

COLONIZATION: A WAR for TERRITORY

The more that a war of colonization comes to rely on political, economic, or ideological means, and the less it uses military force, the more difficult it is for the Indigenous people to comprehend and understand that a war is in fact being waged against them.



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not only lack a will to resist, they can even lack a will to live (i.e., disproportionately high rates of suicide among Native peoples).

Fighting Spirit

A primary aim of Indigenous resistance must be to strengthen the fighting spirit of our people and their will to resist. Fighting spirit can be strengthened and affirmed in many ways, i.e. through the use of certain language and concepts, graphics, clothing, crest animals, songs, etc. A fuller understanding and practice of our own Indigenous cultures would also contribute to raising fighting spirit, and in and of itself is a form of decolonization. Our people's history of resistance, and especially the last thirty-year period, should be maintained and communicated.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article has been to expose the reader to a view of colonization as a war for territory. It is believed that this view is critical to understanding the true nature of our struggle and the intentions, strategies, and tactics of our enemy.

That state security forces will be used to enforce colonial rule and corporate access to resources is an already established fact. As economic and environmental conditions decline, as resources become more depleted, the potential for ever-greater social conflict increases. For these reasons, fighting spirit must also be augmented by preparations for militant defense of land, resources, and communities, in the years to come.

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therefore be clearly communicated. Another important part of decolonization is the history of Indigenous resistance to colonialism. As well, people need to be exposed to the realities of the global capitalist system, its use of military force to impose imperialism, the role of white supremacy and patriarchy in this process, etc.

Casualties of War

The effects colonization has had on our people must be acknowledged. Indigenous peoples have the highest rates of suicide in the country; the highest infant mortality rates; the lowest life expectancies; disproportionately high rates of AIDS, cancers, and imprisonment; the lowest income level; the highest unemployment rates, etc.

Many have suffered physical, mental and sexual abuse in the residential school system; the effects of this have resulted in inter-generational patterns of abuse in our communities. How many tens of thousands of Indigenous children have been taken from their families, and their people, and fostered out in non-Indigenous family units may never be known, and still continues.

The overall physical and psychological effects of these oppressed conditions can never be fully known, for the casualties and deaths of such a war do not appear as bodies on a battlefield, but instead as suicide statistics, alcoholics, drug addicts, prostitutes, and slaves. Many become apathetic to these conditions, while some attempt to assimilate themselves even further into this system and its way of life, a form of self-destruction in itself. Unable to see colonization as the fundamental condition which oppresses them, many

political, economic, or ideological means, and the less it uses military force, the more difficult it is for the Indigenous people to comprehend and understand that a war is in fact being waged against them.

In this way, the inferior condition of the Indigenous person in all aspects of life, and little progress towards remedying this oppressed condition, cannot be accounted for, except as an “unfortunate” result of history. Yet, despite continual inquiries and special commissions and constitutional debates and new government programs—all aimed at uplifting the Indigenous people, we are told—the fundamental conditions which keep Indigenous people oppressed do not change.

This lack of change is not due to history, it is because our enemy actively prevents any movement towards fundamental changes to its system. It in fact seeks to prevent even the thought that fundamental changes are necessary.

Ideology and psychological warfare, transmitted through the public education system, corporate media and entertainment industries, and political institutions, serves to obscure and make incomprehensible the full nature and extent of a war of colonization.

Know Your Enemy

Unable to comprehend this war, the Indigenous person is then incapable of defining an enemy and the means by which they are oppressed. This understanding can only come through education and consciousness. The identification of the colonial system as an enemy of Indigenous people must

“If anyone is trying to destroy you, STOP HIM!”

—Karoniaktajeh - Louis Hall, *Warrior's Handbook*, p. 1



War and Colonization

Just slightly over 500 years ago, in 1492, three European ships under the command of Christopher Columbus arrived on the shores of what has come to be known as the Americas. With this began a genocidal war aimed at destroying Indigenous nations, occupying our ancestral territories, and plundering the natural wealth of the earth. How many tens of millions of Indigenous people were killed in this war will never be known, although the methods of massacres, biological warfare, executions, torture, and the enslavement of entire nations, has been well documented by historians.

Similar invasions were being carried out in Afrika and parts of Asia during this same period. This systematic campaign of genocide and colonization was a total war waged against Indigenous nations by European colonialist nations. No one can deny this historical fact.

Colonization can be defined as the practise of invading other lands for the purpose(s) of settlement and/or resource exploitation. When the land is already occupied by another people, the result is usually war. In fact, colonialism occurs in a similar manner to many military conflicts between nations: there is a reconnaissance, an invasion, occupation, and then assimilation (the same methods can be seen in Iraq and Afghanistan).

War can be defined as,

“a state of hostilities that exists between or among nations, characterized by the use of military force...a violent clash between two hostile, independent, and irreconcilable wills, each trying to impose itself on the other.

“The means to that end is the organized application or threat of violence by military force.”

—*Warfighting*, p. 3

Here in North America, military violence can be said to have characterized the imposition of colonialism and the establishment of settler-nations up to 1890. That year, 300 Indigenous men, women and children were massacred by U.S. military forces at Wounded Knee, South Dakota. By the late 1880s, the use of gun-boats to destroy villages had ended along the Northwest Coast. In the southwest, Apache guerrillas had also been defeated. At this time, the military

as a clash between two forces, opposed to each other by their very nature, with one attempting to impose its will onto the other. It is a life-and-death struggle. This characterization fits our definition of war as previously stated.

It is therefore correct to say that colonization is a condition of war, and is it itself a form of war to gain territory for resources and/or settlement.

Because colonialism continues to this day, it follows then that a war is being waged against our people at this time. This war of colonization is conducted by the state of Canada using all the elements of national power at its disposal, including diplomacy, military/police force, economics, ideology, technology, and culture.

Identifying the Effects of This War and Combating Them

“There is another type of warfare waged on the native...It is waged against the mind of the natives. This type of warfare is every bit as dirty and deadly as the ones with guns. The casualties are the drunks, dope addicts and suicides. The casualty rate is high. There are Indians walking around dazed and confused suffering from identity conflict. This is one of the wars the modern... warriors have to fight. To fight any kind of war, one needs courage, gumption, knowledge of the enemy and strategic planning. The biggest single requirement is **FIGHTING SPIRIT.**”

—Louis Karoniaktajeh Hall, *Warrior's Handbook*, p. 10.

The more that a war of colonization comes to rely on

power, including diplomacy, military force, economics, ideology, technology, and culture.”

—*Warfighting*, p. 25

Wars can be of either high- or low-intensity, depending on the overall objectives and the means available to wage that war. By its very nature, because it is a struggle between two opposing wills, war is both uncertain and constantly changing. Because of these factors, different means of waging war will tend to dominate in certain conditions.

Here in north amerika, as our military ability to resist was overcome, other means besides a military one came to dominate colonialist strategies and methods. The suspension of military campaigns did not, however, mean the end of colonization.

Colonization is an ongoing and continual process that does not end so long as the territory and people are occupied by the colonialist nation. Just as war cannot be said to be purely a question of military force, neither can colonization. The imposition of special laws contained in the Indian Act, including the reserve and band council system; the residential school system and religious indoctrination; distorted and incomplete depiction's of our people and history in the public education system, etc.; these are some examples of colonialism using legal, political, ideological, and cultural means.

Colonization Is War

Colonization, the occupation of a territory and the domination of the Indigenous people, can be characterized

domination of Indigenous peoples was virtually complete. This was only slightly over 100 years ago.

Is There a War Against Indigenous Peoples Today?

Today, there are some who believe that military force and violence does not characterize our present-day reality here in north amerika. But this is not entirely correct: The selective use of military/police violence can be clearly seen in recent examples from the last 30-year period.

Thousands of soldiers and police, using military equipment, weapons and tactics, have been deployed against Indigenous movements and communities. The most notable examples being:

- the 71-day siege at Wounded Knee, S. Dakota, in 1973. Hundreds of police, f.b.i., and paramilitaries, with military assistance including armoured personnel carriers, weapons, ammunition, etc., engaged in fire-fights with warriors in bunkers and trenches. Two warriors were shot and killed.
- the re-occupation of Ganienkah by Mohawks in New York state in 1974. Hundreds of state police laid siege, and gunfire was exchanged with white vigilantes. NY state eventually retreated and negotiated a parcel of land still occupied today.
- the blockade at Cache Creek, BC, in 1974.
- the re-occupation of Anicinabe Park near Kenora,

Ontario, in 1974.

- the 1975 shoot-out at Oglala, S. Dakota (two f.b.i. agents and one warrior killed). Hundreds of f.b.i. agents were deployed to Pine Ridge in a massive search for AIM members.
- Restigouche, 1981: over 500 Quebec police raid the Mi'kmaq community of Restigouche, carrying out assaults and searches for 'illegal' fishing.
- the 77-day standoff at Kanehsatake (Oka) and Kahnawake, near Montreal, Quebec, in 1990. Over 4,500 Canadian soldiers were deployed. One SQ police officer was killed in an initial raid by a heavily-armed police tactical unit on Mohawk road-block, July 11.
- the month-long siege at Gustafsen Lake, BC (Ts'Peten), in 1995. Over 450 RCMP ERT members were used, with nine Bison armoured personnel carriers from the Canadian military. During the siege, RCMP used an explosive charge to disable a vehicle, then rammed it twice with an APC. In a fire-fight which occurred, as many as 20,000 rounds were fired by police, yet only one defender was wounded (one dog killed).
- the re-occupation at Ipperwash (Aazhoodeena), Ontario, 1995. A police tactical unit opened fire on unarmed protesters, killing Dudley George and shooting a 15-year-old youth in the back (one dog killed).
- Burnt Church 2000–01. Hundreds of heavily armed DFO and RCMP officers (including ERT units) in boats, helicopters, and planes were used against Mi'kmaq

Leonard Peltier, an Anicinabe-Lakota involved with AIM in the 1970s and imprisoned for over 30 years, has observed that,

“If white society’s attempts to colonize people meets with resistance, it is called war. However, if the colonized Indians of N. America unite to rise up and resist, then we are called criminals.”

Portraying resistance as “criminal” is a primary method by which our enemy seeks to undermine our movement. Other common smears include “terrorist,” “thugs,” etc. These terms carry negative and anti-social meanings. When attached to a group, terms such as these influence public perception and loyalties. Corporate media play a big role in disinformation campaigns and counter-insurgency operations.

War by Other Means

Some may agree that the selective use of military force is used, but argue that this is the result of the imperfect society we live in. They might add that in other parts of the world, Indigenous people live with deadly violence on a daily basis. In north amerika, we may be oppressed, but it is not a war, because military force is not used against our people as a whole.

This perspective, however, is based on a narrow definition of war, characterizing it as purely military. A broader definition of war states:

“War involves the use of all the elements of national

of, or use of, violence.”

Because of Native protests, the CF removed the reference to warrior groups. Despite this, it is clear that the military continue to train and prepare for future domestic operations against Indigenous defenders.

Considering all this, it must be acknowledged that the use of military/police force, or the threat of violence by military/police force, has in fact continued, directed against and mostly limited to, those Indigenous people who become involved in protest or resistance activities.

Psychological Warfare

Because of the focused use of state violence against Indigenous resistance, some people believe these confrontations are the result of “extremists,” and that this use of military/police force is used only to resolve “criminal” matters.

This view reveals the success with which the state has isolated resistance, in the minds of some, as being the work of Indigenous “criminals” and “terrorists,” etc. In fact, after the 1990 Oka Crisis, an analysis of the siege concluded that the use of the military gave the Mohawk warriors a ‘moral victory’ in the eyes of the public. This was seen to contribute to widespread sympathy for the warriors across the country. One report recommended the use of heavily-armed police to reinforce the view of Indigenous rebels as “criminals.” This tactic was successfully used at Gustafsen Lake and Ipperwash in 1995 (along with strict control of the media).

lobster fishermen and security escorts (including Westcoast Warrior Society).

- July, 2001: over sixty RCMP were used to dismantle a road block at the Sutikalh re-occupation camp near Mt. Currie, BC. Along with a helicopter and dog teams, heavily-armed ERT members were used to arrest seven (unarmed) people. The blockade had shut down all commercial traffic on Highway 99, a vital link between Vancouver and the southern interior.
- Sun Peaks (Skwekwewelt), where RCMP arrested approximately 80 elders and Native Youth Movement members from 2000–08. These arrests resulted from occupations, road-blocks, and protests against expansion of the Sun Peaks ski resort (near Kamloops, ‘BC’).
- September 21, 2002: RCMP from the Integrated Security Enforcement Team (INSET)—an anti-terrorist unit created after 9-11—along with ERT, raided homes of Westcoast Warrior Society members on Vancouver Island (BC).
- April 8, 2003: RCMP with ERT and helicopter raided NYM member homes in Bella Coola and Neskonlith (BC). They seized computers, discs, address books, and printed materials.
- October, 2003: a convoy of approximately 100 RCMP in over 30 large vehicles and vans, with ERT units, riot cops, and dog teams, rolled through Cheam as a show of force (Cheam had blockaded a CN railway cutting through their reserve in protest against logging in Elk Creek).

- June 27, 2005: over 30 Vancouver Police and RCMP (including ERT and INSET members) arrest two members of the Westcoast Warrior Society in Vancouver. They confiscate 10 rifles that had been legally purchased at Lever Arms. No charges are laid and the weapons kept as part of an ongoing investigation (shortly after, the WWS announces its disbandment).
- Spring, 2006: hundreds of Ontario Provincial Police are deployed against the Six Nations reserve near Caledonia, Ontario, after a housing development and highway are blockaded as part of a land reclamation. On April 20, police attempt to remove people from the reclamation site using batons and pepper spray but are forced back. This begins months of blockades and sabotage.

During these incidents and the time periods in which they occurred, hundreds of people were assaulted, arrested, and jailed. At least six Indigenous people died during these incidents; in S. Dakota, between 1973–1976, nearly 70 members/associates of the American Indian Movement (AIM) were killed by paramilitary groups and BIA police, acting under the direction of a corrupt tribal president, with the complicity of local, state, and u.s. federal law enforcement agencies. f.b.i. agents supplied training and equipment to these paramilitary and tribal police forces.

At roadblocks or re-occupation camps, heavily-armed police ERTs are also frequently used for surveillance and over-watch for regular police making arrests. When the Lil'wat road block at Mt. Currie was dismantled in the Fall of 1990, the large RCMP force which arrested over 60 people was covered by ERT snipers.

During a Spring 1995 road block near Merritt, BC, (Douglas Lake Ranch), an RCMP ERT unit was discovered conducting surveillance.

In May 2001, near La Loche, Saskatchewan, an RCMP ERT unit was discovered conducting surveillance on a blockade camp. The camp was alerted to the presence of camouflaged police by a dog. After being confronted, they ran back to an old cabin, where other ERT members were brewing coffee. In their retreat, they left behind several items, including a tear gas canister and a 9 mm pistol.

Following September 11, 2001, and new anti-terrorist measures, the RCMP have become even more aggressive in their repression of Indigenous resistance. As noted, in September 2002, RCMP INSET and ERT units raided the homes of Westcoast Warriors. In April 2003, RCMP and ERT raided the homes of NYM members in Bella Coola and Neskonalith, BC. Then, in June 2005, the arrests of WWS members in Vancouver (after legally purchasing weapons) by INSET officers and ERT.

In 2006, a draft copy of the Canadian Forces new counter-insurgency manual included a description of the Mohawk Warrior societies as an example of domestic insurgents:

“The rise of radical Native American organizations, such as the Mohawk Warrior Society, can be viewed as insurgencies with specific and limited aims. Although they do not seek complete control of the federal government, they do seek particular political concessions in their relationship with national governments and control (either overt or covert) of political affairs at a local/reserve (‘First Nations’) level, through the threat