

PEACE 4 THE PEOPLE

NEWSLETTER OF ILPS COMMISSION 4



Issue 15, May 2021



WAR AND THE PARIS COMMUNE

THE PARISIEN PEOPLE'S STRUGGLE FOR JUST PEACE

Excerpt from PRISM'S Theoretical Primer on the Paris Commune (released by the ILPS General Secretary on April 6, 2021)

Part 1.2

The French defeat at Sedan, Napoleon's surrender, and his Empire's collapse.

On August 18, the Prussian forces won another decisive battle at Gravelotte. They trapped the battered French Army of the Rhine (113,000 men under Gen. Bazaine) at Metz and began to lay siege. The other French Army of Châlons, 103,000-strong and personally led by Napoleon himself, attempted to break the siege. On Aug. 30, however, it caught itself in a giant pincer attack by the 250,000-strong Prussian Third and Fourth Armies. The emperor's army was trapped in the vicinity of Sedan and was shredded to pieces throughout the day of Sept. 1. Napoleon offered surrender, which the Prussian command formally accepted the next day. He and his surviving 84,000 troops were taken into captivity.

Back in Paris, the news of the Sedan defeat and Napoleon's surrender fired up the masses who were now armed and organized as National Guard units. On Sept. 4, a big crowd led by National Guard riflemen stormed the Palais Bourbon and took over the Chamber of Deputies. The French Second Empire collapsed in a whimper. Hence the Third Republic under the Government of National Defense. That same day, leading members of the Chamber (which only had limited powers under Napoleon) gathered at the historic Hôtel de Ville that housed the Paris Town Hall. There they declared the Third Republic and set up a Government of National Defense to continue the now-defensive war.

The new government, with monarchist General Louis Trochu as head, was dominated by conservative republicans and double-faced monarchists. Marx hailed the creation of the new Republic but weighed its prospects with misgivings. In the second address of the General Council of the International (Sept. 9), he noted that this Republic was in the hands of a government "composed partly of notorious *Orleanistes* [former king Louis-Philippe's supporters], partly of middle-class Republicans." On the other hand, he reminded the French workers not to set itself the aim of overthrowing the government ("a desperate folly") but to proceed with "the organization of their own class" for longer-term goals.

Indeed, Marx had the insight to see that the French proletariat was not yet ready to seize power, even as it had to confront the new "Government of National Defense" as the latest incarnation of the French bourgeois state sworn to preserve capitalist rule. This state intended to block proletarian power that was brewing in Paris, even bow down to Prussia if it came to that. The International's second manifesto called for German working-class demonstrations to end the war, to recognize the French Republic and reach an "honorable peace," and to oppose the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine. But the German social-democrats who signed the manifesto were promptly arrested and dragged to prison in chains. Liebknecht and Bebel, the main anti-war advocates within the German parliament, were also arrested for high treason.

Thus, the mass agitation for peace was drowned by the ultra-nationalist German urge for more territory; Prussian armies thrust deeper into France. With the bulk of its main armies disabled at Metz and Sedan, the new French government scrounged around to gather all types of military units, including raw Mobile Guard conscripts and the localized National Guard, in order to strengthen the defenses around Paris. It fortified the city and built up enormous stocks of food and ammunition to last the duration of the expected siege. Paris standing alone but armed.

Traditionally, the National Guard was a middle-class-dominated militia that was supposed to fight together with the Mobile Guard (likewise middle-class-dominated) in support of the main French armies (which were predominantly recruited from the peasant masses), and to undertake police tasks as well. Now though, with the capital in danger of Prussian attack, impoverished Parisian masses swelled the National Guard's ranks to a total of 330,000 men. To its 60 old battalions were added 130 newly created battalions. They were paid 30 sous (1 franc 50) per day and armed with the same infantry rifles and guns carried by the regular army. The Paris public also paid for 400 bronze cannons for its National Guard units.

By Sept. 18, German forces completely surrounded Paris, cut it off from the rest of unoccupied France, and began to lay siege. The National Assembly had left Paris earlier, moving to Bordeaux nearly 600 km to the south. The minister of the interior Léon Gambetta escaped by hot-air balloon to the city of Tours some 300 km to the south, with a mandate to raise a new Army of the Loire and direct the war effort from there. In effect, the French government had two distant arms that barely coordinated with each other—Gambetta in Tours, the National Assembly in Bordeaux—and both were cut off from the besieged capital and its governor, General Trochu (also overall military commander for the defense of Paris, and nominal President).

Part I.3

How did the bungling Government of National Defense handle the Paris siege and trigger the Paris Commune?

The siege of Paris.

While the hastily raised French armies of Gambetta were being defeated on most fronts, the people of Paris and their National Guard battalions braced for the worst. With Gambetta and the National Assembly too detached from Paris, Jules Favre (as vice president and foreign minister) and Adolphe Thiers, another conservative republican with monarchist links, became the Government's de facto leaders. They were more concerned about the rebellious city than about the enemy knocking at its gates. For most Parisians, food stocks were starting to run out while disease stalked the poor neighborhoods under severe winter conditions. Many of the wealthy, on the other hand, were able to retain their comforts by escaping to safety through the Prussian lines or by replenishing their supplies at sky-high prices. The people grew more frustrated at the Government for its incompetence, cowardice, and signs of capitulationism. They were in fact on the brink of revolt.

On Oct. 27, 1870, the French army trapped in Metz under Gen. Bazaine surrendered without a fight. News spread that the real political leaders of the Government (Favre and Thiers) were in fact negotiating with the Prussians for a peace that would disarm Paris. Outraged Parisians massed in the streets and called it a "government of national betrayal." On Oct. 31, crowds backed by worker-dominated National Guard units stormed the Town Hall and temporarily ousted the Government. But middle-class battalions quickly came to the Government's rescue. To avoid civil war and preserve French unity against the Prussian siege, Auguste Blanqui and other leaders of the uprising withdrew. The Government promised to hold elections, but instead it held a plebiscite on its continuance—which it handily won. It then proceeded to arrest 25 leaders of the Blanquist-led uprising. (Blanqui himself would be captured on the eve of the Paris Commune and remain prisoner beyond its fall.)

The people scoffed at the Paris military governor, General Trochu, who publicly vowed "not to cede an inch" but privately said from the outset that any defense of Paris was "heroic folly." He came up with a very passive "defense plan," and failed to unite the various Guard forces and armed civilians who were ready to fight. Increasingly, the people blamed the Government for the bungled conduct of the war. In defending the besieged city, the people began to place more hope on their National Guard units, which were ill-trained although well-armed. As more and more rich and middle-class people left the city for safer sanctuaries, most of Paris *arrondissements* (local districts) and their National Guard units turned increasingly proletarian and radicalized. The battalions were commanded by officers who were elected by the rank-and-file troops themselves. Some National Guard units were led by socialist workers and members of the International. Often on the initiative of women (who were excluded from National Guard duty), the masses

organized themselves, converted public halls and theaters into soup kitchens and Red Club centers, which housed refugees and became the regular venues for daily discussions.

French military units and armed workers had tried to break the Prussian siege twice (in November 1870 and January 1871), but both ended in disaster. Massive daily bombardment by Prussian artillery began, battering the city for 23 days. On Jan. 18, on the outskirts of Paris, Versailles fell to the Prussians. The new German Empire was formally proclaimed, and its emperor Wilhelm crowned, in its Hall of Mirrors. When General Trochu's Jan. 19 sortie failed to break the siege and incurred terrible French casualties, he resigned as Paris governor. Thiers and Favre remained as the real Government decisionmakers; they quickly prepared to capitulate. French surrender, rise of Thiers regime.

On Jan. 28, 1871, the French Government signed an armistice with Prussia. Favre (on behalf of France) and Bismarck (on behalf of Emperor Wilhelm) signed the Convention defining the terms of armistice and capitulation. The humiliating terms included the payment of huge amounts of French money for indemnity and war reparations. Upon Prussia's urging that France quickly set up a new government to legitimately ratify the peace treaty, national elections were held on Feb. 8. (All male citizens were allowed to vote, but women were not.) The vast mass of rural electors, attracted to the slogan "peace at any price" and still charmed by the old nobility, were swayed to support monarchism and reject the intransigence of radical and proletarian Paris. They chose a new government overwhelmingly composed of monarchist, capitalist, middle-class, cleric and landed-gentry deputies. Of the Assembly's 750 deputies, fully 450 were diehard monarchists and Bonapartists; the rest were conservative republicans, and only about 100 were radical republicans. One-third of the deputies had titles of nobility.

On Feb. 12, the Assembly elected Adolphe Thiers as president and chief executive. On Feb. 26, it ratified the treaty with Prussia, putting the final seal on the onerous peace terms. The treaty required France to cede Alsace and part of Lorraine to Germany, and to pay 5 billion gold francs as war reparations. Sensing the rebellious pulse of Paris, Bismarck decided to march his Prussian troops into the city on March 1 but only for a brief and symbolic two-day occupation. He astutely decided not to fully occupy it, only to guard its eastern approaches, and let the French shoulder the task of keeping order within the city through National Guard units. But this decision had its consequences. As Engels noted: "The forts were surrendered, the city wall stripped of guns, the weapons of the regiments of the line and of the Mobile Guard were handed over, and they themselves considered prisoners of war. But the National Guard kept its weapons and guns..." The Thiers regime appointed monarchists as high functionaries. It appointed its own choices as National Guard commander (the Jesuit general de Paladine), Paris police prefect (the Bonapartist Valenin), and for other key military posts. It sentenced to death a Blanquist leader of the Oct. 31 uprising. It suppressed six Republican papers for preaching "sedition and disobedience to the laws."

On March 10-12, the Assembly passed four laws that further crippled Paris. (It also imposed other new financial measures, in an effort to squeeze the French people dry to pay war reparations and hopefully to persuade the German occupiers to leave earlier.) ☐ First, it slashed the pay of National Guard troops to almost nil, leaving them penniless since the ruined economy could not provide them other incomes. ☐ Second, it lifted the moratorium on the sale of goods at pawnshops, where many workers had pawned their meager valuables. ☐ Third, it required all bills overdue for the past four months to be paid unconditionally and with interest within the next three days—many of them unpaid rents of over 200,000 workers' households. ☐ And as a fourth and final humiliation, the new government decided to move its national seat to Versailles, just 17 km outside Paris and directly under Prussian eyes. These measures further fueled the growing resentment of the workers and other toiling masses and began to ruin even lower middle-class livelihoods.

The tinderbox was about to explode into the historic Paris Commune. It would also spread across France through more short-lived armed uprisings in several other cities.

Part II.

The rise and fall of the Paris Commune, March 18 – May 28, 1871

To summarize, the following factors combined to create the conditions for civil war between the worker-led toiling masses of Paris and the Thiers government: (1) the shameful defeat in the war against Germany; (2) the general state of economic ruin among the masses during the Paris siege; (3) deep social discontent among the workers against capitalist exploitation, together with vague but growing aspirations for a socialist system; (4) widespread indignation of the masses against the upper classes and government authorities, which were reactionary-monarchist, incompetent, and wallowing in their luxurious lifestyles.

II.1. How did the Paris Commune rise up in defiance of the Versailles regime?

From the time of the Prussian siege until the new National Assembly was formed, the masses of Paris led by a militant working class had organized and armed themselves into National Guard units of 200,000 men, and with a capacity to make independent political decisions. The masses' armed strength was estimated at 450,000 rifles and other firearms, 2,000 cannons, and immense stocks of ammunition. The National Guard units in Paris, now composed of 215 battalions except for one or two Bonapartist battalions, constituted themselves into the Federation of the National Guard (thenceforth they were also called the Federals).

On March 3, the Federation's program and statutes were approved by delegates elected from all Paris *arrondissements*. On March 15, the Federation elected a Central Committee (CC) to which they now reported instead of the Versailles-appointed commander. All able-bodied citizens were enjoined to organize committees of battalions, councils of legions, and to send delegates to the CC.

Paris was now an armed camp of the proletariat defying the government at Versailles. A situation of dual power existed. The most urgent questions were these: How would the Versailles regime defuse the bomb that was Paris? And would Paris just bow down and disarm? The Versailles regime, backed by the Prussian state, knew it had to disarm Paris. But the people had paid for the city's defense with their own blood, sweat and tears. They asserted their right to bear arms. In fact, they had paid for 400 pieces of artillery with their own money at the start of the siege. They could not just be ordered to stand down, disarm, and allow the arrest of their leaders, especially by a monarchist regime with Prussian backing. People of Paris defend the National Guard cannons. Thiers brought his provocations to high pitch by demanding the surrender of Parisian arms, including the 400 cannons which the masses deemed as theirs. Arriving in Paris on March 15, Thiers' real aim was to seize the fortifications and fully disarm the National Guard. But his immediate focus was on getting the cannons. On the early dawn of March 18, Thiers mobilized 20,000 army troops and loyal Guard units to seize the artillery pieces: 171 cannons installed on the Montmartre heights, 74 on the Belleville heights, and the rest in 16 other locations. Through posters all over the city, he also called on all Parisians to side with Versailles and condemn the CC of the Federals. Army teams of the 88th Regiment under Gen. Lecomte disabled the Montmartre guardsmen, seized some pieces, and moved them with difficulty to the foot of the heights, but a great number of cannons remained on the heights.

Meanwhile, a big crowd composed mostly of women and children began to gather and shame the troops who struggled to move the cannon pieces, offering bread and wine to persuade the hungry troops to stand down. Others used drums to sound the alarm, and soon the main streets were echoing with church bells and bugles. National Guard forces arrived from all directions. Together with the crowd, they convinced the army troops not to fire (despite Lecomte's repeated orders) and to fraternize instead with the Federals. The Federals arrested Lecomte and forced him to order his troops to evacuate another fort. At 9 am the Federals retook the Montmartre heights and replaced the cannon pieces. Similar tugs of war to control other cannons occurred elsewhere. The army units sent by Thiers were dissolving. At 11 am, the Federals had retaken nearly all the cannon except for 10 pieces. At around 3 pm, Thiers and his ministers fled back to Versailles. In the Chaussee des Martyrs later that afternoon, the 1848 butcher Gen. Clement-Thomas was spotted and arrested by the crowd. He and Lecomte were both executed by some of their own mutinous soldiers.

II.2 Central Committee acts as provisional government.

The CC of the Federals, representing the people of the city, was now the sole power in Paris. That same day (March 18), crowds gathered at the Hôtel de Ville amidst shouts of "Vive la Commune!" By midnight, the CC began to function as organ of political power. In its proclamation of March 18, it said: The proletarians of Paris amid the defeats and betrayals of the ruling class, have come to understand that they must save the situation by taking the conduct of public affairs into their own hands. ... They have realised that it is their highest duty and their absolute right to make themselves the masters of their own fate and to seize the power of the government.

###

CALL FOR A SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN TO SUPPORT THE VENEZUELAN PEOPLE

Fight Together Against U.S. Aggression! The People of Venezuela Resist and Struggle!

The International League of Peoples' Struggle (ILPS) is calling for stepped-up global solidarity actions with the people of Venezuela in their struggle against U.S. imperialist aggression and interference in their internal affairs.

The ILPS has consistently stood in militant solidarity with the people of Venezuela in their long struggles against US imperialist aggression and attempts to undermine Venezuela's national sovereignty by such actions as implementing military blockades and imposing war-like sanctions. These have been very detrimental to the Venezuelan people, especially amid the global pandemic.

In this light, the ILPS is holding a solidarity campaign this April to June 2021 to highlight the Venezuelan peoples' issues and amplify their demands. The campaign will jumpstart with a webinar forum on April 17, 2021, with invited speakers to promote the struggles of the people of Venezuela and to prepare for further online and offline solidarity activities over the coming months. This campaign will come to a head in June when the Venezuelan Government holds a major conference in Venezuela to oppose US aggression and interference.

The ILPS calls on all League members, country chapters, regional organizations, commissions and supporting networks to mobilize for the April 17 solidarity event, to take initiative to organize their own actions, and to watch for and participate in the other ILPS solidarity activities to come.

Long live the valiant struggles of the Venezuelan people!
Condemn Imperialist aggression!
Long live international solidarity!

Len Cooper
Chairperson ILPS
7 April 2021

The ILPS is the International League of Peoples' Struggles, an anti-imperialist alliance. www.ilps.info
Commission 4 is concerned with wars of aggression and counter-revolution and nuclear weapons and all weapons of mass destruction.

<https://peace450.wixsite.org/website>

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UNITE IN ACTION AS ONE ANTI-IMPERIALIST MOVEMENT!

COMMEMORATE THE 150th ANNIVERSARY OF THE PARIS COMMUNE

The ILPS is leading a six-month-long global campaign to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Paris Commune (18 March – 28 May 1871). The "Paris Commune at 150" campaign (PC150) will be a global mass commemoration to refresh, revitalize, and sustain interest in the Paris Commune: its historical context and impact in the past 150 years, its lessons, and continuing validity for the current era. [#ParisCommuneAt150](https://pariscommuneat150.org/)

ILPS CAMPAIGN OF VENEZUELA SOLIDARITY

Defend the Bolivarian project! Stand up for sovereignty and democracy!
End the coercive economic measures! No interference! No military intervention!

No to NATO! Yes to Just Peace!

Webinar series on NATO, the role it plays in ensuring US military supremacy, and strategies for building the movement to oppose NATO, war and militarism.

Part 2: Thursday, May 13, 10:00 AM Pacific/1:00 PM Eastern/7:00 PM Brussels Yes to a Just Peace!--Discussion on strategies for building movements against NATO and US-led war and militarism

Sponsored by the Resist US-Led War Movement in collaboration with ILPS Europe

More info and link to register coming soon at: <https://www.facebook.com/ResistUSLedWar>

END THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN PSU AND BOEING!

Speech by the Hurriyah Collective, a member organization of ILPS-US that organizes Muslims to take up anti-imperialist struggle through the lens of Islamic liberation theology.

I want to start by acknowledging that we are on indigenous land, wherever we may exist in the United States, and many parts of the earth globally. We are standing at Portland State University (PSU), specifically on the territories of the Clackamas people, who are a part of the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde (gran•ron) as well as the Cowlitz (cow•litz) tribe, who are a part of the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis (shaha•liss) Reservation. After the Willamette Valley Treaty in 1855, Clackamas people were forcibly removed to what is now the Grand Ronde reservations and are now members of the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon. After their refusal to give up their homes and lands they had lived off in 1855, the Cowlitz were forcibly removed to the Quinalt (kwin•alt) Nation and are now members of the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation. Indigenous people for years have been able to create sustainable ways of living with their own practices and fire management methods. Only recently with the capture and colonization of their land have we seen dire consequences.

I especially reflect on this as the local government's paramilitary style of unleashing toxic gas to violate the environment and people's health continues against people protesting police brutality and state-sanctioned violence against Black communities. Meanwhile, Portland's solution to homelessness and mental health crises is criminalization and more policing, rather than seriously addressing their root causes of capitalism and poverty. Islam is founded on the notion of harmony and "natural state" (fitra) and in respecting balance (mizan) and proportion (mikdar) in the systems of the universe. These provide us as believers with an ethical framework and mandate for respect of nature and all forms of life, as we see from the food we consume, the materials we use, and the zakat are required to give. This balance has been disturbed due to human greed, stemming from capitalism, which has resulted in overconsumption, overexploitation and overuse of resources. At this point, we know that there is no ethical consumption under capitalism. Our environmental issues, such as the loss of biodiversity, extinction of animals, rapid climate change, destruction of natural habitats, and the wildfires we are currently experiencing are direct results of this sustained unethical consumption. We as human inhabitants of this earth have to go back to the guide that Allah has provided us to live by as we know that "every living thing is in a state of worship". "Corruption has appeared on land and sea/ Because of what people's own hands have brought/ That Allah may give them a taste of their deeds/ In order that they may turn back from Evil Qur'an 30: 41."

We know that we need to reassess and reimagine our values and ways of life to mitigate the harm of imperialist and capitalist violence on the world so we can live in harmony with nature as we were meant to. It is why as members of Portland, Portland state students and faculty; we must call on the systems we are integrated into to exemplify this harmony with nature. Institutions such as PSU claim to profess values rooted in anti-racism and rely on the recurrence of publishing empty statements of support for basic human life, to be able to keep up with this performance.

How they are able to continuously get away with this is because these institutions would rather you believe you are a fractured individual than a part of a collective. A collective that demands better. A collective that demands for basic human life to be respected. A collective that asks, "If your definition of anti-racism does not include anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism, is it truly anti-racist?" They can continue putting out empty statements of unfollowed actions or putting up social justice and diversity as a marketing brand rather than a genuine struggle for liberation because they are not unaware of their hypocrisy, and they know they're in a comfortable enough position to not be concerned about students' holding them accountable.

PSU is not unaware of Boeing's fuel-to-the-fire bloodied hand in the U.S. Wars overseas, local police militarization, arming of anti-LGBTQ+ fascist regimes globally, environmental destruction through mining, and the countless lives they have taken and destroyed. With a Board of Trustees deeply entangled with the Air, Space, and Defense tech industry / military industrial complex, this is an intentional partnership where both sides are fully aware of what the other can provide: an endless stream of students being fed into the pipeline of coordinating the U.S. imperialistic, weapons campaign against regions such as Yemen, Somalia, the Philippines, Palestine, and many more.

We are not bringing anything new to their attention; we are students and community members who are watching and will be organizing as we demand for PSU to break all ties with Boeing, which isn't limited to but includes their supply-chain internship and being designated as a priority recruiting/hiring university by Boeing. We call on the PSU Board of Trustees to take action and prevent future partnerships from happening between PSU and Boeing again!

We call on community members in Portland, PSU students, faculty, and staff: come talk to me afterwards because let's get you involved in our campaign! Join our coalition as we take on Boeing at PSU, and demand for an education where land, water, air, and peoples' lives are valued above profit.

###

JUSTICE FOR THE VICTIMS OF AGENT ORANGE!

Veterans for Peace (VFP) e-news, March 23, 2021:

Sixty years ago, the United States used approximately 19 million gallons of 15 different herbicides, including 13 million gallons of Agent Orange, over southern Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. Between 2.1 and 4.8 million Vietnamese were exposed during the spraying and many more continue to be exposed through the environment. Agent Orange exposure continues to negatively affect the lives of men and women in Vietnam and in the United States.

VFP hosted a webinar on the lingering aftermath of the despicable use of agent orange by the US military since 1960. In this powerful panel, Hoan Thi Tran and Heather Bowser talked about their personal stories as disabled children of parents who were exposed to the toxic compound agent orange. A defoliant deliberately mixed strong enough to kill people, the US said it used agent orange to clear jungles where it suspected Vietcong forces were hiding. The US Army Chemical Corps and the Flying Crews were charged with the task. It was poured over people, too. US personnel ordered to spray it in many areas succumbed to illness as did Vietnamese people. Not only did they suffer from cancers and other diseases such as Parkinson's, their children and grandchildren suffered deformities and illnesses, too. Jonathan Moore discussed the U.S. legal cases around Agent Orange, and Tricia Euvard cited the current lawsuit in France. Susan Schnall laid out the broad health effects of Agent Orange, and Paul Cox briefly described and weighed the legislation on Agent Orange that U.S. Congresswoman Barbara Lee would soon introduce. This webinar also occurred in conjunction with the recent release of the powerful new film "The People Vs. Agent Orange."

In 1960, the United Nations passed a resolution to create a treaty against chemical weapons because of discoveries of damage related to their toxins to all people, animals and plants. The use of agent orange was a violation of this treaty and international law, and as such, a war crime.

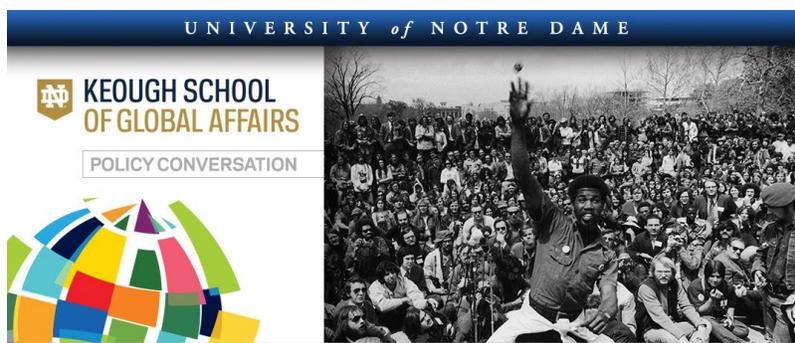
The struggle to get justice for this monolithic crime continues. Tracking the history, we can see how costly the use of agent orange has been in terms of life and dollars. The US Agent Orange Act of 2005 assigned some compensation

totaling \$75 billion to US military veterans. Though the US government cannot be sued, there have been lawsuits against chemical companies. Many litigation cases by US veterans and non-resident aliens have been dismissed. The US military and government claim the effects of agent orange were unexpected “collateral damage” rather than intentional harm. However, it has been shown that the level of dioxin in the mixture sold to the US military was designed to cause death.

The effects of agent orange are still being studied and learned. For instance, hypothyroidism, Parkinson’s, bladder cancer and other illnesses have been known as consequences of exposure, though not officially recognized until 2021.

Veterans and their allies persist in educating the public about the true crimes of US wars. VFP reported on one historic action in its e-news release of April 6, 2021.

Many veterans came home from Vietnam with a mission: to tell the truth about the wartime atrocities being committed and demand an immediate end to the killing. In April 1971, a group of more than 1,000 veterans launched the Dewey Canyon III operation, a ‘limited incursion into the land of Congress.’ April 23 marked the 50th anniversary of one of the most influential anti-war actions of the era.



VFP and the University of Notre Dame’s Keough School of Global Affairs hosted an online forum about this operation and the lessons it offers on April 23.

###

OPPOSE THE CRIMINAL USE OF DRONE WEAPONS



(Reprinted from VFP's e-news release of April 6, 2021)

SHUT DOWN CREECH Anti-war/anti-drone demonstrators from the East and West coasts are converging in Las Vegas from April 4 to 10 to hold daily protests at the U.S. Drone Base at Creech Air Force Base in Nevada. Many military veterans, now members of Veterans for Peace, will be joining. The event is co-sponsored by CODEPINK and Veterans for Peace.

At Creech, U.S. Air Force personnel, coordinating with C.I.A. officials, are, regularly and secretly, killing people remotely using unmanned armed drone planes, primarily the MQ-9 Reaper drones. Thousands of civilians have been killed and injured, in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Yemen, Somalia, Libya, and elsewhere, since 2001, according to the activists.

In the aftermath of the recent and tragic U.S. massacres by lone gunmen in Georgia and Boulder, activists will hold daily two-hour vigils between 6:30-8:30 a.m. and 3:30-5:30 p.m., during commute hours to underline the connection between mass violence at home and the "normalized" mass violence of the U.S. covert drone program and U.S. military.

Over the last 20 years, U.S. armed drones have been used to commit horrible atrocities that have included strikes on wedding parties, funerals, schools, mosques, homes, farm laborers, and in January 2020, included direct hits on high level foreign military and government officials from Iran and Iraq. These drone massacres have, at times, resulted in the deaths of dozens of civilians with a single drone attack. Not a single U.S. official has ever been held accountable for these ongoing atrocities, yet an important drone whistleblower, Daniel Hale, who leaked truths about these atrocities faces potentially harsh sentencing later this July.

Copied from shutdowncreech.blogspot.com: (VFP) organize(s) two Shut Down Creech weeklong anti-drone mobilizations every year, spring and fall. Help make their spring mobilization a huge success.

###

NATO's 72nd Anniversary April 4, 2021—No reason to celebrate

DISMANTLE NATO!

Founded in 1949, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization has pursued its stated aim to defeat communism and assure the domination of US-led imperialism in Europe and beyond. Fourteen founding states joined this alliance out of fear of attacks from rival states and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and confidence in capitalism. Under the enduring leadership of US commanders, NATO expanded after the fall of the Soviet Union, constructing a tight military hold in Eastern and Western Europe to manage the break-up of the USSR, fill the void of the aftermath of its fall and ensure the US imperialist stronghold over the region. Today NATO aims its guns, propaganda and agents after all democratic, independence and socialist movements that refuse to comply with the US dictate. It drains the social budgets of its 30 member states to serve its military aims. The ILPS asserts that NATO has never been a factor for security; rather, it is a factor for aggression and plunder. With its partners in Western Asia, especially Israel, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, it is working to achieve its aims and control that region. It is working overtime to do likewise in Latin America and the Caribbean now.

There is a gigantic arms industry revolving around NATO that benefits from aggression and feeds on conflict. Looking closely, observers can see that it is an intrinsic machine in the military-industrial complex of monopoly capitalism, otherwise known as modern imperialism. This is unproductive activity that is destroying societies and the Earth.

The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines the term “military industrial complex” as “an informal alliance of the military and related government departments with defense industries that is held to influence government policy.” It gained popularity when US President Dwight D. Eisenhower used it upon leaving office in his last speech as President in 1961. The US already involved in the Vietnam conflict, he warned that the military could attain too much influence in all the domestic affairs of state, though he argued for a strong military defense for the sake of peace.

This conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence—economic, political, even spiritual—is felt in every city, every statehouse, every office of the federal government. We recognize the imperative need for this development, yet we must not fail to comprehend its grave implications. Our toil, resources and livelihood are all involved; so is the very structure of our society. In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military–industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.

We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes. We should take nothing for granted. Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals so that security and liberty may prosper together. [*Wikipedia*, last updated on April 3, 2021, and accessed on April 4, 2021]

There is much reason to believe that the limited democracies in the most dominant capitalist states are currently in danger of caving into fascism unless democratic movements rise up.

A policy forum held on April 3 explored the *raison d'être* of NATO and its role in the military-industrial complex that causes economic hardship, instability and climate crisis for the majority of nations in the world. The Canadian Foreign Policy Institute hosted this online event titled “Why Canada Should Leave NATO.” It maintains that Canada should get out of NATO to vastly reduce its military budget and seek non-military pacts with other countries. A founding member state, all Canadian governments have supported NATO.

The forum host underlined the pro-NATO stance of Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson in 1962. The US was floating the propaganda to foster belief in “a crisis of democracy” at the time. Obediently, Pearson rang alarm bells about the democratic and socialist movements in Canada for the reason that they were carrying out a “socialist conquest” of Canadian institutions, community bases and citizens’ associations. He declared a war on this trend and argued for dependency on NATO and the US. Hence RCMP infiltrations and spying on labour unions, communist parties, universities, non-profit organizations and protest groups. The Canadian Secret Intelligence Service was soon created. The upheaval of boom and bust and repeated financial downturns created more insecurity. After restructuring and neo-liberal policies were set, economic insecurity among the middle class and workers added to the fears and made them more malleable. Anti-terror acts came by the 2000s. Thus, Canada and other capitalist states in the US orbit were busy undermining and dismantling democratic principles and practices while triggering instability and managing inequality. The democratic struggle necessarily persisted, finding new ways to speak and take action.

It was PhD candidate Tamara Lorincz who specifically named certain corporations of the arms industry as the key strategists of NATO expansion as of the 1990s. Studying at the Balsillie School of International Affairs at the University of Waterloo in Ontario, she also belongs to the Voice of Women for Peace and the No to NATO Network.

Beginning with the remark that militarization is costly and carbon intensive, she asserted that NATO is the greatest threat to the climate. She also said it is skyrocketing military spending that have deprived the people of proper health care and other social supports. “The pandemic proves that NATO is totally useless in helping a nation meet its challenges. (Furthermore,) it is exacerbating the climate crisis.” Moreover, it is acting in illegal ways, circumventing the UN Security Council and undermining the UN and international law. “National resistance is imperative!” insisted Lorincz. The people must delegitimize NATO; to do that, changing the discourse on security is required.

Using the example of Canada’s participation in NATO, Tamara Lorincz revealed how NATO’s commands and policies are driving state foreign and military policies into national ruin. “NATO is militarizing Canadian foreign policy,” she began. For instance, it is “weaponizing the Women’s Peace and Security Agenda.” She proceeded to list some of the

Canadian military's duties to NATO to demonstrate how Canada has become a "war-making state": it is training Iraqi police as part of the NATO operations to occupy Iraq; it has deployed 540 troops in Latvia; it has put fighter jets in Romania and warships in the Mediterranean and Black Seas; it is leading a NATO maritime group. These facts mean that Canada is not a peace-keeping state. In fact, it only has 42 soldiers working on UN peacekeeping missions at this time.

Lorincz then launched into an explanation for NATO's continued expansion since 1989 although there is no justification for military expansion and increased military spending anymore. Companies that had profited from military contracts and weapons sales did not want the party to stop. Loughheed-Martin (LM), a major weapons producer in the US with a branch in Canada, lead the charge. Both LM and General Dynamics are the heavy funders of and great propagandists for the NATO Association of Canada. Bruce Jackson, the Vice-President of Strategic Planning for LM, formed the US Committee to expand NATO and traveled with the LM CEO, Norm Augustine, to Eastern European countries inviting them to join NATO. They also courted US senators for support. One of the biggest enthusiasts was then Senator Joe Biden, claimed Lorincz.

Qualifying member states had to embrace free market economics, modernize their military forces and become inter-operable with NATO. The US Senate approved Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic as new NATO members, while they rejected the Kyoto Protocol (on the environment). The next step was to get the Senate to make the US government offer such new NATO member states guaranteed loans for purchasing weapons. The US Committee transformed into the Project on Transitional Democracy under President Lyndon B. Johnson. The Project lobbied the US Senate to approve more new NATO members in the 2000s: Bulgaria, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Thus, a guaranteed market for weapons was established.

Canada's role in NATO has been pivotal. Lieutenant-General Charles Bouchard oversaw the bombing of Libya. Two years after retiring from the Canadian Forces, he became the President of LM-Canada. LM and other firms spend a lot of money lobbying the Canadian government to secure military contracts, such as the bidding to buy 88 new fighter jets to the tune of \$77 billion and the building of 15 warships with a price tag of \$268 billion. The Canadian government awarded General Dynamics a sole contract to build tanks for \$3 billion.

At the NATO Summit in Wales in 2014, members committed to spending 2% of their GDPs on defense budgets, devoting 20% of their military budgets to weapons acquisitions. The 2020 NATO expenditures report reveals that Canada pledged \$30.8 billion to defense, which is 1.4% of its GDP. Thus, Canada has committed 15 times more on militarization than on, diplomacy (\$2 billion), environmental protection (\$1.9 billion) for environmental protection and indigenous peoples' services (\$2 billion). In 2018, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Defense released a report called, "Canada and NATO, an alliance forged in strength and reliability" that recommended increased military spending and public education to promote NATO. All four political parties with seats in the House support NATO. Therefore, Canada is not a signatory to the 2017 nuclear ban treaty.

To conclude Tamara Lorincz and all the presenters at the forum strongly urged the people to work to change the public opinion and understanding of NATO so that the people would push for Canada to withdraw from NATO.

Commission 4 recommends everyone take action against the next NATO Summit on June 24, 2021.

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US fighter jet being assembled (photo: public domain)

The structures and ideas of the military-industrial complex

LINKING CLIMATE AND MILITARISM

The 2nd of a 4-part Teach-in series on Climate and Militarism hosted by Mass Peace Action on April 10, 2021 (“Climate & Militarism: Underlying structure”)

Nick Rabb of Sunrise Boston, the Mass Peace Action Peace and the Climate Working Group lead a discussion about the societal structures that lead to the issues, including the military-industrial complex, the history of policing, and post-war global politics. Though the climate crisis has become something clearly worth addressing for so many of us, our understanding of what caused, perpetuates, and is caused by the crisis could often stand to be deeper. Particularly for those of us who grow up in the U.S., one aspect of the crisis that we rarely understand is how it is intertwined with militarism. The U.S. is perhaps the most violent empire in history. Its tentacles stretch to almost all corners of the world, and it concerns itself with maintaining supremacy at very high costs. Yet, we in the core of empire rarely see it for what it is. Therefore, we also fail to see how U.S. militarism is deeply intertwined with the U.S. role in the climate crisis. Fully addressing the crisis cannot be done until militarism is understood and dismantled. (Massachusetts Peace Action Centre, masspeaceaction.org/event-climate... accessed on April 8, 2021)

Conducting the participatory seminar, Nick Rabb began by describing the industrial-military complex (MICx) using a tree metaphor. This speaker drew largely on the writings of Howard Zinn. Certain ideas and values are the seeds out of which roots sprout, the seeds being ideals and principles of patriarchy, capitalism, anglo-eurocentricism, individual rights and so on. The roots transmit this ideology as structures and functions grow to construct an ideology-grounded economy with private enterprises and state, which supports a large military and legal system that protect them, with education and media that inseminate the ideology. In sum, the result is the MICx. It is an imperialist model which causes big problems such as constant conflict, migration, pollution and militarism.

The MICx is inherently violent, and violence is a means of domination, conquest and expansion, explained Rabb as he supplied historical examples of expansionist wars for capture and extraction of resources. Settler colonialism in what is now the US began in 1619 with the arrival of the Puritan settlers whose ideology, based on a principle of violent takeover, spawned policies of genocide, land theft and slavery. Violence was thus institutionalized in US society at an early stage. Nabb described the 1776 revolution as a struggle by colonial rulers on the continent to consolidate power. They provoked the Mexican American war in 1836 so as to expand their territory. Inspired by a Spanish colonialist dream, they initiated a plan to build a canal through Nicaragua as of 1880 but failed, though it was constructed through Panama from 1904 to 1914. Over the same period, they plotted to dominate the Caribbean and Central America, occupying Cuba for three months in 1898 and annexing Puerto Rico, Hawaii, Wake Island, Guam and the Philippines by winning the Spanish-American war. Nabb saw the US’ motives for engaging in WW2 as resource protection and capture. (He did not mention

Korea, but we could add that the US intervened in Korea to combat the movement for a democratic and socialist republic in 1950.) He described the US' moves to rescue the United Fruit Company and oppose the people's movement in Guatemala by supporting the Right and mobilizing the CIA to carry out a coup. Thus began a pattern of right-wing alliances and coups. For example, the US intervened to oppose Karim and set up a coup to install Saddam Hussein. As for Vietnam, the US had been supporting French colonialism then intervened to combat the southern revolutionaries, the Viet Cong in 1964. Domestically, the US created COINTELPRO for internal intelligence and attack dissenters such as the Black Panthers, Malcolm X, and other progressive forces.

This pattern has gone on and on, into the Gulf War in 2003 and a series of conflicts in West Asia. The MICx has brought about enormous instability and violence globally with the main aim of exploiting resources, asserted Rabb. It is fundamentally undemocratic. It has caused interminable migration and exploited migrants. It has provoked resistance and increased its violence to suppress resistance. To justify all the carnage and destruction, the propaganda machine has been elaborated and refined. The truth of this system is not present in the official education curriculums. Rather, imperialist media, think-tanks and schools teach concepts such as "manifest destiny", American exceptionalism, Jim Crow, racism, the Cold War, "crisis of democracy", false human rights speak, the "war on drugs" and "the war on terror." As Noam Chomsky has written, the ideologues of imperialism manufactured consent. Private media corporations formed, a key one being FOX News. A huge PR industry grew, full of the free market narrative with all its assumptions. There have been many scams. Consider the "Green New Deal," supported by Conservative Republicans and liberal democrats alike. The propaganda generates specific positive language to explain and justify the unjust, mainly war and expansion. It also fosters fear and American nationalism. It invents disinformation. For example, disinformation is used to defeat climate science and help the fossil fuel industry. Rabb claimed that fossil fuel corporations made use of the tobacco industry's PR plan.

How and why do the youth and working people join and support the US military? It has provided financial rewards, for one thing; there were bounty hunters and slave patrols in earlier times, for example. Nick Rabb underscored the need for employment and college education today. The Jobs Guarantee program targets the youth and encourages military employment. It is a promise to the poor that they can rise in rank, acquire some money and change their social status, according to Howard Zinn. It offers incentives such as travel, work experience and paid education. The military's narrative of opportunity and security has become normalized. Thus, MICx exploits the poor, oppressed, workers and migrants.

Social policy and government slogans about development have paralleled corporate and military expansion. Military spending has been the number one priority since the early 20th century. Rabb explained how the New Deal was all about developing the MICx, not helping the people. Economic and some measure of coinciding social development in the US has grown because of war. World War 2 boosted the US economy, widening production and employment, increasing exports and private gains. Military spending increased and so did military aid to fight communism. Meanwhile, technological development is funded to produce war technology, which often spins off into other markets (computers, mobile communications, robotics, etc.). Private corporations in the arms trade benefited more and more: for example, Loughheed-Martin, Boeing, Raytheon, General Dynamics and Northrop Grumman. They conduct huge lobbies and political payouts to keep the profits flowing. The arms industry plants its agents in government; in the Biden administration, both the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State come from the war industry. The MICx is a permanent war economy now.

It cannot be "greened". The "green economy" was another false narrative. Based on violence for exploitation and plunder, the system is destructive, wasteful and rapacious. It consumes a huge share of fossil fuel and other resources to leave contamination and deforestation in its wake.

The seminar agreed that the solution is mass organization to expose the truth, challenge the false narratives and create new narratives with alternative values, build communities and communal structures, promote divestment and anti-consumerism, oppose military interventions and WMD development, dismantle extraction and exploitation practices and so on to bring about system change. *(Nick Rabb is a computer science doctoral candidate at TUFTS University and a former employee of General Electric.)*

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JOIN ILPS COMMISSION 4

**-unite, mobilize, cooperate for just peace and
against wars of aggression, counterrevolution and WMD**

Commission 4 is the section of the ILPS that is concerned with organizing for just peace against wars of aggression, wars of counterrevolution, nuclear missile, chemical and biological weapons and all WMD.

As the ILPS is an anti-imperialist alliance, particularly aimed against US-led monopoly capitalism, our perspective is grounded in the anti-imperialist analysis that the ILPS is developing as it observes and engages in mass struggle. Commission 4 does its part to organize and unite in anti-imperialist and democratic struggles, exposing and opposing imperialist positions, measures, exploitation and oppression particularly in relation to the military-industrial complex (the war-based economy) and its aggression, militarization and military pacts. We research, share and teach our information and perspective. We promote just peace and peace negotiations that benefit the people.

Our basic conception

1. Just Peace is peace negotiated with the people and that addresses matters of social, economic and legal justice to correct injustices that result in conflict.

2. Peace Negotiations bring about just peace through addressing the people's demands as opposed to false narratives. For example, foreign occupation and aggression must be ended and the perpetrators held accountable. Also, national liberation must be recognized and facilitated. Furthermore, plans for land redistribution and resolutions to poverty and social inequality must be created. Just peace is not merely a ceasefire.

3. US-led imperialism's global strategy We understand the context. The US is still the leading aggressor and one extending a multi-faceted strategy to defend and sustain the global system of exploitation, domination and plunder. As it is actively hostile to democracy, independence and any kind of socialism, it is therefore expanding, increasing militarization and partnering with reaction, terrorism and fascism.

Contact ILPS Commission 4 today: peace4@vcn.bc.ca

ILPS COMMISSION 4 wants to build!

Our focus for 2021: the military-industrial complex

- aggression to defend profits and expand markets
- how military and political pacts, arms manufacturing and trade/ military contracts, and policies interconnect with the imperialist system
- how aggression targets social and national liberation, democratic and socialist struggles

Our Activities

-support for ILPS global and regional campaigns and discussions

-support and participation in broad, mass actions and campaigns

*End the War on and Sanctions against the people of Yemen

*No War on Iran (stop the US attacks on Iranian military in Iraq, etc.)

*Terminate the US-South Korea-Japan military exercises around the Korean Peninsula

*Stop the use economic coercive measures (sanctions) as weapons against the people

-statements on significant days and events

*International Peace Day, Hiroshima and Nagasaki Commemorations, Armistice Day, the campaigns and actions noted above

-a regular Commission 4 newsletter "Peace 4 the People"

*contains copies of our statements, images, ILPS global calls and some statements, statements and articles by ILPS member organizations and allies, reports on ILPS organizations' actions and discussions, reports on noteworthy, relevant actions and discussions by other peoples' groups on pertinent themes (arms trade, solidarity, mass actions, military pacts, sanctions, conflict scenarios...)

-internal organization (regional studies and analysis, building processes, theoretical development, assessments, development of organizational tools such as our Guide and essays)

-a webinar on just peace