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Racism as an Element of Fascism

A Political Tendency of Capitalism

by PROLETARIAN ALTERNATIVE COLLECTIVE

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On Wednesday, June 17, 2015, a 21-year-old man walked into a church, prayed with the parishioners, and opened fire, killing nine people. All were Black. Subjectively, he thought that African-Americans are soon going to take over an imperialist social formation—so killing nine of them was apparently for him an initial step of slowing down the process of realizing that transfer of power.

This was an act motivated by racism, but it was also more than that. We must analyze the conditions underlying incidents like this one, if we are to combat and overcome these conditions effectively, and to transform society in a way that eliminates them forever. Let us draw the connections between racism, fascism, and the current structural crisis of capitalism. Understanding the fundamental dynamics of our conditions as deeply as possible will allow us to delineate a way forward out of this US-American capitalist/imperialist hell.

In reality, Dylann Roof committed a political act. Because it was a political act, we need to interpret it in the realm of class struggle. No political act is committed outside of the reality of classes and class struggle. This is true even if one does not even recognize that his/her action is a political act, and that it is in the interest of particular classes. Each of our actions, committed

over our lifetimes, usually benefits one class or another. Since our political acts are in the interest of specific classes, then they are INEVITABLY against the interest of other classes, either antagonistically or non-antagonistically.

So it would be insufficient, and very limiting, to reduce this event to the act of a crazy person or even to an act of terrorism. Acknowledging it as a terrorist act is an upgrade from merely attributing it to mental illness, but to limit our thought process even to that is in this case (as in all cases) also a political approach that will benefit particular classes, mainly the dominant classes.

This is not the first time this sort of act is occurring. They have been committed throughout US history including during the Civil Rights Movement—countless acts of lynching, the killing of people in their homes and in the streets, the burning of Christian crosses. These political practices are acts of repression. Most of these extreme acts of repression have been aimed at pacifying the masses for the objective of disorganizing us, in order to reproduce their domination over us. This is especially true when the domination originates from an antagonism based on an economic relation, such as slavery or the relation between capital and labor.

The popular masses from the North and the South, especially slaves and workers, were under different forms of domination due to the different forms of capitalist production respectively adopted by the capitalists of the North and the South. Workers from the North were—and still are—subject to acts of repression, some of them extreme. While slaves were confined to residing in the back yards of plantations, the workers of the North were segregated into ghettos. For a slave to leave the plantation without a pass from the master was deemed a crime, as was a worker venturing outside the ghetto.

The political act committed by Roof, like many other political acts, was an act benefiting a specific fraction of the capitalist class. Whether or not he is conscious of it, this killer is a foot soldier for them. Though this fact may be obscured, in the final analysis he represents this capitalist bloc and his act was in their interests.

Capital is social. It is not simply an added sum, but a form of societal organization. Capital manifests itself through the managerial capacity of the capitalist class, organized by the state apparatus. The capitalist class is not monolithic, but a power bloc with all its internal unity, contradiction and struggle. The struggles inside the capitalist class originate from the conflicting interests of the different forms of concentration of capital. But for any of the fractions of the capitalist class to be able to offer an alternative, they need to be able to unite a significant section of the masses under their leadership. None of their political alternatives can be viable without successfully exerting political influence over the masses.

This foot soldier of the capitalist class represents their most backward ultra-reactionary interests, asserting these interests at the level of the superstructure—in the political and ideological fields. Similarly, the Boston Marathon bomber represented the most extreme ideological interests of another dominant reactionary class that is an adversary of capitalism: the feudal class.

Following this act in Charleston, many intellectuals, in a defense of bourgeois ideology, raced to conclusions and did not look beyond concepts such as racism, terrorism or even the absurd notion of craziness. In doing so, they are setting the tone and terms of debate. And the petit bourgeois radical left will fall in line, focus on the racism aspect and run with it, limiting the capacity to offer a materialist interpretation of objective reality. Because their analysis is only nominally Marxist-flavored, hugely diluted by metaphysics/idealism, they will be stuck organizing struggles confined within the limits offered to them by the intellectuals representing the interests of the capitalist class. Thus they will inadvertently benefit fractions of the capitalist class, most likely those represented politically by the Democratic Party.

The consequence of such approach is that their analysis is not autonomous, meaning in the interest of the working class. Because of that limitation, this line of struggle can only realize reformism. They are merely running after all the small bones caused by the effects of capital at the level of the superstructures, rather than targeting the heart of capital itself.

The petit bourgeois radical left has not shown itself to be capable of maintaining any level of independence from the bourgeoisie.

We are in a conjuncture defined by a deep crisis of capitalism. This is no longer one additional crisis of the many inherent to capitalism, but has developed into a **structural crisis**. In the struggle of the capitalist class to reproduce themselves as a bloc, none has any solution that they can pull out of their back pocket to resolve this crisis.

Capital accumulation occurs in two forms: productive and non-productive. This is a struggle at the level of the economy. A tendency of capital to accumulate non-productively is becoming a dominant tendency, and with that a specific fraction—**investment capital**—is slowly becoming hegemonic. But the non-productive accumulation of capital is toxic.

Though the crisis is in the economic field, history has already proven to us that struggles in any social formation are usually addressed and resolved in the political field. All fractions of the capitalist class will offer a political alternative, primarily for the interest of that fraction but also for the interest of the capitalist bloc as a whole. Meanwhile the masses—even the sector of the masses most antagonistic to capital, the working class—are still under the influence and leadership of the capitalist class. As long as that remains the case, the crisis will tend to degenerate while all alternatives originate from the capitalist class for the perpetuation of capitalism.



Fascism is one of the political alternatives that capitalists are offering, and Roof's orientation is part of a corresponding political line. His act indicates to us (as the acts of many others before him have also indicated), the prospect of fascism arising to address the structural ills facing capital at this time. This is not the first time in the US that capital has faced the problematic of accumulation. The war of independence was waged in order to stop sharing accumulated wealth with England via imposed taxation. The Civil War was waged for the unification of one form of accumulation—the initial productive form of capital accumulation through the production of surplus value.

The capitalists are marshaling their institutions both inside and outside their state apparatus (such as their chambers of commerce, NGOs, their think tanks inside universities, as well as the petit bourgeois intellectuals at large) to address the contradiction produced by the problematic of capital accumulation, and the rising tendency of non-productive accumulation. But none of the existing institutions of bourgeois democracy/dictatorship are equipped to deal with such a fundamental structural problematic.

Capital accumulation can't be semi-productive and semi-nonproductive, as if these two forms can play equally determinant roles in an economy. Capital accumulation as a whole is determined and guided by the productive aspect. The productive production of capital is the source of all other forms of capital.

This vicious killer is in the ideological front guard of the reactionary foot soldiers of capital, one of an ever-growing number who are participating in a political orientation to politically address the crisis of capitalism. These are the foot soldiers of a tendency of capitalism, who believe a race war is an initial stage of FASCISM.

There are class struggles at all levels. Not all fascists will agree with this political orientation at this time. Some are denouncing the act. But fascist Confederate flags still fly high in North-Carolina, and many streets bear the names of slave owners in the Confederate army. Fascist ideological tendencies are deeply rooted in the superstructure of the capitalist/imperialist mode of production of the US. But capitalists are not yet united on this approach; just observe the plethora of presidential candidates representing the Republican Party, a party that with all its ultra conservatism and conservatism is slowly becoming the fascist alternative for capitalism.

The capitalist bloc hasn't reached a unified position to address the problematic of all forms of accumulation of capital. In this problematic, the growth of finance capital has created a much more complex situation. The interests of all fractions in the power bloc are so intertwined that no fraction of the capitalist class as yet has the capacity to emerge as the possessor of a viable alternative. The inversion of conservatism and ultra-conservatism is represented by a liberal tendency dominant in the Democratic Party. Calls for unity of the masses under their leadership, and outside the framework of class antagonism, represent the fractions of capital not in agreement with the fascist alternative.

There are struggles inside the capitalist class over which path might take them out of the mess that they put themselves in. But one thing is for sure: the bourgeoisie is historically showing an increasing incapacity to use its existing structures (its state and non-state apparatuses) to resolve the structural crisis of capitalism. Members of the capitalist class are feeling their crisis and are warning of upcoming evil.

The crisis of capitalism is also a reflection of the crisis of the progressive and revolutionary movement, which is not currently capable of offering a political orientation that can unify the American popular masses enough to enter the political arena, or to offer even a limited alternative such as slowing down the process of fascization of bourgeois democracy. The simplistic approach of the reformist left radicals are objectively making them the foot soldiers of the Democratic Party. Still, they are simultaneously creating more contradictions since they too are dominated and have a list of demands to lighten the weight of capitalism on their backs.

Fascism is an extreme and exceptional political orientation corresponding to the need for a conjuncture to readjust capitalism. Anyone who thinks fascism has been fundamentally about racial purity is dead wrong. The notion of the purity of a race (as well as the non-scientific, socially constructed concept of race itself) is an ideological component at the level of the superstructure, for the consolidation of an economic orientation.

The notion of racial purity is not only endemic to whites. In many social formations of Africa and the Caribbean, the concept of race is used for the historical constitution of the Bureaucratic Bourgeoisie, a fraction of the capitalist class that relies on the ideological sub-component of race for its constitution and consolidation. Although many of those social formations are not fascist, a lot of fascist tendencies are still expressed such as: autocratism, strict limitation of bourgeois democratic rights, intervention of the state apparatus in direct control of capitalist private enterprises, reactionary nationalism, and the question of race that automatically follows the political orientation of race supremacy. Selassie, Senghor, Mobutu, Trujillo, Balaguer, and Duvalier are some examples who represent this fraction.

Unfortunately, the dominant political lines of both opportunism and ultra-leftist dogmatism among the radical petite bourgeoisie will lead the left into the dead end of reformism, either by declaring racism (rather than class antagonism) to be the fundamental contradiction of the US social formation, or by playing their part in a race war. Historically, both left populism and ultra-leftism quickly transition into an ultra-right position.

Many on the petit bourgeois left, with their simplistic and reformist approaches, are slowly becoming the back-up singers for a political orientation that may lead to the realization of a race war as an initial stage of fascism. Progressives may find themselves regretting an orientation that substitutes identity politics and social justice campaigns for class struggle at the center of their strategy for social change. Though the former may gain temporary reforms (which will be inevitably wiped out again by the deepening crisis of capital), only the latter can open a path to the possibility of uprooting all forms of oppression. To wipe out the conditions for oppression, including racism, the fight against it must be situated in the context of class struggle.

Given the lack of an autonomous working class movement in the US, this will be a difficult task. Due to this lack, and making it even more difficult, is the populist tendency among the working class of many social formations (including the US)—a self-defeating right populism that leads workers to blame each other for concessions and losses imposed by capital.

The capitalists are extremely practiced at “divide and rule,” and invent fictional social categories (races, nations) to divide us. When workers accept these capitalist inventions and even base our political line and practice on them, then we are tightening our own chains. Instead of competing with one another for crumbs in a foolish dance choreographed by our exploiters, we must eradicate racism, identity politics, and other bourgeois ideological traps from our ranks, and unite to target the actual source of our exploitation and oppression, our common enemy: the capitalist class.

The act of this killer in Charleston must be denounced for what it is. He is a racist, of course—but he is not simply a racist. On his T-shirt, he had a fascist logo. We must clearly understand that his racism is for fascism, corresponding to the political objectives of specific fractions of capital as they attempt to resolve the current economic crisis in their favor.

For us, there is only one way that the crisis of capitalism can be resolved favorably: by the social force of an organized and united international working class fighting for its interests, which are fundamentally antagonistic to capital, toward the total global annihilation of capitalism. Genuine proletarian revolutionary militants need to strengthen and grow our ranks, construct disciplined, autonomous organizations capable of understanding what is going on under the surface of events and what is driving them, and constantly develop a political orientation (and corresponding line) to shift the balance of power in our favor.