



October 30, 2020  
*Socialists of Caltech*  
**Discussion Group**  
*Intercommunalism* by Huey P. Newton

**Text:** *Intercommunalism* by Huey Newton

**Time:** 2:00 PM - 3:30 PM

*“A vanguard is like the head of a spear, the thing that goes first. But what really hurts is the butt of the spear, because even though the head makes the necessary entrance, the back part is what penetrates. Without the butt, a spear is nothing but a toothpick.”*

*“To us power is, first of all, the ability to define phenomena, and secondly the ability to make these phenomena act in a desired manner.”*

- Huey Newton

## Agenda:

- I. **Introductory Remarks from Ashay** (~ 5 minutes)
  - A. Introduce Essay
  - B. Summarize Flow/Arguments
- II. **Introductions** (< 10 minutes, name/pronoun only)
  - A. Determine note-taker
  - B. Determine stack keeper
- III. **Write One Sentence** (~ 3 minutes)
- IV. **Open Discussion** (~ 60 minutes)
- V. **Concluding Remarks** (~ 10 minutes)

**Discussion Guidelines:**

1. To make the most of the discussion time, let's try to stick closely to text as much as possible, though we should think about connections to our own situations.
2. Take space. Make space. If you've spoken a lot, make space for others to speak. If you haven't spoken much, please put yourself on stack.
3. If you find a term confusing, post it in the zoom chat for someone to define. For example, if the word "dialectic" is confusing, type "define dialectic" into the chat.
4. Discussion questions are only suggestions for interesting things to discuss, but the discussion need not stick to them closely at all.
5. Remember that this space is meant to be open to a wide audience with a variety of backgrounds. When in doubt, don't assume anything in particular. Likewise, if you feel that some information you don't know was assumed, please type in the chat or get on stack to request a clarification.

## Discussion Questions:

1. According to Newton, who holds power in the United States? What, if anything, has changed about this order in the present day?
2. What claims does Newton make about nationhood? Is the US a nation? Why or why not?
3. For Newton, who comprises the class with the most potential to build revolution and why?
4. What is the difference between reactionary intercommunalism and revolutionary intercommunalism?
5. Newton argues that there are "no more colonies or neocolonies." How does this statement relate to contemporary decolonial struggles?

## Potentially Confusing Words:

**Imperialism/Colonialism** - (from [Lenin](#)): *"If it were necessary to give the briefest possible definition of imperialism we should have to say that imperialism is the monopoly stage of capitalism. Such a definition would include what is most important, for, on the one hand, finance capital is the bank capital of a few very big monopolist banks, merged with the capital of the monopolist associations of industrialists; and, on the other hand, the division of the world is the transition from a colonial policy which has extended without hindrance to territories unseized by any capitalist power, to a colonial policy of monopolist possession of the territory of the world, which has been completely divided up."*

**Neocolonialism** - (from [Nkrumah](#)): *"The neo-colonialism of today represents imperialism in its final and perhaps its most dangerous stage. In the past it was possible to convert a country upon which a neo-colonial*

regime had been imposed – Egypt in the nineteenth century is an example – into a colonial territory. Today this process is no longer feasible. Old-fashioned colonialism is by no means entirely abolished. It still constitutes an African problem, but it is everywhere on the retreat. Once a territory has become nominally independent it is no longer possible, as it was in the last century, to reverse the process. Existing colonies may linger on, but no new colonies will be created. In place of colonialism as the main instrument of imperialism we have today neo-colonialism. The essence of neo-colonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside. The methods and form of this direction can take various shapes. For example, in an extreme case the troops of the imperial power may garrison the territory of the neo-colonial State and control the government of it. More often, however, neo-colonialist control is exercised through economic or monetary means. The neo-colonial State may be obliged to take the manufactured products of the imperialist power to the exclusion of competing products from elsewhere. Control over government policy in the neo-colonial State may be secured by payments towards the cost of running the State, by the provision of civil servants in positions where they can dictate policy, and by monetary control over foreign exchange through the imposition of a banking system controlled by the imperial power. Where neo-colonialism exists the power exercising control is often the State which formerly ruled the territory in question, but this is not necessarily so. For example, in the case of South Vietnam the former imperial power was France, but neo-colonial control of the State has now gone to the United States. It is possible that neo-colonial control may be exercised by a consortium of financial interests which are not specifically identifiable with any particular State. The control of the Congo by great international financial concerns is a case in point. The result of neo-colonialism is that foreign capital is used for the exploitation rather than for the development of the less developed parts of the world. Investment under neo-colonialism increases rather than decreases the gap between the rich and the poor countries of the world.”

**Reactionary Intercommunalism** - (from Huey Newton): “A community is a small unit with a comprehensive collection of institutions that serve to exist a small group of people. And we say further that the struggle in the world today is between the small circle that administers and profits from the empire of the United States, and the peoples of the world who want to determine their own destinies. We call this situation intercommunalism. We are now in the age of reactionary intercommunalism, in which a ruling circle, a small group of people, control all other people by using their technology.”

**Revolutionary Intercommunalism** - (from Huey Newton): “At the same time, we say that this technology can solve most of the material contradictions people face, that the material conditions exist that would allow the people of the world to develop a culture that is essentially human and would nurture those things that would allow people to resolve contradictions in a way that would not cause the mutual slaughter of all of us. The development of such a culture would be revolutionary intercommunalism.”

**Counterrevolution:** reaction opposing a revolution or revolutionary activity; alternatively, political activity in favor of the ruling class, against a revolution of the lower class.

**Ideology** - (from [Althusser](#)): (1) “Ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” and (2) “Ideology has a material existence”

**Proletariat** - (from [Engels](#)): “The proletariat is that class in society which lives entirely from the sale of its labour power and does not draw profit from any kind of capital; whose weal and woe, whose life and death, whose sole existence depends on the demand for labour...”

**Lumpen Proletariat** - (from p. 129 of Fanon): *"It is within this mass of humanity, this people of the shanty towns, at the core of the lumpenproletariat, that the rebellion will find its urban spearhead. For the lumpenproletariat, that horde of starving men, uprooted from their tribe and from their clan, constitutes one of the most spontaneous and the most radically revolutionary forces of a colonized people."*

## Notes:

### Summary of Main Argument:

#### 1. Thesis

- a. Imperialism leads to reactionary intercommunalism to revolutionary intercommunalism to communism/anarchy

#### 2. Who Makes US Foreign Policy?

- a. US has actively opposed and intervened militarily in revolutions in the Third World
  - i. See: US assault on Vietnam
- b. US military has standing forces in peacetime and it's goal is "counterinsurgency"
- c. Many competing interest groups - there is a dominant, foreign-policy making class

#### 3. What/Who is the US Ruling Class?

- a. Giant corporations and financial institutions which dominate the US and global economy
  - i. Much higher concentration of power than under feudalism
- b. Corporations have budgets and make decisions that affect more people than other sovereign nations
- c. Dependence on economy organized by and for corporations is basis for US foreign policy
- d. Confidence in business community is central to this economy
- e. Government must pursue policy that ensures confidence of the business community at a basic level
- f. Government policies affect incentive system which forms basis of the privileges of the ruling class
- g. "This does not mean, of course, that the business community as such must prefer a particular candidate or party for that candidate or party to be victorious. It means, much more fundamentally, that short of committing political suicide, no party or government can step outside the framework of the corporate system and its politics, and embark on a course which consistently threatens the power and privileges of the giant corporations."
- h. Resource allocation reflects this state of society

#### 4. How Does the Ruling Class Keep Power?

- a. State Dept, CIA, Pentagon, Treasury, diplomatic positions dominated by corporate representatives and executives
- b. Corporate ideology limits political horizon
- c. Ruling class dominates means of communication and means of production of ideas and ideology (media, nonprofits, universities)
- d. Political "realism" demands that one work within dominant social reality -- corporate organization
- e. Even when there are disagreements between rulers of the upper class, they act to maintain the status quo of capitalism

#### 5. What is the Function of Corporate Ideology?

- a. Unite corporate interest with national interest
  - i. Free community of political subjects is equivalent to "free enterprise" economy
- b. Expanding frontier of new markets is essential to US way of life - must promote American values abroad to ensure free enterprise at home
- c. Expansion of military bases
- d. US capital in foreign nations extracts their wealth and resources for consumption by US multinational corporations, leads to underdevelopment

#### 6. From Nationalism to Internationalism to Intercommunalism

- a. Nationhood requires power, which requires many people - not as applicable for Black people in US context, because they have no power
- b. Revolutionary nationalism: join with other forces in the world fighting for liberation
- c. Revolutionary nationalism with international solidarity - internationalism
- d. The material conditions necessary to form a nation no longer exist
- e. Technological development allows for control of nations far away from metropole
- f. There are no more colonies or neocolonies
- g. It is impossible to decolonize, or return to previous conditions of existence
- h. Rethink world in terms of communities and their institutions - intercommunalism
- i. Ruling class controls all communities with technology - reactionary intercommunalism
- j. Technology can solve material contradictions of capitalism - development of the culture that nurtures resolution of contradictions without extinction of humankind - revolutionary intercommunalism

**7. Who Will Be the Dominant Revolutionary Class?**

- a. "Unemployables": Black people, Third World people, poor people - those who don't have the skills to work in a developed technological society
- b. Ruling class increases its wealth at the expense of workers, who will be phased out when technology reaches a critical point