, 30 years before Hip Hop made its way to the Bronx. He participated in all sorts of verbal games ranging from Signifying to The Dozens.

“As quiet as kept, many of the early rhymes used by Hip Hoppers... can be found in H Rap's book. In his book he talks about the huge circles people would form when rhyming against each other. Sometimes there would be as many as 30-40 people verbally sparring each other in a rhyme game known as The Dozens... long before modern day Hip Hop hit the scene cats like H Rap Brown was putting down some serious rhymes. It's a shame to see a brother who gave so much to the struggle in this current predicament.”

And on the other hand, surely the mass advance of New Afrikan women by the millions breaking out of old roles and trampling under old limitations is going to change the future in ways no one can predict. This may end up being the biggest grassroots change in this generation.

Even troubling trends the paper alludes to – like the hostility to new immigration and immigrant labor – might be problematic but also are complex and *not* the same as the familiar “Kill Arabs!” racism seen after 911 in u.s. society at large. New Afrikans see very clearly that the

new tidal wave of immigrant labor – not just from South Asia and Mexico but from Poland and China and other places – is not just accidental but has been encouraged by u.s. capitalism in part as a racist strategy to undermine the leverage that Black workers had previously gained.

The discussion of internal fascism or other repressive authoritarianisms has been blocked by a number of factors. Such as the strong feeling that any such problem can only be insignificant, given that it goes against the historic grain of Black society (as an example: a group like the Hebrew Israelites may or may not be fascist, but there are few New Afrikans interested in joining them today). Or that it only detracts from the main focus on repression from White America and its government.

Another factor is the wince at even hearing the phrase “Black fascism”, after decades of Black leaders and militants being denounced as “racists” and “fascists” by the u.s. government and the Zionists (One 1960s book on world fascism even had a section on Malcolm X). But the New Afrikan Nation is not back in slavery days, in an oppressed monoclass where there was essentially no political expression on the right. A developed society of 40 millions, the Black Nation has a full spectrum of classes and class politics just as any other nation in the world. It has a far right as well as a left, whether people want to recognize it or not. It certainly has some who are “wickedly great”, to use a term coined by one major Black leader, now that capitalist neo-colonialism has opened up startling possibilities never dreamed of before.

Although this is not the place for any real discussion on Black gangs, they have a place in future politics, too. Because they’re *all* about politics. Not that a criminal gang per se is a fascist organization, although they can resonate along that line. But in the 1990s the u.s. justice department named one particular Black gang as their “number one” target for national investigation & prosecution. This sounded like a strange choice, unless you know the details. The capitalist media talks about gangs as a crime problem, when really it’s not about crime (since they’re only killing and destroying the lives of New Afrikans, which isn’t a crime to America). Although they are public, large and illegal, few if any Black gangs – such as the Vice-Lords which date back to the 1930s or the El-Rukyns which has neighborhood courts where personal disputes are settled and whose leaders were formally invited to President Nixon’s inaugural ball – have been ended by the police. Because Black gangs aren’t about youth and aren’t about crime, although they do crime. They are new violent institutions informally sanctioned by u.s. capitalism, like death squads or drug cartels are, formed as capitalism adapts to this new zone of protracted crisis.

Like many other gangs, this organization controlled a large territory in which its thousands of armed members essentially ruled streets and de facto much of the lives of the population (while it enrolled thousands of youth, much of its structure and leadership were not only adult but middle-aged). Nothing from selling drugs to anti-racist campaigns could take place without their permission. It made and ran on millions of dollars each year in criminal economics. This was tacitly approved of by the police and government, as a “sterilization” to ensure that mass Black revolt did not sweep the inner cities as in the 1960s. Situation normal. It’s not quite Betty Crocker, but it really *is* America as we know it.

However, unlike most gang organizations, it had a leadership with as much practical social-political vision as any George Washington. In the ruthless u.s. counterinsurgency against the 1960s Black liberation movement, their inner city territory had been left a devastated postwar terrain of the type all too familiar to us. A vacuum deliberately maintained by u.s. capitalism. This gang organization decided to fill that vacuum, to become something like an underground dictatorial state. Not only by building illicit ties with policemen and government officials (and sending their own soldiers into the police and correctional guards), not only by starting its own businesses & stores, but by running popular Black anti-racist political campaigns and placing its own electoral candidates in the Democratic Party.

So it wanted to have its own economy and its own share of local State power, as well as violent control of the streets. When it started using indirect federal grants to carry out successful mass voter registration campaigns, with rallies of thousands of people cheering its leading figures, red lights went off. *This possibility of a Black quasi-state inside a major u.s. city pushed all the buttons In Washington.* This gang organization is *not* a fascist party, of course. And neither the organization nor the members have fascist ideology – a mafia is a closer example. But there are fascist precursors in the mass gang subculture. A mass armed criminal organization of declassed men that wants not only to have a rough control of the local population but have a linked economic and political program of domination has taken a step towards fascism (many white criminal gangs are already consciously pro-fascist, of course). Such possible future fascist developments might take a nationalist, “anti-racist” or religious outward form.

From afar, from outside the New Afrikan Nation, it seems that *Fascism & Anti-Fascism* 's analysis in this particular section is too hurriedly done on too little knowledge (a criticism that I doubt the author would disagree with). Still, the contribution here is that the paper opens the door to questions revolutionaries need to deal with. The point the paper is making is that Black fascist infections – small but troubling in the changed light of new authoritarian trends – are an ordinary reality just as in many other nations.

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

The onrush of events is forcing everyone not only to think about fascism alone. What is most significant about rethinking fascism isn't that the left's traditional view of fascism is outmoded; what's most significant is finding that the left's view of the *world* is outmoded. Assumptions so ingrained that they were never really discussed have been forcefully overturned. As much as we've tried to find new answers instead of just repeating old left slogans, there is no shortage of obvious questions that we haven't answered.

- No sensible revolutionary is holding their breath expecting some Great Depression to suddenly do a mass organizing job for us. And imperialism shows no signs of collapsing on its own anytime soon. But there *is* some glossed over infection in the blood, something critical happening within the capitalist structures. Like a positive lab test, the rise of fascism proves that world capitalism's intoxicating moment of historic triumph is not quite as it seems. For it itself is in deep systemic crisis. The

- system is not working as the big capitalists want it to. *Even within the empire of the affluent European Union, capitalism's very development has led to a twilight zone of protracted crisis that is, on a national level, seemingly beyond either reform or ordinary repression.* Will this come to symbolize the system as a whole?
- Fascism always had to be imposed by the ruling class, we thought. We assumed that it could never be popular, especially in Europe where it had such a disastrous track record in living memory. Yet fascism and the associated far right now has a surging mass base, and is the “democratic” choice of millions of Europeans. In Austria, known fascist elements are now in the ruling government coalition. It has pushed the whole political spectrum to the right in Europe, as the ruling class is forced to experiment Frankenstein-like with transplanting parts of fascism into the body of European bourgeoisie democracy.
 - Has fascism become a type of institutionalized subculture, of lifestyle, within world capitalism? Will we see new hybrid capitalist societies, part bourgeois democratic and part fascist as societies splinter into different zones? Just as in Germany now there is a gulf between the cosmopolitan city of Dusseldorf, regional home to Japanese and other transnational corporations, and the “no go” zones of the welfare state German East, where fascists gangs often own the street.
 - Through what mechanisms – practically speaking – do we see the imperialist ruling class directing their national States now that they are also outgrowing them? Is the relationship of classes changing within capitalism? How autonomous can the State be in capitalist society? What is the role of hegemony rather than direct hands-on control in capitalism being maintained?
 - Although fascism is new historically speaking, we have yet to see a stable fascist regime (in retrospect the Franco regime in Spain was clearly – as the Nazis privately complained – a conservative Catholic dictatorship rather than a fascist one, although there were fascists in it). Is fascist rule only a temporary sterilizing interlude before the big bourgeoisie has to reassert control? Fascism as a State power has at least two obvious destabilizing attributes: By repressing or eliminating sections of society – such as Jewish scientists or educated women – it forecloses much of its own needed competitive development. Since it adds new mass repressive layers of soldiers and administrators who produce nothing & must feed off of an already weakened economy, fascism tends towards aggressive wars, looting, and criminal enterprises which bring it into conflict with other capitalist nation-states. There is an underlying liberal attitude that fascism is so self-defeating that it can be outwaited. What does this mean for us?
 - What is true for the prosperous metropolis is even more true for the Third World, for that part of world capitalism that is the neo-colonial periphery. *Here the zone of protracted crisis cannot be hidden.* How long can this state of seemingly permanent crisis be maintained, unresolved? A journalist from the *N.Y. Times* recently visited a Pakistani village, to profile the men who had left as jihad volunteers to go fight the u.s. in Afghanistan. One striking information was that none of the young men who went had ever had regular jobs or any future

expectation of having them. Once these were the men who might have been recruited by left parties and the national liberation movements, but the world failure of the Marxist left has spotlighted the far right as a hope for social change to many people who simply will not stay as they are. The assumption that in fighting fascism we would automatically enjoy majority support has crashed – just look at India or Austria right now. As has the delusion that fascism built its movements solely on bigotry and violence. Even the Nazi movement not only strongly manipulated themes of social justice and restoring civic order, but built its mass base by a grassroots network of fighting squads, self-help groups and social services. What fascists did crudely in 1930 is being done in a much more sophisticated way today – as we can see in the Muslim world. In place after place, the far right is drawing on the energy of “anti-colonialism” and anti-Western imperialism. *This is the more complex rearrangement of the political landscape, the first new political shape of the 21st century.* And the zone of protracted crisis beyond reform or repression keeps growing, deepening. Here in the metropolis, it is hard even for the politically aware to grasp what this fully means. Here is some local news from just one day, one issue of the respected Karachi, Pakistan daily newspaper *DAWN* (for Thursday October 11, 2001):

A petty officer assigned to the naval destroyer *PNS Dilawar* was shot dead in his apartment by unidentified assassins who broke his door in and then fled.

Chairman Syed Hasan of the Sindh Board of Technical Education was killed by assassins on a motorcycle as he was getting into his car.

“Under cover of Anti-US protests certain religious extremists seem to be busy settling old scores.” Mobs of men were led to attack the NGOs serving the refugee areas. UNICEF and UNHCR offices in Quetta were burned, and many smaller NGOs were attacked. *DAWN* reports: *“The championing of causes such as human rights, rights of working women, girls schooling and family planning by the NGOs had drawn the ire of religious extremists”.*

Former ISI Chief Lt-General Hameed Gul was invited to address the Lahore High Court Bar Association, where he repeated his call for jihad, and contributions to aid the fascist war effort were gathered from the assembled lawyers and judges.

The Anti-Terrorist Wing of the Police arrested four members of a “gang”, seizing one Kalashnikov assault rifle, three pistols and four hand grenades. The “gang” had assassinated: Hussain Zaidi, Director of Laboratories for the Ministry of Defense; Captain Altar Hussain, divisional engineer of the Pakistan Telephone Company; Dr. Razi Mehdi and Dr. Ishrat Hussain; religious teacher Pesh Imam of Northern Nazimabad.

Dr. Ayesha Siddiqa-Agha, security analyst, reported that the number of “trained militants” who had gone through rightist military training camps in Pakistan & Afghanistan had doubled in the past fifteen years from one million to two million. She said that the former President Zia’s “*deliberate policy of encouraging the growth of militant groups in the country had increased insecurity tenfold.*” Just as with the Reagan Administration in the 1980s, the capitalist States seemingly can’t stop themselves from making the precise decisions that keep undermining the stability of their own societies.

- The u.s. response to 911 has rolled out a worldwide display of military power, including levels of domestic surveillance and repression not seen outside of the Black community since the 1901 Anti-Anarchist campaign and the 1920s Red Scare (both, like today’s anti-Muslim ethnic profiling, directed officially at immigrants). While this has been characterized by the left as a juggernaut of unchecked State power, it might be just as accurate to term the government repression as a coverup for their increasing weakness. To think of u.s. imperialism as the lone superpower left standing might be expressed differently – as the gradual decline of *all* imperialist nation-state powers. And now only one to go, and it is crumbling not growing stronger. One Chicago position paper after 911 reminded us of this:

“Now with this new ‘war,’ repression is being sold as an acceptable compromise for safety and security... At the same time, the creation of an ‘Office of Homeland Security’ and this public gloves-off approach to domestic repression shows that 911 has weakened the government even as it puffs itself up in cocky displays of supposed strength. We can’t be fooled by this. When they actually have to show force on such a broad scale it means that the usual systems of control have temporarily failed...” ⁴¹

What are the strategic possibilities for us in this changed situation?

Rereading this critique I find with some irony that it has much of the same awkwardness as *Fascism and Anti-Fascism*. That is, it is ragged, jump-cuts, is dense with story & ideas but is more interested in opening new questions and changing the way people see than in settling issues, is hard to read. If 911 changed America forever, one small way it did so was in raising the bar for actual revolutionary *understanding* as opposed to dusty, self-satisfied theories inherited from the past. One thing is unfortunately certain: we *will* see that fascism is a player in the world political agenda. The only question is *when* we will see it.

Chicago, March 2002

The Shock of Recognition is the second part of *Confronting Fascism: Discussion Documents for a Militant Movement*, a book co-published in 2002 by Kersplebedeb and Anti-Racist Action Chicago. It is available from leftwingbooks.net

NOTES: Since I am not an academic, these footnotes were only grudgingly added after a reader of an advance draft protested that they needed footnotes to follow up on specific questions with further readings. Readers, more damned trouble than they’re worth!