

# GEORGE JACKSON ON FASCISM

*With intro article on George Jackson by Walter Rodney*



# GEORGE JACKSON: BLACK REVOLUTIONARY

Editor's note

The following article was written by Walter Rodney for a 1971 issue of *Maji Maji*, the quarterly journal of the youth wing of the Tanganyika African National Union. The text is held at the Robert W. Woodruff Library in Atlanta, Georgia, under the supervision of the Walter Rodney Foundation. The text here is from History is a Weapon with a few minor copyedits and additional footnotes. We want to thank the Walter Rodney Foundation for their work overall and especially for their permission to reprint this important and relatively unknown contribution to our understanding of the Black Freedom movement, African Liberation struggles, Pan-Africanism, and internationalism.

“George Jackson: Black Revolutionary”

To most readers in this continent, starved of authentic information by the imperialist news agencies, the name of George Jackson is either unfamiliar or just a name. The powers that be in the United States put forward the official version that George Jackson was a dangerous criminal kept in maximum security in America's toughest jails and still capable of killing a guard at Soledad Prison. They say that he himself was killed attempting escape this year in August. Official versions given by the United States of everything from the Bay of Pigs in Cuba to the Bay of Tonkin in Vietnam have the common characteristic of standing truth on its head. George Jackson was jailed ostensibly for stealing 70 dollars. He was given a sentence of one year to life because he was Black, and he was kept incarcerated for years under the most dehumanizing conditions because he discovered that Blackness need not be a badge of servility but rather could be a banner for uncompromising revolutionary struggle. He was murdered because he was doing too

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much to pass this attitude on to fellow prisoners. George Jackson was political prisoner and a Black freedom fighter. He died at the hands of the enemy.

Once it is made known that George Jackson was a Black revolutionary in the white man's jails, at least one point is established, since we are familiar with the fact that a significant proportion of African nationalist leaders graduated from colonialist prisons, and right now the jails of South Africa hold captive some of the best of our brothers in that part of the continent. Furthermore, there is some considerable awareness that ever since the days of slavery the U.S.A. is nothing but a vast prison as far as African descendants are concerned. Within this prison, Black life is cheap, so it should be no surprise that George Jackson was murdered by the San Quentin prison authorities who are responsible to America's chief prison warden, Richard Nixon. What remains is to go beyond the generalities and to understand the most significant elements attaching to George Jackson's life and death.

When he was killed in August this year, George Jackson was 29 years of age and had spent the last 11 years behind bars—seven of these in special isolation [1]. As he himself put it, he was from the lumpen. He was not part of the regular producer force of workers and peasants. Being cut off from the system of production, lumpen elements in the past rarely understood the society which victimized them and were not to be counted upon to take organized revolutionary steps within capitalist society. Indeed, the very term lumpen proletariat was originally intended to convey the inferiority of this sector as compared with the authentic working class.

Yet George Jackson, like Malcolm X before him, educated himself painfully behind prison bars to the point where his clear vision of historical and contemporary reality and his ability to communicate his perspective frightened the U.S. power structure into physically liquidating him. Jackson's survival for so many years in vicious jails, his self-education, and his publication of *Soledad Brother* were tremendous personal achievements, and in addition they offer an

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interesting insight into the revolutionary potential of the Black masses in the U.S.A., so many of whom have been reduced to the status of lumpen [2].

Under capitalism, the worker is exploited through the alienation of part of the product of his labour. For the African peasant, the exploitation is effected through manipulation of the price of the crops which he laboured to produce. Yet, work has always been rated higher than unemployment, for the obvious reason that survival depends upon the ability to obtain work. Thus, early in the history of industrialization, workers coined the slogan the right to work. Masses of Black people in the U.S.A. are deprived of this basic right. At best they live in a limbo of uncertainty as casual workers, last to be hired and first to be fired. The line between the unemployed or criminals cannot be dismissed as white lumpen in capitalist Europe were usually dismissed.

The latter were considered as misfits and regular toilers served as the vanguard. The 30-odd million Black people in the U.S.A. are not misfits. They are the most oppressed and the most threatened as far as survival is concerned. The greatness of George Jackson is that he served as a dynamic spokesman for the most wretched among the oppressed, and he was in the vanguard of the most dangerous front of struggle.

Jail is hardly an arena in which one would imagine that guerrilla warfare would take place. Yet, it is on this most disadvantaged of terrains that blacks have displayed the guts to wage a war for dignity and freedom. In *Soledad Brother*, George Jackson movingly reveals the nature of this struggle as it has evolved over the last few years. Some of the more recent episodes in the struggle at San Quentin prison are worth recording. On February 27th this year, Black and Brown (Mexican) prisoners announced the formation of a Third World Coalition. This came in the wake of such organizations as a Black Panther Branch at San Quentin and the establishment of SATE (Self-Advancement Through Education). This level of mobilisation of the nonwhite prisoners was resented and feared by

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white guards and some racist white prisoners. The latter formed themselves into a self-declared Nazi group, and months of violent incidents followed. Needless to say, with white authority on the side of the Nazis, Afro, and Mexican brothers had a very hard time. George Jackson is not the only casualty on the side of the Blacks. But their unity was maintained, and a majority of white prisoners either refused to support the Nazis or denounced them. So, even within prison walls the first principle to be observed was unity in struggle. Once the most oppressed had taken the initiative, then they could win allies.

The struggle within the jails is having wider and wider repercussions every day. Firstly, it is creating true revolutionary cadres out of more and more lumpen. This is particularly true in the jails of California, but the movement is making its impact felt everywhere from Baltimore to Texas. Brothers inside are writing poetry, essays and letters which strip white capitalist America naked. Like the Soledad Brothers, they have come to learn that sociology books call us antisocial and brand us criminals, when actually the criminals are in the social register. The names of those who rule America are all in the social register.

Secondly, it is solidifying the Black community in a remarkable way. Petty bourgeois Blacks also feel threatened by the manic police, judges and prison officers. Black intellectuals who used to be completely alienated from any form of struggle except their personal hustle now recognize the need to ally with and take their bearings from the street forces of the Black unemployed, ghetto dwellers and prison inmates.

Thirdly, the courage of Black prisoners has elicited a response from white America. The small band of white revolutionaries has taken a positive stand. The Weathermen decried Jackson's murder by placing a few bombs in given places and the Communist Party supported the demand by the Black prisoners and the Black Panther Party that the murder was to be investigated. On a more general note, white liberal America has been disturbed. The white liberals

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never like to be told that white capitalist society is too rotten to be reformed. Even the established capitalist press has come out with exposes of prison conditions, and the fascist massacres of Black prisoners at Attica prison recently brought Senator Muskie out with a cry of enough.

Fourthly (and for our purposes most significantly) the efforts of Black prisoners and Blacks in America as a whole have had international repercussions. The framed charges brought against Black Panther leaders and against Angela Davis have been denounced in many parts of the world. Committees of defense and solidarity have been formed in places as far as Havana and Leipzig. OPAAL declared August 18th as the day of international solidarity with Afro-Americans; and significantly most of their propaganda for this purpose ended with a call to Free All Political Prisoners.

For more than a decade now, peoples liberation movements in Vietnam, Cuba, Southern Africa, etc., have held conversations with militants and progressives in the U.S.A. pointing to the duality and respective responsibilities of struggle within the imperialist camp. The revolution in the exploited colonies and neo-colonies has as its objective the expulsion of the imperialists: the revolution in the metropolis is to transform the capitalist relations of production in the countries of their origin. Since the U.S.A. is the overlord of world imperialism, it has been common to portray any progressive movement there as operating within the belly of the beast. Inside an isolation block in Soledad or San Quentin prisons, this was not merely a figurative expression. George Jackson knew well what it meant to seek for heightened socialist and humanist consciousness inside the belly of the white imperialist beast.

International solidarity grows out of struggle in different localities. This is the truth so profoundly and simply expressed by Che Guevara when he called for the creation of one, two, three – many Vietnams. It has long been recognized that the white working class in the U.S.A is historically incapable of participating (as a class) in anti-imperialist struggle. White racism and Americas leading role in

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world imperialism transformed organized labour in the U.S. into a reactionary force. Conversely, the Black struggle is internationally significant because it unmasks the barbarous social relations of capitalism and places the enemy on the defensive on his own home ground. This is amply illustrated in the political process which involved the three Soledad Brothers—George Jackson, Fleeta Drumgo and John Clutchette—as well as Angela Davis and a host of other Blacks now behind prison bars in the U.S.A.

### **Footnotes**

[1] Rodney's original text said 15 years, although this was corrected when published on History is a Weapon.

[2] The History is a Weapon publication notes that "George Jackson also authored Blood In My Eye which was published posthumously, or after this article was written." For more information on this later text, see Curry Malott, Randall Scott, and Elgin Bailey, "George Jackson's 'Blood in My Eye: A Critical Appraisal,'" Liberation School, 01 February 2022.

The following texts from George Jackson are taken from his books Soledad Brother and Blood In My Eye. Both essential readings for revolutionaries in the United States.

# FASCISM

## GEORGE JACKSON

**Its most advanced form is here in Amerika  
Comrade John\***

I've just finished rereading Angela's analysis of fascism (she's a brilliant, "big," beautiful revolutionary woman — ain't she!!). I've studied your letters on the subject carefully. It could be productive for the three of us to get together at once and subject the whole question to a detailed historical analysis. There is some difference of opinion and interpretation of history between us, but basically I think we are brought together on the principal points by the fact that the three of us could not meet without probably causing World War III. Give her my deepest and warmest love and ask her to review these comments. This is not all that I will have to say on the subject. I'll constantly return to myself and reexamine. I expect I will have to carry this on for another couple of hundred pages. We'll deal with the questions as they come up, but for now this should provoke both of you to push me on to a greater effort.

The basis of Angela's analysis is tied into several old left notions that are at least open to some question now. It is my view that out of the economic crisis of the last great depression fascism-corporativism did indeed emerge, develop and consolidate itself into its most advanced form here in Amerika. In the process, socialist consciousness suffered some very severe setbacks. Unlike Angela, I do not believe that this realization leads to a defeatist view of history. An understanding of the reality of our situation is essential to the success of future revolutionizing activity. To contend that corporativism has emerged and advanced is not to say that it has triumphed. We are not defeated. Pure fascism, absolute totalitarianism, is not possible.

Hierarchy has had six thousand years of trial. It will never succeed for long in any form. Fascism and its historical significance is the

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point of my whole philosophy on politics and its extension, war. My opinion is that we are at the historical climax (the flash point) of the totalitarian period. The analysis in depth that the subject deserves has yet to be done. Important as they are, both Wilhelm Reich's and Franz Neumann's works\* on the subject are limited. Reich tends to be over analytical to the point of idealism. I don't think Neumann truly sensed the importance of the antisocialist movement. Behemoth is too narrowly based on the experience of German National Socialism. So there is so much to be done on the subject and time is running out. If I am correct, we will soon be forced into the same fight that the old left avoided.

**6/20/71**

It is not defeatist to acknowledge that we have lost a battle. How else can we "regroup" and even think of carrying on the fight. At the center of revolution is realism. To call one or two or a dozen setbacks defeat is to overlook the ebbing and flowing process of revolution, coming closer to our calculations and then receding, but never standing still. If a thing isn't building, it must be decaying. As one force emerges, the opposite force must yield; as one advances, the other must retreat. There is a very significant difference between retreat and defeat. I am not saying that our parents were defeated when I contend that fascist-corporativism emerged and advanced in the U.S. At the same time it was making its advance, it caused, by its very nature, an advance in world-wide socialist consciousness: "When U.S. capitalism reached the stage of imperialism, the Western great powers had already divided among themselves almost all the important markets in the world. At the end of World War II when the other imperialist powers had been weakened, the U.S. became the most powerful and richest imperialist power. Meanwhile, the world situation was no longer the same: the balance of forces between imperialism and the socialist camps had fundamentally changed; imperialism no longer ruled over the world, nor did it play a decisive role in the development of the world situation" (Vo Nguyen Giap).

In my analysis, I'm simply taking into account the fact that the forces of reaction and counterrevolution were allowed to localize

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themselves and radiate their energy here in the U.S. The process has created the economic, political and cultural vortex of capitalism's last re-form. My views correspond with those of all the Third World revolutionaries. And if taken in the international sense, they are aggressive and realistic.

The second notion that stands in the way of our understanding of fascist-corporativism is a semantic problem. When I am being interviewed by a member of the old guard and point to the concrete and steel, the tiny electronic listening device concealed in the vent, the phalanx of goons peeping in at us, his barely functional plastic tape-recorder that cost him a week's labor, and point out that these are all manifestations of fascism, he will invariably attempt to refute me by defining fascism simply as an economic geo-political affair where only one political party is allowed to exist aboveground and no opposition political activity is allowed. But examine that definition of totalitarianism, comrade. No opposition parties are allowed in China, Cuba, North Korea or North Vietnam. Such a narrow definition condemns the model revolutionary societies to totalitarianism. Despite the presence of political parties, there is only one legal politics in the U.S.--the politics of corporativism. The hierarchy commands all state power. There are thousands of ways however, to attack it and place that power in the hands of the people.

**6/20/71**

All levels of struggle must be conceived as inclined planes leading inexorably to a point where armed conflict will engulf two or more sections of the people.

Armed struggle or organized violence is the natural outcome of a sequence of historical events that have matured to the point of impasse. This is not to say that war is for us the only immediate recourse of the spontaneous result of a breakdown in lesser forms of political activity. I have always tried to emphasize that through every stage of political mobilization there must be a corresponding and equal military mobilization of the people's forces. One is inextricably tied into the other, and not simply for the reason unwittingly put forward by the old guard that fascism allowed for no

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valid opposition political activity, though there is some trust in that position. My position is based on historical precedents that indicate the probable scope and range of violence in an Amerikan revolution.

In the present class structure we represent the group with the greatest revolutionary potential. We are Black—the significance of which needs very little analysis here, though I will go into the mechanics of raceat length later in dealing with the contextual structure of fascist hierarchy.

But mainly my position is rooted in the long history of the Amerikan business oligarchy's penchant for violent repression of any forces that have threatened its centralist movement, and in the very natural defense reflexes of any form of state power. Although, as victims of one of history's most brutal contradictions, as the poorest of the poor, as Blacks, it is quite justifiable and completely possible for us to destroy this country as a modern nation-state, to attack it with a totally destructive counter-sweep of frustrated retaliatory rage; that is not our purpose. As revolutionaries, it is our objective to move ourselves and the people into action that will culminate in the seizure of state power. Our real purpose is to redeem not merely ourselves but the whole nation and the whole community of nations from colonial-community economic repression.

The U.S. has established itself as the mortal enemy of all people's government, all scientific-socialist mobilization of consciousness everywhere on the globe, all anti-imperialist activity on earth. The history of this country in the last fifty years and more, the very nature of all its fundamental elements, and its economic, social, political and military mobilization distinguish it as the prototype of the international fascist counterrevolution. The U.S. is the Korean problem, the Vietnamese problem, the problem in the Congo, Angola, Mozambique, the Middle East. It's the grease in the British and Latin Amerikan guns that operate against the masses of common people.

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**6/21/71**

The nature of fascism, its characteristics and properties have been in dispute ever since it was first identified as a distinct phenomenon growing out of Italy's slate-supported and developed industries in 1922. Whole libraries have been written around the subject. There have been a hundred "party lines" on just exactly what fascism is. But both Marxists and non-Marxists agree on at least two of its general factors: its capitalist orientation and its anti-labor, anti-class nature. These two factors almost by themselves identify the U.S. as a fascist-corporative state. An exact definition of fascism concerns me because it will help us identify our enemy and isolate the targets of revolution. Further, it should help us to understand the workings of the enemy's methodology. Settling this question of whether or not a mature fascism has developed will finally clear away some of the fog in our liberation efforts. This will help us to broaden the effort. We will not succeed until we fully accept the fact that the enemy is aware, determined, disguised, totalitarian, and mercilessly counterrevolutionary. To fight effectively, we must be aware of the fact that the enemy has consolidated through reformist machination the greatest community of self-interest that has ever existed. Our insistence on military action, defensive and retaliatory, has nothing to do with romanticism or precipitous idealistic fervor. We want to be effective. We want to live. Our history teaches us that the successful liberation struggles require an armed people, a whole people, actively participating in the struggle for their liberty! The final definition of fascism is still open, simply because it is still a developing movement. We have already discussed the defects of trying to analyze a movement outside of its process and its sequential relationships. You gain only a discolored glimpse of a dead past. No one will fully comprehend the historical implications and strategy of fascist corporativism except the true fascist manipulator or the researcher who is able to slash through the smoke screens and disguises the fascists set up. Fascism was the product of class struggle. It is an obvious extension of capitalism, a higher form of the old struggle — capitalism versus socialism. I think our failure to clearly isolate and define it may have something to do with our insistence on a full definition — in other words, looking for exactly identical symptoms from nation to nation. We have been

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consistently misled by fascism's nationalistic trappings. We have failed to understand its basically international character. In fact, it has followed international socialism all around the globe. One of the most definite characteristics of fascism is its international quality.

**6/22/71**

The trends toward monopoly capital began effectively just after the close of the Civil War in Amerika. Prior to its emergence, bourgeois democratic rule could be said to have been the predominant political force inside Amerikan society. As monopoly capital matured, the role of the old bourgeois democracy faded in process. As monopoly capital forced out the small dispersed factory setup, the new corporativism assumed political supremacy. Monopoly capital can in no way be interpreted as an extension of old bourgeois democracy. The forces of monopoly capital swept across the Western world in the first half of this century. But they did not exist alone. Their opposite force was also at work, i.e., "international socialism" — Lenin's and Fanon's — national wars of liberation guided not by the national bourgeois but by the people, the ordinary working-class people.

At its core, fascism is an economic rearrangement. It is international capitalism's response to the challenge of international scientific socialism. It developed from nation to nation out of differing levels of traditionalist capitalism's dilapidation. The common feature of all instances of fascism is the opposition of a weak socialist revolution. When the fascist arrangement begins to emerge in any of the independent nation-states, it does so by default! It is simply an arrangement of an established capitalist economy, an attempt to renew, perpetuate and legitimize that economy's rulers by circumflexing and weighing down, diffusing a revolutionary consciousness pushing from below. Fascism must be seen as an episodically logical stage in the socio-economic development of capitalism in a state of crisis. It is the result of a revolutionary thrust that was weak and miscarried — a consciousness that was compromised.

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“When revolution fails . . . it’s the fault of the vanguard parties.” It is clear that class struggle is an ingredient of fascism. It follows that where fascism emerges and develops, the anti-capitalist forces were weaker than the traditionalist forces. This weakness will become even more pronounced as fascism develops! The ultimate aim of fascism is the complete destruction of all revolutionary consciousness.

**6/23/71**

Our purpose here is to understand the essence of this living, moving thing so that we will understand how to move against it. This observer is convinced that fascism not only exists in the U.S.A. but has risen out of the ruins of a once eroded and dying capitalism, phoenix like, to its most advanced and logical arrangement. One has to understand that the fascist arrangement tolerates the existence of no valid revolutionary activity. It has programmed into its very nature a massive, complex and automatic defense mechanism for all our old methods for raising the consciousness of a potentially revolutionary class of people. The essence of a U.S.A. totalitarian socio-political capitalism is concealed behind the illusion of a mass participatory society. We must rip away its mask. Then the debate can end, and we can enter a new phase of struggle based on the development of an armed revolutionary culture that will triumph. On May 14, 1787, the Constitutional Convention with George Washington presiding officer, the work of framing the new nation's constitution proceeded with fifty-five persons and only two were not employers!!!

There have been many booms and busts in the history of capitalism in this nation and across the Western Hemisphere since its formation. The accepted method of pulling the stricken economy out of its stupor has always been to expand. It was pretty clear from the outset that the surplus value factor eventually leads to a point in the business cycle when the existing implementation of the productive factors makes it impossible for the larger factor of production (labor) to buy back the “fruits of its labor.”

This leads to what has been erroneously termed “overproduction.” It

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is, in fact, underconsumption. The remedy has always been to expand, to search out new markets and new sources of cheaper raw materials to recharge the economy (the imperialist syndrome). Conflicts of interests develop, of course, between the various Western nations and eventually lead to competition for these markets. The result is always an ever-increasing international centralization of the various capitalists' elites, world-wide cartels: International Telegraphic Unions (now International Telecommunications Union), universal postal union, transportation, agricultural, and scientific syndicates. Before World War I there were forty-five or fifty such international syndicates, not counting the purely business cartels. The international quality of capitalism is not happenstance. It is clearly in the interests of the ruling class to expand and unite. I am one Marxist-Leninist-Maoist-Fanonist who does not completely accept the idea that the old capitalist competitive wars for colonial markets were actually willed by the various rulers of each nation, even though such wars stimulated their local economies and made it possible to promote nationalism among the lower classes. War taken to the point of diminishing returns weakens rather than strengthens the participants, and if the rulers of these nations were anything at all they were good businessmen. Expansion, then, which often led unavoidably to war, was the traditional recourse in the solving of problems created by a vacuous, uncontrollable system, which never considered any changes in its arrangement, its essential dynamics, until it came under a very real, directly threatening challenge from below to its very existence. Fascism in its early stages is a rearrangement of capitalist implementation in response to a sharpening, threatening, but weaker egalitarian socialist consciousness. In regional or national economic crisis the traditional remedies also include measures which stop just short of massive expansion on the international level. Traditional controls short of expansion and war have always existed in the form of government intervention, tariffs, public expenditure, government export subsidy and limited control of the capital market and import licenses, and monopolies have always used government to help direct investment.

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IMAGE FROM JUST SEEDS

## George Jackson, Prisoner Prophet (From HamptonThink)

On August 21st, 1971, George Jackson was shot and killed by a prison guard in San Quentin during an alleged escape attempt. He was 29 years old. Jackson, who was imprisoned a decade earlier on an armed-robbery charge, died three days before he was to begin a murder trial stemming from the death of a guard. A year earlier, Jackson made national headlines when his 17-year-old brother, Jonathan Peter Jackson, had attempted an armed insurrection at the Marin County Courthouse in San Rafael, California in order to free the "Soledad

Brothers" (George, Fleeta Drumgo, and John Clutchette), the trio of inmates who were accused of killing the guard in retaliation for the murder of three Black prisoners a month prior.

Jackson was a scary figure in the American conscience. On the heels of a tumultuous decade that included a fierce Civil Rights movement, a corollary black power movement, and a series of liberation movements rooted in radical democracy, the country was still reeling. Major figures like Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, and Malcolm X were known by all, but many of the radicals working in the trenches of these revolutionary movements were discarded, both through a deliberate erasing from above and a general fear of facing hard truths about American history and society.

During his time in prison, Jackson developed and refined thoughtful analysis through voracious reading that informed his experience as a Black man growing up in a white-supremacist society. While he became known more for the violent incidents that were destined along his revolutionary path, Jackson was a prolific writer and theorist, particularly on the topics of capitalism and fascism. Along with fellow prisoner W. L. Nolen, Jackson founded the Black Guerilla Family, a black liberation organization based in Marxist-Leninist and Maoist theory. Jacksons' ideological formation had taken place with the help of Nolen during the late 60s while in San Quentin. As he later explained in his collection of prison letters, "I met Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, Engels, and Mao when I entered prison, and they redeemed me."