

OUTLINE FOR PRESENTATION ON THE HAWAII NATIONAL QUESTION

I. POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HAWAII NATIONAL QUESTION

Having a scientific analysis of the Hawaii National Question is important for communist intervention in the class struggle in Hawaii. It goes beyond the question of a class analysis of the Hawaiian community and a political line for work in the Hawaiian Movement which has been in a flow since the early 1970's. It calls for an accurate analysis of the political economy of Hawaii which historically has been a region of the U.S. with a distinct economic structure. The analysis includes developing an understanding of the interplay of racial and national oppression with the development of class and property relations in Hawaii. It also will provide theoretical groundwork for analyzing the question of native peoples in the U.S. and is related to analyzing the national question for U.S. possessions in the Pacific and Carribean such as American Samoa, Guam, the Trust Territories, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

II. MARXIST CATEGORIES, EXISTING THESES AND STATE OF THE THEORETICAL WORK ON THE QUESTION

Existing theses conclude that Hawaii is a colony whose people are part of an oppressed nation. Our study of the question will examine the categories of nation and colony and its applicability to Hawaii. Given our initial understanding of the political economy and development of classes in Hawaii, we assert that the categories of "national minority" and "racial group" and the intersection of national and racial oppression are more appropriate categories for understanding the dynamics of ethnic relations in Hawaii and class stratification. A more developed framework for analyzing indigenous peoples as national minorities will be necessary for understanding the historical oppression and current conditions of the Hawaiian people in Hawaii.

The state of the theoretical work on this question is pitifully undeveloped. The main elaboration of any kind using Marxist categories was a report to the Communist International in 1933 by Sen Katayama, a member of the Japanese Communist Party. It was elaborated a little further in an International Pamphlet by Samuel Weinman. The report characterized Hawaii as a colony plundered by U.S. imperialism. Finance capital, it said, dominated Hawaii's two-crop economy and the U.S. Navy used Hawaii as a military base for war preparations. It provided a lot of phenomenal statistics for Hawaii in 1930 but little analysis of its previous history. We can infer from what is written that they did not consider Hawaii to have been a nation prior to American influence, which they date in 1820 with the arrival of American missionaries. The report called for the establishment of a workers' and peasants' republic and the tasks included organizing a communist group or party, organizing revolutionary trade unions along racial lines with a central trade union council and raising slogans around conditions of workers and peasants.

Some of the New Left base their analysis of Hawaii being a colony on the Comintern's position. They maintain that Hawaii did not consolidate into a nation historically because of imperialist intervention. It became a colony and an oppressed nation in the territorial years and remains a colony today.

Revolutionary Hawaiian nationalists (anti-capitalist, non-Marxist) put forward the concept of a racialized nation. They maintain that Hawaiians formed a sovereign nation, historically, became colonized and lost their sovereignty, and remain a colony today. They demand sovereignty for the Hawaiian people wherein the Hawaiian people would be given back control of Hawaii and the rest of the people in Hawaii would be allowed to continue living there.

III. A WORKING HYPOTHESIS ON THE HAWAII NATIONAL QUESTION

The purpose of the hypothesis is to identify key junctures in Hawaii's history and to make assertions about how to characterize those developments for purposes of further research and refinement. It will serve as a guide for developing a basic class analysis of Hawaii and the critical junctures or turning points in the development of the political economy and class formation in Hawaii.

Our hypothesis about the major periods marked by key junctures in Hawaii's history are:

I. Pre-Contact Hawaiian Society Through the European "Discovery" by Cook in 1778

During this period Hawaii had an essentially feudal economy with many distinct and unique aspects to it. A chiefly class of alii ruled over the common people, makaainana. There was no paramount chief, no centralized economy or state. The alii enforced their rule through their retainers and warriors and through a religious-political system of ritual, restrictions and privileges including the right of human sacrifice called the Kapu System. They had appropriation rights over the makaainana's services (labor) and products by virtue of their religious-political power (called mana) and their control over the land which was parcelled out to the makaainana, who were essentially, serfs.

The Hawaiians were a people which had evolved a historically stable community sharing a common territory, language and culture. They had a distinct economic life, which was not, however, integrated across the eight major islands, but were broken into self-sufficient production units which were districts under the control of konohiki (managers for the chiefs).

II. The Mercantile Capitalist Stage from 1778 through 1820's

Hawaii was drawn into the world mercantile system in furs between Europe, the U.S. and China from 1785 - 1808. Hawaiian chiefs supplied ships dealing in furs with native Americans

on the Northwest coast of North American, with provisions off of the surplus produced by the makaainana under them. The trade in Western arms and military technology made possible the rise of one paramount chief who centralized the islands under his control, King Kamehameha I, in 1795. He established a feudal monarchial state for the first time in Hawaii.

Trade for Hawaiian sandalwood became dominant from 1808 through the 1820's with the Hawaiian alii having the makaainana leave their farming to cut and haul sandalwood. Western diseases drastically reduced the Hawaiian population. This combined with Kamehameha's wars of conquest reduced the Hawaiian population from over 300,000 in 1778 to 120,000 in 1823. Famine hit many common people. The chiefs hoarded items from the trade while the conditions for the common people severely degenerated.

Mercantile capitalism began to alter the relations between the chiefs and the common people and began to make production for commodity exchange dominant over production for consumption. The Kapu System which restricted the fuller development of trade and the full participation of women in the economy was abolished in 1819. It was replaced by a state formation, Western laws and Christianity. The political system and social relations remained essentially feudal. However, dynamic changes in the political economy set the basis for the process of national formation for the indigenous Hawaiian people.

In 1820 missionaries arrived in Hawaii and the whaling industry was beginning to develop as an important source of profit for merchants.

III. The Agricultural Capitalist State from 1830 through 1900

The whaling industry developed from 1830 through 1860. The profits it generated encouraged merchants from the U.S., and Europe to establish merchant houses and operations in Hawaii rather than continue to simply operate through trading ships. The capital generated encouraged the merchants to seek enterprises to reinvest in, but the feudal system presented serious barriers to capitalist enterprises. The merchant class developing into a bourgeois class, made up of settler Europeans and Americans began to reorganize the political system to enable the economy to develop.

First, with the backing of gunships from their countries of origin, they pressured the King into signing a constitution which forced him to divide his absolute power with a cabinet, a legislature and a court system. They then infiltrated these newly created government positions and engineered the passage of a series of laws which transformed the land system and facilitated the development of wage-labor in Hawaii:

- 1848 - Great Mahele: divided the lands for private ownership to the Crown (monarchy), 245 chiefs and konohiki and the government.
- 1850 - Kuleana Act: gave land to 8,205 commoner Hawaiians
- Act to Abolish the Disabilities of Aliens to Acquire and Convey Lands in Fee Simple: gave foreigners the right to buy, sell and own land.
- *** By the end of these three laws, the Crown got 23.8% of all the land in Hawaii; 235 chiefs got 39.2%; the government got 37%; and 8,205 makaainana (commoners) got .8%. 72% of the eligible adult males were left landless and would need to seek some means of survival. By 1862 most of the lands had passed into the ownership of American and European foreigners. On Oahu for example, three-fourths of the lands were owned by haoles (American and Europeans) except in one district where it was one-half.
- Masters and Servants Act: made contract labor legal backed by the enforcement of the government.
- 1852 - the first contract laborers were imported to work on the plantations. They came from China. The government subsidized one-half of the costs of importing immigrant labor. By this time Hawaiians had been reduced to only 80,539.

In 1861 the Civil War in the U.S. closed off the North's supply of sugar from the South and Hawaiian sugar profits boomed with sales to the North. At this point merchants decided to invest in sugar plantations. With Reconstruction protective tariffs were imposed against foreign sugar. The question of a market became a major factor which eventually directed the merchants and planters and missionaries to seek full incorporation into the U.S.

In 1875 a Reciprocity Treaty between Hawaii and the U.S. was negotiated. Sugar production expanded 716% and profits from sugar rose 373% from 1876 to 1887. Of these interests 65% were controlled by Americans, 21% by British, 6% by Germans, and 4% by Hawaiians and slightly less than 4% by Chinese.

To renew the treaty the U.S. demanded exclusive use of Pearl Harbor, in effect calling for the ceding of a portion of Hawaii. This met with resistance from the Hawaiian King and Hawaiian politicians. In 1887 the sugar interests organized a coup against the King forcing him to sign a constitution which made him a puppet. They immediately negotiated a new Reciprocity Treaty ceding Pearl Harbor.

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In 1889, Hawaiian political leaders organized an insurrection to restore the king's rights. It was smashed within twelve hours. Their financial backing came from Chinese merchants, reflecting the lack of any Hawaiian bourgeoisie.

In 1891 new U.S. tariff regulations nullified the Reciprocity Treaty causing severe depression in Hawaii. In 1893 the new Queen Liliuokalani made an effort to change the restrictive constitution of 1887. At that point the planter-business-missionary interests organized the overthrow of the Queen with the backing of U.S. marines. In 1895 there was an attempt to restore the monarchy which failed. In 1898 Hawaii was annexed to the U.S. and in 1900 it became an incorporated territory.

With the overthrow of the monarchy, the last vestige of the Hawaiian people's sovereignty was destroyed. It had been rendered increasingly powerless ever since the King signed the first constitution in 1840, but this was the final blow. The monarchy and the class of feudal chiefs who had established it could not go beyond their class interests to lead the Hawaiian people to effectively resist foreign influence and develop an alternative form of political rule. They had remained a landed aristocratic class and had not made the transition to become part of the developing bourgeoisie. The common Hawaiian did not even comprise a substantial portion of the proletariat. The dynamic settler bourgeoisie had reorganized Hawaii's economy, transforming even the composition of the population whereby Hawaiians had become a minority in their own land. The masses of Hawaiians were incapable of organizing their own resistance, being greatly diminished in number, lacking financial resources to compete militarily with the foreigners and lacking training and experience. Some participated in the new economy, others remained on the margins of the new social, economic and political system. They lived in isolated valleys and districts maintaining distinct economic activities and interacting with the economy occasionally for the purchase of some manufactured items and to get cash to pay for those items and for taxes. In those areas they reproduced their traditional lifestyle.

Faced with the question of control over their market, the bourgeois forces in Hawaii decided to abandon the consolidation of an independent Hawaiian nation and to incorporate Hawaii as a territory of the U.S.

In the development of a multiracial work force in Hawaii, the planters utilized national chauvinist policies to keep the work force divided. They consciously recruited workers from different countries to prevent their unity. They maintained them in differential wages, jobs and living quarters according to nationality in order to stratify and divide the proletariat. While they were assimilated into the social production of Hawaii they were restricted from gaining full rights and privileges of citizenship by the Hawaiian government, made up of Hawaiians and settler Americans and Europeans.

IV. The Territorial Years from 1900 to 1959

During this period, Hawaii was prevented from achieving statehood and realizing its objective status as a part of the U.S.. The American capitalists who established a monopoly control over Hawaii maintained a distinct economy with many regional particularities. Through processes of concentration and centralization of capital they generated most of their capital from Hawaii and reinvested in Hawaii up through World War II. They also did not draw their labor from within the U.S. but from Japan up through 1906 and then from the Philippines up through 1946.

The American capitalists who ruled Hawaii, generally referred to as the Big Five (Castle and Cooke, C. Brewer, AmFac, Alexander and Baldwin and Theo H. Davies) used national chauvinist and racist policies over the working class to keep it divided and exploited. The proletariat for their part began to organize against their class oppression and the racist policies. They organized into multi-racial unions, the first being the I.L.W.U..

The indigenous Hawaiian people were granted land rights in the form of the Hawaiian Homes Commission but not granted any form of political recognition, separately as a people. For the most part, many Hawaiians actively participated in broader electoral politics. They comprised the majority of the electorate because the first generation Japanese who made up the real majority of the population were not allowed to become citizens of the U.S.. Up through World War II Hawaiians continued to comprise the plurality of voters. The Hawaiian political leaders, including the prince who would have inherited the throne made an alliance with the haole Big Five and ran as Republican party candidates and voted for their policies. Hawaiians benefited from this co-operation through political patronage in government jobs and secure positions in Big Five businesses in lower levels of management and as common laborers.

While many Hawaiians functioned within the broader society fully, especially those in urban areas and who worked for plantations and ranches, a significant number of Hawaiians continued to live in remote districts and to reproduce many aspects of their traditional economy and lifestyle.

V. STATEHOOD TO PRESENT

During this period, the status of Hawaii as part of the U.S. was recognized and granted under a campaign led by a coalition of the labor unions, Japanese-American politicians and the Democratic Party. Native Hawaiians were recognized as having an interest in the public lands of the state in the Statehood Act. They continued to have the rights under the Hawaiian Homes Commission and in the seventies began to organize to demand fuller rights equal to those achieved and being demanded by other native American peoples in the U.S..