

Changing Minds: Mental Terrain and the Art of Political Strategy and Tactics

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Part One

Thinking about the question of mental terrain involves looking at what is already in the hearts and minds of people. Specifically we are considering the hearts and minds of the (U.S.) American people admitting that 300+ million human beings are not monolithic. Nevertheless, in terms of social movements throughout history, problems are resolved first in people's thinking, and then in their actions. For example, with slavery people first needed to end mental slavery in order to then end actual slavery. There is a mental battlefield taking place in the six inches between people's ears, and we need to acknowledge this in order to understand what we're up against.

The causes, conditions, and consequences of the global capitalist economic crisis of 2007-8 set the stage for a period of deeper questioning and critiques of the political economy of present day society and its corresponding protective ideological and coercive institutions. This questioning, this awareness, of course, takes place first among the emerging leaders of the contending social forces. Herein lie the threatening in sight conveyed by the worsening plight and arising fight of the poor and dispossessed class around the globe. Today's ever excruciating economic and social conditions is compelling them to enter into desperate struggles for survival. These conditions are also compelling these struggles to unite into a powerful social force capable of unsettling the complacency and awakening the social consciousness of the rest of the mass of the world population who are becoming increasingly insecure economically and restless politically.

History teaches that these changes in the ideology of the masses in which a social conflict is consciously fought out are conditioned by changes in the economy, that is, the mode of production of material life. The changes in particularly in a capitalist economy go through ebbs and flows, longer periods of lulls leading to shorter revolutionary periods of leaps in social developments. These corresponding and mutually conditioning aspects of social developments, both the conditions and conflicts, neces

sarily happen in definite stages of development leading to fundamental change in society. The interacting relationship between this plight, fight, and insight, between social experience and social consciousness generally is a major subject of social science in general, and the science of social psychology in particular. History teaches that although these factors are mutually conditioning, it is primarily the experiences of economic conditions of society that determine the development of

social consciousness. In other words, history has confirmed the scientific conclusion that Karl Marx arrived at, that “It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but their social being that determines their consciousness.” Mastering this law of development is only indispensable guide to effective education and training, to effective pedagogics in changing minds for social change.

In summary, the science of social psychology involves the study of the mental terrain, which is primarily determined by actual life experiences. In other words, this science must start with the study of material conditions of life, which in turn frame the study of the mental terrain, which reflects those conditions. This means studying human thoughts, feelings, and behaviors and how people’s minds and actions develop and change.

In this six part series we argue that thinking about the questions of mental terrain involves looking at what is already in the hearts and minds of people, especially the mental fortresses, which are long established and deeply embedded values and views, preferences and prejudices. These fortresses are reinforced by the prevailing legal and political institutions of society such as the governmental apparatuses, churches, public education system and mental outlets, etc. The mental fortresses and the supporting social institutions serve to defend old ruling ideas and resist the challenge of new revolutionary views and moral values that threaten social change. Before the seeds of new ideas are implanted the grounds of the old ideas must be plowed up. This happens when actual life experiences or life struggles confront changes in the material conditions of life. Old ideas then fail to explain these conditions and so people begin to question the old ideas and panaceas and seek new ones. This is how the experiences of struggle become a school, making possible the changing of minds. In other words, the art of leadership, including the art of pedagogics, is the art of the possible. One can dream the impossible but cannot do the impossible. Therefore what is possible at each stage of social development must be subject to ongoing and seriously engaged study.

Ongoing and seriously engaged study is particularly important now that under the present era of the micro-electronic revolution a newly globalized capitalism has moved into a period of systemic economic crises. Creating increasingly excruciating economic conditions that are making for growing global instability and socially and politically explosive times marks this period. All the deeply embedded old ideas and values buttressed by the long established mental fortresses that have functioned to justify the economic status quo are being undermined and questioned. This is setting the stage for an all-out battle against the old and ruling ideas and changing minds.

Part Two: The Struggle is a School

The basic conflicts between old and new ideas throughout history are what the struggle for social change is all about. Objective changes in the material conditions of our

2

lives and our social response to those conditions make the social struggle a school. This means we as leaders must teach as we fight, learn as we lead, educate as we organize, talk as we walk. This is our indispensable role as leaders in contributing to how objective developments in human history are consciously fought out, to the changing of minds. Most of human history has been a history of class exploitative and oppressive societies engendering ongoing, hidden and open, moral and physical struggles between classes. Under these conditions the emergence of new ideas have always had to come up against old ruling ideas of a society, which are those of the existing ruling class whose fundamental interests are to maintain the economic status quo, that is, the existing system of class exploitation and oppression. Ultimately, these conflicts and the consciousness they express are caused and conditioned by the deepening contradictions, continuous developments with ebbs and flows and leap-like changes in the economic life of the people. Social psychology is

formed and developed in this way. Therefore the science of social psychology must be understood as a part of the science of society the basic propositions of which summarize millions of years of human history. Karl Marx in his Preface to the Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy gives a concise summary of these basic propositions of the science of society.

“In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or – this merely expresses the same thing in legal terms – with the property relations within the framework of which they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an era of social revolution. The changes in the economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure.”¹

“In studying such transformations it is always necessary to distinguish between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophic – in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out.”²

Marx is concluding that it is social existence or human experiences, which are at base conditioned by developments in the economy, that teaches or schools people in the different forms of social consciousness, that is,³ Again, the economic conditions and

¹ Karl Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977).

² Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy.

³ Ibid.

the social experiences, the struggles and conflicts arising from those conditions are the primary movers of the minds and hearts of the masses, the inescapable educators of the educators. What can not be overemphasized here is Karl Marx's main theoretical proposition drawn from his own practical experience and from his deep study of mass historical experiences, that is that, “It is not consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness.”⁴ Therefore to be successful in our pedagogy or political agitation and education campaigns, in our overall political strategy and tactics, we must always take this basic law of social development and change into account. Advanced and mass popular education, propaganda and mass agitation, alone cannot be effective. These pedagogical approaches must be properly combined with the practical life experiences of the masses of the people if they are to help create the conscious critical mass necessary to successfully bring about social change.

The scientific truth of this theoretical observation and political conclusion has been confirmed by all of human history. As society transformed from ancient slavery, to serfdom of the middle ages, to wage slavery of the modern times of capitalism corresponding changes in social ideas and consciousness were conditioned by these successive transformations. These social changes were not and will not be automatic. Well funded and long-established social institutions and powerful organizations of all sorts supported by the capitalist economy have deeply embedded through our

upbringing and reinforced through our daily experiences the old values and views like ideological fortresses inside our mind. They include the various apparatuses and levels of the government; big business lobbying associations; the educational institutions from elementary schools through to the university level; major TV and Radio stations; the corporate internet services; the churches and other religious institutions; the marriage and funeral industries, etc. The basic governmental apparatuses, which have been called the 'State,' that is the military, police and criminal-legal justice systems, forcefully protect these organizations and institutions. The Powers That Be is the class that rules society by controlling these institutions and holding and wielding state power. All this is based on their ownership and dominance of the economy by which they secured political and ideological representatives who strategically and tactically appeal to, manage and manipulate the conditioned old ideas and institutions.

The sections that follow apply the basic propositions of the sciences of social psychology and society as a whole to discuss the major Whys and Hows of changing minds. In other words, to have a new and correct idea is one thing. To convince others or the masses of people of the new and correct idea is another thing. This is where the considerations of political strategy and tactics come in.

All social movements and all social change are products of the confluence of certain conditions and a certain consciousness of those conditions. In other words, social movements are not simply the results of well-sounding conversations. They are compelled at base by the necessities of changing conditions. Raising the consciousness of the oppressed serves to hasten changing conditions by making their social movements more coherent and cogent. Victory in struggle requires the proper combination of these two indispensable elements. Many leaders think that success in building a social movement requires hard

⁴ Ibid.

4

work and exhortation alone. They are not attentive to the conditions and are unaware of what is possible and what is necessary at any given moment. Nor do they lead with a vision based on an accurate analysis of the possibilities contained in the current conditions for the ultimate solution to the effects and structural cause of the problems they face. They think that fighting hard and not fighting smart can win the day. They therefore inevitably fall into frustration and resignation. Or they fall prey to simply being manipulated or outmaneuvered by a more knowledgeable foe.⁵

Specifically, in considering the hearts and minds, the values and views of the American people in the United States, we must study the ways and means by which specific influences have brought about developments and changes in their thinking, feelings, and behaviors. This includes a study of the ways and means by which the existing mental fortresses on the American people's mental terrain will have to be overcome if change is to occur. Firstly, we have to acknowledge the fact that we are dealing with 300+ million human beings who are not monolithic composed as they are of many diverse races, faiths, and ethnic heritages. Nevertheless they share certain common values, cultural norms, customs, and current views.

[In the next installment we examine more closely how](#) history has demonstrated that wars are not won on the battlefield. They are won in the minds of the people. The "hearts and minds", the political will of the people and combatants have to be won. Vietnam War was a clear and unforgettable example of this pivotal principle of all conflicts in history. The Vietnamese lost every major battle on the battlefield in Vietnam but they ultimately won the war on the mental terrain of the American People. Why? Because they successfully conducted an indirect, protracted warfare

that eventually exhausted and defeated the political will, won the public opinion, of the American People compelling the United States' Armed Forces to withdraw from their country.

Part Three: Role of Ruling Ideas in World History

Historically, beginning with their inception, economic class based societies have been defined and pervaded by major and minor, open and hidden conflicts. Even in prehistoric times conflicts have often interrupted primitive tribal societies. They have assumed many forms of struggle and organization---military, economic (i.e., commercial competition, speculation, trade wars, economic blockades, boycotts, lockouts, and strikes, etc), and various levels of political struggles (electoral campaigns, protests at every level of government, pre-war diplomatic maneuvers, revolutions, etc.) or of any combinations of these forms. Whatever forms these conflicts have taken, they have all been mediated through the mental terrain of the human brain upon which the old ideas, belief systems, public opinions, and political wills have been established.

Today the unprecedented micro-electronics technological revolution in general and the information revolution in particular have brought us into a new era of 'many-to many' multi-media, which, at least as far as the internet is concerned, is now more accessible to all, including the poor secured collectively through their organization. This

⁵ Willie Baptist, *It's Not Enough to Be Angry*, (New York City: University of the Poor Press, 2015).

5

is a period unlike the past when the press, radio, movie theaters, and the TV were the most advanced media. These once prominent older forms of media were 'one-to-many' means of communication, very expensive, and for the most part inaccessible to the lower classes. Under these new conditions of struggle, the political strategists of the ruling class are adopting network forms of organizations and network forms of conflicts and control to ensure the maintenance of their ruling ideas or narratives. They are proving to be far superior to the old ways and means. This is compelling the emerging struggles worldwide of the poor and dispossessed to adapt accordingly if they are to win the battles of ideas and of contending narratives.

Matt Chessen in his 1998 essay, "Netwar: A New Paradigm for the Future" states,

"The mind is not only the ultimate weapon, it is the preeminent battleground."⁶

"Consider human 'will.' The American Heritage Dictionary defines it as "The mental faculty by which one deliberately chooses or decides on a course of action." Ultimately this is the arena in which war, indeed all conflict, is waged. People decide to fight. If enough do so, there is war. Simplistic perhaps, but valid nevertheless. Interestingly enough for us, the converse is also true. Cause the enemy to lose his will to fight, end the war. Or better yet, destroy his will before violence breaks out and win a bloodless battle."⁷

Moreover, as the English military historian, Liddell Hart, once noted, in terms of military conflicts, "it is not the loss of lives but the loss of hope that determine victory or defeat."⁸In terms of social conflicts or opposing social movements generally, throughout history problems are resolved first in people's thinking, and then in fact. This is why organizing a fight is more than mobilizing bodies. It is essentially moving minds. For instance, in the struggle against American slavery, people first had to end mental slavery, that is, pro-slavery beliefs and attitudes, in order to then end actual slavery. In this respect, we can understand the subversive Biblical message of Jesus's ministry in the early Christian movement and the revolutionary slogan of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in his launching and organizing of the 1967-68 Poor People's Campaign. That message meant and that slogan preached the "revolution of values." In

other words, they recognized the necessity of changing hearts and minds so as to bring about fundamental changes in society. Dr. King's analysis was especially clear on this when he stated in mid-1967,

"We have moved from the era of civil rights to the era of human rights, an era where we are called upon to raise certain basic questions about the whole society. We have been in a reform movement...But after Selma and the voting rights bill, we moved into a new era, which must be the era of revolution. We must recognize that we can't solve our problem now until there is a radical redistribution of economic and political power...this means a revolution of values and other things. We must see now that the evils of racism, economic exploitation and militarism are all tied together... you can't really get rid of one without getting rid of the others...the whole structure of American life must be changed. America is a

⁶ Matt Chessen, "Netwar: A New Paradigm for the Future," (1998). ⁷ Matt Chessen.

⁸ Liddell Hart.

6

hypocritical nation and [we] must put [our] own house in order."⁹

There is a "mind war" or a "battle of ideas" constantly taking place in our minds. Daily people's mental processes are being bombarded with ideas, images, messages, music, movies and the premises and subtexts of the omnipresent advertisements. These bombardments are delivered through all kinds of social and personal interactions — radio, TV, Internet, individual and group encounters, and i-phones, etc. In order to understand the nature of "mind war" and what we're up against, we must first be aware of this continuous and multi-faceted mental bombardment, which appeal to and strengthen long-established ideas and cultural traditions. Those who own and dominate the advanced corporate media understand this and are good at manipulating public opinion and misdirecting social psychology. For the existing economic and political status quo to be fundamentally transformed, the ruling media messages and prevailing narratives of the ruling class (or the Powers That Be) must be successfully countered. To accomplish this, the mastery in one way or another of existing media is required. This mastery has always been indispensable to raising the social consciousness necessary to organize and build a mass movement for social transformation. Organizing is about more than simply mobilizing bodies. It is essentially about moving minds.

The Chinese revolutionary and strategic thinker, Mao Tse-tung once observed, "Politics is war without bloodshed and war is politics with bloodshed".¹⁰ In other words this is the understanding of wars, and social conflicts generally, as being essentially a 'mind wars, that is, a struggle over the political will, over the "hearts and minds" of the people. This definition is even more the case in this new technological era of the internet and netwars or what is also called the new age of the information revolution. Today what must be considered foremost and decisive strategically and tactically is the mental battlefield on which all the ideological fortresses are established and around which conflicts are fought out with the available legal, political, artistic, religious, philosophic weapons, etc. Consequently the main objective of all military and political strategies and tactics is to defeat the adversary on the mental terrain.

Today we are living in a period of an unprecedented information revolution, a new technological era of network forms of organization and netwar forms of conflict. This is a period where battles of images and the war of ideas are becoming instantaneously globalized, 24/7, and inescapable facts of reality. The new technological and economic conditions of social conflict should remind leaders and teachers today not fall prey of the old proposition saying, that most "generals lose by fighting the last war."

In this connection, it is important to note the instructive observations of John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt. They are from the long established and major military think tank, the Rand Corporation and are among the most noted originators of the term and concept, netwars. In the compilation of essays entitled, *In Athena's Camp: Preparing for Conflict in the Information Age*, "...we call "netwar"—societal-level ideational conflicts waged in part through internetted modes of communication."¹¹ Arquilla and Ronfeldt continue,

⁹ Report to SCLC Staff (May 1967).

¹⁰ Mao Tse-tung, "On Protracted War," *Selected Works*, Vol. II, (1938), 152- 153.

7

"Netwar refers to information-related conflict at a grand level between nations or societies. It means trying to disrupt, damage, or modify what a target population knows or thinks it knows about itself and the world around it. A netwar may focus on public or elite opinion, or both. It may involve public diplomacy measures, propaganda and psychological campaigns, political and cultural subversion, deception of or interference with local media, infiltration of computer networks and databases, and efforts to promote a dissident or opposition movements across computer networks."¹²

Further in their book, *Networks and Netwars*, they point out,

"As with other new modes of conflict, the practice of netwar is ahead of theory... The deep dynamic guiding our analysis is that the information revolution favors the rise of network forms of organization. The network appears to be the next major form of organization---long after tribes, hierarchies, and markets---to come into its own to redefine societies, and in so doing, the nature of conflict and cooperation. ...The term netwar calls attention to the prospect that network-based conflict and crime will be major phenomena in the years ahead...The strongest networks will be those in which the organizational design is sustained by a winning story and a well-defined doctrine, and in which all this is layered atop advanced communications systems and rests on strong personal and social ties at the base...In netwar, leadership remains important, even though the protagonists may make every effort to have a leaderless design. One way to accomplish this is to have many leaders diffused through-out the network who try to act in coordination...Perhaps a more significant, less noted point is that the kind of leader who may be most important for the development and conduct of a netwar is not the "great man" or the administrative leadership that people are accustomed to seeing, but rather the doctrinal leadership---the individual or set of individuals who, far from acting as commander, is in charge of shaping the flow of communications, the "story" expressing the netwar, and the doctrine guiding its strategy and tactics."¹³

The new and advanced media have in an unprecedented way enabled the newly emerging leaders of the arising struggles and organizations of the poor and dispossessed globally to coordinate and synchronize their thinking and actions against the newly globalized and dominating capitalist class. In other words, this new era of net wars has particularly made it possible and necessary for these leaders to globally coordinate and synchronize their research, analyses, and struggles not only in matters of tactics but also in matters of strategy. This poses a new and fundamental threat to the powers that be in the battles, campaigns, and overall war for the mental terrain of the masses of the people.

Strategy as Counter-Strategy

¹¹ John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, *In Athena's Camp: Preparing for Conflict in the Information Age*, (Rand, 1997), 27.

¹² Arquilla and Ronfeldt, 28.

¹³ John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, *Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime, and Militancy*, (Rand Corporation, 2001), 311.

8

Lessons of military warfare and military strategy are often alluded to as analogies and metaphors to illustrate and help explain the nature of social conflicts and political strategy in general. But here we are not only talking about military strategy. We are talking about the all-encompassing political strategy or what some elite political scientists call, "grand strategy" or "geopolitical strategy," which under certain circumstances includes the use of military strategy and tactics. The basic problem of political strategy today is the existence of two fundamentally antagonistic social forces. For instance, today there are, on the one side, the social forces or propertied class who have vested interests in the newly globalized economic status quo and utilize the varied, long established, and powerful ideas and institutions to maintain that status quo. While on the other side, there exist the growing ranks of the newly arising social forces or class of the poor and dispossessed worldwide that has little or no stake in the status quo. With little or nothing to lose, it is in fact the primary social force for social change. Its economic and political position is such that it is compelled to kill the status quo before the status quo kills it.

Political and military strategies are unlike ordinary planning and plans, because it deals with an opposing enemy's strategic plan. The well-known boxer, Mike Tyson, was basically right when he stated, "Everybody has a plan until he is punched in the mouth." Thus every strategy must in essence be a counter-strategy requiring a constant study and anticipation of the strategic and tactical maneuvers of the adversary. As indicated before, social conflicts, including wars, are products of class societies and the ongoing class struggles between the exploiters and the exploited, the propertied and the property-less. Therefore political strategy is first and foremost the estimate of the counter position of class enemies.

Both sides of this conflict are compelled to out-smart and out-fight each other in implementing the time-worn truth articulated by the ancient Chinese philosopher and strategist, Sun Tzu in his masterpiece and classic, *Art of War*, over 2,500 years ago, "Know your enemy, know yourself and in one hundred battles you will never be defeated." This knowledge includes an estimate of the strong and weak points of the opposing forces. In this connection Sun Tzu states that one must "avoid the enemy's strength and attack his weakness." This statement sums up one of the basic principle of the art of strategy that must be mastered if one is to out-manuever and out-fight the adversary.

The newly arising social forces, at their initial stage of resistance, have no institutions and organizations comparable to those of the social forces that are in power, that is, the ruling and exploiting class. However, the currently crisis-ridden and changing objective economic conditions are causing the weakening and breakdown of the once unquestioned powerful influence of the old institutions and corresponding old ideas of the rulers. It is revealing strong and weak points in the respective social and political positions of the two basic social forces. So the protests and struggles against these economic conditions and the social and political institutions must be turned into schools for raising mass consciousness. This effort must include, most strategically, the preparation and positioning of these fights to take advantage of the possibilities afforded by the conditions. This preparation requires the appropriate strategic outlook and tactical operations and corresponding organizational formations.

9

Just as military strategy require the formation of both an army and a united group of generals, a political army with its united and leading officer corps and general staff must be formed to ensure

the formulation and implementation of political strategy. The network of think tanks such as that centered around the powerful and long established Council of Foreign Relations, consist of the most experienced political analysts, ideologists, and strategists. This formidable and sophisticated network of leaders serves as the united core of political generals, which represents and serves the basic economic and political interests of the ruling class of big and globalized capital. It provides today mostly the doctrinal leadership and not simply administrative leadership. Their doctrinal leadership consists in the maintenance of the rule over society of the ideas and narratives of the ruling class in ongoing netwars against the mass of the exploited, excluded, and oppressed.

For the struggles of the poor and dispossessed to attain class-consciousness and unity necessary to fundamentally change society, they must produce their own united group of generals. Antonio Gramsci's statement in this regard must be deeply understood and firmly followed,

“One speaks of generals without an army, but in reality it is easier to form an army than to form generals. So much is this true that an already existing army is destroyed if it loses its generals, while the existence of a united group of generals who agree among themselves and have common aims soon creates an army even where none exists.”¹⁴

One of the main differences between military strategy and tactics and their corresponding organization formations and those of political strategy is that government places at the disposal of military strategy largely already formed armies and generals. However, the corresponding organizational formations for political strategy and tactics are placed at its disposal by history in the course of class struggles. Having already constituted itself as the ruling class wielding economic and political power, its organizational and institutional formations have been established far in advance of those of the rising class of the exploited and oppressed. The early stages of the emergence and development of the struggles of this rising class necessitate the formation of a united group of political generals who are formed out of the leaders newly emerging out of the ranks of these struggles. The unity of these political strategists in turn ensures the education, creation, and direction of the political army of the poor and dispossessed class. So the first step in the formation of a political army was identification, education, and training of leaders who can then form a united group of political generals.

To carry its task this united group of political generals must master the science of social psychology, it must know the mental terrain and how to effectively defeat the mental fortresses that ideologically uphold the disunity and disorganization of the poor and dispossessed. In other words, it must be educated and trained to effectively utilize the changing conditions and daily struggles, to un-educate the masses of the

¹⁴ Gramsci, SPN 52-53.

people, particularly the poor and dispossessed, to un-learn the old and debilitating ideas, so as to educate and to impart the new and transforming ideas. More than any thing else, political strategy is concerned with the possibilities of fundamental social transformations in material and mental life. All strategy is carried out through the use of tactics, which are part of strategy like steps in a staircase.

In general, political strategy and tactics direct the carrying out of the necessary agitation and education campaigns aimed at either constructing or preventing the formation of powerful organizations that are inimical to the current economic system. They consciously hasten or hold back (but not determine) these objectively conditioned possible and necessary transformations. Further in his PRISON NOTEBOOKS, “The Modern Prince”, Antonio Gramsci speaks to this problem of strategic and tactical leadership.

“Mass ideological factors always lag behind mass economic phenomena, and that therefore, at certain moments, the automatic thrust due to the economic factor is slowed down, obstructed or even momentarily broken by traditional ideological elements—hence that there must be a conscious, planned struggle to ensure that the exigencies of the economic position of the masses, which may conflict with the traditional leadership’s policies, are understood. An appropriate political initiative is always necessary to liberate the economic thrust from the dead weight of traditional policies....”¹⁵

Clearly it is in the interests of the Powers That Be to by any means necessary hold back or maintain the lag of the mass consciousness necessary for “liberating the economic thrust” for the transformation of society. Gramsci underscores why the newly emerging leaders of the poor and dispossessed must be educated and trained in strategy and tactics to counter the Powers That Be’s efforts to build on “the dead weight of traditional policies.”

Guided by scientific analysis, strategy and tactics are the ‘art of the possible’ in social and political conflicts. As Marx states later in his Preface,

“Mankind thus inevitably sets itself only such tasks as it is able to solve, since closer examination will always show that the problem itself arises only when the material conditions necessary for its solution are already present or at least in the course of formation.”¹⁶

“The course of formation” of the “material conditions necessary” for the solution to a social problem develops in stages. Therefore each stage of development presents a different set of possibilities in the direction of the ultimate solution and social change. History shows that the initial stages of social movements make possible and necessary the identification and development of leaders who emerge out of the newly arising social forces in resistance to no longer livable exploitive and oppressive conditions. This is due to the fact the newly arising forces start their fight on what is called the strategic

¹⁵ Antonio Gramsci, SPN 210-11 “Prison Writings: 1929-1935,” in *The Gramsci Reader*, ed. David Forgacs, (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 220. ¹⁶Karl Marx, “Preface,” *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977).

11

gic defensive, which means they cannot in this period out-might, out-money, and out-mass the Powers That Be. They can however out-maneuver the more powerful class enemy by understanding the stages of development, what they make possible, and what is required in the initial stages for creating in the later stages the critical mass necessary for fundamental change in the status quo. In other words, although being on the strategic defensive in the initial stages, the poor and dispossessed and their leaders can none-the-less take tactical offensives. They can by taking advantage of the possibilities afforded them at these initial stages through choosing those battles and conducting protracted campaigns that expose and oppose the points of critical vulnerability and weak arguments of the Powers That Be.

Frederich Engels in his 1890 Preface of the Communist Manifesto, coauthored with Karl Marx, sums up a history of experiences as to how change in thinking of the exploited and oppressed masses takes place. Engels outlined the process of how old ideas and “universal panaceas” or what can be called “Mental Fortresses” were overcome. He states,

“Marx relied solely upon the intellectual development of the working class, as it necessarily has to ensue from united action and discussion. The events and vicissitudes in the struggle

against capital, the defeats even more than the successes, could not but demonstrate to the fighters the inadequacy of their former universal panaceas, and make their minds more receptive to a thorough understanding of the true conditions for working-class emancipation. And Marx was right.”¹⁷

Today's economic life is undergoing an unprecedented, rapid, and comprehensive technological revolution making all prior agricultural and industrial technological advances combined look like storms in a coffee cup. The current cyclical and chronic crises in the globalized economy are products of this ongoing technological revolution. They present both tremendous dangers and tremendous opportunities. Today these opportunities represent unheard of possibilities. Of strategic significance, they involve an increasingly mass questioning of old values and complacent views. This is especially of the leaders newly emerging from the ranks of the mass who asked deeper questions that go beyond the leaves and branches of the problem approaching its roots. United struggles and education campaigns, if conducted with strategic and tactical efficiency and with networked and network types of organization, can now take advantage of these new necessities and new possibilities to overcome the mental fortresses of old and obsolescent ideas to move hearts and minds of the majority of the people and thereby build a mass movement for fundamental social change.

In the next installment we examine six "mental fortresses" that deal with people's basic outlooks--reality, rugged individualism, religion, race, and redbaiting. The descriptions are not talking about what's objectively true external to people's consciousness, although conditions are inextricably connected to consciousness. Mental terrain can't be understood apart from conditions. As the term "mental fortress" suggests, these concepts are prevailing influences on the American people's perception of the world. As conditions change, there is a relationship to shifts in people's consciousness. Any attempt to build a social

¹⁷ Friedrich Engels, "Preface," Communist Manifesto, 1890.

12

movement must have a leadership that has a mastery of this relationship between conditions and consciousness.

Part Four: "Mental Fortresses" in terms of 6 Rs

The mind is politically a contested terrain. It is the main theatre or battlefield of every form of social conflict, military and non-military. At the same time, it is the most powerful weapon out of which all other weapons or means of struggle are formed and wielded. In this conflict and with this weapon, knowing your enemy and knowing your self so as to outfight by outsmarting the enemy means as Sun Tzu says, among other things, avoiding his strengths and attacking his weaknesses. The major source of strength of the ruling class enemy are the long established and constantly appealed to mental fortresses of ignorance and prejudices in the minds of the masses of the people. These mental fortresses are deeply held values and views established largely through the people's upbringing, past and present experiences, and the country's educational institutions, media systems, and other cultural outlets. When the French philosopher and author Jacques Ellul in his 1973 book, Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes, talks about "well-established" or "durable opinion, a fixed pattern," he is essentially talking about the mental fortresses that have been established in the thinking and attitudes of the people. When he talks about a propagandist, he's talking about an agitator and educator. Echoing Sun Tzu, he discusses two important principles,

"The propagandist must first of all know as precisely as possible the terrain on which he is operating. He must know the sentiments and opinions, the current tendencies and stereotypes among the public he is trying to reach."¹⁸

"The second conclusion seems to us embodied in the following rule: never make a direct attack on an established, reasoned, durable opinion or an accepted cliché, a fixed pattern. The propagandist wears himself out to no avail in such a contest... But that does not mean that he must then leave things as they are and conclude that nothing can be done...the propagandist can alter opinions by diverting them from their accepted course, by changing them, or by placing them in an ambiguous context."¹⁹

Mr. Ellul goes on to suggest that one way of "placing them in an ambiguous context"²⁰ is to "offer forms of actions"²¹ that bring the masses of people to question the old prejudices and mistaken opinions. This is especially the case when these forms of actions are mass responses to periods of economic and social crises.

In our study and analysis, we have identified 6 major mental fortresses that have to be understood and dealt with in order to navigate and influence the mental terrain of the United States. These "mental fortresses" hold up people of the United States' basic be

¹⁸ Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*, (Vintage, 1973).

¹⁹ Ellul, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

lief systems, which govern much of their behavioral conduct. They are the long and established, reasoned, durable opinion or an accepted cliché, a fixed pattern. They can be described in terms of 6 Rs that is, Realism, Rugged Individualism, Religion, Race, Rights, and Redbaiting. They are not necessarily descriptions of what's objectively true external to people's consciousness, although conditions are inextricably connected to and ultimately shape whatever the existing consciousness. Mental terrain can't be understood apart from conditions that materially, including monetarily, support them.

As the term "mental fortress" suggests, these concepts are prevailing influences on the American people's perception of the world. At the same time, these mental fortresses should not be understood categorically. (Note: Categorical thinking happens to be a strong tendency in the way the American people think. It rests on the narrow practicality and shallow observations of the old American philosophy of Pragmatism. See below.) These fortresses interlock and interplay with each other and with the world outside of the mind. As conditions change, there are corresponding shifts in people's consciousness. Any attempt to build a social movement must have a leadership that has a mastery of this relationship between conditions and consciousness. Also note that the term "mental fortress" is used to describe the sites of the battle for our perception of the world, not categories to be demolished and surpassed. The six Rs are not symmetrical in this way. Where there is nothing useful about Redbaiting, both Rights and Religion are simultaneously sites of tremendous tactical and strategic resources for our struggle and deep wells for ideologies of the status quo of the ruling class. The task therefore is the contestation of conflicting interpretations and views.

1. Realism is often the name given to the old American worldview or philosophy of Pragmatism. This narrow practicalism is an unscientific superficial approach to understanding reality. It is an anti-intellectualism created by intellectuals who were considered at that time as among the foremost United States scholars. These philosophical scholars were products of the most

prestigious elite United States Universities, such as Harvard and John Hopkins. Charles S. Peirce, William James, and John Dewey. Peirce was its founder, James its popularizer, and Dewey its high priest. Dewey attended Johns Hopkins University. Pierce and James attended Harvard University.

In 1878 Peirce developed the central thesis of pragmatism: "Consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the objective of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object." A thing is what it is good for in human activity. And if something isn't useful, it doesn't exist. It must have practical effects. To be is to be useful. Consequently there is no truth, because "there is no external world to which ideas in the mind can correspond." But if there is no truth then an idea or a theory cannot be true or false, it can only be useful or useless. Theory is true because it works and it works because it is true and accurately reflects reality. As a consequence "The guide to action is not theory but belief. The function of thought is not the attainment of knowledge but is solely "settlement of opinion," the "fixation of belief." The "production of belief," Peirce says, "is the sole function of thought."

"In throwing out the old notion of knowledge as having no relation to practical action, Dewey, the education reformer, and James, the psychologist and philoso

14

pher, throw out that which alone would make it possible for knowledge to guide action, namely, that the knowledge be true knowledge that the ideas correspond to the objective material world. This is the central crime of the pragmatists, as has been pointed out time and time again. They claim to unite theory and practice, true knowledge and action, but in the process they eliminate true theory or knowledge, and thus leave practice without guidance, transforming practice into expediency in means and ends, improvisation and spontaneous trial and error. To guide action, knowledge must reflect the way things are and move in the real world. It is this latter aspect, which the pragmatists repudiate. They say that knowledge is only and solely concerned with practice. It is a formula to eliminate guidance, for it destroys scientific theory. It is Dewey's apology for the elimination of intellectual knowledge from the public schools where the workers' children are educated. He is only going to teach know-how, the relation of means to ends which are desired; not knowledge of the real world in the form of truth accumulated by human beings throughout their history."²²

This philosophy undergirds the belief that God has blessed America (U.S.A.) with being the best country in the world where there are no problems of class or no problems of an economy based on the exploitation of one class by another class. This superficial view of reality only sees problems for what they appear to be and not for what they are essentially. It sees only the effects and not the cause, it stops at the perception of the leaves and at most branches of a tree therefore cannot have a conception of its roots. Any problems, such as poverty or healthcare, are understood as individual problems and not social problems. The poor are poor not because of the exploitative and oppressive nature of the capitalist economic system but because of their own indiscretions and self-inflicted poverty and misery. In other words, the poor are self-failures and are to blame for being not hired and laid off, for being evicted and made homeless, etc.

A big part of this perception of reality is connected to the long evolved notion of "American Exceptionalism," a notion that has drawn on the past that saw every generation generally doing better economically than the previous generations. Or in other words, this notion proclaims that the United States is an exception to the basic economic operations of human history. It has also found expression in what W. E. B. Dubois called in his magnum opus, *Black Reconstruction*, the "American Assumption" – "that wealth is mainly the result of its owner's effort and that any average worker can by thrift become a capitalist."²³ It is the idea that if you work hard you can become a

rich capitalist. This assumption rests on the ignorance of actual operations of the class-based capitalistic economy.

American pragmatism and the "American Exceptionalism" has historically supported the ruling capitalist class's so called grand strategies of "Geopolitics" which falsely relegate economic conditions of life as secondary to geography such as in what is contrasted as "Maritime based Strategy" versus "Land based Strategy." In other words, all aspects of the life of a society or groupings within society determine primarily be

²² Harry K. Wells, *Pragmatism: Philosophy of Imperialism*, (International Publishers, 1954).

²³ W.E.B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (New York: Free Press, 1998), 183.

15

where they live and not be how they produce the necessities of life and requirements of conflicts and wars.

However, this way of thinking and the prevailing misconceived Realism, the so called "American Assumption and Exceptionalism" derived from this philosophical thought process is now being fundamentally challenged by the new economic conditions with the fundamentally unprecedented technological shifts in global productivity.

"The greatest danger is one that will not be faced for decades but that is lurking out there. The United States was built on the assumption that a rising tide lifts all ships. That has not been the case for the past generation, and there is no indication that this socio-economic reality will change any time soon. That means that a core assumption is at risk. The problem is that social stability has been built around this assumption – not on the assumption that everyone is owed a living, but the assumption that on the whole, all benefit from growing productivity and efficiency."²⁴

By denying the fundamental functions and poverty-producing results of class realities, "American Exceptionalism" only sees differences between the income and living conditions of the poor in the US and the poor in lesser-developed countries. It doesn't see the fact that no matter the different levels of poverty, the poor are poor for the same reason. That is, they are dispossessed, in other words, they have no property ownership in the economy. Blinding the poor to what they have in common has enabled the Powers That Be to do what the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr condemned in his anti-Vietnam War speech as the "cruel manipulation of the poor."²⁵ The poor are brought up to wrongly see each other as the enemy. They are recruited into the armed forces to fight and kill the poor of other countries for the benefit of the rich. This amounts to the preemption and prevention of the unity of the poor in the struggle for their basic common needs, which reinforced "American Exceptionalism" in the mental terrain of the middle-income strata. Large sections of the middle strata, in spite of their living wages, also have in common with the poor no property ownership in the economy. This makes them susceptible to the powerful unsettling influence of the united actions of the poor especially in today's chronic economic crisis when they are feeling increasing insecurity. In other words, the united forms of struggle of the poor have an unsettling effect on the masses of the people by "placing them in an ambiguous context" unexplainable by the old prevailing false views of complacency.

In summary, the world outlook often time so called, "Realism" and the related assumptions of the superficial notions of "American Exceptionalism" rest on the old American born philosophy of Pragmatism. This philosophy limits thinking to satisfactory and surface glance of social problems. It limits our examination of a problem or issue to its appearances precluding a deeper

understanding of its essential content, to its effects obscuring its cause grabbing only at leaves and branches and leaving alone the root causes of problems. The philosopher and political strategist of the dispossessed Karl Marx once observed in Volume III of his magnum opus, *Capital*, that

²⁴ George Friedman, "The Crisis of the Middle Class and American Power," *Stratfor Global Intelligence*, (January 8, 2013).

²⁵ Martin Luther King, Jr., "Beyond Vietnam," (April 4, 1967). 16

"[A]ll science would be superfluous, if the appearance, the form and the nature of things were wholly identical."²⁶

Pragmatism is a worldview that impatiently prefers that people "Leap, then look!" or "Shoot, then aim!" It professed that it is not for us to ask why; it is for us to do or die. Just do it! It is expressed in strong tendency in our thinking tends to separate theory from practice. This tendency includes a strongly embedded impatience finding no time for study and analysis, which precludes the necessary education and training of leaders. This tendency also includes one of our greatest deficits in building a movement in this country is that our leaders have no understanding of the economy and history, which allows us to grasp firmly the true cause of racial and sexual inequalities and disproportions as well as the other forms of social and political oppression. Consequently, we so little of a grasp of the state and politics for us is only electoral politics. We have no knowledge of what and who we are actually up against. We are therefore left in peril with very limited or inadequate concept of strategy and social movements. Our pragmatic view of reality leaves us disarmed and dependent on the strategy of the Powers That Be.

However, the current conditions of a world in chronic economic and social crises and the worsening plight and erupting fight of the poor are revealing a reality that is in total contradiction with the prevailing American Exceptionalist conception of reality. These new conditions and arising struggles are exposing the error of this conception to the mind of the masses. The true reality is that the present and, by all indications, the future generations will not do as well as the previous ones. Personal hard work, thrift, and sacrifice no longer suffice. How do we erase that gap between the current consciousness and the actual conditions and move people towards a more accurate understanding of reality?²⁷ In crises, people begin to resist and question their old ideas and misconceived attitudes. Their newly emerging leaders begin to ask deeper questions and find more effective and efficient ways and means of fighting. Our job is essentially to wage an all-out war on Pragmatism and anti-intellectualism as it serves to reinforce all the other major misconceived mental fortresses that buttress ignorance and prejudices of all kind and consequently uphold the current economically exploitative and poverty producing system. In other words, our job is to educate and organize this fight in such a way as to bring people's consciousness into a proper alignment with the actual conditions of reality. This means starting with the educating, uniting, and organizing the emerging struggles of the poor and dispossessed.

2. Rugged individualism: The historically evolved "Americanism" considers our existence as individuals as being more important than our existence as part of collectives, economic classes and society as a whole. It is an extension to the United States of America of the basic capitalist private property ideology of liberalism, which has it

²⁶ Karl Marx, *Capital* Volume III, Part VII: Revenues and their Sources, Chapter 48: The Trinity Formula.

²⁷ Read Antonio Gramsci's "Study of Philosophy" in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (pages 323-343 and 348-351) for more on the development of political consciousness and the move from common sense to good sense. SPN, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and

core belief the individual over collective rights. **Rugged individualism** is its specific cultural expression. We have been conditioned historically to strive to be super-men or super-women. It's all about "me and mine," about "I-I me-me and not us-us we we." Any emphasis of the notion of collectivity is un-American. An individual's success and failure depends entirely on either his or her hard work, determination, discipline, and thrift on one hand, or laziness, indolence, and lack of discipline on the other. This mental fortress of selfishness, self-centeredness, and self-preoccupation permeates everything we think and do in this society. It is deeply grounded in and paid for by a class reality delineated by capitalist private profitable ownership of the commanding heights of the economy. **Rugged individualism** is a basic premise of the great "American Assumption" we noted above. And although this premise and assumption have never been in fact true, Du Bois argues that there have been periods in U.S. history where this notion came as nearer to reality than perhaps any other country in the world, especially for large segments of the white masses. According to Du Bois, the freedom pursued under the American Assumption is a freedom not to ensure that every person is fed, clothed, educated, and has shelter, but rather a freedom of economic opportunity and the possibility of capitalistic accumulation for the few.²⁸

The fortress of **rugged individualism** fosters a belief that "success" is solely a matter of individual merit and exertion. Collective and organized efforts are secondary or subordinate to the individual. Furthermore, this fortress is affirmed by the stories of those who rise from the ranks of the working class into the ranks of the capitalist. Billionaires like Bill Gates or Oprah Winfrey are lifted up as proof of what is possible – a success of the capitalist system. What such analysis neglects to illuminate is that the stories of those who fall or never make it up the class ladder are far more prolific. While millions are falling into the ranks of poor, this ideology refuses to name the cause of their poverty as a failure of our political and economic system. This is due to the inevitability of the capitalist economic crises and the wholesale social dislocation and devastation of a mass of people undercutting any notion that this systemic cause is an individual problem not subject to the collective solution of a broad social movement.

3. Religion: The Powers That Be recognize that the structure of governance needs not only political force, but must also develop a system of cultural and moral hegemony as well. Throughout US history, religion, particularly the Judeo-Christian faith, has played contradictory roles: 1) as a means of legitimizing the status quo and 2) as a means of protest and liberation.

In American history, these contradictory roles have been played mainly by the Judeo-Christian traditions. This religiosity of the American peoples has dominated the interpretations and influences of their moral thinking and ethical behaviors, their determination of what's right and what's wrong. Throughout the Civil War the Bible was used by both Abolitionists and slaveholders to justify their positions on slavery. Beliefs used to perpetuate economic and social exploitation often reject the revolutionary roots of the Christian tradition and have taken up an ahistorical perspective that has become dominant in modern Christianity. For instance, the selection of particular Biblical verses or taking of the whole text of the Bible out of historical context supports an anti-poor and pro-poverty-producing system.

²⁸ Du Bois, 183, 276.

Absorbing a set of values that emerged during the Enlightenment, modern Christianity focuses mainly on individualism as expressed in a preoccupation with only personal salvation, i.e. just "me and my Jesus." In other words, the Enlightenment idea of the "self-evidence" that that "we are all

created equal” and the enlightened demand for the God-given human rights, to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness have through out history been contradicted by customary, “except them or the other.” Love of humanity and economic general welfare and social justice for all have been at most give only lip service.

Captive to the bonds of capitalism and its principles of exchange, religion is intertwined with rugged individualism in a way that prevents the development of a class consciousness necessary for the building of community and a broad mass movement to abolish poverty in the midst of plenty. Influencing how people view community and the individual, wealth and poverty, etc, the institutional Church and its capitalistic theological views becomes an obstruction to social change. In this way, religion has been used in history for reaction, mass killings, and injustice. In addressing the role of religion in history, Eugene Peterson argues that,

“Religion is the most dangerous energy source known to humankind. The moment a person (or government or religion or organization) is convinced that God is either ordering or sanctioning a cause or project, anything goes. The history worldwide, of religion-fueled hate, killing, and oppression is staggering.”²⁹

The continuing power of religious ideas via the new globalized media and communication systems must not be lost on strategic thinking. Certainly, it has not been lost on the Powers That Be. It follows that the tremendous influence of religion in the era of Netwar cannot be ignored.

In developing a counter Netwar strategy, we must re-examine the historical context out of which key biblical concepts and texts emerged and developed. These key biblical terms and concepts relate to the clash of theologies and strategies that have taken place through the different stages of US history. As Reverend Dr. Liz Theoharis explains we must work to understand how, “the Bible – a text replete with references to economic justice and the scourge of indifference to the poor – has been politicized to suggest that poverty is a result of the moral failures of the poor sinning against God, that ending poverty is impossible, and that the poor themselves have no role in impacting their poverty.”³⁰ In the US this strategic narrative continues to find its main mental and geographical stronghold in the black belt region of the South, which is also called the “Bible Belt” because of long and deeply held Judeo-Christian views and the density of churches. This “Bible Belt” historically served to ideologically hold in tact the largest and contiguous belt of poverty in the country. To win the war on poverty strategically, the economic and social conditions are dictating that the struggles of poor and dispossessed must be united and organized. Winning the “Battle for the Bible” is indispensable to this unity and organization and the ultimate victory of the war to abolish poverty.

²⁹ Eugene Peterson, Introduction to the book of Amos, “The Message”. ³⁰ Liz Theoharis, “Poverty and the Bible,” 48.

Furthermore, in building a movement to end poverty, a new morality and social practices that assert the possibility of ending poverty are needed. Within the context of the U.S., the Bible provides us with an important source of legitimacy and of many lessons for the struggles of the poor and dispossessed today. In a country where the Bible continues to be used as a moral battlefield, we must explore the political message present in the Bible and the idea that a social and political movement of the poor is religious.

4. Race: The color question is critical to the thinking of the American people. Our country’s history is based on the slaughter of Native Americans, slavery of African Americans, exploitation of Hispanic- and Asian American, with many more examples. Out of this history of racial oppression,

inequality, and discrimination has evolved a major social construct for social control. Racism and white supremacy that are derived from this construct are not innate attitudes but have long been bought and paid for by and in the interests of the rich ruling class. Although poor whites and other sections of working class whites have been unwitting tools of race, hatred, and white supremacy, today the material white skin privileges are being consumed in layoffs, foreclosures, and evictions. The rulers and their representatives have historically, strategically, and tactically used the institutionalization of racial prejudice, mistrust, and the vanity of white supremacy as narratives and devices to prevent unity among the poor and dispossessed, turning them against each other. Drawing from the analysis in W.E.B. Du Bois's *Black Reconstruction*, we can call this form of divide and conquer "Plantation Politics."³¹

Race, racism, and white supremacy have long been understood and promoted from the standpoints of the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois upper classes that hold no fundamental opposition to the economic status quo of capitalistic exploitation and oppression. White supremacy and racial inequalities and disproportions have therefore been viewed as issues separate from the problems of the economy, disconnected from the exploitative economic class relations. Consequently race, racism, and white supremacy have been largely and one-sidedly discussed and debated as solely problems of the racial oppression, mass lynching, and police repression of non-whites, or peoples of color. However history teaches and today's realities continue to confirm that racial ethnic politics, which is closely related to today's "identity politics" is as much, if not mostly, about the historically evolved central political formula in the US of how the white masses have been controlled in the economic interests and needs of the class rule of the wealthy. Historically, the bulwark of this political formula of control has been the southern region of the United States. This has been the whole meaning of the so called "Solid South", that is, the all-whites, all-classes unity maneuvered through the isolation, "separate but equal" segregation, and disproportionate oppression of non-whites. As W. E. B. DuBois once concluded, "the South controls the country and Wall Street control the South." This has long been the ultimate meaning of the so called "Southern Strategy" that Wall Street and its liberal and conservative, Democratic and Republican representatives have always pursued.

³¹ Du Bois argued that while the possibility of real and new democracy existed in the union of democratic forces (the champions of universal suffrage and the rights of freedman, leaders of labor, small landholders in the West, and poor whites in the South) such unity was torn apart by artificial lines of division, 239.

20

It should not be forgotten that the social base of racial superiority or white supremacy and the political power of the US ruling class has been the maintenance of an all white, all-classes unity and the disunity of the bottom economic classes secured through the disproportionate economic and social bribery derived from an ever-expanding, super-exploiting imperialist economy. This is similar to how anti-Semitism, which was tied inseparably to the myth of the superiority of the "Aryan Race," was politically used in Nazi Germany. In this approach the Powers that be in Germany got many of its cues from how the tools of racial superiority were utilized in US history. Much attention has been given in movies and corporate-financed media about the ghettoizing, isolation, and the "Final Solution", that is, the genocidal killings or Holocaust against the Jews and their historic fight back. However next to nothing is said about the use of these practices and the supportive pseudo-scientific theories of anti-Semitism to maintain economic exploitation and political control of the German masses. And consequently to get the dispossessed and poor Germans to fight and die in the rich man's wars of aggression for the benefits of the ruling class of the Krupps, I. G. Farbens, Siemens, Thyssens, etc.

In the different stages of US history, of the ongoing "battle of ideas", the Powers That Be have

seen to it that this "Plantation Politics" is applied in different forms to the wide-ranging political spectrum of thought and public opinion. The "left/Liberals" side of this spectrum has cried crocodile tears for the non-white section of the dispossessed. While the "right/Conservatives" side has expressed "concern" for the "white working class." The Powers That Be have often acted as if they were above these two opposite sides and assumed the political posture of the so-called "centrists." This rich and powerful center has also at times don the mask of the so-called "progressives" and "independents" controlling and manipulating both sides of the "opposition" between the "left-wing" and "right-wing" into a shrewd and hidden politics of "heads I win, tails you lose" and thus preempting or preventing the "bottom line" real threat of the united action of the poor and dispossessed. Strongly influenced by this method of control and manipulation has been the long use of "ethnic politics" by particularly US big city electoral machines. "Middle Class" electoral politics and the "Identity politics" of race, gender, etc. have been the latest versions.

Similar to and also strongly influenced by the history of race has been the history of gender or sexual oppression, inequality, and discrimination. The prejudices and injustices that have long been directed at women have now an immediate global character. The ruling class has always determined the ruling ideas about the role of women and sex relationships. Today, among other things, these ideas, or at least their premises, permeate the subtext of major multi-million dollar movies and omnipresent commercials.

An important example in US history of the ruling class's Oppressive combined use of gender and racial politics was how certain factors and forces came together or coincided by the time of the passing of Women's Suffrage 19th Amendment in 1920. When the 19th Amendment for women suffrage was passed, the poll taxes took hold and the near effective disenfranchisement of most of the women and men in the South. This included the total disenfranchisement of African-American men and the continuing disfranchisement of African-American women while Northern women were given the right to the ballot. Most accounts of these two important developments in US electoral history see them as separate or merely coincidental phenomena. However, more study

21

should be made of this cruel out-manuevering and manipulation of "Plantation Politics."

Although today "code words" abound, persistent racial politics, ethnic politics, and gender politics continue to have the same strategic objective as far as the Powers That Be are concerned, that is, at base the preemption and prevention of the unity of the poor and dispossessed as the most threatening social force to the economic class interests, political formula of control, and ideological hegemonic leadership of the rich as the ruling class.

5. Rights: This fortress includes specific ideas of rights, including being "endowed by the Creator with certain inalienable rights." In the U.S., people think in terms of God given rights to "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness" (i.e. the Declaration of Independence) much more than in the terms of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). However, the latter has as one of its main historical origins the former.

There is a tension in the story between ensuring people the opportunity to attain basic economic needs and the obligation of society and governments to provide fundamental needs. The current notion of rights as social and governmental obligation to ensure the universal right to basic economic human needs is currently a minority story. The story of the opportunity to fulfill rights derives from the dominant right to capitalist private property. This is the right to hire and fire for the purposes a few individuals accumulating immense profit and wealth through the exploitation of the many who have no ownership of property in the means of production and exchange. The story of opportunity is based on the dominant narrative of the rights of private property, which finds expression and support in the prevailing values of rugged individualism and the other current major

mental fortresses of the American identity. The dominant interpretation of rights in the U.S. is connected to the language and principles of choice and opportunity. It is argued that if the opportunity can be provided, their rights will be ensured through people's own efforts. This principle of opportunity fails, however, to guarantee that equality will be the result. While this country is founded in opposition to the "Divine Rights of Kings" and in favor of "We the People" being endowed by their "Creator" with the inalienable right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," the dominant interpretation of this core creed has been narrowly interpreted to only uplift a rich few and to exploit and exclude the lives of the majority of everyday people. Today we are witnessing emerging struggles of growing ranks of the poor and dispossessed for food, housing, education, health care, etc., without which they have no rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The human rights to these basic human rights have long been limited to the idea of civil rights, that is equality before the law and not actual equality. They have long been reduced to the judicial "due process" to be battled over in the capitalist courts or reformist street battles to pressure policy changes in the capitalist legislatures. This narrative and these battles around rights have had little to no material impact on those actually suffering the pains of economic inequality and deprivations of our current cruelly unjust system.

In this way the root cause of a system that produces poverty in the midst of unprecedented plenty are avoided. In this way wealth continues to be concentrated among a decreasing minority while poverty and misery continue to be expanded among an increasing majority. The struggles that are emerging on these issues of basic economic

22

needs are kept separated and isolated and defeated. In addition, it is very easy to coopt and divert these struggles into channels that are non-threatening to the prevailing strategic narrative about rights. For this reason, key political strategists of the Power That Be such as the likes of the former National Security Advisor of President Carter's Administration, Zbigniew Brzezinski have for some time now argues for a "Human Rights Framework." However their "Human Rights Framework" is limited to the civil rights and right-to-opportunity approach.

How do we shift this narrative and create a narrative that people can see themselves in and relate to? First, we have to appreciate the changing economic conditions, which are weakening the old, obsolete, and false narratives about the rights of private property. Then we must timely take advantage of these changing conditions to conduct class-conscious-raising agitation and education campaigns to introduce new narratives. In waging these sorts of campaigns, we must ensure among other things that rights are not defined only as just civil rights or the right to opportunity. We must ensure that rights are defined to also include the necessary obligations of society and its government to guarantee our basic economic human rights. The ideologists and political strategists of the ruling class of billionaires dismiss or demonize basic economic human rights as "lazy" or fiscally unfeasible "entitlements" and their rhetoric and advocacy of "equal opportunity" and "civil rights" become mental mechanisms for the Powers That Be to pit people against each other. The racialized myth of the so-called "welfare queen" is but one example.

Our basic human rights to housing, food, good jobs, education, health care, etc., must not be understood as privileges, but rather must be claimed as basic needs that can and must be guaranteed and non-negotiable.

6. Redbaiting: The point of any form of baiting is simply to get a fish or people to pay attention to the bait and therefore not see the hook or trap. Specifically, Redbaiting is essentially ignorance-based fear-mongering. In the United States this has meant the creating of fear and distrust by labeling as "Communists" or "Communism" anything that challenges the ruling capitalist class and its economic system. It has been based on a total lack of understanding of history of the anti-capitalist revolutionary processes involving the leading roles of the poor and dispossessed as

organized social forces. We have for a long time been kept ignorant of these processes particularly those that actually took place and reconstructed Russia, Vietnam, China, and Cuba. Instead, we have been taught to fear the ruling class's deliberate distortions of these major experiences.

Throughout the Cold War, the American people were conditioned to fear the so-called "totalitarianism" of the Soviet Union putting it in the same category as Nazi Germany. The description of both the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany as "totalitarian" appealed to the ignorance of most people who knew little or nothing about the history and nature of the economic and political systems of each of the two countries. In this way, the fear of Hitler and Nazism born of the actual role they played in the mass devastation and death of World War II was used to increase the fear of "communism." Moreover, it served the purpose of strengthening and stepping up red baiting during the launching of the Marshall Plan and the Cold War against the Soviet Union. Consequently, whenever the ruling class wants to isolate, divert, and destroy a movement, group, or individual that poses a threat, they label it "Communism." For example,

23

Martin Luther King, Jr. was redbaited and called a Communist as he moved in the direction of economic human rights and opposing the war in Vietnam. It is important to note that Redbaiting took hold with increased tenacity particularly in the United States during the post-World War II period when the standards of living were rising. Its influence weakens in times of crisis when social and economic conditions become more excruciating and pronounced.

To outmaneuver and ultimately bring down the mental fortresses of the 6 Rs and win what are essentially mind wars, we must, as was indicated by Jacques Ellul, not make a direct assault on these deeply embedded mental fortresses. We must instead identify and concentrate our efforts on their Achilles' Heel or points of vulnerability by agitating for a sustained series of actions that "place them in ambiguity" causing them to be questioned. The current economic conditions are making it possible and necessary for political agitation to place the mental fortresses in an ambiguous situation, which can result in the change of social consciousness and society. Giving the current transition of the world economy from a history of expansion to period of contracting purchasing capacity or world market. This systemic economic contraction and the connected conditions of social crises are resulting from an unprecedented micro-electronic technological revolution colliding with the fundamental relation of capital and labor, of the propertied class and property-less class.

In the following segment we take up the role of symbols, art, and cultural forms and indispensable components of political strategy. Drawing from examples from the Liberty Bell in Pennsylvania and the Roman cross that crucified Jesus Christ, we examine how tactics and campaigns must creatively use art and cultural forms, particularly in the new era of network organization and netwar.

Part Five: Role of Symbols, Arts, and Cultural forms

The many uses of symbols, the arts, and other cultural forms have become more prominent, penetrating, and powerful weapons of struggle in this new era of netwar. They have become indispensable components of political strategy. Cultural, religious, and patriotic symbols, songs, and slogans continue even more so to play a major role of either maintaining or defeating the critical ideological fortresses on the mental terrain of the masses of people. Political leaders, teachers, and organizers disregard this factor at their peril.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania is a city of major importance in US history and traditions. It is one of the homes of the origins of the basic symbols of the American Personality. For instance, the

Liberty Bell wasn't called the "Liberty Bell" until the abolitionist movement took it up. On the bell is inscribed a passage from the Old Testament book of Leviticus 25:10: "Proclaim Liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof." The Liberty Bell is closely associated with the founding creed of the United States. The Declaration of Independence's proclamation of the God-given rights to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" rings throughout the different stages of US history. The struggle over its meaning has been fought out in each of these stages up to and including the formulation and different interpretations of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Social movements in the US-- the American Revolution against the British Empire, the Civil War, the struggles for women's suffrage,

24

trade union rights, and civil rights--have been instances where the leaders fought to expand the notion of rights and who has access to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Napoleon has been credited as the source of the saying, "A picture is worth a thousand words." Certainly, history has noted major periods of times when the power of images--as expressed especially in icons, rituals, and symbols--has overtaken the weapon of words. The major ideological role Art and Culture has played in the creative conjuring up and manipulation of images to convey messages and to conduct mass education cannot be denied. The language of images penetrates the borders of all national languages. For this reason the warning of the historical novelist, Umberto Eco, must be heard, "A democratic civilization will save itself only if it makes the language of the image into a stimulus for critical reflection—not an invitation for hypnosis."³²

The apostles and disciples of the early Christian movement played indispensable roles as leaders and teachers of a Gospel of justice or in bringing good news to the poor. This placed this movement and these leaders in a dangerous position of opposing the constant bad news being perpetrated on the poor by the exploitative and oppressive Roman Empire. The bad economical and political news found expression in the prevailing religious doctrines of the empire. This historic and biblical confrontation represented a profound clash of theologies. The Ministry of Jesus of Nazareth and his devoted disciples called for essentially "a revolution of values" challenging the mental fortresses and terrain that supported the military dictatorship of the ancient economic slavery based Roman society. Their use of signs, symbols, parables, and other cultural forms made their messages and ministries more relevant and penetrating. Consequently they functioned as educators and organizers of churches or a social movement for the just Kingdom of God and against the unjust Slave Empire of Caesar. Further this Gospel (expressed politically in the meaning of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ) was symbolized by replicas of Roman crosses, which were often situated alongside the Roman roads system serving as political advertisement of the power and terrorizing device of the Roman Empire. The Roman road system (the ancient "internet") while serving to facilitate the strategic movements of the Roman Army, commerce, and the Roman postal system, was also utilized as lines of communication for the counter movement of the messages of the early Christian movement, symbolized by the counter use of the Roman cross. This counter strategy was promoted and carried out through the itinerant ministries of the disciples and apostles and particularly through Paul's travels and epistles.

Clearly, art and culture have been major means and venues for the construction and maintenance of the dominant narratives of society. All songs, movies, and other cultural forms and artistic productions put out a particular ideology, and overall the role of arts and culture is to construct a narrative that supports that ideology. Often arts and culture operate on an unconscious level, getting into our minds without us being conscious of it. We need to be conscious of what is being used to promote the dominant views appealing to and reinforcing the existing mental fortresses of the poverty producing economy system. This means we have to be strategically clear as to how we use arts and culture. Arts and culture can be used to make people feel a sense of connectedness and absorb meaning in ways more penetrating and longer lasting than

words. It can also help embody a message in a different way. For example, the Border Network often uses the American flag and the Virgin of Guadalupe. This is an example of redefining what is America, who is American, and the rights associated with America. In order to move hearts and minds, we also need to know the artistic and cultural impulses and developments already arising out there in response to the objective necessities or conditions of the struggles. Effective tactics and campaigns must incorporate creatively the proper approaches to the use of art and cultural forms, particularly in the new era of network organization and network.

In the final part of this series we turn our attention to the political and educational role of campaigns. In particular we look at the significance of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Poor People's Campaign of 1968 as part of a strategy capable of taking on the ruling class's prevailing and protective conceptions of **Reality, Rugged Individualism, Religion, Race, Rights, and Redbaiting** through the potentially powerful role of the poor and dispossessed becoming "a new and unsettling force." This vision in 1968 has an even more strategic and mass import today as the plight of the poor worsens and their fights grow and are united nationally and globally.

Part Six: Waging Campaigns--Their Educational and Political Impact

Having an accurate estimate of your enemy and yourself is the first basic principle of the art and science of strategy and tactics. As stated before, this estimate involves a continuous assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of your forces as well as those of the forces arrayed against you. This assessment necessarily includes knowledge of how these strengths and weaknesses are reflected in the mental terrain. The weaknesses or the points of vulnerability are also called the 'Achilles' Heel.' From this basic principle is derived another principle of strategy and tactics, that is, to concentrate your strengths against the weak points, the 'Achilles' Heel,' of your enemy. History teaches that to win one must concentrate your strength against your enemy's weak points. Ongoing campaigns, which are coordinated series of interconnected, repeated, protracted, and multifaceted forms of actions must be thrown at those points of vulnerability when and where they are discerned and located.

The present technological revolution is ushering in a new electronic era, which is potentially a thousand times more productive, rapid, and efficient than the passing industrial era. Its unprecedented productivity and efficiency is increasingly eliminating the need for human labor in all areas of production, exchange, and communication. Given the economic status quo, that is, the present profit-making and poverty-producing system, this technological revolution is resulting in an accelerated growth of poverty in the midst of plenty. It is turning the middle-income strata into the poor and the poor into superfluousness. This is causing the weakening or the beginnings of the mental fortresses, that is, the raising of fundamental questionings of the economic status by at first the newly emerging leaders of the increasing struggles of the poor and dispossessed. This is making possible the construction and conduct of campaigns to raise class-consciousness striking a crippling blow at the mental fortresses.

The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was very prescient when talking about the launching of the 1967-8 Poor People's Campaign he stated,

"If ...[the] poor can be helped to take action together they will do so with a freedom and power that will be a new and unsettling force in our complacent national life."³³

In this statement Dr. King anticipates the Achilles' Heel of the present economic system and its protective ideological superstructure including the aforementioned mental fortresses of the 6 Rs—the ruling class's prevailing and protective conceptions of **Reality, Rugged Individualism, Religion, Race, Rights, and Redbaiting**. The potentially powerful role of the poor and dispossessed becoming "a new and unsettling force" have a more strategic and mass import today than ever before as their plight worsens, spreads, and their fights grow. They are then united nationally and globally. Nothing more threatens the global economic status quo and frightens the Powers That Be than the sustained exposures through protracted united actions of the poor and dispossessed (i.e. series of poor people's campaigns) in their resistance to the unnecessary and immoral existence of poverty in the midst of plenty. The political threat is that these united actions can become an opposing rallying point attracting large sections of the middle-income strata, which is the main social base of support of the Powers that be and their profit-making and poverty-producing economic system. Aristotle pointed out in antiquity, and history has proved him correct, that a stable and growing middle strata is necessary for the stability of class societies. Currently the global economic crisis is proving to be not only cyclical but chronic now undermining the so-called, "Middle Class" or middle income strata, which in turn is weakening the ruling class's political control and prevailing ideological influence. This is why the ruling class and their political representatives continue to wage billion dollars campaigns to portray the poor as either a charity case or a criminal case. In either case poverty is falsely presented as not the inevitable result of an economic system that needs changing but as the result of the poor's own indiscretion or inertness.

The poor today is not the poor of yesterday. Where in the industrial era it was a necessary part of the labor force serving largely as the surplus labor reserve to be partly thrown later into the production process of an ever-expanding economy. It now represents the increasing breakdown of a capitalistic social production and exchange system that can no longer provide the basic economic necessities of life to increasing masses of the people. Most of the so-called "middle class" have considered themselves as such because despite the fact of them not having any real possession of the means of production and exchange, they nonetheless currently receive a living wage. However today they have a growing sense of insecurity about this middle-income status because the new economic conditions are reducing increasing segments of them to impoverishment without any other prospects for them and their children.

The apologists and strategists of the economic status quo clearly see and admit in hindsight the necessary end of ancient slavery and Middle Ages feudal production systems. However, they and the capitalist class are blinded by their own upbringing and propaganda to the necessity for the end to the present economic system of class exploitation and social oppression. All the mental fortresses together with all the old

³³ Martin Luther King, Jr., "Nonviolence and Social Change," *The Trumpet of Conscience*, (Beacon Press, 2011).

27

and traditional values and views are combined to apologize or argue for policies that protect the existing economic system of class exploitation. These arguments and policies are supported by such notions as "American Exceptionalism" including the more recent idea advanced by Francis Fukuyama of the "End of History." In other words, God has blessed American capitalism and that there can be no more productive and innovative system than this liberal democratic system. These notions are so embedded in the thinking of the ruling class that it unconsciously goes without saying. So day in and day out the ideologists of the status quo are strategically and tactically appealing to the old ideas to win the mental terrain of their class and the masses of the people. Again the basic strategic objective is to cover their weak flank by pre-empting and preventing the powerfully unsettling educational impact of the poor and dispossessed whose united actions undercut the hegemonic false notions.

Conducting campaigns are effective ways of concentrating strengths to attack weak points. Campaigns are not separate tactical operations like a march or a day's action or rally. It is conducted over a more sustained period coordinating combined tactical operations or planned successive phases of actions where the initiative is taken. This initiative compels your enemy to react on terms unfavorable to him.

Campaigns are not to be confused with strategy, especially political strategy and the whole situation of war or conflict waged over a longer period. History teaches that political strategy is concerned chiefly with the overall and long-term course of struggles, the line of march of social movements for or against political and economic emancipation. As mentioned earlier, social movements develop through stages conditioned by the ups and downs, lulls and leaps in economic developments. Campaigns are constructed and conducted to complete each stage of development of political strategy and social movements for social change. Strategy provides a big picture perspective to choose those battles or tactical operations favorable to completing the stages of development of social movements and accomplishing their ultimate goals and objectives. Campaigns are about actually choosing of your battles and battlefields accordingly. Campaigns are about taking the initiative to frame the issue in such a way as to particularly expose and oppose the weak points of your enemy's argument and position of political influence. As mentioned earlier, the initial stages of the development of a social movement are marked by the fact that oppressed and exploited cannot out-money, out-mass, nor out-might the ruling class. Because of this campaigns necessarily assume mainly the character of agitation and education operations seeking to outnumber the enemy by organizing and building up over time step by step, stage by stage, their main strategic strength, that is, their overwhelming and still growing numbers. Herein lies the strategic significance of the lessons of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision, launching, and organizing of the 1967-68 Poor People's Campaign.

In his work and words leading up to the launching of the Poor People's Campaign, Dr. King expressed his clarity as to the relation of the necessity of changing the mental terrain and fortresses of old values and misconceived views to fundamental social and political change. These values and views include indispensably moral values and views, that is, what is right and just and what is wrong and unjust. Historically every social movement starts off with the struggle for political legitimacy based on the moral and ethical questions. In April of 1967 he gave his famous Beyond Vietnam Speech at Riverside Church in which he underscored the need for a "revolution of val

28

ues",

"We as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin the shift from a "thing-oriented" society to a "person-oriented" society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered... True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it is not haphazard and superficial. It comes to see that an edifice, which produces beggars needs restructuring. A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth ...A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death."³⁴

In this new era of chronic economic crises and **netwars**, Dr. King's Poor People's Campaign, which aimed at uniting the struggles of the poor or constructing a multi racial "nonviolent army of the poor," retain much strategic value. This is especially so with regard to these initial stages when the main object of strategy for a newly arising movement is to identify, build, and unite a large core of leaders/teachers who are committed to uniting the poor and dispossessed. Through the

development of this strategic clarity and commitment these leaders/teachers become a crucial embodiment of the necessary “revolution of values.” This “revolution of values” today involves primarily changing the prevailing and erroneous attitudes about the poor and poverty. These attitudes are expressions of a mistaken view of the vast majority of the people that devalues and stereotypes the poor blaming the poor as the cause of their own poverty--that they have failed the existing economic system and that the system has not failed them. The view serves as the main basis of the present mass complacency against becoming a part of a broad and powerful movement to abolish the deepening polarity of wealth and poverty and all its connected social ills and injustices. It is against this complacency that Dr. King targeted his launching of the Poor People’s Campaign. His conceptualization and promotion of this campaign was about giving effect to the “revolution of values” practicing what he preached about the actual meaning of “true compassion.”

The economic and social position of the poor and dispossessed places them at the weak points of the poverty-producing economic system and its protective ideological institutions. This economic and political system is the main enemy of all humankind. This fact is clearly asserting itself in the increasing mass insecurity and impoverishment precipitated by the current global economic downturn. Launching and conducting campaigns that unite the immediate struggles of the poor in resistance to the excruciating effects of the economy in chronic crisis exposes and allows for the concentration of the fight against the Achilles’ Heel of the class enemy and the economic system it protects.

Mental fortresses of this system are finding it extremely difficult to hide and impossible to explain the true class reality that is now being asserted in the unprecedented economic crises that people are now facing. The problems and issues of the poor today are in fact not self-inflicted. The worsening plight of the poor is not about individual

³⁴ Martin Luther King, Jr., Beyond Vietnam, Riverside Church, April 4, 1967. 29

ual cases of pity or punishment. It is now the leading indication of the breakdown and failure of the entire economy, which threatens the livelihood and life of everyone, not just the poor. The defense that the mental fortresses provided ultimately relied on the misconception of the impoverished and dispossessed being seen as either criminal or inert and inept charity cases. In either case, the poor were stereotypically looked down upon as the “other” blamed for their own poverty. They were thought of as failures of society not as victims of a society that has failed them. These misconceptions and stereotypes kept the economically insecure middle-income strata in a state of complacency by giving them among other things a false sense of security.

Dr. King envisioned and worked to build a campaign that would serve to help the poor--“white and Negro”, to unite into a social force with the freedom and power to “unsettle” the complacent mindset of the broad masses of the people, particularly that of the so called “Middle Classes.” This would in turn open the mental terrain of the American people for a “revolution of values” toward a “radical redistribution of economic and political power”, a “change of the whole structure of American life.” This meant that the Poor People’s Campaign was to be largely conducted as an agitation and education campaign to arouse and change the thinking of the mass of the American people. The struggle for the unity of the poor and dispossessed through the proper and protracted conduct of such campaigns provides the only ways and means of winning the middle strata, the social base of this cruelly unjust society, thereby winning the masses of the people to the complete abolition of this poverty-producing system. This is much like the prolonged and effective ideological role played in US history by the runaway slaves in the Underground Railroad against first, mental, and then, material slavery.

Here is what Dr. King said in his 1967 Massey Lecture to the Canadian Broadcast,

“The dispossessed of this nation -- the poor, both white and Negro -- live in a cruelly unjust society. They must organize a revolution against the injustice, not against the lives of the persons who are their fellow citizens, but against the structures through which the society is refusing to take means which have been called for, and which are at hand, to lift the load of poverty. There are millions of poor people in this country who have very little, or even nothing, to lose. If they can be helped to take action together, they will do so with a freedom and a power that will be a new and unsettling force in our complacent national life...”³⁵

The ultimate object of the campaign in Dr. King’s view was to “organize a revolution” to “lift the load of poverty,” to abolish “a cruelly unjust society”, which was threatening the livelihood and life of not only the presently poor and dispossessed but the whole nation and world. In this respect the campaign aimed to awaken the consciousness of mass of the American people by effectively challenging the prevalent and false notion of the poor being a case of charity. The united actions of this “nonviolent army of the poor” were to culminate in mass protests of civil disobedience, publicly challenging unnecessary economic and social inequalities and the unjust laws that upheld those injustices. These tactical acts of protests were not acts of criminal disobedience,

³⁵ Martin Luther King, Jr., “Nonviolence and Social Change”. 30

but of civil disobedience deliberately design to use accepted mass arrests to bring mass attention to the injustice of poverty existing in the most affluent society. In this way it was also to challenge the other prevalent and false notion of the poor being a criminal case.

Reigniting Poor People’s Campaigns today to unite the poor and dispossessed as the leading “unsettling” social force has a particular significance in that it poses an existential threat to Powers That Be and their cruelly unjust status quo. Historically, the so-called “Solid South” has used the ideology of white supremacy to hold intact a reactionary and oppressive all-white, all-classes unity based on the isolation and the perpetration of open murder of particularly black citizens. It has secured this isolation and attacks through the many years of de jure and de facto segregation and the bribery of whites and the mass incarceration and lynching of blacks. This unholy alliance that has long served as a strong bastion for the mental fortresses of the 6 Rs in the United States continually relied upon by the ruling class, Wall Street, as an indispensable means of the political control of the entire country and through this control to project its money and military power internationally. Moreover, this mental terrain finds expression in white nationalist evangelicalism, which justifies the ongoing assault on the lives of all the poor and dispossessed, white and non-white, with a theology, which explains deadly co-existence on the same territory of a Bible Belt and poverty Belt. This area is the origins of old black belt slave plantation region of the South, which has at once one of, the largest concentration of churches with the largest contiguous area of poverty in the country. This so called “Solid South”, which since the recent Civil Rights Movement and legislation has not been changed but has been largely Republicanized transformed from the old home of “Dixiecrats.” The current chronic economic crises are asserting the common class economic interests of the poor whites and poor non-whites threatening in a profound way to break up the all white, all-classes unity of the so called Solid South. This is objectively opening the way for effective Poor People’s Campaigns to successfully fight for the unity and mass organization of poor and dispossessed across color lines and all other lines of division.

In many ways Dr. King’s vision and leadership of the 1967-68 Poor People’s Campaign anticipated the global crises and struggles today. A sustained series of reignited Poor People’s Campaigns might be such directed concentrated efforts on the mental terrain of particularly the people of the United States can “place them in an ambiguous context” and thereby help change their minds, which would open the way to the ultimate abolition of all poverty. The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr’s version of the 1967- 8 Poor People’s Campaign was to unite on the basis of what they had in common the emerging struggles of the poor and

dispossessed across color and lines of division. Dr. King's view was very prescient because it anticipated that due to the social and economic position of the poor and dispossessed today it can in its united and organized actions play a similar ideological and political role that the runaway slaves in their Underground Railroad played in spearheading the unsettling of the prevailing thinking that upheld capitalist slavery, which led ultimately to the latter's abolition.

Also in terms of moral and political legitimacy owing to especially the religiosity of the American masses, it is of strategic significance that the last year of Dr. King's life in many respects parallels the last week in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus's Ministry was itself a poor people's campaign as much of it took place in the poorest areas of the Roman Empire, which inaugurated the early Christian movement. Similarly, Je

31

sus's work of uniting and organizing the poor resulting in his execution by the state apparatus of the Roman Empire. As Dr. King attempted to do before he was assassinated by the powerful US state apparatus in bringing together leaders from the ranks of the different sections of the poor, Jesus's Ministry started with the identification, education, and organization of his core of leading disciples of what became a powerful revolutionary movement that the ruling class of the Roman Empire had to reckon with and ultimately succumbed to.

In the initial stages campaigns of this type allows for every struggle, every protest to be turned into a school for raising class-consciousness, a school especially for educating and training the newly emerging leaders committed to uniting the poor and dispossessed as a class. To ultimately move the mental terrain of the global masses, to overcome its mental fortresses, its deeply held mistaken values and misconceptions, require our mastering the lessons of that campaign and applying them to the reigniting of such campaigns toward ending poverty altogether under today's changing conditions.

