

THE BIRTH OF AMERICA

A REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF *SETTLERS* BY J. SAKAI



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INTRODUCTION

Settlers: The Mythology of the White Proletariat by the rather enigmatic ‘J. Sakai’ is, in the opinion of some, one of the few worthwhile pieces of Marxist-Leninist literature produced in America. Typically, Leninist literature produced in the United States, Canada, and so forth is saturated with labor-aristocratic drivel. Sakai’s work is exceptional in that, to put it concisely, it is not filled with drivel.

What is *Settlers* about? It is a class-based analysis of the genesis of the US and its various peoples, the way in which the American economy was formed, the class composition of the early United States, the question of class in the Civil War, and some other things. But the work is exceptional in that it touches upon the national question in North America, although perhaps not entirely in a Leninist sense; Sakai unearths numerous gems for study, but does so “in the dark”, so to speak, and in the end proves unable to piece these gems together and illuminate them sufficiently for the reader. Nonetheless, his unhesitant willingness to thrust the uncomfortable truths of America’s labor movement before the reader leaves a whole wealth of material for review and analysis.

We will address all that later. For now, it stands to say that *Settlers* is, indeed, an illuminating work regardless. It has not been given its due credit: published in 1983, it’s still fairly obscure, remaining prominent mainly through college-age intelligentsia who, in the end, oppose anyone that agree with the analysis put forth in the book.

Now, we should say before moving on: there are plenty of criticisms we make of *Settlers*. But they are different in character than those criticism which come from the bitter pens of social-democratic and liberal critics, and so forth. We will go over this at the very end, when we touch upon popular reviews of *Settlers* and how they are woefully inadequate.

We also will not be overbearing on the rather colorful and prescriptive language Sakai employs, nor will we decry his “unacademic” style. These are minor trifles sometimes put forth to discredit Sakai’s work. We should avoid sinking to this level – we will analyze the content of his writing, not the form.

In any case, a review and Leninist appraisal of the work should not hurt it. It will embolden its strongest points and help bring out the conclusive truths from that which is left murky by Sakai.

THE GENESIS OF THE AMERICAN NATIONS

The key to understanding Amerika is to see that it was a chain of... settler colonies that expanded into a settler empire. **To go back and understand the lives and consciousness of the early English settlers is to see the embryo of today's Amerikan Empire.** This is the larger picture that allows us to finally relate the class conflicts of settler Euro-Amerikans to the world struggle.

A study of roughly 10,000 settlers who left Bristol from 1654-85 shows that less than 15% were proletarian. Most were youth from the lower-middle classes; Gentlemen & Professionals 1%; Yeomen & Husbandmen 48%; Artisans & Tradesmen 29%. The typical age was 22-24 years. In other words, the sons and daughters of the middle class, with experience at agriculture and craft skills, were the ones who thought they had a practical chance in Amerika.

Thus far Sakai; and what he says is true. The “Euro-Americans” (what are today called the Whites) were not predominantly proletarian, but small-scale laborers, both urban and rural.

What is valuable in particular, and what serves as the basis for a large part of Sakai’s analysis, is the question of land, which Sakai phrases as thus:

What made North Amerika so desirable to these people? Land. Euro-Amerikan liberals and radicals have rarely dealt with the Land question; we could say that they don't have to deal with it, since their people already have all the land. **What lured Europeans to leave their homes and cross the Atlantic was the chance to share in conquering Indian land.** At that time there was a crisis in England over land ownership and tenancy due to the rise of capitalism.

Sakai does not elaborate on *why* land is such a pressing question to the European masses. He offers some prescriptive talk of how non-landowning laborers were viewed as “low”, and thus the European middle class feared the prospect of not owning land and invaded America, and so forth. To summarize his reasoning:

It was these [agricultural laborers] despairing of owning land in their own country, who were willing to gamble on the colonies.

Participating in the settler invasion of North Amerika was a relatively easy way out of the desperate class struggle in England for those seeking a privileged life.

Then, too, many **English farmers and artisans couldn't face the prospect of being forced down into the position of wage-labor.** Traditionally, hired laborers were considered so low in **English society that they ranked far below mere failures,** and were considered degraded outcasts.

Ultimately, we must do away with Sakai's romanticizing about "rank" and say bluntly: people wanted land because to not have land is to not have a steady source of food, especially in the 17th century, when uncultivated land was becoming rarer and rarer in Europe. In fact, Sakai himself quotes a scholar on the matter:

"Land hunger was rife among all classes. Wealthy clothiers, drapers, and merchants who had done well and wished to set themselves up in land were avidly watching the market, ready to pay almost any price for what was offered. Even prosperous yeomen often could not get the land they desired for their younger sons...It is commonplace to say that land was the greatest inducement the New World had to offer; but **it is difficult to overestimate it's psychological importance to people in whose minds land had always been identified with security, success and the good things of life.**"

In other words, to lack land is to lack security. Security of what? The security of food, which implicitly is also the security of steady work, of a long life, and all else that comes with a full stomach – "success and the good things of life".

So we establish that what brought the settlers to America was not an indignant attitude towards being "lowered" to the ranks of the landless, but rather, the lack of food security brought by the ever-diminishing amount of land for purchase and settlement in Europe.

To put it briefly, the Europeans feared starvation and poverty, and so they fled where the food was ripe. Hence the emphasis put first and foremost on maize, corn, in the early days of colonial agriculture, which is only then followed by tobacco and cotton.

Sakai spends some time elaborating on the details of land settlement and just how rapid this process took place. He sums up with an important claim:

It was [land] alone that drew so many Europeans to colonial North Amerika: the dream in the settler mind of each man becoming a petty lord of his own land. Thus, **the tradition of individualism and egalitarianism in Amerika was rooted in the... concept of equal privileges for a new nation¹ of European conquerors.**

It borders on guesswork, but it's not to be dismissed. On a material basis, the tradition of individualism and egalitarianism in America was perpetuated by the concept of equal privileges for a new nation of European conquerors. Whether or not this was the *root*, i.e. the ideological *origin* of the liberalism Sakai describes, it is questionable. But this is a matter for another time.

Sakai moves to addressing the actual social life of the Euro-American people, and how it is built on both the genocide of indigenous Americans and the slavery of African-Americans:

The European invaders — Spanish, Dutch, English, Portuguese, and French — simply killed off millions and millions to safeguard their conquest of the land and provide the disposable slave labor

¹ What is interesting too is Sakai's implication here that these settlers are, at the same time, still a real nation.

they needed to launch their "New World". Conservative Western historical estimates show that the Spanish "reduced" the Indian population of their colonies from some 50 million to only 4 million by the end of the 17th Century...

The early settlers were not just the passive beneficiaries of a far-off Afrikan slave trade — they bankrolled their settlements in part with the profits of their own eager explorations into Native slave trading...

Sakai explains how this led to a whole culture of parasitism, a culture based on the exploitation of slaves:

The essence is not the individual ownership of slaves, but rather the fact that world capitalism in general and Euro-American capitalism in specific had forged a slave-based economy in which all settlers gained and took part...

Slavery... was the unpaid, expropriated labor of millions of Indian and Afrikan captive slaves that created the surpluses on which the settler economy floated and Atlantic trade flourished.

So all sections of white settler society — even the artisan, worker, and farmer — were totally dependent upon Afrikan slave labor... the entire settler economy was raised up on a foundation of slave labor, slave products, and the slave trade

Now that we have seen the extent to which the Whites partook in slavery, we will recall Sakai's claim at the beginning of the chapter:

It is the absolute characteristic of settler society to be parasitic.

It goes without saying that Sakai is right to call the Euro-American nation parasitic in some regard. But to say it is *absolutely* parasitic implies, also, that it was *absolutely* predicated on slavery and slave-labor. Yet, in doing this, he implies that the peoples in question have *voluntarily surrendered themselves to slavery*, i.e., that the Euro-Americans themselves expended no labor in enslaving the others, and thus these others were put in shackles by their own hands. Obviously, this is wrong: for the Euro-Americans to have imposed the shackles upon the Africans and Natives, the latter would necessarily have had to react, to resist, and from there the Whites too would have had to resist upon their resistance. And there was born the ghost of their collective struggles: the Black, Indian, and, in proportion to these two, the White, identities. The Indian and Black identities were born as targets of destruction; they resisted, and the resistance to this resistance was the White identity.

Hence, the White identity appears to Whites not as a mark of shame, but as a "civilizing mission" brought upon savages who attacked them first. It was the very real labor of a people avoiding real labor.

So it is more right to say: the Euro-American nation, while based on parasitism, was, in proportion to its parasitism, based on the labor expended on maintaining parasitism.

The genocide of indigenous Americans and the enslavement of African-Americans was – and *is* – nothing to the identities of the peoples involved. But the *resistance* put up by the natives to their destruction, by the Africans to their enslavement; and the counter-resistance put up by the Euro-American settlers in relation to this resistance, was, at the same time, the birth of these three people's identities, their cultures; and, simultaneously, the birth of the irreconcilable antagonisms between these cultures.

In the case of the indigenous peoples, their several cultures and identities were conjured as a singular “Indian” identity. In reality, the native peoples never lived together as a single people. The “Indian” was really numerous Indians in a state of constantly changing alliances, some of which collaborated with the Euro-Americans against other Indians. But, in the context of the settlement of the Americas, the “Indian” manifested itself as the two-fold identity of the vicious savage, the very real material thing that existed beyond the wooden palisades of the outer settlements, living in the forests with crude tools and eating one another, speaking in extremely simplistic and limited languages, and so on; and the “noble savage”, which was in reality the later-stage Indian who has invented agriculture, more advanced communication, and so forth².

A third “shade” of this identity even exists for the larger empires, such as the Aztecs; the identity of the “urbanized savage”, or whatever one might call it. It was the identity of the Indian who had invented small-scale manufacture, and had ultimately reached the brink of civilization (the stage the early Romans would have occupied, for instance) without outside interference.

In the case of the African peoples, their several cultures and identities were conjured as a singular “Black” identity. The Black identity was the one which grew from plantation life; with English as its *lingua franca*, the Black nation grew from its master, and contraposed itself to him. Born from the cohesive body of slaves created in the rural South, which, as we'll later see, was greatly facilitated by the industrialization of America, the Black nation was the nation of the un-White, and un-Indian. It was the African savage who had, with the “gift” of slavery, been rapidly brought into the discourse of civilization, experiencing all its cruelties and none of its joys.

And, in proportion to these identities, there also grew the Euro-American identity, the identity of the settling people. The White nation grew from those nations that grew from him; the White then contraposed himself to them. If there are an inferior people to be enslaved, and an inferior people to be genocided, then there must be a superior people to be carrying out these measures, perhaps with the sanctity of God.

If the Euro-American Whites had settled the land, and really not come into conflict with the population there (as the historical revisionists, which Sakai derides, claim), then there would be

² Think of the Euro-American tale of Squanto, the Indian who taught the White man to grow maize, etc.

no “Euro-American Whites” — we would instead still have Dutch-Americans, English-Americans, German-Americans, etc. There would be no motivating force for their assimilation into a single people. The assimilation of the various peoples of America into a single White people was, at the same time, the forcible assimilation of indigenous and African peoples into a single “Indian” and “Black” people, portrayed in a mirror reflection.

Sakai goes on:

Both [the Black nation] and the Indian nations were self-sufficient and economically whole, while the Euro-American invasion society was parasitic.

And here is where Sakai’s analysis contains a glaring contradiction. We will not delve into it quite yet, because it is a contradiction which arises in a much clearer and more persistent form later on. But we will at least touch upon it here.

Sakai says that, unlike the Euro-American nation, the other nations of the American continent were “self-sufficient” (we will ignore “economically whole” for now). Yet, he says in this same chapter:

All sections of white settler society — even the artisan, worker, and farmer — were totally dependent upon Afrikan slave labor: **the fisherman whose low-grade, "refuse fish" was dried and sold as slave meal in the Indies; the New York farmer who found his market for surpluses in the Southern plantations.**

And here, in saying that the Whites depended upon the Blacks, he has also coincidentally implied that, at least in two cases, the African-Americans *rely on the Whites* as a reciprocation of the former relation. Though they’re being given only “clippings”, the African slaves are still receiving part of the food reaped from the conquest of Indian land.

In other words: Black slaves are brought from primitive life in the jungles of Africa and into the conquered American lands, where they have all the tools of civilization not only at their disposal, but positively forced into their hands at the threat of the whip. It is like a thorned rose: this process grants to them the benefits of rapid socioeconomic advancement, the development of a single consolidated language, sprawling and cultivated land, and, in return, deprives them of their old land and thrusts them under the brutal and humiliating (and often fatal) hand of the slavemaster.

They are *both* internal components of one and the same settler system structured primarily against the Indians. Such is born a situation where the Black depends on the White, and the White on the Black, but in ever-intensifying antagonism to one another; and against both of these is the Indian. The moment one should not antagonistic to another, when all land should be settled... Again, we will come to that later.

Sakai will spend a good portion of the book asserting that it was only a matter of time before a slave revolt broke out. And this is true. But why was it a matter of time, and not a matter immediate? Because the slave still had something to gain from the master, for three hundred years until the 19th century (when the master runs out of “civilizing tools” to give the slave): here, when slaves begin to escape the plantations in large numbers, they do not escape primarily to the *west*, into the wilderness to live as they lived in Africa, but to the *north*, into the settled Canada and the Northern United States, both very much colonial empires by Sakai’s definition.

But we should not get carried away from Sakai. He skips ahead, to the American Revolution, and discusses the class composition of the Euro-American nation by the late 18th century. Here, if one can see past the tone, Sakai says:

When we point out that Amerika was the most completely bourgeois nation in world history, we mean a [multi]-fold reality: Amerika had no feudal or communal past, but was constructed from the ground up according to the nightmare vision of the bourgeoisie.

There is no nation that has a communal or feudal past, because “nations” in the sense Sakai speaks of *did not exist* in feudal or communal times. The nation (in the general sense) is something which is *precisely a bourgeois invention*, and it is the era of bourgeois revolution that ushers in the rise of nations and the national movement. Germany, by Sakai’s definition, is just as bourgeois as America, because it was never a nation with a communal or feudal past – at most it was a confederation of tribes in communal times, and a loose conglomeration of princes, archbishops, and so forth during feudal times. The “Germany” we know never existed until the rise of liberalism, where it was built “from the ground up” according to what Sakai would call “the nightmare vision of the bourgeoisie”.

Yet, Sakai said America was “the most completely bourgeois nation in world history”. We will have to seek the reason why in the latter points then.

Amerika began its national life as an oppressor nation, as a colonizer of oppressed peoples.

And here, we again have a contradiction, for unless Sakai supposes all nations immediately reach communism upon their birth, there has *never* been a nation whose “national life” was not predicated on being an “oppressor nation”, a colonizer of oppressed peoples.

By Sakai’s definition, every nation is now the most bourgeois nation to ever exist. Again, this does not work, so we will have to seek his meaning in the latter points.

Amerika not only has a capitalist ruling class, but all classes and strata of Euro-Americans are bourgeoisified, with a preoccupation for petty privileges and property ownership.

Here, Sakai only says of the Americans what Engels said of the English a hundred years prior³, and what Lenin definitively proved a few decades after that. In the age of imperialism, all imperialist nations can be classified in this way.

Sakai then offers an accurate description of the settlement of America:

...The privileges of conquest produced a nonproletarian society of settlers... Every European who wanted to could own land. Every white settler could be a property owner.

With their extra-proletarian living standard and their future in the propertied middle classes, most settler workmen had no reason to develop a proletarian consciousness... In the Colonial era the majority of Euro-Amerikan artisans and wage-laborers eventually bought farmland and/or business property and rose into the middle strata.

And contained here is a fascinating implication: were the African-Americans not also living, even though in slavery, in “extra-proletarian” standards – on land stolen from natives, in better climate than their ancestral lands, and, most importantly, *with an implicit future as liberated slaves*? So, then, would the African-Americans, by that logic, be destined not to adopt a revolutionary consciousness, but a consciousness which corresponds to their status as beneficiaries, even dependents, of the settler system?

The special and non-proletarian character of settler artisans and workers (which has been so conveniently forgotten about by today's Euro-Amerikan radicals) was well known a century ago by Europeans...

Sakai opens himself up to attack when he lunges and proclaims: the “special and non-proletarian character” of “settler[s]” has been “so conveniently forgotten about by today’s Euro-American radicals”. Because Sakai falls into this same trap!

Sakai insists that the White radicals have “conveniently forgotten” about the White’s role in the perpetuation of slavery, etc. But Sakai, fancying himself a radical all the same, “conveniently forgets” that the Black nation never possessed such a character either; that it, too, lived on stolen land, and, twisted as it may be, received from their enslavement the very means of self-emancipation that their brothers who remained in Africa still lack *to this day*.

In general, it's commonly agreed that Euro-Amerikan workers earned at least twice what their British kinfolk made.

Was the African-American nation – which was, by nature of their exploitation, implicitly tied to the Euro-American nation – not standing to gain, in a way that their African brothers were not, from this economic situation?

³ “The English proletariat is actually becoming more and more bourgeois, so that this most bourgeois of all nations is apparently aiming ultimately at the possession of a bourgeois aristocracy and a bourgeois proletariat alongside the bourgeoisie.” – something that Sakai quotes later in the book.

Were the still-free Africans of Western Africa, or those in the shackles of the Western African princes, not in some way lower than the African-American, who was, by extension of his relations, engaged in global commerce? The free African was lower, and higher; he was freer than the slave, and not only in spite of his freedom, but because of it, he was only a savage. And today, he remains in destitution and shackles, while his American cousin lives in rich modern society, second-class citizens or not.

To wrap up, Sakai perhaps realizes a slight contradiction in his argument, and attempts to rectify it. Let's see how he manages this.

Many of the [White] settler laborers were indentured servants, who had signed on to do some years of unpaid labor (usually four) for a master in return for passage across the Atlantic. It is thought that as many as half of all the pre-1776 Europeans in Amerika went through this temporarily unfree status.

Some settler historians dwell on this phenomenon, comparing it to Afrikan slavery in an attempt to obscure the rock of national oppression at the base of Amerika. **Harsh as the time of indenture might be, these settlers would be free — and Afrikan slaves would not.** More to the national difference between oppressor and oppressed, white indentured servants could look hopefully toward the possibility of not only being free, but of themselves becoming landowners and slavemasters.

The problem arises in that, evidently, Sakai has not investigated the matter thoroughly. He claims that indentured servants “would be free, and African slaves would not”. Yet, investigating the populations of some of the slave states in pre-1860 America shows us the following:

State	Amount of Freed Blacks	Total Blacks	% of Freedmen
Maryland	83,942	87,189	96%
Virginia	58,000	490,865	11%
North Carolina	30,463	331,059	9%
Louisiana	18,647	331,726	5%

(Wilson, 1965)

Less free than indentured Whites, for sure, but Sakai's claim that the Whites could become free, Blacks could not, is generally incorrect. Nonetheless, he moves on:

Once these poor whites were raised off the fields and given the chance to help boss and police captive Afrikans, their rebellious days were over. The importance of this experience is that it shows the material basis for the lack of class consciousness by early Euro-American workers, and how their political consciousness was directly related to how much they shared in the privileges of the larger settler society. Further, **the capitalists proved to their satisfaction that dissent and rebelliousness within the settler ranks could be quelled by increasing the colonial exploitation of other nations and peoples.**

If the formerly revolutionary Whites could be placated with the spoils of conquest, by “increasing the colonial exploitation of other nations and peoples”, then what stops the Blacks from also being placated in this way? This is the main structural flaw in Sakai’s analysis.

AFRICAN-AMERICANS PARTICIPATE IN SETTLERISM

We concluded the previous chapter by saying that, according to Sakai's logic, the Blacks, too, should lose their apparently revolutionary consciousness should they stand to gain from the settler system, just as the Whites lost their apparently revolutionary consciousness in the same way.

Sakai begins the following chapter by proving this hypothesis to be *definitively true*:

The popular political struggles of settler Amerika — the most important being the 1775-83 War of Independence — **gave us the first experience of alliances between Euro-Amerikan dissenters and oppressed peoples...** [But] the national division between settler citizens of emerging Amerika and their colonial Afrikan subjects was enormous — while the distance between the interests of Indian nations and that of the settler nation built on their destruction was hardly any less. While tactical alliances would bridge this chasm, **it is important to recognize how calculated and temporary these joint efforts were.**

Sakai assures us that these alliances are not of the same character, because they are only “calculated and temporary”. Aside from this, he leaves the matter alone.

For us, this will not do. If the efforts to integrate Blacks into the settler system are invalid on the grounds of being “calculated and temporary”, then so too is the effort to integrate all the various European peoples into a single “White” nation around the Anglo-Americans. According to Sakai's own logic, the Euro-American peoples no longer are a valid group of settlers, as their cooperation with one another was “calculated”, and, in any case, “temporary”; the German, Dutch, and so on are no longer “colonizers”, but are “colonial peoples”, subjugated to the Anglo-Americans, who are offering them a “calculated and temporary” alliance.

Are not all alliances “calculated and temporary”?

Sakai offers us an example of one of these “calculated and temporary” alliances between the White and Black nations:

[It is necessary to study] Bacon's Rebellion, one of the two major settler uprisings prior to the War of Independence. In this rebellion an insurgent army... seized state power in the Virginia Colony in 1676. They defeated the loyalist forces of the Crown, set the capital city on fire, and forced the Governor to flee. **Euro-Amerikans of all classes as well as Afrikan slaves took part in the fighting, the latter making up much of the hard core of the rebellion's forces at the war's end.**

Sakai sets the premise of Bacon's Rebellion, explaining the history leading up to it and so forth. He gives a summary of the events that took place, how Bacon utilized the Occaneechee against the Susquehannock before eventually turning on the Occaneechee and enslaving them too, how Bacon and his men attacked nearby unarmed natives and stole their property, and so on. He is sure to make it clear to us how repulsive this act is. He explains how the colonial government attempted to prevent the Baconites from these acts, leading the Baconites to capture Jamestown.

Bacon recruited not only the white servants of his opponents, but also their Afrikan slaves. Hundreds of new recruits flocked to his army. On Sept. 19, 1676... he triumphantly ordered Jamestown put to the torch...

...The last die-hards [after Bacon died] were some 80 Afrikan slaves and 20 white servants, who refused to surrender to a fate they knew all too well.

It would seem that Bacon found the most intense expression of his anti-Indian Crusade in the *Black slaves*, who stuck with the movement to the end, even after Bacon's death.

It would seem, therefore, that the African slaves stood to gain from the settler system when it was least constrained; that at its zenith, the settler system appealed not only to Whites, but to Blacks as well.

Out of the debris of this chaotic dispute we can pick out the central facts... **Bacon's Rebellion was a popular movement, representing a clear majority of the settlers,** to resolve serious economic and social problems by stepping up the exploitation of oppressed peoples.

Here, Sakai concedes two things: Bacon's Rebellion is a popular movement, and that it represents *increasing the exploitation of oppressed peoples*. Yet, were slaves not the majority of the "die-hards" who stuck with the movement to the very end – who still had something to gain, even when nobody else did? Bacon's Rebellion, therefore, was not only about increasing the exploitation of oppressed peoples, but, in direct proportion to this increase of exploitation, *integrating the Blacks into the system of Settlerism*.

It is here that Sakai's analysis breaks down completely:

Far from being "democratic", it was more nearly fascistic...

...There was no "Black and White unity" at all. Needing fighting bodies, Bacon at the very end offered a deal to his opponents' slaves. **He paid in the only coin that was meaningful — a promise of freedom for them if he won.**

Sakai insists at one and the same time that "there was no Black and White unity at all", but that the Blacks united with the Whites under the promise of freedom! How does Sakai reconcile this strange claim?

Those Afrikans who signed up in his army didn't love him, trust him, view him as their leader, or anything of the kind.

“Unity”, in Sakai’s mind, is apparently not a matter of cooperating with someone in a single task, but a matter of loving and trusting someone! Thus, it stands that if the Whites didn’t “love” Bacon, “trust” him, or “view him as their leader”, *then the Whites are thereby absolved of the acts they commit!*

This is nonsense. The Whites, whether they “love” Bacon or not, participated in the action, and so they bear responsibility for the action. The same principle applies to the Blacks, the Africans.

Sakai, short of breath, tries to further absolve the Blacks by proclaiming it mere practicality on the slaves’ part:

They were tactically exploiting a contradiction in the oppressor ranks, maneuvering for their freedom.

And just like that, the Whites are no longer exploiters, for they were only “tactically exploiting” a “contradiction in the oppressor ranks” of Europe, “maneuvering for their freedom”! This is the extent Sakai goes to in order to avoid stating what he doesn’t wish to state: *that even the Black slaves partook in the settler system just as viciously and selfishly as the Whites.*

Sakai does not wish to recognize this fact for reasons we will later see.

While standing on the most narrow beam, Sakai attempts a cartwheel when he tries to condemn only the Whites for this act, inadvertently condemning the Blacks with them. He cites White labor activists praising the Baconite rebellion, and then says:

It is easy to see how contemptible these pseudo-Marxist, white supremacist lies are... How meaningful is a "democratic" extension of voting rights... based on genocide and enslavement? Would voting rights for white ranchers have been the "democratic" answer at Wounded Knee? Or "free speech" for prison guards the answer at Attica?

Sakai has shot himself in the foot. He now says: to utilize such things as the Baconite rebellion for a “temporary and calculated” attempt to gain freedoms is “contemptible”. And just before, he had said:

[Bacon] paid [the slaves] in the only coin that was meaningful — a promise of freedom for them if he won.

He goes one further. He has labeled a rebellion which, at its ultimate climax, was left with 80 Black slaves and 20 White servants, as “white supremacist”. This really makes no sense at all; if

we are to apply Sakai's logic in the strictest fashion, we end up with a Baconite rebellion that is actually "Black supremacist", and this is equally nonsensical.

This will not do. The thing which Sakai fails to see through the fog of race is that the Baconite rebellion was the early trembling of an *American nation*, a "melting-pot" nation based on assimilation and the use of any and all peoples – Dutch to Indian to Black – in the project of global settlement and conquest.

It is not the mere existence of the Euro-American nation that is responsible for all the ills Sakai laments; it is the attempt to create a single "American" nation out of the Euro-American, African-American, and Indian nations. *This* is the key structural flaw to Sakai's analysis throughout the book, and we should see it come up a few times from here. In fact, he almost recognizes it by accident in the immediately following paragraph:

The truth is that Euro-Amerikans view these bourgeois-democratic measures as historic gains because to them they are... **The inner content, the essence of these reforms was the consolidation of a new settler nation.**⁴

And in fact, Sakai explains the mechanics of the system without following them to their logical conclusion:

The winning of citizenship rights by poorer settlers or non-Anglo-Saxon Europeans is democratic in form. The enrollment of the white masses into new, mass instruments of repression-such as the formation of the infamous Slave Patrols in Virginia in 1727 — is obviously anti-democratic and reactionary. Yet these opposites in form are, in their essence, united as aspects of creating the new citizenry of Babylon.

Sakai spends a good deal of the book celebrating the "democratic struggle" for the rights of African-Americans under the American state (as we shall come to see). But when he says:

The winning of citizenship rights by poorer settlers or non-Anglo-Saxon Europeans is democratic in form.

And adds:

The enrollment of the white masses into new, mass instruments of repression-such as the formation of the infamous Slave Patrols in Virginia in 1727 — is obviously anti-democratic and reactionary.

To conclude:

These opposites in form are, in their essence, united as aspects of creating the new citizenry of Babylon.

⁴ The "settler nation" being the thing called "America".

Are we not to say then, that the winning of citizenship rights by poorer Blacks in a democratic form was also dialectically united with the aspect of creating this new “American” citizenry – with genocide and conquest?

Sakai makes another large admission:

This was fully proven in practice once again by the 1776 War of Independence, a war in which most of the Indian and Afrikan peoples opposed settler nationhood and the consolidation of Amerika. **In fact, the majority of oppressed people gladly allied themselves to the British forces in hopes of crushing the settlers.**

When conditions allowed for it, the slaves and Indians gladly allied themselves with the British “in hopes of crushing the settlers”.

Has someone not told Sakai where the “settlers” came from, and what the British Empire was? He says here – the Blacks and Indians abandoned one empire for the other. That is the value his observation! But he incorrectly portrays this matter as the Africans and Indians being willing to take a “revolutionary” stance alongside the decaying British Empire against the Colonial settlers of *that same Empire*.

He even recognizes this!

This clash, **between an Old European empire and the emerging Euro-Amerikan empire**, was inevitable decades before actual fighting came...

So, the “colonized peoples” have sided with the “Old European empire”, *the one that created the “emerging Euro-Amerikan empire”*. He moves on to explaining the American Revolution of 1776, and the subsequent Revolutionary War fought between the Americans and the British:

Like Bacon's Rebellion, the "liberty" that the Amerikan Revolutionists of the 1770's fought for was in large part the [liberty] to conquer new Indian lands and profit from the commerce of the slave trade, without any restrictions or limitations. In other words, the... "freedom" to oppress and exploit others...

It was Afrikans who greeted the war with great enthusiasm... Far from being either patriotic Amerikan subjects or passively enslaved neutrals, the Afrikan masses threw themselves daringly and passionately into the jaws of war...

The British, short of troops and laborers, decided to use both the Indian nations and the Afrikan slaves to help bring down the settler rebels. This was nothing unique; the French had extensively used Indian military alliances and the British extensively used Afrikan slave recruits in [The French-Indian War].

Sir Henry Clinton, commander of British forces in North America, issued [the] offer:

“I do most strictly forbid any Person to sell or claim Right over any Negroe, the property of a Rebel, who may claim refuge in any part of this Army; And I do promise to every Negroe who shall desert the Rebel Standard, full security to follow within these Lines...”

Could any horn have called more clearly? **By the thousands upon thousands, Afrikans struggled to reach British lines.**

Sakai has conceded a massive admission, and things have been turned on their head. Suddenly, the American Whites⁵ – the ones Sakai claims are inherently oppressive, exploitative, and so forth, and who apparently have no revolutionary impulse – have come into opposition with the British, the force which not only spawned the Whites, but which, by 1776, is engaged in the creation of all sorts of slaver empires from Africa to North and South America. And the Blacks and Indians, those forces Sakai says are “fighting for their freedom”, etc., are in a position wherein this freedom is won through service to the British conquerors.

And now, applying Sakai’s logic: was the British empire not also something built entirely on conquest and annexation? And therefore, is the freedom the British granted the slaves not also a freedom bought with the blood of conquered peoples across the world?

By attempting to portray the Blacks and Indians as the heroic enemies of White slavers, Sakai has accidentally admitted that the Blacks and Indians cooperated with even bloodier slavers than the Whites. He has proven that the Blacks and Indians, who he alleges have a revolutionary impulse, have joined the side of reaction, while the Whites, who he claims are reactionary, find have found themselves acting as a motive force.

But, in Sakai’s eyes, it is the *British* side – the side of the world-spawning Empire which birthed the US and many more regimes – which is acting as the progressive, revolutionary force. He even goes as far as lauding the British imperialists! He says:

The thousands of rebellious Afrikans sustained the British war machinery. After all, **if the price of refuge from the slavemaster was helping the British throw down the settlers, it was not such a distasteful task.**

And he then talks about how the Blacks then participate in the *other* settler-slaver empire!

...The settlers hurriedly reversed their gears and started recruiting Afrikans into the Continental U.S. Army. On Dec. 31, 1775, Gen. Washington ordered the enlistment of Afrikans into the Continental Army, with the promise of freedom at the end of the war... One Hessian mercenary officer with the British said: "The Negro can take the field instead of the master; and therefore, **no regiment is to be seen in which there are not Negroes in abundance...**"

⁵ And we take “White” in the national sense – the Whites are the European-Americans, the British are not “Whites”.

Many Afrikans were disarmed and put back into chains at the war's end, despite solemn settler promises.

The conclusion to the alliance with the British, which Sakai speaks so fondly of and declares as “primary for the African masses”, was the further consolidation of Euro-Americans into a constituent political force separated from the Blacks and Indians. The dissent of slaves during the Revolution was, at the same time, the justification in the White man’s eyes of his “superiority”, his “civilized morals”, and so on. To the settler, it was the White man that fought for freedom, and the Black man for slavery. To the slave, it was the opposite. Naturally, the only progression for the “American” identity would require the end of this contradictory system, slavery, and the assimilation of Blacks into the greater social body. Without mutual antagonism between the White and Black, there is not a White or Black identity at all. But this is something we will not yet touch upon.

Sakai perhaps understands that he has just shown the slaves cooperate with two different bands of slavers (and the Baconites). Yet he again falls back to the absurdity of claiming:

Just as the slave enlistments in Bacon's Rebellion demonstrated only the temporary and tactical nature of alliances between oppressed and oppressor forces, so [too did] the alignment of forces in the settler War of Independence.

These “only temporary” alliances seem to be a fairly permanently recurring phenomenon. Sakai must understand that the Blacks are not some noble and morally righteous force, but a force like any other, a self-interested group acting based on impulse. And these impulses, on multiple occasions, drive them into collaboration with imperialists of the worst brand: Baconites who insist imperialism is too restricted, Brits who insist their colonies are growing unruly, etc.

Sakai does not want to admit this, but it is a necessary fact of history.

THE CONTRADICTION BETWEEN SLAVERY AND INDUSTRIALIZATION

The slave system had served Amerika well, but as the settler nation matured what once was a foundation stone increasingly became a drag on the growth of the new Euro-Amerikan Empire. The slave system, once essential to the life of white society, now became worse than an anachronism; it became a growing threat to the well-being of settler life...

As "natural" and "Heaven-sent" as the great production of Afrikan slave labor seemed to the planters, this wealth was bought at the cost of mounting danger to settlers as a whole. For the slave system imported and concentrated a vast, enemy army of oppressed right in the sinews of white society. This was the fatal contradiction in the "Slave Power" so clearly seen by early settler critics of slavery.

There is little to pick apart here. What Sakai says is a fantastic summation of the antagonism between slavery and the "settler economy", what is in reality an antagonism between rural and urban labor, agriculture and industry. Sakai elaborates on how this antagonism led, as a natural conclusion, to slave insurrection:

It was widely believed by settlers that in small numbers the "child-like" ex-slaves could be kept docile and easily ruled. The explosive growth of the number of Afrikans held prisoner within the slave system, and the resultant eruptions of Afrikan struggles in all spheres of life, blew this settler illusion away.

The Haitian Revolution of 1791 marked a decisive point in the politics of both settler and slave. The news from Santo Domingo that Afrikan prisoners had risen and successfully set up a new nation electrified the entire Western Hemisphere. When it became undeniably true that Afrikan people's armies, under the leadership of a 50-year old former field hand, had in protracted war⁶ out-maneuvered and out-fought the professional armies of the Old European Powers, the relevancy of the lesson to Amerika was intense.

...The new Haitian Republic proudly offered citizenship to any Indians and Afrikans who wanted it, and thousands of free Afrikans emigrated. This great breakthrough stimulated rebellion and the vision of national liberation among the oppressed, while hardening the resolve of settler society to defend their hegemony with the most violent and naked terror.

The Haitian revolution served as the catalyst which brought the long-developing contradiction between slave and slaver to full light. The slaves would rebel: this much was guaranteed, and historical analysis shows that slavery is destined to end this way in every case. To enslave, one must develop the slave adequately to maintain the highest possible level of production. The

⁶ Sakai perhaps betrays his "Maoist" influences with the talk of "African people's armies" and "protracted war".

developed slave is capable of liberating himself. Thus, to reap benefit from slavery, one must give the slave the means of emancipating themselves from slavery.

When discussing the Haitians, Sakai *again* betrays his idealization of the Blacks as a “thing-in-itself”, an eclectic thing, a monolithic force of always-noble dissenters, hands clean of blood. He clearly believes the Haitians as a force are not bourgeois and parasitic, like the Euro-American republic, but a colonized people rising up to form something of a workingman’s state led by African-Haitian laborers.

But this is not at all what the Haitian Revolution, or the Haitian Republic, was. Toussaint L’Ouverture, the freed slave and leader of the Republic, was, two years into the Republic, betrayed by his followers. His generals, through a conspiracy of landowning “Mulattos” – slaves who had inter-married with the French settlers – collaborated with the French to imprison and assassinate him. These same followers then transformed the Republic into separate African-Haitian and Mulatto states, the African one launching a campaign of massacres, mass-rapes, deportations, and, indeed, even slavery upon not only the French, but the Mulattos and other African-Haitians as well. In the end, after years of conflict between the Northern Blacks and Southern Mulattos, the landowning caste of the latter would come to exert dominance over the entirety of the former, with the help of the French and Americans, and the revolutionary era of Haiti came to an end.

But regardless, Sakai has moved back to America, giving us an outline of the development of this insurrectionary consciousness in the slaves in the United States:

The Virginia insurrection led by Gabriel some nine years later, in which thousands of Afrikans were involved, as well as that of Nat Turner in 1831, caused discussions within the Virginia legislature on ending slavery. The 1831 uprising, in which sixty settlers died, so terrified them that public rallies were held in Western Virginia to demand an all-white Virginia. Virginia's Governor Floyd publicly endorsed the total removal of all Afrikans out of the State. **If such proposals could be entertained in the heartland of the slave system, we can imagine how popular that must have been among settlers in the Northern States.**⁷

A point which is not often talked about is the actual material impetus for the development of this revolutionary consciousness among the Black slaves. How did they come to organize around this ideal of Haitian-style freedom? Sakai explains:

The situation became more acute as the developing capitalist economy created trends of urbanization and industrialization... **And the commerce and industry of these cities brought together and educated masses of Afrikan[s]** - in the textile mills, mines, ironworks, docks, railroads, tobacco factories, and so on...

⁷ Sakai does well here in demolishing the myth that the Northerners were some pious souls who despised slavery with their moral being.

The slave system had committed the fatal sin of restricting the white population, while massing great numbers of Afrikans.

In other words, the Whites had brought in so many slaves that, when industrialization was brought upon them, the vast Black population began to grow many times more rapidly than the White population. The inevitable conclusion to this, obviously, is a similar thing that occurred in Haiti: a bloody reaction brought upon the outnumbered slavers by the slaves.

Sakai, however, *again* becomes lost in fantasy. The Blacks, who he admits had previously gone into their third “temporary alliance” with the Whites for the eradication of Indians, are now growing agitated on that stolen land and demanding they be fairly given the spoils of conquest; just as the indentured servants demanded the “freedom to live on Indian land”, so too were the Blacks. Sakai is not at all objective when he says:

From among the ranks of free Afrikans outside the South came courageous organizers, who moved through the South like guerrillas leading their brethren to freedom.

In doing so, Sakai uses a glamorous brush to paint the rather un-glamorous process of slaves being moved from stolen land where they aren’t free, to stolen land where they are free. As we should come to see, this small issue in Sakai’s analysis grows to be a larger one.

Sakai then explains how, to thwart the development of a slave liberation movement, the Whites begin to ban the Blacks from cities, hindering Southern industrial development for the sake of retaining the old economic system.

Slavery had become an obstacle to both the continued growth of settler society and the interests of the Euro-Amerikan bourgeoisie.

Slavery is no longer a tool of the Euro-American settlers, but now an obstacle. Hence, to abolish slavery, Sakai implies, is to facilitate the Euro-Americans and their settlement project.

He explains the core of the antagonism between the industrial North and agricultural South, and does a good job at it:

While Northerners saw the increasing dangers of a slave economy, with its mounting, captive armies of Afrikans, the planters saw the same dangers in importing a white proletariat. The creation of such an underclass would inevitably, they thought, divide white society, since the privileged life of settlerism could only stretch so far. Or in other words, **too many whites meant an inevitable squabble over dividing up the loot.**

In any case the deadlock between these two factions of the settler bourgeoisie meant that both sides carried out their separate policies during the first half of the 1800s. While the merchant and industrial capitalists of the North recruited the dispossessed of Europe, the Southern planters fought to expand the "Slave Power."

We can only understand the deep passions of the slavery dispute, the flaring gunfights in Missouri and "Bloody Kansas" between pro-slavery and anti-slavery settlers, and lastly the grinding, monumental Civil War of 1861-1865, as the final play of this greatest contradiction in the settler ranks.

Sakai's analysis beams here. It is a remarkably clear portrayal of the contradiction between the slave system and the industrialized Northern economy. We shouldn't need to say anything Sakai already said.

THE RISE OF WHITE LABOR

Sakai treats us to several pages about the rise of the White labor movement and how it was predicated on mob violence towards other groups of people (Africans, Asian immigrants, etc.). Ultimately, Sakai misses the mark in attempting to portray this as something unique to America, when a study of nearly any multinational state's history will reveal similar instances: the pogroms against Jews in Russia; the massacres of Armenians so typical in Georgian history; the Turkish violence on Greeks; the English starvation of the Irish; and so on.

Still, he makes some points worth examining. Repeatedly, he presents form as essence. He implies: "The White nation conquered, therefore, the essence of the White nation is conquest." More importantly, through this implication, he further implies: "The Black nation was conquered, therefore, the essence of the Black nation is to be conquered." And in doing this, he excuses the Black nation of any instance where it participates in conquest, because to participate in conquest, for Sakai, is to be the White nation; and in his mind, he twists Black conquest into a matter of "temporary alliances" with Whites for "practical needs" and so on (as we have already seen), without connecting this to the fact that, in his own words, the Whites were only a "temporary alliance" between Europeans for the "practical need" of escaping the land crisis in Europe.

He then goes into depth about the rise of the White labor movement, and how it served as the front for the labor aristocracy being imported from Europe and integrated into the new White nation:

[Immigration in the 19th century supplied America with] millions of immigrant European workers, many with Old European experiences of class struggle, furnished the final element in the hardening of a settler class structure. The political development was very rapid once the nodal point was reached: From artisan guilds to craft associations to local unions. National unions and labor journals soon appeared.

What we find is that this new class of white workers was indeed angry and militant, but so completely dominated by petit-bourgeois consciousness that they always ended up as the pawns of various bourgeois political factions. **Because they clung to and hungered after the petty privileges derived from the loot of empire, they as a stratum became rabid and reactionary supporters of conquest and the annexation of oppressed nations.** The "trade-union unity" deemed so important by Euro-American radicals (then and now) kept falling apart and was doomed to failure.

So: the "trade-union unity" between Blacks and Whites was, in Sakai's words, a "ruse" which was "doomed to failure". He says that since the White trade unions are bribed by the "loot of empire", they become "rabid and reactionary supporters of conquest and annexation".

So, what happens then, when the Blacks and Whites finally are integrated into one whole? What happens when the Black nation is given a chance to lay hands on the loot of empire, which is by no means confined to that which was stolen from them, but also what was stolen from the Indians and so forth? They would surely become an imperialist force like no other.

We must keep this in mind when Sakai says:

Even among settlers, high property qualifications, residency laws and sex discrimination limited the vote to a very small minority. So **popular movements, based among angry small farmers and urban workingmen, arose in state after state to strike down these limitations - and thus force settler government to better share the spoils of empire.**

Because, just shortly afterwards he says:

Did this national trend "for the extension and not the restriction of popular rights" involve the unity of Euro-Amerikan and Afrikan workers? No. In fact, the free Afrikan communities in the North opposed these reform movements of the settler masses. The reason is easy to grasp: Everywhere in the North, the pre-Civil War popular struggles to enlarge the political powers of the settler masses also had the program of taking away civil rights from Afrikans. These movements had the public aim of driving all Afrikans out of the North. **The 1821 New York "Reform Convention" gave all white workingmen the vote, while simultaneously raising property qualifications for Afrikan men so high that it effectively disenfranchised the entire community.**

Sakai has now implied:

First, that even among the settlers, political representation was vastly restricted, and there was to some degree economic exploitation, but these occurred within the context of annexation and so forth. Therefore, though oppressed in one form, the White labor movement is, in reality, a movement demanding the ruling classes better share the "spoils of empire". This manifested itself in a "rabid and reactionary" consciousness.

Second, that the Blacks were "effectively disenfranchised" *in 1821*, meaning, prior to this, *they were in some way enfranchised*. He has implied that free Blacks, living on stolen Indian land, were enjoying in the spoils of empire, but now are having these spoils restricted.

And third, he implies that a movement which should arise out of this – a Black labor movement – would, despite being oppressed in one form, also be, in reality, a movement demanding the White ruling classes better share the "spoils of empire". This would surely also manifest itself in a "rabid and reactionary" consciousness.

Altogether, Sakai suggests that the problem is not that the Blacks are still exploited by the Whites, but that the Whites are not giving them an adequate share of what was stolen not only from Blacks, but Indians, etc. Sakai's protest is that the Blacks are not being treated as Whites.

He then goes into Andrew Jackson's political campaign, the genocide of the Indians, and tells us the history of the Seminole-Africans and their heroic stand against the American army. He skirts over the fact that the Seminoles kept African slaves themselves. In the final analysis, he shows how the Seminole-Africans proved the complete genocide of Africans to be an impossible task. The rest of the chapter, as already stated, is talking of the national strife that America was born out of, and portraying this as unique to America.

CIVIL WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION

Sakai's analysis does wonders in presenting us with a new perspective of the Civil War, and of the antagonisms between rural slave labor and urban industrial labor that led up to it. Yet, in the end, Sakai lights up a firework only to snuff out the fuse at the last second; his analysis almost completely skips over the actual Civil War itself, *the very climax of the contradiction between slave and settler labor*. Ultimately, his avoidance of the topic masks the dialectical "negation" of the Black slave – his full transformation into the Black American settler.

Instead, Sakai talks of the White labor movement, then and glosses over the Civil War with only a few paragraphs, then talks of the aftermath in somewhat rosy terms. Nonetheless, we will examine these paragraphs, because it is here that the metamorphosis of the Black slave takes place, and Sakai, for his part, does at least acknowledge this metamorphosis implicitly.

We have to see that there were two wars going on, and that both were mixed in the framework of the Civil War. The first conflict was the fratricidal, intra-settler war between Northern industrial capitalists and Southern planter capitalists. We use the phrase "Civil War" because it is the commonly known name for the war. **It is more accurate to point out that the war was between two settler nations for ownership of the Afrikan colony - and ultimately for ownership of the continental Empire.** The second was the protracted struggle for liberation by the colonized Afrikan Nation in the South.

In one stroke, Sakai obliterates the mythology set up by modern liberals around the Yankee role in the Civil War: it was nothing of a liberatory war, but a struggle for ownership of the Black nation, which was already fighting for its self-determination.

But he again falls into a trap: that ideal of the Black slave which was created when his hands were shackled in Africa has left a permanent imprint in Sakai's mind. He is unable to separate this from the living, breathing Black nation that exists in the US's borders. He quotes:

Judge John C. Underwood of Richmond, Virginia, testified later before Congress that: "I had a conversation with one of the leading men in that city, and he said to me that the enlistment of Negro troops by the United States was the turning point of the rebellion; that it was the heaviest blow they ever received. He remarked that when the Negroes deserted their masters, and showed a general disposition to do so and join the forces of the United States, intelligent men everywhere saw that the matter was ended."

The U.S. Empire took advantage of this rising against the Slave Power to conquer the Confederacy...

Sakai tells us that the Black nation has *again* cooperated with a reactionary force, this time alongside the same American state that enslaved them! They 'temporarily' ally with the Americans against an uprising of White rural landowners. Why did they choose one slaver state

over the other? Immediate material interest; in other words, the promise of becoming free men on that land which was stolen from Indians. Sakai skirts over the entire Civil War to avoid going into detail about this fact, but he still is forced to implicitly acknowledge it, when he says:

[After abolition] the Union armies had to not only watch over the still sullen and dangerous Confederates, but had to prevent the Afrikan masses from breaking out.

The Boston capitalist Elizur Wright said in 1865: "...the blacks must be enfranchised or they will be ready and willing to fight for a government of their own."

All over their Nation, Afrikans had seized the land that they had sweated on.

The land they had sweated on – and the land the Indians had bled on, *and still were bleeding on*. The Northern Euro-Americans had bribed the Blacks with the land stolen from the Southern Euro-Americans (something Sakai implicitly states later in the book⁸), who had stolen that land from the Indians.

The emancipation of the Blacks is, at one and the same time, the transformation of the Blacks from an exploited mass of slaves into a lower caste of settlers, just as the freed (or, as Sakai argues, even indentured) servants were in the days before the Revolution. What the slaves in the Baconite rebellion fought for, the slaves in the American Civil War won.

We will very shortly later come to see how, immediately after this point, the Blacks become a potent force in the American state's conquest of land. By 1866, a year after the Civil War, there are six all-Black regiments in the US army, which partake in the settlement of the Western frontier, finding themselves in the midst of such events as the Wounded Knee Massacre (on the side of those doing the massacring).

Sakai goes on:

The Southern economy - now owned by Northern Capital - was struck dead in its tracks, unable to operate at all against the massive, stony resistance of the Afrikan masses. This was the greatest single labor strike in the entire history of U.S. Empire. **It was not done by any AFL-CIO-type official union for higher wages, but was the monumental act of an oppressed people striking out for Land and Liberation. Afrikans refused to leave the lands that were now theirs, refused to work for their former slavemasters.**

He lauds the freed slaves for occupying the land, but attempts to disconnect it entirely from the United States' role in this act; he attempts to portray it as something which overwhelmed and overtook the Union, which was unexpected, a true mass self-emancipation of the slaves; when this whole act was begun by the American state's executive proclamation that the slaves were

⁸ "There were, of course, many Euro-American sharecroppers and tenants as well in the South. Most of them were extremely poor, a poverty whose roots lay in the original defeat of their abortive Confederate nation. For them the possible path of class conscious struggle was visible."

free, and, *as Sakai himself describes*, was a problem Lincoln himself predicted *prior to the war's end*:

Even before the War's end a worried President Lincoln had written to one of his generals: "I can hardly believe that the South and North can live in peace unless we get rid of the Negroes... whom we have armed and disciplined and who have fought with us, I believe, to the amount of 150,000 men. I believe it would be better to export them all..."

Sakai admits that this was not some unexpected revolutionary upsurge, but something that the Union very much predicted. And then comes the extremely damning moment, where Sakai, who still sees the ghost of the 16th century slave floating above the freed 19th century Black, is forced to recognize the real, living facts which dispel this ghost:

Afrikan U.S. army units were hurriedly disarmed and disbanded, or sent out of the South (out West to serve as colonial troops against the Indians, for example)...

Sakai alleged before that the Blacks' unions with the settler state through time were a "temporary" matter born of practicality. What are we to believe at this stage, then, when the Blacks have begun to actively partake in the military conquests of the settler state, and have been officially integrated into the settler armies? The Whites, who attempted to force exploitation on the Blacks by developing them, have here now exhausted those simple things they could gift to the Blacks before – language, organization, etc. – and now must placate them with land and loot.

However, though it is somewhat disconnected from his previous analysis, Sakai makes a major discovery:

The Northern settler bourgeoisie sought to convince Afrikans that they could, and should want to, become citizens of the U.S. Empire. To this end the 14th Amendment to the Constitution involuntarily made all Afrikans here paper U.S. citizens. This neo-colonial strategy offered Afrikan colonial subjects the false democracy of paper citizenship in the Empire that oppressed them and held their Nation under armed occupation.

Sakai has done it! He has taken the step so many in his position refuse to take; he has recognized that the Blacks were "Americanized", they were made US citizens. The integration of Blacks into the United States was *nothing* but folly meant to induct an unruly people into the constantly expanding annexation of land.

What is the reconstruction? It is the reconstitution of America from a Euro-American state to a multi-national state. It is the final step in the creation of the White and Black nations, and the first step in the birth of the modern "American nation".

It is here that Sakai of right now severs himself from Sakai of a few paragraphs ago; and in doing so, he raises himself from the Alps to Everest. He explains how the Blacks, the freed

slaves, are used not only as tools of annexation, but as tools of annexation *against the rebellious Whites!*

While the U.S. Empire had regained its most valuable colony, it had major problems. The Union Armies militarily held the territory of the Afrikan Nation. **But the settlers who had formerly garrisoned the colony and overseen its economy could no longer be trusted;** even after their attempted rival empire had been ended, **the Southern settlers remained embittered and dangerous enemies of the U.S. bourgeoisie[!!!].** The Afrikan masses, whose labor and land provided the wealth that the Empire extracted from their colony, were rebellious and unwilling to peacefully submit to the old ways. **The Empire needed a loyalist force to hold and pacify the colony.**

If Sakai were not already so mindlessly lapped up by college students, it's likely they'd decry him as a racist.

He has declared that the Blacks are now being inducted as a "loyalist force", to be used against the "embittered" Southern slave-owners, who he says are *dangerous enemies of the bourgeoisie*.

And Sakai does not stop there. He explains how the United States utilized Blacks as a political prop:

[In the phase of] Black Reconstruction... Afrikans were promised democracy, human rights, self-government and popular ownership of the land - but only as loyal "citizens" of the U.S. Empire... Afrikans became the loyalist social base. Not only were they enfranchised en masse, but Afrikans were participants and leaders in government: Afrikan jurors, judges, state officials, militia captains, Governors, Congressmen and even several Afrikan U.S. Senators were conspicuous.

This regional political role for Afrikans produced results that would be startling in the Empire today, and by the settler standards of a century ago were totally astonishing.

What was most apparent about Black Reconstruction was its impossible contradictions.

[The] dramatic reversal outraged the Confederate masses - who saw their former "property" now risen over them. The liberal Reconstruction governments swept away the social garbage of centuries, releasing modern reforms throughout Southern life: public school systems, integrated juries, state highway and railroad systems, protective labor reforms, divorce and property rights for women, and so on.

And they were impossible contradictions indeed.

The White and Black identities arose *precisely* as opposites to one another. So, to unify them is to bring these opposites into more and more acute contradiction, just as holding two magnets together makes them push yet stronger away from each other.

Any attempt to lift the Blacks will lower the Whites; any attempt to lift the Whites will lower the Blacks.

That is the impossible contradiction of Black Reconstruction, of integration and “Americanism” in general.

What is the result to all of these, as Sakai puts it, “impossible contradictions”? The impossible contradictions of integration proved to be, indeed, impossible.

The Afrikan petit-bourgeois leadership in government made every effort to stabilize relations with the former planter ruling class, and, in fact, to cement relations with all classes of settlers. They openly offered themselves as allies of the planters in return for settler acceptance of the new neo-colony. But in vain.

The Reconstruction politicians hoped for a bourgeois democratic reconciliation, wherein the Northern industrialists, they and even the former slave-masters could all harmoniously unite to prosper off the labor of the Afrikan proletariat. Beverly Nash, one of the Afrikan leaders in the South Carolina legislature, told his people: "We recognize the Southern white man as the true friend of the black man...It is not our desire to be a discordant element in the community, or to unite the poor against the rich...The white man has the land, the black man has the labor, and labor is worth nothing without capital." Nash promised the banned ex-Confederates that he would fight to not only get their voting rights restored, but to get "our first men" (the former Confederate leaders) back in their customary places in Congress and the judges' bench. This desire to be accepted by the planter elite was far too common. Henry Turner, the "most prominent" Afrikan politician in Georgia, opposed seizing tax-delinquent planter estates and campaigned to free Jefferson Davis from prison!

Reconstruction fell, its foundations eroded away by the ever-growing mass terror against the Afrikan population by settler reaction. It was militarily overthrown by the secret planter para-military groups of the Ku Klux Klan, White Caps, White Cross, White Legion and so on. In town after town, county and parish one after another, then in state after state, Reconstruction was broken in bloody killings.

IDENTITIES

The question of the “Black”, “White”, and “American” identities are the basis of the confusion around the “racial”, national question in the United States. To avoid restating what we have already said, and will come to say, we should summarize: the Black identity and the White identity exist in opposition to one another, and this opposition is the basis of their existence. When this opposition is removed, the two identities “merge” into a broader “American” identity.

Sakai portrays this reciprocation of identities when he describes the rise of Black Labor through the suppression of Black labor, and in doing this, shows the creation of an independent Black labor movement to be, at the same time, their exclusion from the White labor movement:

The N.L.U. was the first major labor federation of white workers, the forerunner of today's AFL-CIO. Delegates from 59 trade unions and craft organizations took part in its first Baltimore meeting, with observers from much of the rest of the settler craft unions joining into the heady talking and planning. The most "advanced" settler unionists strongly argued for "unity" with Afrikan workers. It was repeatedly pointed out how the capitalists had used Afrikan workers to get around strikes and demands for higher wages by white workmen. Rather than let Afrikans compete in the job market against settlers, it was urged to restrain them by taking them into the N.L.U.

...Afrikan labor had gotten "out of control." **Throughout... their nation Afrikan workers were organizing their own unions, following their own leaders, launching their own strikes...** By 1869, state conventions of Afrikan unions were being held, following the call for the December, 1869, first convention of the National Colored Labor Union. This federation was intensely political, and embraced Afrikan workers in all spheres of production, North and South.

Euro-Amerikan labor's... colonial competitors were "out of control", building their own organizations to further their own interests. This had to be fought! **The immediate decision was to warmly invite these Afrikan unions to join the white N.L.U., so that the settler unionists could mislead and undermine them.** So at the 1869 N.L.U. Convention, for the first time, nine Afrikan union delegates were seated...

But the celebration of unity was short-lived. The "integration" of the N.L.U. meant not only submission to European hegemony, but [it] was virtually suicidal... **Afrikans quickly parted ways with the N.L.U.**

While the N.L.U. had granted Afrikan organizations the privilege of affiliating with it as a federation, Afrikans themselves were barred out of the individual white trade-unions. **Every advance, therefore, of European trade-unionism meant the "clearing" of Afrikan workers out of another mill, factory, railroad, warehouse or dock...** The Eight-Hour campaign, the "Anti-Coolie" and anti-Afrikan campaigns were not separate and unconnected events, but linked chapters in the development of the same movement of white labor.

The Blacks and Whites, as long as they remain antagonistic to one another, create the very basis of their identities; and, any attempt to reconcile this antagonism on one side leads to the proportional worsening of the same antagonism on the other side. And since the Blacks, through the conditions imposed on them by history, are confined to a starting position far worse than the Whites, this antagonism *cannot be reconciled* in a way that does not also include the lowering of one side or another, *or an increase in external conquest*.

We should review all we have gone over so far regarding the genesis of the Black and White nations: the enslavement of Africans leads to the creation of the Black identity, and the revolutionization of Blacks as a people; this leads to the seizure of land by Blacks, which is itself a confirmation of the Black identity, the identity of the enemy of Whites; the White thereby becomes justified in his creation of a White identity, the identity of the enemy of the enemy of the Whites.

The slave revolts were the physical validation of the Black identity that previously existed only in the fearful imagination of the White slaver. This, in turn, affects the bitter exclusion of Blacks from the labor unions, further solidifying their separate-ness as a “Black” identity, distinct from the “White” identity. This leads to the creation of Black labor movements, and so the White labor movements in turn evolve to oppose the Black labor movements.

At its core, this all stems from the original antagonism between slave and master when the land was first being settled.

Sakai now shifts focus to the White nation, and to the consolidation of what was once several European nations into a single Euro-American people, the White nation:

While white labor had tacked together a precarious political unity based on the commonalities of wage-status and settlerism, it was as yet so divided that it did not even constitute a class. In brief, we can point to [some] main aspects of this: **White workingmen were sharply divided by nationality... Immigrant labor did not constitute a single, united proletarian class itself because they were part of separate national communities (German, Swedish, etc.) each headed by their own... leaders.**

Sakai goes on to insist that these nations do not yet constitute a single White nation, but several differentiated nations; yet, he fails to draw the connection, to “connect the dots”, between the various national communities in America and the singular “Euro-American nation”, and the “American” identity. In a word, he does not clearly disclose the nucleus, the integral unit, of the White nation, although he comes close. So we must do it for him.

Sakai says:

...The Irish, Polish, Italian, etc. immigrants had the honor of replacing Afrikans, Mexicanos, Indians and Asians as the primary labor force of the U.S. Empire in the North. **But the position of "native-born", Anglo-Saxon settlers changed little if at all. The "native-born" settler masses**

were still above the nationally-differentiated proletarians, still small property-owners and small businessmen, still foremen, overseers, and skilled craftsmen.

So, the Anglo-Saxon crowd, even though heavily outnumbered, still served as the economic nucleus for the White nation, and all other groups assimilated into it. Thus, the various nations immigrating into the American continent became part of the Euro-American nation, a nation which was primarily Anglo-Saxon, but also contained fragments of German, Irish, Swedish, and so forth cultures; in terms of language, all these nations vanished in America outside of accented forms of English.

In short, the various nations who immigrated became Anglo-Saxons with fragments of their original cultures. This is the essence of the “White” identity, the White nation; it is the various European peoples who assimilated into the Anglo-American nation.

And Sakai goes on to explain how the Irish were the lowest of these nations, the closest in condition to the Blacks; yet, at the same time, the most hateful and vitriolic towards the Blacks. He explains how their ancestors back home did not appreciate this fact:

It is interesting that Irish patriots, themselves engaged in the bloody armed struggle to throw off British colonialism, saw from across the Atlantic that their countrymen here were being led into taking the reactionary road. In 1841 some 70,000 Irish patriots signed a revolutionary petition to Irish-Americans: "Irishmen and Irishwomen, treat the colored people as your equals, as brethren. By all your memories of Ireland, continue to love Liberty - hate Slavery - *Cling by the Abolitionists* - and in America you will do honor to the name of Ireland."

“It is interesting” for sure! Sakai does not make this conclusion, but it is readily apparent: here, the Irish-Americans no longer consider themselves Irish at all. Their allegiance has been *severed* from the Irish nation, and their brethren protest in vain; they are not “brethren” at all. The Irish-Americans are now *Whites*, Euro-Americans. Their identity has been brought to the great White melting pot, and they have become one with the White nation. In a word: they are assimilated, and there exists *no* tie any longer between the Irish nation and the Euro-Americans that descended from the Irish.

This applies to the other nations as well, but it is especially true for the Irish nation, which already spoke English and thus assimilated into the Anglo-Saxon crowd faster than the Germans, Italians, and so forth. Still, all these other nations follow suit.

And here is revealed the full, colorful spectrum of the American “racial” question reveals itself as many national questions combined: really, the “White” is the Anglo-Saxon, and all other things are measured in relation to the Anglo-Saxon language, English. The difference between “Black” and “White” (and also “Asian”, “Indian”, etc.) is only this difference magnified to a considerable degree.

The first settlers upon the nation are the Anglo-Saxons. For a time, they are simply English colonies, and thus remain Anglo-Saxons; in their conquest of the indigenous peoples, and their enslavement of Africans, they transform from Anglo-Saxons into Anglo-Americans, the basis of the “American nation”. In this process is also born the German-Americans and Dutch-Americans, and eventually, these peoples come together in their conquest of Indian land and begin to constitute themselves into a single White people, a White nation; still, the Anglo-Americans remain the integral unit of this nation, the anchor to which the other nations assimilate towards. Thus, it is the Anglo-Americans which manifest themselves as White in the purest sense of the word; they are the basis of the White identity and nation.

Upon the Revolution – which, as Sakai has shown, was born of the relation between settlers, slaves, the British, and Native Americans – is born a new “American” identity. This identity is the frozen ghost of an Anglo-American army with some German and Scottish immigrants within its ranks, as well as a large portion of African slaves who had been promised freedom.

Then begins the process of immigration and assimilation into the White nation.

The Irish and Scots immigrate and assimilate into the existing White nation at tremendous pace. They already spoke English, and so they were already White in essence; they were “below” the Anglo-Saxon only on the basis of an accent, slightly odd names, and the mark of a lower class position, all three of which are quickly transcended.

Next is another generation of Germans, Swedes, Dutch, and so on – in a word, the Germanic peoples – who also assimilated with considerable pace as well; they are already mostly White, but “lesser” Whites. Their languages were already Germanic languages which share a good deal of vocabulary and grammatical structure with English, and thus the abandonment of German or Dutch for English comes as a fairly rapid process.

Of course, these Germanic immigrants are not to be confused with the original ones who were in America at the time of the Revolution.

Next to come are the Latin, or Romance peoples. The Italians, French, and Spanish immigrate into America, not consecutive to the Germanic peoples, but concurrently. They assimilate at a slower rate; they become the subjects of ridicule and mockery, questions are raised as to whether they’re really “White” or not, and since they do not shed their old tongues for new tongues with ease, this must be forced on them, in the schools. The French, especially the Cajun French, who have developed their own dialect of French and thus prove even more difficult to adequately “assimilate”, are subjected to the abrupt censure of their language, in schools and in public spaces of all kinds. The material basis for the French-Americans is killed in this way, and thus they become Whites. But for the Italians and Spanish, they are met with a good deal of resistance in their assimilation. Not only is the English language not imparted easy on them, but the Spanish and Italian peoples were, at this point in time, ardently Catholic, in contradiction to the mostly Protestant composition of the existing America. All of these elements must be cleansed

from them, and it is several generations of inter-marriage before they are considered truly “White” with the rest. Still, they arrive upon “Whiteness”.

After that are the Eastern European peoples, primarily Slavs: Poles, Russians, Czechs, etc. These follow a similar course to the French-Americans, becoming truly “White” only once English is their mother tongue.

Lastly are the Caucasian and Semitic peoples, those who speak Armenian, Arabic, and so forth. These peoples only immigrate at a small volume. Owing to their considerably different linguistic and cultural characteristics, they partially become White, but hover in a sort of “limbo” between the White and Black nations. Vitriolic Whites are quick to label them as Blacks, or at least as non-Whites. Still, English comes to them, and with a few generations of inter-marriage, they become White.

The White nation is all these contradictory nations unified in reflection to the political development of the African-Americans and Indians. The assimilation of these peoples into the White, Anglo-American nation is something which is not favored by the Anglo-Saxons themselves. It only occurs in direct relation to the rising need of the Anglo-Saxons to employ settlers to keep down African-American labor and Indian insurrection. Sakai says:

Thus the Irish, Polish, Italian, etc. immigrants had the honor of replacing Afrikans, Mexicanos, Indians and Asians as the primary labor force of the U.S. Empire in the North. **But the position of "native-born", Anglo-Saxon settlers changed little if at all. The "native-born" settler masses were still above the nationally-differentiated proletarians,** still small property-owners and small businessmen, still foremen, overseers, and skilled craftsmen.

Without the employment of the various immigrants in the whole project, the Anglo-American nation dies; thus, these peoples become necessary and permanent appendages of the physically living Anglo-Saxon nation, and this necessary alliance mutates the ghost of the original Euro-American alliance formed at the Revolution.

Then we arrive upon the Asian immigrants, primarily Chinese immigrants speaking Mandarin or Cantonese. As Sakai points out, they are subject to incredibly amounts of violence throughout the later 19th century as they immigrated to the Americas in vast numbers. They never are fully considered “White”, but never fall into the category of “Black”. They are considered slightly above the “Indian” as well.

The Asian languages are vastly different than English. Not only do they possess entirely different vocabularies and grammatical structures, but they are even different *types* of languages, with most no small portion of Asian languages being tonal. It is difficult to shed the old language for English, and even through several generations, accents tend to persist. Arising from this, and from the radically different economic life in the Asian countries at the time, is the entirely

separate culture, etc. of the various Asian immigrants, leads clashes between the various Asian immigrants and the Anglo-rooted Whites.

The Indians – that is, indigenous Americans – spoke a wide array of languages, all of them not even remotely close to English. They were the languages of early human development, and would appear outrageously difficult for a foreigner to learn (and vice versa, English would appear very difficult for an indigenous American to learn). Thus, they were destined to remain as something foreign to the Whites, unable to assimilate into it; only in chance circumstances was a Native American capable of assimilating into the White nation.

The “Indian”, by the turn of the 20th century, is a “ghost” in the very real sense of the word. The indigenous peoples have been mostly eradicated from the physical world, and live on mainly as the imagined reflection of that old savage outsider that hundreds of years prior; distinction between this or that Indian nation is now irrelevant, and this “ghost” appears only as a singular Indian entity, wearing a headdress, bearing face-paint, and wielding a bow.

Otherwise, the real Indian only lives on miserably in American-made reservations, much too quietly to leave an imprint in the consciousness of the White man. At this point, the occasional protest of these peaceable Indians evokes the old fantastic image of the colonial-era savage Indian in the White man’s psyche.

And finally, the Blacks were born from the various African peoples who were forcibly enslaved and brought to the American continent; their identity is a reflection of the mutual struggle for survival against the slavemaster. They lost their old languages, as they were taken from a wide array of tribes and mixed with one another, intentionally kept apart so as to prevent their ability to communicate and organize revolts. On the basis of the languages they spoke, which were similar to the Indian languages in level of development, they were placed solidly as the “opposite” of the White, the furthest thing from the White along with the Indian.

Even without a shared language, there was, to the Black, the perceivable unity with the fellow Black in two common factors:

First, the Blacks were all taken from their African homelands, and brought forcibly to America. Thus, they relied on one another for survival, in opposition to their slavers.

And second, the Blacks were all rapidly brought under a common language – English – in order to maximize their effectiveness as slaves, leading to a Black dialect which is undeniably stamped with the mark of their old languages.

The Black and Indian identities both arise out of similar conditions of survival against White settlers. Yet, they differ from one another on the basis that the Whites did not depend on Indians for labor, and thus destroyed them, while they did depend on the Blacks for labor, and thus forcibly brought them under a common language.

This is why Sakai is wrong when he attempts throughout the book to conjure the Indian and Black peoples as one identity, in the form of “the colonized”.

All of these identities arise out of the struggle of different linguistic groups for American land. The Asians, Indians, and Africans were, like the various Europeans, “foreign” by nature of their non-English languages. But each of these groups had different experiences in shedding their old languages and adopting the English language, with varying levels of difficulty; ultimately, the more generations it takes for one to master English in the purest form, that is, “unaccented” Anglo-American English, the further they are from “White”.

Germans take only a few generations, and so they are simply lesser Whites, becoming “fully” White within a few generations.

The Irish take just a generation or two, as they speak in an accented form of English already.

The Chinese must take a considerable amount of time before becoming “White”, since, even through the generations, the vast difference between Cantonese and English requires several generations of assimilation before old accents disappear.

Blacks take many, many generations, especially when they have been so consistently deprived of adequate schools, etc. for the means of developing their linguistic ability. Thus, they are stamped as separate from the Whites for as long as this remains the case; if the Whites were to finalize the process of imparting Anglo-American English onto Blacks, they would at once kill the basis of both the White and the Black identities, and all that would remain is the American identity, and the ever-fading phantoms of the White and Black identities.

The Indians, lastly, cannot really be expected to learn English at all, unless one is to expend a huge amount on their schooling. What similarities exist between a language that calls a boat a “boat”, and a language that calls a boat a “*ᎠᎩᏍᏔᏅ*”?⁹

Thus, the majority of them were not given schooling, but death. The adoption of English, as already stated, only occurred in exceptional circumstances. Today still, the Native Americans are deprived of proper education in their native languages, their reservations are left impoverished, and they are forced to remain in this condition or abandon their nations to partake in the Anglo-American system.

This is the essence of the whole “racial” question in the United States. It is process of material processes and their ideal reflections: from Anglo-Saxons, to Anglo-Americans; and from there into Whites and Blacks; and from both of those, into “Americans”. All of these are anchored around the integral unit, the Anglo-Americans, and fall within the binary of “White” or “non-White” through the linguistic spectrum of “how ‘proper’ is their English?”.

⁹ As it is apparently called in some Cherokee dialects.

Hence, the cruelty of slavery portrays itself most clearly to the otherwise ignorant Whites when the Black appears to them not as a savage appealing for mercy, but as a rounded man who is “well spoken” and “articulate”, at least, “for a Black”; and the most “noble savage” is embodied in the translator. The sympathy for these peoples is born from witnessing the suppression of what appears to be not an Indian or a Black, but an “American”, an Anglo speaker like any other White, distinct only in the identity that was born out of the land struggle.

The whole difference between the “racist” and “anti-racist” liberals is, at its core, a question of whether or not someone considers the English-speaking non-White to be foreign or “American”.

In the end, every nation, with their national language, occupy a “shade” varying from the Anglo-American shade that existed since the nation’s founding. The closer to the Anglo-American, the “Whiter” this shade is. The further, the “Blacker”.

This is the essence to the racial question in America.

AMERICANISM

We come back now to Sakai. In doing so, we move on from the old White and Black labor movements, and progress to the “American” labor movement, the final step prior to the full political and social integration of Blacks and Whites into a single “American” nation. We should see if Sakai recognizes it as such.

He begins his investigation of American labor by explaining the basic principles of a labor aristocracy, and for his part, he does a better job than most:

To begin with, our criticism of the historically negative role of the settler masses here is no more pointed than Friedrich Engel's statements a century ago about the English working class.

This tossing of a few crumbs to the British workers resulted in a growing ideological stagnation, conservatism and national chauvinism. Engels was outraged and disgusted, particularly at the corrupt spectacle of the British workers slavishly echoing their bourgeoisie as to their alleged "right" to exploit the colonial world. "...There is no workers' party here ... and the workers gaily share the feast of England's monopoly of the world market and the colonies."... "The English proletariat is actually becoming more and more bourgeois, so that this most bourgeois of all nations is apparently aiming ultimately at the possession of a bourgeois aristocracy and a bourgeois proletariat alongside the bourgeoisie. For a nation which exploits the whole world this is to a certain extent justifiable."

However, we should take care to remind Sakai: was he not lauding these same Brits not too long ago for the “freedom” they offered Blacks? We now see what that “freedom” was born of; “exploiting the whole world”.

The only logical reconciliation of all these points is the following: Sakai must say that the Blacks who collaborated with the British for “freedom” in the American Revolution and War of 1812 were, actually, being *bribed* by the spoils of conquest, *just as they were bribed by the Union during the Civil War and by the Baconites during Bacon's Rebellion*. Only in saying this can he reconcile history with the facts he holds to be true; and in saying this, Sakai must admit that the African-Americans are as susceptible to bribery as the Euro-Americans – a step he is unwilling to take.

Nonetheless, Sakai has a purpose for explaining to us Engels' definition of a labor aristocracy. He lays out some assertions regarding the American labor aristocracy, and invokes Lenin:

Under imperialism "racist" politics were an outward manifestation of a class "alliance" with the imperialists.

This labor aristocracy of bribed workers is not neutral, but is fighting for its capitalist masters. Therefore, they must be combated...

When the new communist movement was formed, it was greatly outnumbered and out-organized everywhere in Europe outside of Russia. **Lenin's answer was concise: Since the bribed, pro-imperialist masses were primarily the upper, privileged layers of workers, the communists in order to combat them had to "go down lower and deeper, to the real masses."...**

And what does Sakai claim Lenin believed the “real masses” to be? He does not even insist that it is the African-Americans. Instead, he says:

On the global scale Lenin's strategy of "go down lower and deeper, to the real masses" meant that the communist movement became truly internationalist, organizing the masses of Asia, Latin Amerika and Afrika - the "real masses" of imperialism. Near the end of his life, noting the unexpected setbacks in revolutionizing Western Europe, Lenin remarked that in any case of the future of the world would be decided by the fact that the oppressed nations constitute the overwhelming majority of the world's population.

He offers us Africa as an example of “the real masses”. And in doing so, he very clearly intends for the reader to perceive not the African, but the African-*American*. And these are two different things entirely.

If Sakai were to call attention to this difference, then it would have much different implications when he says:

The analysis of the labor aristocracy under imperialism helps deepen the understanding of our own varied struggles, and the evolution of the U.S. Empire in general.

As the U.S. Empire jumped into the imperialist "scramble" for world domination at the turn of the 20th century, its Euro-Amerikan workers were the most privileged in the entire capitalist world.

He says the US’s workers are “the most privileged in the entire world”. He arbitrarily tacks on “Euro-Amerikan”, but one is left wondering: for what reason? Why are only the Euro-Americans the most privileged in the world, and not *any* workers within the United States? He openly acknowledges that it is possible to be at once oppressed, and beneficiary of oppression, when he says:

The "great mass" of English workers were, in contrast, certainly exploited. **They lived lives of hardship. Yet, they had in their own lifetimes seen an uneven but upward trend in their wages and working conditions** - a rise dependent upon the increasing profits of the overseas empire.

Sakai attempts to explain the distinction without explaining the distinction:

In 1900, labor in Amerika was sharply divided into three very separate and nationally-distinct strata (literally, of different nations - Euro-Amerikan, European and oppressed nations).

We will accept Sakai's premise as if it were true, for now.

He recognizes that America contains three national "strata": Whites, "Europeans", and "oppressed nations" (and in this he means primarily Blacks and Asians, and perhaps Native Americans as well). We will assume the Euro-Americans and Europeans are beneficiaries, and that, in the time Sakai talks about (1900), the Africans are oppressed and do not benefit from imperialism.

What are we to make of things, then, when Sakai says:

Engels felt in the late 1890's that this might be only a temporary phenomenon - and one limited to England by and large. **He thought that** with the growth of rival industrial empires and the sharpening of European capitalist competition, **the super-profits that supported this bribery might dwindle. Exactly the reverse happened, however. With the coming of imperialism and the tremendous rise of the most modern colonial empires, the trend of social bribery of the working classes spread from England to France, Germany, Belgium, etc.**

So, "social bribery of the working classes" *spread* with the rise of "modern colonial empires"! Sakai now has claimed: if the United States should see an increase in the spoils wrought from imperialism, then at the same time, even the downtrodden in America will start to become progressively conservative and imperialistic. He further presupposes this when he talks of Europeans, saying:

Imperialism allowed the European workers - **once much more exploited and revolutionary than their Amerikan cousins** - to catch up in privileges and degeneracy.

If the European workers, "once much more exploited and revolutionary", could "catch up in privileges and degeneracy", *then the African-Americans can too*. And Sakai, whether or not he recognizes this fact, shies from it.

He then spends some time telling us of how the European immigrants in America became a labor aristocracy, and so forth. He goes over a brief history of America's rise as an imperialist power, their annexationist wars in the Philippines and Cuba, and so forth. At one point, while describing the Philippine-American war, he says:

Unable to cope with the guerrilla tactics of the Filipino revolutionaries, the U.S. Army decided to starve them into disintegration by destroying their social base - the Filipino population. The same genocidal "Population Regroupment" strategy that settlers first used against the Indian nations was revived in the Philippines - and would be used again in Vietnam in our times... **Villages would be burned down, crops and livestock destroyed, diseases spread, the People killed or forced to evacuate as refugees. Large areas were declared as "free fire zones" in which all Filipinos were to be killed on sight.**

The problem is that, in his romanticized view of colonizers and colonized, Sakai has forgotten a rather damning fact: by 1900, African-Americans were no longer a few brigades stationed on Indian land, *but a major component of the US Army*. They very much partook in these genocidal wars:

During the 1899-1902 American-Filipino war the United States Army dispatched four Black regiments to the Philippines. **Some sources indicate that 7,000 Black soldiers [5.6%] served in this conflict.** Here **the Black soldiers found themselves in the position of fighting against oppressed islanders** who were seeking independence from foreign (i.e. U.S.) rule.(Boehringer, 2009)

And we should point out that the American military still has plenty of Blacks in it – this was no “temporary alliance”, as Sakai would say.

	% of US Population	% of US Army
Euro-American (White)	75%	61%
African-American (Black)	13%	21%
Other	12%	18%

(US Army, 2010)

It would seem that what Sakai avoids acknowledging – that if Blacks are given the spoils of imperialism, they will become imperialists – has already been proven true (if it wasn’t already in the time of the Baconites).

With all that we have gone over now fresh in our minds, we will examine how Sakai describes this war, which the African-Americans participated in:

U.S. Imperialism took the Philippines by literally turning whole regions into smoldering graveyards. U.S. Brig. Gen. James Bell, upon returning to the U.S. in 1901, said that his men **had killed one out of every six Filipinos on the main island of Luzon** (that would be some one million deaths just there). It is certain that at least 200,000 Filipinos died in the genocidal conquest. In Samar province, where the patriotic resistance to the U.S. invaders was extremely persistent, U.S. Gen. Jacob Smith ordered his troops to shoot every Filipino man, woman or child they could find "over ten" (years of age).

Sakai’s attempt to stir the enraged impulses of the reader backfires when the reader learns that African-Americans took part in this process, too.

He then goes over the anti-imperialist movement that formed in the wake of the invasion of the Philippines, and, quoting one of the leading figures of this movement, he shows how a contradiction arose between the imperialists who wished to continue the development of the “American nation”, and those who wished to stop it in its tracks, to prevent it from further annexing territories. Sakai quotes one such anti-imperialist:

“The scheme of Americanizing our 'new possessions' in that sense is therefore absolutely hopeless. The immutable forces of nature are against it. **Whatever we may do for their improvement, the people of the Spanish Antilles will remain ... Spanish Creoles and Negroes, and the people of the Philippines, Filipinos, Malays, Tagals, and so on ... a hopelessly heterogeneous element - in some respects more hopeless even than the colored people now living among us.**”

In other words, the anti-imperialists wish to stop annexing territories because these peoples are *so* foreign to the Anglo-American base that they cannot be assimilated – they are “even more hopeless than the colored people” in the matter of assimilation.

The Blacks are at least “American”, Anglo-American, even if not “White”. But the Tagalog, Malays, and so on are not even “American”, they are nothing close to Anglo-American, and it would take many generations for their languages to be successfully “assimilated”, especially when one considers that they would not be intermingling with the other Americans; they would be isolated on the Philippine islands hundreds of miles away, in the Pacific. Thus, the former (that is, African-Americans) can be integrated into the American imperialist system, even if it takes a very long time, but the latter (the Philippine peoples) cannot be assimilated at all, for they do not even share land with the “American” nation – and, as Sakai has shown, the whole national and “racial” question in America arises out of peoples’ relation to the land.

That is the real basis of the contradiction between the “settler camps”, as Sakai calls them.

Still, the imperialist camp would win out, the Philippines were invaded and brutally occupied, and the African-Americans played a prominent role in this process.

Sakai then treats us to lengthy praise of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), the famous labor union meant to be “one big union of all the workers”. He tells us how the IWW, unlike previous White labor groups, is unique in that it “genuinely despised... white-supremacist persecution”. Still, he criticizes:

The I.W.W. never attempted to educate the most exploited white workers to unite with the national liberation struggles. Instead, it argued that "racial" unity on the job to raise wages was all that mattered.

Thus, the IWW was advocating not for White labor, like the old labor unions, but “American” labor – the labor of Whites and Blacks combined. But when Sakai says:

This is the approach used by the AFL-CIO today; obviously, it's a way of building a union in which white-supremacist workers tolerate colonial workers...

This is far off the mark. On the contrary: it was a way to build a union which was precisely *not* white-supremacist, as all the previous ones were, but which was *American*, and which saw no distinction between the Black and the White.

Sakai, in trying to paint Americanism as White Supremacy, accidentally condemns his own argument when he says:

The I.W.W. warned white workers: "**Leaving the Negro outside of your union makes him a... scab¹⁰**", dangerous to the organized workers..." **These words reveal that the I.W.W.'s goal was to control colonial labor for the benefit of white workers...**

"As far as the 'negro question' goes, it means simply this: Either the whites organize with the negroes, or the bosses will organize the negroes against the whites..."

If the IWW's goal was to *control colonial labor*, and at the same time, *they were actively recruiting Black members into their ranks* – and further, if those Blacks who did not join the ranks of this union attempting to “control colonial labor” became “scabs, dangerous to the organized workers” – what are we to make of this? Is the IWW not then clearly an “American” union, predicated on distributing the spoils of “colonial labor” to both Whites *and* Blacks, i.e., to “Americans”? This is what Sakai accidentally implies in his argument.

So really, it is more accurate to say: the IWW's goal was to control colonial labor for the benefit of “American” workers, not for White workers.

Sakai seals the matter completely when he shows that the IWW, in fact, *does not acknowledge the existence of the Black and White nations*, and therefore, cannot be acting in the name of “White supremacy”. Rather, they recognize the “American” nation, the melting-pot nation based on Anglo-American imperialism:

Even in 1919, after two years of severe "race riots" in the North (armed attacks by white workers on Afrikan exile communities), **the I.W.W. kept insisting that there was: "...no race problem. There is only a class problem. The economic interests of all workers, be they white, black, brown or yellow, are identical**, and all are included in the I.W.W.

Thus, the problem of the IWW is not a matter of “White supremacy”, but a matter of denying the existence of a distinction between the White and Black American peoples. It is the first major “American” labor movement.

¹⁰ Someone who takes a striking worker's job.

THE RISE OF AMERICAN LABOR

Sakai now moves from the 1910s and 20s, to the 1930s and 40s, the era of the Great Depression and the rise of fascism in Europe, and the “New Deal”.

It is a revealing comparison that during the 1930s the European imperialists could only resolve the social crisis in Italy, Germany, Spain, Poland, Finland, Rumania, and so on, by introducing fascism, while in the U.S. the imperialists resolved the social crisis with the New Deal. In Germany the workers were hit with the Gestapo, while in Amerika they got the C.I.O. industrial unions.

What Sakai means here is that, unlike Europe, where the land question had reached a critical point, in America there was still Western lands to settle, and so the global economic depression resulted only in some social-democratic reforms in the US while leading to the rise of Nazism in Germany, and so on.

We will skip the rather banal historical data Sakai supplies and go instead to the “New Deal”, the Roosevelt-era economic reforms in the United States which introduced limited social-democratic measures to rebuild the American economy. Sakai explains to us how this process was ultimately the final step in the creation of an “American” identity – that thing which, as we said earlier, was originally the “ghost” of various Whites *and Blacks*, and immigrants in general, fighting for their freedom (to do one thing or another) through the American Revolution.

The major class contradictions which had been developing since industrialization were finally resolved...

The New Deal administration of President Franklin Roosevelt reunited all settlers old and new. It gave the European "ethnic" national minorities real integration as Americans by sharply raising their privileges. New Deal officials and legislation promoted economic struggle and class organization by the industrial proletariat - but only in the settler way, in government-regulated unions loyal to U. S. Imperialism. President Roosevelt himself became the political leader of the settler proletariat, and used the directed power of their aroused millions to force through his reforms of the Empire.

Thus, both the Anglo-speaking Whites, and the recently immigrated “ethnic Europeans” who still speak their native tongues, are formally recognized as one and the same “American” people. And it is fitting that this should be the final step in the creation of this abstract “American” identity, because the American is the White, the Black, the Indian, etc., who has given up his identity as a White, a Black, an Indian, etc. *The American identity is the very identity of the non-American*, of the foreigner who is being made un-foreign by necessity. “America is a nation of immigrants”, as the saying goes.

The American identity already existed since the time of the Revolution as a *military* coalition of the Whites and freed Blacks against the English and Indians; the “American” was the immigrant, the outsider, who had come to America, whether in chains or in comfort, to partake in the conquest of land. The “American” was a necessary presupposition in fighting the English.

With the Civil War, it transcended to a *political* coalition of Whites and Blacks against the Indians and Whites who stood in the way of conquest.

Here, with Roosevelt, this identity is transcended to an *economic* coalition; the Black begins to be lifted to the White on an economic basis in the midst of the New Deal reforms.

Now, it is only a matter of time before the African-Americans demand their *social* integration in the “American nation” be recognized as well. Sakai has spent the whole book implying that the Blacks are on the brink of rising up; yet, as we’ll come to see, here they are on the brink of Americanization.

But first, we should further investigate the “American identity”, and what it consists of. If we are right in these assertions about the Black nation, the facts should reflect that.

Sakai says:

It was only with this shakeup, these modernizing reforms, and the homogenized unity of the settler masses that U.S. Imperialism could gamble everything on solving its problems through **world domination**. This was the desperate preparation for World War. The global economic crisis after 1929 was to be resolved in another imperialist war, and the U.S. Empire intended to be the victor.

Sakai here says “world domination”; and in doing so, he implies that the “American nation” is not a nation of exploiting the Blacks, but a nation of exploiting *the whole world*.

He is correct. And, since he is correct, *he must acknowledge that there is now room for Blacks to benefit from the “American nation” – the settler system – without the settler system collapsing!*

And Sakai recognizes that *this is precisely what happened*, when he quotes:

This social reunification could be seen in President Roosevelt's unprecedented third-term victory in the 1940 elections. Pollster Samuel Lubell analyzed the landslide election results for the Saturday Evening Post:

“Roosevelt won by the vote of Labor... and the Negro.”

Why would “the Negro” vote for Roosevelt unless they stood to gain from it? And what were these gains, if not – as Sakai said – the spoils of “world domination”?

The American identity, it would seem, includes the African-Americans. The economic barriers are crumbling – the Black has, since the time of Bacon, more apparently since the time of the Philippine War, and now, so clearly that nobody can deny, become “Americanized”. It is only a matter of demolishing old civic and social barriers (most of which were already weakened in the days of the Civil War and Reconstruction), and the Blacks will be united with Whites as equals in the conquest of the world’s land. On the military, political, and economic level, they are already united in this regard, and their difference is now only a matter of inequality not in how the spoils are divided, but in how the spoils may be used.

And it’s improper to hand-wave the fact that the Blacks voted for Roosevelt as “this was Roosevelt imposing on them”, “this was Roosevelt duping them”, because Sakai himself says:

It was not just the social concessions that the government made; the deep allegiance of the Euro-Amerikan workers to this new Leader and his New Deal movement was born in the feeling that he truly spoke for their class interests. **This was no accident. Nations and classes in the long run get the leadership they deserve.**

It “was no accident”. So such hand-waving will not do.

Sakai then tells us again what we can expect as the fate of Black unrest, by telling us what happened with White unrest:

Once outsiders challenging the local establishment... the [CIO Union] was now part of the local bourgeois political structure.

One might think it is harsh to draw this comparison, that it is contriving Sakai’s words. In that case, they are recommended to read when Sakai *agrees with this interpretation*:

Nor was this [bribery] limited to Euro-Amerikans. Coleman Young (Mayor of Detroit), John Conyers (U.S. Congressman), and many other Afrikan politicians got their start as young CIO staff members... The CIO unions became an essential gear in the liberal reform machine of the Democratic Party.

Thus, we may conclude: the economic unification of the Whites and Blacks into an “American” people has taken place, and all that remains is the civic unification of Whites and Blacks into a single “American” entity.

The government and the labor aristocracy were impatient to get colonial workers safely tied up...

That they were. But at this point, we are talking not in terms of White colonists and Black colonized, but of American colonists and non-American colonized (in countries like the Philippines, etc.).

As if anticipating protest, he gives us the argument:

The Afrikan Civil Rights organizations, the labor aristocracy, and the liberal New Deal all had to "educate" resisting workers like those to get in line with the settler unions.

He seems to imply that, since the Blacks didn't immediately go with it, they are absolved altogether. What he leaves out is: did these "African Civil Rights organizations", "the labor aristocracy", and so forth, *succeed* in "educating resisting workers to get in line with the settler unions"? According to the data Sakai already laid out for us, we are to assume they succeeded.

The integration of the CIO, therefore, had nothing to do with increasing job opportunities for Afrikans or building "working class unity."

Sakai is right: it is even worse. It was the integration of the Black nation itself, into the American nation.

It was a new instrument of oppressor nation control over the oppressed nation proletarians.

That it was. Only the Blacks and Whites were both, in this case, the oppressor nations, and the "instrument" was their unification.

Sakai further elaborates on the Second World War. Here, the "American identity" in its truest sense was solidified by returning to the original identity: the military alliance of White and Black, this time against the Germans, Italians, and Japanese.

BLACK AND WHITE NATIONALISM

The development of the Black and White nations both consist of numerous internal “splits”, ruptures, over what the course for the nation should be. The divide ultimately rests on the question: “Better ideological life (i.e. living truly free and self-sustainingly), or better material life (i.e. accepting the spoils from imperialism and becoming Americanized)?”

The former fall into the camp we should call the nationalists.

The nationalists did not always exist. They first come into being only at the dawn of the American Revolution, and even here, they only exist in embryonic form (as does the American state itself). It was not until the consolidation of the American state and the political integration of Blacks during the Civil War, and the final centralization of the American state and the economic integration of Blacks during the New Deal, that there is, in proportion to these integrations and centralizations comes the resistance of the Black and White nations to retain their identities and nationhood *separately* from the “American nation”. As the logical conclusion of this resistance, the demand put forth by Black and White nationalists are independent Black and White states on the American continent, which presupposes the destruction of the American identity and state.

The latter fall into the camp we should call the “reformers”, “liberals”, “Americanizers”, “cosmopolitans”, “imperialists”; in short, whatever one would like to call them.

They comprise the group who determined the best course for the Black and White nations was the eradication of their identities and national sovereignty, their “merging” into a single “American nation” based on global conquest.

Sakai says:

The revisionists in general and the Euro-American "Left" in particular have falsely portrayed the Afrikan people within the U.S. Empire as having no independent revolutionary struggle at that time, but only a "civil rights" struggle.

We take Sakai, by “revolutionary”, to mean nationalist – this is what he implies¹¹.

The fact is that, at this point, the Blacks have split into two camps: the nationalist, revolutionary camp, and the Americanizer, reformist camp

The nationalist camp offers ideological dignity, ideological satisfaction. An empty belly, but dignity.

¹¹ That they are “revolutionary” to Sakai because they are fighting the American state. We consider a “nationalist” to be someone who, at this point, would be fighting the American state.

The reformist camp offers material dignity, material satisfaction. No dignity, but a full belly.

History has proven that the reformist camp won out. But in order to avoid acknowledging this truth, Sakai portrays these two camps not as the opposite and contradictory sides of the Black movement, but as *mutual and compatible forms* of one and the same abstract “political awareness”:

Much of the present written accounts of Afrikan politics in this period centers around events in the refugee communities of the North - the "Harlem Renaissance," tenants' organizations fighting evictions in the Chicago ghetto, Afrikan participation in union drives in Cleveland and Detroit, and so on. **All these struggles and events were indeed important parts of the developing political awareness. But they were not the whole of what was happening**

Afrikans were picking up the gun. That should tell us something about their political direction.

But we will not dwell on this trifle.

Sakai takes a moment to remind us that White nationalism exists as well, *and that it is a revolutionary force just like Black nationalism*:

There were, of course, many Euro-Amerikan sharecroppers and tenants as well in the South. Most of them were extremely poor, a poverty whose roots lay in the original defeat of their abortive Confederate nation. **For them the possible path of class conscious struggle was visible.**

And this, Sakai explains, leads to a situation wherein there are strong White nationalist unions, strong Black nationalist unions, and both of them are oriented in a somewhat proper direction in the class struggle, yet refuse to cooperate in the national struggle. Sakai highlights this with an anecdote:

Addressing a group of Choctaw Indian farm workers, Mitchell called on them to "get organized" by joining the [White union]. The Choctaw leader simply ended the discussion by saying: "[The] Indian [is] already organized. When [the] white man and Black man get ready to take back the land, we join them."

What is interesting, then, is when Sakai portrays the Black nationalists abandoning the nationalist struggle for “American” imperialists *as a revolutionary act!*

The primary organizer for the STFU¹² in its formative years was its Afrikan vice-president, the Rev. E.B. McKinney. **McKinney related to the STFU and its radical Euro-Amerikans only to the exact degree that he felt Afrikans thereby gained in self-organization and political strength.** This rural preacher turned out to be both much better educated than most of the settler union activists...

¹² Southern Tenant Farmers Union.

[In 1939] Rev. McKinney quit the STFU in protest, saying that: "The Negro is the goat of the STFU." All thirteen Afrikan tenant farmer union locals in Arkansas quit the STFU and joined the rival CIO union as a group.

It would seem the old problem has simply happened in reverse. Previously, the Whites wished to gain from lowering the Blacks, and so they betrayed the Blacks in the class struggle for national aims. Here, the same thing has occurred, but in reverse.

How does Sakai appraise such a thing this time around? He falls back to his “temporary and practical alliance” excuse *yet again*:

These Afrikan sharecroppers were trying to take advantage of Euro-Amerikan labor factional in-fighting, playing those factions off against each other attempting to find a situation with the most resources and leverage for themselves.

Yet *still*, Sakai is forced to concede that they selfishly betrayed the labor movement to find “the most resources and leverage for themselves” by “trying to take advantage of Euro-American in-fighting”.

Sakai has been sure to criticize the Whites for their tendency to abandon Blacks during the labor struggle and desert to the labor aristocratic unions that cooperate with the American state. Here, the Black nationalists have done just the same thing.

Did Sakai not spend several pages pouring venom on the White workers when they did this? Then let us see what venom he pours on the Black workers who did the same thing:

Practice showed that the Afrikan sharecropper and tenant labor struggles not only had a class character but were part of a larger national struggle. **They were anti-colonial struggles having the goal of removing the bootheel of settler occupation off of Afrikan life and land.**

Anti-colonial struggles! That is how he describes Blacks selling out their nation to the American state to become “Americanized”, and to have a greater share in the spoils wrought by imperialism.

And now, Sakai abruptly takes us to *Ethiopia* of all places, because evidently he *does not understand what the Black nation actually is*. He assumes that any nation with those who are black-skinned is, therefore, the Black nation:

The political horizons for Afrikans had opened wide in those years. It is especially important to understand that masses of Afrikans viewed themselves as part of a world struggle, that their aims and concerns encompassed but went far beyond immediate economic issues. Nothing proved this more clearly than the spontaneous mass movement to support Ethiopia in its war against Italian imperialism.

Afrikan within the U.S. Empire reacted instantly in a great uproar of anger and solidarity. Journalist Roi Ottley pointed out that there had been "no event in recent times that stirred the rank-and-file of Negroes more than the Italo-Ethiopian War." It is important to grasp the full and exact significance of this political upheaval... Why then did this one case call forth such special attention from Afrikans in the U.S. Empire? Because it involved the principle of national rights for Afrikans, the defense of Afrikan nationhood.

There are two major flaws here.

The first is that the African-American *slaves* did not come from Ethiopia. There are perhaps African-American *immigrants* who came from Ethiopia, but if we are talking about them, then we are no longer talking about slaves, but *settlers*, who – like the Europeans – escaped economic conditions in their homeland to seek a better life in the settler state.

The second is that if those with black skin are, therefore, the Black nation, then obviously, those with white skin should be one White nation. Yet, he distinguishes the Whites and the Russians, the Whites and the British, the Whites and the Italians, and so forth.

Why? Are these not all “white”?

They are not White, because the White nation is located in America, and so is the Black nation. The racial categories of “white” and “black” as based on skin, or on other biological factors, is irrelevant here.

Sakai misses the mark, then, when he suggests that the Blacks are all united not only in America, but *everywhere* – in doing this, he sets up the perfect foundation for an imperialist project of “world-unification” of all the Blacks.

If anything, Sakai should be criticizing the American Blacks who are romanticizing over the Ethiopian resistance to Italy (which, Sakai doesn’t mention, failed).

Instead, Sakai emphatically tells us that “even the moderate political forces rallied around this... issue”! As if this is a good thing!

Even the moderate political forces rallied around this most basic issue to the nationally oppressed. Even someone such as Walter White, the executive secretary of the NAACP, could angrily write: "Italy, brazenly, has set fire under the powder keg of white arrogance and greed..."

And then Sakai, for whatever reason, lowers himself from Everest to the ground: he tells us, with his eyes beaming, that the Ethiopian imperial officials gather in a Church and convince the Black nation to sell its life to Ethiopia!

Representatives of the Ethiopian came to the U.S. At a packed Harlem meeting of 3,000 at Rev. Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.'s Baptist Church, Ethiopian envoy Tasfaye invoked the solidarity oppressed Afrikan peoples: "It is said that we despise Negroes. **In the first place, you are not**

Negroes. Who told you that you were Negroes? You are the sons and daughters of Africa, your motherland, which calls YOU now to aid her last surviving free black people."

The "Volunteer Movement" arose spontaneously throughout the Nation. Thousands upon thousands of Afrikans volunteered to go fight in Ethiopia. The Black Legion established a military training camp in rural New York, and its leaders urged Afrikans to prepare to renounce U.S. citizenship. While the "Volunteer Movement" was blocked by U.S. imperialism, its popular nature shows how powerful were the potential forces being expressed through the Ethiopian support issue.

Sakai glosses over all of this and expects the reader to take it willingly. But he fails to mention: did he not earlier describe the plan by Whites to send the African-Americans back to Africa to be a "Hitlerian fantasy"?¹³ Is this not *precisely* what is going on now, with Ethiopian public officials requesting American Blacks – most of whom did not even descend from Ethiopia – come die in a hopeless struggle (which ended in defeat on the part of the Ethiopians) in a country that has nothing to do with them (how many American Blacks can speak Amharic?) instead of carrying out a struggle at home?

In fact, does he not laud the same American project of deporting all the Blacks (again, what Sakai described as a "Hitlerian fantasy"!) when he praises it under the name of "Garveyism"? He describes Garveyism:

The Garvey movement at its peak in the early 1920s was the greatest outbreak of Afrikan political activity since the Civil War. It said that Afrikans could find their liberation in building a new, modern Afrikan Nation of their own **back on the soil of the Afrikan continent...**

As a beginning toward the day, Garveyism organized national institutions here in all spheres of life. However modest, these medical, religious, military, economic and other organizations were designed to develop Afrikan self-reliance and national independence...

What remains to be asked: are the Africans okay with this? We know the Ethiopian *government* apparently is. But what Sakai describes here would be, quite literally, *the large-scale invasion of Africa by the African-Americans*, in a word – *the same thing the Europeans did when they arrived in America*.

Sakai even admits this! He says:

To the extent that **Garveyism was naive about capitalism** (which it obviously was) this was a stage of development widely shared by its critics as well. **Garveyism's weakness was that it saw in capitalism - the form of social organization of the colonizer - the instruments that Afrikans could use to free themselves.** So that **the essence of nation-building was expressed in forms**

¹³ "President Jefferson's solution to this dilemma was to take all Afrikan children away from their parents for compact shipment to the West Indies and Afrika... The President thought this Hitlerian fantasy both 'practicable' and 'blessed.'"

precisely paralleling those of European society - businesses, churches, Black Cross, etc., etc. Garveyism's predilection for Western titles of nobility ("Duke of Nigeria") and full-dress European court uniforms was but a symptom of this.

So it is a *direct copy* of the European settlement of the Americas! Except this time, he supports it, because it is happening to people who belong, in his mind, to the “oppressed” category, and thus whatever they do must be an act of the oppressed and cannot be the act of an oppressor.

Muddle, in the strictest sense of the word. What Sakai has proven here is that large amounts of African-Americans – even the Black nationalists – are able to be duped into supporting what would ultimately be the “American” invasion of the whole African continent. And Sakai hurts his own argument, then, when he himself not only buys into this dupe as well, but argues that these movements are the *primary form of Black nationalism* in the 20th century:

...Garveyism and its successor, the Nation of Islam, were the two largest outbreaks of Afrikan activity and organization-building within the continental Empire of our century...

INTEGRATION AND CIVIL RIGHTS

We have touched time and time again on Sakai's portrayal of the Blacks as somehow disconnected from imperialism and the settler state. Sakai now himself reserves a section of the book for showing how the settler state has offered various political and economic concessions to the Blacks:

The neo-colonial stage known as Black Reconstruction had qualitatively changed and enlarged the New Afrikan petit-bourgeoisie. **This class, even in defeat by the Euro-Amerikan planter capitalists, were to a degree held up by and patronized by U.S. imperialism... they retained like a religion their loyalty and dependence upon the Federal government.**

By 1892 the Federal offices in Washington employed some 1,500 Afrikans.

Washington, D.C. was then the "capitol" in exile of Afrikans, the center of "Negro society." Some eight bureaucratic positions with status eventually were reserved for them...

In 1913 a journalist light-heartedly labelled these eight "the Black Cabinet." But what began in jest was eagerly taken up by petit-bourgeois Afrikans in seriousness. **The custom began of regarding the "Black Cabinet" as the representatives to the U.S. Government of the whole Afrikan population within the U.S. So a petit-bourgeois Afrikan national leadership had been created which was, in fact, both employed by and solely picked by the imperialist government.**

Sakai, perhaps to console himself and his ideal of the Black nation, adds:

But, of course... the imperialist-selected Afrikan leaders [never] represented the will of the masses.

He then tells us of the attack launched against Garveyism, and Black nationalism in general, by the reformist, "American" wing of the African-American movement. Sakai explains:

The political attack against the Garvey Movement within the Afrikan Nation was most aggressively spearheaded by a young Afrikan "socialist" and labor organizer, Asa Philip Randolph... [he was] useful to the U.S. Empire...

Who do the masses side with then? The nationalists, or those who are "useful to the US empire"? Sakai would have us believe that this whole time, the Black masses were supporting the nationalists. Yet, he says of Randolph:

He would become for decades the most important Afrikan union leader, eventually rising to be the only Afrikan member of the AFL-CIO Executive Council... **He was credited with forcing the Federal Government to desegregate industry.**

It's hard for activists today to view [Randolph] as anything but another of the faceless Uncle Toms.

This greatly underestimates his historic role... A. Philip Randolph was a radical star in the Afrikan community.

And he goes as far to implicate Martin Luther King Jr.:

[Randolph's] long tenure as the lone recognized Afrikan leader on a "national level"... was so striking that it led the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. to query in an article why "85% of Negroes are working people, some 2,000,000 are in trade unions, but in 50 years we have produced only one national leader - A. Philip Randolph."

Sakai intends to illustrate how King is also a tool of US empire, but in doing so, he proves that the Black masses follow the *reformist*, and not the *nationalist* line, because – and nobody can deny this – *King was most certainly followed by the Black masses*.

At last, all the tedious buildup of national strife in America comes to a climax in the late 20th century. That which has been forced on the African-Americans for centuries here comes to a definite end. After the economic integration of Blacks and Whites into the “American nation”, there now only remains their social and civic integration. In this struggle, there prevail two main camps among the Whites: the integrationists, those who wish to carry out this political integration, and the segregationists, those who want to prevent this political integration. Further are the two camps between the Blacks: the integrationists, and the nationalists.

There is no mass insurrection of Black workers, as Sakai has repeatedly hinted at throughout the book. We are at the climax of the antagonism between the White and Black nations, and it culminates only in some marches for “equality”, and some counter-marches and police violence against that.

Sakai alleges that, by claiming this, one is engaging in historical revisionism. But, it seems Sakai has just definitely proved it to be *true*, in his own words, when he argues that this reformist, anti-nationalist line was followed by King, who was followed by the masses.

This is about the full extent Sakai goes to examine the American Civil Rights movement. This tremendous climax to the antagonisms Sakai has been describing is bizarrely absent from the overall work. Sakai mentions King, then goes back to describe the 1950s and the fall of the Communist Party (CPUSA), but upon arriving at 1960s, he begins to talk about Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Third-World Labor, and so on. He abandons the Black nation almost entirely, and begins to amuse us with trifles.

GLOBALISM AND PARASITISM

Parasitism is still the principle characteristic of the Euro-American society.

Sakai says this, and he is both right and wrong.

Is it the principle characteristic of the Euro-American society? Yes. But he should say it is also the principle characteristic of the *American* society in general; yet, he is afraid to take this step. Still, he unintentionally acknowledges it when he says:

Only now the crude parasitism of the early settler conquest society has grown into and merged with its blood the greater parasitism of the world imperialism. **The imperialist oppressor nations of North Amerika, Western Europe and Japan have in the post World War II years reached a mass standard of living unparalleled in human history.** These nations of the imperialist metropolis are choked in an orgy of extravagance, of fetishistic "consumerism," of industrial production without limit.

Unless he means to insist that the Blacks and other American peoples have in no way benefited, at any turn, from "extravagance, consumerism, industrial production without limit", etc., then he tells us that these peoples are being treated to a life unimaginable on their ancestral continent.

The majority of the world's population, the proletarian and peasant masses of the neo-colonial Third World, exist under conditions of increasing hunger and landlessness, of increasing terror and dislocation...

Armies of "terror and dislocation", bringing "increasing hunger and landlessness" upon people. This is also what Sakai calls the "immiseration of the world's people on a global scale".

So, what should we call it when the Black Americans are not starving of widespread famine in the streets, but on the contrary, are taking part in the very armies which facilitate this "increasing terror and dislocation"?

Sakai does us a favor when he gives an example of precisely the neo-colonial terror he's talking about:

In 1965, when a reform government was attempted by a faction of the Dominican military, the U.S. promptly invaded with 23,000 troops to restore the old order.

Sakai does not mention the fact that, by 1965, *Blacks are over 20% of the US Army.*(US Public Broadcasting Service, r. 2021)

Thus, we should rewrite his claim:

Millions have died... of hunger and disease [so] that Euro-Amerikans may overeat.

To:

Millions have died... of hunger and disease [so] that **Americans** may overeat.

And if he were to say this, then he would be correct.

Sakai then says a profound truth, only to miss a yet-profounder truth:

No society would freely enter into such self-destructive relationships. A world of colonies and neo-colonies create the only conditions for the imperialist "free market." In addition to its own armies, **imperialism maintains in every nation that it dominates puppet military and police forces, amounting world-wide to millions of armed men, in order to extend capitalistic repression into the smallest and remotest village. The Third World War is already going on.**

But Sakai, clearly, is not in the position to yet come to the existential truth: that the "Third World War" is indeed already going on, *and that the African-Americans are overwhelmingly on the side of the imperialists*, shoulder-to-shoulder with their fellow "Americans", the Whites.

This is the conclusion Sakai has avoided, over and over, throughout his book. The whole polemical attitude taken by Sakai, time and time again, is used to mask the disconnect between Sakai's assertions, and his conclusions; either willingly or unwillingly, he fails to acknowledge the crucial fact that *Blacks are also beneficiaries of imperialism and have been since they were taking part in Bacon's rebellion on their own free will.*

The moment he began writing of "temporary and calculated alliances", he plucked the pedals from the flower and left us with only the stem.

This is the real, *objective* conclusion of Sakai's work, which is distorted through Sakai's own subjective ideal of a broad uprising among the "minority nationalities". And he avoids this conclusion because, by necessity, it leads one to an inarguable destination: *the majority of Blacks will continue to favor and serve imperialism for as long as they have something to gain from it.*

That is the flower when we nurture the stem Sakai handed us, and witness it grow back its pedals.

At any rate, from different subjective truths, Sakai reaches the same objective truth: *the Whites and Blacks must be kept from assimilating into a single American people*, for as soon as they are assimilated, they will be a parasitic machine like the world has never seen.

And this conclusion – regardless of how he arrives there – is what raises Sakai above his contemporaries, and makes his work so revolutionary and brilliant. But we will elaborate on this in our own conclusion.

Sakai reaches the subject of globalism. Again, he at once proves definitively that the Blacks are beneficiaries of imperialism, labor aristocrats:

The observation was made by the Black Liberation Movement during the 1960's that modern Amerika was just "slavery days" on a higher level - in which U.S. imperialism as slavemaster made the entire Third World its plantation and Amerika itself its "Big House." **The real economy of the U.S. Empire is not continental but global in its structural dimensions.**

The U.S. oppressor nation itself has increasingly specialized into a headquarters society, heavily dependent upon the super profits of looting the entire Third World.

Sakai has now admitted that the "US oppressor nation" is not one of *continental* exploitation, but *global* exploitation.

Sakai is right! The US is a tool for the exploitation of all the world's people on behalf of the *Americans*, the Whites, Blacks, and anyone else under the settler state. It is not the "White" nation doing the exploiting anymore, but the "American" nation.

Sakai agrees that this is the case when he describes how the Blacks were moved up in rank through American society, *which he tries to portray as Blacks being moved downwards*:

In these years the Euro-Amerikan workers moved upwards, **increasingly handing over their places in basic production to colonial workers...**

Afrikan were recruited anew into the factories. They, along with Chicano-Mexicano and Puerto Rican labor, would keep production growing while most Euro-Amerikan workers laid down their tools, one by one.

Were those "places in basic production" not "labor aristocratic" when the Whites occupied them? Then, are they not also labor aristocratic when the "colonial workers" occupy them? The question is not nature of the person doing the work, but the nature of the work itself.

If they are being given jobs in the factories of America – something which, when the Whites escaped their condition in Europe to partake in, Sakai called labor aristocratic and exploitative – then are they not becoming labor aristocrats and exploiters?

Sakai seems to think that by having "colonized workers" in the labor aristocratic factories, the labor aristocratic factories become colonial. In fact, it is the opposite: by having "colonial workers" in the labor aristocratic factories, it makes the colonial workers labor aristocratic.

With all this in mind, Sakai's critique of "Euro-American" parasitism transforms, in reality, to a criticism of all American parasitism, and it is once we have allowed Sakai's work to break from these fetters that it begins to shine most brilliantly:

[Their] seeming productive vigor was only outward. U.S. imperialism was moving the weight of [American] society away from toil and into a subsidized decadence.

Essential production and socially useful work occupy a gradually diminishing place in the domestic activity of U.S. corporations, in the work of its settler citizens, in the imperial culture. Decadence is taking over in an even deeper way, in which non-essential and parasitic things become the most profitable, while worthless activities are thought the most important. Always present within imperialism, this decadence now becomes dominant within the oppressor nation.

Finally, he explains that any semblance of industry remaining within the “American nation” is taken over not by Blacks, but by *new immigrants*:

The growing dependence on undocumented workers just transfers new Third World production inside the borders of the continental Empire. **Numbering a minimum of 6 million at this time, these workers are primarily Mexicano**, but include Dominicans, Chinese, Haitians, and others from all over the world. **Their role in production is by now essential and irreplaceable to the U.S. oppressor nation.**

And by referring to the “US oppressor nation”, instead of the “Euro-American oppressor nation”, Sakai has most certainly acknowledged that the Blacks are included in benefiting from this process; maybe he did not mean to.

Sakai then sabotages his own argument by quoting Lenin, showing he would have *opposed* Sakai’s position:

As Lenin pointed out: "The class of those who own nothing but do not labor either is incapable of overthrowing the exploiters. Only the proletarian class, which maintains the whole of society, has the power to bring about a successful social revolution."

Now, by Sakai’s own evidence, the Blacks no longer stand to be the “proletarian class, which maintains the whole of society”; instead, they have been supplanted in this regard by the “Third-World”, and by new immigrant labor from Mexico, China, and so on, which Sakai has totaled at “a minimum of 6 million”, an amount equal to 22% of the Black population at the time Sakai is writing.(The New York Times, 1983).

Sakai, still unable to disillusion himself, says:

The meaning of this for us is obvious.

He moves on to giving us a criticism of the “American nation” and its cultural decomposition as a result of its parasitism. Unfortunately, he unnecessarily paralyzes this analysis by applying his criticism only to the Whites, and not to the Americans in general. Still, we will keep in mind that, with all that has been evidenced so far, what that he says about Euro-Americans should

apply to “Americans” in general. We will analyze his words on the Euro-American nation as if he were talking about the whole “American nation”.

There is a distinct and exceptional [American] way of life that materially and ideologically fuses together the settler masses - shopkeeper, trade-unionist and school teacher alike.

The general command of bourgeois ideology over these settler communities is reinforced by the mobilization of tens of millions of [Americans] into special reactionary organizations.

A fantastically pointed analysis of the “American ethic”, when we allow it to be such a thing.

And Sakai, who is very fond of flattering his arguments with poetry, gives what is actually a good metaphor:

These "white poor" are truly the lost; the abandoned remnants of the old class struggle existing without direction inside Babylon.

He has implied here is that, *should they have direction*, these “white poor” will be a force in the class struggle.

We will keep this in mind.

Sakai moves on to diagnose America’s “philistine mode of life”, a thing most people can certainly agree exists. We will reserve pedantic criticisms and instead comment him for how he describes the way in which this “philistine mode of life” manifests throughout the “American nation”:

Thus, the mass of **the lower middle classes, the huge labor aristocracy, and most workers are fused together by a common national way of life and a common national ideology as oppressors**. The masses share a way of life that [mimics] the bourgeoisie, dominated by a decadent preoccupation with private consumption. **Consuming things and owning things, no matter how shoddy or trivial, is the mass religion**. The real world of desperate toil, the world of the proletarians who own nothing but their labor power, is looked down upon with contempt and fear by the [Americans].

An adequate description of the ideology fostered by imperialism.

Sakai concludes this point by understanding the past, but not present:

In Amerika this bribery, this bourgeoisification, took place within the context of a settler society... **The immigrant European proletarians were bribed by being absorbed - "integrated" if you will - into this specific society.**

Were Blacks, during the era of FDR to the Civil Rights era to today, not in the process of being bribed by imperialism? Were they not also, as Sakai said, “begging to be bribed” during

the Baconite Rebellion? The Blacks are being “integrated” as well. Indeed, “integration” is what it has become commonly referred to in broad discourse.

Sakai then transitions to the topic of Zionism, and rather abruptly so – he attempts to connect it with the overall analysis.

We said before that if college students read Sakai before praising him, they would decry him as a racist. We now content ourselves in repeating that assertion, but this time, that they would decry him as an anti-Semite.

Either way, Sakai’s recognition of Zionism’s influence in the overall matter is a step worth commending. Further, his analysis of Zionism is extremely useful, because in it, he accidentally debunks all his earlier fantasies about the Black return to Africa, and implies some other things as well. He even outright demonstrates the inability to use ‘historical burdens’ as a means of appraising the modern living world, showing that no level of oppression faced by a people absolves them of objective historical criticism:

The connection between Euro-American settlerism and Zionist settlerism - twin servants of imperialism - is shown in all the recent reactionary political developments within the U.S. Jewish communities. **Repeated propaganda about the Holocaust is used as fascistic indoctrination, to whip up a belligerent sentimentality that justifies Euro-Americans as victims** ("no more guilt trips about racism") and powers new terroristic attacks on colonial peoples... The same ultra-Orthodox Zionist elements are killing Afrikan youth in Brooklyn and shooting Palestinian youth on the West Bank...

The Russian Jewry come as more reinforcements for the U.S. oppressor nation; come not for survival or bread, but for the rich, privileged lifestyle of settlerism. Beneath the propaganda, this is all very evident.

...The conquering and killing of Arabs, Afrikans, etc. is felt by Zionist settlers as therapeutic "rehabilitation," restoring them to European dimensions...

In Sakai’s words, people are using the historical injustices perpetrated upon Jews to absolve these same Jews when they perpetuate injustices on others, including Blacks.

What, then, when Blacks perpetuate historical injustices to be “restored to European dimensions”, such as the genocide of Filipinos? That is all we should say on the matter.

FANTASIES

We now come to the final chapter in Sakai's work, which he titles "TACTICAL & STRATEGIC". It is something of a "political program", drawn out by Sakai. We will investigate this plan as he describes it.

The settler nature of the Euro-American oppressor nation is the decisive factor in their political struggles. It is the decisive factor in relations between Third-World struggles and the Euro-American masses.

This is true. From now on, however, we will stop referring to how he should have spoken of the whole American masses, and not just the Euro-Americans. It should be implied.

Sakai opens up his appeal to the Americans not by appealing to the largest American nation – the Whites – nor by appealing to the largest minority nation, the Blacks. He does so by appealing to the *Asian-Americans*.

What are his grounds for appealing to such a unique minority? He is Asian-American.

It is in this little section that Sakai's inability to tear himself from his subjective position becomes the most pronounced. He says:

It is only by grasping this that the question of broader unity can be correctly answered. **This is a particular problem for Asian-Americans**, who as relatively small national minorities within the Continental Empire have a high organic need for political coalitions and alliances. **It is difficult to evaluate different forms of unity just from our own experiences alone.**

For some reason, while he entrusts our patience, he goes as far as saying the Asian-Americans don't have any political organization:

Asian national minorities here have had a limited history of political unity with each other...

Since historically most Asian workers here have been nationally segregated, there has been little opportunity to test out this trade union unity.

So why he begins his appeals to this group specifically, seemingly only on the basis of his identity, we are left wondering.

To better examine the question of strategic and tactical relations, we need to turn to the broader history of "Black-White workers unity," which has been used in the U.S. Empire as the classic example of the supposed superiority of radical integrationism.

Tactical unity should be understood as temporary, short-run unity around a specific issue by forces that can even be fundamentally antagonistic.

Sakai is again trying to peddle us nonsense about “temporary alliances”, this time calling it “tactical unity”:

By this definition, Sakai has rendered *any and all unity* to be “tactical unity”. That is, unless Sakai wishes to argue that there somewhere exists a unity between things that is permanent, that we know will exist from now until the end of time, in which case he has made a remarkable scientific discovery.

Alas. Sakai tries to do this.

The unity between proletarians of different nations, struggling towards socialism, is not tactical but strategic. **There is nothing temporary or tactical about the deep bond, for example, between the Vietnamese Revolution and the guerillas of El Salvador.**

Yes! There was “nothing temporary or tactical” about the “deep bond” between the “Vietnamese Revolution” and the “Guerillas of El Salvador” (he does not explain what this bond consists of), “nothing temporary” about this “deep bond” that does not exist any longer today.

This is the logic Sakai is willing to contort his body to, in order to make sense of the world.

Sakai then tries to explain a hardship the Blacks face, by explaining a benefit the Blacks have gained from imperialism:

Some Afrikan coal miners did indeed get higher wages, better working conditions and so on from this unity. But to pay for that most got driven out of their jobs. **Many Afrikan families who once mined coal now live in exile and on welfare in the North.**

A tragedy! They have gone from the mines to their homes, from hard labor and no pay, to no labor and hard pay.

However, Sakai does well to explain “American” nationalism, and what it is:

[It is] the advocates of oppressor nation hegemony over all struggles of the masses that are promoting the narrowest of nationalisms - that of the U.S. settler nation.

Sakai, for all the harsh criticism we have subjected him to, concludes his work admirably. He states something worth repeating a thousand times over:

Every nation and people has its own contribution to make to the world revolution. This is true for all of us, and obviously for Euro-Amerikans as well. But this is another discussion, one that can only really take place in the context of **breaking up the U.S. Empire and ending the U.S. oppressor nation.**

CONCLUSIONS

Sakai's work has led us to some general conclusions that can be agreed upon: that the "American nation" is predicated on imperialism and annexation; that integrationism is a force of this imperialism and annexation. All of these are secondary.

What is primary is that the gains of the White nation, when increased, correspond to a decrease in the gains of the Black nation; and the gains of the Black nation, when increased, correspond to a decrease in the gains of the White nation. Whenever the Whites experience a lift in their condition, the Blacks experience a decline; decline provokes the Blacks to react, and the Whites react upon this reaction. Whenever the Blacks experience a lift in their condition, the same thing occurs.

This two-fold relation is the basis of the White and Black identities.

Above all, the Whites and the Blacks are being assimilated into a single "American" people, which sustains itself on the labor of the whole world – as soon as this integrative process is complete, there will no longer be the antagonism which sustains their identities, nor will there be the internal antagonism which hinders the outward development of the United States. It will become a fully imperialistic nation, a social-democratic nation in the European style, and it will have been unified into a well-running machine of world conquest.

The Black and White nations exist on the basis of their antagonism to one another, and thus, for this antagonism to cease existing is also for these two nations to cease existing, to become "American". If these contradictions are resolved – and they can *only* be done so through world imperialism – the assimilatory process will be complete, and the Black and White nations will be dead.

What Sakai does not realize, but implies: if the Black nation is lifted up in order to resolve the contradiction between White and Black, then a part of the White nation – the nation which, top to bottom, has already been given "Babylon" (in Sakai's words) – must be lowered. This section will react violently, and in every case, will oppose the assimilation of the White and Black nations into the "American nation".

This will be the social base for mass social movement in the United States. The Black nation, as Sakai himself has proven, will in any case choose to be lifted up by the spoils of imperialism. It is the *Whites*, who, as Sakai has proven, *have already been given all there is to give by imperialism*, and must be lowered in order to bring the contradiction between White and Black to its natural resolution: the "American".

Thus, we see that the "American nation" is the biggest enemy of the White and Black nations; that lowest strata of the White nation, which will resist assimilation, is the biggest enemy in

particular to this “American nation”; and that the *Black Nationalists* – the non-reformers who oppose assimilation and integration, or at least, what remains of them – is the other biggest enemy to this “American nation”.

These are the conclusions Sakai’s work brings us to. He shies from some of them, but an honest analysis of his work brings those truths he avoids to the forefront. If one is to avoid analyzing the book honestly, they wind up at the same fantastical position Sakai himself wound up at, and the book’s underlying argument is lost on the reader, just as it was lost on Sakai.

Either way, we shouldn’t restate what doesn’t need to be restated. Instead, we should conclude by restating Sakai’s own conclusion:

Every nation and people has its own contribution to make to the world revolution. This is true for all of us, and obviously for Euro-Amerikans as well. But this is another discussion, one that can only really take place in the context of breaking up the U.S. Empire and ending the U.S. oppressor nation.

This message would get Sakai jeered by many of his own followers today. But still, we would insist to them: this is the ultimate point of Sakai’s whole work.

We will conclude by saying this: America is a “Newton’s cradle”. One orb acts on the other; the White nation acts on the Black nation, and they reciprocally knock into one another, their collisions constituting the thing we call their “identities” – the White and Black identities. In between the Whites and the Blacks are the various immigrant groups (Asian-Americans, etc.), absorbing the shock from each blow and transmitting it to the other side; from White to Black, and back to White again.

If the inertia should die down, and the collisions should stop (something we should add can only come from an outside force); then we should have “America” in all its glory. The cradle as a whole, motionless and still – in a word, dead.

But there exists an alternative: to destroy the binds of the cradle altogether, to sever its various components, and to let them scatter their own ways, whatever those ways may be. Here, we may perceive destruction in the breakage of the cradle; but in the end, we will really at last have free, unfettered movement in every direction.

APPENDICES: REVIEWING REVIEWS OF SETTLERS

When we subject Sakai to harsh criticism, it is not because his work is poor. On the contrary, if his work was poor, it wouldn't be worth criticizing. It is precisely because Sakai's work is so valuable that it is worth pointing out its errors and bringing out the fullest extent of its content.

However, there are two prominent "reviews" of *Settlers* which are fairly common among the work's detractors, and a third by extension. We will analyze those, if not to distinguish our criticism from the criticism of "American" nationalists, who declare Sakai's work to be reactionary, divisionary, etc.

"THE CHARNEL HOUSE'S" REVIEW OF SETTLERS

We could just as well title this one "How not to criticize a work". The article is digested like barbed wire, yet, the reader has perhaps encountered it if they have entered into discussion about Sakai. Since it persists among leftists of the "American" variety, we will give it a quick review.

The review is by Ross Wolfe, apparently a blogger of sorts. It is titled – and this is really something – "Do not bother reading *Settlers* by J. Sakai". (Wolfe, 2017)

What kind of review asks the reader *not* to read the work being reviewed? Does this not betray everything the review is supposed to be?

It begins with the author talking about how he wrote a review of *Settlers* some time ago, and it was picked up and reposted by a news site. Fans of the book found it and went after the author. The Wolfe describes:

I posted this a couple days ago it was picked up by Anti-Fascist News, which linked to it along with the sole remark that it was "interesting." This led some fans of *Settlers* to then launch a campaign against me personally, referring to me as "a sacrificial pig to be made an example of" (a Marrano, perhaps?) and applauding the fact that I'd been doxxed in the past as a "commie Jew" by Stormfront neo-Nazis. One person even threatened to send people to my door, all because I criticized a book she likes. Joshua Moufawad-Paul of the blog M-L-M Mayhem, whose meta-review I linked and whose name I unfortunately misspelled, also responded to the post.

So. Let us review the content which got Wolfe targeted by the Gestapo, or whatever he claims.

Hopefully this addendum will give some sense of what it is I object to in the book.

To provide just one example of Sakai's shoddy historical research, he writes on page 53 of *Settlers*: "The pro-imperialist labor aristocracy — which in 1914 Lenin estimated at roughly 20% of the German working class — were the leaders of the German trade-unions, the 'socialist' party, etc." Unsurprisingly, no mention is made of what text Lenin supposedly made this estimation in (much less a citation). I have scoured through all of Lenin's writings and have yet to find anywhere he claims twenty percent of the German working class be-longed to the "labor aristocracy." Neither in 1914 nor in any other year.

Good criticism. Sakai Lenin said a statistic, which Lenin apparently did not say. Now, Wolfe could prove Sakai wrong, and show us data proving the real composition of the German classes. But this would be perhaps too much to ask for.

Still, we'll give it to him: he is right in saying Sakai should have provided a citation. Yet, it is such a benign and useless point, that it is worth both ignoring the flaw, and any criticism of the flaw.

Further, it's very frustrating that Sakai nowhere explains what his criteria are for someone belonging to the "labor aristocracy."

In this regard, we would direct Wolfe to Chapter V of *Settlers*, 'Colonialism, Imperialism, & The Labor Aristocracy', where Sakai spends several pages outlining the basis of a labor aristocracy.

Wolfe than transcends to the level of Arbor by *attempting to disprove the idea of a labor aristocracy*:

The "labor aristocracy" thesis first advanced by Engels during the 1890s and then expanded upon by Lenin between 1905 and 1922 has already been challenged convincingly by writers such as Charles Post...

We will not even bother here. This matter is one settled several times, and particularly by Lenin in 1914. If the reader wishes to delve into the matter, they may do so.

However, we arrive at last upon a valid criticism, one which we made several times:

Sakai neglects to mention that oppressed populations in the New World have just as often been at each other's throats — e.g., the "Buffalo Soldiers," all-black volunteer cavalry units which served with distinction in massacring Plains Indians for nearly a quarter-century.

It seems that the "hole in the bag of sugar" has been sniffed out by a roach. Still, we can't expect Wolfe to do anything useful with this contradiction — and of course, he doesn't.

Up to now, we have only been reading the *addendum*, which Wolfe placed there for folks like us. We will now move on to his actual analysis, prefaced with an "Opening Tirade" that is longer than his review itself:

J. Sakai's 1983 screed *Settlers: The Mythology of the White Proletariat* has been making the rounds again lately. Unfortunately, the "analysis" offered in *Settlers* is tendentious garbage.

He then quotes a wide array of authors, which we will spare ourselves from. He gets to the point:

Incidentally, Sakai himself no longer seems to think the central thesis of *Settlers* holds with respect to the contemporary US, a fact which ought to complicate matters...

To us, it does not. Sakai could denounce it, renounce it, uphold it, it does not matter. What he said in *Settlers*, we appraise based on what he said in *Settlers* – not elsewhere. Wolfe should adhere to this as well, but he instead – like Arbor – analyzes things as a liberal would.

Wolfe then leaves us with Noel Ignatiev's 1985 review of *Settlers*. We should review it separately.

NOEL IGNATIEV'S REVIEW OF SETTLERS

Noel Ignatiev was an American historian, the Jewish-American editor of *Race Traitor*, who called to "abolish the White race" in an article which was, for some reason, published by Harvard.(Ignatiev, 2002) So, we can probably assume what kind of review we are about to get.

Still, since his review was recommended to us by Wolfe, we will look at it. Unlike Wolfe, he went with a safer title: "Review of *Settlers*".(Ignatiev, 1985)

According to J. Sakai's *Settlers: The Mythology of the White Proletariat* (1983), "the entire settler economy was raised up on a foundation of slave labor, slave products, and the slave trade."

Of course it was, and as *Settlers* points out, the fisherman, the forester, the clerk, the cooper and the farmer were "dependent" on the system of slave labor; so was the child who tended a loom thirteen hours a day in a cotton-mill. Not only that, the slave was "dependent" on the mill worker and the fisherman.

Yes. This much is right so far. He is also right to echo our earlier point:

Not only that, the slave was "dependent" on the mill worker and the fisherman.

This leads him to the conclusion:

Ever since the division of labor, human beings have depended on others for the things they need to live. In modern society all laborers "depend" on the exploitation of others. To attempt to give this truism a profounder significance is to embrace the worldview of the bourgeoisie...

Yes. But Ignatiev ignores the fact that the question is not whether humans have depended on one another's exploitation in the past, but whether they should in the future.

Sakai's answer to this question is in the negative. Ignatiev's answer is that to call attention to this question at all is to "embrace the worldview of the bourgeoisie".

As an aside, why limit the category of "settler" to those from Europe? People from Africa were imported to the western hemisphere to produce surplus-value, which was subsequently transformed into capital. Were they "settlers" too? And what about Mexicans and Indians already here, and Chinese imported later? They also produced wealth used to dominate others.

Again, the weakness in Sakai's analysis is pointed out. This is correct.

Standard bourgeois economics teaches that a job is property. Settlers shares that view, as well as the outlook of the white worker who thinks that a racial monopoly of the "better" jobs is worth defending.

[But] class is not a listing of individuals by occupation, [it is] a process whereby some people come to see they have common interests, and that these interests include the building of a new society.

Ignatiev does not defend this point, nor elaborate. Since he did not go into detail about how he is right, we cannot go into much detail about how he is wrong.

A "class is a process whereby some people come to see they have common interests".

Ignatiev has turned a nation from a union of contradicting classes, into a single class. Or rather, he has turned the *process* of the nation realizing its self-interests into the *process* he calls "class"

What's more: suddenly, a football team is a social class! Or rather, not the team itself, but the *process* of the football team "coming to see" that they have a "common interest" by defeating the other team. That process is "class" to Ignatiev.

In short: he is being so vague that he may as well really mean nothing at all. We should say: a class is a *relation* wherein one group shares mutual socioeconomic interests, mutual relationships to the physical means of production and exchange, with each other. Ignatiev's definition is remarkably vague, concealing the material essence of class.

He then gives us the sophism:

Only events will determine whether any sector of European-Americans will take their stand with the global proletariat.

As if Sakai had denied such a thing!

Still, he concludes:

For European-Americans who think that revolution is necessary... they need a theory that will point out the fissures in [white society], not deny their existence.

It seems that, in any case, the “fissures” in “American” society are what creates the Black and White identities. They need a theory that will not give an idealized version of these fissures, but a real, living picture.

In that regard, we should agree.

ERICH ARBOR’S REVIEW OF SETTLERS

Erich Arbor is something of an “American patriot”. So, naturally, he is not fond of the work.

“The Anti-Marxist Elitism of J. Sakai’s *Settlers*”. That is the title he goes with.(Arbor, 2020)

Across the history of organizing the masses of the working class, certain forms of decadence and distortions of theories, histories, and tendencies have arisen within Marxism. Typically these bastardizations of historical materialism can be codified as petty bourgeois. We see these organizations, ideas, and figures throughout the history socialist struggle, portraying themselves as in the interest of working-class liberation, yet steeped within utterly bourgeois sympathies and reaction.

Petty bourgeois reaction is present in every single significant revolutionary event in recent history... these forces have continually stood against the interests and revolutionary character of the working class. Each example represents a dereliction to the working class and highlights their subservience to the ruling bourgeoisie.

Currently, a petty bourgeois ideology plagues the Western Socialist zeitgeist, which has largely been spread by the work of writer J. Sakai.

So. He begins his review with a three paragraph attack on Sakai himself. First impressions are lasting, as the saying goes; and this tends to leave an unfavorable impression.

Let us see on what grounds Arbor attacks Sakai for “petty bourgeois ideology”.

In most circles, it is taboo to present a single criticism of their book *Settlers*, written in 1983. Virtue signaling towards POC comrades, FWTW’s¹⁴ own guilt has suspended historical materialist analysis, not allowing critique of an ultraleftist, anti-Marxist line. Nevertheless, it must be confronted head-on, why a self-professed anonymous Maoist such as Sakai, with no known connection to organizing nor even academic circles, should be adopted, without question, at face value, by Marxist-Leninists.

Interesting. It seems that Arbor has forgotten to explain the grounds on which he was attacking Sakai for “petty bourgeois ideology”. No matter.

¹⁴ “First World Third Worldism”, an ideology Arbor makes up in the article to attack (“It evades a name, but we can refer to it as ‘First-World Third Worldism’”).

He also seems to think a work is only worth something if it comes from a name he recognizes. What are the grounds for this? An anonymous paper correctly explaining why the sky is blue is still, in essence, both correct and useful. But Arbor would disagree: he would insist that the sky is not yet proven to be blue, and we first need for the sky to be confirmed as blue by an authority on the matter.

In Arbor's conception of the world, we must believe the Church over Copernicus. No matter.

Arbor, who declares he is about to confront Sakai's work "head on", confronts the work decidedly not head on, instead linking to a review by a Black anarchist:

The renowned Kevin Rashid Johnson, Minister of Defense of the New Afrikan Black Panther Party, who is currently incarcerated in the Pendleton Correctional Facility in Indiana, has already decidedly closed the case on Sakai's FWTW infantilism in this piece on the subject.

Okay. We ask Arbor get to the point, that he give us *his* review.

He says:

Anyone who has found the time to read Settlers should have no excuse for navigating this text.

An interesting tactic! Before starting the review, Arbor has told the reader that they have "no excuse" for reading the book he is reviewing.

We should ask first: why not? Arbor apparently had time to read it (presumably).

And we should ask second: why not? What is with these "reviewers", who do not want us to read the book they're reviewing?

It seems like Arbor is nervous for us to actually read the work he is reviewing, and thus see for ourselves what he has now spent several paragraphs "confronting head on".

Or, by "this text" he meant the review, in which case we agree.

Arbor lets us in on some disappointing news:

...It can be a lengthy read, and this essay will reiterate and summarize Comrade Rashid Johnson's points, as well as provide further examples of how the FWTW ideology corrupts the workers' movement internationally, and how we should instead be moving forward.

Arbor complains "it can be a lengthy read" (something that, it would seem, did not injure me in writing this review), and that for this reason, he's simply going to "reiterate and summarize" the points of his "Comrade"! Is this not really shameless? Did Arbor, the man talking so authoritatively, not read the work? Maybe he has read the work, we will not be unfair. But he certainly does not give the impression that he has read the work.

But no matter. We will review his review of Johnson's review of *Settlers*.

He says (immediately after the previously quoted part):

Leon Trotsky had a well-documented disregard, and in many cases, outright resentment for the peasantry of Russia.

Well, this is really quite some tract indeed! He then rambles for almost three paragraphs about Leon Trotsky, the Mensheviks during the Russian Civil War – in a word, he bombards the reader with “fluff”.

Let's see where he goes from there.

Permanent Revolution has effectively proven to be a failing ideology in building socialism, not only against the successes of Socialism in One Country projects that built actually-existing-socialism in the Soviet Union, China, Korea, Cuba, and Vietnam, but because of how void Trotskyism is of a proletarian character.

We will discard all the dressing Arbor puts up, and cut out what's useful:

Socialism in One Country... built actually-existing-socialism in the Soviet Union, [etc.]...

He recognizes the Leninist position on the national question. Therefore, it stands to reason that Arbor should recognize the Blacks and Whites as two separate nations, and the “Americans” as a pseudo-nation meant to facilitate the process of global conquest.

We will keep this in mind for now. Arbor then elaborates on what “petty-bourgeois character” is, etc. We can skip this, as we should already understand these concepts – Sakai spent the whole work elaborating on how this character was predominant in “American socialism”. He gives us more talk about the history of Trotskyism, in a word, more rubbish. He rather abruptly stops talking about Trotsky and gets to the point:

Establishing the petty bourgeois character of Trotskyism, it would be irresponsible not to address more popular forms of similar ideology within the contemporary Left. Trotskyism has been on a steady decline in popularity, as its ineffectiveness has been proven through decades of mediocre political action. Right now, however, well-meaning comrades who identify themselves with scientific socialist principles are falling prey to similar reaction, calling for utopian, albeit materially bankrupt ideas based in what is found in J. Sakai's *Settlers*, a book towing what Comrade Rashid Johnson condemns as the “vulgar labor aristocracy line”.

Ah. So, that was a lot of buildup for what amounts to a “punch in a dream” – large windup, with almost no effect. There is no substance to even analyze here.

Then, before addressing the content of the work, Arbor asks us for a *second* time to dismiss the work!

One could easily write off Sakai's work as an infantile self-projection of what is petty bourgeois in American society.

And then, *at last*, he brings us to his criticisms:

Throughout the book, statistics are left unsourced, and quotes from labor leaders and communists are manipulated in a way to slander these figures as white supremacists.

Sakai was afraid to acknowledge the blatant fact that Blacks engaged in imperialism. Here, Arbor is the same with Whites.

As for "unsourced statistics", this is true; but it is a minor trifle. To bring it up is to sink to, as Arbor would say, "petit-bourgeois criticism".

Arbor goes on about how Sakai used "bad faith" when quoting the White labor organizer William Foster. He protests that Sakai "misrepresent[s] the quotes of... William Z. Foster to portray Foster as a racist."

In what way does Sakai "misrepresent the quotes" of Foster? Arbor lays it out for us. He says that Sakai writes:

Foster's lynch mob oratory was only restrained by the formality expected of a Euro-American "communist" leader. His white-supremacist message was identical to but more politely clothed than the crude rants of the Ku Klux Klan. **He warned that the capitalists were grooming Afrikans as "as race of strike-breakers, with whom to hold the white workers in check; on much the same principle as the Czars used the Cossacks to keep in subjugation the balance of the Russian people."** It's easy to see how Foster became such a popular leader among the settler workers.

The full, contextualized quote from Foster reads:

The need for action looking towards better relations between whites and blacks in the industrial field should be instantly patent; for **there can be no doubt but that the employing class, taking advantage of the bitter animosities of the two groups, are deliberately attempting to turn the negroes into a race of strike-breakers, with whom to hold the white workers in check; on much the same principle as the Czars used the Cossacks to keep in subjection the balance of the Russian people.** Should they succeed to any degree it would make our industrial disputes take on more and more the character of race wars, a consummation that would be highly injurious to the white workers and eventually ruinous to the blacks.

That is the nature of Arbor's complaint. We will not even bother to argue whether or not Arbor is right for this criticism (which we believe he is only on a partial basis). We must say: it is again, a minor trifle. He does not even give us analysis of the quotation. He simply protests: "Sakai has portrayed Foster as a racist, and he wasn't a racist."

The reader is left wondering: who cares? What about *Settlers*?

Arbor at last comes to the crux of his complaint. Whereas just earlier, he was praising Socialism in One Country and the Leninist position on the national question, and even took time to explain how “American socialists” were bribed to support imperialism, he now plays lackey for the American state.

What Sakai and others utterly fail to realize is how whiteness, historically and presently, is employed by the bourgeoisie to divide and conquer working Americans as a whole, across racial barriers.

Do not be mistaken. The primary effect, intended or not, of the inherently petty bourgeois rhetoric is to create unnecessary rifts and divisions among the working class of the United States.

According to Arbor, the distinction between “White” and “Black” is an “unnecessary rift and division”.

By Arbor’s logic, the entire history of settlement that Sakai described was really the act of a single nation attacking itself over and over! The slaves, the Indians – “Whiteness” is a myth, and thus, they cannot be distinguished from the White. So, what about when the Americans conquer the Philippines? Are the Filipinos then “creating unnecessary rifts and divisions” by insisting they are not White, that they are distinct from their conquerors?

Arbor then goes off the cliff, and outright defends the assimilationist “nation”:

Certain points of unity, such as that an overwhelming majority of the American working class (white or not) are patriotic and “Proud to be American”, are seen as settler-colonial sentiments, and not to be used in uniting the working people within the United States.

He then evokes Mao in an attempt to persuade *literally Sakai himself* (as if he is reading!) by appealing to Sakai’s Maoist sentiments – unless Arbor anticipates his reader to be a Maoist as well:

Let us listen to what Chairman Mao Zedong thought when it came to the topic of Chinese nationalism, within his writings “On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People”:

“Over nine-tenths of [China’s] inhabitants belong to the Han nationality. There are also scores of minority nationalities, including the Mongol, Hui, Tibetan, Uighur, Miao, Yi, Chuang, Chungchia and Korean nationalities, all with long histories though at different levels of cultural development. Thus China is a country with a very large population composed of many nationalities.”

The problem that Arbor does not address: China is not the United States, and Chinese history is not American history.

At last, Arbor reveals his truest colors. He says:

...No other mode of analysis among Marxist tradition is equipped to structure a strategy in **unifying the working class of the United States**, as well as healing the most marginalized within American society, such as Black and Indigenous **residents**.

Arbor calls for the assimilation of Whites and Blacks into a single “American” people, a people of the United States. This speaks for itself.

Arbor then spends several paragraphs rambling about the Rainbow Coalition, a political formation of various allied Blacks, Whites, etc. in the late 20th century. In doing so, he presupposes a distinction between Blacks, Whites, etc, of distinct groups of people. Yet, when we proceed to his conclusion, he begins:

The racial capitalist structure in the United States is deeply entwined by the US government’s legacy of slavery and ethnic genocide of the native population. The bourgeoisie have worked very hard to alienate white workers from their fellow workers of color, simply by **a manufactured notion of whiteness**.

The Rainbow Coalition, which Arbor encourages us to repeat, is apparently a matter of people unnecessarily creating divided groups around the “manufactured notion of whiteness”. “Whiteness” is now fake, and there’s no distinction between the Black and White. Therefore, there is no organization of uniting the White and Black to be done, because they’re already one and the same thing.

It’s an ideological dead end that Arbor leads us down repeatedly in his review.

Then, hilariously, Arbor condescends Sakai for acknowledging the labor aristocracy, saying it is “nothing novel to [him]”. He follows this by calling the labor aristocracy the “working class” and defending them:

This labor aristocracy that Sakai discusses is not novel to him, and in fact has existed for quite a while. However, to lay the blame at their feet as to why the United States has not witnessed a proletarian revolution is a terrible mistake. **The working class is not stupid, and they know they have nothing to materially gain from racism within US society.**

Now, Arbor has done something really silly: he has admitted that the labor aristocracy has “nothing to materially gain from racism” – and by “racism”, he means the division of White and Black identities (which is not racism, but is what Arbor calls racism) – meaning the cooperation of Whites and Blacks is, at the same time, the placation of the labor aristocracy, of the imperialist masses.

At the least, Arbor is correct in this regard, even if on accident.

Arbor wraps up by *explicitly defending imperialism!*

Every historical labor aristocracy has carried immeasurably more revolutionary potential than any simultaneous petty bourgeois class. We must not forget this. In addition, we must not forget the eternal truth that tie all true Marxists in their work: when workers of the world unite, workers win.

Now, the resistance of the petit-bourgeois to imperialism – say, the petit-bourgeois resistance being put up in Palestine or Syria – is suddenly less revolutionary than the labor aristocracy *which is actively attacking them!*

This is the essence of Arbor's opposition to Sakai. Arbor comes from a standpoint of openly defending the labor aristocracy, and the labor aristocracy presupposes world conquest. Why would Arbor oppose Sakai's work, which is on the topic of the counter-revolutionary nature of those who partake in world conquest? We leave the reader to conclude this themselves.

Overall, the final analysis of Arbor should amount to: Arbor probably did not read the book.

How characteristic of an "American patriot".

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