

# Colonization: past and present

**C**HAUVINIST FORMS OF NATIONALISM in Canada will be transformed into revolutionary nationalism through political struggle that is rooted in the understanding of Canadian history.

A strategy for Canada must therefore be both political and intellectual. The development of knowledge becomes a form of political action when it helps liberate people from their enslavement. It is historical knowledge which makes direct action into revolutionary struggle.

The orthodox and academic approaches to Canadian history do not take into account the struggles that have shaped our history so they do not have ideas that are relevant for the present struggle. Revolutionaries will have to start afresh — using old historical information and uncovering the new — but reinterpreting our history in terms of our colonization. The colonization of British North America to 1776 and of 'Canada' after that is the vital trend in our history. It is an understanding of this that can ultimately relate the Quebec movement, the youth and student movements and the regional movements of working people now developing in Canada. All are potentially revolutionary because they all have the seeds of an anti-imperialist sentiment.

Both the 'American Revolution' and 'Canada's Confederation' have been mystified and the history surrounding these developments distorted. The left has been affected by this ignorance as much as any group. U.S. radicals rarely show an understanding of the co-called American Revolution. Instead of realizing that a domestic elite won militarily over a foreign elite — replacing a mercantilist economy with a national capitalist (and ultimately imperialist) one — they often imply that their revolution was for national liberation. That is the way U.S. history is taught and such confusion and ignorance is one price citizens of the main imperialist nation in the world have to pay.

In Canada, because of our colonial mentality (and ignorance) the left still tends to think in terms of a formal concept of "Canada" (i.e. in terms of the ideology of the nation state). There are specific reasons for this. The militant left in Canada has come from a narrow, atypical background and has (as yet) only had limited political experience. Our colonial mentality will only be broken when radicals come to know the contradictions of Canadian society in a personal way. So far there has been very little real political struggle for the new left. All of us were indoctrinated (e.g. in schools) with the ideology of the nation state. The rhetoric of our movement has

thus far stayed abstracted from Canadian realities. Our radicalism is thus more academic than existential. We 'know' more, in an academic sense, about the Russian, Chinese and Cuban revolutions than about our own history. Such is a poor beginning and footing for making our own revolution.

The typical view of the American Revolution and Canada's Confederation is rooted in a formal political ideology. It goes something like this: The Americans defeated the British colonialists and established an independent, free nation. The founding fathers of Canada met and established an independent, free nation. A military struggle was required in the U.S. case but diplomacy worked in the second. In both cases freedom was equated with the creation of a nation state.

The political and economic forces behind these formalities are usually ignored. Rather than events like the Boston Tea Party being fundamental to the American Revolution it was restrictions placed on New England trappers and traders by the Quebec Act of 1774. The conflict between the American and British elites over markets was brought to a head by this act. Both the English-French and English-American conflicts were at play at the same time. This shows how the dialectics of colonization, not

formal events, shaped the history of North America.

The British mercantilist (and later 'free trade') system lost control of the territory South of the 49th parallel but regained it in the North. (The French had already been colonized.) The creation of the United States constituted a break from European colonialism and the beginning of American imperialism. The imperialism included the genocide of the native population, the black slave trade and military and economic expansion into the Southern and Pacific hemispheres. After 1776 the U.S. empire spread until today it controls about 60 per cent of the world wealth.

The formation of Canada parallels the decline of the British empire. Canada — as a co-ordinated military and political system — was formed partly as a defensive move against the expanding U.S. system and partly to further the colonization of the Northwest.

The colonization of North America is not something that ended with the growth of national political forms (e.g. the BNA Act). The form of colonization has simply changed. The new political forms often facilitated the new colonization. (The BNA Act gives the provinces control over natural resources. Such facilitates the North-South process

of continentalism.) French Canada was colonized, mainly militarily. After North America was divided into the remains of the British empire and the beginnings of the American empire the forms of colonization were further changed. The Northwest was colonized through land settlement and Indian reserves, both with the help of the RCMP and the military. The struggles for self-determination by the native people in 1869 and 1885 symbolize the resistance to the colonization of the Northwest. In his effect, Louis Riel was one of the few revolutionary nationalists in our history.

The colonization by the United States has varied, being mainly economic but always ready militarily (Cuba, Dominican Republic, Vietnam, etc. — Canada?).

Since the last war the U.S. empire has begun to expand northward. Its Southern and Pacific expansion has been maximized and Canada constitutes a new frontier. The added fact that the United States is facing growing opposition from its other colonies and satellites makes Canada vital for extracting scarce resources (e.g. water, oil, etc.) Continentalism — Canada as a geographic and corporate branch plant — is, then, the newest dynamic of U.S. imperialism.

Canadians have been colonized continually. The native and French Canadian struggle for self-determination symbolizes the resistance to this but the total population has also suffered. The federal-provincial political party system and the ideology of the nation state specific to this system has diverted consciousness from this fact of continued colonization, but the people — in their economic dependency and in their colonial mentality — nevertheless prove it.

Once our formal idea of Canada is demystified through a study of the colonization of North America, revolutionaries will be in a position to initiate national liberation politics. This form of politics will be aimed at exposing how the regional political economies reflect our continued colonization. The regional cultural makeup of the people and their potential concern with self determination (controlling their own lives in a cooperative way) will be the basis of a resistance movement. Once awareness of the colonization of North America and the past struggles for self determination replaces the ideology of the nation state the Canadian people can begin to see through the liberal rhetoric which presently functions to integrate Canada into the U.S. empire.

## Colonization of the future: the Mid-Canada Corridor

**O**UR COLONIZATION IS A CONTINUAL PROCESS and we must therefore look ahead and locate the future in present trends. It has not stopped with the complicity of the Thatchers, Mannings, Bennetts and Trudeau.

U.S. capitalism must expand to survive and it must plan to expand. As the newest of the new frontiers, there are plans for Canada.

Resistance to colonization in the past came from the two most exploited groups: the natives and the French. The picture of an Anglo-Saxon explorer-trader sitting at the helm of a canoe being guided by an Indian and paddled by several French voyageurs is not at all surreal. The French resistance was ultimately smashed on the Plains of Abraham and the native resistance at Batoche. The British mercantilist-industrial system thus spread from the East to the West coast. The decline of the British empire brought a halt to the expansion in Canada. Canada thus remained a social structure along the Southern transportation and communications system and line of cities.

American capital has been taking over the areas of declining empires across the globe (mainly French and English). This has happened in Canada as well. An East-to-West colonization (British) thus has been replaced by a North-to-South one (U.S.). As the United States reached its limits of expansion in the Southern and Pacific hemispheres it again looked to the North as it had briefly at the beginning of the 1800s. A wealth of resources exists here and the new colonization is well underway.

An analysis of the Mid-Canada Corridor will show us the extent of this new colonization. Because the Canadian movement (as yet) does not have its own press and because the people of Canada have been and will continue to be kept ignorant of plans and the ramifications of the new colonization, I will deal with the Corridor in detail. On the basis of my analysis I will outline how a national liberation strategy for Canada can best be developed.

A brochure describes the Corridor as a: "coast-to-coast development corridor from two to five hundred miles in width running across Newfoundland through Labrador Northern Quebec, south of James Bay, then across Northwestern Ontario, through Northern Manitoba with a spur into Churchill, Saskatchewan and Alberta where the Corridor splits into three parts, one going into the Northwest Territories up the Mackenzie River Valley to the Arctic Ocean at Inuvik and Tuktoyatuk, another into the Yukon Territory, and the third into the Prince Rupert sector of British Columbia."

The Mid-Canada Corridor corporation held its first conference at Lakehead University in August, 1969. The sponsors of that conference were the government of Ontario and the universities of Alberta, British Columbia, Guelph, Lakehead, Laurentian, Laval, Manitoba, Memorial of Newfoundland, McGill, Montreal, and Saskatchewan. This sponsorship again shows how Southern Ontario functions as the metropolis and the other provinces as the hinterland in Canada. The power of capital (ism) is centred in Toronto and, as part of the continentalism, profits are seeped into Southern Ontario from Quebec and the Maritimes and the Prairies and the West coast, and, via U.S.-controlled subsidiaries, then go into the United States. Ontario's role in continentalism is seen explicitly in the Corridor.

The sponsorship also shows how the university has become totally integrated (for research and training) into the continentalist process. U.S. radicals have attacked their universities for being racist and imperialist institutions. Canadian radicals are beginning to see how their universities are becoming branch plants for U.S. corporate interests, and, as such, need to be attacked as part of the national liberation strategy.

The advisory council for this conference shows its capitalist makeup. This council includes seven corporate capitalists: Baker of Foundation Co. of

Canada; Griffith of The Steel Co. of Canada; Bovey of Northern and Central Gas Co.; Harrington of The Royal Trust Co.; Hart of The Bank of Montreal; Crump of CPR; and Powis of Noranda Mines. It includes two state capitalists: MacMillan of CNR and Pratte of Air Canada and the president of the Canadian Labour Congress, MacDonald. (It also includes the Director of the Arctic Institute of North America.)

The integration of the union bureaucracies into the corporate society is once again shown. This alliance between corporate and state capitalism and the CLC means that the union bureaucrats will try to keep labor unrest and the disruption of capitalist expansion to a minimum. (The union heads of workers building the Columbia River Treaty dams have already made no-strike agreements to ensure a smooth sellout of our resources.)

This council also presents an 'all-Canadian' facade to the Corridor. Air Canada; Canadian National; Canadian Pacific; Canada Ltd. this and Canada Ltd. that. Oh Canada. One begins to have a conditioned reflex to the word if you hear it enough.

The chairman of the conference and the corporation (Richard Rohmer) even added a tone of Canadian nationalism to the conference. In his opening address he stated:

"The time to move is now if we are to preserve our sovereignty and control over our lands and over our destiny as a nation."

A conference brochure reinforced this 'nationalism': "...invitations to participate in the conference will be extended only to Canadian corporations and other organizations which are Canadian-controlled."

Rohmer was a past federal candidate for the Progressive Conservatives in Toronto. Many Conservatives have talked of developing more transportation and industry across Canada's North. Perhaps the Corridor is really an attempt by Canadian nationalists (red tory types?) to develop Canada for Canadians.

What are we to make of a conference and a corporation that is clearly capitalist and seemingly nationalist? What are we to make of it in terms of what we earlier stated about chauvinistic nationalism and revolutionary nationalism? Is the 'nationalism' of the corridor a form that can ever become militant?

We have to look at the corporate structure of the Corridor to answer these questions. The share capital for the corporation is to be all-Canadian. Also, in Rohmer's words:

"...the corporations would own land upon which new cities and industries are built; the land would be available to home owners and developers on a long-term lease basis. It would undertake with Canadian private enterprises the financing construction of railways highways, pipelines, communications systems, schools, hospitals, university housing, industries and all the basic elements to implement (the Corridor)."

This sounds like a new, more rationalized chain of company towns. As a news story on the idea of mobile cities stated:

"The whole city, houses, street, all facilities are transportable. A city such as this can be brought in, erected, the resources exploited, and the city can move on."

This nationalistic capitalism and its sophisticated methods would leave Canada with a chain of Sudburys.

The nationalism is clearly a symbolic type only. The quality of people's lives — their self-determination and freedom — is not important. The corporate system of control and profits, aided by the nation state and its rhetoric, is what the other corridor is all about. The corporatism is so thorough that it would amount to being a totalitarian use of technology. The company towns would reduce human existence to the goals of the corporation, using modern science (both social and natural) and technology to rationalize the process of resource extraction.

In an imperialist era, national (e.g. Canadian) capitalism and international (e.g. corporate) capitalism amount to the same thing. Capitalism is an international system and U.S. capital is the locus of it. So-called Canadian private enterprise, Canadian shares and government subsidies may be used to build the infrastructure that is necessary for international (mainly U.S.) corporations to move in and exploit resources and market goods, but the control and ownership will ultimately end up with the latter. Capitalism with an all-Canadian facade would then lay the groundwork for the new colonization of this country. All-Canadian capitalism could easily prove to be the best strategy for U.S. imperialism here.

When the reality of U.S. control and ownership of industry in Canada (two-thirds in major industries) and the related lack of an independent national bourgeoisie is admitted, the nationalistic concept of the Corridor presently being propagandized seems absurd. But that does not mean that another more realistic (e.g. imperialist) concept won't develop as the colonization of the North proceeds. After all concepts are easy to come by. What matters is the system of power and control that lies behind a concept. And the system behind the Corridor — which will bring it into operation — is U.S. imperialism.

At the conference the experts (some honest, others brown-nosing) provided a multitude of reasons why the Corridor was not a responsible idea. Ecologists criticized the plans, but since when have corporations considered the consequences of their plunder? For example, there was much concern about the Corridor polluting the North, but reporting on the conference's discussion of pollution a newswriter stated:

"...this problem could almost be said to be irrelevant. The general feeling was that now that the public has become conscious of the problem, answers were being found."

As well, population analysts criticized the notion

that the Corridor will be necessary to absorb Canada's population growth. The Corridor propaganda talks of Canada having a population of 120 million by 2067. The analysts commented that our resources cannot support this population (and we shouldn't allow it to rise to this) and if it is to raise significantly the real growth will be in the large cities now existing (more Canadian ghettos).

Such criticisms stocked up and it became abundantly clear that the Corridor was an attempt to pretend that present social problems don't exist and that more capitalist expansion can somehow avoid more social problems in the future. The idea failed to cover up reality but when did realities (e.g. consequences) ever stop capitalist expansion?

Resisting the Corridor must be a priority for any revolutionary strategy for Canada because it is the first comprehensive plan for the colonization of the North. (The process is well underway, however — e.g. the Columbia River Treaty). It is based on a nationalistic rhetoric (that can appear to a national chauvinism) that covers over an imperialist venture. It is a total plan — affecting all the regions and provinces — and hence must be countered with a total strategy. It forces us to face the reality of U.S. imperialism here and the role of Canadian state capitalism within it. It is a challenge to cease basing our radical ideas on events outside Canada. It shows us how anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist positions are reconciled by a national liberation strategy. It forces us to prove whether or not we are serious: whether or not we want the luxury of revolutionary rhetoric without the commitments of revolutionary struggle. The second and total colonization of this land will not be stopped with an academic or sectarian leftism but with a revolutionary nationalism — a national liberation movement that is anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist in a way specific to our situation. The satellite political economy can only be exposed and countered by such an orientation.

## Regional tactics and national liberation

**I**T IS NECESSARY TO DEMYSTIFY the notion of 'strategy'. The word has come to have a reified meaning, unrelated to the commitments and actions that any strategic analysis should imply.

A number of tactics — timed and ordered in such a way that a desired effect is had (the growth of the movement both in numbers and consciousness being a vital criterion) is what constitutes a strategy in practice. Once we get away from the academic idea of strategy (fulfilling certain logical criteria — ignoring the reality of the praxis of radicals) we can

begin to evolve regional strategies that can build a national liberation movement.

These tactics must be regional because the regional political economies establish the context within which the struggle will occur. It is fine to romanticize a national strategy but the specific makeup of regions (the characteristics of the developing political economy; the history of radicalism, etc.) must be the basis of tactics. The increasing militancy of the Western farmers is related to the international wheat market, the so-called 'cost-price squeeze', and the history of the farmers' movement itself. The strong separatist

sentiment in Northern Ontario results from the continued economic and political exploitation of the North by the capitalist power in the South. The nationalism in Quebec will never be understood until the particular history of the French nation and the capitalist political economy in Quebec is grasped. And so on. . . . The form and content of national liberation politics in each region will depend on such specifications.

Attempts to build a national radical organization in Canada have failed not because they were premature. They have failed because the notion of a national radical movement is rooted in our colonial

mentality. Acceptance of the ideology of the nation state (e.g. seeing ourselves in terms of the federal-provincial state) and our related ignorance about the colonization of Canada (and growing continentalist trend) has kept past radicals from studying and acting in terms of their regional political economy. National organizations have been the panacea for those who have little or no understanding of how imperialism works around them.

Once the history of Canada is specified it becomes clear that particular immigration patterns and a particular development of the political economy (among other things) have combined to create a

particular political culture in each region. If we wish to work among and with the people to build a real national liberation movement we must understand the political culture within which we are organizing. A national liberation movement needs to be firmly rooted in the regional realities.

This analysis has several implications for the way organizing should be done in Canada. National vanguard organizations are largely irrelevant to the task of building a national liberation movement because they are too removed from the regional political cultures and political economies that determine the context of struggle. A formalized,

sectarian leftism develops from such organizations and the development of the historic consciousness required to nurture a revolutionary nationalism is impeded. Such groups have continually diverted our attention from the struggle at home and hung us up on academic and sectarian debates about past revolutions. This is true even if the vanguard groups have a nationalistic rhetoric. This form of leftism therefore must be countered; but by a regional praxis, not a counter-rhetoric. Canadian Nationalism

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