Persian Gulf Dead End for An Outmoded Empire

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Statement of Unity of the Stop the U.S. War Machine Action Network

Today a massive U.S. military machine is poised for war in the Persian Gulf. The lives of tens of thousands, Arabs and Americans, and many others hang in the balance; the fate of millions could be at stake if chemical and/or nuclear warheads are let loose.

We have been told by the government that the U.S. forces are in the Gulf to stop Iraqi aggression. Yet why then did the U.S. conquer Iraq's aggression against Iran? We have been told that one country must not be allowed to invade another—just what is this U.S. did in Panama less than a year ago. We have been told that international law must be defended—but President Bush served in an administration that consistently ignored and flaunted international law in Central America. We have been told that the U.S. seeks a peaceful resolution of this crisis. Yet the U.S. has rejected numerous Iraqi offers to negotiate and even the whisper of compromise brings only new denunciations and troop deployments.

HELL NO! WE WON'T GO!

America's deployment and war plans are about oil and power. We won't kill and die to protect an "American Way of Life" based on plundering the world's resources and poisoning the planet. We won't stand by and let blood be spilled for oil and global power politics! And we stand with our Arab brothers and sisters, whose lives are every bit as precious as ours, and their right to choose their own future free from imperial invasion.

U.S. OUT OF THE GULF!

Saddam Hussein is a tyrant, but this is no justification for U.S. intervention. In fact, the U.S. and other big powers have created and nurtured Hussein and dooms him like him around the globe; the U.S. never called Hussein a "Hitler" when his tyranny and aggression served U.S. purposes. Those same big powers have no right to now threaten war in the Gulf because their creation has crossed them. The peoples of the Middle East must deal with oppressors like Hussein and exercise their right to self-determination. Getting the U.S. out is the best way to start.

Thousands have taken to the streets against U.S. intervention in the Gulf—but much more is needed. Our Network aims to mobilize the broadest, most determined opposition possible against the U.S. war moves. People from all walks of life will join and build this opposition in many ways and in many places. We will support all those who act against the U.S. actions in the Gulf. We will especially SUPPORT G.B. RESISTANCE! Those who courageously refuse to fight for a war and power have already begun to boldly take their stand, and we pledge to stand with them.

STOP THE U.S. WAR MACHINE, NO MATTER WHAT IT TAKES!

We hold diverse views on the politics and philosophies of struggle, change, and social solutions. What we unite on in this Action Network is that the U.S. is deadly serious about waging war in the Gulf and that only the world's people—not the governments—can stop this impending war. which will be a bloody and horrific battle for the Persian Gulf.

 activists will not stop fighting for a real solution to the problem of U.S. war moves in the Gulf. We will continue to build and develop this Action Network in order to mobilize the broadest, most determined opposition possible against the U.S. war moves. People from all walks of life will join and build this opposition in many ways and in many places. We will support all those who act against the U.S. actions in the Gulf. We will especially SUPPORT G.B. RESISTANCE! Those who courageously refuse to fight for a war and power have already begun to boldly take their stand, and we pledge to stand with them.

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Three Main Points

by Bob Avakian
Chairman of the RCP, USA

What do we in the Revolutionary Communist Party want people to learn from all that is exposed and revealed in this newspaper? Mainly, three things:

1) The whole system we now live under is based on exploitation—here and all over the world. It's completely worthless and no basic change for the better can come about until this system is overthrown.

2) Many different groups will protest and rebel against things this system does, and these protests and rebellions should be supported and strengthened. Yet it's precisely those who try to negate this and are compromised, which will be a bloody and horrific battle for the whole world.

3) Such a revolutionary struggle is possible. There is a political Party that can lead such a struggle, a political Party that speaks and acts for those with nothing to lose but their chains: The Revolutionary Communist Party, USA.

This Party has the vision, the program, the leadership, and the organizational principles to unite those who must be united and to make the needed change. It is radical, it has the vision, power, and the strategy to dream and act to bring about a completely new and better world. Support this Party, join this Party. spread its message and its organized strength, and prepare the ground for a revolutionary movement that has a solid basis and a real chance of winning.

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IN YOUR AREA CALL OR WRITE:
Persian Gulf

Dead End for An Outmoded Empire

The U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia got a big turkey on Thanksgiving—the Commander-in-Chief, George Bush, made a personal appearance in the Saudi desert and spoke to the Marines on the front lines. It was on the volume even higher on the battle fronts against Iraq. One account in the New York Times has it that Bush should have been more ominous tone toward Iraq. He came closer than he ever has before to a direct threat of war.

The developments toward a U.S. war of aggression in the Persian Gulf are getting force. After Bush announced in early November that 200,000 more U.S. troops would be sent to the Gulf, Saddam Hussein countered with a decision to deploy 250,000 more Iraqi troops to bolster his forces in Kuwait and southern Iraq. The U.S. government is trying to get the UN to pass a new resolution authorizing the use of force against Iraq. The foreign ministers of the five countries on the UN Security Council—the U.S., Soviet Union, Britain, France, and China—are reportedly already at work on the language of such a resolution. There is much talk of a “window of war” between now and March when the U.S. might very well launch an offensive against the Gulf. It would be more difficult for the U.S. to wage war after that period because of weather conditions and Ramadan, a time of religious observances for Muslims.

The U.S. rulers say that Saddam Hussein with his “gas attacks” and mass killings in Kuwait. The U.S. so far has managed to pull together an international coalition of big powers and reactionary regimes to bring down enormous pressure on Saddam. But by sending the huge military force into the Gulf, the U.S. has followed Saddam into that dead end, and it looks increasingly like there is no way out except another war. If there is such a war, there is no telling what kind of crisis it might cause throughout the U.S. empire.

Bush’s Justifications for War

Some ruling class critics of Bush complain that he is not doing a good job of explaining what the U.S. aims to accomplish in the Gulf, and that this is the reason why the administration is not able to build public support for a war against Iraq. But there is no shortage of reasons why Bush can’t give a “clear and consistent” explanation. After all, in order to get to the heart of what the U.S. is aiming to do, Bush would have to tell the truth and say: “We, a tiny ruling class who hold power in the U.S., are sending hundreds of thousands of soldiers—drawn overwhelmingly from the poor and oppressed—to the Middle East in order to gain control of a strategic oil-producing area of the world. We need this in order to keep our position as a global power strong and we can we can assert our domination over people here and around the world and our leadership among our allies. And we’re willing to commit any crimes to achieve these aims—using American troops as cannon fodder, murdering millions of people, steamrolling over small countries.” Of course Bush can’t say this! If he did, those among the people who—who against their own class interests—support what the U.S. is doing in the Gulf or are still confused would immediately turn against the government. That’s why he has to come up with all sorts of lying justifications for U.S. actions.

In the Saudi desert, Bush came up with another excuse for going to war against Iraq. He claimed that Iraq might develop nuclear weapons very soon (although many experts say it will be at least ten years before Iraq on its own could build a nuclear bomb) and that Saddam Hussein has to be stopped right now because “he has never possessed a weapon that he didn’t use.” Here’s a short Q&A on the hypocrisy behind Bush’s justifications for war.

Who built up Saddam Hussein through the past ten years with all kinds of modern weapons, including chemical bombs and technology for building nuclear weapons? The U.S. and its big-power allies. Who, along with its superpower rival, has held the world hostage over the past several decades with a nuclear arsenal destructive enough to wipe out human life and society? The United States.

Who has enabled the vicious oppressor states in Israel and South Africa to possess nuclear arms? The United States. Which is the only country to use nuclear weapons in actual war? The U.S., which dropped atomic bombs on two Japanese cities at the end of World War 2.

Compulsion for War

As Bush and the U.S. rulers continue to press for war, they are coming up against difficulties. There are reports on the press that there are divisions within the reactionaries in the Saudi ruling class over whether it is in their best interests to have a U.S.-initiated war against Iraq. Some Saudi rulers are worried that the widespread antiwar sentiment in the U.S. will eat away at the Bush administration’s ability and will to fight and that the Saudi regime will be left very exposed. Although the Soviet Union has joined the international team piling up on Iraq, the Soviets are also trying to push their own interests in the Middle East and have not yet given full endorsement to a U.S. offensive against Iraq.

Here in this country, polls say that there is little support for a U.S. war in the Gulf, even in “Middle America.” Protests against U.S. intervention in the Middle East have taken place from Hawaii to the East Coast, including a march of 15,000 in New York City in October. With Jeff Paterson setting an inspiring example, resistance in the military is growing. The protests and acts of resistance need to continue and become even more widespread.

But people also need to be aware that there are strong pressures working on the U.S. rulers in Iraq and pushing them to war. Saddam Hussein faced huge economic problems after the end of Iraq’s war with Iran, and these problems are a major reason why he invaded Kuwait. Although war with the U.S. would mean vast destruction for Iraq, Saddam also knows that his grip on power will be in danger if he backs down now.

On the other side, the U.S. needs a decisive “victory” in the Gulf and firm control of the Gulf oil resources in order to regain the position of undisputed top imperialist power in the world. The U.S. wants to make it clear to the other powers that only it has the military power capable of reaching out quickly to far-flung places and putting down challenges to the “world order.” Bush and his class cannot afford to look weak by backing down or settling for less than a clear “Victory”—they don’t want to have their allies think that the U.S. can’t be “tough” and fight a war because of domestic opposition.

The situation calls for even more determined mass protests and resistance—RIGHT NOW—against the U.S. war machine by all those who think the U.S. aggression in the Gulf is madness and a crime. This is the only way to make sure that the powers-that-be will have hell to pay if Bush launches a war.

Down With the “New World Order”

Bush says that the cooperation of the major powers in the efforts in the Gulf is bringing a “new world order” into being. What’s so new about this world order? It’s the same world order where a handful of imperialists monopolize the wealth and power of the world and dominate the vast majority of the people in the world. A world order dominated by parasites who control mass murder and destruction to protect their privileges and position. This is an outmoded world order that needs to be overcome and replaced with a truly new, revolutionary world order.

This downgrading system brutality, attacks, and murder people every day. The brutal war that Bush and his class are preparing for in the Gulf makes their criminal nature even more clear. But their empire and their war machine may well get stuck in the desert sand traps and dead ends in the Gulf. And this may open up great opportunities to push the revolutionary movement forward.

U.S. Hands Off the Persian Gulf!
U.S. Troops Out of the Middle East!
Hell No, We Won’t Go!
Fuck the U.S. and All Its Might,
Revolutionary War Is the One We’ll Fight!
The RW Interview

Jeff Paterson:
ABOUT FACE!
To the War Machine

Part 2

By Jack Gardener

In Part 1 of the interview with Jeff Paterson which appeared in this paper last week, RW contributing writer Jack Gardener asked Jeff about what happened at the airfield when he refused to board a military plane for Saudi Arabia and the kind of support he has gotten. Gardener hoped to talk to Jeff face to face when he came to the San Francisco Bay Area to participate in a teach-in and meet veterans and other GI resisters. But the Marines suddenly cancelled Jeff's leave and confined him to Hawaii, so Gardener interviewed Jeff over the phone. In this concluding part, Jeff talks about how his views changed after he joined the military and what he feels is required to stop the U.S. warmachine in the Persian Gulf.

RW: What circumstances led you to join the armed forces in the first place?
JP: It was a combination of all kinds of things, like everybody. It was a combination of coming out of a small-town difficulty in finding employment opportunities...laying irrigation pipe for the rest of your life. And actually kind of believing that you'd be serving your country by going there and being patriotic, and then you'd come back and everybody would go, "Ah, he's a great person." Being respectable, getting some discipline in your life, and all this other bullshit.

RW: Well, then what happened in your life and in the world to change your thinking?
JP: The first time I started waking up was after school, artillery school. I guess if you first go through boot camp, you start seeing what they're doing—going down in the hole, bayoneting baby dolls and trying to stab the ones with the red stars and avoid stepping on the ones that don't have the red stars. Kind of like a selective killing machine. Even then I thought, "That's bullshit," but I just went with it. It was kind of an extreme. But, well, I guess the Marine Corps is kind of extreme.

Then, once I got out of boot camp, went over to Okinawa, Japan. You see how the military has this attitude towards the people living there, really condescending—like, "We Americans, we won the war and you're just lucky that we let you live here." Little kids would come up to you and flush the peace sign, and guys would go, "Yeah, two bombs, two homes, Real America." And, at that time, you're either gonna go for it, or you're gonna go. You're gonna go, "Okay, this is my privileged position, I'm an American and we did win the war." Or you're going to say, "This is bullshit, these guys are a bunch of assholes."

Contributing writer Jack Gardener interviewed Jeff Paterson in Pan 1 of the interview with Jeff Paterson which appeared in this paper last week. More recently he has covered the intense struggles of the Central American immigrants in L.A.'s Pico-Union barrio who are fighting against police harassment and an INS concentration camp. Gardener is a participant in the 1988-89 field assignment of the U.S. Committee to Support the Nicaraguan Resistance.

In Panama after the December 1988 U.S. invasion, Jeff talked to victims of the invasion, visited refugee camps and mass grave sites, interviewed U.S. officials and soldiers, and uncovered evidence of U.S. atrocities. This journey is chronicled in a four-part series that began in RW #54.

In Part 2 of the interview with Jeff Paterson, which appears in this paper, Gardener talks to Jeff about how his views changed after he joined the military and what he feels is required to stop the U.S. warmachine in the Persian Gulf. In Part 3, Gardener will talk to Jeff about his experiences in Panama after the December 1988 U.S. invasion.

Jeff Paterson is calling for protest actions throughout the country on December 3 to support Jeff Paterson and all GI resisters. Jeff faces a military trial of a political antiwar resister who refused orders to the Gulf. The U.S. military says he refused to go because of his opposition to the war.

Support Jeff Paterson and All GI Resisters!

The U.S. Out of the Persian Gulf Committee to Support Jeff Paterson is calling for protest actions throughout the country on December 3 to support Jeff Paterson and all GI resisters. Jeff faces a military trial of a political antiwar resister who refused orders to the Gulf. The U.S. military says he refused to go because of his opposition to the war.

Jeff Paterson, who is a member of the Stop the U.S. War Machine No Matter What It Takes Action Network, is on trial in Panama to face charges of desertion, evasion of military service, and aiding and abetting the resistance. Jeff is facing a military trial of a political antiwar resister who refused orders to the Gulf. The U.S. military says he refused to go because of his opposition to the war.

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Invasion Comparison

One of the main Persian Gulf themes of George Bush has been to compare Iraq's Saddam Hussein to Adolf Hitler. For example, Bush claimed in October: "I'm reading a book, and it's a book of history, a great, big thick history also appearing. And there's an argument between what Hitler did to Poland and what Saddam Hussein did to Kuwait." But in his speech, 1 comes down to saying you go to make your message so watered down and so broad that nobody's going to do anything. Nobody's going to get excited. Nobody's going to get moved. It's hard to get excited about the Troops Home, Please.

Invasion Comparison

A Western Hadley—headquarters for all U.S. military operations in the southern part of the Iraq) in Panama admits that the invasion killed 515 Panamanians. SOUTHERN COMMAND says that 252 of the Panamanians were civilians. Another 262 were wounded civilians. All Panamanian deaths are counted according to the U.S. might have been members of the Panamanian military. Panama's National Guard is one of the resistance forces. The U.S.-installed government in Panama claims the figure of 570 as the number killed by U.S. troops, of which only 88 can be proved to have been members of this military. The official figures by both the U.S. and Panamanian governments exceed the body count in Kuwait, and the number of civilian deaths acknowledged by the two governments is many times greater than in Kuwait.

But even these figures are very small compared to the actual death and destruction rained down on Panama by the U.S. Air Force.

During the December 20, 1989 Yankee assault on Panama, the carnage created by the December 20, 1989 Yankee assault on Panama. The U.S. military claimed that 515 civil or military deaths were caused by the U.S. attack. However, some sources estimate that as many as 4,000 to 6,000 Panamanians were killed. The exact number of casualties is unknown due to the lack of official records and the destruction of government archives. The Panamanian government claimed that the number of dead was 570, and the U.S. government put the figure at 88. The actual number of deaths is likely higher, as many victims were not counted or recorded.

The invasion caused widespread destruction, including the destruction of homes, businesses, and infrastructure. The United Nations estimated that 150,000 to 200,000 people were displaced by the invasion. The U.S. military also used chemical weapons, including tear gas and nerve agents, against the Panamanian population. The use of such weapons raised international concern and led to criticism of the invasion.

In the years since the invasion, Panama has struggled to recover from the effects of the war. The country's economy was devastated, and the population faced poverty, unemployment, and health issues. The legacy of the invasion continues to be felt in Panama today.
"Fear Nothing, Be Down for the Whole Thing" Hits Atlanta

The Fear Nothing, Be Down for the Whole Thing tour hit Atlanta, Sunday, November 17. Almost 100 people crowded into a hotel ballroom to hear RCP national spokesperson Carl Dix, notorious flag-burner Joey Johnson, and fierce revolutionaries sister Sasha. This was a program that dared the powers and offered a vision of a world without exploitation and oppression—and what it's going to take to get there.

In the weeks leading up to the event RCYB youth had gone out to the projects to build the tour, and homeless people took up the task of passing out flyers on downtown street corners. But the fight to bring the tour to Atlanta really sharpened up on Sunday, October 28 when the RCP led the people in taking on a secret Ku Klux Klan rally on the steps of the Georgia capitol. The only publicity for the Kluckers' rally had been a two-inch article in the newspaper a couple of days before. The powers had hoped their vicious pressure would be able to hold their rally without facing the fierce opposition that usually greets them in Atlanta.

But the demonstration to oppose the KKK had been organized. But the RCYB discussed their obligation to walk point and decided to go up in the face of the Klan, even though some of the youth around Bragg was torn 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"I'm glad this kind of thing is getting out in the open these kinds of leaders and this kind of tour. I'm glad it's getting out. Channeling some of this energy that is getting mis-directed. Violence on each other and hoping for some kind of Black Capitalism to take the heat off. So I was really glad that he got into some of that stuff."

Black student

"I enjoyed hearing men talk about equality with women, and to me, when I hear a man talk about equality between men and women, and constantly says "Men and Women," with men's names first, I don't believe him. ... I heard him a number of times refer to "Sisters and Brothers," and I really appreciated that."

Middle-class white woman

"I saw that the so-called "flaws in the system" was a wrong way of looking at it. The flaw is the system! And seeing the RCP and the RCP in the RW newspaper going out and going up in the face of these reactionaries, and going out in support of revolution, really encouraged me to go out and do it in my own school, which made me some kind of an outcast. But if you're going to be a revolutionary you're going to be going up against a lot of shit in this country. At least that's the way it is now, until we can change more people's consciousness. But it convinced me to go out in school and tell people that what they thought was Communism was just Capitalism dressed in Marxist clothes, like Bob Avakian says. Just the fact that I was going out there and doing something made me feel that I was doing something concrete, rather than going out and just talking about revolution. I am trying to be a part of making it."

Young Black proletarian woman

"I love their speeches, really. And I love to hear Sasha speak because she says she's down with it and everything. ... Like they talk about, everything will change and get better and better if we keep fighting—the world will change and we'll put the high-price people on the bottom and us on the top. I'm gonna take some of their words back to school, to the teachers and students, and tell them how it went on. Because some people want to join, some people don't—we sit around, talk, and see how you could get a whole lot of people together to change the world, and if we do that I believe we will change it. Other people like the president talk about how it's bad to burn the flag, but it needs to be burnt, and we put up another one. I was glad to join the RCYB because I think we oughta be fightin' back. Cause all they want to do is put us in jail and lock us up. They always wanna be against us."

Young Black proletarian woman

"I thought Carl Dix made some really important points about how if the gangs would stop fighting each other and get together and fight the system, a lot of their anger would be directed in a more powerful direction. If that happens, the system is dead."

White youth from the rural South
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This week the RW presents a new feature: "Science for the Revolution." This will be a series of articles on scientific questions which are important to the basic people in their struggle to make revolution and transform the world. The author of this series – A.S.K. – is a contributing writer to the Revolutionary Worker with experience in the struggle for scientific experimentation as well as the revolutionary struggle. The RW would like to hear from our readers – especially the sisters and brothers in the prisons – on how they like these science articles, what they didn’t understand, and what questions they would like us to explore in future issues.
by A.S.K.

Why is this question important? Human beings all over the world assign special value to life. In all cultures we celebrate life and mourn death. The slander that, in some cultures or some parts of the world, "life is cheap" is never true. Everywhere we value more than life—less inanimate objects—or at least most of us would claim to do so. We are aware that we are alive, and most of us want to stay that way as long as possible—although many of us would give our lives for the sake of others under certain conditions. We look around us and reflect on what, if anything, distinguishes us from everything else around, or on what we have in common with other forms of life. We argue about where life comes from and whether there is life after death, wonder about whether there is life in other parts of the universe, and whether life will continue to exist on this planet. Most of us agree that all life is of equal social value. Most of us value human life above that of plants or other animals—at the same time that more and more of us recognize that the future survival and quality of life of human beings is closely tied up with that of other life-forms on this planet. Human beings kill all life the same. Whether it is right or wrong to kill various plants or animals is a question of human social priorities. And there are—and will be—class conflicts between people over such questions. These conflicts are shaped by the nature of bourgeois relations dominating the world, pitting the interests of the few against the interests of humanity as a whole. For instance, there is a world of difference between killing plants and animals for food and destroying life in the oceans or in the rainforests for the gain of rich ones. The difference between killing plants and animals is a question of human social priorities. And there are—and there will be—class conflicts between people over such questions. These conflicts are shaped by the nature of bourgeois relations dominating the world, pitting the interests of the few against the interests of humanity as a whole. For instance, there is a world of difference between killing plants and animals for food and destroying life in the oceans or in the rainforests for the gain of rich ones. It is not only acting as if a fetus being alive were the same thing as being a full human being, which it isn't. See next "Science for the Revolution" column for more on this question. They are also basically saying the life of a fetus has more social value than the life of a woman. They are saying, "The lives of women be damned!"

The question of what is life is very relevant these days as people struggle over the morality of abortion, issues of environmental destruction, different kinds of wars and the question of pacifism vs. revolutionary violence, and so on. We need to be thinking about life—about what it is and what it isn't—about what's precious about it on the one hand, but why even human life can't and shouldn't always be preserved on the other. The powers that be create a great deal of confusion and misinformation around this vital question as part of keeping the masses of people mentally shackled and oppressed overall. Most people are kept in the dark as to some of the basic scientific facts of life, the kinds of things which can be (and have been) studied and figured out. It is essential to struggle with the real world. What follows is an attempt to help correct this situation. 

In considering all the different stuff on Earth, human beings usually draw a big line between what we say is "alive" and what is not. But what does that mean? It is a fact that our own bodies and all the plants, animals, and even rocks and mud on Earth contain elements made long ago inside stars. So what really makes us, or any other living organism, or organism, different from a lump of coal? 

The answer is not so obvious. A lump of coal doesn't get up and walk around, but plants don't either and yet they breathe! A river is home to many animals and plants and is itself a tremendous material force, carving out the land around it, but it is the river itself a living organism? The fact is that most things on Earth have a lot in common with non-living things and with all the stuff in the universe generally. Consider this: About 99 percent of the known universe is made up of only two chemical elements: hydrogen and helium. Other really common chemical elements are produced inside the cores of stars when they start to burn out and collapse. The heat and pressure inside those stars is so great that tremendous reactions like those in a nuclear bomb take place: hydrogen atoms fuse into helium, helium fuses into carbon, carbon into oxygen, then neon, magnesium, silicon, sulfur, and so on, including nitrogen, calcium, iron... If some of these atoms seem familiar it is because many are very common elements on Earth. In fact it is now thought that all the chemical elements on Earth except for hydrogen and some helium were originally produced billions of years ago inside stars. Collapsing stars released those elements in space as the form of gases. And these gases eventually cooled down and condensed to form new stars and planets. This is a process that is still going on in other parts of the universe. And this is how our star, the Sun, and its nine orbiting planets— including the Earth—were formed.

On our planet, all living things are made up mostly of only four main elements: carbon, oxygen, nitrogen and hydrogen. For instance, these four chemical elements make up 99 percent of the atoms in our own bodies. About one-fifth of our individual body weight is made up of carbon atoms. And every one of these carbon atoms was originally produced inside a star. So it really is true, as the astronomer Carl Sagan likes to say, that WE ARE MADE OF STARSTUFF! It is worth thinking about this, to appreciate the continuity and similarities between all the things on Earth, living and non-living, and all the rest of the matter in the universe. Of course all the common everyday atoms on Earth are only basic building blocks. They are put together in many different ways. Different kinds of atoms come together to form basic units called molecules. For instance, a basic unit, or molecule, of water is made of two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen. And atoms can move around and trade places with other atoms in the same or in different molecules. This is what's called chemical reaction. 

Continued on page 10
What Is Life?

Continued from page 9

Life has different levels of organization. Living organisms are typically made up of one or more living cells. Cells are tiny sub-units of life which are basically groupings of molecules enclosed by some kind of membrane and within which lots of chemical reactions take place. Some living organisms, such as bacteria or some microscopic pond organisms, have only one cell, while other organisms have a great many interconnected and interdependent cells. The average human body has TRILLIONS (that’s millions of millions) of interconnected living cells.

But complexity and cellular organization are not, in and of themselves, enough to define life. There are, however, a number of processes which, put together, seem to characterize all life as we know it and which serve to distinguish living things from non-living things.

1. The ability to grow, and to process (“metabolize”) some outside energy source.
2. The ability to reproduce.
3. The ability to encompass and reproduce change over the generations.

Let’s look at each of these in turn:

1. Growth and Metabolism
   All living things take in some kind of energy source from the outside world and metabolize it. That means they burn it up and convert it into some new substances. This is how living things produce what they need to grow, develop and maintain their bodies. All living things also return some kind of waste product back to the outside environment.

2. Reproduction
   All the different kinds of living organisms reproduce. No living organism lives forever. And certainly not every individual living organism reproduces. (For example, not every individual animal has offspring.) But the ability to produce new generations of separate individuals is a feature of all the different kinds of living things.

3. A Way To Encompass and Reproduce Change Over the Generations
   There are many ways to do it: Some one-celled creatures just divide into two new cells. Some creatures can clone themselves, producing identical new individuals. Many kinds of plants and animals on earth have evolved sexual reproduction, combining different female egg cells and male sperm cells to produce seeds or eggs with their own unique identity and potential. Whatever way it’s done, the ability to reproduce is a key feature of all living things.

Where Did Oxygen Come From?

There was almost no oxygen in the earth’s atmosphere until around 2 to 3 billion years ago, when some new kinds of bacteria (cyanobacteria) evolved. These were the first organisms able to convert sunlight energy into sugars AND at the same time release oxygen. In doing this, they radically changed the earth’s atmosphere and thus provided a basis for the future evolution of all the life-forms which need oxygen to live—incorporating just about every life-form on earth today. Today it is still the case that all the oxygen we breathe, all the oxygen in the earth’s atmosphere, is the result of this photosynthetic process started by some bacteria long ago and continued today mainly by the various kinds of green plants.

Life Has Different Levels of Organization

On earth at least, living matter spans a lot of different levels of organization, and not all “life processes” take place at all levels. For instance, a one-celled organism such as a paramecium goes through all the processes described here. But in an organism whose body is made up of a lot of living cells, these cells are sub-units of the whole body and as long as they are part of that body they are not independently alive as distinct individual organisms. For example, each cell in a human body is alive as part of the whole living body and participates in many of the life processes of the body. These cells process energy, assume specialized functions such as a liver cell or a sperm cell for instance, but these living sub-units don’t fulfill all the criteria for living organisms on their own. For instance, sperm cells don’t reproduce, even though they are living sub-units of whole organisms that do reproduce and they participate in the reproduction process.

The term “organism” refers to that level of life—of whole individual creatures—which meets all the criteria of life discussed here: the capacity for growth, metabolism, reproduction, and some sort of system through which hereditary characteristics can be passed on to other generations. Keep in mind however that while only individual organisms "reproduce" first generation or any other sub-unit, and not populations or species or any larger entity, evolutionary change takes place over multiple generations at yet another level, that of species—or whole distinct "types"—of life. Individual reproduction, species evolve.

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Probably the biggest difference between living things and non-living things is the way they interact with the outside world. This has to do with the qualitatively different way living things change the outside world and are changed by it.

Take something non-living like a rock. It can be changed by the outside world—for instance, it can be worn down by wind and rain. It can also change the outside world—for instance, it could divert the water in a stream, or if thrown it could break the windshield of a car. And it could even passively record changes over time—for instance it might be squashed into layers by pressures inside the earth or hold the fossil imprint of some long gone plant or animal. A river could carve out the land, switch from a trickling stream to a raging torrent after a big rain, or be pent up by a dam. A volcanic eruption could block sunlight with ash and consume millions of acres with burning lava. A tropical storm could spawn multiple tornadoes and cause weather changes in far distant regions—the storm could gain strength or eventually fizzle out. These are all examples of the very dynamic interplay which can take place between non-living matter and the surrounding environment. But not even the most dynamic of non-living systems has the ability that all living things have to bring forth and incorporate "new" features, and reproduce and spread these changes in an ongoing way over the generations.

The way it works in this All living organisms, at least on this planet, have a genetic system, based primarily on collections of what are called DNA molecules contained within their cells. This DNA is like a chemical storehouse of information which programs a lot of the growth and development of an individual organism and determines many, though not all, of its basic features. It is the inherehouse of information for those characteristics that are inheritable. It is passed on from generation to generation. And it contains the basic information which might make an egg cell develop into a dandelion while another developed into a rabbit or another into a human being.

Comparing the DNA in the cells of different species reveals a lot of similarities between the different forms of life on earth and the fact that we all are descended from common ancestors (see box "An Example of Evolution By Natural Selection"). These types of comparisons also reveal that we are more closely related to chimpanzees, for instance, than we are to the most distant species of fish. A genetic system records past changes in the history of life and provides blueprints for the basic development of individual organisms. But it also provides raw material for change in relation to a constantly changing external world. Life evolves, and that is its most distinguishing characteristic.

Genetic programs get passed on from generation to generation. But while much of the information remains fairly constant, different individuals inherit somewhat different versions of the programs, due to a certain amount of "reshuffling" of the genetic information which takes place primarily in the course of reproduction. Some of this chemical reshuffling sometimes leads to the emergence of new features in individuals. It also means that in any one locale, in any one population of living organisms there can be a great deal of variation between individuals—a lot of different "versions" of any one type of plant or animal—interacting with the outside world. As different individuals with their different features interact with those continually changing external conditions, some will manage to leave more descendants than others. And in this way whatever internal genetic particularity they might have had (along with any features they might give rise to) will tend to become more common in the next generations.

This is in a nutshell what is meant by natural selection. Sometimes the changes are sufficient to give rise to a whole new type—or species—of plant or animal. It is through this mechanism of natural selection that life evolves on this planet. This means of recording and transmitting change over the generations is what has made possible the great diversity and variability of living forms on earth.

In a sense, the raw material of life is involved in an ongoing process of unconscious "experimentation." There is no external hand guiding this from the outside. It is passed on from generation to generation. And it contains the basic information which might make an egg cell develop into a dandelion while another developed into a rabbit or another into a human being. In a sense, the raw material of life is involved in an ongoing process of unconscious "experimentation." There is no external hand guiding this from the outside. It is passed on from generation to generation. And it contains the basic information which might make an egg cell develop into a dandelion while another developed into a rabbit or another into a human being.

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Evolution by Natural Selection: Another Example

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Evolution by Natural Selection: Another Example

Where did amphibians (salamanders, frogs, toads) likely come from? Millions of years ago, there was a kind of fish (the lobefins), some of which had not only the usual fish gills used for breathing underwater, but also a kind of "lung" which most likely allowed them to breathe out of the water for a while. Some of them also had extra thick and sturdy fins. A coelacanth, a primitive fish with stout fins on its belly that allow it to walk on the ocean floor.

A long-tailed salamander

An Example of Evolution by Natural Selection

Imagine a type (species) of tree which normally produces seeds every year. But maybe, due to a certain amount of variation in the genetic programs of these trees, a few of them can produce seeds only every two years. Now imagine some of the outside conditions change (like the climate), and it turns out that under the new conditions those few trees that spent less energy producing seeds every two years actually end up in the long run leaving more descendants than the one-year trees. Now if this ability to produce seeds every other year is one of those kinds of features that can be passed on to the next generation (many features cannot be), then after a number of generations the two-year types of trees may well outnumber the one-year types. The one-year type might eventually disappear, or you might end up with two very distinct types (species) of trees. This whole process would be an example of evolution by natural selection.
What Is Life?

Continued from page 11

"goal" that living things are moving towards.

But what evolution does mean is that—
in interaction with a changing outside world—living species can produce new and different life forms. Some will keep going and some will not. Depending on the conditions, change over the generations—we human beings share these characteristics with all other forms of life on this planet. In the course of our evolution we have also developed another, very powerful and very rapid, way of encompassing change and passing it on to future generations—a social means, not directly coded in our individual genetic systems but emerging at a whole other level, out of our experiences and interactions as a social species.

Other animals have evolved a bit of this ability. A young wolf is not born knowing how to hunt but must learn it from other wolves. A female chimpanzee must be taught by other chimpanzees how to care for a baby. Whales teach their young the techniques of life on this planet. Today there are all sorts of different life-forms on the planet. For instance, most plants and animals produce more seeds and young than can ever make it to maturity, which means that a lot of the cells alive today in all the living creatures are all descendants of those first living cells which could take in energy, grow, divide and eventually even transmit some kind of simple genetic program from one generation to the next. Today, the environmental conditions are very different, and new cells are not being formed from scratch in this way. This means that ALL of the cells alive today in all the living creatures are all descendants of those first living cells on the planet. Right now there are all sorts of different life-forms on this planet, thanks to the historical evolution of living forms through the mechanism of natural selection. But we can all trace our ancestry back to those first cells, and we are all related.

All Living Things On Earth Are Related

At the beginning of life on Earth, the chemical composition of the waters and atmosphere was such that tides of some organic chemicals could cluster together and surround themselves with membranes within which various chemical reactions could take place. These were the prototypes of the first living cells which could take in energy, grow, divide and eventually even transmit some kind of simple genetic program from one generation to the next. Today, the environmental conditions are very different, and new cells are not being formed from scratch in this way. This means that ALL of the cells alive today in all the living creatures are all descendants of those first living cells on the planet. Right now there are all sorts of different life-forms on this planet, thanks to the historical evolution of living forms through the mechanism of natural selection. But we can all trace our ancestry back to those first cells, and we are all related.

Life Is a Beautiful, Wonderful, and Special Thing

Life is fundamentally a question of whether or not it's right to do so is a question of what's objectively justified and sometimes in the name of a higher social good to benefit all of society.

Next Time: Science for the Revolution #2; "One Live Egg, One Live sperm, One Live Cell, One Live Fetus, One Live Woman: Which Do We Value Most? Life Cannot, And Should Not, Always Be Protected"
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Chicago Students Fight Racism

Black people constantly hear “Get an education—then you can be whatever you want to be.” But recent events at Chicago’s University of Illinois Circle Campus reveal some hard truths about racist Amerikkka.

Circle Campus is a major, four-year university near Chicago’s Black proletarian west side. Walk north from the famous Maxwell Street flea market district, and you can see that the university built a fortress wall to keep the people out.

Some students of color have made it past that wall onto campus. But getting in doesn’t mean they have escaped racist madness. Universities are said to be islands of “academic freedom” and liberal attitudes, but all-too-familiar racist shit oozes out here too!

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Oxy College

250 Students Sit In Against Racist Censorship

The week before Thanksgiving, students at a small liberal arts college in Los Angeles took over the campus administration building for four days. The protest began when the college authorities—at the urging of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD)—abruptly cancelled a student-organized and funded free concert. The concert planned to feature a Latino rap group as well as a demonstration and display by local graffiti artists.

Occidental College is a private school of 1,650 students. Its manicured grounds and immaculate stucco buildings, and the neighboring middle-class homes, contrast with the nearby barrio of Highland Park. The administration talks a lot about “cultural diversity” and making the college part of the community, and enrollment of people of color has actually increased during the last four years. But students of color still experience discrimination in their dealings with the school, including around cultural events.

The concert was supported by the associated students and a broad range of student groups who saw this as an opportunity for cultural diversity and breaking down the walls between the campus and the surrounding community. But, one of the protest leaders observed, the school won’t allow the students to define the community they are part of. With the concert less than a week away, the LAPD called the college and told them they felt the security for the event was inadequate because flyers had gone out to high schools with “rival gang factions.” The administration dutifully cancelled the event.

Students were incensed at the blatant
Reading, Writing, “Rhetoric”—and Racism

Since school opened in the fall, gangs of white male students have harassed Black and Latino students, especially women. Since early October there have been at least right or nine incidents of racial harassment or graffiti. The Ku Klux Klan fazed in ugly literature to the campus newspaper, calling on the student journalists to campaign against any increase of Black and Latino enrollment. Last September a letter cut from a dead body was left hanging on the door of a Black woman with a note signed “The KKK.”

Anger has been building over these outrages. On Friday, November 16, the UIC administration sponsored a “town meeting” to try to chill things out. Their plans backfired.

About 300 students came, mainly Black women. And they wanted results. One after another, furious women spoke about the climate of intimidation they live under every day. One said, “All this administration knows how to do is to make a committee, to make a committee, to make a committee.” We’re not talking anymore. Students want action now.” The crowd pointed out that University Chancellor Stukel hadn’t even bothered to come.

One student explained that official inaction actually supports harassers and helps isolate the abused: “It wasn’t too long ago in this country when a Black woman could be beaten, raped, killed and no one cared. We can’t be told not to get remarked, not to laugh, the victims of these attacks don’t feel safe, feel like they’re going to die.”

Students denounced the racist and sexist pressures they face. “It’s important to look at these incidents are only a manifestation of what has always existed and pervaded this school,” one student pointed out. “It’s like that 60 percent of Black students leave before getting their degrees. As such policies were made, the crowd shouted support, saying “Right on!” and “Tell ‘em!”

The campus director of housing said the administration hadn’t done anything after two recent attacks on Black women by groups of white men, because “Something broke down in our reporting mechanism.”

The crowd responded to these landladies with boos. One uptight administration employee was mocked and ridiculed until he said dawn.

The Breaking Point

The people could only stand so much official bullishit. After two hours, a representative of the UIC Coalition of Latin American Students presented a platform of demands and the president of the Black Student Union called for students to go to the Chancellor’s office. There was a walkout.

A very diverse group of 40 students gathered Black, Latino, Pakistani, and white youth made a fast and loud march. Many had “No Peace for Racists” stickers on their jackets. Students chanting, “We want Stukel! We want answer!” and “Fight the Power! Seize the Power!”

The administration is building to prevent student takeovers. Elevators stop two floors short of the Chancellor’s office and the stairwells are locked.

One member of the RCYB wrote to the paper: “Security and physical plant workers isolated everybody and shut down the elevators but agreed to take a delegation of six students up to the Chancellor’s office. Six students were and promptly opened the stairwell doors for the rest of us.” The resultant crowd headed for Stukel’s office, occupying it and putting up a “No Peace for Racists” stickers everywhere. People broke open the ledger books to see how much money was being spent to keep the “minority” student programs, while other students called Stukel and the media on his office phone. Box of photos, pictures from Stukel’s desk got passed around as students drew up a list of demands. Cops showed up, but weren’t allowed inside of the room. After the names, calling student leaders aside, telling them to be quiet. At the same time, two others, the student, broken out around the demands. Some wanted to demand more police protection and “answers” from the administration. Others thought that both police and the administration were part of the problem and that the answers are found in solidarity among students on the basis of fighting white and male supremacy.

The sit-in forced the Chancellor to show up. After several hours, Stukel agreed that there would be no reprisals for the takeover and agreed to meet students the following Monday with some response on their demands.

When Monday came, many more students showed up, attracted by Friday’s events. Again the administration thought they would win “town meetings” but would show how hollow their commitments are. Instead, students took over. They presented demands and gave the administration a deadline for an official plan of action. Community leaders, local politicians, and professional reformers rushed into negotiation with the administration and a real struggle began.

Meanwhile the majority of the students held a sit-in. Student leaders from various groups spoke, including the Women’s Center, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance and the Asian American Students. Some students sang songs of resistance, others of compromise. One activist questioned why women needed to be on campus. “The administration wants to see other students from pushing the struggle forward.”

One Black student came to the formation of a Black self-defense league, opposed the call for more police and supported the idea of forming a No Peace for Racists Club at UIC. A young Black nationalist walked in on the negotiations, and came back to tell the slogans, “We can’t sacrifice the oppressor and not sell out.”

Another said, “If the negotiations our president agreed to had to date to have a meeting. One man told our reporters, “You’re not a correspondent. If you agree to all the demands, the same stigma is going to persist.”

Another student temporally got the administration out of a tight spot. But there is a problem. When the students in this case, the whole national coalition has been formed in the course of this struggle. And there is a struggle to put the focus squarely onto this male-dominated, white-supremacist system. One Black man said, “We’re sick and tired of being sick and tired!”

Racist Connections of a Racist System

These brave and bold actions by the students need to be supported by everyone who hates this racist shit. The University is not separate from the broader society and the struggle on campus is connected by a thousand links to events that are happening across Chicago.

Police have used the “war on drugs” as an excuse, to stage massive raids, evictions, searches and arrests in Chicago public housing (see “The Chicago Lockdown” special section in RW No. 582). “Operation Clean Sweep” has left nearly 30 buildings “locked down” like prisons. Every resident seven years and up is forced to carry ID. Armed guards are stationed at checkpoints like an occupying army, brutalizing tenants. Using the Chicago Housing Authority as a national model, Housing Commissioner Joffe and Development Secretary Jack Kerr is trying to institute this police-state setup across the country.

To justify such things nationally, photon cops are labeled “cruel drug dealers” and “animals.” This is the same hysteria that has been used in the past wave of racist attacks on campus. There are a thousand links because the same racist system is behind all the racist attacks. RCP chairman, Bob Avakian, says: “We must work to build the unity of all oppressed people—of all races and nationalities, men in unity with women—on the basis of equality; but at the same time, especially in these days, we must be very clear about this: “Women are subject all their lives to male-supremacist outrages. Black people experience racism, as Black people, everywhere they turn in this society. For women to have guts feelings against men, for Black people to have guts feelings against whites, is not at all the same thing as for a woman with guts to rebel against the male-supremacist, white-supremacist system we live under. Men who are chauvinists, who are racists, who have this whole system behind them, and in turn they help prop up this system with their behavior and expression. Our fire must be aimed at this male chauvinism and white racism—and the system they serve. “If we ignored these basic truths, we would not be able to overcome real divisions and build the real unity we need—revolutionary unity.”

We want to thank A.K. from the RCYB in Chicago, whose correspondence made this article possible.

O
Get Down with Carl Dix:

I'm not going to tell you to chill out. I'm not going to tell you some never-gonna-happen fantasy about doing something positive with your life to try and make it in this hell-hole system. I am going to tell you the truth like nobody else will. I'm going to tell you why you need to live, die, and fight for revolution for the oppressed here and around the world. Ain't nothing else worth being no. 3.

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