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# Dragon and Hydra Revisited

A Dialogue

Steve Bloom and Russell Maroon Shoatz

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2016

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the other side, men dispossessed of “their” women by the new capitalism, who are increasingly resorting to radical and violent measures to “defend” and “reclaim” their patriarchal birth right, or at least grab a piece of the action in a new male order.

Working-class women are fighting back, but they are in a position of strategic weakness. Their struggles typically still lack the capacity for collective physical self-defense—a precondition for fundamental change.

Still, change is coming... The era of male revolution has ended, but a new era of working- class revolution is starting to unfold.

The author’s observation about the “strategic weaknesses” of these struggles, their “lack [of] capacity for collective physical self defense” is precisely what “The Question of Violence” essay in *Maroon the Implacable* (p. 227) was designed to address!

Even so, these revolutionary wimmin and their daughters will *also* establish hydra-like formations and movements. Thus we return to Steve’s emphasis on us *not* making the same errors—in that regard—that earlier revolutionaries made. Here his final conclusions are worth noting, and are one’s i’m in agreement with, while i hope my own observations and comments also prove helpful:

**Steve continues with conclusion #4:** “How to achieve this is the key question that the revolutionary mass movement (hydra) has not yet solved. One part of a solution is clearly understanding that after it has been let out of its cage the dragon will not voluntarily go back, but must be forcibly restrained and returned. This will require a very conscious and collective effort by the hydra forces. After an initial victory the hydra cannot allow itself to go to sleep, not even to rest, until the dragon is safely restrained once again.

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privileges they held under the previous male capitalist order. But millions of poor and de-classed men are joining in, forming a kind of united front of misogyny.

These changes are ones that the “left” seems all but obvious to, which is not that surprising since it, too, in many ways, remains an *unconscious* sector of the patriarchal cabal. Yet our author is further letting the left know that it needs to wake up, because the 21<sup>st</sup> century will *not* be like the last century. The left needs to get with the changing times, with the global conditions and challenges:

For those of us trying to rebuild a radical anti-capitalist movement, the reorganization of the world economy and the accompanying changes in how women are exploited and controlled have fundamental significance because, as a result of this transformation, the core of the working class—capitalism’s historical enemy—is also being transformed. This reconfigured working class, with women at its heart, will be the ultimate source of new waves of resistance and revolution. It will spawn new labor movements, new cultures, new parties, new insurgencies, new armies. We are at a major historical turning point, full of promise.

Nonetheless, our author cannot help but return to the awful violence that confronts or threatens wimmin and girls throughout the world! It is a phenomenon that *everyone* is aware of—though we may be asleep in terms of his earlier assessments. Here too the author explains where *the center of gravity* rests, the aspect that controls *all others*:

In the meantime, though, working-class women are caught in a free fire zone. On one side, the brutal power of global capitalism, exploiting working-class women’s labor through compulsion and violence. On

the manufacturing and service industries of a radically transformed global economy. This wholesale relocation and reorganization of capitalism's core work force is at the very heart of globalization... even as the new wave of capitalism extends its reach, it simultaneously revives and modernizes its own worst enemy—its antagonist class. The women of the exodus, and their daughters, will determine the future of anti-capitalist struggle.

Digging even deeper, our author takes us through the little talked about role capital's globalization is playing in helping to uproot, destabilize, and advance towards the destruction of patriarchal relations that these hundreds of millions of wimmin, their daughters and sisters, are part of—sweeping their families and a sea of *irate patriarchal males* along with them:

Today, as a juggernaut of mutant capitalism finally acts to pulverize the world's "peasantry" and to drive working-class women directly into gigantic transnational industries, the exploitation of women's labor is being dramatically reconfigured. Women are being busted out of traditional rural and urban patriarchal families to serve capitalism better. Groups of men of all classes are fighting desperately to resist or, failing that, to get a piece of the emerging post-modern patriarchy... Today the main opposition to capitalist globalization comes not from the weakened anti-imperialist Left, or—yet—from working-class women, but rather from militant right-wing men. The anger of male dispossession fuels reactionary populist, fundamentalist and fascist trends in every part of the world. These right-wing movements are typically led by men of the middle classes, furious at losing the

## Special introductory note by the editors

In the "Policies of this Website" we explain that we are seeking to promote discussions "where participants are engaged in active listening and a search for commonalities or convergences—giving at least as much emphasis to this as we do to 'clarifying differences.' The overall goal of our project is not just to recapitulate well-established views but to transcend them if/when we can in order to create a stronger collective synthesis of revolutionary thought."

We believe that the exchange below is an excellent case study in this process and how it can work effectively. We offer it here, therefore, as a way of illustrating the kind of dialogue we are seeking, as well as for the inherent usefulness of the ideas that are presented. Readers will probably understand even without our saying so that the synthesis remains incomplete. Steve will tell you that he cannot endorse all of the conclusions in Maroon's contribution. But he will also tell you that the original question he posed to Maroon has been answered—in a way that dissolves any disagreement between the two of them on that point, the most important point. Perhaps further discussion will create an even deeper shared understanding.

The way the joint conclusion contained in this essay is formulated could not have been arrived at by either of our two authors working alone. It required their joint efforts—starting in different ideological spaces but with both willing to consider ideas raised by the other that could complement and enhance their original conceptions. In our judgment this is the way more discussions on the left ought to proceed.

**Introductory note by SB:** In November of last year I sent Maroon a letter about his essay "Dragon and Hydra," which read,

in part: “Your historical assessment regarding the failure of the dragon is indisputable: Any and all dragon formations that have, at least up to now, actually succeeded in conquering power ended up transforming themselves into a new oppressive force of some kind. However, we can make an equally valid argument regarding the historical failure of hydra formations. Not one of them has proved up to the task either—if we define the task as stopping a manifest-destiny imperialism from dominating and ultimately destroying the planet.”

In February, as part of our exchange over this question, I suggested some preliminary conclusions, explaining that “I might modify or reconsider them as a result of an exchange with you and/or a discussion in the group. Still, they represent the general approach I believe, at this point, we ought to collectively affirm after considering the relevant issues.” What follows is Maroon’s response to these four conclusions.

**Introductory note by RMS:** This text reflects a conversation between veteran activist Steve Bloom and political prisoner Russell Maroon Shoatz, exploring ways to move the oppressed and toiling masses’ struggle forward, without that struggle losing control of the very organizations that have served to help liberate the masses from their primary antagonists.

We both use “The Dragon and the Hydra: A Historical Study of Organizational Forms” ( *Maroon the Implacable*, 2013, PM Press p. 101) and Leon Trotsky’s *The Revolution Betrayed* (first published 1937, various editions available, can be downloaded in a kindle version at [www.marxists.org](http://www.marxists.org) ) as case studies in how revolutionary oppressed workers and their allies amongst the peasantry, the military, and other segments of society, developed a number of revolutionary formations *from below*, and how these same efforts eventually propelled forward embryonic/quasi or actual revolutionary state formations that, over time, *from above*, began themselves to oppress and exploit their former allies below. These two tendencies here symbolize our dragon and hydra: the dragon being the quasi

Class in this context becomes a compass of orientation—toward the classes of people, the exploited, oppressed and disadvantaged in all their variety—rather than a structural category to be filled with consciousness.

He further warns of the difficulties in bringing together these elements:

Though empowered by rising literacy and by new means of communication, popular class movements face great obstacles, divisions of ethnicity and religion, and between different kinds of employment. But only programmes and organizational forms which take these challenges into account will have a serious chance of bringing these plebian strata together.

A major shortcoming in Therborn’s otherwise strong piece is his failure to analyze and highlight the *strategic* role wimmin are now and will increasingly play in global affairs—a role that will determine if we are to survive and avoid the existential threat that capital/imperialism is presenting to the entire world in the 21 st century.

Here I’ll introduce *Exodus and Reconstruction: Working Class Women at the Heart of Globalization* (Bromma, [www.kersplebedeb.com](http://www.kersplebedeb.com) ). This is a timely and powerful booklet that will help address this shortcoming. It is a piece i will urge you to acquire and read in its entirety! In the introduction our author immediately puts us on the path towards recognizing what Therborn missed:

Hundreds of millions of working-class women are flooding out of the countrysides of the world into the cities. In an epic upheaval, pervaded with human suffering, these women are being channeled into

powerful movement based on this proletariat would have a tremendous impact throughout the developing world, but we hardly describe that as a likely prospect.

Therborn argues at length why those prospects amongst the working class in China seem to be less promising than might be expected, something that can be taken up at another time. We will, however, proceed with what is being recognized as a historic shift in the struggle between capital/imperialism in another part of the world:

The red banner has passed from Europe to Latin America, the only region of the world where socialism is currently on the agenda... The “socialism” of Morales, Corea and Chavez is a new political phenomenon, which stresses its independence from 20<sup>th</sup> century Eurasian models of left-wing politics... It draws [its] support from many layers of society: ... urban poor; ... people of indigenous or African descent; progressive elements of the middle strata... Industrial workers are rarely in the vanguard...

This passage reports that in those revolutionary countries our proposed *MOSAIC: Movement of Oppressed Sectors Acting In Concert* is already in motion—and bearing fruit.

Latin America may not offer a model that can be exported to the rest of the world in the immediate future. But if there are to be radical social transformations ... they will surely have more in common with ... that region than with the 20<sup>th</sup> century ... revolution based on a wage-earning proletariat.

Therborn goes on to argue for a more scientific way to define class in the 21<sup>st</sup> century than the stale doctrinaire formulas that the historical events in this piece debunk:

or actual state acting from above and our hydra being the once-liberated and subsequently repressed and exploited workers and their allies below.

Our conversation got fully underway after Steve painstakingly copied and mailed Maroon *The Revolution Betrayed*—which he had neglected to read due to the shortsighted prejudices he had developed because of his political immaturity. We will begin here with Steve’s conclusions and go on to include Maroon’s responses, that are lengthy because the spirit of the conversation is primarily designed to allow Maroon room to deepen his thesis laid out in “The Dragon and the Hydra” essay with Steve’s help.

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**Steve’s conclusion #1:** “Historically, the Marxist movement up to the time Stalin emerged as the dictator over the USSR was firmly committed in both word and deed to the withering away of the dragon after the socialist revolution, would have unanimously rejected any thought of its emergence as a dominant force over society. This is reflected in all of Trotsky’s references to the writings of Marx, Engels, and Lenin on this question. And it is also personified by his personal struggle and sacrifice. Post-Stalin this approach became transformed into its opposite, into a virtual worship of power for the sake of power (or, more precisely, for the sake of bureaucratic privilege)—and of course even the Trotskyist movement did not remain unaffected by this transformation.”

**Maroon comments** by expanding Steve’s framework and introducing the examples in “The Dragon and the Hydra” essay, even though it has been argued that the struggles critiqued there—carried out by the enslaved workers in Surinam, Jamaica, areas of what is today the USA and Haiti—were *not* truly revolutionary. That line of reasoning seems to smack of the same type doctrinaire, sectarian reasoning that prejudiced me against Trotsky’s writing.

That said, the historical record contains such striking similarities to what Trotsky would later talk about regarding the aftermath of both the French and Russian revolutions that we can here begin to seek out lessons that can be learned by a *comparison* of these different events and the forces each of them developed from below and above. In that regard Steve's observation that "the Marxist movement up to the time Stalin emerged as the dictator over the USSR was firmly committed ... to the withering away of the dragon" *also* holds true for the struggles critiqued in "The Dragon and the Hydra"—the caveat being none of these struggles were operating within a Marxist framework since they all predated that era.

Yet their drive to liberate enslaved workers bears a close resemblance, in many ways, to the approach adopted within the Marxist paradigm. And they had a *material* effect on the struggles Trotsky writes about, since it's a well-known fact that the African chattel slavery from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries provided much of the *capital* that allowed Europe and the USA to develop many of the global economic engines that threaten our existence today. Thus it stands to reason that the sustained blows delivered *against* that system of *accumulation* had to have a *revolutionary* aspect.

Steve notes the role played by the degeneration of the revolutionary hydra's energy and control, until not long after Lenin's death the Stalin-led faction can clearly be seen putting the brakes on the still-maturing revolutionary process inside Russia. This was accomplished by pushing the development of a *privileged dragon sector*. Both Trotsky and Steve note that the once-revolutionary dragon was transformed into its opposite: "... a virtual worship of power for the sake of power (or, more precisely, for the sake of bureaucratic privilege)." Thus Steve's words can be applied to the later phenomenon that Fred Ho has termed "manifest destiny Marxism"—a malignancy that developed during the time in question and has continued to be practiced throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, up until today. One feature of manifest destiny Marxism is the *idealistic certainty* regarding the inevitability of *their version* if

the late charismatic Hugo Chavez and his counterpart Evo Morales in Bolivia—we otherwise witness *negligible* roles being played by so-called "vanguard parties" and their industrial proletariat.

This brings us to consider a related topic: What are the social forces in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that we should look to in order to find material for our hydra-dragon revolutionary alliance in general? Here I'll introduce passages from "Class in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" by Goran Therborn, most of which corroborates what the MOSAIC proposal in the "Dragon and Hydra" essay calls for: "The time when the working class was seen as the future of social development may feel as close as yesterday, but it is unlikely to return [to the US and other advanced countries]" (*New Left Review* 78, Nov/Dec 2012).

Let me comment on that passage: Any sober adult who resides in or follows the news in the US and the advanced countries of Western Europe and Japan cannot fail to recognize the the economies in these regions are *not* far from what they were *during the Great Depression* of the 1930s. And the industrial jobs they've all depended on during the 20<sup>th</sup> century to keep large segments of their people economically viable are gone. Neither they nor the ruling class knows how to address the loss.

Continuing with Therborn:

The industrial baton has been passed to China, the emerging center of world manufacturing capacity... Chinese industrial growth is strengthening the hand of the workers... The Chinese authorities are aware of this, of course, and Chinese labour legislation aims to rein in unbridled capitalism... New legislation, residual traces of the Communist heritage and the spread of electronic media are offering greater room for autonomous working-class organization, which will not change China's social system in the short run, but might provide workers with a better deal within the existing framework... The emergence of a



will, more than likely (if successful), have to pass through a stage where its fighting maroon/hydra forces will have to eradicate the reactionary dragon(s) of capital/imperialism, before *temporarily* seizing state power. Perhaps through the sheer fighting-maroon style and staying power, coupled with the temporary concessions wrung from truncated states, it will move aggressively forward to more fully eradicate the inherent nation state—with its propensity to serve as an oppressive instrument of class rule. This is something which, our discussion laments, the early socialists were never able to accomplish, as they idealistically believed in the *certainty* of the “withering away of the state” that their early leaders wrote about.

In the interim the hydra/dragon alliance needed to reach that stage will *again* exhibit the dialectical tension Steve mentions. And for the early 21<sup>st</sup> century we should keep an eye on Venezuela and Bolivia, where strong social movements (hydras) are acting in alliance with the radical/“revolutionary” state institutions (dragons). In Venezuela the hydras are massively organized into councils—community councils, workers’ councils in different fields, and councils that represent various segments of society that have historically been deprived of a voice, similar to the original revolutionary soviets in Russia. This movement gives the hydra/dragon alliance more power than the mass movements in Brazil and Argentina (in particular), which exhibit hydra-like qualities but are *not* able to advance further because their states are controlled by at best lukewarm reformers. This supports Steve’s thesis about the *necessity* of a “revolutionary dragon.” Further, in Venezuela the revolutionary movement is also following Steve’s insistence that “we must keep the revolutionary dragon in a cage” and only “let it out of its cage when needed.” This has been tested and proven to be workable on a number of occasions.

It’s instructive that in *neither* Venezuela nor Bolivia, where the hydras are the engines behind the revolutions—not discounting the strategic roles in bringing the state’s dragons into their camps by

a proletarian class annihilating all other classes in order to usher in a dictatorship of *their proletariat* led by a bureaucratic “vanguard party” under the control of an elite. In essence this is a new ruling class.

**Steve continues with conclusion #1:** “We need to know where manifest destiny Marxism came from and why it grew to be so dominant, precisely what we are rejecting about it and why, also what from a more traditional Marxist methodology we might be able to salvage.”

**Maroon comments:** It seems to me that the *historical material conditions* placed the bourgeois and nascent socialist forces that came to power in 1917–1922 Russia on an extremely uneven playing field—badly weighted against the early socialists. This combined with a failure of the Russians to receive aid from struggles being waged in other parts of Europe to so unnerve and demoralize elements amongst the Russian revolutionaries that they allowed themselves to be led (bit by bit) into reaction by their most demoralized sectors, eventually choosing Stalin as their head. It’s important to recognize that if not Stalin, these demoralized elements would have chosen *someone else* to lead their retreat. Thus it’s the social and productive forces that are *key*—not the personality of Stalin.

Consequently, at that point, in addition to the civil war between the Russian revolutionaries (the “Reds”) and the counterrevolutionaries and their allied foreign interventionists (the “Whites”), an extremely intense *internal* struggle developed over time around controlling the various bureaucracies that had developed—shaped by the need to defend the revolution against the Whites. These interlocking bureaucracies channeled all production in the socialist camp into defeating their enemies, a policy that came to be known as “war communism.” These bureaucracies represent our dragon here.

Simultaneously, the mass revolutionary upsurge amongst the Russian wimmin, workers, peasants, and armed forces—that had originally been the foundation of the revolution, the layers that

organized themselves into soviets (councils)—continued to play an important role in this drama. They symbolize our hydra.

Yet in order to avoid defeat by the counterrevolutionary Whites, while holding onto the 20<sup>th</sup> century state structure and paradigm, it was inevitable that the bureaucracies and war production be given priority. It follows that this preference would doom the hydra elements and their struggle to maintain the socialist nature of the state.

Recognizing this, the dragon elements consciously took a decision to channel as much of the state's productive forces as possible into the hands of a small segment of the reds, originally through what was called "war communism." Even the hydra sectors could rationalize this—for a while, at least—until it was too late for the hydra sectors to stop the new proto/quasi "socialist" elite. And the Russian productive forces simply were *not* capable of satisfying *both* the security needs, shared by both the dragon and the hydra, and the socio-cultural expectations in any way one could rationally describe as "socialist/communist"—the goals and programs the masses had been suffering and dying for. That could only come about if the already-mentioned aid arrived from the socialist struggles taking place in other parts of Europe, and eventually further afield.

Otherwise, global capital/imperialism and its *technologically advanced states* stood a good chance of eventually overwhelming and destroying a socialist state that aggressively took measures to satisfy the expectations and needs of all its citizens, as opposed to a *garrison state* where eventually millions would be sacrificed in a race to industrialize its productive forces, its military capacities and supporting infrastructure, in order to compete with the global forces of capital/imperialism—within the 20<sup>th</sup> century state paradigm.

Ideologically this came to be known as the doctrine of building, supporting, and defending "socialism in one country," championed by the demoralized and opportunistic elements led by Stalin who

technological wizardry continues to propel forward exponentially, creating the "capital-based technological [and social] change" phenomenon that is already outstripping Marx's most dire equations—regarding how the environment is being destroyed in particular! That is *not* to say capital/imperialism will collapse on its own. Such an idea runs counter to the internal dynamic that drives the system, which dictates "where there's a will there's a way." It is a will that is first and foremost backed up by power and violence!

Consequently, until capital/imperialism is eradicated it will continue to squeeze profits out of anything in the universe it can.

What are some of the useful lessons we can learn from the fighting maroons? First and foremost they serve to give us courage, something that is sorely needed by a severely demoralized global multitude which has received so many blows many are now all but convinced that capital/imperialism is essentially all powerful. Moreover, the demoralized sea of humynkind has all but come to believe that capital/imperialism is *destined* to defeat, subjugate, exploit, and/or co-opt everyone and/or everything it chooses. And the all-too-apparent (historic) capitulation(s) of even the (nominally) "socialist" dragons further drove home this message.

Yet the history of the most successful fighting maroons shows that they *never played by capital/imperialism's rules*. That's lesson number two: First remember capital/imperialism is not all-powerful. If that is true then seeking to oppose their system by relying strictly on building a *traditional* nation state will always place you at a material (technological, etc.) disadvantage which would take you centuries to overcome! This is a period of time that today's capital/imperialist-dominated world, with its accompanying ecocide, guarantees will not be available. Our 21<sup>st</sup> century fighting maroon-style organizations and communities must seek to avoid the traditional nation-state trap and prevent ecocide. Instead they must develop a system of inter-communal *self-determination*, the rudimentary outlines of which are laid out in the "Dragon and Hydra" essay. Even so, such a process

sciously disarming and dispersing the reactionary state power, but defeat for the mass movement came nonetheless when the revolutionary dragon then turned around and destroyed the hydra, establishing itself as the supreme power over society—Trotsky offering us perhaps the most important case study.

“We cannot do without the revolutionary dragon, because we must have a force that can consciously disarm and disperse the reactionary dragon. But we must keep the revolutionary dragon in a cage that is strong enough so that it cannot escape, with the door to that cage firmly locked and the key in the hands of the hydra. The revolutionary dragon should be let out of its cage only when needed in order to defeat the reactionary dragon, then firmly placed back in its cage once again.”

**Maroon comments:** Besides the fighting maroons critiqued in “The Dragon and the Hydra” essay, there are precious few other examples one can study in order to learn useful lessons on ways to avoid (or defeat?) the centuries-old march of capital and its associated imperialist states. The age-old struggles of the peoples who occupy the mountainous regions between Afghanistan and Pakistan is another example, but i have not properly studied them enough so I’ll continue to concentrate on the fighting maroons here.

Steve is *absolutely correct* about the need for a “revolutionary dragon” to “disarm and disperse the reactionary state power.” As I’ve already pointed out the material and technological advantages that capital/imperialism bring to the table makes that true.

Even so, I’d hazard to say that within a generation or less those advantages will turn into their opposites, based on the fact that the environmental destruction brought on by capital’s vaunted technological prowess is literally cutting the ground out from under their feet, while the accumulation dynamic inherent in capitalism will reach a point where capital will be so concentrated amongst such a small sector of the populace that there will no longer be an adequate enough base to consume its commodities and services. This is a crisis of overproduction as Marx explains, but one their

eventually dominated the Russian bureaucracies: our dragon. On the other side—the opposition—was Trotsky’s doctrine of “permanent revolution,” which was understood and the aim of most of the early socialists throughout the world, though maybe not by that title. Of course, history has shown that Trotsky’s position, despite its shortcomings, comes closer to hitting the mark than the socialism in one country perversion.

All of the foregoing is well known. Yet one thing i read into Fred Ho’s concept of “manifest destiny Marxism” is how it also labels and succinctly moves toward helping us trace the ideological, political, and socio-economic paths the Marxist, Leninist, Maoist parties continue to take. And while many of them initially strove to live up to goals that are consistent with a socialism that *really* serves humankind, they *too* fall into the trap of making a choice to channel their societies’ productive forces into the dragon-like bureaucracies—while neglecting the hydra sectors, whose sacrifices are most often key to their coming to power. They did so in order to *maintain their elite and dominant positions in their societies*, as well as to survive against the forces of an even more sophisticated and powerful capital/imperialist opposition.

Their manifest destiny Marxism choices are, moreover, ideologically and philosophically aided by a *deviation from* their professed belief in *scientifically evaluating all things*—Lenin’s “concrete analysis of concrete conditions” dictum—adopting *instead* the already-described *idealistic certainty*. This pseudo-religious posture has allowed its adherents to commit heinous crimes against those they profess to be fighting for, while on the other hand being blinded to the all-too-obvious flaws and inconsistencies in their analysis and practice.

A good example is their continued insistence that the industrial proletariat of the West (Europe and North America) will be “the grave diggers of capitalism,” and that *their vanguard parties will lead them*. This error in theory is clung to because it was originally propagated by various early leading lights. The inability to move be-

yond it also underlines the idealism mentioned earlier. Even Lenin, early on in *What Is to be Done*, pointed the way forward when he called for struggles to defend and support peasants, oppressed nationalities, minorities, persecuted religions, students, and regular soldiers— *along with the proletariat*. And toward the end of his life Trotsky, in his “Transitional Program” also called for uniting with and reliance on these and other *non-proletarian* sectors (wimmin in particular), as well as finally rejecting the vanguard party formula for a broad system of councils, like the early Soviets. Ironically, this is a return to a broader and more democratic organizing paradigm that both these leaders helped to suppress—all of which is ignored by later manifest destiny Marxists.

Materially the dragon/manifest destiny Marxists are *all* trapped by the inability of those struggling against capital/imperialism to overcome the military and associated technological advantages that the latter has enjoyed since before the beginnings of the industrial revolution—a dominance that has been decisive in helping capital and its imperialist states to eventually overwhelm *all* challenges to its hegemony—with rare exceptions. One of these exceptions was the maroon communities written about in my already-mentioned essay on the subject. Yet even the most powerful maroon communities could not revolutionize the surrounding states. They *too* were trapped by the material dominance already mentioned. Thus they opted instead to remain as free as possible from that dominance and cooptation.

**Steve’s conclusion #2:** “Still, the revolutionary Marxist movement underestimated the difficulty of disarming the revolutionary dragon. With the exception of a few visionaries among the Russians, no one envisioned the first victory of a socialist revolution in an economically less developed country. And no one, including the Russian visionaries, imagined that this first victory in a less developed country might remain still standing even while isolated for decades. And yet this turned out to be the historical reality, a

reality which dramatically strengthened all of the bureaucratic tendencies that ended up generating a repressive Stalinist state.

“The pre-revolutionary theorists were wrong, therefore, when they imagined that (or at least wrote as if) the withering away of the state would be an almost automatic process after the victory of the socialist revolution, requiring little or no conscious effort/preparation. We must now acknowledge this error, based on the experience of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and make sure our new revolutionary movement works consciously and consistently to avoid making the same mistake again.”

**Maroon comments** by stating: Steve’s second conclusion stands on its own merits, as my already-mentioned analysis seems to be fundamentally in the same vein.

**Steve’s conclusion #3:** “The dialectical tension between the need for and threat posed by the dragon has characterized every revolutionary struggle going back to the Paris Commune. It goes back even further, in a sense, but the outcome of whatever tension existed was essentially predetermined for bourgeois revolutionary struggles. The material foundations for the supremacy of the hydra simply did not exist during the bourgeois revolution—though the struggle between dragon and hydra could become quite intense as during the period of Black reconstruction in the US South after the civil war. The socialist revolution, on the other hand, opens up the possibility of a definitive victory of the hydra for the first time if we can figure out how to make it happen.”

**Maroon comments:** i believe my comments will make more sense if i reserve them until after you have read Steve’s fourth conclusion.

**Steve’s conclusion #4:** “There are multiple cases where the lack of a revolutionary dragon that could consciously disarm and disperse the reactionary state power has led to an outright defeat and the re-imposition of the old power relations, even if in a significantly different form (consider post-apartheid South Africa). There are other cases where the revolutionary dragon succeeded in con-