new POLITICS

a journal of socialist thought

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OBITUARY

From the Editors

New Politics is changing our cover design artist. Bob Gill has designed our last fourteen covers. His work has been excellent, and he has been praised on the Internet. We thank him for his work. But we think it is time for a change. Our new designer is Lisa Lyons. Throughout much of the 1960s and 70s she played an active role in the revolutionary socialist, anti-war, women's liberation, black power, and labor movements as a cartoonist and graphic designer. Recently retired from graphic design and teaching, she has resumed work as a political cartoonist. Lyons was staff cartoonist for the *International Socialist* and *Workers' Power*, was syndicated by Liberation News Service, illustrated *MacBird,* contributed to *It Ain't Me Babe*, the first women's comic, and produced many flyers, posters, buttons, etc. for the Civil Rights and anti-war movements. Her work is included in a number of books about American radicalism. She lives with her family outside Washington, DC. A blog is forthcoming.

Within these pages you will note the passing of three very dear friends of *NP,* Howard Zinn, Ernest Erber, and our co-founder Phyllis Jacobson. Flaubert once wrote, "Human speech is a cracked pot on which we beat out rhythms for bears to dance to when we are trying to wring tears from the stars." No words can express our sadness at the loss of these comrades.

Stephen R. Shalom and Joanne Landy have done a masterful job (we think) in organizing the special section for this issue, A World in Crisis, and their introduction to it follows.

Elsewhere this issue deals with such varied topics as female genital cutting, African-Americans in Obama's America, China's Opium Wars, and much more. Your comments and suggestions are always welcome.

MARVIN AND BETTY

LETTERS

Anarchism and Socialism

I AM LESS KIND TO ANARCHISM than is Marvin Mandell, who if anything was too kind to Wayne Price in their exchange in NP #48. At this point, I think anarchists don't have a theoretical leg to stand on; the idea that an anti-capitalist revolution could move immediately to a stateless society is utopian in the worst sense.

Among the reasons:

• The end of class conflicts is not the end of serious conflicts about social priorities. In the medium term, even a socialist world would have to decide, for example, about how much of its resources to devote to the reconstruction of the formerly exploited South or ex-Third World at the expense (necessarily) of the advanced formerly-capitalist countries — a politically difficult problem especially if there is democratic self-rule in the latter. In the long term, a socialist world would have to decide about what proportion of its effort and resources should go into, e.g., health versus education, and once that was decided, how to implement its decisions. All this would involve political conflict.

• Political decisions and free association means political parties; effective administration and enforcement of these decisions means a coercive apparatus of some sort (police, anyway); specialization (necessary for the development of expertise) requires (democratically accountable) hierarchy. One may call these something else, but they are the functional equivalent of the state.

• Even the concept of the withering away of the state requires close scrutiny. The end of exploitation does not mean the end of the need for administration, and Engels' old slogan about the administration of things and not of people doesn't hold up. Power over resources and their allocation — power to determine priorities — is power over people, even if it's accountable power.

• Even assuming that resources are not scarce (there will always be nonrenewable resources, hence relative scarcity, not absolute abundance), the determination of priorities in their use and the need for their efficient (non-wasteful, rational) use means that these decisions must be arrived at by authoritative bodies and enforced effectively, by coercion if necessary.

We are stuck with the state. The point is to radically democratize it, not abolish it.

JASON SCHULMAN
New York, NY

FOR SPECIOUS ARGUMENTS, the prize goes to Marvin Mandell for claiming that Stalin's persecution of Old Bolsheviks proves that Stalinism cannot be the logical outgrowth of Leninism. Stalin was paranoid. He persecuted almost everyone. But he himself was an Old Bolshevik as were many of his cronies. If Mr. Mandell cannot see that Lenin and Trotsky established a one party dictatorship which enabled Stalin to come to power, because all opposing political currents in the Soviet Union had already been suppressed, well, he needs a new pair of glasses.

Exactly what does he think the Soviet Union would have looked like if there was no Stalin? A workers democracy? The Bolsheviks forcibly disbanded the Constituent Assembly in 1918 and eviscerated the soviets by 1919. Other parties on the left were suppressed early on. People with "bourgeois" backgrounds were stripped of their civil rights. Horrible atrocities were committed by the Red Army in defeating the various peasant uprisings during the civil war. Slave labor was already being used on a large scale to build public works in the 1920s. Trotsky finally criticized the lack of party democracy in 1923, but not the lack of democracy throughout the Soviet Union. A less brutal dictatatorship? Perhaps. But nothing any democratic socialist would have been proud of.

BENNETT MURASKIN
Morris Plains, NJ

In Response to Jason Schulman

My kindness — over kindness? — to anarchists, owes not to their belief in an immediate post-revolutionary transformation into a stateless society. No, the legacy of anarchism is more than that tenet, important as it is to anarchist thought. We can look at the careers of such anarchists as Emma Goldman, Buenaventura Durruti, and Paul Goodman and marvel at their utter dedication to the fight for a just society.

But Jason has given us much to think about in his thoughtful critique not just of anarchists' belief in an immediate transformation, but also of the conventional socialist wisdom — from Engels to Lenin and beyond — of the withering away of the state in a classless society.

In Response to Bennett Muraskin

> It is often said that "the germ of all Stalinism was in Bolshevism at its beginning." Well, I have no objection. Only, Bolshevism also contained many other germs — a mass of other germs — and those who lived through the enthusiasm of the first years of the first victorious revolution ought not to forget it. To judge the living man by the death germs which the autopsy reveals in a corpse — and which he may have carried in him since his birth — is this very sensible?
>
> Victor Serge, introduction to *Memoirs of a Revolutionary* (1901-1941)

The problem with Bennett Muraskin's critique, in my view, is that it is ahistorical. All of the Bolshevik decisions can be debated — and were vigorously debated by the Bolsheviks themselves — but to neglect the context in which they were made is to deny history itself. For example, Abraham Lincoln's suspension of habeas corpus can be debated only in the context of the material conditions of the Civil War at that time. Muraskin ignores the Russian Civil War (mentioning it only to situate an action), ignores the lack of industry, ignores World War I, ignores the foreign invasion on several fronts, ignores the famine, ignores the failure of revolution in Western Europe, a revolution that the Bolsheviks counted on. All those factors contributed to the rise of the Stalinist counter-revolution, which was — *pace* Muraskin — the result of a class struggle, not merely a byproduct of Stalin's paranoia.

Example: the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly by both the Bolsheviks and the Left Social Revolutionaries.... Just a few months after the workers' revolution had swept the Bolsheviks into power, the Constituent Assembly refused to honor the basic promises of that revolution — peace, land, and transfer of power to the soviets. The Bolsheviks and the Left S.R.s believed that the choice was between workers' power and a return to the parliamentarianism of the Kerensky regime.

Example: Muraskin mentions the horrible atrocities committed by the Red Army, but the Ukraine was a sea of blood. Does Muraskin have any evidence that the Bolsheviks were bloodier than the Whites, the Petlurists, the Austrians, the Makhnoites? I doubt it; I have never seen any.

Muraskin asks if I believe that there would be a workers' democracy in Russia today had the Stalinists not won. Of course not. Neither did the Bolsheviks forecast such a future for Russia if the revolution in Western Europe did not come to its aid.

Of course the Bolsheviks were not infallible, but to say that what they did caused Stalinism is to deny history.

Marvin Mandell

NOTE: I am speaking of course as an individual, not for the *NP* board, which has a range of views on these questions.

César Chávez

Alan Aja's review (*New Politics #47)* of Randy Shaw's *Beyond the Fields* overlooked the fundamental weakness of the book: its hagiographical character. Shaw has written the life, influence, and impact of Saint Chávez, but César Chávez committed too many sins against working class democracy and political independence to belong in that category.

I am personally quite proud to have volunteered from time to time to work with the United Farm Workers in the late 1960s and early 1970s. For young people at the time, both workers and students, it was a great experience, a tremendous movement. Chávez, despite government repression and employer violence, organized farm workers to fight employers and to demand labor and political rights. But, as I and other biographers have noted, while Chávez was remarkable in his ability to reach the farm workers of California, he also kept them firmly under his control and under the control of the Catholic Church and the Democratic Party.

Chávez's first experience in labor organizing, before he founded the United Farm workers Union (UFW), was working with Mexican-Americans in Oxnard in the mid-1960s to keep Mexican nationals from working in field in the United States. He continued that policy — working with the U.S. government to keep undocumented Mexican workers out of the fields — throughout most of the early heroic period of the union, despite criticism from other Mexican-American leaders such as Bert Corona.

Mid-twentieth century California's first labor unions were first organized by the radical leadership and militant strategies of the Filipinos, many of them Communists. But once Chávez appeared on the scene, he fostered an ideology that was a mixture of Mexican-American nationalism, Roman Catholicism, and Democratic Party liberalism. Chávez marched out the workers behind the banner of the Virgin of Guadalupe, a figure quite alien to the Filipinos. Chávez's Mexican Catholicism not only alienated the Filipinos, but also many of the Protestants and Jews, and the secular humanists and socialists who worked with the union.

Believing that farm workers could not win in the fields by themselves — and he had a point there — Chávez sought allies among students, among other union members, among liberals, and from the Protestant and Catholic churches. Chávez brilliantly projected the UFW boycott of grapes, wine, and lettuce into cities across the country and into homes throughout the nation. The farm workers needed those allies, but at some point in the 1970s it seemed that the balance between workers and supporters shifted. Chávez began to lean more on the allies than on the workers, to rely on the boycott not the strike, to look to the Democratic Party, not to the movement.

Chávez early on forged an alliance with Walter Reuther, then leader of the United Auto Workers (UAW), the flagship union of the CIO. It was, in part, the partnership with Reuther that led Chávez to align as well with the Kennedy wing of the Democratic Party, then the governing party of the United States. The alliance with Robert Kennedy and with Lyndon B. Johnson brought economic subsidies from government poverty programs which became the financial mainstay of the union. Thus the farm workers movement became politically and financially dependent upon the Democrats and government largesse.

At the same time, Chávez dominated the internal life of the union, expelling dissident factions, suppressing rank-and-file worker militants, purging leftists, and by the mid-1970s driving out many of the most talented members of his organizational staff. Paranoid and jealous of his power, he filled union staff positions with family members and his closest friends. He moved the union headquarters out of the farm worker town of Delano and up to La Paz in the Tehachapi Mountains, a kind of union monastery dominated by Chávez. During the 1970s and 1980s, Chávez — having driven out much of the union's historic leadership — micromanaged the union affairs, no detail too small to demand his supervision. At the same time, Chávez promoted a kind of cult around himself. In his own lifetime, long before Randy Shaw proposed his beatification, he had already become Saint Chávez.

Chávez, working with Democratic governor Jerry Brown, succeeded in pressuring the state legislature to pass a collective bargaining bill. That bill led to the UFW winning contracts in the fields, a first for farm workers in the continental United States. But when Republican George Deukmejian succeeded Brown, the union found itself on the defensive and gradually during the 1980s lost most of what it had won in the previous decade. Many other factors intervened and Chávez should not be held responsible for all of the problems the UFW faced in his later years as president and since his death. Still, today the UFW has only a bare toehold in the fields of California, has few contracts, and represents few workers.

True, Chávez's union produced many union leaders, some of whom left the UFW to work for other unions, such as the SEIU and UNITE-HERE. Working for such unions they also worked to elect Democrats such as Nancy Pelosi. What lessons, though, would they have taken from Chavez's UFW? The lesson perhaps that the leader knows best? The lesson that workers cannot win for themselves? The lesson that the unions must be subordinated to the Democratic Party? Perhaps Chávez politics and the UFW experience explains why some of those former UFW leaders came to feel at home in Andy Stern's SEIU. In any case, while in the 1960s and early 1970s Chávez led a great farm worker movement in California, he also in many ways led it in the wrong direction.

Randy Shaw wrote the life of Saint Chávez, but the union movement doesn't need saints nor The Lives of the Saints. We need a democratic, politically independent labor movement. If we are working to build that, then Shaw's biography of Chávez sets us off in the wrong direction, and Aja's review failed to alert us to the danger.

DAN LA BOTZ
Cincinnati, OH

Aja Responds

THANKS TO DAN LABOTZ for his thoughtful response to my dual book review published in last summer's *New Politics* (Vol. XII, No. 3, 2009). LaBotz criticizes me for not calling out Randy Shaw for his "saintly" examination of Chavez, which glosses over the side of Chavez that was brash, nepotistic and authoritarian. I take LaBotz's point: we don't need any more "condescending saviors" or paternalistic heroes in the labor movement. LaBotz knows this very well, based on his own experience while volunteering with the UFW in the 1960s and 1970s, not to speak of his own academic contributions to the vast labor literature, including a biography on Cesar Chavez and La Causa (2005).

While working as a labor organizer in Texas for CWA Local 6186 (Texas State Employees Union) in the early 2000s, I learned through leadership training and immersion that the most effective techniques in organizing workers into a union involved disseminating information and educational tools to promote growth and self-governance. This meant allowing workers to make organizational decisions through democratic processes, thus taking ownership over their own futures. Herstory teaches us that outright recruitment with an "I know what's best for you" attitude, or even incorporation of these philosophies in union organizational frameworks and everyday practices, can sometimes get workers to sign the card, even win campaigns, but it does not build relationships nor empower workers to build and sustain their own union. In the case of Chavez and the UFW, as LaBotz (2005) and others attest to, condescending practices, cultish behavior, and unilateral organizational decisions alienated and drove out key leaders of the movement, aiding in its decline.*

To be fair, perhaps LaBotz's pique may be less with Randy Shaw and more with my review. As I pointed out (admittedly too briefly), Shaw does criticize Chavez for his paternalism, sexism, and often-draconian leadership practices. Shaw also notes how this behavior was instrumental in the downfall of the movement in the late 1970s, but lessens his critique by mentioning Dolores Huerta's defense of Chavez's tactics as a necessary means to protect the union from internal attacks. I agree with LaBotz that Shaw may have been too soft, glorifying what history will show was a sometimes testy and imperious leader who made decisions that should not be reproduced in grassroots, democratic-participatory organizations.

At the same time, as a scholar in the interdisciplinary field of Latino Studies, I feel that we must consider the unequal conditions and oppressive circumstances that people like Chavez were born into, which eventually (mis)informed their leadership practice. As numerous scholars have noted, "colonized minorities" have been the subject (and thus unwilling students) of non-democratic, plutocratic models of governance, and they encounter nasty forces designed to question and undermine them if and when they hold batons of leadership.**

To explain, let us consider that Chavez, a descendant of a people victimized by two imposed "caste systems" (Spanish colonialism and U.S. expansionism), as a child witnessed the confiscation of his family's land during a burgeoning eugenics movement. Not only did this movement promote beliefs that people of color

*I am mostly referring to LaBotz's *Cesar Chavez and La Causa*, Longman Publication Group (2005) as well as recent publications by former UFW organizers/staffers Marshall Ganz, *Why David Sometimes Wins: Leadership, Organization and Strategy in the California Farmworker Movement*, Oxford University Press (2009) and Michael Yates "The Dubious Legacy of Cesar Chavez," *Left Business Observer*, 2009.

**I borrow the term "colonized minority" from Robert Blauner's important thesis *Racial Oppression in America,* Harper Collins, 1972.

were genetically inferior and thus should not be allowed to reproduce, but it also held that they were incapable of self-governance and leadership. Coupled with future competition posed by Braceros, the wrath of Jim Crow segregation, subsequent mechanization of labor, white flight (and jobs) from urban centers to suburbs, oppressed people confronted almost insurmountable barriers to successful organizing. When they began to scale these barriers to wrest control over institutions that dictated their lives (Civil Rights Movement), they were not only tagged as inept decision-makers, but also forced to find ways to prove their credibility as leaders. If mistakes were made from within the organizational level (from the Southern Leadership Conference, NAACP and UFW of yesterday to ACORN today), it fueled racist beliefs that people of color are genetically or culturally inferior. In essence, expectations for minorities in positions of influence and power are diametrically different than for whites. Therefore, we should be aware of a double standard that levels harsher criticism when they transgress high-minded expectations of democratic and moral leadership. This should not be viewed as an excuse for anti-democratic practices, but rather as a way of understanding why Chavez (and other progressive leaders) may at times contradict their own leadership principles.

In closing, I agree with the thrust of Dan LaBotz's letter and concur that it is imperative to build a politically independent, democratic labor (and general economic, environmental, and social) movement. At the same time, we need to contextualize the decisions and leadership style of leaders like Chavez, who do exhibit valiant and even heroic qualities as they confront nearly insuperable odds in the struggle for social and economic justice, but also learn from their imperfections to ensure democratic inter-organizational ideals and practices.

Alan A. Aja
Brooklyn, NY

THE WORLD IS IN CRISIS.

New Politics is pleased to publish a set of articles that offer insights into some of the world's major conflict.

We present three analyses of Iran's democratic movement, with articles by Yassamine Mather, Negar Mottahedeh, and Danny Postel. There's been sharp debate on the Left in Pakistan regarding that country's campaign against Islamic militants; Pervez Hoodbhoy and Adaner Usmani offer contending views. Stephen R. Shalom discusses Obama and Israel-Palestine. Adrienne Pine writes on the twin crises in Haiti and Honduras. Steven Fake and Kevin Funk address the situation in Darfur, and Sudan more generally. And Derrick O'Keefe puts forward a critique of the foreign policies of the Obama administration from a Canadian perspective.

We hope that these articles will help make sense of these different conflicts, and encourage appropriate political action.

— STEPHEN R. SHALOM AND JOANNE LANDY

Obama's Foreign Policy
The View from Canada

DERRICK O'KEEFE

CANADIAN AUTHOR MARGARET ATWOOD famously described the border between our country and the United States as the world's longest "one-way mirror."

I think this metaphor holds both for popular culture and politics. Canadians follow events south of the border closely, sometimes even with more interest than events in their own country. Progressives, for example, regularly held pub nights to watch the 2008 U.S. Presidential primaries and election debates. We were all glued to our television sets watching the returns come in that November, and many a leftist up here has admitted to shedding some tears upon seeing Jesse Jackson and the rest of the revelers in Chicago's Grant Park that historic night. By contrast, Americans, and frankly this includes many progressives, could most often care less what takes places in Canada.

A couple of geography-related anecdotes illustrate the point. Here in Vancouver, on Canada's Pacific coast, I was working with a Palestine solidarity group to bring a prominent U.S. academic to do a public event. He was based in the Midwest, but his cordial email reply asked us to "wait until next semester when I'm in New York — it will be a shorter trip for me." A few months later, a good friend of mine was asked by his interviewer from a Pacifica radio station in San Francisco, "What time zone are you guys in up there?" (We're both in the Pacific Time Zone.)

To modify a memorable Gore Vidal-ism, to this northern observer it sometimes looks like the United States of Myopia.[1] I open with this point not to be cantankerous or to express a vulgar nationalism, but rather to implore U.S.-based progressives to look north a little more

DERRICK O'KEEFE *is co-chair of the Canadian Peace Alliance. He was co-writer with Malalai Joya on her political memoir,* A Woman Among Warlords *(Scribner, 2009) and is currently at work on the book* Michael Ignatieff: The Lesser Evil? *(forthcoming from Verso).*

often. As much as sometimes we in Canada hate to admit it, the reality is that our political contexts are not that dissimilar, especially when it comes to foreign policy.

The horror of Abu Ghraib never actually ended. It just moved and got subcontracted.

Canada remains stuck with a Bushite in power, for goodness sake. Our Conservative prime minister, Stephen Harper, supported the Iraq War, and so did our Liberal opposition leader Michael Ignatieff, who at the time echoed Bush's rationale for the invasion from his influential perch at Harvard.[2] Although Canada was mercifully forced to stay out of the "coalition of the willing," successive governments have almost completely aligned themselves with U.S. foreign policy priorities. Canada's military explicitly pursues integration with U.S. forces, and our foreign policy direction can be understood as following similar imperatives. From Afghanistan, Israel/Palestine, and Iran to Haiti, Ottawa and Washington work in close tandem. The impasse, or at least downturn, that the anti-war movement in the United States confronted, due in part to "the Obama factor" — imperialism with a human face, in Tariq Ali's memorable turn of phrase[3] — has reached all the way into Canadian politics. Forces that once railed against "Bush's war" in Afghanistan have fallen silent, even as that war literally doubled in scale over the first year of the new U.S. administration.

And this is the ultimate reason that what happens north of the 49th parallel should matter to progressives in the United States. Together, we need to fashion an integrated, powerful movement for peace and justice. This essay is written with that overarching goal in mind.

Canadian Foreign Policy 101

FOR DECADES, Canada has had an almost entirely undeserved reputation as a neutral arbiter in world affairs — a consummate "peacekeeping" nation, committed to multilateralism and to the framework of international cooperation as organized through the United Nations.

The reality is that Canada has always been a key player in the NATO alliance, and a loyal upholder of the interests of the capitalist world system and its military enforcement. Even when particular Canadian governments appear to poke the U.S. Empire in the eye by not going along with a particular military venture, they work hard to provide support by other means. During the Vietnam era, Canada never sent troops to bolster that unpopular war, but it was a key supplier of weapons to the United States; chemical weapons such as napalm were in fact developed and tested in Canada.

In this sense, the significant events of early 2003 fit squarely within the historical pattern. Then Liberal Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, seeing crowds of hundreds of thousands on the streets in Quebec and across the rest of Canada in January and February of that year, made the popular announcement that Canada would not join the Iraq invasion.

Only a short time later, however, Chrétien announced a new beefing up of Canadian forces in Afghanistan, a measure that many correctly noted freed up more U.S. forces for Iraq — a sort of de facto endorsement of the invasion. Indeed, despite the refusal to commit troops, the Canadian government wished the U.S. forces a speedy victory in Iraq. Canada also found myriad other ways to provide concrete support to the illegal U.S. war.[4]

A year later, in February 2004, Canada worked hand-in-hand with the governments of France and the United States to back a coup d'état that drove elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide from Haiti, and which resulted in years of severe repression.[5]

In the decade since the "war on terror" began following the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States, Canadian elites have worked to transform this country's foreign policy in a more explicitly aggressive direction. Although the peacekeeping label was never strictly warranted, it was a national self-perception of sorts that coincided with the preferences of a majority of the Canadian public. Just as in the United States, then, hawks in Canada saw 9/11 and in particular the war in Afghanistan as the impetus to push the idea of a "warrior" nation, finally abandoning what they saw as the emasculated posture of peacekeeping and working through the United Nations.

Successive Canadian governments have pursued foreign policies closely aligned with the interests of the U.S. Empire. Both Liberal and Conservative governments have pushed through extensions of Canada's military mission in Afghanistan. But both traditional governing parties have been careful to avoid allowing the war to become an election issue. Prime Minister Harper has repeatedly stated that Canada's military mission in Afghanistan will end in 2011. Hawks and doves alike agree that the Canadian military is at the limit of its fighting capacity, its battle-ready forces over-extended after years in Kandahar Province, a site of consistent insurgent activity.

However, the government has left itself wiggle room to keep hundreds of "trainers" in Kabul or elsewhere. The game now for the government is to continue to give as much political and military support to the occupation of Afghanistan as possible without arousing too much popular opposition, especially in traditionally anti-war Quebec.

In March of this year, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton came to Ottawa for meetings in advance of the June 2010 G8/G20 summit to be held in Toronto. On her visit, she made clear that Washington would like Canada to stay militarily in Afghanistan beyond 2011. The reaction was a testament to the continuing "Obama factor" in Canada: Harper politely reiterated the position that the military mission would end in 2011, though pledged other forms of support and assistance (including, upon clarification, troops and top military officials to act as "trainers," a blatant euphemism for anyone with memory of Vietnam). Contrary to what would have happened had a George W. Bush or Donald Rumsfeld urged Canada to overturn a parliamentary decision to curtail participation in the war, there was limited public outcry against Clinton's request. The opposition New Democratic Party basically said nothing, consistent with the social democratic leadership's behavior on the war in the year and a half since Obama came to power.[6]

Obama in Afghanistan and Haiti

As mentioned, the focus of Canadian foreign policy over the past decade has been the war in Afghanistan. A secondary focus has been on Haiti, where since the 2004 coup Canada has focused on police training and enforcing the politicide of the popular Lavalas movement through various means. Afghanistan and Haiti are the top two recipients of Canadian foreign "aid," and the painful results of all this intervention are apparent: these countries remain dead last on the Human Development Index (HDI) for Asia and the western hemisphere, respectively.[7]

For progressive observers and critics of Canadian foreign policy, there were fewer illusions regarding Obama as a "peace candidate," since our attention has been focused more on Afghanistan and Haiti than on Iraq in recent years. The fact that he had opposed the "dumb war," as he called it in his much trumpeted 2002 speech,[8] was no big deal to Canadians — since 80 percent of them shared this sentiment about the Iraq war and most believe their government was not implicated in the slaughter. This is to say that it's hard to share the feeling of "betrayal" that some have expressed about Obama's ramping up of the war in Afghanistan, or his other aggressive foreign policy moves, such as endorsing (after initial token or rhetorical opposition) the regime-change-by-coup in Honduras or his expansion of the "Drone War" in Pakistan.

On Afghanistan and Haiti we can only observe that Obama kept to his word from the campaign trail. The same goes for Iran and the Middle East, though analyzing those cases is beyond the scope of this piece. We can say that on foreign policy Obama has been even worse than we feared. But to speak of betrayal only betrays one's own utterly false hopes and projections. It's useful to consider these two specific areas of Obama's foreign policy in relation to the movement's activity — the organized push back or lack thereof — on each front.

Afghanistan

CANDIDATE OBAMA PROMISED to focus the war machine back on Afghanistan, the "good war," the "necessary war." The scale of the escalation in Afghanistan was the only thing in doubt. It was especially glaring and frustrating that the major U.S. peace groups did little during the period in the summer and fall of 2009 when the Afghan War was supposedly under comprehensive review. While General McChrystal openly called for a large surge, and Ambassador Eikenberry wrote memos urging against a big surge, the anti-war movement applied very little pressure at all.

So far, the surge has predictably resulted in a surge in violence and deaths on all sides. October, 2010 will be the ninth anniversary of the war, and would be an ideal time to mobilize a truly global day of action. The Canadian anti-war movement is preparing a national mobilization in October, and movements in other NATO countries would be likely to come on board. The key would be to get broad-based organizations in the United States organizing seriously; it's well past time to see mass demonstrations against the war in the United States as well.

Haiti

SOMETIME IN 2008, I happened to flip the channel to David Letterman interviewing candidate Obama. My ears perked up when the host threw in a question about what Obama might do for the beleaguered people of Haiti. It must have been soon after one of the devastating hurricanes that hit Haiti that year. I hoped against hope for some substance from the candidate. "You know, Haiti's a country that's had a real string of bad luck…." Nothing concrete followed, and certainly no hint that Washington had repeatedly overthrown Haitian democracy.

With this year's earthquake in Haiti, the situation has gone from terrible to catastrophic. Obama's move to appoint Bill Clinton and George W. Bush to head up relief fundraising was a slap in the face, and there should have been more outcry, given the murderous policies they have both imposed on Haiti. The United States has opportunistically used the earthquake to expand its military presence in the Caribbean. This development, combined with the reactivation of the fourth fleet of the U.S. Navy and the expansion of military bases in Colombia, bodes ill for all of Latin America. Anti-war activists must keep Haiti in our hearts, minds and actions in the months and years ahead.

How Can the Anti-war Movement Overcome the "Obama Factor"?

HERE, THE VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONS that make up the skeleton of the mass anti-war movement that North America desperately needs to rebuild would be wise to borrow the wisdom of Karl Marx in his non-sectarian mode: "every step of a real movement is more important than a dozen programs." The movement, broadly defined, should avoid making a fetish of anyone's analysis of Obama's politics. In their understandable frustration with those who see the president through rose-colored glasses, some bend the stick too far and throw away all those people they disagree with as incorrigible liberals, opportunists or some other form of scoundrel.

In real life, with respect to the urgent needs of movement-building, it doesn't so much matter whether you think Obama is a craven opportunist bourgeois centre-right politician, or a genuine progressive and all-around great guy constrained by recalcitrant conservatives in the U.S. Senate and the inertia of Washington. Wherever you are on that spectrum, if you want to end the war in Afghanistan the imperative is to organize a mass movement including big demonstrations and dozens of other tactics aimed at achieving that end. Those with greater "faith" in Obama, in fact, should be more energetic in organizing this type of pressure from below, since they presumably believe "their" candidate really wants to go in this direction anyway. The most fruitful inter-progressive debates about Obama's real politics will come in the context of working together around concrete campaigns.

It's easy to restate that the war in Afghanistan should be opposed more vigorously. But how to oppose it? A few suggestions for those in the United States from an outsider's perspective:

Point out that the world is against this war. While it's true that Afghanistan is another "American" war, it has always had, especially in the early years after 9/11, a veneer of multilateralism. Therefore, it's worth educating Americans about just how unpopular this war is in almost all other NATO countries. And it's worth noting that some of the partners are jumping ship. Most importantly, the story of the Netherlands pulling out should be told, since their government fell over this question and since they were doing heavy fighting in the south of the country; they were a key military player in recent years, like Canada, which is also scheduled to leave. Even more important than European or Canadian opinion, it's important that Americans learn what the Afghans really think. Scores of dubious opinion polls have purported to show support for the occupation over the years. But dramatic shifts have taken place in recent years and months. In Kandahar, for instance, the latest poll shows over 90 percent of the population prefers negotiations over continued war — and this is the province where NATO planned in June to launch a key military offensive. It's now unclear whether that offensive will even be carried out.

Humanize the people of Afghanistan by telling their stories. Pointing to the work of the many analysts from across the political spectrum who argue that the war is now unwinnable is important. There's a consensus emerging and that should be broadcast far and wide. That will help us end the war. But to prevent future disasters, and to really create a different vision of foreign policy, we must humanize the Afghans with the goal of spreading a greater understanding of the culture and history of that troubled land, and of building links of real solidarity. The voice of Afghan dissidents like Malalai Joya, and the heroic underground activists of the Revolutionary Association of Afghan Women (RAWA), should be given special emphasis.

Tell the hard truth about the American Empire. Commentators on the right have long ago begun to frankly discuss the imperial nature of the United States. In the past, there may have been good strategic reasons for progressives to focus on ending one war at a time, rather than focusing on a broader analysis of U.S. foreign policy. There is no such excuse now for avoiding confronting head on the fact that the United States is a declining empire. It was a mistake to separate out Afghanistan from Iraq to maximize public support for getting out of the latter. These wars were always linked, and the fact is that the Washington hopes to maintain military occupations of both countries for decades, including massive permanent bases.

Talk about torture. The horror of Abu Ghraib never actually ended. It just moved and got subcontracted. An important analytical link between Afghanistan and the Empire can be made by talking about Bagram airbase. A stop for many of those poor souls on their way to indefinite detention in Guantanamo Bay, it was and remains a site of extra-legal measures against "enemy combatants." And while Gitmo will, eventually, close down its detention center — though Obama's promise to close it within a year of his inaugural has not been kept — the United States is busy expanding Bagram. Afghans, in fact, call it a "second Guantanamo."

I hope this piece hasn't conveyed a lack of gratitude for the immense contributions of activists and critical intellectuals in the United States, or taken too pessimistic a tone. Strong foundations have been laid for the work that must be done, much of it by those who struggle within the "belly of the beast."

We do, however, need to renew the imagination and initiative of the movement. We should take heart that the majority of the public is with us in both Canada and the United States, even if the opposition to war is tepid or uncertain. Where our level of organization is weak, cross-border collaboration and coalitions can help pull us through.

The anti-war movement is in fact winning in other NATO countries. In the UK a whopping 77 percent are now opposed to the war.[9] In the Netherlands, as noted, the government was recent toppled when it tried to renege on its pledge to pull out starting this year.

In North America, it is a matter of turning apathy and resignation into action and power. In other words: yes we still can, end the war in Afghanistan.

NOTES

1. Gore Vidal referred to his country's lack of historical memory as the United States of Amnesia — indeed most critics of U.S. foreign policy have this insight as a basic starting point. (*Democracy Now!*, May 21, 2004, www.democracynow.org/2004/5/21/gore_vidal_on_the_united_states.)

2. Ignatieff was a key public intellectual making the case for the war in Iraq and the wider "war on terror" during the early years of the Bush administration especially. He returned to Canada in 2005 after more than 30 years abroad and quickly ascended to the leadership of the talent-starved Liberal Party.

3. I interviewed Tariq Ali for *rabble.ca*, a Canadian progressive web publication, Feb. 16, 2009, www.rabble.ca/news/interview-tariq.

4. Richard Sanders, "Canada's secret war in Iraq," *Common Ground*, http://commonground.ca/iss/199/cg199_iraq.shtml.

5. Yves Engler and Anthony Fenton have written a short but comprehensive history of Canada's role in the 2004 coup. *Canada in Haiti: Waging War on the Poor Majority* (Black Point, Nova Scotia: Fernwood, 2005) www.fernwoodpublishing.ca/Canada-in-Haiti-Yves-Engler-Anthony-Fenton/.

6. At their federal convention in 2006, the NDP made a call for troop withdrawal from Afghanistan a cornerstone of their policy, following a keynote address by Afghanistan's dissident MP Malalai Joya.

7. We will never be anywhere near a decent world so long as GDP remains a more important indicator of societal well-being than HDI. http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/.

8. Obama's 2002 speech details a number of what he describes as necessary wars from U.S. history, including the response to 9/11; in a way, this little war-as-peace speech was a warm-up for his 2009 address to the Nobel Prize Committee in Oslo.

9. "Afghanistan: A conspiracy of silence," *Independent* (UK), April 18, 2010, www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/afghanistan-a-conspiracy-of-silence-1947857.html.

Can The Left Become Relevant To Islamic Pakistan?

Pervez Hoodbhoy

The Left has always been a marginal actor on Pakistan's national scene. While this bald truth must be told, in no way do I wish to belittle the enormous sacrifices made by numerous progressive individuals, as well as small groups. They unionized industrial and railway workers, helped peasants organize against powerful landlords, inspired Pakistan's minority provinces to demand their rights, set standards of writing and journalism, etc. But the Left has never had a national presence and, even at its peak during the 1970s, could not muster even a fraction of the street power of the Islamic or mainstream parties.

A comparison with India is telling. While the Indian Left has also never attained state power — or even come close to exercising power and influence on the scale of the Congress Party — it looms large in states like Kerala, Tripura, and West Bengal where it successfully ended iniquitous feudal land relations. Across the country it helps maintain a secular polity, protects minorities, keeps alive a broad focus on progressive ideas in culture, art, and education, and uses science to fight superstition. Today, a Maoist movement militantly challenges the depredations of capitalism as it wreaks destruction on their native habitat. Left-inspired movements noticeably impeded passage of the U.S.-India nuclear deal. Indeed, for all its divisions and in-fighting, the Indian Left is a significant political force that is a thousand times stronger than its Pakistani counterpart.

Surely this difference begs an explanation. The answer is to be found in Pakistan's genesis and the overwhelming role of religion in matters of the state. Understanding this point in detail is crucial to the question: how can one hope to make the Pakistani Left relevant in the future? Are there intelligent ways to deal with a major handicap?

Pakistan's Early Years

Carved out of Hindu-majority India, Pakistan was the culmination of the competition and conflict between natives who had converted to Islam and those who had not. On the whole, Indian Muslims had less education and were less willing than Hindus to accept alien ways of thinking, including communist and socialist ideas. They opposed the British for obvious nationalistic reasons, but they also saw science and modernity as alien impositions. In 1835, for example, more than 8,000 Muslim notables in the state of Bengal signed a petition against the teaching of English and modern ideas.

Realizing the conservatism of his constituency, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, later to become the founder of Pakistan, demanded a separate country for Muslims based upon his 1940 articulation of the Two-Nation Theory. This stated that Hindus and Muslims could never live together peacefully within one nation state. An impeccably dressed Westernized man with Victorian manners, secular outlook, and a taste for fine foods and wines, Jinnah nevertheless eloquently articulated the fears and aspirations of an influential section of his co-religionists. The Communist Party of India thought poorly of him, but, seeing that enormous communal forces had been unleashed, many of its Muslim members eventually chose to support the de-

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mand for a separate Pakistan. After Partition they went on to form the nucleus of Pakistan's Left, which bravely struggles on despite the odds.

Some Pakistanis use the crude image of a condom to describe the U.S.-Pakistan relationship; Pakistan will be used for the business at hand and be cast off immediately when the business is concluded.

Interestingly, Jinnah was also opposed by a section of the conservative Muslim *ulema*, such as Maulana Maudoodi of the Jamaat-e-Islami. They argued that Islam was a universal religion not to be confined within national borders. But Jinnah and his Muslim League, by enlisting the influential Muslim feudal and bourgeois class, won the day by insisting that Muslims constituted a distinct nation which would be overwhelmed in post-British India by a larger, wealthier, and better-educated Hindu majority.

Pakistan's basis in religious identity soon led to painful paradoxes. An overbearing West Pakistan ran roughshod over East Pakistan and was despised as an external imperial power. Jinnah's Two-Nation theory was left in tatters after the separation of East Pakistan in 1971, and the defeat of the Pakistani military. The enthusiasm of Muslim Bengalis for Bangladesh — and their failure to repent decades after the separation — was a blow against the very basis of Pakistan. Nevertheless, contrary to dire predictions, the Pakistani state survived. Its powerful military crushed emerging separatist movements in the provinces of Baluchistan and Sind.

For a while after 1971 the question of national ideology fell into limbo. Aware of the popular demand for economic justice, the newly-elected prime minister, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, also knew that anything that smacked of Marx's "religion is the opiate of the masses" could not work. The shrewdest politician that Pakistan has ever had, he invented "Islamic socialism" and inspired an agenda for progressive change. But land reform for him, as a big landlord, would have meant too much personal sacrifice. For all his electioneering rhetoric, he also did not wish to alienate the other pillars of the Pakistani state: the army and industrial class. Social reform took back-stage. Instead Bhutto chose to raise national fervor by promising revenge for the loss of the East Wing, declared a "war of a thousand years" against India, and started off Pakistan's quest for the atomic bomb. Although anti-Indianism served temporarily as a rallying cry, the military coup of 1977 that sent Bhutto off to the gallows was to revive the national identity issue.

Zia Remakes Pakistan

Soon after he seized power, General Zia-ul-Haq announced his intention to remake Pakistan and end the confusion of Pakistan's purpose and identity once and for all. The word soon went out that Pakistan was henceforth not to be described as a Muslim state. Instead, it was now an Islamic state where Islamic law would soon reign supreme. To achieve this reconceptualization, Zia knew that future generations of Pakistanis would have to be purged of liberal and secular values.

Thus began a massive decade-long state-sponsored project. Democracy was demonized and declared un-Islamic, culture was purified of Hindu contamination, Hindi words were removed from Urdu to the extent possible, capital punishment was freely used, left and liberal opinion was silenced, and religion was introduced into every aspect of public and private life. Education became a key weapon.

Zia's generation is everywhere today in Pakistan. A moderate Muslim majority country has become one where the majority of citizens want Islam to play a key role in politics. The effects of indoctrination are clearly visible. Even as the sharia-seeking Taliban were busy blowing up girls' schools (457 to date), a survey by World Public Opinion.Org in 2008 found that 54 percent of Pakistanis wanted strict application of sharia while 25 percent wanted it in some more dilute form. Totaling 79 percent, this was the largest percentage in the four countries surveyed (Morocco, Egypt, Pakistan, Indonesia).

A more recent survey of 2,000 young Pakistanis between 18-27 years of age found that "three-quarters of all young people identify themselves primarily as Muslims. Just 14 percent chose to define themselves primarily as a citizen of Pakistan." The youth are deeply worried by lack of employment, economic inflation, corruption, and violence. In this turbulent sea, it is not surprising that most see religion as their anchor.

For some, violent change is the answer to the country's problems. This is precisely what Zaid Hamid, Pakistan's self-styled Hitler-clone, advocates. A fiery demagogue who claims to have fought against the Soviets in Afghanistan, he builds on the insecurity of the young. Enthralled college students pack auditoriums to listen to this self-proclaimed jihadist rail against Jews, Hindus, and Christians. Millions watch him on various TV channels as he lashes out against Pakistan's corrupt rulers and other "traitors," praises the Afghan Taliban as heroes and a force of resistance, and promises that those who betrayed the nation's honor by joining America's war on terror will hang from lampposts in Islamabad. In his promised Islamic utopia of amputations and stonings, speedy Taliban-style justice will replace the clumsy and corrupt courts established by the imperial British.

Just as Hitler dwelt on Germany's "wounded honor" in his famous beer hall oratory in Munich — where he promised that Germany would conquer the world — Hamid calls for the Pakistan Army to rebel against its American masters and go to war against India, liberate Kashmir, Palestine, Chechnya and Afghanistan. Pakistan's flag shall *inshallah* soon fly from Delhi's Red Fort, he announces. The students applaud wildly.

Hating America

PAKISTAN IS PROBABLY THE MOST anti-American country in the world. Right, center, and left share the antipathy. Surveys show that the United States is disliked far less in Cuba, Iraq, and Afghanistan — all countries that have been attacked by Washington. A private survey carried out by a European embassy based in Islamabad found that only 4 percent of Pakistanis polled speak well of America, 96 percent against. The United States has displaced India as Pakistan's number one enemy, at least for now.

Why these intense feelings? Drone strikes are often quoted, but these are relatively precise strikes on Al-Qaida and Taliban targets in Waziristan, which have devastated the Islamist leadership while killing some civilians as well. Although the death of innocents is terrible and deserves condemnation, it is utterly insignificant compared to the carnage in Vietnam's cities which were carpet-bombed by B-52's in the 1970s. Nevertheless, the anger in Pakistan leads to a ferocious anger far greater than ever existed in Vietnam.

The explanation may lie in wounded pride and Pakistan's dependence syndrome. U.S.-Pakistan relations are frankly transactional — America today pays Pakistan to fight a war that is primarily for America's benefit. It is a separate matter that Pakistan must now fight the war for its own survival. Some Pakistanis use the crude image of a condom to describe the U.S.-Pakistan relationship; Pakistan will be used for the business at hand and be cast off immediately when the business is concluded. This self-loathing is typical of what a client state develops for its paymaster. One sees this in Egypt as well.

Pakistan's excessive dependence on external powers comes from its long-standing dispute with India over Kashmir. This called for much military hardware, soon acquired by turning towards the West. In the 1950s, Pakistan entered into the SEATO and CENTO military pacts aimed against communism. This made the Pakistani Army the most powerful and well organized institution in the country. In time it developed huge corporate interests and has, directly or indirectly, run Pakistan since the first military coup in 1958.

Pakistan has a litany of other grievances as well. An early one is that the United States. did not aid Pakistan in its 1965 and 1971 wars against India where, according to Pakistan's understanding, it was required to do so. Other grievances are pan-Islamic while yet others derive from Pakistan's bitter experience of being a U.S. ally in the 1980s. Then at the cutting edge of the U.S.-organized jihad against the Soviets, Pakistan was dumped once the war was over and left alone to deal with numerous toxic consequences. Among them was a large army of ideologically-charged fighters, willing to put their finely-honed skills to use. But disadvantage was soon turned to advantage when the Pakistani state hit upon using these fighters for bleeding India in Kashmir, as well as securing strategic depth in Afghanistan. The dragon seed, planted by the Pakistan Army, is only half regretted today.

The Conspiracy Industry

In a country that can boast of few achievements in improving the lot of its own people, legitimate criticisms tend to be conflated with illegitimate ones. After all, it is human nature to blame others for one's own miseries. Today the United States is frequently held to blame for Pakistan's ills, old and new. Absurdities abound. Surely America should not be held responsible for the sewage-contaminated water that Pakistanis must drink, the pitifully low level of taxes collected, the barbarity of the police, or the massive theft of electricity by rich and poor alike. Nor can it be blamed for the fact that Kashmir is unresolved and that Pakistan's generals foolishly thought of winning it through covert war.

Of course, Pakistan is not the only country where America provides a rationalization for internal failures. U.S.-bashing is a structural phenomenon where, at least sometimes, it has nothing to do with what America actually does. For example, one recently saw the amazing spectacle of Hamid Karzai threatening to join the Taliban and lashing out against the Americans because they (probably correctly) suggested he had committed electoral fraud.

In the present anti-American climate, the manufacture of conspiracy theories has become Pakistanis' single biggest industry. Various polls show that the events of 9/11 are assumed by most Pakistanis to have been a CIA-Mossad conspiracy designed to malign Muslims and a part of the West's war on Islam. It is also believed that Osama bin Laden did not carry out these attacks and, even if he did, that he died long ago. Many think he is an American agent trained and armed by the CIA, while Blackwater is believed to be behind suicide attacks in Pakistani markets and mosques. On the other hand, the Afghan Taliban are often pictured as simply freedom-loving people trying to free their country from foreign occupation. Just when one feels that the limits of absurdity have finally been crossed, some popular television anchor throws out a conspiracy story that leaves one gasping.

Example: for months one heard the theory from various popular anchorpersons that leaders of the Pakistani Taliban, Baitullah Mehsud and Hakimullah Mehsud, were U.S. agents. But there was deafening silence when these leaders were killed by American drones. And, by the way, what happened to the *khatna* (circumcision) theory — that suicide bombers were uncircumcised and were either Blackwater employees or Indian agents? Now that one can check the carcasses of suicide bombers frozen in cold storage, that theory has conveniently disappeared from the market.

Pakistan's collective psychosis is painful to behold. When a suicide bomber walked into the female cafeteria at the Islamic University in Islamabad, followed by a second bomber in the male cafeteria, one might have thought that great anger would have been expressed at the Taliban. Instead, the brainwashed students vented their anger at the university administration, government, and America instead of the perpetrators of this heinous deed. The Jamaat-e-Islami and other religious political parties flatly refused to condemn the suicide attack on students.

Let me state the bald truth: Pakistan needs reform not revolution.

Ordinary Pakistanis — including the bearded and burqa'ed ones — have fully bought into America-bashing. So does the Westernized elite which yearns for a Green Card, sends its children to U.S. universities, listens to American pop music, and drives out in fancy cars to a McDonald's. It also includes Pakistanis permanently settled in the United States, who writhe in guilt knowing they live off an anti-Muslim superpower — as they see it.

Tragically for Pakistan, anti-Americanism has played squarely into the hands of Islamic militants. They vigorously promote the notion that this is a bipolar conflict of Islam versus imperialism when, in fact, they are actually waging an armed struggle to remake society. They will keep fighting this war even if America were to miraculously evaporate into space. Created by poverty, a war-culture, and the macabre manipulations of Pakistan's intelligence services, religious militants want a total transformation of society. This means eliminating music, art, entertainment, and all manifestations of modernity and Westernism. Side goals include chasing away the few surviving native Christians, Sikhs, and Hindus from the Frontier province.

There is certainly legitimate reason for countries across the world to feel negatively about America. In pursuit of its self-interest, wealth and security, it has waged illegal wars, bribed, bullied and overthrown governments, supported tyrants and military governments, and undermined movements for progressive change. But nutcase conspiracy-thinking of "foreign hands" being behind most ills is deadly for a nation's mental health. If some "foreign hand" is imagined behind everything, then that kills self-confidence and one's ability to control outcomes. Imagining these "extra-terrestrial" forces deadens the ability to think rationally and sharply reduces the capacity to deal with terrorism — which is here to stay in Pakistan for the foreseeable future.

Pakistanis, who desperately want someone to stand up to the Americans, have bought into the notion of the Taliban as being somehow anti-imperialist. Today, in a country that is divided on everything else, strong anti-U.S. feelings provide a rare point of consensus. Sadly, some in the Pakistani Left seek to cash in on this.

Is The Left's Negativism Helpful?

Go to a left-wing rally and the standard chants are: down with religious extremism, down with the Army, down with American imperialism, down with the drones. This position of "downing" everyone and everything is laudably pure and pious. But it scarcely helps us answer the question: who shall protect Pakistan's population from religious militants, stop the daily dynamiting of girls' schools and colleges, prevent human bombers from exploding themselves in mosques and markets, and end the slaughter of Shiites?

The notion that protection can come from "mobilizing the working class" is laughable. The demonstrations in Pakistan against the U.S. invasion of Iraq were miniscule compared to those in Europe and America. It is irresponsible to think that somehow the fierce onslaught of an army of fascistic holy warriors can be stopped by two dozen earnest people holding colorful placards.

So what is to be done? Every option is a bad one: local militias (*lashkars),* the police and Frontier Constabulary, the Pakistan Army, and the American drones. The *lashkars* often have criminals within them and are certainly known to avenge old tribal scores; the police and FC are notorious for corruption and brutality; the Army originally fathered the Taliban and is still a dubious quantity; and the Americans cynically manipulated religious fanaticism when it suited them. But without some combination of these unsavory forces, there will be carnage of ordinary people.

Let us recall what happened in Swat. A weak-kneed state, earlier complicit with the Taliban, had allowed the fanatics to devastate this idyllic tourist-friendly valley before it was brought to its senses and finally persuaded into using military force against the fanatics. Women had been lashed in public, hundreds of girls' schools were blown up, non-Muslims had to pay a special tax *(jizya),* and every form of art and music was forbidden. Policemen deserted en masse, and institutions of the state crumbled. Thrilled by their success, the Taliban violated the Nizam-e-Adl Swat deal just days after it was negotiated in April 2009. They quickly moved to capture more territory in the adjacent area of Buner. Then barely 80 miles from Islamabad (as the crow flies), their spokesman, Muslim Khan, crowed that the capital would be captured soon.

Had the Pakistan Army not moved against the Swat Taliban, the consequences for the rest of the country would have been grim. Today the situation there is far from good, but it is immensely better than it was a year ago when headless corpses were strewn in public squares in Mingora and Saidu Sharif. The Army is popular there once again, a supreme irony because it was responsible for having let the Taliban establish themselves in Swat. It will never be decisively established whether Maulana Fazlullah, leader of the Swat Taliban, was put up by the Army. But it certainly did nothing to stop his fiery broadcasts until he finally turned against the Army.

Terrorism is here to stay in Pakistan, and the battle has only begun. And although there are no good guys, nothing can be worse than the Taliban. Through terror tactics and suicide bombings they have made fear ubiquitous. Women are being forced into the burqa, while anxious private employers and government departments have advised their male employees in Peshawar and other cities to wear *shalwar-kameez* rather than trousers. Coeducational schools across Pakistan are increasingly fearful of attacks — some are converting to girls-only or boys-only schools. Video shops are going out of business, while native musicians and dancers have fled or are changing their profession. A sterile Saudi-style Wahhabism is beginning to impact upon Pakistan's once-vibrant culture and society.

The cancerous offshoots of extremist ideology continue to spread. Another TTP is important — Tehrik-e-Taliban Punjab. Indeed, one expects that major conflict will eventually shift from Pakistan's tribal peripheries to the heartland, southern Punjab. The Punjabi Taliban are busy ramping up their operations, with repeated successful suicide attacks on the police and intelligence headquarters.

The future: dazed by the brutality of these attacks, the army's officer corps finally appears to be moving away from its earlier sympathy and support for extremism. At least for now, tribal insurgents cannot overrun Islamabad and Pakistan's main cities, which are protected by thousands of heavily armed military and paramilitary troops. In reaction, rogue elements within the military and intelligence agencies are instigating and organizing suicide attacks against their own colleagues.

Pakistan must find the will to fight the Taliban, and the Left must consider its duty to help in this fight. The national and provincial governments must protect life and law rather than simply make deals that fall apart no sooner than they are made. As an Islamic state, Pakistan is falling into anarchy and chaos, being rapidly destroyed from within by those who claim to fight for Islam.

Can The Left Become Relevant?

WHAT CAN THE LEFT DO to turn the situation around? The answer is: not very much. It is too small. Although its efforts for creating a better society will not and should not cease, it has no realistic chance of becoming a major national force in the foreseeable future. Instead, given the bankruptcy of Pakistan's Islamic and mainstream parties, perhaps the Left's real importance lies in being a moral force that helps nudge Pakistani society in a positive direction.

To do this, leftists must use simple direct arguments instead of convoluted explanations that conflate all adversaries together at the same time. Examples:

1. Take the brave struggle of peasants in Okara, rightly helped by numerous small left-wing groups, for preserving their land from a predatory military that seeks to displace them. This is a conflict between the tillers of the soil and those who seek to grab the wealth of others. In this case it is right, proper, and essential to challenge the Pakistan Army because it has illegitimate claims to the land. But why the slogans against imperialism, which neither knows nor cares about the Okarans? All that this does is muddy the waters.

2. Why even imagine that the Taliban want liberation? While religious extremists indeed derive some support from marginalized social groups, they do not demand employment, land reform, better health care, or more social services. There is nothing progressive in their agenda, and no place for social justice and economic development. There is silence about worldly things like roads, hospitals and infrastructure. The Taliban are not the Maoists of Pakistan, nor do they subscribe to some form of South American liberation theology. Instead, they see their reward lying in heaven. It is also false that the Taliban constitute an ethnic "Pakhtun movement," as some prominent left-wingers argue. This serves only as an excuse for tolerating their barbarities. Most Taliban victims have been other Pakhtuns. If the Taliban is a Pakhtun movement then what about the Punjabi Taliban, who are as ethnically different from Pakhtuns as chalk from cheese? The Pakhtun and Punjabi Taliban share an ideological commitment — and that is precisely what Talibanism is all about.

3. The Baluch, Sindhis, Siraikis, Baltis, and many other ethnic groups have legitimate complaints against the arrogant center in Islamabad. They certainly deserve support from progressive people. But ethnic groups sometimes look through a very narrow, parochial lens that should not be condoned. After all, the vision of the Left is for a society where economic justice for all is the goal. A person's ethnic origins, religion and nationality are mere products of circumstance. There is no need to glorify any one of these — at least from a left perspective.

Let me state the bald truth: Pakistan needs reform not revolution. The Left needs to know that there is not a chance in a million of capturing state power in the foreseeable future. In fact, the only ones who can even conceivably bring about a revolution are the Islamists. And their revolution is to be dreaded because they will wipe out every little gain made in sixty years. Therefore the Left must pick its fights, and not try to fight everyone at the same time.

At a time when the country needs clarity of thought, one must not look at everything through the prism of fossilized ideologies. Nor should one pose moralistic questions like: "Is America good or bad?" Of course America is just as selfish as most other countries, has repeatedly committed aggression overseas, has worsened the Palestine problem, and maintains the world's largest military machine. We also know that it will rush to make a deal with the Taliban if that is perceived to be in its self-interest, and will do so even if that means abandoning the people of Afghanistan to bloodthirsty fanatics. But for Pakistanis the important question is: what are the options for Pakistan's people today?

Instead of chasing demons, Pakistan's leftists need to reaffirm their allegiance to what truly matters: the ideals of economic justice, secularism, universalistic ideas of human rights, good governance, women's rights, and rationality in human affairs. Washington must be firmly resisted, but only when it seeks to drag Pakistan away from these goals. It is futile to frame the debate in pro- or anti-America terms; the key point is to be pro-people. The Left has a hugely important role to play in setting the moral compass. Only then will it matter to Pakistan.

Pakistan: The Myth of Civilizing War

Adaner Usmani

It would hardly be an exaggeration to suggest that, today, in the baleful shadow of the Great War on Terror, one central site of intra-progressive discord has been the question of the broad Left's relation to political and militant Islam. The brouhaha surrounding the candidacy of Ilhem Moussaid in the French New Anticapitalist Party, and the fallout from Gita Sahgal's resignation from Amnesty International over the organization's work with Moazzam Begg are but some of the more recent illustrations of a fault-line that runs deep in progressive politics.

Certainly, in the abstract the controversy seems perplexing, since the Left position — at this level — is not complicated: to unrelenting massacres on today's imperial frontiers, to wars on civil liberties and immigrants at home, and to the role of racist caricatures of the Muslim world in legitimizing them both, we stand wholeheartedly opposed; and simultaneously, to the patriarchal, retrograde politics animating many prominent Islamist groups today, we object no less vociferously.

Yet as political conjunctures pose concrete questions, these twin principles reveal themselves as nothing more than premises that set the parameters for a developed perspective. The substantive task — and the task that has, unfortunately, proved too daunting for a few on the Left, today — is to ascertain what, given the balance of forces before us, a forward-looking politics demands.

In Pakistan, the State has massively escalated its "home-grown" War on Terror (hand-in-hand with Obama's surge in Afghanistan), confounding some of the country's progressives on the question of what these twin commitments demand in the present historical context. Distressingly, more than a few of these activists and intellectuals have cited the specter of a creeping, forbidding "Talibanization" as grounds for cheerleading the offensives waged by the military in the Northwest[1] — "heavy-hearted" support, we're told, for a policy and an institution guilty of mass displacements and untold atrocities.[2] In so doing, I will argue, they are committing a grave analytical, political, and moral blunder — at best condemning themselves to irrelevance; at worst fomenting unwelcome, purposeless confusion, as the Left attempts to orient itself in a theater of escalating war.

The State: "Form of State, Form of Regime"

The struggle against fundamentalism demands — first — a searching appraisal of the historical context in which the problem has evolved. It is worth stressing that we can make no sense of the task at hand if our starting-point is steeped in imperial histrionics. The only path to a progressive strategy, in Pakistan and in the United States, runs through an attentive and independent assessment of the factors that have thrust militancy to the center of the political landscape.

Without discounting the complexity of the issues involved, I will insist that — at a high level of abstraction — the structuring reality is easy enough to apprehend: all Left strategy must begin from the elementary fact that the Pakistani State has forever played a sordid, suffo-

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cating role in the political life of the country. The political leadership has been compelled, decade after decade, to share power with the

> Any Leftist strategy, in sum, that dresses up twists in the Army's strategic logic as a newfound commitment to a secular Pakistan is gravely misguided.

Army, precisely because of its congenital inability to represent meaningfully the aspirations of the provinces and the poor. I mean this both in the larger sense that Pakistan has had three (and-a-half, now) cycles of dictatorship succeeding failed periods of civilian rule, and in the specific sense that each civilian government has been painfully cautious not to alienate the establishment, when in power.[3]

The arguable exception to this pattern was the "missed opportunity" of the Z.A. Bhutto years, in the 1970s, where it might well have been possible for the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) to lead a popular challenge to the Army. Yet, even here, the possibilities can be overstated: not only was Bhutto himself a man of the establishment (Foreign Minister under General Ayub Khan, Chief Martial Law Administrator from 1971-1973, and champion of the Army's iniquities in East Bengal and then in Baluchistan), but he sought always to contain the popular upsurge that propelled him into power.[4] Modest reforms were coupled with uncompromising repression: an attempt to establish hegemony over organizations of the working-class, for example, that involved the "wholesale destruction of many trade unions' offices, occupation of factories (and even whole industrial areas) by armed police, and widespread arrests, tortures, and in some cases assassinations of militant labor leaders."[5] As Aijaz Ahmad wrote on the eve of Bhutto's murder by the man he had himself appointed Army Chief of Staff, Zia ul-Haq: "reform and repression... [constituted] a very precise dialectic," mandated by the extraordinary exigencies of the era and, in the final analysis, in the service of the existing class structure.[6]

The larger point thus remains: these two alternating forms of rule (or, "forms of regime") are but different ways in which an underlying status quo (a centralized State lacking genuine legitimacy amongst the urban and rural poor, and amongst national minorities) has been articulated politically.[7] It is this status quo — an unbroken, abhorrent "form of State" — that has to be at the very forefront of our minds, when addressing the myriad challenges before us.

Militancy

Regarding political Islam in Pakistan, then, this grounding thesis suggests three defining features of the present conjuncture, without which no political strategy can hope to be coherent. The Left ignores these at its peril.

First, the Pakistani State has always regarded the ideology of the "ultra-Right" instrumentally. Domestically, as is well known, it has invoked Islam in order to chloroform class and provincial cleavages, and to suppress the politics to which they have given rise. As Hamza Alavi argued, in response to regional protest that began in the early 1950s (most seriously in East Bengal), "Islam and the notion of Islamic brotherhood became the order of the day. It was unpatriotic on the part of Bengalis, Sindhis, Pathans and Baluch to make demands in terms of their regional ethnic identities because all Pakistanis were brothers in Islam."[8] Even Bhutto's populist challenge succumbed, infamously currying favor with the right-wing, by declaring the Ahmadi community "non-Muslim" in 1974.[9] And subsequently, of course, followed the dark years of Zia's "Islamization," during which the "ultra-Rightists" were championed in an aggressive effort to sanctify the military's writ.

In the specific case of the Taliban in the border districts, this pattern persists. The historical roots are well known: in active collaboration with the American war on the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, the Pakistani Army positioned itself at the head of the networks of patronage that laid the foundation for militancy in the region.[10] Via the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), billions of dollars were funneled toward the most rabidly reactionary of the militant commanders, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. When he failed to seize control of the country in the stygian civil war of the early 90s, the ISI turned its attention to the Taliban, "a group mainly comprising students it had trained since 1980 in madrassahs in the North-West Frontier Province."[11]

Today, mortally afraid of being cornered by India from the West and the East, the Pakistani Army remains locked in a predictably devious geopolitical tussle. It seems clear, for instance, that it is in league with elements of the Afghan Taliban.[12] And even in the case of the myriad groups that comprise the Pakistani Taliban (the TTP),[13] the reputed "existential" threat, the opposition of the Pakistani Army has been inconsistent across time and place. As has been noted for years, the military has repeatedly courted individual militant leaders (the "Good Taliban") in its fight with others (the "Bad Taliban").[14] These, it bears emphasizing, are groups with no less millennial, misogynistic, and venal an agenda than those against whom, it is alleged, our Army is fighting its Great War for Civilization.

Any Leftist strategy, in sum, that dresses up twists in the Army's strategic logic as a newfound commitment to a secular Pakistan is gravely misguided. No doubt, the military can afford to dispose of some of these groups when they stray from the "party" program. But to suggest, as some have done, that this means that — finally! — the Army can be trusted to rid the north-west of misogyny, bespeaks an inexcusable, wishful myopia.

Second, the insurgencies in the north-west have come to stand in for everything that is frightening about escalating fundamentalism in the rest of the country (the brutalization of the education system, attacks on minorities and women, the "thinning out" of national culture, the rise of conservative mores, etc.). No Leftist worth his or her salt can stay silent on these issues, of course. But neither can our political strategy fall prey to the temptation of falsely conflating the many crimes of the Pakistani Taliban with these trends (in which, in fact, it is frequently the State that is complicit). Many an apocalyptic pro-war argument is premised on precisely this mistake: for Pervez Hoodbhoy, for instance, the thrust is this ominous, sneaking connection between his veiled, silent students and the depredations of Fazlullah in Swat.[15] Similarly, last spring, at an event hosted by the Women's Action Forum in Karachi, "Talibanization" was the catchword for all this and more. One student representative fervidly screeched, for example, that her parents' generation had enjoyed Karachi's discos, which were now no more. The implication: hence we must have war in Paktunkhwa!

Outsourcing our struggle to today's political and military apparatus, which is anyway staffed by some of the most vile formations in the country (the Muttahida Qaumi Movement, for example), will not advance secular, minority-friendly, or tolerant politics in the slightest. In fact, it is sure to set this battle back. We are celebrating and empowering the same Army, lest we forget, that is — today — callously and brutally repressing an ongoing popular liberation struggle in Baluchistan (the fifth time the Army has been deployed since independence: 1948, 1958, 1962, 1973-77).[16] At a minimum, some 1,600 Baluchis have been "disappeared" since 2005 alone (this is the number submitted by the attorney-general to the Supreme Court; activists put the number at 6,000),[17] part of the several thousands that have gone missing in

Pakistan at-large since 9/11.

It takes a peculiar species of Left-wing "heavy-heartedness," then, to succumb to this State's fabricated outrage at the atrocities of the TTP. Effectively feudal landlords today sit in government in Sindh — those subject to their wicked writ harbor no such illusions.[18] Moreover, the persecution of minorities in the "integrated" parts of Pakistan continues apace, and with impunity. In a particularly egregious example that came to light last month, police allegedly burned (to death) a Christian man and raped his wife for the crime of refusing to convert to Islam.[19] No action, it seems, has yet been taken.

Third, no serious Left observer can afford to deny that these insurgencies have their roots in a deplorable history of economic and political oppression. In a 2005 brief, the Asian Development Bank described FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas) as "the most impoverished part of Pakistan," noting that it "falls behind the rest of the country in almost all... socio-economic indicators."[20] Recently it was noted that a list of the ten most food-insecure districts in the country contains five Taliban-hit areas: Upper Dir, North Waziristan, Mohmand, South Waziristan, and Orakzai.[21] Certainly, severe structural oppression is only a partial explanation for the rise of the many militant groups.[22] Yet it is nonetheless crucial to foreground this angle of the issue, as it clarifies the bankruptcy of relying on an avowedly neoliberal Pakistani establishment to resolve the problem of militancy, especially in the long-term. Absent the insight, in the narratives of those for whom the Taliban are "barbarian hordes" without origins, the temptation is to militarize and outsource a struggle that can only be waged politically, and by the Left.

In this vein, unrelenting denunciation of the many atrocities committed by the TTP, which is certainly integral to a Left path forward, must not occlude the no less depraved history of the central State in the north-west. According to the government's own figures, the estimated literacy rate amongst women in FATA, for example, is a criminal 3 percent (in the settled districts of NWFP — North-West Frontier Province — or Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, the figure is 19 percent).[23] This sorry reality is a consequence of the fact that the Pakistani government has, for decades, perpetuated the model of governance pioneered by the British Raj, wherein effective authority was handed over to an array of pliant elites. Supreme judicial authority resides in the viceroy-like figure of the Political Agent, whose consultations with a tribal jirga more-or-less constitute due process. The penal code that complements this arrangement is openly draconian, legislating the punishment of entire tribes for the crimes of individual members.[24] It is no coincidence, after all, that one of the Pakistani Taliban's central rallying points was the offer of "speedy justice," to be executed via their own Sharia courts. Though the Government — not for the first time — announced its intention to reform this condemnable legal-political apparatus in August 2009, and Parliament reiterated the need for these measures earlier this year, progress has yet to be made.

The Left, and the Way Forward

If we root ourselves in these few premises, the line advocated by some — that a "weak and irrelevant" Left support the "lesser evil" in the Pakistani Army's battle with the TTP — reveals itself to be analytically misinformed, politically feckless, and morally unpalatable. It would be unwise to overstate how influential the position itself has been — most activists are too intimately familiar with the historic priorities of the Pakistani establishment, I think, to have been duped by the Manichean framing of the war.

Instead, in the abstract, the tasks of the Left remain what they have always been, Taliban or not. It is a sign of the times — of the pervasive grip of Islamophobia on the minds of activists everywhere — that it seems necessary to remind allies (and ourselves, even) that Pakistan, too, is a country comprised of workers and peasants, of class exploitation and class struggle. Perhaps the defining political issue in Pakistan is the national question, for example — yet few in American antiwar circles would know that in every instance, this struggle is led by overwhelmingly secular forces (or indeed, at times, even that it exists).

The Left — however fragmented — must first take solace in the solidity of its political and ideological moorings, rather than nursing wounds inflicted by past defeats. It remains obvious, I think, that it is only the Left which can make substantive sense of what afflicts Pakistan, and why (imperialism, neoliberalism, militarism, ethnic chauvinism, Islamism, etc.) — and, if I may, only the Left which possesses, in its history and in its principles, the political strategy required to organize mass resistance in response.

Once again, advocating this does not at all mean that we ignore the TTP and their myriad iniquities. In fact, quite the opposite — abandoning the entirely manufactured sense of urgency peddled by our elites for reasons of State is the precondition for operating with a principled, ever more severe sense of urgency with respect to the real tasks at hand. Though Pakistan is not, in any sense, about to fall to the Taliban, it is — in this sense — already in the hands of a panoply of forces whose agenda we unreservedly condemn.

Thus, to the tragedy that has befallen the people of FATA and NWFP (or Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa), it is incumbent upon the Left to be frank and far-sighted. There exist no "within-the-system" solutions to the crises that confront the people of the region. Their partial, self-serving, and deeply unethical nature aside, military operations have done little more than scatter guerrillas from old stomping grounds; the underlying problems (and likely the war itself) promise only to intensify in the years ahead.[25]

Fundamentally, then, the resolution of these crises will demand an overhaul of the geopolitical and socio-economic "facts-on-the-ground": among other things, an immediate end to the U.S.-led occupation of Afghanistan; the decolonization and political, legal, social integration of FATA; the rapid economic uplift of the poor of the area, through land reforms, infrastructure provision, the expropriation and defunding of our military empire, and more; the decommodification of basic necessities; the construction of schools, hospitals, homes, and universities.

Certainly, this guiding vision is no substitute for tactics in the short-term. Yet it is nonetheless clear that, because of the history and principles that inform it, the path from the present to these goals does not at any stage run through the Pakistani establishment. It is this, above all else, that has been the most damaging of all the illusions peddled by pro-war progressives. Against them we must insist on a reinvigorated, independent, and clear-eyed Left, which has to undertake — as it is already doing — the painful, thankless, and long-term task of grassroots organizing and agitation.

The economic crisis that hit Pakistan particularly hard (as per ruling theologies of liberation, an ongoing $11 billion IMF bailout has mandated austerity and retrenchment) has already provoked trenchant resistance, ranging from massive riots against bus fare hikes in Rawalpindi, to a 25-day occupation of a five-star hotel in the heart of Karachi, to a 1,600-strong, 26-day strike at a tire factory run by a now-retired military general. The burden here, as elsewhere, is to strengthen our infrastructures of resistance towards the goal of uniting these disparate struggles.

That it promises to be a long and uncertain battle was never in doubt.

NOTES

1. There have been three major military offensives in the

past eighteen months (in Bajaur, Swat, and South Waziristan), complemented by a series of surrogate operations throughout the northwest. At its height, some two to three million people were displaced, including about half of Bajaur's entire population. Today, roughly one million have yet to return to their homes (see the UNHCR's most recent reports, available at www.unhcr.org/4b8fae4b6.html). A media blackout on areas under siege has meant that estimates of civilian casualties are unavailable. Nonetheless, scattered anecdotes and independent reports have made for frightening reading. The *Economist*, for example, reported that after the Swat operation, "an estimated 300 to 400 corpses of suspected Taliban... turned up in Swat, dumped on street corners, bridges or outside homes..." ("Pakistan's Swat Valley" Oct. 1, 2009 www.economist.com/world/asia/displaystory.cfm?story_id=14563668). And only recently, in what is now "liberated" Swat, the military responded to a recent suicide blast with an operation of terrifying proportions — reportedly rounding up some 1,000 residents to undergo a search in the rain, and detaining a similarly enormous number ("Over 1,000 rounded up in Mingora search operation," *The News,* Feb. 26, 2010 http://thenews.com.pk/top_story_detail.asp?Id=27516).

2. As one ex-reporter wrote recently, "The media rarely reports on the civilian deaths due to a combination of self-censorship, difficulties in accessing the conflict, and pressure from the military. The cover-up of what is going on is systematic." (see Fahad Desmukh, "The Myth of War Reporting," *thirdworldism*, April 14, 2010 http://thirdworldism.posterous.com/16214908).

3. See Aasim Sajjad Akhtar, "Pakistan: Crisis of a Frontline State," *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 40: 1 (2010), pp. 105-122.

4. This was Pakistan's 1968, documented best in Tariq Ali's *Pakistan: Military Rule or People's Power* (New York: William Morrow, 1970).

5. Aijaz Ahmad, "Democracy and Dictatorship in Pakistan," *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 8:4 (1978), p. 486.

6. Ahmad, p. 486.

7. Certainly, a more developed formulation of this claim would accommodate the massive social and economic changes in Pakistan since independence. One might further argue that it begs more questions than it answers. But provisionally (or even just heuristically), given the limitations of this piece, it will have to suffice as is.

8. Hamza Alavi, "Pakistan and Islam: Ethnicity and Ideology," in Hamza Alavi and Fred Halliday, *State and Ideology in the Middle East and Pakistan* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1988), pp. 106-107.

9. Ahmed Akhtar Khan, "Rare Attack on Pakistan Ahmadis." *BBC News*, Oct. 7, 2005 http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4319116.stm.

10. See Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim* (New York: Three Leaves Press, 2005), pp. 128-161.

11. Mamdani, p. 159.

12. The recent arrests of high-profile members of the Quetta Shura hardly mark a break in these relations, as some have suggested; rather, the worry for the Army was that it was going to be left out of the negotiations that seem to be underway. As a show of strength, it played its hand. The underlying contours of its strategy, however, have remained the same (See Gareth Porter, "Defying U.S., Pakistan Keeps Custody of Baradar," *IPS*, Feb 28, 2010 http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=50488).

13. The TTP came together in December 2007 on the shared goal of fighting the Pakistani State, which they regarded as a satrap of the American military. This line has been repudiated by the Afghan Taliban, who on numerous occasions have made clear that they regard attacks inside Pakistan as contrary to their interests and principles.

14. These commanders include: in the Mehsud areas in the Eastern half of South Waziristan, Qari Zainuddin Mehsud (died June 2009) and Toofan Mehsud; in the Wazir tribal areas in the Western half, Maulvi Nazir Ahmed; in North Waziristan, Hafiz Gul Bahadur; in Tank, Turkistan Bhittani. (See "Baitullah rival Qari Zainuddin shot dead in D I Khan," *DAWN News*, June 23, 2009 www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/pakistan/provinces/07-baitullah-rival-qari-zainuddin-shot-dead-in-d-i-khan-ha-02, "NWA Taliban pledge adherence to accord," *The News*, March 18, 2010, www.thenews.com.pk/daily_detail.asp?id=229661, "Making Friends with the Taliban," *BBC News,* June 24, 2009 http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8117186.stm.)

15. See Pervez Hoodbhoy, "The Saudi-ization of Pakistan" in *Newsline,* Jan 2009 www.newsline.com.pk/NewsJan2009/cover2jan2009.htm.

16. See Karlos Zurutuza, "Pakistan's Other Insurgents," in *Vice Magazine*, Nov. 2009 www.viceland.com/int/v16n11/htdocs/pakistans-other-insurgents-227.php?page=1.

17. See Madiha Tahir, "Pakistan's Broken Mirror," in *The National*, March 25, 2010 www.thenational.ae/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20100325/REVIEW/703259996/1008/rss.

18. See Adaner Usmani, "Struggling for Land" in *Zamana.org*, Sept. 2009 www.zamana.org/struggling-for-land.php.

19. See Fareed Khan, "...Christian is burned alive...", in *AsiaNews.it*, March 24, 2010 www.asianews.it/news-en/Rawalpindi,-Christian-burned-alive-is-buried.-Police-suspected-of-setting-him-on-fire-17975.html

20. See ADB, "FATA Rural Development" www.adb.org/

Documents/Profiles/PPTA/33268012.ASP#scl_aspcts.

21. Four of the other five on this list are, tellingly, in Baluchistan (see Abid Qayum Suleri, "Hunger Pains" in *The News*, Feb 27, 2010 www.jang.com.pk/thenews/feb2010-weekly/nos-27-02-2010/pol1.htm#2).

22. It cannot itself explain, for example, why resistance has taken a religious, "right-wing" cast (for that, at a minimum, one needs to incorporate into the narrative the multiple legacies of the anti-Soviet jihad in the 1980s).

23. Scattered socioeconomic indicators are available on the website of the government of FATA. See www.fata.gov.pk/subpages/socioeconomic.php.

24. To this day, the Frontier Crimes Regulation Act (FCR) — handiwork of Lord Curzon, in 1901 — remains in place. This, lest we forget, is the same Lord Curzon who, confronted with unruly tribes in the border regions, famously said: "Not until the military steamroller has passed over the country from end to end, will there be peace." Cue the F-16s, it seems.

25. A striking illustration of this is the recent intensification of military operations in Orakzai and Khyber, justified by the claim that militants have fled there in the face of the South Waziristan campaign. In Orakzai, the new operations have already displaced some 200,000 individuals since the turn of the year — about *half* the total population of the district ("200,000 civilians flee Pakistan military offensive," *AP News*, April 12 2010 news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20100412/ap_on_re_as/as_pakistan). And in Khyber, in mid-April, the military twice bombed a "militant" outpost in Tirah — once initially, and once as residents came to rescue people from the rubble — duly killing some seventy-one civilians. ("Villagers claim many slain during operation," *DAWN News*, April 13, 2010 www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/pakistan/03-villagers-claim-many-civilians-slain-during-operation-ss-03).

Palling Around with Terrorists: Obama and the Israel-Palestine Conflict

Stephen R. Shalom

During the 2008 presidential campaign, Barack Obama was accused of pal-ing around with terrorists.

This Republican canard was focused on the former Weatherperson, Bill Ayers, but also on Rashid Khalidi, the respected Palestinian-American scholar who had been a friend of Obama's in Chicago.

From some of his early connections and early comments there was thought that Obama might be more sympathetic to Palestinian rights than most U.S. politicians. But as he moved from the state legislature to the U.S. Senate and the national stage, Obama took the usual route of seeking the blessings of the Israel lobby — just as he moved from community organizer to corporate shill in domestic politics.

So, yes, during the campaign Obama did have a few advisers who rejected rabid positions on Israel-Palestine, like Robert Malley. But when Malley was criticized for having spoken to Hamas, the Obama campaign courageously declared that he wasn't a significant adviser and that he would have no further connection to the campaign.

And, yes, the Obama campaign did say that he would talk to anyone. But he then explained that this only included countries, so Hamas was excluded.

And, yes, Obama went and spoke to AIPAC, the rightwing Israel Lobby, and departed from standard U.S. policy. Unfortunately, his departure was to move to the right of the Bush Administration, calling for Jerusalem to remain Israel's "undivided" capital — though he backed off from this the next day — and criticizing Bush for allowing Hamas to participate in the Feb., 2006 Palestinian elections.

But this was all during the campaign and we know that candidates will say anything to get themselves elected. So there was still the possibility that despite his campaign rhetoric, once in office the wisdom gleaned from those dinners with Rashid Khalidi would assert itself.

An early Obama appointment offered some hope. George Mitchell was named special White House envoy to the Middle East; Mitchell had previously headed a fact-finding commission on the Al-Aqsa intifada in 2001 whose report was relatively balanced.

But in other respects, Obama's first month wasn't promising.

One of the administration's early nominees was Chas Freeman, a veteran diplomat who had been willing to criticize Israel. Great. But when Freeman was attacked, Obama refused to support him, letting him flutter in the wind until Freeman withdrew himself from consideration.

Also in his first month, Obama decided to visit the headquarters of the Caterpillar Corporation and sing their praises, even though church groups, human rights organizations, and peace activists urged him not to do so given that Caterpillar was in violation of international law and basic morality in selling armored bulldozers to Israel used to smash Palestinian homes and olive groves as part of Israel's colonization of the occupied territories.

The 2008-2009 Gaza war officially ended just before Obama was sworn in as president. There's only one president, said Obama, as he

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maintained general silence on the matter, but with his aides pointing out that he was on record supporting Israel's right to defend itself from rocket attacks — which of course was a wholly misleading way to characterize the war — this was taken in the Arab world as tacit assent to Bush's policy. Some analysts hypothesized that Israel ended its offensive when it did precisely so as not to put Obama to an early test. But in the months that followed Obama failed the test time and time again.

On February 23, Amnesty International released a report in which they condemned war crimes on both sides in the Gaza war and called on those who supplied arms to the two sides to cease doing so. The response of the Obama administration was to ship what Amnesty called a "massive consignment of munitions" to Israel the next month.

From the beginning of his administration, Obama declared that he was concerned over the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and that he wanted the blockade of Gaza loosened. But Israel ignored him and the United States did nothing. Fifty-four Representatives urged the United States to apply real pressure on Israel to lift the blockade, but to no avail. There was and remains a very simple solution if Obama genuinely wants to mitigate the effects of the blockade: namely, the United States could do what Rep. Brian Baird of Washington suggested: break the blockade. Just sail supplies in by sea. Israel certainly isn't going to sink U.S. navy vessels.

And although the war crimes in Gaza took place before Obama became president, his continued obstruction of efforts to investigate those crimes makes him complicit. The UN appointed Judge Richard Goldstone, who happened to be a Jew and a Zionist, to report on war crimes; his findings were demonized, misrepresented, and blocked by the Obama Administration. Obama's position, that it rejects the Goldstone report as biased, while still urging Israel to conduct its own investigation, is essentially the Israeli government position, and — as human rights groups have noted — totally farcical, given the clear inadequacy of Israel's self-investigations. That Obama's position was the same as that of Israel is in fact the view of Michael Oren, Israel's ambassador to the United States, who declared that the American position "could have been drafted in Tel Aviv, it was so wonderful."

> How did the Obama Administration vote on these same 15 resolutions two years later? Exactly the same way as did the Bush Administration.

Obama and Bush

HOW DOES OBAMA'S POLICY on Israel-Palestine compare with that of George W. Bush? This is not an easy comparison to make. After all, the circumstances faced by the two administrations have varied: for example, there have been different political parties in power in Israel to deal with, and different wars and atrocities to address.

But it turns out that there's a rather objective measure by which we can compare Obama's policy on Israel-Palestine with that of Bush, almost a controlled experiment. We can compare the United States' UN General Assembly voting record under Bush with the record under Obama. More specifically, we can compare the votes during the 2007-2008 62nd General Assembly session — which took place entirely under the Bush Administration — with the votes during the 2009-2010 64th GA session, which took place entirely under Obama. (2007 of course was in the second Bush term, where some of the berserk policies of the first term were toned down. So actually this is a comparison of Obama's policies with those of Bush's second term, of Bush 43.2.)

In recent years, the General Assembly has passed about 250 resolutions annually. Some two-thirds of these resolutions, however, have been passed without a vote: they were consensus decisions, often about rather non-controversial matters. So, for example, in both 2007 and 2009, there was a resolution passed without a vote in favor of "improving global road safety." Some other resolutions that passed by consensus in both sessions opposed violence against women migrant workers, called for steps to combat malaria, urged the building of a better world through sports and the Olympic ideal, and so on.

Some of the consensus resolutions seemed as if they had greater significance — such as resolutions that approved African and Middle Eastern nuclear-free zones — but these tended to be toothless declarations, so blandly formulated that even the Middle Eastern country with one to two hundred thermonuclear warheads, Israel, was able to go along without breaking a sweat.

But not every General Assembly resolution has passed by consensus. Typically, a quarter to a third of them have involved contentious issues, and therefore there has been a recorded roll-call vote. And often virtually identical resolutions are voted on several years running. So we can compare how the Bush Administration voted on a resolution and then look and see how the Obama Administration voted on essentially the same resolution two years later.

Now, as noted above, some General Assembly resolutions were really nothing more than endorsements of motherhood and apple pie. But it is true that the Bushites were not invariably supportive of these seemingly unexceptional resolutions. Throughout the Bush Administration, the U.S. delegate voted against a resolution affirming the rights of the child: in 2007 the vote was 183 countries in favor and 1 opposed, the United States. Likewise, the United States voted against a resolution urging support for a Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (154-1-0) and voted no on a resolution affirming that people have the right to food (186-1, with North Korea abstaining).

These votes of course did nothing to further U.S. foreign policy interests, no matter how crudely or selfishly defined — it's not as if the resolutions obligated rich nations to end the global inequality that especially burdened women and children or even to ship one peanut butter sandwich overseas. But to the Bush Administration such resolutions had the whiff of socialism, so they voted no. For Bush, success in diplomacy seemed to be measured by how many people around the world came to hate your guts, and by this measure he was very successful indeed.

But Obama knows that in-your-face diplomacy doesn't gain anything, so he has been eager to improve the U.S. image. Accordingly, he allowed the 2009 resolutions on children's rights, discrimination against women, and food to be adopted unanimously.

On several nuclear weapons resolutions, Obama continued Washington's historic isolated opposition .On a few nuclear weapons resolutions, however, Obama has distanced himself from the Bush policy in ways that are substantive, rather than simply cosmetic —a reflection of the modest but real improvements Obama has made relative to Bush on nuclear policy.

So what about Israel-Palestine resolutions?

Some resolutions came up in only one of the sessions but not the other. So there were two resolutions in the current session on the Goldstone report, calling on both Israel and Hamas to investigate their alleged war crimes during the Gaza war. Washington was one of 18 countries voting against the first of these resolutions and one of 7 voting against the second. But because there was no comparable 2007 resolution, we can't compare the Obama and Bush Administrations. Likewise, in 2007 the Bush Administration and Israel were the only ones to vote against the financing of the UN Interim force in Lebanon — but there was no comparable resolution in 2009.

There were enough resolutions, however, that were put forward in both the 62nd and the 64th session that we can perform a meaningful comparison. Under Bush, in 2007 the United States cast negative votes on 15 Israel-Palestine resolutions where it was joined by fewer than 10 of the UN's 192 members. Generally it was joined by Israel and some of the small Pacific islands that host U.S. military bases and are virtual dependencies of the Pentagon — like Micronesia and the Marshall Islands — and about half the time it was supported as well by Canada and Australia. What's crucial to note here is that Bush was not just choosing sides in a North-South face-off, or a debate between democracies and authoritarian states; rather, the U.S. position was isolated from a large majority of the world, including most of the North and most democracies. Should the Geneva Convention apply to the Occupied Palestinian Territories (Res. 62/107)? The United States was one of 6 countries voting no. On resolution 62/83 criticizing Israel's construction of the wall (which had been declared illegal by the International Court of Justice) and otherwise calling for a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine, Washington cast one of 7 negative votes. On resolution 62/84 expressing concern at Israeli actions in Jerusalem that violated Security Council resolutions that the United States itself had previously supported, the U.S. was one of 7 no votes. Likewise on resolution 62/85 that criticized Israel for violating a prior Security Council resolution on the Golan Heights, again passed with U.S. backing, Washington was one of 7 negative votes. On resolution 62/108 condemning Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, the United States was one of the few to vote no. On resolutions affirming the Palestinian right to self-determination (62/146), their sovereignty over their land (not including the pre-1967 territory of Israel) (62/181), their right to their property (62/105), and the right of those displaced in the 1967 war to return to their homes (62/103), the United States was part of the tiny minority voting no. On four resolutions supporting the work of various UN bodies seeking to promote the realization of Palestinians' rights and well-being (62/80, 62/81, 62/82, 62/104), the United States was one of a handful of nations voting no. On resolution 62/56 warning of the risks of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East, only the United States, Israel, and four Pacific microstates voted no. And on resolution 62/188 calling on Israel to pay for the clean up of the oil slick on Lebanon's shores caused by the Israeli bombing of oil storage tanks during the 2006 war against Hezbollah, Washington was one of only 8 no votes.

> In short, the United States continues its long-term policy of palling around with terrorists, the terrorists who lead the Israeli state.

OK, so how did the Obama Administration vote on these same 15 resolutions two years later? (64/92, 64/19, 64/20, 64/21, 64/93, 64/150, 64/185, 64/90, 64/88, 64/16, 64/17, 64/18, 64/89, 64/66, 64/195) Exactly the same way. In each case it was part of a group of fewer than 10 countries that voted no in the face of overwhelming international support. In fact, there was a 16th resolution, 62/109, that the Bush Administration had abstained on — it criticized Israeli human rights practices in the Occupied Territories (something obvious to anyone who read the U.S. State Department's annual human rights report). When this resolution came to a vote in 2009 (64/94), the Obama Administration did not abstain: it voted no, along with only 8 other nations.

In short, the Obama Administration's record in the General Assembly shows that it has been at least as supportive of Israeli oppression of the Palestinians and regional aggression as was Bush.

Now of course the General Assembly is not the real center of power at the United Nations. That's the Security Council and the United States cast a veto on behalf of Israel in the Security Council 9 times under George W. Bush and not once under Obama. But vetoes, which once gave a pretty good indication of the role of the major powers in the Security Council, no longer are that informative. Since the late 1980s the permanent five members of the Council have often wielded their authority more indirectly, through use of what Céline Nahory has called the "The Hidden Veto." Meeting behind closed doors, rather than in official open sessions, without any record of what has been said, the P5 can issue private veto warnings before a vote takes place, blocking action they oppose without having to appear obstructionist in public.

So for example, no veto was recorded during the 2006 Israel-Lebanon-Hezbollah war, but it is known that Washington scandalously prevented the UN from calling for a ceasefire until Israel was good and ready for it. But it's hard to imagine that Obama would have behaved any differently had he been president. In 2006 he was one of 61 co-sponsors of a Senate resolution expressing unconditional support for Israel in that war. As his campaign literature boasted: "Throughout the war, Barack Obama made clear that Israel should not be pressured into a cease-fire that did not deal with the threat of Hezbollah missiles."

In Obama's Security Council, as in Bush's, no resolution has been adopted critical of Israel. Indeed, under Obama, there has not been a single Security Council resolution adopted that includes the words "Israel" or "Palestine." Israel essentially continues its immunity from Security Council condemnation.

So in both bodies of the United Nations — the General Assembly and the Security Council — there has been no significant difference between Bush and Obama on Israel-Palestine.

Settling on Settlements

In May 2009 Obama "demanded" that the Israelis stop expanding their settlements. This was no more than a demand that Israel comply with international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention — or more precisely, a demand that Israel stop new violations of international law while maintaining its already established settlements, whose continued existence is an ongoing violation of international law.

In its opposition to Israeli settlements, the Obama Administration was breaking no new ground. As Hillary Clinton explained, "For 40 years, successive American administrations of both parties have opposed Israel's settlement policy." But of course, what is also a fact is that the United States has stated its opposition to settlements but then done absolutely nothing to stop them. Given that in the years since World War II the United States has provided more aid to Israel than to any other country in the world, given that Israel has been the leading aid recipient from 1975 to 2004, given that more than half of all vetoes cast by Washington have been on behalf of Israel, given that the U.S. bestows innumerable special privileges on Israel — surely the United States could get Israel to stop building settlements if it had wanted to.

That there should be no new construction, not even for natural growth, was in fact part of the so-called Road Map, drawn up by the Bush Administration, endorsed by the Quartet — the United States, Russia, the EU, and the UN — and signed by Israel. Israel now claims that the Bush Administration released them from these Road Map obligations, but both the Bush and Obama Administrations deny that this was the case. (For example, National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley declared on May 7, 2008: "We basically have said our position on settlements is ... the road map position, which is that there must be an end to settlement expansion, a full stop.") Condoleezza Rice did explain that just because the United States says stop, doesn't mean that Israel will stop. And of course that's true if it's clear that Washington will do nothing to get Israel to stop.

That pattern has continued with Obama. He made his May 2009 settlement "demands" and Netanyahu refused them. The Israeli prime minister said he would freeze West Bank settlement construction for 10 months, but that this wouldn't cover building in Jerusalem, or already approved West Bank construction, or natural growth or militarily required construction, or public facilities, or exceptional circumstances, or West Bank construction after the 10 months was up.

Obama accepted this and both Clinton and Mitchell praised Netanyahu for his unprecedented offer. Rather than putting pressure on Israel to comply with its signed obligations, the Obama Administration put pressure on the Arab states to tell the Palestinian Authority — give it cover really — to agree to indirect talks with Israel, so-called proximity talks, despite the ongoing settlement activity.

Commentators were unanimous in not expecting much from these proximity talks. The Israeli foreign ministry issued a secret report to Israeli embassies telling them that the talks were not a top Obama priority and not much would come of them.

But then came the announcement approving construction of 1600 new housing units in East Jerusalem, just as Vice President Biden was in Israel affirming the United States' strong commitment to the Jewish state. It would be hard to imagine a more blatant attempt to sabotage the talks. Nor a more direct challenge to U.S. credibility. And international bullies like the United States do care about their credibility, for if their threats are not believed, if they can be humiliated without consequence, then their power is that much less.

Sometimes moments like this can have a profound effect — shaking things up enough to cause U.S. policymakers to distinguish between those areas where Israeli interests and U.S. imperial interests coincide — in terms of crushing radical and nationalist movements in the region — and where they diverge, which they have always done on the issue of the settlements. Giving a state to a cooperative Palestinian leadership under Mahmoud Abbas doesn't undermine U.S. imperial interests. Indeed, it has always been the case that U.S. backing for Israeli oppression of Palestinians entails real costs to U.S. interests. Thus General Petraeus testified in March that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict "foments anti-American sentiment, due to a perception of U.S. favoritism for Israel" — a perception! — which weakens the U.S. position in the Arab world, undermines the legitimacy of pro-U.S. regimes, and helps al-Qaeda and other militant groups mobilize support.

The rightwing Israel Lobby —still quite powerful despite the challenge to its monopoly by J Street — has denounced Obama's picking on Israel. But it's not just AIPAC that keeps Obama from using the United States' vast leverage to demand a settlement of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Although the United States gets nothing out of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank or of settlement construction in Jerusalem, it has long traded its acquiescence in the occupation in return for other Israeli services to the U.S. empire. As the *New York Times's* David Sanger and Isabel Kershner reported (3/18/2010), "what has many in Washington worried most is the magnitude of the breach with Mr. Netanyahu, at a time that the two countries are intent on showing that they are working hand in hand on a strategy to counter Iran and its nuclear program." In other words, Israel is seen as a useful ally for maintaining U.S. hegemony in the Middle East.

It is still unclear how this current flare up will resolve itself.

In Biden's Tel Aviv University speech immediately following the insult, he criticized the Israeli announcement, but then went on to express his appreciation for Netanyahu's clarification "that the beginning of actual construction on this particular project would likely take several years" — as if a long-term commitment to build in East Jerusalem weren't just as damaging to peace prospects as one that started now.

On the other hand, the follow-up conversations were much tougher, with Clinton and others demanding that Netanyahu cancel the building project. Netanyahu has dug in his heels, proclaiming that Jerusalem is not a settlement, but Israel's capital. The crucial question, however, now, as always, is what sort of leverage the United States will use to get Israel to comply with international law and the U.S. peace process? Will the Obama Administration use the threat of a reduction in military aid or a withdrawal of diplomatic support to force Israel into line?

On military aid, Israel seems not to have much to worry about. On March 12, Hillary Clinton declared that "the United States is a strong supporter of the security of Israel. Always have been, always will be." And two weeks later *Haaretz* reported (3/25/2010) a huge new U.S.-Israeli arms deal.

In terms of diplomacy, there were rumors that Washington might consider abstaining on (and thus not vetoing) some future Security Council resolution condemning Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem; but this report was soon denied. And when a story was published indicating that some former national security advisers had recommended that the United States put forward its own peace plan (as the Palestinians want and Israel opposes), the current National Security Adviser made clear that that was not in the cards.

It's possible that Obama will try to force Netanyahu to alter his governing coalition, or even try to oust him from office — as Bill Clinton did in 1999. (When Prime Minister Netanyahu backed away from Israel's Oslo commitments, the U.S. President twice refused to meet with him in Washington, while meeting with Arafat, helping to weaken Netanyahu before the next Israeli election, enabling his replacement by Ehud Barak.) But given that the Labor Party is already in Israel's ruling coalition and that even President Peres insists on Israel's right to build in Jerusalem, it's going to take more than that to move the peace process forward. It's going to take real cuts in aid and an end to diplomatic backing, for which Obama has yet to show any sympathy.

On April 15, the *New York Times* detected the hint of a new Obama Middle East policy in a single phrase at the end of a news conference. But our job is not to be Kremlinologists looking for hidden clues as to Obama's future direction. Rather, it's to create the political pressure that forces him to move. And this is within the realm of the possible. There are fissures among important elites, the appearance of some dissenting voices in the media, and significant divisions within the American Jewish community, all of which provide fertile ground for political action. At Berkeley, students are seeking to get the university to divest from U.S. firms that are complicit in the Israeli occupation. If we can replicate such exemplary actions as these, we might be able to break U.S. support for the oppression of Palestinians, and finally allow a just solution to this long conflict.

Without massive political pressure on Obama, it seems that we're not going to see major departures from prevailing U.S. policy any time soon. Obama will continue — as he has thus far continued — the long-standing policy of arming Israel as it slaughters Palestinians, protecting it from any consequences or sanctions as it suffocates the people of Gaza, providing it with diplomatic cover as it further restricts the scope of a future Palestinian state, and granting it legal impunity for its war crimes. In short, the United States will continue its long-term policy of palling around with terrorists, the terrorists who lead the Israeli state.

Darfur: The World's Most Famous Humanitarian Disaster

STEVEN FAKE AND KEVIN FUNK

THE EMERGENCE OF DARFUR as a cause célèbre in the West has been one of the more notable propaganda achievements in recent memory. Though the Darfur region of Sudan has been the scene of great human suffering, a death toll of perhaps 300,000 and a population of displaced persons numbering well over 2 million qualifies Darfur as serious but — regrettably — hardly unique for the scale of its violence in the first decade of the 21st century. Nonetheless, the appellation of "world's worst humanitarian disaster" was regularly affixed to the boilerplate at the end of wire service dispatches about the conflict, long after the worst of the violence had abated. The fact is that Darfur was, from Washington's point of view, the ideal public relations opportunity: Sino-Arab villainy against a helpless population.

Condemnations of the atrocities implicitly cast the denouncer in favorable terms, and the U.S. government took the lead in displaying vocal outrage over the crimes in Darfur. The effect was to convey a meaning most consumers of the U.S. press could hardly miss: whatever mistakes have been made, in Iraq or elsewhere, the United States is a beacon of light contrasting against the stark evil in Sudan.

While such public posturing is hardly novel, Darfur did occasion one notable innovation in thought control and agenda-setting: a vibrant grassroots advocacy network. Typified by the Save Darfur Coalition, well funded activism around Darfur has been particularly successful at recruiting high school and college students, who might have otherwise drifted into more subversive organizing. However, momentum around the topic has eroded in recent years as Darfur has faded from the news, along with Iraq.

The Darfur Rebellion

SINCE DARFUR BEGAN GRABBING headlines in 2003 for daring rebel attacks upon government outposts, the Muslim western region of Sudan quickly became synonymous with massive war crimes, and even "genocide." Due to the counterinsurgency campaign Khartoum launched in response, violence against civilians exploded, with death tolls peaking in the period through mid-2005, and sporadic attacks continuing to the present. Low-level conflict with the rebels endures, even as peace agreements and truces come and go.

Millions of displaced villagers continue to reside in camps that arose at the start of the strife and quickly mushroomed. Some camps now outrank many cities in size, though certainly not in basic services. Living conditions are harsh, and many are eager to return to what is left of their homes, but do not feel safe to do so. Some fled to the capital. Khartoum's periphery is lined with massive slums housing the marginalized from Darfur and southern Sudan. Other Darfuris are refugees, residing just across

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the border in neighboring Chad or emigrating to Egypt and beyond.

The rebels were originally comprised of two groupings, the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA), based among the Fur, Zaghawa, and Masalit ethnic groups, and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), drawing from the Kobe clan of the Zaghawa and linked to Islamists that had fallen out with Khartoum. Available indications are that the rebels had substantial popular support, at least in a general way. Their grievances were deeply felt and longstanding: a lack of economic development and a share of political power. Dating back to the pernicious years of British colonialism, infrastructure development has been concentrated in Khartoum while Darfur remains desperately poor, lacking all but the most rudimentary schools and medical facilities.

> The Obama administration has continued Bush White House policies toward Sudan in broad strokes.

Similar underdevelopment pervades most of the periphery of Sudan — only the central areas have seen substantive evidence of the country's oil wealth. As Harry Verhoeven noted in the *Guardian* (UK) on April 12, "Inequality in Sudan as a whole continues to widen: while Khartoum's elite rubs shoulders with foreign investors in posh hotels, parts of Jonglei state [in South Sudan] are experiencing malnutrition levels that are three times higher than global emergency indicators."

The regime of President Omar al-Bashir, motivated by a concern to avoid relying on the army, which had a substantial Darfuri presence in its ranks, implemented a counterinsurgency plan that relied instead upon organizing paramilitary forces from those Darfuris who could be enticed by the prospect of sacking villages and keeping the loot. The strategy relied upon making opportunistic use of existing tensions between nomadic pastoral and settled farming tribes. A division between Arab and African-identifying tribes received considerable attention in the West and synchronized well with the "War on Terror" paradigm but was deeply misleading. The Janjaweed, as the paramilitaries became known, were drawn from Arab-identifying tribes in Darfur — though only a very small minority of the Arab tribes participated. Many Darfuri Arabs feel triply victimized: underprivileged within the region, demonized internationally, and ignored by humanitarian groups.

Negotiations Limp Forward

Internal disagreements and power struggles among the rebels led them to devolve into a dizzying array of factions – a process encouraged by skillful manipulation from Khartoum. Currently, three groupings are prominent: JEM, the faction of the SLA led by Abdul Wahid Mohamed al-Nur (SLA-Nur), and the newly formed agglomeration of small factions know as the Liberation and Justice Movement, which promptly announced a ceasefire agreement with Khartoum in March. The accord followed on the heels of a tentative peace agreement and ceasefire Khartoum reached with JEM in February in Doha. Neither agreement contains much prospect for leading to a lasting, comprehensive peace.

More notable is the concurrent normalization with neighboring Chad. There have been previous détentes, none of which held for long, though the current incarnation seems more likely to stand the test of time. The border between the two countries — closed since the outbreak of hostilities in Darfur — was reopened in April. This development may modestly improve the prospects for peace in Darfur since it removes the destabilizing influence of

Chad's patronage of the JEM rebel group and Khartoum's counter-maneuvers.

In late February, amid ongoing negotiations with the JEM, the militarily strongest of the rebel groups, Sudan carried out an assault upon the territory of al-Nur's rebel faction, long the most stubborn holdout for substantial concessions from Khartoum. In that context, the attack upon Jebel Marra was clearly an attempt to punish al-Nur for his intransigence and to force him to the negotiating table. As the longtime journalist on Sudan Julie Flint wrote in *Middle East International* on March 2, the attack was "reminiscent of the early days of the war, with aircraft, infantry and militias attacking the mountain stronghold of the man who for the past four years has refused to participate in the internationally-sponsored peace talks currently taking place in Doha." Several hundred people were reportedly killed and tens of thousands forced to flee.

Yet after several years of sustained coverage of the Darfur conflict, the Western press is no longer interested. Flint bemoaned the "near-total silence from the international community," asking, "where are the voices of international protest?"[1] The White House, traditionally so vocal on the region, has fallen silent. With the occupation of Iraq off the radar and the delicate management of the looming division of Sudan to attend to, Washington's agenda has shifted. The bloodshed in Darfur is a propaganda opportunity that has run its course.

Abdul Wahid al-Nur, ensconced in Paris, has frustrated many observers by steadfastly rejecting negotiations with Khartoum, in Doha and elsewhere, until the government lays down its arms. Yet Sean Brooks of the Save Darfur Coalition reported in *Huffington Post* on March 23 that in a recent tour of Darfur he

> heard repeatedly from camp leaders and other Darfuris that they feel inadequately represented in Doha. Some people were aware and supportive of the Doha Declaration signed by 170 leaders last November that outlined collective demands for the negotiations; however, many individuals had not heard of the document and/or felt alienated from the formal processes of the mediators to include these voices in the talks.

Al-Nur reportedly retains considerable popularity among many displaced Darfuris, presumably an endorsement of his negotiating stance. However, that principled position may be informed in part by a misplaced faith in outside powers. Washington's hollow grandstanding against Khartoum's massive atrocities has not been merely inconsequential — it has raised the hopes of victims and may have impacted the negotiating posture of rebels under the illusion that they have powerful backers. The point has even been tepidly alluded to by the doyen of politically expedient moralizing, Nicholas Kristof, who admits, "Did the movement leave Darfuris with unrealistic expectations? Maybe."[2] The sense of betrayal felt by those Darfuris expecting tangible support to accompany the international publicity has been one of the more wrenching aspects of the conflict to contemplate.

Saving Darfur or Feel-Good Activism?

Darfur has been ill-served by the establishment-friendly activist leadership around the issue. As a consequence of the ideological commitment to the beneficence of Washington, activist demands have generally been weak and ineffective, if not counterproductive. From calling on Washington to declare the bloodbath "genocide" — a legally dubious determination revolving around academic distinctions — to demanding that the UN replace African Union (AU) peacekeepers while ignoring the inadequate logistical and financial support provided to them by the developed nations, the status quo in Darfur has been little altered.

Notably, developed nations failed to provide the peacekeepers with the bare levels of support needed for them to have any hope of success. Some four years after the first calls were made for the donation of transport helicopters for the peacekeeping operations, five choppers, representing about a quarter of the minimal number needed, were finally made available in February. One notes to the point of boredom that activist groups have largely failed to press Western governments to rectify the starvation levels of funding and logistical support afforded to both the peacekeepers and aid groups.

In fact, peacekeepers cannot even defend themselves — in March a patrol of 63 peacekeepers was ambushed. The peacekeepers were detained and robbed of their weapons, vehicles, and equipment before being released. One resident of a displaced persons camp recently bitterly dismissed the ineffective UN-AU forces as "a tourism army."[3]

Predictably, the effect of longstanding U.S. sanctions on Khartoum's behavior in Darfur has been somewhere between nil and undetectable while permitting blame to be deflected onto China. Meanwhile, with hardly a peep from Save Darfur, Washington has quietly protected leading participants in the counterinsurgency policies in Darfur, including Major General Salah Abdallah Gosh, "an architect of the genocide," in the words of John Prendergast and Don Cheadle, from inclusion on a list of individuals facing UN sanctions. These figures have been repeatedly welcomed to Washington for meetings on such matters as collaboration with the CIA on intelligence operations in Iraq, an obvious organizing point that has been somehow absent from Save Darfur's multimillion-dollar ad campaigns.

Prior to taking office, virtually all the major officials of the Obama administration had been aggressive proponents of stopping Khartoum's slaughter in Darfur. In many cases the measures proposed by figures such as Joseph Biden, Susan Rice, and Hillary Clinton would have risked worsening the humanitarian situation. However, the likely outcomes were beside the point as the hawkish posturing was not seriously intended and merely meant to placate the uncritical Save Darfur leadership, which was accomplished with great ease.

Nor have prominent activists effectively responded to international attempts to seek justice in Darfur. Arrest warrants for President Bashir and other Khartoum officials issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for crimes in Darfur have languished. Bashir responded to the issuance of his warrant by expelling a number of foreign aid groups in March 2009. Sudanese aid organizations largely succeeded in filling the gaps, though not without being forced to divert some of their focus away from long-term development projects. Washington, strongly opposed to the ICC in principle, has made a narrow exception for the Court's pursuit of the Sudanese officials, but refused to contemplate submitting itself to ICC jurisdiction — the one action that would have a real impact. As a consequence, pressure upon Bashir is diminished. Yet no campaign has arisen to demand that the United States ratify the Rome Statute. Unlike Save Darfur advocates, the world has not failed to notice the glaring hypocrisy.

Genuine assistance from Washington would take the form of reducing hypocrisy — for a start, by submitting to ICC jurisdiction and halting its alliances with Ethiopia, Uganda, and Rwanda — and providing more substantive aid by better supporting humanitarian and peacekeeping operations, cutting ties with the Khartoum intelligence apparatus, and pushing for peace talks that fully include Darfuri civil society.

U.S.-Sudan Relations Under Obama

The Obama administration has continued Bush White House policies toward Sudan in broad strokes. This maintains the bipartisan consensus on Sudan policy, with most variations reflecting changing circumstances. Relations were at a nadir during the Clinton years. Occasional indications of a shift towards rapprochement and normalization with Khartoum from the Bush administration never materialized. However, the signals from the Obama White House point toward an acceleration of the thaw. After meeting with National Congress Party officials in April 2009, Obama's special envoy for Sudan, retired Maj. Gen. J. Scott Gration, expressed optimism about relations between the two nations and said of the Khartoum government, "I'm very encouraged to have a new friend, to have someone who we can work with."[4] At a campaign rally in April, Bashir went so far as to proclaim, in regards to his National Congress Party, that "Even America is becoming an NCP member. No one is against our will."

Elsewhere, Gration expressed his views on how to approach Khartoum and the Darfur conflict: "We've got to think about giving out cookies… Kids, countries — they react to gold stars, smiley faces, handshakes, agreements, talk, engagement." The comment elicited scorn from the activist establishment — not for its striking paternalism, but rather for his supposed naïveté about the depth of Khartoum's evil. The standard ideological assumption that Washington wears a white hat persists.

Nonetheless, the broad outlines of Washington's policy goals are not difficult to surmise. One principal aim is the emergence of a loyal ally in the oil-rich and strategically located future nation of South Sudan. The United States is providing close to $1 billion in aid to Sudan annually — a sum that is largely dedicated to funding infrastructure construction and the training of police and military forces in the South.

The April 2010 national elections were an important prerequisite in the process that will culminate in a southern referendum on independence next January. However, it was widely felt by southerners and diplomats that any change in government in Khartoum would endanger the referendum. Thus, Washington strongly backed the national elections, contributing $100 million in logistical aid, while remaining mute on irregularities in the polling preparations.

Victory for Bashir in the April ballot was widely forecast. Opposition parties are weak and divided. The strongest opponent, the southern-based Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), exhibited an indecisive approach to the elections. The Sudan Communist Party, once one of the strongest in the Arab-African world and reflective of a vibrant labor movement, has been reduced to ineffectiveness and chose to boycott the election.

Even by the low standards of liberal democratic systems, the elections were a deeply flawed exercise in popular expression. Problems in the South, under SPLM-control, were no less serious than in the North but were much less publicized. Still, reflecting the warming relations with Khartoum, Gration expressed his "confidence that the elections... would be as free and as fair as possible."

Abuses in the South are not the only violations of democratic norms in the region to pass with little notice. Conspicuously, the repressive climate surrounding May elections in Ethiopia and August elections in Rwanda has received minimal attention despite little prospect of any semblance of democracy emerging from the rituals. Indeed, the electoral atmosphere in Ethiopia, where the West has real leverage, is far worse than in Sudan. On March 24, Human Rights Watch mildly observed, "The country's principal foreign donors — the World Bank, United States, United Kingdom, and European Union — have been very timid in their criticisms of Ethiopia's deteriorating human rights situation." Coverage of these findings in the U.S. press was negligible. It is difficult to avoid noticing the starkly different treatment accorded to loyal allies of Washington.

Few observers doubted Bashir's victory in the elections and, indeed, irregularities benefiting him may well have been redundant. The media has been tightly controlled for years in northern Sudan, where the bulk of the population resides. Even some southerners supported a Bashir victory — not out of personal affection but with the aim of smoothing the way to the referendum on southern independence.

The Future of Sudan

THE POSSIBILITY OF SUBSTANTIAL VIOLENCE related to the referendum is very real. Outbreaks of ethnic fighting in southern Sudan have already led to over 2,000 violent deaths last year, surpassing the toll for Darfur in the same period. Just last fall, the Chief of General Staff of the military wing of the SPLM forecast a 50 percent likelihood of a reigniting of war with Bashir's regime in the North.

To prepare for independence, the South has been busily rearming itself — largely in an effort to deter any attempt by the North to seize the oil fields. Washington and its allies, Kenya and Ethiopia, have assisted in this by providing training and support and serving as conduits for weaponry. The aid is not without historical irony — the United States became the principal backer of the northern-based Nimeiri dictatorship in Sudan which provoked the relaunching of the North-South civil war in 1983, a conflict that ultimately killed some 2 million people before concluding in a 2005 peace agreement. Levels of military aid reached such heights that a senior Sudanese official called it an "air bridge" of weaponry from Washington to Khartoum. The U.S. role was decisive in allowing the unpopular Nimeiri to remain in power as long as he did. Tellingly, the dictator was finally overthrown in 1985 by massive street demonstrations while he was away on a visit to Washington. The entire episode is little remembered outside Sudan, even on the left.

Historically, governments in Sudan have tended to fall when populations in the major urban areas feel the pinch of economic contractions and become restive. The current oil wealth has strengthened the Bashir regime in the last decade; a situation that may change in the wake of the looming loss of South Sudan and direct access to its oil, though the outcome can scarcely be predicted. As for Darfur, its peoples remain without genuine friends in the international community. The prospects for peace are perhaps not quite so dim as in the past, though justice remains nothing but a depressingly distant mirage.

NOTES

1. Julie Flint, "The War for Jebel Marra," *Making Sense of Sudan* blog at the *Social Science Research Council*, March 11, 2010; http://blogs.ssrc.org/sudan/2010/03/11/the-war-for-jebel-marra.

2. Nicholas Kristof, "Voices on Genocide Prevention," *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum* speaker series, March 18, 2010; www.ushmm.org/genocide/analysis/details.php?content=2010-03-18.

3. Sean Brooks, "Protection, Trust and UNAMID in Darfur," *Save Darfur Coalition*, March 24, 2010; http://blogfordarfur.org/archives/3371.

4. We are indebted to Jim Remsen for drawing our attention to this statement from Gration.

Foosball with the Devil

Haiti, Honduras, and Democracy in the Neoliberal Era

ADRIENNE PINE

FROM THE PERSPECTIVE of Honduran and Honduranist scholars, the most common reference to Haiti is as a point of hemispheric comparison. Whether measuring GDP per capita, state legitimacy and citizens' political tolerance, or corruption, the phrase "Honduras ranks last…after Haiti" seems to be de rigueur. This is no coincidence: the policies and structures that have effected extreme poverty and highly concentrated wealth in both places are very much connected.

Although the scope of devastation in the January 12 Haitian earthquake — as measured first in the number of people who lost their mothers, brothers, uncles, classmates, neighbors, and partners — is nearly unprecedented comparisons will (and should) be made. The most obvious comparison between the Haitian earthquake and Honduras would seem to lie with Hurricane Mitch, which devastated the Central American country in 1998, taking with it the lives of thousands of fathers, sisters, cousins, friends, and coworkers. And there are a number of other easy parallels. Both are spoken of as "natural" disasters despite the fact that in each case it was structural violence that made the natural phenomena so deadly. In both cases, stories of graft and mismanagement of aid distribution boggled the mind. Both provoked outrageous responses from U.S.-based televangelists. And both disappeared from the international media within a month.

But beyond the latest, greatest "natural" catastrophe, it is last year's military coup in Honduras that most clearly highlights the similarities between the two countries.

In 1999, I met the owner of a *maquiladora* (textile processing factory) producing clothing in the industrial town of Choloma, Honduras, through one of his employees, Lesly Rodriguez (the same Lesly who had been instrumental in bringing down Kathy Lee Gifford in 1996 by exposing the fact that her WalMart clothing line was produced in Honduras by young girls working under abusive conditions). I'll call the owner Jack. Jack was close friends with Gap's founder, Don Fisher (1928-2009), and spoke with nostalgia of the first 1969 Gap store in San Francisco, which sold "Levis, records, and tapes." When Fisher decided to create his own brand, he took the then-innovative decision to subcontract and internationally outsource all production (thus lowering costs and removing Gap from direct responsibility for labor conditions in factories). To set up these factories, he called upon Jack. Over the following decades, Jack set up and ran factories in countries throughout Latin America and the Caribbean to produce Gap and Gap Inc. clothing lines, including Old Navy and Banana Republic. It bears note that the presence of the latter brand is a bitter irony in Honduras, the original "banana republic," so named for its forced dependence on banana companies that employed mercenary armies to carry out numerous coups in the early 1900s, allowing them free reign to expropriate lands, exploit workers, and shirk paying taxes on the profits off their "green gold."

Jack, who was not seen as a particularly bad boss by his employees (at least the ones I knew), allowed me to interview him on the condition

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that I not use a tape recorder. In an evening filled with fascinating stories, he told me of his days running factories for the Gap in Haiti during the Baby Doc Duvalier regime, recalling with a laugh his comfortable living situation: a mansion just down the street from the Duvalier residence. “Wait — ” I interjected, taken aback, “You knew Baby Doc?” “Did I know him?” he responded, “Hell, I played foosball with Baby Doc!”

> Haiti and Honduras, two of the most indebted countries in the hemisphere have been easy prey for the neoliberal policies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). But where did that debt come from?

I admit, I’ve been waiting to find an article into which I could insert this anecdote for a long time. And to be honest, at the time I found it funny. But in the context of both the Honduran coup and the very unnatural disaster in Haiti, the close relations between authoritarian military regimes and the *maquiladora* industry are no laughing matter. In both countries, the industry in the military-industrial complex is not producing weapons but rather sneakers and perky summer frocks for U.S. consumers. Free trade zones were introduced in both countries during 1970s military dictatorships, and became central to Reagan’s “rollback” strategy (“rolling back communism” in our “back yard”) under the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI), which (first implemented temporarily in 1984 and now made permanent) gives preferential tariff and trade status to countries not designated by the United States to be under communist influence or to have expropriated U.S. property.

Haiti and Honduras, two of the most indebted countries in the hemisphere (again, the superlative comparison), have been easy prey for the neoliberal policies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). But where did that debt come from? Haitians were forced by the French in 1825 to repay the cost of their value as slaves (and other French “property” lost when Haiti won its independence) to the tune of $21 billion in today’s dollars. So who, then, was the “devil” that — as Pat Robertson so sagely proclaimed on the 700 Club on January 13 — freed them from the French and left Haitians “cursed”? Perhaps we can understand it as militarily-imposed debt.

Although the debt to the French was paid off by 1879, the damage to Haiti’s economy and infrastructure was irreparable. Deeply indebted to U.S. financiers, Haiti was brutally occupied by U.S. forces from 1915 to 1934. Violently-imposed debt, combined with aggressive U.S. and Canadian trade practices (in particular, the rice export policy imposed by former President Clinton) and intermittent U.S. and U.S.-supported military attacks, have starved countless Haitians out of their houses, towns, and country over the past two centuries, systematically preventing them — despite the country’s wealth of natural resources and rich agricultural farmlands — from being self-sufficient. Meanwhile, by 1888 Honduras had accumulated a debt — to finance railroad projects benefiting U.S. investors — that was so high that at “prevailing land values, Honduras could not repay such a debt by selling its entire national territory.”[1] Those railroad projects were never completed, but Honduran tax revenues that might otherwise have gone into things like schools, hospitals, electricity, or roads, went into paying off British loans until 1953.

Although the specifics are different, the structure in both cases is the same: as a result of a violent colonial legacy of debt and ongoing military interventions (including, in the case of Honduras, the numerous banana coups of the early 20th century mentioned above), the sovereign countries of Honduras and Haiti have never been able to exercise any form of democratic control over their national resources. This has been compounded by the fact that both countries have armies that exist only to confront internal threats, and a history of death squads. Battalion 3-16 in Honduras, which tortured and disappeared hundreds of Hondurans in the 1980s, and the FRAPH, which during the early 1990s tortured and murdered thousands of Haitians, received funding and training from the CIA, and operated with the full knowledge of the U.S. embassy. Here we confront an historic continuity, not in "poverty," "underdevelopment," "backwardness," or any other misleading description that places the onus on Hondurans and Haitians for their plight, but in imperialism and military force used in the service of businesses serving a U.S. market.

Lest this description appear to be too much of a caricature of U.S. domination, let us be clear about two things: first, in both cases local elites have played pivotal roles in collaboration with the U.S. — and Canadian — governments and investors in violently suppressing their compatriots, and second, Hondurans and Haitians have passionately and valiantly fought military and economic imperialism every step of the way.

Let us explore — albeit far too briefly — the above two points. In the first lies a particularly delicate and difficult-to-approach similarity between Haiti and Honduras. In both countries, especially over the past few decades, the local elite have been increasingly made up of a group of citizens of Arab descent (and, in each case, one main Jewish family, Biggio in Haiti and Rosenthal in Honduras). There are significant distinctions: in Honduras, the Facussés, Canahuatis, Handals, Laraches, and Kafatis (among others) are primarily of Palestinian descent, whereas in Haiti, families like the Boulos, Apaid, and Mourra (one half of the "BAMBAM" — a Haitian term for the ruling elite, formed from family initials) are primarily of Syrian and Lebanese descent. It was Arabs from British Mandate Palestine who migrated to Honduras, while Arabs primarily from French Mandate Syria (which then included modern-day Lebanon) migrated to Haiti, at a time when the British and French were thickly involved in imperial projects in Honduras and Haiti, respectively — a fact that points to the ongoing legacy of classical European imperialism in both countries.

Aside from geographical origin, however, another difference between the Honduran and Haitian cases is the degree of integration of these ethnically-marked groups in politics. In Honduras, this integration is relatively recent but notable: President Carlos Flores Facussé (1998-2002), current foreign minister Mario Canahuati, and member of Congress Carlos Kattán are just a few of the dozens of Honduran politicians of Arab descent. In Haiti, Arab-identified elites have played powerful behind-the-scenes roles in politics — for example, André Apaid Sr. was a strong supporter of Duvalier, and his son, André Apaid Jr., is the leader of the group of 184, associated with the U.S. Agency for International Development and the U.S. federally-funded "National Endowment for Democracy" (NED), which collaborated with the U.S. military to oust Aristide in 2004. However, they have been unable to succeed in getting voted into power, to a large extent owing to a phenotypical difference between them and the rest of the population — understood in racial terms — that does not exist as such in Honduras.

Now, in and of itself, the ethnic makeup of the elite would not necessarily be remarkable. Prior to the ascent to economic power of a few Arab-descended families, each country was controlled in much the same violent way as it is today by a few ethically and/or racially-marked criollo (Honduras) and mulatto (Haiti) families.[2] And indeed, those families have not all been replaced by people identified as Arabs; the oligarchy does not operate as a solid impermeable block (or even exist as anything other than a reified category I adopt here for simplicity's sake, for that matter). The reason that the high concentration of families of Arab descent within the elite is important is because of the way it is interpreted and experienced in each country. Despite the significant presence of people of Arab descent in each place since World War I, there is an strong current of xenophobia that runs in both directions. In Honduras, Arab-Hondurans are regularly depicted, using racist tropes, as foreigners/internal colonizers with stronger ties to their perceived homelands and the United States than to their fellow Honduran citizens. While accusations of this sort are not entirely unfounded, they nonetheless lead to complex prejudices and a sense of exclusion that is often expressed in ethnic-nationalistic — rather than class — terms.[3]

In both countries, families of Arab descent are particularly heavily invested in the *maquiladora* industry, which has benefited more from IMF and World Bank liberalization policies tied to debt relief than any other industry. Free Trade Zones set up with the aim of attracting foreign investment capital to exploit the countries' cheap labor without paying taxes also attracted these local elites (adding to a sense among locals of non-Arab descent that the oligarchy is a foreign enemy among them). If these industries were taxed even minimally, that income could have been used to strengthen infrastructure and thus provide equitable access to resources, and popular access to allegedly democratic governments. Such access could have resulted in death tolls from both Hurricane Mitch and Haiti's earthquake closer to those from events of similar magnitude in countries with an infrastructure equipped to deal with them, just as the deaths of thousands of people during Hurricane Katrina can be blamed on poor infrastructure and lack of democratic process in the implementation of policies benefiting powerful business interests. But instead of holding *maquiladoras* democratically accountable, regressive taxation policies imposed from the outside in combination with other neoliberal policies mandated as a condition of debt relief, have resulted in an increased concentration of wealth, the privatization of public infrastructure, and the impoverishment and disenfranchisement of ever larger numbers of citizens in Honduras and Haiti.

AND HERE WE COME TO PART II of our caricature-challenge. How have Hondurans and Haitians responded to this disenfranchisement? Not by resorting to their criminal "nature," nor by accepting oppression as "tradition" or fighting it with *brujería* or voodoo, as the racist northern press imagines. The people of Haiti — a nation born in true popular struggle for liberation, in contrast to the largely *criollo* rebellions that brought independence from classic colonialism throughout Latin America — have continued to demand justice and democracy, loudly and firmly, throughout their history as a nation, even as they (like so many others throughout the world) are often consumed by the day-to-day struggle for survival. Likewise, Honduran history is full of examples of rebellion against structures of violence and disenfranchisement, from the 1954 banana strike that reconfigured labor relations in that country to the contemporary militant labor unions organized by teachers, *maquiladora* workers, and banana company, healthcare, and telecommunications workers (among others) who periodically shut down entire industries. Added to the traditional union and peasant movements in both countries are newer groups focused on the environment, women's rights, health access, and in Honduras, LGBT rights, Garifuna and indigenous rights, that have mobilized against anti-democratic and oligarchic structures of power. In both countries, liberation theology has played a key role in shaping and sustaining opposition movements. Aristide is, of course, himself a former Roman Catholic priest, and the Honduran resistance holds among its iconic figures Father Guadalupe Carney, a U.S. priest who was likely killed by Battalion 3-16 in 1983, and Father Andrés Tamayo, a longtime leader in the struggle for environmental justice in Honduras who was stripped of his Honduran citizenship while accompanying President Manuel Zelaya in the Honduran embassy last September.[4]

And how have local elites and the United States dealt with these movements? In both countries, recent military coups are directly tied to *maquiladora* owners' outrage at minimum wage increases ceded by populist presidents in response to massive popular movements. In Haiti, the above-mentioned Apaid family's opposition to Aristide was rooted in Aristide's 1991 minimum wage hike, which threatened the profits of the Apaid *maquiladora* empire, Alpha Industries. And although, after his first ouster that same year, Aristide was forced to embrace neoliberal policies favoring sweatshop labor accompanied by little or no infrastructural development, that apparently wasn't enough to prevent him from being violently kidnapped and removed from power a second time in a coup funded by the Canadian and U.S. governments through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the International Republican Institute (IRI), and executed by Haitian security forces and the U.S. military.[5] (Of course, his demand that France pay over $21 billion in reparations did not earn him points with Haiti's former colonial masters or their allies either.) Current President René Préval, meanwhile, took these lessons to heart: he refused to sign a bill the Haitian parliament had approved to raise the minimum wage to $5 a day, sparking numerous protests (apparently deeming them less of a threat than another U.S.-supported military coup).[6]

In Honduras, in December 2008, President Manuel Zelaya signed a minimum wage increase into law of $109 (in urban areas) and $33 (in rural areas) per month, bringing the monthly minimum wage to $290 and $213, respectively.[7] As in Haiti, the response from *maquiladora* owners — particularly those belonging to the national elite — was outrage. This fury was accompanied by a well-funded smear campaign in the newspapers owned by the same elite — Jorge Canahuati Larach, Carlos Flores Facussé, and Jaime Rosenthal are the most powerful media owners in Honduras, and all have significant direct or family investments in the *maquiladora* industry. The straw that broke the camel's back, of course, was Zelaya's agreeing to the demand of an increasingly powerful popular movement that he take steps toward holding a popular constituent assembly on constitutional reform. He was ousted on the day that a non-binding poll — asking citizens whether a referendum on convening such an assembly should be held as part of the November elections that signaled the end of his term in office — was to be held.

Since the June 28, 2009, military coup, the actions of the Obama administration — though at times in apparent contradiction with its rhetoric — have fully supported the de facto coup government of Roberto Micheletti and his successor, Pepe Lobo. The Obama administration circumvented the strong multilateral position of the Organization of American States (OAS) demanding Zelaya's unconditional and immediate return to power by imposing talks that recognized the de facto regime and never removed the U.S. ambassador, Hugo Llorens, from Tegucigalpa; it refused to officially characterize the military coup as such or impose appropriate sanctions; it never spoke out against the over 4,000 specific human rights violations carried out by the regime against members of the non-violent resistance between the coup and the November elections and documented by Amnesty International and the Inter-American Human Rights Commission; it funded and administered the November elections through the National Democratic Institute (NDI) despite the fact that dozens of anti-coup candidates (including a presidential candidate whose arm had been broken by security forces of the de facto administration) had withdrawn their candidacies in protest of the conditions under which they were being held, and the UN, the European Union, the OAS and the Carter Center had refused to send monitors; it betrayed the Guaymuras accords calling for Zelaya's reinstatement — and the list goes on and on. In running roughshod over Honduran aspirations for democracy, the administration has enjoyed the support of Washington lobbyists like Lanny Davis and Peter Schechter paid by coup financiers, think tanks like the Interamerican Dialogue, mainstream media outlets like the *Washington Post* and *CNN*, and even the Washington Office on Latin America.[8]

In both Haiti and Honduras, violent usurpations of recent governments have been interpreted by historians as "Post-Cold War" or "New Millennium" coups, and by political economists and politicians as a challenge to Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez's so-called "21st Century Socialism." These interpretations are wrong. The recent coups in Haiti and Honduras are neoliberal coups, carried out to prevent the democratic urges of citizens of corporate states from taking root, so that *maquiladoras*, agribusiness, mining, and other tax-exempt or undertaxed industries can continue to exploit workers, destroy the environment, and make enormous profits while receiving funds to do so from international lending institutions. But the opposition is also, in large part, a product of neoliberalism. The scope and force of the resistance to the coup in Honduras took everyone by surprise, but the resistance movement would not have emerged had not the increasing disenfranchisement and impoverishment of the vast majority of Hondurans through neoliberal practices in the preceding decades set the conditions for it.

The U.S. and Canadian press has failed miserably to recognize Hondurans and Haitians as agents in their own national destinies fighting (our) violent economic and military imperialism. As Honduran scholar Karen Bähr Caballero wrote on January 19:

> [M]ainstream media sources … continue to reduce the resistance movement to a group of "Zelaya supporters." … With one click of a keyboard, these media have created a caricature of the real demands of a movement whose members have not only articulated their condemnation of the coup and defense of Honduran democracy, but who demand the reformation of their country on a basic, not superficial level — one that is truly democratic, socially just and inclusive.
>
> In Haiti, we have seen how the media industry satisfies the morbidity of the consumers of suffering, representing them as pathetic victims, and as of the last few days, as criminals, looters of stores and violators of the sacred holy right of private property. But even worse is that we are consistently seeing Haitians portrayed as being responsible for what is happening to them …
>
> It is in this way, with their historic demands for democratization and autonomy, that Hondurans and Haitians invaded the symbolic territory ruled by the power of the local and global elites. It is of little importance whether they are confronting a North American businessman, a Honduran banker or a Haitian consul in Brazil — any person in power senses the threat to their ability to control the way people can live their lives, whatever the impact on the majority might actually be.[9]

In addition to the roles of neoliberal coups and the media, the disenfranchisement of Hondurans and Haitians has been carried out through "democracy" itself. Journalist Anzel Herz notes that "the coup was 'legitimized' through the election of Lobo even though the election was a sham, and the opposition repressed on the day it happened…and in Haiti, since the coup, Lavalas [the party of Aristide] has also been excluded through elections and repression."[10] In both cases, the NED and its subsidiaries the NDI (affiliated with the U.S. Democratic Party) and the IRI (affiliated with the Republican Party) were deeply involved in these shadow theaters of democracy.

So what hope does the future hold? That depends on the ability and willingness of citizens who have been the victims of foreign and local investors bolstered by imperialist debt-centered and military policies, to persistently identify and resist these forces. On a state level, much of Latin America has signaled its displeasure with the violence of neoliberalism by forming new alternatives to it. States are reassessing their commitment to debts with roots in colonialism, and forming regional political and economic blocs (e.g., Mercosur, ALBA) that challenge the most virulently anti-democratic features of neoliberalism. The explosion of new military bases in U.S. client states Colombia, Panama, and now Honduras reflect not a regional kowtowing to the North (and to be sure, the processes by which the agreements to bring new bases and troop increases to those countries were in each case profoundly undemocratic), but rather a reaction of Washington to a strengthening Latin American opposition to U.S. military occupation of their countries; both Bolivia and Ecuador have recently outlawed foreign military bases. And on February 22, while the U.S. militarization and blockade of aid to Haiti was still a source of international outrage, the Latin American and Caribbean countries voted to form a new regional bloc for all the countries in the hemisphere except the United States and Canada. This decision, directly related to the U.S. and Canadian interference in the attempts (with the broad multilateral support of all other Latin American and Caribbean countries) of Hondurans to retake their democracy, holds great promise. The violence of neoliberalism today manifests itself most clearly in the dead bodies of Honduran resistance members and Haitians killed not by a relatively minor earthquake (Chile's February 27th earthquake was 500 times stronger[11]) but by willful neglect. But through real opposition starting at the grassroots, U.S., Canadian, and local untaxed investors will no longer enjoy playing foosball with brutal military dictators or other such devils. Instead, the daughters, aunts, grandfathers, teachers, colleagues, and lovers of the Hondurans and Haitians who have needlessly died over the past year will live to achieve the democracy they have so long been denied.

NOTES

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Revolutionary Prefigurations

The Green Movement, Critical Solidarity, and the Struggle for Iran's Future

Danny Postel

A year has now passed since the explosive appearance of Iran's Green movement in June 2009. Suspecting malfeasance in the official tally of the country's June 12 presidential election, millions of Iranians took to the streets. The historian Ervand Abrahamian, author of the classic *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, described the silent rally of June 15 at Azadi (Freedom) Square in Tehran (*London Review of Books*, 7/23/09):

> The call was heeded by around a million people — the conservative mayor of the capital put the number at three million. The scene was reminiscent of the rallies held in the same square during the 1979 revolution. … The rally drew all kinds of protester: old and young, professionals and workers, bazaaris and students, women with sunglasses and headscarves as well those with the full-length chador. Lines of protesters nine kilometres long converged on the square from the northern, better-off districts as well as from the southern, working-class ones.

A succession of protests has followed, and has occasioned — one might even say inspired — an array of interpretations and formulations. In the heady, early days and weeks following the June election, Slavoj Zizek characterized what was unfolding as "a great emancipatory event" (*LRB*, 7/23/09). "[I]t is indeed an intifada that has broken out in Iran," wrote Robert Fisk in *The Independent* (7/23/09). Hamid Dabashi described the situation as "something quite extraordinary, perhaps even a social revolution" (CNN.com, 6/22/09), though Dabashi's better-known argument is that the Green movement is essentially a civil-rights movement (which, he adds, "does not mean that the Islamic republic may not, or should not, fall") (*Daily Beast*, 1/2/10). Ali Javaherian of the Marxist-Humanist newspaper *News & Letters* rhapsodized that the upheaval heralds "a new reality," something "so unique and new" that it could "transform not just Iran but the entire Middle East, indeed the whole world" (unpublished manuscript).

So is it reform or revolution? Are we witnessing the metamorphosis of what began as a program of reform into something else, something more radical and ambitious?

I tend to agree with Iranian political scientist Hossein Bashiriyeh that this is a "potentially revolutionary situation" that, depending on several variables, "may well turn into a thoroughly revolutionary situation."[1] Will it turn into one? Of course, we have no way of knowing. How events will turn out, even what direction they're moving in, is simply impossible to determine.

What I think we can say, however, is that something very profound has taken place, and is taking place, in Iran today — something of enormous significance for Iran and its future. Whatever concrete outcome emerges, or fails to emerge, from the events unfolding, something very important has already happened. There is a widespread sense that things have changed in Iran, quite possibly forever — that there's been a crack in the mirror, a tectonic shift

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in the country, since June. I don't just mean the widely remarked-upon evaporation of Khamenei's "halo" due to his naked partisanship for Ahmadinejad, a development that has without question intensified the regime's already protracted crisis of legitimacy. I'm talking about a deep-seated shift in the consciousness of millions of Iranians, in their ways of seeing and perceiving their political reality. Consider these reflections of a generally apolitical blogger, a young mother who writes under the name "Lady Plum," after attending a protest rally with her child and her mother:

> They had divided us by appearance. Devout, western, downtown [working-class], intellectual, pauper, and hooligan . . . [B]eing together has shattered this. This magic green bracelet has worked wonders on our culture, our feelings, and our hearts. We stand as our true selves. (Cited in *New Internationalist*, Jan. 2010.)

Again, it's hard to measure this kind of thing, but you can see it manifested in quite palpable ways, down to the level of bodily existence: amidst the upheaval, many Iranians have stopped eating and sleeping as usual. And yet they're intensely energized and animated, many of them in a way they've never known before. There's an awakening taking place (albeit a sleep-deprived one). This new sensibility is also on display in what Farideh Farhi has described as an "unprecedented willingness to confront the security forces" (Inter Press Service, 12/31/09).

Make no mistake: as dramatic a process as I believe this to be, I'm not suggesting that the entire population has been swept up in the Green wave, or that there's anything like a "general will" forming. This is, to be sure, a mass movement with millions of adherents, and it represents the sentiments of many millions more. But it does not represent the sentiments of all Iranians. Several other million Iranians are regime loyalists. A bitter pill to swallow though this may be, it is nonetheless a fact. The Green movement does enjoy broad popular support, but Iran is a house divided — irreducibly so — and the competing political visions are engaged in a war of position over Iran's future.

> "Fewer of the slogans were aimed at Ahmadinejad and more at Iran's theocracy-based political system," reported Borzou Daragahi.

The democratic forces realize they're in for the long haul. They will face setbacks, as they did on February 11 — although the regime's declared victory on that occasion was, as Scott Lucas has argued, largely Pyrrhic (*Enduring America*, 2/12/10). Such bumps in the road present opportunities for the movement to do some critical self-reflection and strategic thinking about its next steps, a process that could prove the movement's coming of age.

Neither is the Green movement unified itself. It does represent a broad alliance that has come together around a common set of animating ideas and impulses, but it's far from a monolithic movement. As the influential Iranian religious thinker Abdolkarim Soroush has said, "This is a pluralistic movement, including believers and non-believers, socialists and liberals. There are all walks of life in the Green Movement" (*Global Viewpoint*, 1/6/10).

One could add to this that there are many in the movement committed to nonviolence, while there are at least some who are prepared to do battle with the security forces. This issue has become a point of contention and debate within the movement, perhaps more than any other up to now.

It's also a movement very much in flux, responding to a dramatically evolving situation, and growing in the process. It's finding its voice and intellectual bearings. Particularly in the widely-discussed manifesto issued in January by five of Iran's leading religious intellectuals (Soroush, Kadivar, Mohajerani, Ganji, and Bazargan), we've seen the Green center of gravity shift from pure protest politics to a more layered, more affirmative mode, with the contours of a vision beginning to take shape (*Tehran Bureau*, 1/4/10). The manifesto was, in the words of Robin Wright (*LA Times*, 1/6/10), "the first concrete indication of what the opposition wants and what Iran might look like if [it] prevails." People are no longer asking "Where Is My Vote?" but rather, What kind of society do we want to live in?

"Maybe in the Next Stage"

"For now," Soroush has said, the Green movement has made a point of working "within the framework of the constitution" and has been "careful not to trespass those limits." "Maybe in the next stage," he continues, the movement will push harder against those limits and consider redrafting the constitution.

But some currents within the democratic movement have already begun to think outside the box of the existing system. Even before December's Ashura demonstrations and their brutal repression by the security forces — widely regarded as a turning point for the movement — there were signs of radicalization. Reports on the student protests of early December underscored this. "Fewer of the slogans were aimed at Ahmadinejad and more at Iran's theocracy-based political system," reported Borzou Daragahi in the *Los Angeles Times* (12/8/09), "a shift that could . . . further galvanize protesters and serve to destabilize the Islamic Republic." The protests, another report emphasized,

> showed a striking escalation in direct attacks on the country's theocratic foundation and not just on the June presidential election . . . [P]rotesters burned pictures of Ayatollah Khamenei . . . They held up Iranian flags from which the "Allah" emblem, added after the revolution, had been removed . . . [and] there were more chants aimed directly at Ayatollah Khamenei — a taboo that has increasingly eroded since the election (*NY Times*, 12/8/09).

In this same spirit, the appearance of the slogan "Iranian Republic" has made the post-theocratic or anti-theocratic point explicit.

These developments have produced critical tensions within the Green movement; debates are afoot over the most effective way to frame the movement's message. There is now much talk of a national reconciliation process, which has aroused fears that the movement's leaders might be preparing to cave in to the regime and sell out the movement. They may be unfounded or exaggerated — in some instances willfully distorted by the regime itself — but the concerns reflect something very real: a desperate desire for a new day, and an existential realization for many that this could be the only chance in their lifetimes to create far-reaching change. There is an ominous, now-or-never sense that if the Green movement's promise is dashed, there might not be another opportunity like this for a long, long time.

This uprising, to quote Dabashi once again (*Daily Beast*, 1/2/10), "has seen phases of civil disobedience and shades of civil unrest — but its skeletal vertebrae is a nonviolent drive toward democratic institutions that the current republic will either accommodate and survive, or else resist and be washed aside."

I'm not so sure I agree. I doubt very much that what Dabashi calls "the current republic" — or what we might call, invoking Rudolf Bahro, the Actually Existing Islamic Republic — is capable of accommodating the emancipatory and democratic demands of the Green movement. That surgical procedure would more than likely kill the patient. I believe that this regime is beyond that point. This is not the regime of 1997-2005, or even the subsequent one presided over by Ahmadinejad until this past June. In Ahmadinejad's "second term," the reverence for Khamenei is gone, the repressive state apparatus' gloves are off, the hardline elements are digging in deeper than ever, and the state is militarized to such a point that martial law is a real possibility. It's a stretch to fathom this regime accommodating even those demands contained in the Soroush-Kadivar manifesto, let alone the considerably more robust wish list of the grassroots movement, which only expands and gains popular traction with each day. "There is no possible scenario," Dabashi argues, "that will divert [the movement] from its main objective — of reaching the goal of liberty, the rule of law, democratic republicanism, civil liberties, civil rights, women's rights . . . freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom to form political parties, freedom to choose a democratic government."

In this process of the unfolding of the movement's demands and vision, the groundwork for a new set of arrangements is being laid. This is what Antonio Gramsci called prefigurative struggle. His point, as Carl Boggs argues in *The Two Revolutions* (1984, p. vii), was that

> a good part of what we call revolution actually precedes the conquest of political power, and it is this prefigurative dimension of politics that shapes the conflict of regimes, armies, organizations, and leaders . . . Beneath the level of insurrection and statecraft there must be a gradual conquest of social power, initiated by popular subversive forces emerging from within the very heart of [the] society.

The prefigurations of the current upheaval in Iran are of course hidden in plain sight. As several commentators have observed, many of the intellectual and political seeds now being harvested were planted during the reform period of 1997-2005. Today's upheaval, the anthropologist Michael Fischer maintains, has been

> in the making for over a decade both via the cat-and-mouse game between state censorship and the press, and also via the networking of a student generation marked by the violent repression of demonstrations in 1999, and a growing determined women's movement partly under the banner of the Million Signatures Campaign . . . launched in 2006 (*Cultural Anthropology*, forthcoming).

But of course the prefigurative arc extends back even further. Fischer speaks poetically of the "long fetch, the waves receding and returning, the long term respirations of the social revolution," pointing to 1906-11 (the Iranian Constitutional Revolution), 1951-53 (the Mossadeq years of liberal-democratic nationalism), and, of course, 1978-79.

Critical Solidarity

DABASHI SEES VARIOUS POSSIBLE SCENARIOS, from the dismantling of the office of the supreme leader (which he calls an "undemocratic obscenity") while keeping the rest of the constitution intact to discarding the very idea of an Islamic republic altogether.

Again, we have no way of knowing whether any of these scenarios will materialize. Martial law could be declared tomorrow, shutting the door on the process of building a democratic Iran — at least temporarily. But I see the mere articulation of such scenarios, the very act of thinking big, of imagining alternatives to the existing system, as a promising development. Indeed I think it's a precondition for moving forward.

A s many have pointed out, this is a process that Iranians will undertake and work out for themselves. It's not for outsiders to impose blueprints. We know all too well the legacy of foreign intervention in Iranian affairs. This is an Iranian struggle, and whatever resolution emerges from that struggle will be an Iranian one.

While foreign intervention must be opposed, however, international solidarity has a role to play — not in some spurious neoconservative form, which lacks any semblance of credibility and is shot through with bad faith. I'm talking about the work of groups like Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the Committee to Protect Journalists, and the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran. I'm talking about the solidarity work that international trade unions and labor organizations are doing with their beleaguered counterparts in the Iranian labor movement — the campaign of the International Transport Workers' Federation in support of Mansour Osanloo and the Tehran bus drivers, to take one example. (These are very much overlapping efforts: Amnesty has campaigned vigorously for the release of Osanloo, as a prisoner of conscience, and has deployed the felicitous slogan Workers Rights = Human Rights.) And I'm talking about the work of groups like the Campaign for Peace and Democracy and United for Iran.

Postponing the economic question, saving it for later, could be dangerous, because the economic "default setting" of the global system is some form of neoliberalism.

This kind of solidarity work is vitally important, and Iranian activists strongly welcome and seek it out: Iranian labor organizers, for instance, have been developing relationships and building bridges with labor activists in North America, Europe, and Latin America. As important as this is, though, it's predominantly a negative form of solidarity — that is, it revolves mainly around denouncing repression and human rights violations, and otherwise pushing back against the boot on the neck of Iranian activists. It's vital work, but I'd like to float a few suggestions, in the spirit of what the late Fred Halliday called critical solidarity.[2] Meaning: we stand with you in your struggle and are prepared to contribute to it, but we also offer some food for thought and seek a bit of give-and-take about the movement's future.

In brief, what I'd like to suggest to the Green movement as it stands at this moment of decision, this pivotal juncture, is that it not hold off on thinking big — specifically that it not postpone addressing the looming economic questions it will inevitably face should it take power but rather begin to tackle them — openly and undogmatically — now.

It makes perfect sense that economic questions have not yet featured prominently in Green thinking. For one, political questions simply figure more immediately and pressingly in the movement's experience — it was, after all, a political event (a disputed election), rather than an economic one that was its primary impetus. The struggle to date has been for democracy, not for a particular set of economic arrangements. (This goes a long way in explaining why liberal and pluralist ideas have generally had a bigger influence on the thinking of Iranian dissidents and activists than have Marxist ones, something I've discussed elsewhere.[3]) Once democracy is achieved, once that boot is removed from our neck — the thinking goes — we'll have the breathing room and the mechanisms to deal with economic issues. Fair enough. And it is also true that pushing economic questions to the fore could divide the already diverse spectrum of Iranians marching together under the Green banner. Besides, there's only so much energy — the movement has its hands full, to put it mildly, just trying to survive in the face of constant state repression. One has to prioritize. Understood.

And yet, notwithstanding my sympathy for those who must weight such considerations, I want to suggest to Iran's Greens that they take a close look at the cases of Eastern Europe and South Africa. The democratic movements that by and large formed the post-Communist governments of the former Warsaw Pact countries faced a similar situation — different from Iran in many regards, to be sure, but similar in the crucial respect that their focus was political in nature and their platform consisted mainly of democratic principles and negative liberties. It was presumed that these were the most press-ing matters and that economic issues would get worked out in due course. But what happened? To make a long story short, shock capitalism happened, and it brought the kinds of dislocations, dispossessions, and disfigurations that are its global trademarks. Because the democratic-movements-turned-governments hadn't given much thought to questions of economic structure or policy, they were unprepared to respond to the convulsions induced by neoliberalization.

This should serve as a cautionary tale for Iran's democratic movement. Postponing the economic question, saving it for later, could be dangerous, because the economic "default setting" of the global system is some form of neoliberalism. This may or may not be what the Greens decide they want, but if it isn't, they'd better get on the case, because it's what they'll end up with unless they actively steer clear of it and pursue an alternative path.

That means confronting, head-on, several major questions that all governments must face: Should Iran join the WTO? What policy on foreign direct investment would make the most sense? Can Iran learn from models other than the dominant neoliberal one, or is it fated to merely take its place in the neoliberal global system? What might it learn from the social-democratic model of Norway, another oil-rich state? What might it learn from Lula's Brazil? Or from the Bolivarian revolution in Venezuela?

This last one gets really thorny, because although I think there is a good deal to be learned from the Venezuelan experience, many in the Iranian democratic movement are so disgusted with the response of Hugo Chávez to Iran's June election and its aftermath — and to his enthusiasm for Ahmadinejad, more generally — that, unfortunately but understandably, they aren't open to learning from him. Recall the Venezuelan Foreign Ministry's June 16, 2009, denunciation of the Iranian street demonstrations:

> The Bolivarian Government of Venezuela expresses its firm opposition to the vicious and unfounded campaign to discredit the institutions of the Islamic Republic of Iran, unleashed from outside, designed to roil the political climate of our brother country. From Venezuela, we denounce these acts of interference in the internal affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, while demanding an immediate halt to the maneuvers to threaten and destabilize the Islamic Revolution.

The damage this has done to Chávez's standing among Iran's democratic forces can't be overstated, and may be permanent. But as much as he has earned criticism on this point, and as badly flawed as his judgment has been with respect to Iran's internal politics, there are many aspects of Venezuela's attempt to construct an alternative to the neoliberal model that deserve careful study, and Iran's democratic movement would do well to take a close look at some of its achievements.

I would also, in a spirit of friendship and critical solidarity, suggest that the Green movement engage David Schweickart's important work on economic democracy, or what he calls market socialism. Likewise with Amartya Sen and Joseph Stiglitz — see what they're saying about the current global economic order and elicit their advice on how Iran might chart a progressive economic course. How about the Mondragón cooperatives, and the participatory institutions that Brazilians have built — not only the celebrated participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre and other Brazilian cities, but the Health Councils, the City Master Plans, and other experiments in bottom-up design and grassroots structures?

With its "horizontalism" and networking structures, Iran's Green movement has itself offered a model of organization and social movement that others are beginning to study, and I believe will continue to study for many years to come, whatever the outcome of its quest. It has, from its inception, been an innovative and imaginative force, in an open-ended and constant state of flux, building the road as it travels and re-inventing itself at every turn. It is for this reason ideally suited to open-mindedly engage with other models and movements around the world. It has always, from day one, been a bold and daring movement, so thinking big is in its very DNA. This might not be the optimal moment for Iran's Greens to undertake a detailed analysis of the economic experiments of Brazil, Venezuela, and Mondragón, or to address the ideas of Schweickart, Sen, and Stiglitz (or any number of others), engaged as they are, right now, in a life-and-death battle. I would nonetheless like to encourage Iran's Greens not to wait until it's too late.

Leftist Confusion

BUT IN ORDER TO ENGAGE in *critical* solidarity with Iran's democratic struggle, we must first be in *solidarity* with that struggle. If we want to nudge Iranian progressives to the left in the ways I'm suggesting, we must have their ears. We can't engage them in critical dialogue about their vision and future without demonstrating our support for their overall cause. Sending messages in a bottle won't get the job done; we need to be in active dialogue with our sisters and brothers in Iran's Green movement, and especially the labor movement. (To follow developments in Iran's labor movement, go to www.iranlaborreport.com. To get involved in the Iran Labor Support Committees, e-mail me at dannypostel@gmail.com.)

Hugo Chávez is by no means alone on the Left regarding Iran. A steady stream of poison has issued forth from certain radical quarters, perhaps most notoriously from *MRZine*, which has become a digital bulletin board for the Islamic Republic.[4] Sadly, *In These Times* published a particularly vile piece in its April 7 issue that contained some of the worst distortions and clichés about Iran. Among multiple disfigurations, Matthew Cassel trots out the tired canard that the Green movement is a creature of the privileged elite while Ahmadinejad is a hero of the downtrodden masses. But the Iranian journalist Nasrin Alavi provides a healthy corrective to this lazy ritual incantation:

> A simple glance at the background of Iran's prominent student leaders tells you that, by and large, they are not the children of affluent citizens of north Tehran, but instead come from provincial working-class families or are the children of rural schoolteachers and clerks. The Western media cliché of an opposition limited to the urban upper class belies the current realities. These future leaders of Iran commonly hail from the very heartland of Ahmadinejad's purported support base (*New Internationalist*, Jan. 2010).

The democratic struggle in Iran isn't going away. The street demonstrations may have dwindled, but *a luta continua*. Which side are you on?

NOTES

1. Danny Postel, "Counter-Revolution and Revolt in Iran: An Interview with Iranian Political Scientist Hossein Bashiriyeh," *Constellations: An International Journal of Critical and Democratic Theory*, Volume 17 Issue 1 (March 2010).

2. Danny Postel, "Who is Responsible? An Interview with Fred Halliday," *Salmagundi*, No. 150-151 / Spring-Summer 2006. www.opendemocracy.net/danny-postel/who-is-responsible-interview-with-fred-halliday

3. Danny Postel, *Reading "Legitimation Crisis" in Tehran* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2006).

4. *MRZine* has, among other things, reprinted speeches by Khamenei, published the Venezuelan government's denunciation of the protests in Iran, and sympathetically portrayed Iran's Basij paramilitary force as the victim of Green movement mayhem. Pieces hostile to the Iranian democratic movement have been written by James Petras, and Edward Herman and David Peterson among others. For several outstanding rejoinders, see Reese Erlich, "Iran and Leftist Confusion," CommonDreams.org, June 29, 2009, www.commondreams.org/view/2009/06/28-10; Hamid Dabashi, "Left is wrong on Iran," *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 16 - 22 July 2009, http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2009/956/op5.htm; Saeed Rahnema, "The Tragedy of the Left's Discourse on Iran," ZNet, July 10, 2009, www.zmag.org/znet/viewArticle/21948; Stephen R. Shalom, Thomas Harrison, Joanne Landy and Jesse Lemisch, "Question & Answer on the Iran Crisis," Campaign for Peace and Democracy, July 7, 2009, www.cpdweb.org/news/20090707.shtml.

Iran: Reform and Revolution

Yassamine Mather

Recent news about Iran has been dominated by U.S. attempts to increase sanctions, and one could be forgiven for thinking the world hegemonic capitalist power is preparing war against a major nuclear power. The reality is far different: all the fuss is about a country where nine months of mass protests have not only weakened the state but also divided the ruling circles, making reconciliation at the top impossible. We are talking of a country where neoliberal policies and sanctions have created a serious economic crisis, with inflation projections of 50 percent this spring and youth unemployment estimated at 70 percent. So why are the U.S. and world media obsessed with the "threat posed by Iran"? — a threat that must be curtailed with "severe" sanctions or war? And what is the future for the protest movement in the midst of all this?

Current threats against Iran have little to do with nuclear issues. Iran is still two to five years away from achieving nuclear weapons capability. The drive for new sanctions cannot be understood unless one looks at the history of U.S. relations with Iran's Islamic regime. The 1979 revolution deprived Washington of one of its most important allies in the Middle East, and the world superpower cannot be seen to be losing control in such a strategic area. Iran's territorial waters include the Straits of Hormuz through which 40 percent of the world's seaborne oil shipments flow. Also, at a time of world economic crisis the United States and its allies need a place to assert their authority. Yet since the launch of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq they have inadvertently increased Iran's regional influence and strength.

The continuation of the conflict has another major cause. Iran's Islamic regime has relied on crises and foreign enemies to survive. Otherwise how could it explain its failure to achieve any of the basic demands of 1979 after 31 years in power? The "external" enemy is also essential for justifying continued repression.

Iranian workers and political activists (with the possible exception of supporters of the former Shah) are unanimous: new "crippling" sanctions, bombing Iranian nuclear sites, or a military attack would be a disaster. Sanctions will let the regime off the hook, as the regime will blame severe economic conditions entirely on the embargo.

In April of this year Washington unveiled its new nuclear policy, which limits its use of nuclear weapons but excludes from its pledge "outliers" such as Iran and North Korea. Protests and demonstrations inside Iran should be seen within this context. The protests continue due to the tenacity and courage of thousands of Iranians, though more sporadically in the face of severe repression. But everyone, from government to "reformists" to revolutionary opposition, now agrees that the protests are no longer about who should be "president," but about the very existence of the religious state.

Reports from some recent protests suggest that for the first time in the last 30 years many women demonstrators didn't wear head-scarves or hijabs. On December 27, 2009, security forces at a number of locations had to retreat, as demonstrators burned police vehicles and *basij* posts and erected barricades. Videos show instances where police and *basij* were captured and de-

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tained by demonstrators and three police stations in Tehran were briefly occupied. Demonstrators also set fire to Tehran's Bank Saderat.

Moussavi will no doubt go down in history as the first Iranian to put his life on the line for the cause of "reform" and compromise!

Since early 2010 *basij* and Revolutionary Guards have been unleashed to further impose an atmosphere of terror. Hundreds have been incarcerated, arrested worker activists have been fired, and leftists have been rounded up and in some cases issued death sentences.

Conservative Divisions

DESPITE THE BRAVADO of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, the demonstrations of 2009-10 have divided the conservatives. While supporters of Ahmadinejad openly call for more arrests and even execution of political opponents, the parliamentary "principalists" preach caution.

In January 2010, a parliamentary committee publicly blamed Tehran's former prosecutor, Saeed Mortazavi, a close ally of Ahmadinejad's, for the death of three prisoners arrested in June. The committee found that Mortazavi had confined 147 opposition supporters and 30 criminals to a cell measuring only 70 square meters. The inmates were frequently beaten and spent days without food or water.

Ali Motahhari, a prominent fundamentalist parliamentarian, told the magazine *Iran Dokht*: "Under the current circumstances, moderates should be in charge of the country's affairs." He suggested holding Ahmadinejad accountable for the prison deaths and for fuelling the post-election turmoil. Iranian state television broadcasts debates between "radical" and "moderate" conservatives, in which some blame Ahmadinejad for the crisis. There are two reasons for this dramatic change in line:

1.The winter demonstrations were a turning point, in that both conservatives and "reformists" came to realize how the anger and frustration of ordinary Iranians was taking revolutionary forms.
2. The principalists are responding to a number of "proposals" by leading "reformists" — as a last attempt to save the Islamic Republic. Fearful of revolution, "reformists" from June 2009 presidential candidate Mir-Hossein Moussavi to former president Mohammad Khatami — have made conciliatory statements, and the moderate conservatives have responded positively.

In a clear sign that "reformists" have heard the cry of revolution, Moussavi's initial response to the winter 2009 demonstrations was to distance himself from them, emphasizing that neither he nor Mehdi Karroubi had called for them. His January 1 statement "Five stages to resolution" was a signal to both his supporters and opponents that this was truly the last chance to save the regime.

Western reportage of the statement concentrated on his comment "I am ready to sacrifice my life for reform." Iranians are well known for their love of "martyrdom," from Ashura to the Fedayeen Islam in 1946, to the Marxist Fedayeen (1970s-80s). Iranians have been mesmerized by the Shia concept of martyrdom, a yearning to put their lives at risk for what they see as a "revolutionary cause." But Moussavi will no doubt go down in history as the first Iranian to put his life on the line for the cause of "reform" and compromise!

Moussavi's plan was seen as a compromise because it did not challenge the legitimacy of the current president and "presents a way out of the current impasse," demanding more freedom for the "reformist" politicians, activists and press, as well as accountability of government forces, while reaffirming allegiance to the constitution of the Islamic regime, as well as the existing "judicial and executive powers."

Moussavi's statement was followed on January 4 by a "10-point proposal" from the self-appointed "ideologues" in exile of Iran's Islamic "reformist" movement: Akbar Ganji, Abdolkarim Soroush, Mohsen Kadivar, Abdolali Bazargan and Ataollah Mohajerani.[1] Fearful that Moussavi's plan will be seen as too much of a compromise, the five call for the resignation of Ahmadinejad and fresh elections under the supervision of a new independent commission to replace that of the Guardian Council. Later Khatami and another former president, Ali Akbar Rafsanjani, publicly declared their support for the compromise, while condemning "radicals and rioters." Khatami went further, insulting demonstrators who called for the overthrow of the Islamic regime.

All in all, winter was a busy time for Iran's "reformists," terrified by the radicalism of the demonstrators and desperate to save the clerical regime. Inevitably the reformist left, led by the Fedayeen Majority, is submissively following the Moussavi-Khatami line. However, inside Iran there are signs that the leadership of the Green movement is facing a serious crisis. None of the proposals address the most basic democratic demand of growing numbers of Iranian protestors: separation of state and religion.

On the Iranian left, arguments about the "principal contradiction" and "stages of revolution" seem to dominate current debates. While some Maoists argue for a "democratic stage" of the revolution, citing the relative weakness of the organized working class, the Coordinating Committee for the Setting Up of Workers' Organizations (*Comite Hahamhangi*) points out that the dominant contradiction in Iran, a country where 70 percent of the population lives in urban areas, is between labor and capital. They say that the level and depth of workers' struggles show radicalism and levels of organization and that the Iranian working class is the only force capable of delivering radical democracy.

Leftwing organizations and their supporters are also discussing the lessons of the recent demonstrations. Sections of the police and soldiers are refusing to shoot demonstrators and the issue of organizing radical conscripts in order to divide and reduce the power of the state's repressive forces must be addressed. In some working class districts around major cities the organization of neighborhood *shoras* (councils) has started.

Official celebrations of the 1979 uprising that brought down the shah's regime stood in total contrast to the events of 31 years ago. The state's lengthy preparations for the anniversary of the revolution included the arrest of hundreds of political activists, hanging two prisoners (for "waging war on god"), and blocking internet and satellite communications. The government brought busloads of *basij* paramilitaries and people from the provinces to boost the number of its supporters — it considers the majority of the inhabitants of Tehran to be opponents.

The 48-hour internet and satellite blackout was so comprehensive that the regime succeeded in stopping its own international media communications. The *basij* blocked all routes to Azadi Square by 9 a.m. and dispersed large crowds of oppositionists who had gathered at Ghadessiyeh Square and other intersections, preventing them from reaching the official celebration. From the speakers' podium, surrounded by basij and Revolutionary Guards, many dressed in military uniform, Ahmadinejad produced yet another fantastic claim. In the two days since his instruction to step up centrifuge-based uranium enrichment from 3 percent to 20 percent, this had already been achieved! Nuclear scientists are unanimous that such a feat is impossible. The crude display of military power, typical of the state-organized shows that dictators have always staged, together with the severe repression in the run-up to the anniversary, had nothing to do with the revolution it was supposed to commemorate.

In fact, the events of February 11, 2010 were the exact opposite of February 10-11, 1979, when the masses took to the streets and attacked the regime's repressive forces, when prison doors were broken down by the crowds and political prisoners released, when army garrisons were ransacked and the crowds took weapons to their homes and workplaces, when the offices of the shah's secret police were occupied by the Fedayeen, and when air force cadets turned their weapons against their superiors, paving the way for a popular uprising.

The show put on by our tin-pot dictators was an insult to the memory of that uprising. Yet despite all the efforts and mobilization preceding the official demonstration, despite the fact that confused and at times conciliatory messages of "reformist" leaders had disarmed sections of the Green movement, the regime could muster only 50,000 supporters. Meanwhile tens of thousands in Tehran and other cities took part in opposition protests — even in the streets close to Azadi Square, despite the presence of large numbers of *basij*. The protests were so loud that, according to Tehran residents, the state broadcast of Ahmadinejad's speech had to be halted and instead TV stations showed the flags and crowds to the accompaniment of stirring music. Fearing that the *basij* might not be able to control the protesters gathering in neighboring squares, the government decided to start its extravagant ceremony early and then cut it short.

Attempts at compromise by Green movement leaders in open and secret negotiations with the office of the "supreme leader" failed.[2] By early February, it was clear that no deal was in the cards. As always, the main problem with our "reformists" is that by remaining loyal to the "supreme leader,"[3] by condemning the popular slogan, "Down with the Islamic regime," they fail to understand the mood of those who have taken to the streets. The movement is adamant in its call for an end to the current religious state — the repeated shouts of "Death to the dictator" are directed at the so-called "supreme leader" himself.

The February protests marked a setback for Moussavi and Karroubi — not just in their politics, but also in their tactics. First, it is foolhardy to organize demonstrations to coincide with the official calendar of events, as it allows the regime to plan repression well in advance. Second, it was absurd to call on people to join the regime's demonstrations and, third, opposition to a dictatorship cannot simply rely on demonstrations. The state has unleashed its most brutal forces against street protesters, and we need to consider strikes and other acts of civil disobedience.

A lot has been written by Persian bloggers about the "lack of charisma" of Moussavi and Karroubi. However, the truth is their main problem is not personality, but dithering. This has cost them dearly at a time when opposition to the regime in its entirety is growing. The Islamic version of capitalism has brought about much harsher conditions for the working class and the poor. The state's own statistics show a constant growth in the gap between rich and poor. The impoverishment of the middle classes, the abject poverty of the working class, the destitution and hunger of the shantytown-dwellers — these are reasons why the urban protests continue.

On February 15 Hillary Clinton cited the economic and political power of the Revolutionary Guards as a sign that "Iran is moving towards a military dictatorship." Yet there is nothing new in the power of the Revolutionary Guards. Since 1979 they have been the single most important pillar of the state, involved in every aspect of political and military power. What is new is their involvement in capitalist ventures, empowered by the relentless privatization plans driven by the IMF and World Bank.

In recent years Revolutionary Guards have accumulated vast fortunes through the acquisition of privatized capital — precisely the pattern seen in the former Soviet Union and elsewhere. Those in power, often with direct connections to military and security forces, are able to purchase the newly privatized industries. That is the case with many U.S. allies, yet we have not heard the State Department criticize "creeping military dictatorships" in those countries.

No doubt, as repression increases, Iranians' hatred of the *basij* and Revolutionary Guards will increase. However, they don't need the crocodile tears of the U.S. administration — indeed interventions like those of Clinton and condemnations of the repression coming from the U.S. and European governments tend to damage the movement. Iranians are well aware of the kind of "democratic havens" created by the United States in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the last thing they want is regime change U.S.-style.

Working Class Response

As repression increases and mass demonstrations are replaced with localized protests, many point out the significance of workers' strikes in the overthrow of the Shah's regime and attention is turning towards the unprecedented levels of worker protests. In the words of one labor activist, "a Tsunami of workers' strikes."[4] Even before the new sanctions, the economic situation has worsened. Hundreds of car workers — the elite of Iran's working class — are being sacked every week.

The involvement of the working class in the political arena has increased qualitatively. Four workers' organizations — the Syndicate of Vahed Bus Workers, the Haft Tapeh sugar cane grouping, the Electricity and Metal Workers Council in Kermanshah, and the Independent Free Union — published a joint statement declaring support for the protests and specifying what they call the minimum demands of the working class. These include an end to executions, release of imprisoned activists, freedom of the press and media, the right to set up workers' organizations, job security, abolition of all misogynist legislation, declaration of May 1 as a public holiday, and expulsion from workplaces of government-run organizations. Meanwhile, Tehran's bus workers have issued a call for civil disobedience to protest against the holding of Mansour Osanloo in prison.

Workers involved in setting up nationwide councils have issued a radical political statement regarding what they see as the priority demands that Iranian workers ought to raise. Emphasizing the need to address the long-term political interests of the working class, they also call for unity based around immediate economic and political demands.

There are reports of strikes and demonstrations in one of Iran's largest industrial complexes, Isfahan's steel plant, where privatization and contract employment have led to action by the workers. Leftwing oil workers/employees are reporting disillusionment with Moussavi and the "reformist" camp amongst fellow workers and believe there is an opportunity to radicalize protests in this industry, which is critical to the regime's survival.

In March 2010, many prominent labor activists, including Osanloo, who are currently in prison, were sacked from their jobs for "failing to turn up at work," prompting protests in bus depots and the Haft Tapeh sugar cane plant. In December 2009 Lastic Alborz factory workers struck for unpaid wages. There have been protests at dozens of other workplaces.

Future of the Protests

Even if the two main factions of the regime had achieved a compromise, it was unlikely that such a move could have defused the movement. However Moussavi, Karroubi and Khatami have failed to gain anything from their attempts at "reconciliation"; they are well aware that any additional talk of compromise will further reduce their influence amongst protesters. That explains recent statements by Moussavi, who in early April told a group of reformists in

Parliament that the Iranian establishment continued to lose legitimacy: "One of the problems is that the government thinks that it has ended the dissent by ending the street protests."[5]

Moussavi said that people have lost confidence in the state because of widespread corruption, incompetence and mismanagement since the presidential election. He said the movement needed to expand its influence among social groups like teachers and workers. "Our interests are intertwined with their interests, and we need to defend their rights," he said. Khatami echoed this message: "If the authorities do not come up with effective policies the coming year will be the year of social crises."[6]

Iran is bracing itself for another turbulent year, and most observers believe the working class and youth will play a greater role in the coming protests.

NOTES

1. Manifesto, 1/6/2010, www.digitalnpq.org/articles/global/423/01-06-2010/archive/2001_spring/index.html.

2. See Mather, "Reformists fear revolution," *Weekly Worker*, 1/14/2010, www.cpgb.org.uk/worker2/index.php?action=viewarticle&article_id=1002026.

3. See, for example, "Karroubi accepts Ahmadinejad as Iran's president," *The Daily Star* (Lebanon), 1/26/2010.

4. Conn Hallinan, "The Iranian Tsunami," *FPIF*, 3/12/2010, www.fpif.org/articles/the_iranian_tsunami.

5. "Mousavi: Regime problems 'far deeper' than just street protests," 4/8/2010, http://en.irangreenvoice.com/article/2010/apr/08/1638.

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Green Is the New Green

Social Media and the Post-Election Crisis in Iran, 2009

NEGAR MOTTAHEDEH

THE PERSIAN LANGUAGE BLOGOSPHERE is rich, varied, and dynamic. Of the 100 million blogs registered around the world in 2005, 700,000 were Persian language, either inside Iran or in the diaspora. Of these, over 60,000 are updated frequently. With over 20 million Iranians connecting to the internet, and over 600,000 Iranians signed up on Facebook by the presidential election of the summer of 2009, the Iranian cyber community is by far the most dynamic such community in the Middle East, and one that is unambiguously diverse. Of the 60,000 Persian language blogs, 75 percent may be characterized as non-political in content, interested rather in questions of religion, poetry, and sexuality.

Shortly after Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's election as president of Iran in June 2005, there was a definite move towards the centralization of power over traditional media. During the first two years of Ahmadinejad's presidency, more than 100 newspapers and other periodicals were banned. 70 percent of press outlets were run by active supporters of Ahmadinejad. On the eve of the June 12, 2009, presidential election, foreign reporters were either imprisoned or expelled from Iran. And then, in the aftermath of the election, what remained of the opposition's news outlets was banned or put under strict surveillance. This in part led to the rise of online "underground" papers, such as *Kalam Sabz* (Green Word) and *Khiaban* (The Street), and more urgent uses of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and the Iranian social media site, Balatarin.com.

According to Nasrin Alavi, Gholamhossein Karbaschi (the vice presidential candidate on the ticket of reformist Mehdi Karroubi in the presidential election of 2009) was the first Iranian on Twitter to call the presidential election of June 12, 2009, a fraud. He was by no means the last. Elham Gheytanchi describes the days following the election:

> Immediately after the results of the election were announced showing Ahmadinejad's "landslide victory," protesters poured into streets. For three consecutive days, masses of Iranians marched peacefully onto the streets in silence asking one question written on their placards: "Where is my Vote?"
>
> As the results of the election were announced, a twitter message from Bandar Abbas, a port city in the south of Iran, read *Raye ma ra dozdidand, bahash darand poz mida* ("They have stolen our votes and they are flaunting our stolen votes!")
>
> In an unprecedented move, the political establishment decided to cut all SMS [text] messages, the Internet connections and mobile phones in the week after the election results were announced. The next day, demonstrators in at least 20 different locations in Tehran gathered, waving placards that read *Doroghgoo khaen ast va khaen tarsoost va tarsoo sms ghate mikonad* ("The Liar is a Traitor and the Traitor is fearful and the fearful cuts the SMS.")

As news and images of the protests on the ground circulated in social media all over the internet — on Flickr, on Twitter, on YouTube, and on Facebook — they were channeled back

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to Iran via satellite, broadcast largely by way of the then-popular BBC Persian.

A sense of euphoria and unprecedented freedom had dominated national politics during the presidential campaigns. Election activities were color-coded. And campaign paraphernalia, campaign headquarters, and campaigners themselves were clearly differentiated using pre-designed graphic coding based on the colors of the candidate's campaign. Indeed, people spoke of Tehran in campaign colors. Iranian state-owned television broadcast a series of lively debates among the candidates. This was a first under the Shi'a theocracy. During one of the debates, the reformist candidate Mir-Hossein Moussavi put on a green shawl to highlight his status as a descendent of the prophet Muhammad. A month later, in the days following the election, an all-embracing, spontaneous movement donning green armbands, finger-bands, and headbands took to the streets to call Ahmadinejad's victory a fraud — the color green thus became the symbol of the movement. The opposition was lovingly called the "Sea of Green," the "Green Wave," or the "Green Movement."

> In captioning their photographs, the men claimed their solidarity with Iranian women who have no choice but to veil under the Islamic regime; they voiced their opposition to the human rights violations of the Islamic Republic and called for the release of the imprisoned Majid Tavakoli.

The silence of the street protesters was broken as the violence of the regime became palpable. Neda Agha Soltan was brutally shot and murdered on Kargar Avenue, at the corner of Khosravi and Salehi streets in Tehran on June 20, 2009. The YouTube video documenting her death in the midst of a small crowd circulated on Facebook and Twitter immediately. Her name, Neda ("voice" or "calling" in Persian), became the rallying cry for the Iranian opposition. Images from the street protests showed men and women, urban and rural, young and old, marching shoulder to shoulder, mourning the disunity that had gripped the nation.

Outside Iran, around the globe, images of the spectacular crowds in green and the murder of Neda Agha Soltan captured the hearts and galvanized the will of people of all backgrounds and ages. High school students in the United States would talk about "Going Iranian" against authority figures. Journalists like Roger Cohen who had been forced to leave Tehran immediately after the election, felt bereft and wrote about "the responsibility of bearing witness." Indeed, as Golbarg Bashi noted in the heat of the summer, "Iranian is the new black." Hundreds of songs dedicated to Neda, in English and in Persian, started circulating on YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. Her name became a search topic or so-called "hashtag" on Twitter (#Neda). It was the highest ranking hashtag on June 20, 2009, indicating thousands of posts on the day of her death.

A corollary hashtag, #iranelection, continues to rank on Twitter. It was the highest ranking hashtag for weeks following the elections, dropping only momentarily after the death of Michael Jackson. It ranked high as a search topic on the 30th anniversary of the hostage crisis, November 4, 2009, and on the 31st anniversary of the Islamic Republic on February 11, 2010.

It may come as no surprise, then, that thousands of people on Twitter around the world put a green overlay on their avatars — the two-dimensional icons used to represent themselves — in solidarity with the Sea of Green in Iran.

A black-and-white version of an image of Neda — the wrong one, as it turned out — made from thousands of avatars of Twitter subscribers.

Many changed their location to Tehran and set their time zone to +03:30 GMT to protect the identities of people who were actually tweeting from the ground. This image of a Neda with a green overlay — a Neda Soltan who was initially mistaken as the murdered Neda Agha-Soltan — is made up of the many thousands of green avatars of active Twitter subscribers in the aftermath of Iran's summer elections (Neda Soltan is currently seeking asylum in Germany in the wake of the publicity that the misuse of her image attracted.)

In the absence of foreign news agencies and independent media in Iran, these thousands of supporters of the Sea of Green on social media became nodal points of information for what was happening on the ground. On the 31st anniversary of the Islamic Republic, all internet access and SMS was cut in Iran. Citizen journalists, young and old, reported on the crowds, on the slogans, and on the violence of the police in Tehran during the protest by calling in to Epersian radio, which then broadcast the news all over the world online. Their reports were translated, transcribed, and broadcast immediately by Twitter and Facebook subscribers, reaching millions of people all over the world, long before news broke on broadcast television. Many supporters continue to help spread the news about various online and in-person campaigns. In the early days of the protests, many also came to the aid of Iranian protesters by identifying safe havens for the wounded on Google maps as word spread that the wounded were being picked up and imprisoned by military forces upon their arrival at hospitals around Tehran.

"Social media: It's like the phone turned into a radio," writes Clay Shirky. In fact, it is precisely this broadcast model of social media, combined with the intimacy of texting, that allows personal experience to resonate deeply both locally and globally. This, combined with the fact that we are privy to the everyday life of others on social media who live remote from us in every other way, creates a unique connection of trust and solidarity between activists on the ground and activists on social media, a winning formula for the Sea of Green.

On December 7, 2009, about 6 months after the presidential election, Majid Tavakoli, a student at Tehran's Amir Kabir University of Technology, was arrested after he gave a talk during the student protests. A photograph of him in a *hijab* (full Islamic veil) was published by official news agencies announcing that he had attempted to flee security forces donned in women's clothing. Supporters of the Green Wave around the world saw things differently. Cognizant that this photograph was an attempt to ridicule Majid Tavakoli, by associating his courage with "the weaker sex," thousands of Iranian men all over the world donned the hijab and posted their photos on the web, using these photographs as their avatars on social media,

Some of the thousands of Iranian men who put on the hijab for their social media avatars to show support for Majid Tavakoli.

such as Twitter and Facebook.

In captioning their photographs, the men claimed their solidarity with Iranian women who have no choice but to veil under the Islamic regime; they voiced their opposition to the human rights violations of the Islamic Republic and called for the release of the imprisoned Majid Tavakoli. This global campaign came to be known as the "The Men's Scarves Movement" or the "I am Majid" campaign, receiving the hashtag #IamMajid on Twitter.

The international campaign eventually went live. A YouTube recording signaled its impact elsewhere: A group of Iranian men calling themselves "Majid" posed together, donning the hijab in front of the Eiffel tower.

This act of resistance to the violation of human rights in Iran had stunning reverberations: French men and women donned the veil in solidarity with the Iranian men's scarves movement, and in this simple gesture, that went viral on the internet, showed their opposition to *l'affaire du voile* in France (the controversy in France over the wearing of veils in public).

This is not to say that the effort to bring about civil rights and the firm stand against the violation of human rights in Iran has subsided in any way on the part of the Green Movement, but to suggest that the circulation of the images and sounds of the post-Election period, their going viral on the internet, has had important consequences for oppositional movements and global collaborations elsewhere.

Race and the Obama Era

Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor

It has been more than a year since Barack Obama was inaugurated as the first African-American president of the United States. Despite the obvious historic significance of his election, Obama's actions to date make it very doubtful that his presidency will alleviate the persisting conditions of racism, discrimination, and general inequality that continue to shape the experience of most African-Americans in the United States.

When Obama was first elected, the main question pursued in the media was whether or not the United States was entering a "post-racial" era; today the questions have centered on the meaning of "Black politics" when a Black president is overseeing the most regressive attack on Black living standards in a generation. Should special programs be established for Blacks to curtail the impact of the economic recession on Black living standards? Should African-American organizations protest the Black president when racists in the Republican Party and Teabaggers are also protesting the president? Do we need a new Black political agenda? These are just some of the questions that shape race in the Obama era.

The debate over political strategy stems from the blunt reality that Black America is drowning in the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. Despite all the querying over whether or not the U.S. economy is technically in or out of recession, Black unemployment, home foreclosures, evictions, and bankruptcies continue to grow. Just last March when the mainstream media crowed with excitement about the addition of 162,000 jobs to the economy, it was simultaneously reported that Black unemployment had grown from 15.8 percent to 16.5 percent.

The overview of unemployment doesn't begin to convey the extent of the jobs crisis in Black America. Officially, the nation's highest unemployment rate is in Detroit, which is 83 percent Black — joblessness is a staggering 28 percent. Unemployment on the mostly Black south and west Sides of Chicago comes in second at 22 percent. The top 10 areas in the country where unemployment is concentrated include Black neighborhoods in Toledo, Atlanta, and St. Louis.

For example, the rapid loss of jobs means that greater numbers of African- Americans are losing their health care, which will only worsen disparities around health care between Blacks and whites that already exist. In 2007, when Black unemployment was approximately 10 percent, 20 percent of Blacks were without heath insurance. With Black unemployment growing steadily today, the numbers of the Black uninsured are sure to rise, too.

Unemployment also impacts rising levels of poverty in Black communities. A recent report found that 90 percent of Black children are part of families that will use food stamps by the time they are 20 years old. All told, 40 percent of Black children live in poverty, according to the government's official statistics. According to the census, a full quarter of African-Americans were living in poverty in 2007 —

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two years before the unemployment crisis in Black America.

Rising unemployment is also exacerbating the foreclosure crisis in Black neighborhoods across the country. While foreclosures are not tracked by race, the number of Black homeowners who face the threat of losing their homes is believed to be twice that of whites. A study conducted by the Woodstock Institute in Chicago found an 18 percent jump in foreclosures across the city in 2008, but most were concentrated in African-American neighborhoods like Englewood and West Englewood. In these two neighborhoods alone, there were 725 foreclosures in a nine-month period. According to the Center for Responsible Lending, 53 percent of African-Americans who bought homes in 2006 have already lost or will lose their homes to foreclosure in the next few years, compared to 22 percent of white borrowers facing foreclosure.

Despite the obvious and disproportionate impact the economic crisis is having in African-American communities, Black political figures from Barack Obama to the Reverend Al Sharpton have been remiss to either talk about racism as a factor or to call for particular race-based programs to help the growing ranks of the Black unemployed and the Black poor. In an interview with *USA Today*, Obama responded to a question about Black joblessness, saying, "I will tell you that I think the most important thing I can do for the African-American community is the same thing I can do for the American community, period — and that is get the economy going again and get people hiring again...I think it's a mistake to start thinking in terms of particular ethnic segments of the United States, rather than to think that we are all in this together, and we are all going to get out of this together."

Black political figures from Barack Obama to the Reverend Al Sharpton have been remiss to either talk about racism as a factor or to call for particular race-based programs to help the growing ranks of the Black unemployed and the Black poor.

Obama has been skilled at enlisting prominent Black liberals in his colorblind jobs creation efforts and has faced little to no political pressure from African-American civil rights organizations or political groups for his lack of a clear program on ending the financial crisis in Black America today. Last February, prominent Black liberals Al Sharpton, NAACP leader Ben Jealous, and Urban League President Marc Morial met with Obama to discuss unemployment in the African-American community, only to emerge from the meeting to vow support for Obama's plan not to develop specific programs to help African-Americans. Ben Jealous, in an interview afterwards, commended Obama by saying, "What's clear is that we have a president that gets it." Al Sharpton praised Obama in a *New York Times* story for not having a "black agenda." In fact, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that Sharpton has been to the White House five times since Obama became president and that he has been handpicked as Obama's "go-to-guy" to respond to grumbling amongst some of the Black political and academic elite about the worsening state of Black America while a paucity of policies are suggested by the Administration.

Sharpton's new role was on vivid display for all when last March he heatedly jousted with African-American talk show host Tavis Smiley over whether or not Obama should take up Black issues in particular. In a pointed exchange with Smiley during a popular Black radio program, Sharpton commented that it was "stupid" for Obama to become an "exponent for black views" because it would create fodder for conservatives who would then try to defeat Obama's agenda. Sharpton went on to argue that Smiley and other progressive critics of Obama were in fact guilty of applying a "double standard" to President Obama since they would never demand a "black agenda" from a white president. A few days after this exchange Smiley convened a meeting called "We Count: The Black Agenda is the American Agenda" on the Southside of Chicago, Obama's hometown, in front of a thousand of mostly Black residents. Smiley culled together a panel of Black intellectuals, political and religious figures including Louis Farrakhan, Cornel West, Michael Eric Dyson, Julianne Malveaux, and a handful of others, to discuss both conditions in Black America and the posture that should be taken by progressives towards Obama. Meanwhile the audience was restricted to "thirty seconds or one minute" to pose a question to the distinguished panel. While many panelists had critiques of the pace of change and the worsening situation for most Blacks, it was all couched in professions of "love and respect" for the president.

The ongoing row between Black liberals over how to respond both to the unraveling crisis in Black America and its facilitation by an African-American president is the most recent demonstration of the crisis and paralysis that racks Black politics today. The Black liberal strategy of placing no demands on the President yet hoping that will produce substantive changes in the condition of most African-Americans is naïve at best and self-serving at the very least. It is difficult to build a movement or any kind of resistance on this basis. In some ways both the Black political establishment and their religious and academic Black counterparts are reacting to two political realities; on the one hand, despite Obama's inattention to the devastation in African-American communities, he remains hugely popular, with approval ratings among Blacks above ninety percent and secondly, but related, he and other African-American politicians have been subjected to withering racist attacks by Republicans, the Tea Party, and Fox News. The racist hysteria that was kicked up as the vote on the health care bill came closer should have ended all doubt about the actual character of the so-called Tea Party movement and their Republican lapdogs. A combination of both these factors have made Black leaders, at the very least, skittish about raising criticism of the President.

However, the inactivity of Black liberals and their organizations run deeper than the fact of a Black president. After all it's not as if these individuals and organizations were busy building a movement before Barack Obama was elected as president. For the thirty-five years or so since the social movements for Black liberation and against racism gave way to the alleged pragmatism of entering the realm of formal and electoral politics — the much vaunted move by civil rights leader Bayard Rustin from "protest to politics" — the barometer for measuring political success is based on access and proximity to political power. Thus, today Black liberals view the election of an African-American Democratic Party President as the culmination of a generation's struggle. And once this goal has been achieved there is very little space to be critical or challenge the President in that context, which is what we are witnessing today. As the Democratic Party has moved to the right over the last thirty-five years, so have African-American elected officials and the liberal organizations in their orbit as a means to maintaining their access and proximity to the power centers of the party. Thus, when Bill Clinton was president and used racism to push through welfare reform and expand prisons and the criminal justice system, he did so with little to no resistance from Black elected officials or the Urban League or the NAACP. If getting Democrats into the White House is the goal, then once that goal is achieved the pressure is to acquiesce, not mobilize the masses. But these strategic differences are not just based on political differences but also reflect the growing class cleavage in Black America. From the largest number of Black elected officials in history to the largest number of Black millionaires ever, not all African- Americans share the same interests. There are a growing number of African-Americans who have no problem with the system as it stands; they are just looking for greater access to its benefits. This is why the Black elite focuses on issues of personal responsibility among Blacks or their perceived lack of it to explain the disproportionate levels of poverty and social discord in Black communities. It if is not the system then it must be the people.This puts them at political odds with the interests of the majority of African- Americans who are the daily victims of American capitalism. Finally, whatever side of the debate the Black liberals are on, whether it is Tavis Smiley who is openly critical of Obama or Al Sharpton who is working in tandem with Newt Gingrich to push Obama's reactionary "school reform," they all agree that politics is viewed from the top down and is ultimately shaped by what happens in the Beltway. It is essentially Black millionaires and almost millionaires debating the future of ordinary and poor working class African-Americans.

It is simply bizarre that Al Sharpton and other prominent liberals would argue that African-Americans should not "pressure" Obama into creating a Black-only agenda. According to a study conducted by the Pew Research Center, the 2008 election was unprecedented for two reasons — it was the lowest ever white voter turnout in Presidential election history, with only 66 percent of whites voting on the one hand, while it was the largest Black voter turnout ever, with more than 65 percent of Black voters casting a vote in the election, on the other. Sixty-eight percent of African-American women produced the highest turnout ever for a presidential election. Young African-American voters also were decisive in Obama historic victory. Amongst young Blacks aged 18-29 there was almost a nine percent increase in voter turnout from 49 percent in 2004 to more than 58 percent in the 2008 election. According to Pew, it was the highest turnout among young voters from any ethnic group in U.S. election history. In total, a whopping 95 percent of all Black voters cast their votes for Barack Obama. For any other block of voters to mobilize for a candidate in this matter, it would be unquestionable that group of voters would be expected to place demands on the candidate who won office as a result of their unprecedented mobilization.

Yet, African-Americans are told that it is a "double standard" and unfair to place race based demands on Barack Obama. What Al Sharpton and others like him really mean to say is "We have never been invited to a summit at the White House. Today we have a seat at the table and access to the President — don't rock the boat because we don't know when or if this will happen again." Their contention that if Obama were to advocate for Blacks that it would destroy his Presidency reflects the utter cynicism that clouds politics in the United States. The idea that Obama would never survive advocating for programs to help Blacks who are facing historic levels of unemployment is rooted in the idea that ordinary whites are so racist that they would never tolerate such an agenda. Despite this popular notion in the press and amongst liberals, a CBS poll shows that most Americans have supported affirmative action programs for more than a decade, with almost 60 percent supporting race based affirmative action in 2000. In 2009, 51 percent supported race based affirmative action programs while 80 percent supported programs, that provided special help for people from "disadvantaged backgrounds." Of course, polls like these are always tenuous and in a climate of economic crisis, unemployment, and scapegoating, support for these kinds of programs could decline. The stark reality remains the same nonetheless: in the context of any halting or limited economic recovery, if particular plans are not developed to deal with the particular problems faced by Black workers, we will continue to see jobs created, while Black unemployment continues to rise or plateaus in the double digits.

President Lyndon Johnson, who had a nasty penchant for using the word "nigger," said in 1965,

> Freedom is the right to share, share fully and equally, in American society — to vote, to hold a job, to enter a public place, to go to school. It is the right to be treated in every part of our national life as a person equal in dignity and promise to all others. But freedom is not enough. You do not wipe away the scars of centuries by saying: Now you are free to go where you want, and do as you desire, and choose the leaders you please. You do not take a person who, for years, has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line of a race and then say, "You are free to compete with all the others," and still justly believe that you have been completely fair. Thus, it is not enough just to open the gates of opportunity. All our citizens must have the ability to walk through those gates.

That reality has not changed. LBJ did not come to this conclusion on his own; a grassroots movement in the South and North that clearly put forward a "black agenda" for jobs and freedom pushed him. The resources exist, of course, for the U.S. government to both create a jobs program and economic stimulus as well as reinvigorate a welfare safety net for all workers who are either out of work or underemployed, but a year and a half into the Obama presidency this clearly is not the plan.

The problem with Obama is not whom he is surrounded by or that he has not had sufficient time to push through his "other" agenda; rather politics in this country is shaped by millionaire donors, corporate influence and money, and political compromise between representatives of unprincipled parties who are willing to do anything to get their piece of legislation passed. This is an atmosphere that demands cooperation, compromise, and moderation — none of which create much space for the kind of radical change that is needed to get ordinary Americans — especially African-Americans — out of the worst crisis in eighty years.

Today, we are told that Obama must be given more time. But the question remains, if Obama has not been compelled to come up with particular programs to address the disproportionate impact of the economic crisis in African-American communities when he has had a super majority in Congress and was elected with a "super mandate" evidenced by unprecedented approval ratings around seventy percent, then what will he do when he potentially loses that super majority in the mid-term elections and already faces an approval rating that dips below fifty percent? The notion of giving Obama time makes the assumption that he is simply waiting for the right moment to unleash his inner radical and begin advocating for programs that put poor and working people first — as opposed to his program of bailing out banks, sitting idly while people lose their homes and expanding a war in Afghanistan that will not only cost hundreds of billions of dollars more but will kill tens of thousands of innocent Afghans.

Finally, it is true that Black support for Obama remains at historic highs and above ninety percent. It is also true that in the absence of a vibrant and visible movement for racial justice for more than a generation many African-Americans accept most of the conservative and reactionary explanations for the disproportionate levels of Black poverty and deprivation. This will remain the case until a movement changes the terms of the debate by focusing on the way in which the intractable inequity of capitalism distorts the lives of most Black people in this country. New grassroots movements against racism and injustice need to be organized around concrete questions like the creation of jobs for African-Americans, an end to foreclosures in Black communities which are destroying Black net worth, an end to the disproportionate number of evictions affecting Black women and Black families, and so on. The housing organization City Life/Urbana Vida has been very successful in organizing African-Americans against foreclosures and evictions in Boston with more than one hundred community people meeting weekly. These are the types of struggles that can be the beginning of the kind of a new movement that can put pressure on Obama or whoever is in the White House and Congress to deliver programs that can actually mitigate the destructive racism, discrimination, and inequality that shapes the lives of African-Americans in the United States.

China's Opium Wars:
Britain as the World's First Narco-State

ROSSEN VASSILEV

THE TERM OPIUM WARS refers to two infamous imperialist wars that Britain fought against Qing-dynasty China in the middle of the nineteenth century over Chinese restrictions on foreign commerce, such as China's high customs duties and particularly its ban on the importation and sale of foreign-grown opium. In 1750, Britain, the world's economically most developed country at the time, had a per capita GDP of about $1,200 (in today's dollars). The Industrial Revolution had started in Britain around that time (notably with the invention of the steam engine in 1769). Industrialization—the use of energy to drive machinery and the accumulation of such machinery along with the products manufactured by it—was thus tied to Britain's emerging leadership role in the world economy. By around 1850, the wooden sailing ships of earlier centuries had been replaced by larger and faster coal-powered iron steamships. Coal-fueled steam engines set off the great age of railroad building and also drove British factories producing textiles and other industrial commodities. Britain dominated global trade in this period and became the financial capital of the world, managing an increasingly complex global market in goods and services. The British currency, the pound sterling (silver), served as the world's reserve currency. Because Britain's capitalist economy was the most technologically advanced in the world and its industrial products were competitive worldwide, British policy strongly favored free markets and free trade. But international monetary relations were still based on the value of precious metals such as gold and silver, which the predominantly rural, agrarian, and agricultural China of the nineteenth century had in abundance (especially silver, which was mostly imported from Latin America and was the only commodity that the Chinese would accept from foreigners as payment for their exports).

Before the first Opium War (1839-1842), also known as the Anglo-Chinese War, the Qing imperial government allowed foreign trade — including the ostensibly illicit opium imports—only at the seaport of Guangzhou (Canton) and restricted contact between visiting Westerners and the native Chinese. Imperial officials feared that the introduction of Western materialism and commercialism, as well as the presence of crusading Christian missionaries from the West, would upset the traditional Chinese way of life and undermine the old Confucian, Buddhist, and Taoist ideals, values and customs.[1] The Qing dynasty, which had ruled since 1644, lived under the self-delusion that semi-feudal China could remain forever in splendid isolation from the rest of the world, including from an industrialized West which was clearly outstripping it. The Manchus had always seen their rule as mandated from heaven and universal in nature, rising above the mere governing of the "Celestial" Empire and based on time-honored and universal Confucian tenets. In principle, no other worldly power could be recognized by the ruling "Sons of Heaven" as anything else but their inferiors and vassals. By the early nineteenth century, however, the Qing's hold on the "mandate of heaven" was becoming shaky and tenuous. The Manchu

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court was riven by intrigue, corruption was rampant, and the imperial treasury was under constant strain. The backwardness of industry and infrastructure only inflamed the nationalist resentment at a unpopular dynasty whose Mongol founders had invaded from the north and which made its Chinese subjects wear pigtails in a humiliating sign of submission.

Although outlawed in China a hundred years earlier, British and other Western merchants continued to smuggle the drug, resulting in the world's first major drug epidemic.

At that time the British Empire was the world's largest producer and exporter of opium — the main product of global trade after the gradual decline of the slave trade from Africa to the Caribbean and to North America — while China was by far its main market. Although outlawed in China a hundred years earlier, British and other Western merchants continued to smuggle the drug, most of which came from British colonial plantations in India, resulting in the world's first major drug epidemic. Even though it brought only misery and ruin to the Middle Kingdom, opium was a financial windfall for British and other Western traders, and also helped reduce London's huge trade deficit with an economically autarkic China. Seeking to break Chinese resistance to its drug-lord demands for "free trade," "free markets," and other special privileges during this very early stage of globalization, London challenged the legality of the Chinese prohibition on opium imports. In response to British bullying, the Chinese tried to end all trade in opium — the world's first ever officially declared war on drugs — and, in retaliation, Victorian Britain, the global superpower of the day, twice declared war on China, destroying its navy and army. While largely forgotten or simply ignored in the West,[2] this act of savage banditry has been neither forgotten nor forgiven by the Chinese,[3] surviving as a grim reminder of a time when Western colonization of Asia and Africa was quickly gaining momentum.

The First Opium War

For more than a century, Britain's East India Company had been shipping large quantities of Indian-grown opium to Guangzhou, which it traded for tea, silk, rice, spices, porcelain, and other local products, but which ultimately precipitated a grave moral, social, monetary, and political crisis in China. By the early 1800s, nearly two centuries after the first shipment of opium had arrived from abroad, a third of the Chinese adult population had become addicted. Concerned at the escalating number of Chinese opium addicts from all walks of life, the imperial authorities tried to outlaw the opium trade as early as 1729 and even decreed the death penalty for illicit drug trafficking in 1799. Despite this legal prohibition, the opium trade continued to thrive, as British and other Western merchants made huge profits from selling the banned extract to China's millions of "opium eaters." For example, a chest (approximately 135 lbs) of opium cost only £2 to produce in British-ruled India but it sold for £10 (over $700 in today's prices) in China. By the late 1830s private Western traders were smuggling into China an estimated five million pounds of the drug annually, which so disrupted China's balance of foreign trade and international balance of payments that its backward economy was on the verge of collapse.[4] The imperial treasury was in danger of running out of silver reserves. Warren Delano (maternal grandfather to future U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt), a Guangzhou-based senior partner in Russell & Company of Boston who made a fortune in trading the outlawed drug for Chinese tea and silk, wrote home that he could not justify on moral grounds the lucrative opium trade and the accompanying bribery of Chinese officials, "but as a merchant I insist it has been . . . fair, honorable and legitimate," and "no more objectionable" than importing alcohol into the United States.[5] Even the Western missionaries in China turned a blind eye to the local drug epidemic, many of them having arrived from abroad onboard schooners ferrying large shipments of contraband opium.

Opium smuggling had also led to widespread vice, violence, and official corruption, which was undermining the moral authority and prestige of the Qing emperors. It was wreaking such havoc and demoralization in Chinese society that in 1836 the alarmed imperial government made opium possession illegal and began closing down the numerous opium dens across the country. Some Qing administrators advocated legalizing the opium trade because they feared that the declining Celestial Empire was in no position to resist Britain or embargo British contraband. But the Daoguang Emperor (1782-1850), the sixth Manchu Qing monarch who ruled the Middle Kingdom from 1821 to 1850, sided with more nationalistic-minded Chinese officials like the brilliant and famously incorruptible Imperial Commissioner Lin Zexu (1785-1850), who opposed any appeasement of British imperialism and colonialism and personally set in motion the world's first anti-narcotics campaign.[6]

Starting on March 24, 1839, Chinese customs officials led by Commissioner Lin tried to stop the growing import trade in opium by seizing and dumping into the sea a large shipment of the illicit drug which British merchants had warehoused in Guangzhou for the purpose of selling on the local market. Lin even sent an open letter to Queen Victoria, demanding that the British cease drug smuggling into China, especially since the sale and consumption of opium was banned in Britain itself. He also demanded that all foreigners, including Britain's opium merchants, accused of committing crimes in China be tried in Chinese courts of law. Lin warned that China might suspend all trade with Britain and expel all the Queen's subjects from Chinese soil, but London ignored his letter and Lord Palmerston, the British Foreign Secretary, threatened to use military force if the confiscated opium was not returned to its "lawful" British owners.

In the midst of a furious anti-Chinese and pro-war propaganda campaign in Britain, the conflict between the two sides deepened a few days later when a group of drunken British sailors ashore attacked and killed a local Chinese villager. The British government refused to turn the accused sailors over to the Chinese legal system and again demanded that all British citizens be granted the right not to be tried in Chinese courts. China rejected this demand because accepting it would have meant, among other things, violating the legal principle of the Qing emperor's superiority over all other foreign rulers. Britain, however, had refused to accept this principle, so there were no treaty relations between the two countries.

When the Chinese authorities declined to compensate the British traders for their lost opium and even tried to turn back British merchant vessels in November 1839, a British expeditionary force led by new paddle-wheel steamers shelled Guangzhou and occupied the coastal areas around it, including the island of Hong Kong. The poorly-equipped Chinese military proved to be no match for the technologically superior and better trained British troops and the firepower unleashed by their fast-moving steam gunboats armed with more accurate and longer-range cannon. The war continued until the Qing imperial government was forced to accept the humiliating terms of the Treaty of Nanjing (Nanking), the first of what the Chinese called the "unequal treaties" that permitted Britain and other Western powers to gain unfair and unreciprocated trading and other advantages in China and severely limited the latter's national sovereignty.[7] Having fallen out of imperial favor due to his anti-British defiance and intransigence, the legendary Commissioner Lin was demoted and sent into internal exile.

The Nanjing Treaty, signed on August 29, 1842, along with the Supplementary Treaty of the Bogue, signed on October 8, 1843, provided for a large indemnity to be paid by the defeated Chinese, ceded Hong Kong to Britain in perpetuity, opened five Chinese coastal cities, including Guangzhou, to unrestricted British rights to residence and trade, and imposed a very low tariff on all British imports under the "most-favored-nation" principle. The Treaty of Nanjing also granted British consular officials extraterritorial jurisdiction to try all criminal cases involving the Queen's subjects in China. Moreover, it gave private British merchants extremely generous import-license privileges and legal exemptions (called "capitulations"), under which the opium trade continued unabated and even expanded. In 1844, France and the United States forced China to sign similarly unequal and unjust treaties, giving them the same unrestricted trading rights and special advantages as Britain. The first Opium War only added fuel to the smoldering embers of anti-Manchu rebellion by bringing about in its wake a devastating famine in southern China, marked by mass starvation among tens of millions of poor Chinese peasants, as well as widespread banditry and piracy at sea. From 1850 on, the traditionalist Qing dynasty was increasingly challenged by armed uprisings on a large scale, reform movements, and a growing sense that China could no longer remain in isolation from a much stronger and interfering West.

The Second Opium War

BECAUSE THEY SAW their newly acquired treaty privileges as inadequate, the British continued their aggressive encroachment, seeking to extend the treaty settlements in China. London also claimed that the Chinese were not fulfilling their obligations under the terms of the Nanjing Treaty by continuing to restrict foreign trade, especially the importation of opium. The Chinese imperial authorities had indeed continued to decree that opium should not be smoked by their own people, even as the British had continued to sell it inside China. In fact, the smuggling of opium had increased dramatically after the end of the first Opium War.

Britain soon found an excuse to renew hostilities, when Guangzhou customs officials boarded the *Arrow*, a Chinese-owned but British-registered ship, and detained twelve of its native Chinese crew members on charges of piracy and opium smuggling. The French joined the British in the resulting second Opium War (1856-1860), also called the Arrow War or the Anglo-French War in China, using as a pretext the execution of a French missionary, mistaken for a Chinese, in China's hinterland.

In December 1857, Britain and France launched a joint punitive expedition inland after British naval raids along China's southeast coast had been "illegally" (according to London) resisted by the Chinese military. The Anglo-French expeditionary force under the command of a British admiral, Sir Michael Seymour, quickly defeated the Chinese and forced them to sign the 1858 Treaty of Tianjin, which provided for Western powers to establish permanent diplomatic offices in the Chinese capital of Peking (a "forbidden" or closed city at the time), the right of residence and extraterritorial immunity for Western diplomats, the opening of eleven more Chinese coastal cities (called "treaty ports") to foreign residence and trading, free travel for foreigners with passports in China's interior, as well as the right of Christian missionaries to travel, reside, own property, and spread their faith without any obstruction throughout China. The treaty imposed new and heavy indemnities, allowed unrestricted foreign shipping on the Yangzi River, annexed China's Kowloon Peninsula, adding it to the British colony of Hong Kong, and lowered even further Chinese customs duties on imported British products. By also placing China's Maritime Customs (through which all Chinese imports and exports passed) under total British control, the Treaty of Tianjin ensured that British business interests would dominate China's markets and foreign trade.

When a further negotiating conference held at Shanghai in October, 1858 officially legalized all opium imports into China, the outraged Qing imperial court refused to accept the predatory terms of this second "unequal treaty" and hostilities soon resumed. Another joint Anglo-French expedition captured Peking (Beijing), where they looted and then burned to the ground the majestic Imperial Summer Palace compound,[8] forcing the Celestial Empire's complete surrender. In 1860 the Chinese signed the Peking Convention (which came to be known as the infamous "diktat of Peking"), in which they agreed to ratify and observe the ignominious provisions of the Tianjin Treaty. The same year, similarly imposed and unfair treaties were signed with France, the United States, and Imperial Russia, as a result of which the Russians received all Chinese territory north of the Amur River and east of the Ussuri River. This second set of humiliating foreign treaties further weakened the teetering Manchu dynasty and impressed on the senior Qing commissioners the urgent need for semi-feudal China's belated modernization and the adoption of the latest Western ideas, technologies, and methods of warfare.

Conclusion

A BLATANT ACT OF NAKED "SHOCK AND AWE" aggression, the Opium Wars became a cataclysmic event that not only shook the foundations of Manchu dynastic rule and saddled the conquered nation with large indemnity payments, but also marked the beginning of China's century-long subjugation and slavish servitude to imperialistic Western powers, later joined by Japan, all of which came to share a common interest in maintaining by force their "most-favored-nation" privileges and advantages in that semi-colonial country.[9] Branded by William Gladstone, a later British prime minister, as "the most immoral war in British history," the Opium Wars became the most important event of China's modern history — a cornerstone of Chinese nationalism and xenophobia, which led directly to the triumph of Mao Zedong's Communist Revolution in 1949.

> The first Opium War only added fuel to the smoldering embers of anti-Manchu rebellion by bringing about in its wake a devastating famine in southern China.

As a result of the most humiliating military defeat they have suffered in their modern history, the Chinese were forced to legalize the importation of foreign-grown opium, accept unbalanced and one-sided terms of foreign trade, open China's major seaports and the Yangzi River to foreign commercial penetration under the so-called "treaty port" system, and even exempt all Westerners from China's local laws and national jurisdiction. Already by 1864 more than 87 percent of China's imports consisted of British manufactures and raw goods. Opium importation alone grew from 58,000 chests in 1859 to 105,000 chests in 1879, accounting for nearly 15 percent of the British Exchequer's annual tax revenue at that time. In 1888, *The Times of London* reported that 70 percent of China's adult males were opium addicts.[10] For the British, who had become global hegemon as a result of the Industrial Revolution, the Opium Wars were just another step in the scramble to acquire — supposedly in a fit of "absent-mindedness" — the greatest colonial empire the world has ever seen, encompassing a quarter of the Earth's land surface upon which the sun never set.

So severely curtailed was China's independence in that period that the Chinese still view the two Opium Wars as a symbol of national disgrace and humiliation. Today, the never-forgotten trauma of the Opium Wars continues to be, in Chinese eyes, a blunt and embarrassing reminder of their past defeat and colonial enslavement, as well as of the West's self-righteous hypocrisy and hubris.[11] Occasionally, the Communist government in Beijing has even used the memory of the Opium Wars in trying to deflect justified Western criticism of China's poor human-rights record and its iron-fist rule of Tibet.

NOTES

1. See John Fairbank and Merle Goldman, *China: A New History*, 2nd enlarged edition (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2006).

2. In fact, many of my undergraduate students believe that the British Empire fought the Opium Wars in order to end opium smoking, the opium trade, and other similar "barbarian" practices in China.

3. In July 1997 China's veteran film director Xie Lin released to the public his super production *The Opium War*, a celebrated event which was clearly timed to coincide with Britain's return of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty. Xie Lin was quoted describing his epic film as "a special gift for the motherland and the Chinese people...to ensure that we and our descendants forever remember the humiliation the nation once suffered" (*Xinhua* News Agency, July 1, 1997).

4. See Jack Beeching, *The Chinese Opium Wars* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977).

5. Quoted in Karl Meyer, "The Opium War's Secret History." *The New York Times* (June 28, 1997).

6. See Peter Fay, *The Opium War, 1840-1842: Barbarians in the Celestial Empire in the Early Part of the Nineteenth Century and the War by Which They Forced Her Gates Ajar* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975).

7. See Arthur Waley, *The Opium War Through Chinese Eyes* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005).

8. China's world-famous Imperial Summer Palace encompassed some two hundred palaces, pagodas, pavilions, and other architectural marvels, as well as numerous magnificent gardens stretching over eighty square miles of beautifully landscaped parkland. Surpassing even Versailles in majesty, beauty, splendor and riches, this unique treasure-palace housed not only the imperial family's immense wealth and sumptuous wardrobes but also priceless works of art such as original paintings, sculptures, porcelains, jades, and a trove of the world's finest silk, as well as invaluable and irreplaceable library collections of countless Chinese manuscripts and books.

9. See Sheng Hu. *From the Opium War to the May Fourth Movement*. Trans. Dun J. Li. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press,1991.

10. See William Hanes and Frank Sanello *Opium Wars: The Addiction of One Empire and the Corruption of Another* (Naperville, Ill: Sourcebooks, 2000), pp. 293-295. It was only after the Communist takeover in 1949 and Chairman Mao Zedong's strictly enforced ban on the importation, cultivation, sale, and consumption of all narcotic drugs save for medicinal use that the opium trade and the opium epidemic were finally eradicated in China. The Communist authorities even resorted to mass public executions, sometimes of entire families, in their campaign to make the country opium-free.

11. China's late Premier Zhou En-lai reportedly complained to visiting Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1965, "Do you remember when the West imposed opium on us? They fought us with opium."

Female Genital Cutting, Colonialism, and Women's Liberation

Amy Littlefield

Perhaps no issue represents the intersectionality of colonialism, human rights, and feminism more powerfully than Western views of female genital cutting.[1] While the practice of cutting and its consequences are as varied and complicated as the lives of the hundreds of millions of women across the world who have experienced it, the framing of female genital cutting by Western feminists has been oversimplified, objectifying and ultimately unproductive at combating the practice in any of its manifestations.

Genital Cutting and Transnational Sisterhood: Disputing U.S. Polemics, a 2002 essay collection (University of Illinois Press), critiques the Western fixation on the details of female genital cutting, a practice that takes place in countries across the world. The procedure ranges from a nicking or removal of the clitoris (clitoridectomy) to the removal of most of the outer genitalia and the sewing together of the tissue that remains (infibulation). Graphic images of the procedures as they are performed in some African countries have appeared in magazines and films in the last few decades, but the larger context of African women's lives is generally left out of the frame.

The Western "debate" over female genital cutting is often framed as a polarity of tradition vs. progress: of African "tradition" or "culture" against Western civility and gender equality. The notion of "culture" as it exists among groups in Africa is rendered static and historic. In the essay "Listening to Other(ed) Voices: Reflections around Female Genital Cutting," Stanlie M. James states that the struggle against female genital cutting begins with a redefinition of culture: "Culture is neither monolithic or static. Rather, culture is composed of a cacophony of voices and thus should be understood as the language of argument about identity" (93).

The book's Introduction envisions a cross-cultural movement in which Western feminists support women in Africa as they work to educate and promote alternatives to practices of female genital cutting in their own communities. The book opens with a position paper by the Women's Caucus of the African Studies Association, which was first published in 1983, but remains prescient today in the context of Western articulations of female genital cutting by feminists like Eve Ensler:

> The Women's Caucus of the African Studies Association feels that changes in the practice of clitoridectomy and infibulation in Africa must be initiated and carried out by members of those African cultures in which the custom exists, and that outsiders' contributions to this effort can be most effective in the areas of collaborative research, discussion, and dissemination of information about the progress of efforts elsewhere, and technical support. There is a great need for work in these areas with significant opportunities for genuine collaboration. The Women's Caucus also feels that clitoridectomy and infibulation should not be addressed as phenomena isolated from the larger context of women's general needs. Many African women need food for themselves and their children, greater control over the means of food production, access to clean water, a secure fuel supply, access to health care, including family planning, and ways to acquire cash income. Concern about clitoridectomy

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> and infibulation as the sole issue affecting the status of women may be a luxury that only the West can afford. (2)

The book further implicates the West by shedding light on female genital cutting as it is practiced in North America. In the essay "The Intersex Movement and Medical Double Standards," American intersex activist Cheryl Chase details the emotional and physical damage done by her own clitoridectomy, which was performed by doctors in the United States after she was born with non-conforming genitalia — a clitoris that was too short to be a penis, but too long to be considered "normal." About 1 in every 1,500-2,000 children are born with genitalia that noticeably violate the gender binary and provoke the intervention of a specialist, according to the Intersex Society of North America, a group founded by Chase. Intersex activists recommend that the genitals of those children be left alone, lest they suffer the emotional and physical agony that Chase describes in her essay: "I fantasized killing myself quite messily and dramatically in the office of the surgeon who had sliced out my clitoris, forcibly confronting him with the horror he had imposed on my life" (134).

While the fixation on African women's genitals has served to reaffirm Western cultural superiority in much feminist discourse, Chase's story disrupts that sense of comfort in the "civility" of the West as over and against the "barbarism" of African tradition. In the same way that other cultures may use genital cutting to mark gender, North American doctors cut genitalia to violently maintain a false dichotomy between male and female. The relative silence around female genital cutting in the United States upholds what Chase calls "the double standard":

> Examining the way that first-world feminists and mainstream media treat African practices and comparing that treatment with their response to intersex genital mutilation (IGM) in North America exposes some of the complex interactions between ideologies of race, gender, colonialism, and science that effectively silence and render invisible intersex experience in first-world contexts. Cutting intersex genitals becomes yet another hidden mechanism for imposing normalcy upon unruly flesh, a means of containing the potential anarchy of desires and identifications within oppressive heteronormative structures. (140 - 141)

Female Genital Cutting in Western Feminist Discourse

In the 1990s, Alice Walker was the central focus of a campaign against colonialist framing of female genital mutilation. Walker's novel *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (1992) and the 1993 non-fiction book *Warrior Marks* (also made into a documentary film) were dubbed imperialist for their superficial representations of the women affected by the procedure. Stanlie James's critique encapsulates the arguments of feminists who took issue with Walker's oversimplified representations of African "victims." In the following paragraph, James points to the inevitable conclusion that Walker's representation of African women is imperialist, but she offers Walker the benefit of the doubt, suggesting that the problematic representations resulted from oversight, not intentional insult:

> The superficiality of Alice Walker's insights into African social, political, and economic institutions obscures the rich heritage of its many cultures and societies, and that, in turn, suggests an (unintentional perhaps?) insensitivity to the complexities of the lives of African women. This crucial deficiency leads to the regrettable conclusion that both the text and the video *Warrior Marks* are contaminated by a not-so-subtle form of cultural imperialism. That conclusion is especially disappointing, because Walker's womanist writings are typically characterized by sophisticated analyses of the concept of multiple oppressions. (93)

Since Walker's documentary and novel have moved out of the spotlight, feminists such as Eve Ensler — the playwright and performer behind *The Vagina Monologues* — have traveled to Africa in order to witness the wounds caused by female genital cutting and provide support in the form of fundraising and publicity. Like Walker before her, Ensler has taken it upon herself to become a voice for victims.

While Ensler has raised some imperialist red flags by traveling to countries like the Democratic Republic of the Congo and dramatizing the violence done to women there in plays and documentaries, Ensler's statement in a 2006 interview with Marianne Schnall of Feminist.com envisions a more anti-colonialist position. In the interview, Ensler describes her relationship with Agnes Pareyio, a Masai activist in Kenya whom Ensler found traveling from village to village with a wooden model of a vulva, explaining the pain and health risks associated with cutting to other people. Ensler has fundraised for the shelter Pareyio runs for girls who escape from the threat of unwanted cutting.[2]

> I can share from my own experience with Agnes, for example, in Africa. Agnes was walking through the fields to end female genital mutilation. She knew how to do it, she knew the practice she was doing, she had a beautiful method to educate people. She didn't need me to come and tell her what to do. She didn't need me to occupy her town in Africa and move in, and spread my knowledge all over her. What she needed was resources to do what she already knew how to do. And once she got those resources, she built a house, she changed her community, she became deputy mayor, she began to bring her way of thinking and her way of doing things, inside her own tradition, into being.[3]

Ensler's words envision an ideal partnership in which Western women can use their financial privilege and platform of visibility to support women who are working to end female genital cutting in their own communities. The vision is perhaps more ideal than what Ensler herself has actually accomplished. While female genital cutting inspires justifiable anger among women across the globe, the movement to end all forms of oppression against women is a local struggle as well as a global one. Women's resistance is complex and strong. Some scholars point out that the practice of cutting itself can hold feminist meaning in places like Sierra Leone, where the practice may be used to introduce girls to Sande, "a powerful women's secret society."[4]

No meaningful liberation from oppression — whether economic, physical, or gender-based — has come from above or outside. But women everywhere are capable of remarkable resistance on behalf of themselves and their sisters. As Cheryl Chase wages war against the medical community's altering of intersex bodies, women across the globe wage difficult and complex battles to liberate themselves. Resisting female genital cutting may be part of that process; resisting Western domination is another part.

NOTES

1. In framing discussions of female genital cutting feminists as well as international bodies like the World Health Organization have used the term "female genital mutilation" strategically to emphasize the violence of the practices as they are performed in Africa and on other continents outside the United States. But some women who have received the procedure and maintain that it is an important part of their culture have objected to the term, saying their bodies are not "mutilated." As intersex activists like Cheryl Chase point out, the cutting of intersex bodies could also be considered a form of "mutilation" performed to uphold culturally important standards of sexual differentiation. Less loaded terms like "female genital surgeries" and "female genital cutting" have also been used by activists and scholars.

2. Goldberg, Michelle. "Rights Versus Rites: When it comes to the lives of women around the globe, do local traditions ever trump human rights?" *American Prospect*. April 28, 2009. www.prospect.org/cs/articles?article=rights_versus_rites

3. Schnall, Marianne. "Conversation with Eve Ensler." Feminist.com. Oct. 23, 2006. www.feminist.com/resources/artspeech/interviews/eveensler.html

4. James, Stanlie M. and Claire C. Robertson. "Introduction: Reimagining Transnational Sisterhood" (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 200), p. 11

Moral Equivalence and the "Salvador Option"

Matt Carr

Few wars have been accompanied by so much talk of morality as the 21st century terror wars. Whenever bombs fall on refugee camps, wedding parties, or peasant villages, whenever there are criticisms of torture or extrajudicial killings by Western states, a Benjamin Netanyahu or John Bolton can be found, solemnly invoking "moral clarity" and rejecting any suggestions of "moral equivalence" between the counterterrorist violence of the state and the unique evil of terrorism. These arguments tend to take it for granted that counterterrorism is dictated by moral and ethical considerations that are inimical to its terrorist opponents, but from time to time it is possible to glimpse a less elevated logic behind the moral rhetoric.

In January, 2005 an astonishing article in *Newsweek* reported that Pentagon officials were contemplating a new policy in Iraq called the "Salvador option" in response to the raging insurgency that was then carrying out some 500 attacks weekly against Anglo-American occupation forces. The article compared the situation to the 1980-92 civil war in El Salvador, when "faced with a losing war against Salvadoran rebels, the U.S. government funded or supported 'nationalist' forces that allegedly included so-called death squads directed to hunt down and kill rebel leaders and sympathizers. Eventually the insurgency was quelled, and many U.S. conservatives consider the policy to have been a success — despite the deaths of innocent civilians."

This revisiting of one of the darkest chapters in Cold War history was striking for what it said and for what it left out. According to the UN Truth Commission in El Salvador, 85 percent of the 75,000 civilians killed during the conflict died at the hands of "agents of the State, paramilitary groups allied to them, and the death squads." Successive Salvadoran governments had disclaimed responsibility for the death squads, but the Commissioners noted that "members of State structures were actively involved or . . . turned a blind eye" to these groups, who were used as "an instrument of terror used systematically for the physical elimination of political opponents."

Throughout the war the U.S. government showered military and economic aid on the Salvadoran military, even as it presented itself as a moderating influence attempting to curb the death squads. Now, according to *Newsweek*, the Pentagon considered the death squads to have been a success, and was preparing to use U.S. Special Forces "to advise, support and possibly train Iraqi squads . . . to target Sunni insurgents and their sympathizers, even across the border into Syria." One unnamed official suggested that these operations would not be limited to armed insurgents, since "the Sunni population is paying no price for the support it is giving to the terrorists . . . From their point of view, it is cost-free. We have to change that equation."

A few days later Donald Rumsfeld dismissed such suggestions as "nonsense," but the Salvador option continued to percolate through the media. In an article in the *New Yorker* on January 17, 2005, a former U.S. intelligence official told Seymour Hersh: "Do you remember

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the right-wing execution squads in El Salvador? We founded them and we financed them . . . the objective now is to recruit locals in any area we want. And we aren't going to tell Congress about it."

Within a few months disturbing evidence would begin to emerge in Iraq that these proposals were being implemented. And before we consider what happened and why, we need to take a little closer look at the option that was presented to the world in January, 2005. Because more than any of the instruments of counterterrorism, the death squad belongs to a dark tradition of violence that connects the terror wars of the past to those of the present – a tradition from which moral considerations are generally conspicuous by their absence.

Instruments of Statecraft

THROUGHOUT HISTORY, armies have carried out mass killings and exemplary massacres to terrorize rebels and insurgents, but the death squad is a relatively recent innovation. The historian Bruce Campbell defines death squads as "clandestine and usually irregular organizations, often paramilitary in nature, which carry out extrajudicial executions and other violent acts (torture, rape, arson, bombing, etc.) against clearly defined individuals or groups of people. Murder is their primary or even their sole activity."

The death squad first emerged as an international phenomenon after World War II, in response to the upsurge in nationalist and anticolonial revolutionary violence that confronted Western armies in the Third World. With the onset of the Cold War, U.S. military and political theorists formulated a new doctrine of national security, which argued that the West faced a global subversive communist conspiracy that could not be fought by conventional means. Such wars did not preclude the use of military force, but they also changed the meaning of war and combat, so that the whole of society became a zone of politico-military confrontation. In 1954 a U.S. government commission directed by former president Herbert Hoover described the new parameters

> It is now clear that we are facing an implacable enemy whose avowed objective is world domination . . . there are no rules in such a game. Hitherto accepted rules of human conduct do not apply . . . If the United States is to survive, long-standing American concepts of fair play must be reconsidered . . . We must learn to subvert, sabotage, and destroy our enemies by more clever, sophisticated, more effective methods than those used against us.

Other Western states were reaching similar conclusions. French army officers analyzing the reasons for the French defeat in Indochina promulgated the concept of *la guerre revolutionaire* (revolutionary warfare) and the "war on the crowd," in which the state would adapt "Marxist" methods of clandestine political warfare for its own purposes. These counterterrorist "dirty wars" embraced a range of unconventional military practices that included torture and "pseudo operations" in which security forces disguised as insurgents carried out assassinations and bombings in order to discredit their enemies. But unlike the Nazis, Western democracies could not carry out such activities openly without inviting negative political consequences.

The solution to this dilemma was the death squad. During the so-called Battle of Algiers in 1956-7, the use of torture by French paratroopers in response to a terrorist bombing campaign by the nationalist FLN became a national scandal in France. This controversy obscured the hundreds, and possibly thousands of real and suspected FLN militants who were secretly executed by the French army in clandestine detention centers or dropped from helicopters into the sea with their feet encased in concrete. Paul Aussaresses, a captain in the army at the time, later became one of the few French army officers to admit to participating in what he called *escadrons de la mort* — death squads.

Aussaresses was one of various Algeria veterans who became advisers to the U.S. army in Vietnam, where the "French school" of counterinsurgency was particularly influential. In 1965 the CIA sponsored a campaign of assassination, kidnapping, and torture that became known as the Phoenix Program, in which U.S. Special Forces and South Vietnamese paramilitary units known as Provincial Reconnaissance Units (PRUs) "neutralized" at least 26,000 real and suspected Vietcong members and sympathizers before the program was discontinued in 1972.

Similar methods were adopted by the Latin American "national security states" in the same period. Under the military junta that came to power in 1976, the methods used by the French army in Algeria were implemented on a massive scale as some 30,000 Argentinians were abducted and secretly killed by the security forces and their paramilitary allies. Death squads also appeared in Brazil, Uruguay, Colombia, Peru, and Guatemala, where their victims ran into the tens of thousands. In the aftermath of the Chilean coup in 1973, the Chilean secret police DINA coordinated what amounted to a transnational death squad known as Operation Condor, in which the security forces from various Latin American military regimes kidnapped, tortured, and killed political dissidents who had sought asylum outside their own countries.

The proliferation of death squads in Latin America was not dependent on external tutelage, but such tutelage was not absent. In 1963, the U.S. Defense Secretary Robert MacNamara explicitly declared that "Our primary objective in Latin America is to aid, wherever necessary, the continual growth of the military and paramilitary forces, so that together with the police and other security forces, they may provide the necessary security."

These objectives were reflected in a stream of Latin American graduates from American military and police training programs and logistical assistance in terms of weapons, surveillance equipment, torture technology and instruction, and military advisers. Other U.S. allies, such as Israel and Taiwan, also provided

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military training and assistance to security forces and paramilitary groups in various Latin American countries. The targets of the death squads were not always political. In Brazil in 1958, off duty policemen in Rio de Janeiro formed a group of *homens corajosos* (courageous men), who began executing criminals on their own account and later became the model for the Clint Eastwood film *Magnum Force*. The Brazilian death squads subsequently assumed a more political role under the military dictatorship that came to power in 1964 – a role that included so-called "death flights" over the Amazon, in which prisoners were dropped alive from helicopters.

By the end of the Cold War, death squads had become an established technique of counterinsurgency in numerous conflicts, in Northern Ireland, the Punjab and Kashmir, in the Palestinian Occupied Territories, and Haiti. During the 1990s these methods returned to Algeria, where the Algerian security forces kidnapped and "disappeared" thousands of people in their dirty war against Islamist insurgents.

Whether death squads engaged in the "selective" assassination of real or suspected insurgents or wholesale terror aimed at their civilian sympathizers or fellow travelers, their modus operandi was broadly similar . Often the groups responsible cultivated a mystique of dread and terror, through special insignia, vehicles or clothing or lurid and melodramatic names. In some cases their victims vanished without a trace. Others were deliberately publicized. During the Phoenix Program, Vietcong suspects were sometimes murdered together with their families, with "eye of God" cards nailed to their foreheads. In Guatemala and El Salvador, the victims of death squads were often exhibited in public places bearing horrific mutilations and marks of torture.

Such cruelty was rarely gratuitous, but formed part of a rational and purposeful instrument of psychological terror that was coordinated from within the state or carried out with the tacit sanction of the security forces. Ricardo Castro, a West Point graduate and Salvadoran army officer later described how death squad activities were coordinated by the civil affairs branch of the Salvadoran general staff and conducted with the same modus operandi, in which orders were always verbal and soldiers dressed in civilian clothes conducted killings and kidnappings of the names given to them beforehand. In Argentina the AAA death squads that decimated leftwing urban guerrillas in the early 70s were financed and organized from within the Ministry of the Interior. In Guatemala, death squad victims were chosen from lists compiled by military intelligence agencies operating from within the National Palace.

Plausible Deniability

On the one hand the anonymity of these groups provided what one Salvadoran army officer called a 'phantom presence' within the societies in which they operated, which magnified their psychological impact. The political scientist and historian J. Patrice MacSherry has written of the "pervading sense of ambiguity, unreality, and dread" that such groups engendered. Even as the death squads killed and intimidated their opponents with impunity, their sponsors were able to maintain a façade of "plausible deniability" and avoid any unwanted political repercussions for such activity, such as a reduction in military or economic aid.

In some cases the states that directed the death squads attributed them to "rogue elements" and "uncontrollables" within the security forces, or blamed them on the insurgents themselves. Plausible deniability had particular advantages to democratic governments whose own legal and moral norms obliged them to maintain a discreet distance from such activities.

The lines of contact between Western democracies and the murder campaigns and human rights abuses carried out by Latin American death squads are necessarily nebulous, but there were numerous indications that the countries that provided them with assistance were aware of their activities. In 1968 an American diplomat in Guatemala, Viron Peter Vaky, wrote an anguished internal memo to his superiors, which protested the apparent approval of the military's methods and asked "Have our values been so twisted by our adversary concept of politics in the hemisphere? Is it conceivable that we are so obsessed with insurgency that we are prepared to rationalize murder as an acceptable counter-insurgency weapon? Is it possible that a nation which so reveres the principle of due process of law has so easily acquiesced in this sort of terror tactic?"

In 1977 military aid to Guatemala was cut as part of the Carter Administration's new emphasis on human rights, but these policies came under increasing criticism from the Republican right following the triumph of the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua. In 1980 the rightwing Santa Fe Committee's Inter-American Foreign Policy for the Eighties called for "policy of political and ethical realism" in response to the radical currents unleashed by the Sandinista revolution based on the recognition that the United States was 'engaged in World War III' and that "in war, there is no substitute for victory."

It was an indication of the new 'ethical realism' that Mario Sandoval Alarcon, the founder of the extreme-right National Liberation Movement (MLN) and one of the main death squad organizers in Guatemala, was an invited guest at Ronald Reagan's inauguration in 1981. Emboldened by the Reagan Administration's new determination to combat "internal subversion," the Salvadoran and Guatemalan security forces unleashed a wave of massacres and death squad killings. In 1984 Reagan's own ambassador to Guatemala Fred Chapin described the "horrible human rights realities" in the country and argued that "we must come to some resolution in policy terms. Either we can overlook the record and emphasize the strategic concept or we can pursue a higher moral path."

Other U.S. officials had a very different attitude to what was taking place. That same year General Paul Gorman, the commander of the U.S. army's Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) defined low-intensity conflict as a form of warfare "repugnant to most Americans, in which non-combatant casualties may be an explicit object. Its perpetrators are secretive, conspiratorial, and morally unconstrained." In 1983 the rightwing terrorism expert and U.S. national security adviser Neil Livingstone visited El Salvador where he met a death squad operative nicknamed Blowtorch "in recognition of the deft way he used a blowtorch to interrogate suspected communists, terrorists, and subversives." Livingstone described the death squads as "an extremely effective tool, however odious, in combating terrorism and revolutionary challenges." His guide to these activities was probably Major Roberto D'Aubisson, the foremost promoter of the death squads, whom one U.S. ambassador described as a "psychopathic killer." In December, 1984, 120 representatives from leading American conservative organizations staged a dinner at the Capital Hill club in Washington, in which they awarded a plaque to D'Aubisson in honor of his "continuing efforts for freedom in the face of Communist aggression."

American support for the death squads was not only ideological. One of the most vicious death squad leaders in El Salvador was Hector Antonio Regalado, a dentist known as "Doctor Death," who pulled the teeth out of his victims before killing them. Regalado also provided firearms instruction to U.S. agents from the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) in El Salvador, with the approval of the U.S. embassy and the military advisory group. Throughout the Salvadoran war a trickle of army defectors and former death squad members claimed that American intelligence and military personnel had been aware of their activities. In 1991 a former death squad member named Cesar Joya Martinez claimed that a U.S. military adviser had sat at an adjoining desk and received "all the reports from our agents on clandestine captures, interrogations . . . but we did not provide them with reports on the executions. They did not want to hear of the actual killings."

In 1993, a former San Francisco policeman named Thomas Gerard claimed to have photographs of CIA officials with death squad members in El Salvador during a 24-month assignment assisting the Salvadoran police. Gerard threatened to produce these photographs if he was not acquitted of criminal charges. In Guatemala in 1989, an American Ursuline nun, Sister Diana Ortiz, was kidnapped, raped, and tortured by Guatemalan intelligence agents. During her ordeal she claimed that an American intelligence official had been present during her interrogation and ordered her interrogators to release her because she was a North American citizen. In Honduras during the 1980s, the army unit Batallion 3-16 abducted and killed hundreds of Honduran citizens and Salvadoran asylum seekers. An investigation by the *Baltimore Sun* later accused the U.S. ambassador John Negroponte of covering up these abuses.

Phoenix Over Baghdad

THIS WAS THE SLEAZY HISTORY that the moral theologians of the war on terror now saw as an exemplary model for Iraq. In November 2003 the neocon columnist Max Boot called for the use of "targeted counterinsurgency programs like Phoenix" to "neutralize" Iraqi insurgents. As early as January 2004, the journalist Robert Dreyfuss reported in the liberal *American Prospect* magazine that $3 billion of special funds allotted to Iraq by the U.S. Congress would be dedicated to "the creation of a paramilitary unit manned by militiamen associated with former Iraqi exile groups." Some experts compared these proposals to the "hunter-killer teams" of the Phoenix Program and one unnamed intelligence official was concerned that a "lethal, and revenge-minded, Iraqi security force" might carry out a similar "wave of extrajudicial killings, not only of armed rebels but of nationalists, other opponents of the U.S. occupation, and thousands of civilian Baathists."

Some of Dreyfuss's interviewees were more enthusiastic about this possibility. Danielle Pletka, vice president for foreign and defense policy studies of the neocon bastion, the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), hailed what she saw as a new determination by the U.S. military to "whomp the crap" out of the insurgency. Another neoconservative strategist told Dreyfuss that "It's time for 'no more Mr. Nice Guy.' All those people shouting 'Down with America!' and dancing in the street when Americans are attacked? We have to kill them."

Within a few months of Iraq's first post-invasion elections in January 2005, a new tributary began to emerge in Iraq's landscape of violence. In May, the *Los Angeles Times* and *New York Times* reported the discovery of 46 Iraqi men who had been kidnapped and executed and thrown in the Tigris, dumped in ditches and garbage-strewn lots, and buried at a poultry farm. In June, the *Washington Post* claimed that hundreds of Arabs had been kidnapped by Kurdish militias in the divided northern city of Kirkuk, with the knowledge of the U.S. military. That same month, Iraqi correspondents from the Knight Ridder news agency reported that corpses were beginning to appear in the Baghdad morgue that "appeared to have been killed in methodical fashion. Their hands had been tied or handcuffed behind their backs, their eyes were blindfolded and they appeared to have been tortured. In most cases, the dead men looked as if they'd been whipped with a cord, subjected to electric shocks or beaten with a blunt object and shot to death, often with single bullets to their heads."

The reporters noted that "many of the dead were apprehended by large groups of men driving white Toyota Land Cruisers with police markings. The men were wearing police commando uniforms and bulletproof vests, carrying expensive 9-millimeter Glock pistols and using sophisticated radios." The abductions and killings continued to multiply, following the formal transfer of power to the Shiite-dominated government of Nouri al-Maliki in April. Their victims were mostly Sunni Muslims, and they were often tortured and mutilated before their deaths. Electric drills to the head, burnings and beatings with cables were common.

Amid the ongoing mayhem in Iraq, it was difficult to determine who was responsible for these activities, but both foreign reporters and Sunnis attributed many of them to the bewildering array of special police commandos and "pop-up militias" connected to the interim Iraqi government, such as the Scorpion Brigade, the Wolf Brigade, and the Volcano Brigade. Sunni suspicions also focused on the Badr Brigade – a militia connected to the pro-Iranian Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), one of whose officials, Bayan Jabr, was Interior Minister in Maliki's government. At least some of the groups accused of death squad activities were created and trained by U.S. military advisers or private military contractors and continued to carry out joint operations with American forces.

In November 2005, *Newsday* claimed that special police commando units responsible for a series of "execution-style massacres" in and around Baghdad had received training from Colonel James Steele, the former head of the U.S. military advisory team in El Salvador and a former associate of Oliver North, whose testimony at the Iran-Contra hearings was deemed by the special prosecutor to have "contained numerous false and misleading statements concerning his own activities." Steele was one of various Reagan-era covert ops veterans who reappeared in Iraq, such as the Contra War point man in Honduras John Negroponte, who served as ambassador to Iraq from 2004 -2005 before becoming Director of National Intelligence. One of Negroponte's security advisers was Steve Casteel, a former DEA agent and "risk management" specialist who had taken part in the hunt for the Columbian drug lord Pablo Escobar. Casteel also worked as an adviser to the Interior Ministry of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), where his duties including overseeing the training of the Iraqi police units, including the special police commandos.

These units were originally recruited by Iraqi and American officials in late 2004 from Saddam Hussein's special forces and Republican Guard, under the commander of one of Saddam's uncles, Adnan Thabit, a Sunni Muslim and former Baathist. Despite or perhaps because of their reputation for brutality, Lieutenant General David Petraeus described the commandos as a "horse to back" and authorized special funding and training for them.

In an article on the "Salvadorization of Iraq" in the *New York Times* magazine in May, 2005, the journalist Peter Maas wrote a profile of the Special Police Commandos, in which he noted the advisory role played by both Steele and Casteel. According to Maas, both men insisted that "torture and death-squad activity are counterproductive." But Maas visited a prison run by the commandos, where he heard gunshots and found beaten detainees, including a Syrian "hanging from the ceiling by his arms and legs like an animal being hauled back from a hunt." In November that year, U.S. soldiers discovered 173 half-starved Sunni prisoners in a secret prison run by the Wolf Brigade, in the basement of a building belonging to the Interior Ministry.

(NEOCON): "It's time for 'no more Mr. Nice Guy.' All those people shouting 'Down with America!' and dancing in the street when Americans are attacked? We have to kill them."

The death squad killings climbed to a new peak following the bombing of the Shia al-Askari mosque in Samarra in January, 2006. In February, the outgoing UN human rights chief in Iraq claimed that hundreds of Iraqis were being tortured to death or summarily executed every month in Baghdad alone by death squads working from the Ministry of Interior.

By this time the death squad killings were running at an estimated 140 bodies a day. In June, 2006, the violence climbed again, following a second bomb attack on the Samarra mosque. On July 9, Shiite militiamen killed 50 Sunnis at random in an attack on a Baghdad vegetable market. The following week Sunni death squads retaliated with a similar attack on a Shiite marketplace in Mahmudiyah. For the rest of year, the Badr Brigade, units of the Sadrist Mahdi Army and other irregular Shiite units carried out scores of kidnappings and killings in Sunni neighborhoods in Baghdad in what amounted to a campaign of ethnic cleansing, and Sunni militias responded in kind.

In public American officials condemned these activities and blamed them on Iran or militia penetration of the security forces. Some critics of the Iraq invasion have alleged that the

United States deliberately promoted death squads in order to promote civil war as a justification for their continued presence. Others have argued that this was done in order to pave the way for a sectarian division of the country. Such explanations are inevitably based on circumstantial evidence and tend to suggest a degree of hierarchical involvement and strategic planning that is impossible to prove.

This does not mean that we have to accept the military's presentation of itself as an honest broker trying to bring about national reconciliation in the face of sectarian savagery. It is difficult to believe that the appearance of the death squads in 2005 had nothing to do with the public debates about the Salvadoran option that preceded them, nor can these debates be separated from more than half a century of counterinsurgency dirty wars.

The Carrot and Stick

TOWARDS THE END OF 2007, the death squad killings and the overall level of violence in Iraq began to decline. This reduction has been attributed to various factors, from the deployment of 20,000 new U.S. troops known as "the surge" and the extra security that it provided, to the construction of walled gated communities separating Sunni and Shia districts in Baghdad to the successful U.S. cooption of Sunni insurgent groups in Anbar province known as the "Anbar awakening." The surge has often been described as a heroic and skillful endeavor, in which the American military under the new commander in Iraq, General David Petraeus rediscovered "hearts and minds" counterinsurgency and replaced the blunders of the Bremer transitional authority period with a new cultural sensitivity, new tactics, and a new willingness to engage with Sunni tribal sheikhs. But the reduction of violence was also a direct consequence of the death squads. In the summer of 2007, the *Washington Post* correspondent Thomas Ricks quoted a U.S. military officer in Baghdad who claimed that "Now that the Sunnis are all gone, murders have dropped off. One way to put it is they ran out of people to kill."

In his insider account of the Bush inner circle during the surge, *The War Within* (2008), Bob Woodward describes a meeting between representatives of the largest Sunni bloc in the Iraqi parliament and Condoleeza Rice in Baghdad, in which Bush's national security adviser was presented with a "gruesome portfolio" of "eight-by-ten glossy photographs, some in color, showing Sunni victims of torture – decapitations and bodies with holes drilled into their heads and hands." According to Woodward, the Sunni leaders insisted that these actions were the work of "Shia death squads linked to people in the highest ranks of the government . . . .The Sunnis' message was simple: we need to be protected."

The militias may not have been the only group that the Sunni population needed protecting from. From May 2006 onwards U.S. military and intelligence agencies began to carry out secret operations in Iraq that Woodward claims "enabled them to locate, target, and kill key individuals in extremist groups such as al Qaeda, the Sunni insurgency, and renegade Shia militias." Many of these operations were carried out by the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), a covert Special Forces unit responsible for counterterrorist operations across the world that Seymour Hersh has described as an "executive assassination ring."

In a CBS television interview to publicize his book, Woodward described these "very sensitive and secret operational capabilities" as a "breakthrough" comparable to the discovery of the tank and the submarine, which had had a decisive impact on the outcome of the surge. The British military also participated in these operations, according to the *Sunday Telegraph,* which revealed in August, 2008 that a secret British army unit called Task Force Black had conducted a series of covert operations over a two-year period in which 3,500 insurgents "have been taken off the streets of Baghdad." According to the article the majority of these 'terrorists' had been captured but 'several hundred . . . have been killed by the SAS.' The circumstances in which these killings had taken place were not made clear, but some members of Task Force Black had once served in the secretive Force Research Unit (FRU) in Northern Ireland accused by the Stalker report of collusion with Loyalist paramilitaries and carrying out extrajudicial killings.

Despite this connection with the Irish dirty war, the military sources quoted by the *Telegraph* "denied that the SAS was taking part in 'extra-judicial killings'" and claimed that lawyers oversaw these operations, but the experience of Northern Ireland suggests that there is no reason to take such explanations for granted.

Were the death squads used as a stick to beat the Sunni tribal sheikhs into accepting the financial carrots offered by Petraeus and his COIN team? If so, did the U.S. military actively support them or was it simply powerless to prevent them? The truth may never be known; it would not be the first time in history that terror was followed by more positive inducements in the interests of counterinsurgency "pacification." The Phoenix Program was carried out in tandem with a civilian assistance program, which offered financial incentives and new homes to Vietnamese villagers whose farms and villages had been destroyed, on condition that they accepted the new political dispensation of those who had destroyed them in the first place. A leaked U.S. counterinsurgency manual *Foreign Internal Defense Tactics, Techniques for Special Forces*, first written in 1994 and reissued in 2007, emphasizes the importance of "national programs to win insurgents over to the government side with offers of amnesty and rewards" and noted that "pressure from the security forces has persuasive power' in this process."

Whether or not the death squads were seen as an instrument of such "persuasive power," such tactics are unlikely to lead to a more stable or democratic Iraq. Nearly fifty years after they first came into existence, Brazilian death squads continue to kill criminals and homeless people. El Salvador remains one of the most violent societies on earth, while Guatemala has been plagued by vicious killings since the end of its own armed conflict, whose perpetrators often remain as obscure – and as brutal — as the death squads that preceded them.

The behavior of the Iraq's militia-dominated police and army does not promise a more positive outcome. Meanwhile, similar formations have begun to appear in other battlegrounds of the war on terror. In 2008, the United Nations special rapporteur in Afghanistan Philip Alston accused Afghan paramilitary units, some of whom were operating from U.S. military bases, of carrying out extrajudicial killings of suspected insurgents. In October, 2009, *The Economist* reported on the proliferation of state-sponsored tribal militias following a successful anti-Taliban offensive in the Swat valley, where "An estimated 300 to 400 corpses of suspected Taliban have turned up in Swat, dumped on street corners, bridges or outside homes . . . Most show signs of severe torture. Some were killed with a single shot to the head, hands tied behind their backs. Often the dead were last seen alive being taken away by soldiers."

All these actions will no doubt have their defenders — in private at least, though no one is taking public responsibility for them. But whenever such activities occur, we can assume that someone in a carpeted office has given a nod and a wink and a list of names to the men with drills and cables. And whatever their reasons for doing so, their calculations are unlikely to have been influenced by any moral considerations, but only the amoral concept of statecraft that the Hoover Commission once claimed was necessary against the "implacable enemies" of the past.

Sobriety and Its Discontents

American Politics in a Post-American World

John Kane

This paper seeks to better understand the relationship between two U.S. phenomena: 1) its privileged position as the holder of the world's key reserve currency, and 2) the relative unimportance of socioeconomic "class" within American politics. Most importantly, though, it seeks to question the nature of future American politics in the event that the U.S. dollar's standing in the world economy becomes less important. Whereas the Bretton Woods regime firmly positioned the U.S. dollar as the world's dominant reserve currency, the United States has persistently used the privileges that come with seigniorage to pursue its domestic and international interests. Though the Bretton Woods regime officially ended within the first half of the 1970s, the position of the United States has been one of continued political and economic hegemony. But can this country sustain its high levels of consumption, military, social, and stimulus spending indefinitely, all while keeping taxes, interest rates, and incentives to forgo consumption low?

This paper operates on the premise that it can't. Moreover, the notion of a world not dominated by, and submissive to, U.S. interests has become increasingly accepted by the mainstream. For example, the political commentator, Fareed Zakaria, argues in his best-selling book, *The Post-American World*, that America's "free ride is coming to an end," largely because of its overstretched global ambitions and inability at the domestic level to impose self-restraint.[1] This notion of "self-restraint," while somewhat unfamiliar to Americans, has frequently been felt in other areas of the world, with the common result being the intensification of class-based politics. The looming question for the U.S. Left is whether it will have a message that resonates in this class-based, post-American world.

A New Hegemon Emerges

The unrivaled position of the United States in the years immediately preceding and following the end of the Second World War enabled it to dramatically influence the architecture of the world economy. The U.S. dollar, as a result of the Bretton Woods agreement, became the world's reserve currency, meaning that it became the currency to which all other currencies were anchored. However, the U.S. dollar, though accorded this spectacular privilege, needed to itself be "checked" by some other value. Therefore, the U.S. dollar was made exchangeable upon request for gold (at a rate of $35 per ounce). Whereas, in the nineteenth century, the British pound sterling had been the de facto reserve currency vis-à-vis Britain's dominance of the global economy, the U.S. dollar had become the "rock of certainty for all nations."[2]

While the Bretton Woods arrangement was largely orchestrated by figures like Keynes and his American counterparts, it did not come without significant criticism in later years. In fact, French President Charles DeGaulle complained of the "extravagant privileges" accorded to the United States as a direct result of the "hegemony of the dollar" — i.e., the right of seigniorage.[3] Put simply, the right of seigniorage creates a glo-

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bal demand for the dollar that might not have otherwise existed, thereby creating a global need for the dollar's value to remain relatively stable. These "extravagant privileges" that DeGaulle warned of specifically dealt with the enormous advantages of being able to "simply print dollars to fight foreign wars, …buy up [foreign] businesses, and…go deeply into debt without fearing negative consequences."[4] The advantages of seigniorage became especially pronounced in the late 1960s. The United States financed the rebuilding of Western Europe in the post-WWII period and then engaged militarily in Korea and Vietnam; its balance of payments deficits then became an issue of considerable concern to major economies holding dollars. But where diminishing confidence in a country's currency would normally result in the international selling off said currency, the opposite case was true for the United States. In the midst of the Cold War, U.S. allies, "fearing that collapse of the dollar would force the United States to withdraw its forces from overseas and to retreat into political isolation, agreed to continue to hold overvalued dollars."[5] Additionally, a variety of export-oriented economies, seeking to maintain their competitiveness in American markets, also acquiesced to the overvalued dollar.

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Here we see the beginnings of an age of politico-economic inebriation, where the capitalist "laws" that govern virtually all governments and economies effectively cease to exist for the United States. Consider the increases on the social programs contained within President Johnson's Great Society initiative along with the ever-mounting expenditures on the Vietnam War. Given the size of these simultaneous expenditures, one would expect that — if all warfare and welfare projects were to continue unabated — taxes on the American public must be increased. But again, this was not the case. For reasons concerning political capital and public support for the war, the Johnson and Nixon administrations were reluctant to make the costs of profligate government spending an economic reality for U.S. citizens. Moreover, the Federal Reserve implemented expansionary monetary policies, further distorting the actual value of the U.S. dollar. [6]

This relative freedom from balance-of-payments constraints, with the resultant privilege of governments being able to avoid making difficult, contentious politico-economic choices, is central to the country conferred with the right of seigniorage. But this privilege began to see major signs of its unsustainability in 1971, when the United States declared that it could not maintain an exchange rate of $35 per ounce of gold. In December, it was agreed — after intense pressuring and negotiation by this country — that the dollar would be devalued by 7.9 percent. It should be noted that the ability to consciously devalue one's currency, without spurring successive waves of capital flight, is in itself a substantial privilege unknown to virtually all developing economies. Nonetheless, continued inabilities to manage the value of the dollar resulted in a second devaluation in 1973, this time designating an ounce of gold to be exchanged at $42 per ounce. Finally, much to the satisfaction of market economists such as Milton Friedman and others, the "gold standard" was finally abandoned by the United States in March, 1973. The journalist William Greider notes how then-Treasury Undersecretary for Monetary Policy and International Affairs, Paul Volcker, perceived of the Bretton Woods collapse as "a failure of American leadership, an unwillingness to confront the nation's economic excesses and to impose self-discipline."[7] This "self-discipline" would have necessarily involved, as Greider also notes, "the discipline of higher interest rates and higher unemployment, less spending and slower growth."[8]

Seigniorage Resiliency and the Age of Inebriation

THE COLLAPSE OF BRETTON WOODS was initially seen as a failure, by Volcker and others, largely because it demonstrated the inability of the United States to maintain the extraordinary position that the rest of the world had, whether willingly or otherwise, consented to. But the outcome of the collapse was not the market-imposed disciplining of the U.S. government that many commentators and economists might have predicted (if not hoped for). While the value of the dollar would henceforth be determined largely by the foreign exchange market, this did not mean that governments and central banks no longer had an interest in maintaining a relatively strong dollar. Nor did it mean that the United States no longer had an interest in maintaining the dollar's unrivaled prominence in the global economy as the world's key currency. This codependent relationship is largely the result of the long absence of a viable alternative to the dollar coupled with the dollar value's tremendous significance to various export-oriented economies, oil exports (which are priced in dollars), and dollarized economies such as those of Ecuador, El Salvador, and Panama. This can be understood as a kind of seigniorage resiliency: a de facto seigniorage status which persists well beyond the period wherein the U.S. dollar was formally ordained the world's reserve currency. As elucidated by economist Barry Eichengreen, "As in politics, in the competition to be a leading international financial center and to hold the top reserve-currency status, incumbency is an advantage." [9]

Therefore, as a result of other countries' interests in maintaining a stable dollar, the United States has been able to continue reaping the benefits of seigniorage — one of which being continued fiscal and Current Account deficits since the early 1980s. And whereas persistent deficits would normally oblige the deficit country to assume the burdens of adjustment, this too did not apply to the United States, especially in its relationship to Japan, which frequently ran trade surpluses. Throughout the first half of the 1980s, the United States grappled with the problem of running recurrent Current Account deficits with Japan. However, instead of imposing austerity measures to close the deficit and "live within its means," intense pressure from this country during the Plaza Conference resulted in the Japanese appreciating the yen, thereby shifting the brunt of the burden on the Japanese. Similarly, any debts held by the United States could (to some extent) be inflated away, which also shifts much of the burden off of this country and onto foreigners who hold the dollar as a store of value.

This international dependence upon the dollar's stability is a key component of seigniorage. But also central to the dollar's continued prominence in the post-Bretton Woods era is the lingering confidence in the soundness of the dollar (that is, confidence that the U.S. government is capable of financing the debt that it has accumulated and will never default on its debt). This helps explain why the common response of international investors to the global financial crisis — which originated in the U.S. real estate bubble — was to invest in none other than the United States itself. Citing this phenomenon as a "safe haven effect," one *New York Times* article reported that "the dollar has once again been affirmed as the global reserve currency," and that any perceptions of the dollar being a risky investment for foreign central banks have been "soundly debunked."[10] However, we should understand this recent flight to the dollar, first and foremost, to be the residual privilege of seigniorage resiliency insofar as investors are keenly aware that virtually all economies are dependent upon a stable dollar. The economist Paul Krugman explicates this point succinctly: "U.S. government debt is as safe as anything on the planet, not because the United States is the most responsible nation on earth but because a world in which the U.S. government collapses would be one in which pretty much everything else collapses too…"[11] But regardless of the underlying motivations, this flight to the dollar only serves to delay the need for this country to make "austerity" choices — thus postponing (and perhaps intensifying) the inevitable rectification. In the mean time, the United States can maintain its trade deficit, its warfare and welfare spending, mildly manage the vicissitudes and inequities inherent within capitalism, and avoid raising taxes, all while discussing future spending projects as though the funds for them are virtually limitless.

In spite of fears of a risky dollar being "soundly debunked," one can begin to hear the murmurings of doubt. Again, this is especially important given the fact that so much of the dollar's value, now that it is no longer collateralized by gold, is determined by the belief that it has such value (though, as noted earlier, this belief — and thus, confidence — largely springs from the recognition of the dollar's historical penetration into virtually all economies, and is therefore more an international dependence upon the stability of the dollar). For instance, because oil is priced — and thus, generally paid for — in dollars, the stability of the dollar is uniquely important. However, it was recently reported that major economies such as China, Japan, Russia, and Brazil seek to transition oil pricing away from the dollar by 2018.[12] But the subtle erosion of confidence in the dollar has perhaps found no greater voice than the Chinese government. For much of the past decade, U.S. officials and commentators have focused much emphasis on China's "currency manipulation." But now, even as slightly left-of-center commentators have begun pointing to the problem of China's currency being undervalued, it seems that officials and policymakers in the United States have become more reluctant to pressure China. In fact, as the recent G-20 summit revealed, there is a hesitancy to seriously pressure China to revalue its exchange rate, even as much of the world acknowledges the role of the so-called "global imbalances" in intensifying the severity of the current economic crisis.[13]

This fact becomes extremely important when we recall the actions of the United States in the past, which sought to shift the "burden of adjustment" to other countries, especially Japan. Moreover, China has recently become more vocal in questioning the strength of the dollar, with the Chinese premier, Wen Jiabao, stating in March that "We have lent a huge amount of money to the U.S. Of course we are concerned about the safety of our assets. To be honest, I am definitely a little worried."[14] Similarly, there are growing fears amongst the Chinese populace that the magnitude of China's dollar holdings could be potentially dangerous, resulting in considerable pressure on Chinese officials to reverse course.[15]

The discussion surrounding the valuation of China's unit of currency, the yuan, often misses the symbiotic relationship that exists between the two countries. First, the United States has consistently imported more goods and services from China than it has exported to it. Chinese officials are keenly aware of this dynamic and, as noted in a recent New York Times article, consciously seek to maintain a trade relationship where the United States is purchasing $4.46 worth of Chinese goods for every $1 that China purchases of U.S. goods.[16] Under normal conditions, this would mean that as the U.S. dollar is converted into the Chinese yuan in order to purchase these Chinese goods, the Chinese yuan should appreciate in value against the U.S. dollar. As this trend continues, the yuan would appreciate enough so as to dampen demand for Chinese products by U.S. consumers. But this has not been the case. In fact, in 2008, the trade deficit reached a record $268 billion.[17] Joseph E. Stiglitz argued in a *New York Times* article in

2006 that the United States' mounting trade deficit with China could not go on indefinitely and that there existed growing international awareness of this fact. The bad news, as he rightly pointed out, was that "no country believes its policies are to blame."[18] Some blame China's undervalued currency, while others blame the U.S.'s huge fiscal and trade deficits. The problem is that the two are closely intertwined. As a means of financing its enormous budget deficit, which, at the time of this writing, hovers around \$1.56 trillion[19], the U.S. relies heavily on China's purchasing of U.S. treasury bonds. This has several important effects. First, this assists in allowing the U.S. government to maintain its current levels of spending — whether for military, social, economic, or other expenditures. Second, it keeps Chinese goods inexpensive for U.S. consumers, which thereby contributes toward expanding the U.S. trade deficit. Third, it allows this country to maintain low interest rates, which, especially during a recession, are similarly convenient for U.S. consumers and businesses. In China's case, it has maintained an undervalued exchange rate largely by demanding U.S. treasury bonds and maintaining relatively low levels of domestic consumption. Both processes work favorably toward maintaining large surpluses in China: foreign currency reserves currently hover around \$2.2 trillion, the great majority of which are denominated in dollars. First, purchasing U.S. treasury bonds serves to prevent the value of the dollar from depreciating against the yuan. Such a depreciation would 1) immediately result in a depreciation of the dollar-denominated debt that China currently holds, and 2) make Chinese imports more expensive for U.S. consumers, causing a drop in demand. Second, low levels of domestic consumption in China — currently around 35 percent of GDP as compared to 70 percent in the U.S. — have resulted in a lack of demand for imports.[20] Thus, neglecting to stimulate more consumer spending has contributed to the trade deficit, which has in turn directed more attention to the undervalued yuan.[21]

The present situation represents a politico-economic stalemate, largely because rectifying it would require difficult, politically unfavorable choices to be made, especially in the United States. Current estimates approximate that the Chinese yuan is undervalued by roughly 15-25 percent,[22] while this country's budget deficit continues to mount (the trade deficit will likely begin ballooning again as the U.S. economy recovers). But as a recent Council on Foreign Relations article argues, "there is little constituency for concrete measures that would help reduce the imbalances of the world economy."[23] This is true in the U.S., where the government finances two foreign wars, resists raising taxes, and must work to steer the country out of a recession, as well as in China, which relies on a strong dollar to keep its exports competitive, its growth rates high, and its dollar-denominated assets from depreciating. If revaluing the yuan were to effectively curb U.S. consumption, what effect would this have on U.S. GDP — of which consumption represents approximately 70 percent? Finally, what effect would a revalued yuan have on American retail outfits that predominately sell Chinese goods? Would these firms simply find new suppliers, or would they be forced to scale back operations amidst falling consumer demand? Questions such as these reflect the risks of altering the status quo, and therefore the political reasons for failing to do so.

The Age of Sobriety

Nevertheless, the age of inebriation is unsustainable. An age in which a country persistently produces far more than it consumes, doing so by printing currency and selling its treasury bills domestically and — increasingly — abroad, necessarily must meet its end. The international economic and military position held by the United States throughout much of the twentieth century explains how this inebriation was able (and permitted) to exist for so long, but this historical fact in no way negates the necessity of eventual rectification. Whether this correction occurs vis-à-vis self-imposed or externally imposed austerity measures makes little difference. American citizens will suddenly find themselves on the receiving end of such austerity measures as those of the International Monetary Fund and its notorious "Structural Adjustment Programs." To be clear, it is not the prerogative of this paper that such a "rebalancing" must necessarily be rapid and calamitous. Instead, it is to stress that any move toward achieving fiscal austerity and improved trade balances will come with burdens to be shared by the American populace. Exactly how these burdens are shared has everything to do with politics.

What form will austerity measures take and, as a consequence, who will be most affected? Will warfare prevail over welfare?

At present, questions concerning U.S. deficit spending have become entangled in the traditional two-party divide. Many on the political Right have become overnight fiscal hawks, opposing virtually all new forms of federal discretionary spending. Of course, one need only observe the budgetary effects of hastily launching two protracted foreign wars while routinely cutting taxes, to discover the sheer hypocrisy in demanding fiscal soundness in the present. Indeed, much of the political Left (radical and non-radical alike) often counters with a similar response, perhaps then justifying the morality and worthiness of stimulus spending, major health care reform, etc. What is absent from the debate, however, is that the "warfare and welfare" strategy of the United States is ultimately unsustainable. As other countries have had to make "tough choices," so too will this country as its privileged position in the world economy continues to be abused beyond repair, and thus increasingly challenged.

Thus far, few have paid any attention to what effect the end of U.S. seigniorage will have upon class relations — and therefore class-based politics. In fact, many have chosen to view the decline of dollar hegemony as a positive development, as did the market economists in the wake of the Bretton Woods collapse. Zakaria, for example, writes that, "The United States would benefit from being forced to make some hard decisions that will ultimately make it better off."[24] The essential point to be noticed is that arguments concerning the need for the U.S. dollar to decline have begun to do so from a patriotic standpoint. For instance, one such article in *Foreign Affairs* similarly argues that the dominance of the U.S. has led to poor policymaking, and that the U.S. government should now concentrate on "increasing productivity," as well as implementing tax policies that "create incentives for both U.S. and foreign firms to locate in the United States," specifically by, "cutting corporate tax rates."[25] Such prescriptions should sound familiar to the political Left. Views such as these, while making perfect sense to most mainstream economists, are nevertheless detached from the economic and social realities — and, therefore, the political discontents — that come with the implementation of such "hard decisions." Many point approvingly to the consecutive budget surpluses run during the Clinton Administration, for example, but usually neglect the substantial cuts in social programs that helped, at least in part, to make those surpluses possible. But to what extent might fiscal "self-restraint" re-politicize class inequalities?

Lessons From Latin America

THE COUNTRIES OF LATIN AMERICA are no strangers to structural adjustment programs and measures to improve fiscal austerity. But one fascinating example to look at, especially for our purposes, is that of Venezuela. In the 1950s, Venezuela saw the end of a military regime and the beginning of a "pact democracy" known as *puntofijismo.* Eventually, this pact devolved into two political parties: AD and COPEI. While high oil prices sustained the popularity of this so-called "Fourth Republic" throughout much of the 1970s, it began to see countervailing pressures in the 1980s. Declining oil revenues and debt obligations forced successive governments to self-impose austerity measures. The resultant hardships caused the Venezuelan populace to switch back and forth between the two parties in search of a less painful solution. However, successive administrations committed what became known as the "great turnaround" — i.e. running on a populist platform and, after winning office, imposing austerity measures anyway. This pattern culminated in the Caracazo riots of 1989 — in part, a reaction to the one hundred percent increase in gasoline prices ordered by the once popular Pérez administration. Economic hardship continued for a substantial portion of Venezuelans, eventually leading to the "failed coup" of 1992 led by Hugo Chávez, earning him national acclaim. Throughout much of the 1990s, Venezuelans grew increasingly frustrated with the longstanding Punto Fijo government. By 1996, with an inflation rate over one hundred percent and increased foreign debt, IMF-negotiated structural adjustment policies were reinstated under the benign banner, the "Venezuela Agenda." Most notably, these policies included the privatization of the SIDOR steel company as well as the effective privatization of the CANTV telephone company. Additionally, the Caldera government — as a means of attracting foreign investment — oversaw the weakening of workers' benefits (vis-à-vis the Labor Law of 1997) and increased liberalization of the social security system and oil industry.[26]

The consequences of the Venezuela Agenda, again, involved deteriorating conditions for the Venezuelan poor. The situation was becoming increasingly ripe for a candidate who opposed the Punto Fijo regime. By 1997, 67 percent of Venezuelans were subsisting on less than $2 per day.[27] What is important to observe is that the "shock treatment" approach toward rebalancing the Venezuelan economy had significant socioeconomic ramifications. But perhaps the most important consequence of the structural reforms was the refueling of long-dormant class antagonisms in Venezuelan society. For instance, one study notes that, "Shortly after the reforms began, public opinion surveys discovered that nearly twice as many upper-class respondents supported the new model as opposed it, while lower-class respondents were more than six times as likely to reject the reforms as to support them."[28] Thus, the reforms that were instituted early on in the second Pérez presidency — which many would describe as "neoliberal" in nature — in many ways re-politicized class inequalities, creating fertile ground for an anti-Punto Fijo, class-conscious movement to exploit. Today, the Chávez administration represents one of, if not the most, openly anti-capitalist governments in the world.

One author on the subject explained Venezuela's economic situation in the 1980s succinctly: "For decades the country had consumed more than it produced; inescapably, to restore balance, real incomes and consumption had to decline."[29] Again, however rational this prescription appears, it nonetheless fails to capture the ways in which "restoring balance" generated a revival of class-based politics in Venezuela. And the example of Venezuela is by no means unique — many would argue that austerity reforms in Bolivia helped lead to the resounding victory of President Evo Morales, who is also openly critical of capitalism and its neoliberal prescriptions for development. The point is that "restoring balance" does not come without political reaction. And this reaction will often come from those that must endure the brunt of the economic burden — i.e. the poor and working class.

A Return to Class Politics?

If the Latin American experience with structural adjustment and self-imposed austerity measures contains any lesson, it is that such measures lay bare the preferential treatment of the capitalist class. In other words, in such a situation, class inequalities become re-politicized. Noam Chomsky has argued in the past that "class" has become a four-letter word in the United States. Indeed, when Democrats and progressives propose raising the top income tax rate by several percentage points (usually to approximately thirty-nine percent), they are frequently charged with inciting "class warfare." But the reluctance to do so is in itself a symptom of inebriated politics, wherein launching two foreign wars results in tax cuts rather than tax increases. In contrast, financing the Second World War and the Cold War during the 1950s, for example, required nominal tax rates on the wealthiest Americans to be above eighty percent, even briefly topping ninety percent.

But things have changed, and openly class-based politics now finds little support among an increasingly overworked and underpaid American workforce. Some may point to how the policies of specific administrations led to this development. But what is often missed is the role that seigniorage privileges have played in allowing successive governments to maintain welfare programs (i.e. entitlements) that benefit much of the so-called "middle class" (such as Medicare and Social Security, for example), while simultaneously pursuing large-scale, prolonged international military ambitions. Even today, as the U.S. government is incurring record deficits as a result of bank bailouts and stimulus spending, the United States is quietly expanding its military presence in Colombia, which will reportedly last well into next decade.[30] This is of course in addition to the recently approved $680 billion budget for 2010 — utterly dwarfing China (the second highest military spender) by approximately $600 billion[31] — which doesn't include the potential additional $50 billion for the war in Afghanistan.[32]

The point is that this country continues to be free from the economic restraints that would ordinarily require it to make "tough choices." *Not having to make these choices has, at least in part, served to postpone the precipitation of class-based politics in the United States.* And while some argue that the current spending levels are of strict necessity (presumably to counter the current recession), and will be scaled back once the recession is over, history suggests otherwise. Self-imposing austerity measures — especially when they are concentrated on social programs and entitlements — is politically inconvenient and potentially dangerous. Thus, such measures will likely be postponed for future administrations to handle. Others use the budget deficits as a means of attacking the Obama administration (and perhaps Keynesian economic policies in general), though they will rarely concede that military expenditures are similarly "out of control" or, perhaps more damning, "inefficient." And, as mentioned earlier, one of the more fascinating developments has been the emergence of a patriotic argument in favor of the U.S. dollar's decline. Such arguments generally posit that reigning in profligate spending, however painful in the short-term, is a necessary precursor if the United States hopes to remain competitive and prosperous over the long-term in an increasingly globalized world. What is missing from this argument, however, is the question of exactly how this newfound sobriety will affect class-based politics within this country.

Therefore, if we are to inquire about the future of class-based politics in the United States, we must ask two important questions. First, what form will austerity measures take and, as a consequence, who will be most affected? Will warfare prevail over welfare? Or, will increasing hardship and social unrest result in the build-up of police and military forces? Will government spending openly favor capital over labor; trickle-down economics over social justice? Or, will the growing Libertarian voice prevail, thereby shrinking government in the interest of freeing the market and "securing liberty?" Second, how much of a disruption to their standard of living will most Americans tolerate before seeking out, as did Venezuelans during the 1990s, a new voice that criticizes not only the unjust nature of the austerity measures, but also perhaps the unjust nature of capitalism itself? In sum, it is often felt amongst the U.S. Left that capitalism and capitalist forces are primarily responsible for the marginalization of the radical Left in the United States, whether vis-à-vis the privately-owned media, political institutions, law, public education, etc. The irony here is that it is precisely capitalism itself that will create a new opening for the U.S. radical Left — that is of course, if we want it.

NOTES

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20. "The Spend is Nigh," *The Economist*, 7/30/09, Available at www.economist.com/businessfinance/displaystory.cfm?story_id=14124376. (Accessed on 7/29/09)

21. Stiglitz and others in the past have noted that China, at least, has a "Plan B," which would require a shifting of the emphasis from exporting and saving to importing and consuming.

22. "The Spend is Nigh," *loc. cit.*

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Co-founder of New Politics
Phyllis Jacobson, 1922-2010
A Personal and Political Tribute to Phyllis

LYNN CHANCER

IT'S A STAPLE of American comedians to make fun of in-laws in general and mothers-in-law in particular. But, in my case and with no offense to Michael, I could have married my husband simply for his parents.

In fact, I knew of Julie and Phyllis long before I met Michael. When I was at Princeton as a young woman, doing research on the U.S. left, I came across the book *The Negro and the American Labor Movement* edited by Julius Jacobson and written before the term African-American came into common and preferred usage. Because of this, I was already impressed when I met Michael Jacobson, the son of an American leftist — the quite-cool-and-interesting-to-me-sounding radical, "Third Camp Socialist" figure Julius Jacobson.

But, as I know well as a feminist, much as I loved and respected my father-in-law, there could and would have been no Julie *qua* respected left democratic socialist theorist and debater without Phyllis. They were a team: Phyllis-and-Julie, Julie-and-Phyllis, inseparable and linked at the hip even though they grew up in (and tried to transcend) a traditionally gendered, raced and classed world. In some ways, their lives were conventional in terms of gender roles: Phyllis did more of the cooking, taking care of the house, more of the raising of Michael (it was, after all, the 50s), more of the administrative work for their long-standing publication *New Politics* — and more of the typing, transcribing and editing of all Julie's articles. In other ways, though, their love — for I will always think of Phyllis and Julie's story as, at one level, a love story — transcended gender hierarchies and conventions. I saw this very clearly after Phyllis' tragic stroke when Julie, as so many men of his generation would never have done, refused to leave her bedside, setting up a telephone and bringing his books so that he could be by her side. He wouldn't even leave to go to the Socialist Scholars Conference one year, saying to me that "being with Phyllis was much more important, and what gave his life meaning."

But why did Phyllis mean so much to me over the years I knew her, from the time we met when she was just about my age — i.e., in her 50s? The reasons are as much personal as political, emotional as much as if not more than intellectual. For, very soon after she came to know me, Phyllis accepted and loved me virtually as a daughter. She showered me with the unique combination of kindness and intelligence, dignity, and determination that I later learned marked her relationships with many other people as well. What I admired so much in her was the grace she created, her utter commitment with Julie to enjoying pleasures from eating to listening to music and appreciating the beauty of art and antiques to traveling. At the same time, Phyllis shared with Julie a passionate commitment to justice and overcoming inequalities: their anti-Stalinist socialism involved a vision in which everyone, not just class, racial and gendered elites, could partake of the beauties of day-to-day life.

To capture both the personal and the political, the emotional and intellectual, aspects of my relationship with Phyllis, I'd like to share with you some vignettes and images, through the many years I knew my lovely, kind, and intelligent mother-in-law Phyllis Jacobson:

• One image goes back to when Michael and I were first together, and he was busy in the late 80s working in the City's budget office. I would call Phyllis some afternoons when I was upset about the pressures of the Columbia tenure process I was going through, or lonely because Michael had to work long hours, and I can hear Phyllis saying immediately, "Come right over" and my knowing I would have a cheery evening of dinner and conversation.

• And I can see Phyllis in my mind's eye bounding down the stairs cheerfully when I would come, saying "Hi child." If I complained about Michael to her (as I remember doing sometimes during that particularly stressful period), she would say, "Oh, I don't know what you do with someone like that."

• Then so many dinners, wonderful evenings, come back to mind with Michael and Julie and Phyllis and I — dinners when the conversation was truly at least 50 percent about food and 50 percent about politics. We'd debate whether Empire chickens were the best or Murray's, and whether Staubitz the butcher was too over-priced (as Phyllis would complain) and how to best cook some delicious dish Phyllis was making. Then the conversation would move as though seamlessly into politics and I can almost hear Phyllis' voice as she decried one "miserable" politician or another (from Clinton to Cheney and back again). And then we would move from debating food to debating a political question — like capital punishment. For some odd reason, Julie didn't share Phyllis, Michael and my opposition to capital punishment — and, at least on this issue, I would find Phyllis to be the better, more articulate and even fiercer debater than Julie.

• And then, after we'd talked about food and eaten and talked about politics, there were so many evenings when I can see the maps coming out as we'd plan summer trips that Phyllis and Julie took so many times, and which before our son Alexander's birth, for many years, we managed to take with them. Many people would think Phyllis and Julie had lots of money, but they might not know that both of them would economize all year (eating in pretty much all the time), saving all year for precious European voyages they loved). And then, many times, the four of us did meet up in the 14th arrondissement in Paris on the Rue Boulard or sometimes outside Paris and even once (as I recall) in Venice, comparing notes and Phyllis saying enthusiastically "Let's do it" about going to particular monuments or art exhibits or restaurants or just to a local market or store we'd heard about.

• Then I remember when Alexander (whom Phyllis and Julie called "Sasha") was born, and a picture comes to mind of being in the Jacobsons' house where Michael and I used to change Alex's diaper on top of the washing machine. I can remember Phyllis shouting Julie's nickname, "Yudi! Yudi! Come down here!" when we were about to change Alex because she wanted him to share with her the joys and sensuousness of her finally having become a grandmother.

• This is where some of these "personal" beautiful memories start to become sad, though, as I remember the tragic years after Phyllis became sick and was confined — this wonderful lively, smart, energetic woman — to the nursing home. Yet somehow, someway — even from this horrific position when Phyllis' stroke left her unable to speak and to move — there was something, in all those years, of the same dignity that characterized Phyllis in the years when she was well. Anyone who came to visit Phyllis in the nursing home might know what I mean about a certain recognizable dignified smile that came onto her face even under these conditions — when she was no longer living in her beautiful home surrounded by lovely antiques, and when there was nothing to offer any of us by way of food or drink or greetings. And yet somehow, someway, she would greet strangers and nurses with some of that same dignified poise and grace that characterized her in her better days — and she would still raise her fingers as though to make an older point of debate or argumentation. Michael and I could still make her laugh by telling her funny stories.

WHAT DIGNITY, what an amazing testament to the human spirit, to strength of will, does Phyllis offer to us not only in her younger and happier days but even through and up to the end.

But I want to leave you today not just with these images of Phyllis the beautiful and strong woman and person, but of Phyllis the intellectual. See, for example, her article "Black Outrage in Los Angeles" that she wrote for *New Politics* in 1992, or the *NP* review she wrote in summer 1997.

Thank you, Phyllis, for everything — for the love and role model you presented me, and for the belief in a better personal-and-political world that I still share, and for providing me inspiration for the rest of my life, as a mother, as a teacher, as a friend. I'll never ever forget you and what you meant to me: how could I?

Dan La Botz, Ohio Socialist Party Candidate for the U.S. Senate

Dan La Botz, a school teacher, writer, and activist from Cincinnati, Ohio is running as the Socialist Party candidate for the U.S. Senate. "We in Ohio and all of us in the United States face a series of interrelated economic, environmental, and foreign policy crises," said La Botz, "and neither the Republicans nor the Democrats have a program to address these issues and to take our country forward."

"Ohio's official unemployment rate is 11 percent, while the unofficial employment rate is 17 percent — and all the Republicans and Democrats can talk about is a tax break for business," said La Botz. "We need to have the government take over idle plants and put people to work building for the green economy. The government should itself invest in industry and services to put people to work. Where the government takes over or creates plants, they should be controlled democratically by our society, and run by the workers with the input of consumers."

"But to change the direction of our country, we need to build a powerful movement of working people that can wrest power form the corporations. Working people make the country run, and they should run the country," said the candidate.

La Botz, 64, a former Fulbright Scholar, teaches Spanish at a private school in Cincinnati, and for ten years before that was a professor of U.S. History and Latin American studies at Miami University, the University of Cincinnati, and Northern Kentucky University. A long time labor and civil rights activist, in the 1970s La Botz was a founding member of Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), the Teamster reform movement. Later in the 1980s, he worked as a community organizer among Latino immigrants in Chicago. He is a member of the editorial board of *New Politics.*

While living and working in Cincinnati, La Botz became active in local civil rights issues, fighting against police discrimination and brutality in the African-American community, and working with Latino immigrants for immigrant rights. Throughout his life he has been an activist against U.S. wars abroad and for workers' rights at home.

La Botz has thrust himself into the middle of the debate between the Tea Party and the Obama administration about the question of whether or not the United States is being transformed into a socialist country by Obama.

"Historically, socialism grew out of the labor movements of the nineteenth century, and its basic notion was the working people, the workers and farmers who formed the majority of the society, should democratically control the government and the economy for the benefit of all. The Obama administration, which came to power in the midst of a severe economic crisis, has demonstrated that its principal preoccupation has been to save American capitalism, the banks, and corporations. Billions of working peoples' tax money has been redistributed to banks, insurance companies, and corporations, but we have not gained any control over those institutions. On the contrary, they continue to exploit working people and to block the road to reform," said La Botz.

"The measures taken to deal with the crisis, first by the Bush and then by the Obama Administration, such as the nationalization of certain financial institutions and the buying up of the stock of industrial corporations, are similar to those taken by other capitalist countries — from Japan, to Mexico, to France, to Sweden — during other recent crises. (I have discussed these issues at greater length in the articles "The Financial Crisis: Will the U.S. Nationalize the Banks?" by Dan La Botz http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2008/labotz280908.html and "The Financial Crisis: A View from the Left" by Dan La Botz http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2008/labotz240908.html) Throughout history when there is an economic crisis, the capitalist state and capitalist parties have intervened to save the banks and corporations, sometimes by nationalizing them, and then later selling them back to private investors.

"The Republican and Democratic Parties, both dominated by the banks, insurance companies, and multinational corporations, serve their interests. Working people — workers, nurses, bus drivers, steelworkers, teachers, Wal-Mart workers, autoworkers, and computer programmers — need their own political party. Such a party will only be constructed only by an independent and militant social movement fighting for change. We need to build a powerful movement of working people that can demand that the large corporations be socialized, taken over the government, but democratically controlled by the people of the United States.

"What would socialism mean? Here's an example. The U.S. government now owns almost half of General Motors, so why don't we turn those plants to green production — solar panels, wind turbines, hydrothermal equipments — to solve both the economic and environmental problems we face? We could as a people democratically elaborate a plan for the banks and corporations which we own, a plan to be carried out by workers collaborating with consumers, advised by environmentalists.

"We would not run these plants or others for profit, but rather to take care of the human needs of the American people. We would not wage war to control the world's oil, but rather wage peace to share our knowledge and experience to help the rest of the world achieve a decent standard of living. Such a sharing of economic know-how, raising the world's living standards, would also relate to the kinds of immigration issues we now face, because people migrate in search of a decent standard of living, and most wouldn't migrate if they had jobs and security in their own countries.

"The Obama Administration proposes that a government run by corporations also regulate the corporations in order to save the corporations from destroying themselves in their chaotic struggle to control our nation's wealth and resources. Obama's government, like Bush's, acts as a kind of super-executive committee of corporations, working to coordinate the corporations so they will be more successful in wringing their wealth from us. Socialists argue that America's working people make the country run, and working people should also run the country. There is all the difference in the world between those two visions and programs."

BACK OF THE BOOK

A Radical for All Time

MARVIN MANDELL

> Emma
> HOWARD ZINN
> as performed by the Next Move Theatre, Boston, Maxine Klein, director

HOWARD ZINN'S *EMMA* is a powerful play about the young adulthood (1886-1906) of Emma Goldman (1869-1940). We see Emma in sweatshop, home, bar, brothel, prison. We see her struggling against the oppressiveness of family, boss, even comrade. But Zinn has not given us cardboard figures for propaganda. *Emma* is not a *Waiting for Lefty,* which has interchangeable parts for characters, as S. J. Perelman pointed out in his *Waiting for Santy* parody. And pathos is not Zinn's thing: he respects his characters too much for that. For example, although no one can challenge Emma's total commitment to The Struggle, Zinn shows us that she knows how to celebrate, too. She defends a comrade's indulgence in a shirt considered frivolous by Alexander Berkman, Emma's sometime lover and lifelong comrade and friend. Zinn captures Emma's vitality, her joyfulness: she dances and sings; she loves flowers (*pace* Berkman's revolutionary austerity!); at the same time that she defends President McKinley's assassin, she offers to nurse McKinley; she becomes a midwife.

In 1892, Henry Clay Frick, as the acting head of Carnegie Steel, hired about 300 Pinkertons to protect both property and scabs during the Homestead strike. Many workers were killed. In response, Berkman convinces his comrades that Frick must die and that he must kill him. Emma tries to prostitute herself for a short time in order to raise money for the gun. (This incident was not used in the play; we see Emma in a brothel, but Zinn implies that loss of her room is her sole reason for her being there.) Berkman succeeds only in wounding Frick. Zinn does a magnificent, almost Chekhovian job in capturing the confusion of this scene.

Zinn shows Emma opposing the anarchist leader Johann Most for his belittling Berkman's act on petty grounds. Yet he misses an opportunity to deepen the irony, in that he does not mention that later Emma opposes Berkman's belittling Czolgosz's assassination of McKinley (again on petty grounds, in her view).

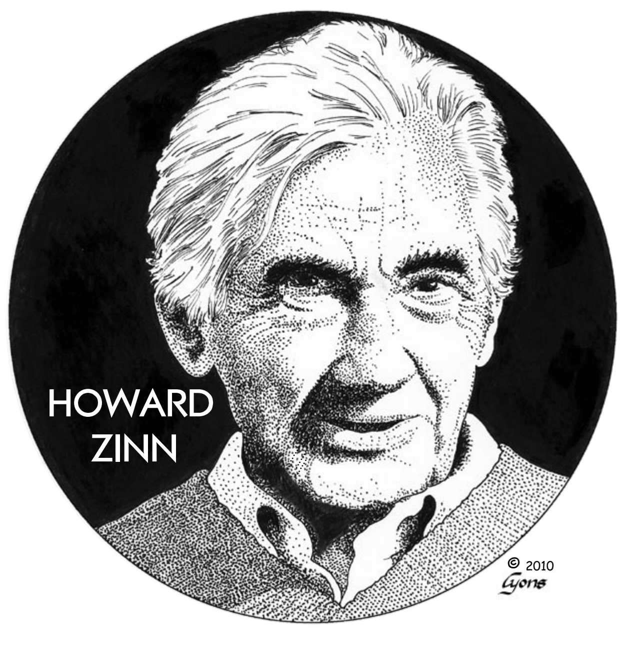
Zinn has arranged the play in swiftly moving tableaux revealing a wide spectrum of political, social, and emotional conflict. As in a Dickens or Zola novel, we are moved from degradation to resistance to solidarity to joyfulness to conflict to suffering, etc. Zinn has evoked a real sense of movement, of urgency in the heyday of anarchist struggle. Equally well, he has captured the essence of the immigrants' fierce struggle to survive in a country which had promised a New Jerusalem and delivered sweatshops and firetraps. The tableaux provide us with a wide range of relationships. Yet, in doing so, perhaps they sacrifice the depth of a continuing relationship. One gets more of the depth of the Goldman-Berkman relationship from reading Richard Drinnon's biography of Emma (*Rebel in Paradise)* or his *Nowhere at Home* (letters between Goldman and Berkman). I do not wish to criticize the play for not doing what it did not set out to do. Yet I have the feeling that much of Emma's character was simplified (as were her politics), and perhaps this could have been avoided by probing more deeply into the Goldman-Berkman relationship.

But this is minor compared to what Zinn has accomplished. Only radicals, humanists, and artists could do what he did, and only inspired ones, at that. I wish only that the play be revived and that a road tour arranged so that *Emma* can be brought to every corner of our country. We live now in despairing times when every triumphant work is itself a revolutionary act.

Emma's offer to nurse McKinley was a serious offer and reveals her basic humanism. In going to the root of things, the radical is a humanist, destroying reluctantly but always seeking to create. Both Howard Zinn and Emma Goldman were such humanists.

NOTE: *Democratic Left* published a moving obituary of Howard Zinn (1922-2010) by *New Politics* board member Steve Shalom. It has been republished on our website, newpol.org.

CRUSADERS FOR JUSTICE



"There is a tendency to think that what we see in the present moment we will continue to see. We forget how often in this century we have been astonished by extraordinary changes in people's thoughts, by unexpected eruptions of rebellion against tyrannies by the quick collapse of systems of power that seemed invincible...

To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness.

What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives. If we only see the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those times and places—and there are so many—where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act, and at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a world in a different direction."

— Howard Zinn
Activist, historian, writer

The Unliquidated Crisis of Capitalism

BARRY FINGER

Zombie Capitalism:
Global Crisis and the
Relevance of Marx
CHRIS HARMAN
London: Bookmarks Publications, 2009
400pp., $24.95

THIS RECENT WORK BY the late Chris Harman is an application of the "permanent arms economy" theory, a hallmark of the British Socialist Workers Party, to the current economic crisis. This analysis is borrowed in part from the American writer T.N. Vance who argued in the presses of the Independent Socialist League of the early 1950s that the much anticipated reversion to the "unliquidated" crisis conditions of the 1930s was averted at the close of World War II through an application of military Keynesianism. "Imagine," Vance asked, "what would have happened to capital accumulation and to production if war outlays had returned to the negligible level of 1939 or before! In one sentence, the prophets of postwar depression would have been correct." Keynes, one might recall, admonished " 'To dig holes in the ground,' paid out of savings, will increase, not only employment, but the real national dividend of useful goods and services. It is not unreasonable, however, that a sensible community should be content to remain dependent on such fortuitous and often wasteful mitigations when once we understand the influences upon which effective demand depends."

Vance gave the theory a Marxian gloss. "War expenditures accomplish the same purpose as public works, but in a manner that is decidedly more effective and more acceptable (from the capitalist point of view)." Vance, like such actual socialist prophets of postwar depression as Fritz Sternberg (*The Coming Crisis of Capitalism*, 1947), apparently ascribed the crisis tendencies of capitalism to market scarcity owing to the restricted consumption of the working class. This lack of effective demand required, if not as its permanent antidote then as a palliative, the "necessity for state intervention to immobilize excess accumulations of unpaid labor…" through the increased diversion of industrial resources to waste production, output that cannot be reapplied directly or indirectly to the expansion of economic capacity. It required, as Keynes had also suggested, capitalism "borrowing from the techniques employed by the more static class societies of slavery and feudalism," of burying capital, in effect, in an economic ditch.

Vance argued that this permanent war economy, as he called it, would lead initially to a burst of employment and profits, freeing capital to accumulate rapidly. But the cost of hiving off industrial capacity to armaments must, Vance argued, inevitably come at the cost of the wage goods sector and ultimately economic stagnation. The increasing demand for capital goods — buildings, resources, machinery, raw materials — to expand both the capital goods producing sector needed to reproduce both itself and the armaments sector dictated, in effect, economizing solely where there was slack to economize with, namely the growth capacity for consumption goods. Money wages, at full capacity employment, would rise in excess of actual wage good production leading to an ir-

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resistible tendency to permanent inflation. Full employment would therefore be purchased at the costs of the relative and — ultimately — at the absolute impoverishment of the working class. The short-term cyclical nature of the economy would be ironed out without providing the working class with increased security. As such, Vance held, the material basis for revolutionary politics could be preserved even in the context of full employment.

The problem with this theory was twofold. First, it did not seem to describe American capitalist reality of the 1950s and 60s. While an increase in arms spending was indeed a seemingly intransigent feature of Cold War capitalism and economic crises seemed to be an historical relic, working class living standards nevertheless thrived and high levels of economic growth proved capable of flourishing within a context of relatively low inflation. When, in the early 1970s, things began to unravel, leading both to stagnation and inflation, the crisis tendencies of capitalism also began to reassert themselves in the recognizable forms of unemployment, profit erosion, and a fiscal crisis of the state — the very combination which seemed to be precluded by Vance's theory.

When, in the early 1970s, things began to unravel, leading both to stagnation and inflation, the crisis tendencies of capitalism also began to reassert themselves.

Second, and equally important, the underlying theory proved too much. As Vance presented the case, capitalism itself seemed economically impossible without the ongoing "immobilization" of profits. "The ruling class is impaled on the horns of a most serious dilemma: to allow those growing and mature accumulations (of capital — BF) to enter into economic circulation means to undermine the very foundations of existing society (in modern terms, depression); to reduce or eliminate these expanding accumulations of unpaid labor requires the ruling class or sections of it to commit hari-kari (in modern terms, the capitalist must cease being a capitalist or enter into bankruptcy)." In other words, Vance suggested that capital accumulation cannot internally sustain the level of demand needed to maintain the rate of profit in the absence of a state generated market for waste production.

That capital accumulation cannot itself sustain at length the level of demand needed to maintain the consistency of the profit rates, may be true enough. But Vance rejected out of hand the possibility of capitalism coexisting with a falling rate of profit, which is the alternative outcome to the process that he described. To do so would be "like asking capitalists to accept a 3 percent rate of profit, because if they make 6 or 10 percent they … destroy the economic equilibrium." Yet as long as capital accumulates faster than the rate at which profitability falls, the fall in the rate of profit would be compensated by a rise in the mass of profits. Insofar, and only insofar, as that process can be sustained — the very elusive possibility of economic "equilibrium" that Vance so vehemently denied, would in fact be supportable. Conversely, because the state markets no commodities, it has no independent source of income beyond its ability to tax and borrow, which is itself simply a form of deferred taxation. The creation of a market for arms can eliminate the problem of excess capital capacity, were it to exist, and can therefore increase the mass of profits by bringing unused private resources into play. But the state can accomplish this only by annexing idle liquidity, with the promise of future repayment with interest, and recycling this liquidity to the market in the form of government contracts. What appears in the short term as an injection of profitability due to government intervention can be sustained only by the expropriation and redistribution of capitalist income once full capacity is again attained. The arms economy would then, in the context of full capacity, be able to expand only by squeezing the profits of the private sector. This makes it all the more difficult to support the pace of accumulation needed to further raise the mass of profits in the reproductive sectors against the renewed pressures of declining profitability and stagnation.

THIS IS WHERE HARMAN TAKES OVER in the further development of the theory of the permanent arms economy. Harman's political associate Tony Cliff drew directly from Vance's analysis and was unable to bring any new insights into the mix except in one critical detail. Cliff argued that the tendencies identified in western capitalism also applied to the "bureaucratic state capitalisms" of the Soviet bloc. That is, Cliff and his associates argued that competition with the West induced tendencies within the Stalinist economies that paralleled the workings of market capitalism. Michael Kidron, writing in the 1960s, supported the permanent arms economy theory but on an entirely different footing. Where he and now Harman were to differ from Cliff and Vance is that both came to see arms production primarily as a countertendency to a falling rate of profit, rather than as an offset to the rather primitive "underconsumptionism" that underscored previous versions of the theory. The central dynamic of "closed capitalism" was in Kidron's words this: "(S)ince unpaid labor is the sole source of profit and the outlay on labor power a constantly declining part of all investment outlays, profit as a proportion of total investment is bound to decline." Therefore a rapid buildup of capital combined with "even the most marginal rise in real wages would precipitate bankruptcy and slump."

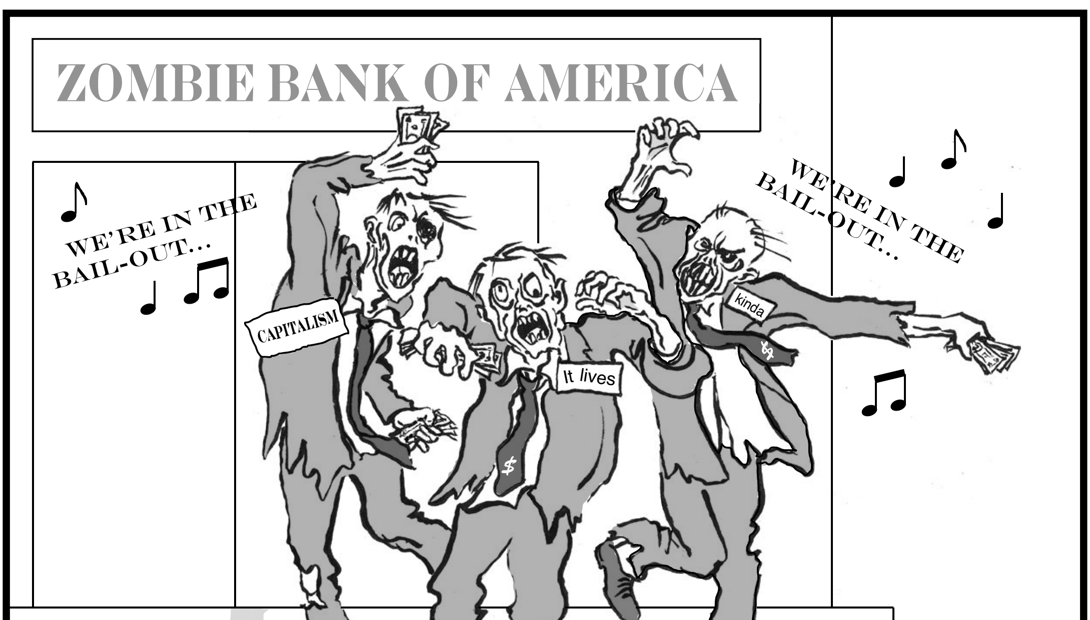
But Kidron believed he had discovered a loophole to the falling rate of profit in the work of neo-Ricardian theorists who were gaining academic traction in the 1960s. Questioning the adequacy of Marx's price theory, the neo-Ricardians argued that the rate of profit was determined solely by the conditions of production in the capital and wage goods industries, those industries that contributed to the material reproduction of the system as a whole, rather than by the all-sector competition to divide the pool of profits collectively created in the economy. Since armaments were not part of the reproductive sectors of the economy, shunting excess capital into waste production seemingly shielded the economy from the effects of a falling rate of profit. Kidron never argued that the ruling classes had any great neo-Ricardian insights into the workings of capitalism, but rather that capitalism fell into this virtuous trap through the political necessities of Cold War rivalry. The problem is that he no longer could really make a convincing case for revolutionary working class politics. It is true that Kidron would argue that the rising technological intensity of the arms industry could create stubborn structural pockets of unemployment, and that the price to pay for ironing out the business cycle was likely a moderation in the tempo of growth. But this is no longer a capitalism lacking the economic fat to continuously add to the economic security and well being of its working classes through rather modest redistributive concessions.

That is not to say that workers' struggles would disappear. After all, the forms of hierarchal social organization at the workplace remain rigid and oppressive. Working arrangements, rules and discipline, the intensity of labor, the dignity of labor on the shop floor and in the working environment are all issues that cannot be eliminated by economic stability. Still the question remains as to how to translate fragmentary concerns and particular issues into larger social movements and political networks for comprehensive change when the crucial underlying necessity for sweeping change —

wholesale economic insecurity — is lacking.

Moreover, Kidron, with his concentration on runaway waste production, nonreproductive commodities of which armaments are a special case, raised issues more conducive to a far different approach to socialism. The picture which Kidron paints — but which he failed to pursue — was one of a capitalism increasingly confronted with ecological barriers, which it cannot overcome. In order to overcome them, economic development and growth must be made in a rational, democratically planned and controlled way – which, no doubt, is incompatible with capitalism. But the problems that confront society primarily facing an ecological barrier do not summon the working class, except as individual members of a larger outraged public, to play a key strategic role.

How did Harman and Kidron come to accept the neo-Ricardian approach that denies the non-productive sectors' influence on the overall profitability of capital? The argument, such as it is, has been presented this way by Piero Sraffa, the principle theorist of the Ricardian revival. "If an invention were to reduce by half the quantity of each of the means of production which are required to produce a unit of a 'luxury' commodity of this type, the commodity itself would be halved in price, but there would be no further consequences; the price-relations of the other products and the rate of profits would remain unaffected." But what Kidron and Harman forget is this: Sraffa's conclusions only hold true under the hypothetical assumptions maintained in the Sraffaian model that is "concerned exclusively with properties of an economic system as do not depend on changes in the scale of production or in the proportion of 'factors.'" That is, the neo-Ricardian critique operates under the assumptions common to mainstream neo-classical economists of a system without capital accumulation. It is spe-



cifically designed to challenge the conclusions of mainstream economists on their own turf.

Once that crucial assumption is discarded, as it must be, to examine the actual workings of an economy in motion, very different conclusions arise. Under a dynamic system, inventions that lower production costs by diminishing the capital intensity of the production process increase profitability, regardless of the sphere of production involved. The increase in profitability under such circumstances in any sector draws investment to it, thereby allowing it to expand relative to all other spheres. This drives down the average level of capital intensity. As a result, a dollar's worth of capital investment becomes coupled with a growing level of profit-yielding employment. It is associated, in other words, with a system-wide increase in profitability.

> How did Harman and Kidron come to accept the neo-Ricardian approach that denies the non-productive sectors influence on the overall profitability of capital?

Similarly, productivity gains that coincide with an increase in the investment of capital relative to wages ultimately tend to attract to them additional investment in search of profit differentials. But to quite different ends. By drawing investment disproportionately to capital-intensive sections, the overall capital intensity of the system grows. However, now a dollar's worth of investment is associated with a diminished level of profit-yielding employment and — therefore — a falling rate of profit. In an expanding economy, changes that affect the direction of profitability do not distinguish between "reproductive" and "nonreproductive" spheres of investment. Consequently, the distinction that the neo-Ricardians and Kidron-Harman prize as so noteworthy are effectively devoid of any real world applicability.

Where the distinction between "reproductive" and "nonreproductive" investment becomes crucial is, as we shall argue, in the pace or rate at which the system as a whole can expand.

This is the theoretical problem that Harman inherited. Unfortunately, he makes a regular hash out of this challenge. Harman above all seems intent on proving his Marxist orthodoxy — which, in his case, means rejecting the once fashionable neo-Ricardian fancies — while retaining the crucial neo-Ricardian corollary that armament production offsets the falling rate of profit. In other words, Harman is out to rescue his political tendency from the theoretical and historical problem that it is ill-equipped to explain: the return of the capitalist business cycle of rampant unemployment and the decades long erosion of working class living standards.

Harman contends that the resumption of capitalist crises coincided with the reduction of the relative weight of the armaments sector within the world economy. "The very success of low arms spending economies began to put pressure on the high arms spenders to switch resources away from arms and towards productive investment. For only then could they begin to meet the challenge they faced in market competition from Japan and West Germany." But this begs the question: Why were low arms spenders more successful, if success is measured by profit rates, in the post-war decades when the entire theory seems to suggest — if not predict — the very opposite? Why was Japan, where military expenditure is about .8 percent of GDP, in a decades-long slump commencing in the 1990s, despite being a low arms spender? Conversely, why didn't Germany experience the wild gyrations of the business cycle based on its relatively low armaments expenses (1.5 percent of GDP) throughout the post-war years? Can the collapse of the bureaucratic "state capitalist" economies be based on their retreat from arms productions or was their retreat a byproduct of their general economic collapse? Is China's and India's relative success to be attributed to their increasing expenditure on military production (now attaining 4.3 percent and 2.5 percent of GDP respectively) or does their relative economic success permit such (modest) increased expenditures?

If we look at the actual figures, the Kidron-Harman theory seems to have little explanatory value. World military expenditure in 2008 is estimated to have reached $1.464 trillion in current dollars (just over $1.2 trillion in 2005 constant dollars). This represents a 4 percent increase in real terms since 2007 and a 45 percent increase over the 10-year period since 1999. Of course, the lion's share of that increase must be attributed to American military spending, whose military expenditure now accounts for just under half of the world total, at 41.5 percent. Yet it would be hard for anyone to argue that this increased expenditure is a boon to the American economy or its working class, beyond those directly and indirectly employed in those sectors.

What Harman should have been in the position of asking, were his theory coherent, is why the success of high arms producers, such as the United States, did not pressure low arms producers to abandon international competition and channel investment into armaments or other waste goods so that their economies might be shielded from cyclical effects of the falling rate of profit? That is, one should have expected the exact opposite question from that which Harman actually poses. After all, one could, following Kidron's and Harman's logic, ask why excess capacity — or over-production of capital relative to profitability — exists at all, since it should quite "easily" be mopped up by adapting idle capacity to waste production? The point is this: No worker consumes armaments and no capitalist uses military hardware as machinery. To the extent that values are capitalized into nonreproductive goods, they are lost to the process of accumulation. And it is not just their profits that are lost, but the entire value of the output of such goods that are lost, assuming — not unreasonably — that the incidence of taxes needed to buy arms falls primarily on the capitalist class. The maximum potential rate of accumulation is thereby diminished. To sustain the pace of investment needed to raise the mass of profits, increasing downward pressure must be continuously placed on the living standards of the working class. This is especially true if, as is often the case, the political process guarantees arms manufacturers a higher rate of profit than that which prevails in the overall economy. Rather than "rescuing" capitalism from the falling rate of profit, enlarging the nonreproductive sectors — even by the relatively modest measure of according them a higher rate of profit than the prevailing rate in times of economic contraction — reinforces the tendencies to stagnation.

Harman's observation is therefore correct — competition from low arms producing nations did squeeze the economies of high arms producers. But, as we have argued, it did so for very different reasons from those adduced by the "permanent arms economy" theory. It did so by making immanent the drag that nonreproductive sectors impose on the pace of accumulation and manifested itself anew in the demand for diminished taxation by the wealthy on corporations and on claims to profits.

How then in broad terms can the relative golden decades of the 1950s and 60s be explained within a context of a growing arms sector? The theory of the falling rate of profit is reasonably enough grounded. New technologies are applied to existing lines of production not when they are absolutely cheaper than prevailing techniques, but rather when they are relatively cheaper. As long as the savings on wages exceed the increased costs of new production processes, capital expands by introducing techniques that raise the capital intensity of production. If real wages are able to rise with productivity, the rate of profit would decline. But the opening of new avenues of consumer products in the post-war era continuously offset the rising capital intensity in existing production lines. This ongoing expansion of light industry, once established, is subject, of course, to the same tendency towards increased capital/labor thresholds over time. The onset and expansion of "consumer capitalism," however, extended a decades-long reprieve from the falling rate of profit because capitalist lines with relatively low capital to wage ratios were cropping up and outstripping the pace at which existing lines of production were deepening their levels of capital intensity. As long as this fortuitous condition continued, capitalism was able to expand both its reproductive and armaments sector without the tendency towards stagnation, which such waste expansion might otherwise entail.

The stability of the capital-output ratio over in the 1950s and 60s has given rise to the belief that the incidence of capital deepening and capital saving innovations are roughly the same. But this is largely attributable to the aggregation of economic statistics that fail to disentangle the impact of new product lines with lower capital/labor thresholds with actual innovations in the means and methods of production. Capitalist investment in productivity enhancing technology, as opposed to product innovation, generally exhibits, as we have argued above, a capital using, rather than savings bias. "Neutral" technological bias is largely incompatible with capitalism because it would force capital to adjust its growth path to that of labor force. Product innovation, on the other hand, is technologically random in its impact on the capital output ratio. But statistics do not properly distinguish between product innovation and process innovation and therefore tend to blur the distinction.

By the early 1970s the reprieve had, in any case, played itself out and the normal laws of accumulation reasserted themselves through a prolonged economic malaise. This could not be attributed simply to the oil shock of 1973. It is true that the oil companies ran record profits, largely at the expense of all other sectors. But this only obscured the underlying fact that, as economist William Nordhaus observed, "by most reckonings corporate profits have taken a dive since 1966," record oil profits notwithstanding. And, he continued, "The poor performance of corporate profits is not limited to the United States. A secular decline in the share of profits has also occurred in most of Western Europe."

This gave rise to the celebrated belief, both among business and even far left economists, that labor militancy was the cumulative cause of profit erosion. And Harman is quite right in dismissing this explanation. But he does so by appealing to a statistical dodge, that wage shares only appeared to have increased because proper consideration had not been given to taxes and capital appreciation. Why then are wage demands so feared, if merely so much froth? Though statistically true, this explanation fails to explain the actual mechanics of wage increases within the context of capital accumulation. The rise in money wages impacts capitals of different compositions, of different capital to wage ratios, in a way that further exacerbates the tendency for profit rates to fall. Investment flows from spheres with high wage components towards spheres with relatively low wage components, to compensate for the profit differentials opened up across the board by increases in worker compensation. Moreover, within each sector, more capital-intensive methods of production — unprofitable at lower wage rates — are now introduced to compensate for the profit squeezing threat of higher wages. The net effect of an increase in wages is therefore a thoroughgoing round of capital deepening, of ever higher ratios — in other words — of capital to labor, as capital seeks ever more ferociously to free itself from the constraint of wage costs. This is how a still expanding capitalism provisionally reorganizes itself to check the rise in wages. But this reorganization is itself contradictory in that it hastens along a different path the very consequence it seeks to avoid. By diminishing the mass of labor activated by the additional dollar of capital invested, the system undermines its ability to extract a volume of profits commensurate with the level of accumulated capital.

The problems caused by the lack of profitability can be solved only by depression.

The crisis in the mid 1970s rocked the system. The breezy confidence of the post-war era that the business cycle had been vanquished evaporated overnight. Unions that had grown accustomed to partnering with capital — to the extreme point of providing a reserve lobby for sectoral business interests — in return for a steady growth in incomes and benefits, were caught flatfooted. Having long abandoned confronting business on behalf of mass society, it had grown comfortable and respectable by explaining to its rank and file the orderly limits of capital. Yet even the weak forms of resistance that the housebroken American labor movement was still able to muster, proved too much for Reagan. An all out assault was launched against the remaining pretensions that labor was ever a coequal partner in society.

Where Keynesian intervention, the supposed savior of the 1930s, became discredited both in academia and in public life, the ideological trend swung to its seemingly opposite extreme. It was the market itself, which would restore the conditions of profitability and revive the system. And in order for the market to reign supreme, statist deregulation became the principle function of conservative governments from Carter and Reagan to Clinton. The overriding purpose of government became to delink itself from the economic process. That is not to deny that deficit spending in the form of military Keynesianism under Reagan halted the spiraling contraction of the system. Still the low point for profit rates was reached in the early 1980s and the actual revival of business activity was to wait until rampant cost cutting measures, the purging of excess capital through bankruptcy, the concentration of remaining capital into fewer hands, and, above all, the slashing of working class wages and living standards could all churn through the system. The thorough reconfiguration of the production structure, in short, was required before conditions of profitability could be restored.

As the system contracted and profits dissipated, the funds left to business were used to setting up production in low wage areas in both the South and abroad. Existing assembly lines were sped up in attempt to boost the productivity of a diminished labor force. Overhead costs embodied in occupational safety measures, pension plans, and health benefits were dialed back or eliminated. Excess inventories were purged by computerized "just in time" controls. Energy was conserved through a new generation of efficient-usage innovations. Office space, equipment, and factories were purchased at fire sale prices as a wave of mergers and acquisitions streamlined, in part, the production process. Production became lean and tight. The Information and Computer Technologies (ICT) revolution opened up new lines of investment, with far-ranging productivity boosting and labor cost savings applications. Profit rates began to revive, though not, according to Robert Brenner, to the past glories of the long post-war boom.

HARMAN THEREFORE RAISES A STRONG and insightful point that the crisis period of the 1970s was never fully liquidated. He rightfully points out that investment in the major capitalist nations remained historically low for the past two decades. And he correctly noted that "world capitalism would not have become dependent on the bubble had profit rates returned to the levels of the long boom."

Deregulation most famously cleared a path for the creation of new financial instruments such as derivatives, swaps, and the securitization of various forms of debt, including home mortgages. And "financialization," in Harman's words, "provided a substitute motor, in the form of debt, for the world economy." Derivatives, which are essentially hedging bets against the future price movements of underlying assets, mushroomed to almost three times the value of the assets they were designed to cover. This was massively and continuously fueled by the undervaluation of the Chinese yuan, which kept Chinese export accounts in perpetual surplus, allowing an ocean of recycled dollars flowing back to American banks. A seemingly self-perpetuating cycle had emerged, keeping interest rates low, liquidity fluid, and the American export sector perpetually at a competitive disadvantage with the largest of emerging markets. The brief revival of profit rates, punctuated by a series of dot.com bubbles and stock market gyrations, was also ultimately based on a price structure that was out of all connection to the underlying production structure. Economic expansion came to rest increasingly on debt accumulation, without a corresponding buildup of productive capacity. The state could cover its growing obligations only through massive borrowing; consumers, faced with diminished or stagnant wages, maintained consumption levels by mortgaging and continuously refinancing houses, borrowing against insurance policies, maxing out credit cards, and cashing in 401Ks; corporate borrowing necessarily replaced internal financing owing to inadequate profits; the enterprises consolidated through the mergers boom of the 1980s — financed by debt acquisition — were just as likely to be dismantled for speculative ends as to be productively applied. The massive cost-slashing undertaking that had transpired since the early 1980s, which might have given momentum to the system for a renewed burst of accumulation had it been sufficient to produce a reasonable expectation of acceptable returns, was instead applied to transforming the economy into a gigantic lottery. Financial deregulation gave rise to the illusion that profit making could bypass and make itself independent of the production of values, a project that, as we have seen with dramatic certainty, is ultimately unsustainable. Yet without this "irrational exuberance" stoking the expansion of credit and debt, the vast engine of capitalism would have stalled out long ago.

The merit of Harman's book, for all its pitfalls and unnecessary dead ends, is that it persuasively locates the current collapse — superficially ascribed in the popular press to lax legislation, financial mismanagement, and greed — on the historical continuum of capitalism. The system, as Harman explains, is caught in a noose. The problems caused by the lack of profitability can be solved only by depression. This is the only massive cost cutting purgative that can eliminate excess capital and labor costs ruthlessly enough to restore profitability and revive production. Depression is the essential internal feedback system and ultimate fallback of the market economy. That certain financial institutions such as AIG, Bank of America and Citicorp are considered "too big to fail" and make room for more efficient entities, represents a justified fear on the part of political elites that triggering the onslaught of a second depression would unloose massive social dislocations with unpredictable and uncontrollable political consequences. Like religious zealots confident in their belief in the afterlife, yet petrified of dying, the ruling class that worshiped at the altar of the market place, trembles in fear of a market place let loose. That fear encapsulates the barbaric obsolescence of the market economy.

Anarchism Remembered

PAUL BUHLE

> Forty Years in the Struggle: The Memoirs of a Jewish Anarchist
> CHAIM LEIB WEINBERG
> tr. Naomi Cohen, edited and annotated by Robert P. Helms
> Duluth, MN: Litwin Books, 2008, 228pp, pbk, $28

THE STORY OF ANARCHISM in the United States remains, in so many ways, a mystery. Not mainly because anarchists have been conspiratorial, although some certainly were and are, for good reason, but because until recent decades, most of the activity and publications took place in languages other than English. Imagine a historian treating the differences and similarities of anarchist immigrant groups and their largely working class followings in Italian, Spanish, Russian, Hungarian, and Yiddish, then congratulate yourself on the power of imagination: no such historian exists or seems likely to exist.

The dilemma is redoubled by class. Up to the present, English language anarchists come from the middle classes; the leading exception, working class Wobblies, would not necessarily call themselves anarchists at all, and these ranks, too, have shifted into college-going activists. Real working class anarchism might best be found, even forty years ago, among the oldtimers who remembered the Spanish Civil War and who devotedly read the longest-lived American anarchist publication, *Fraya Arbeter Shtimme* (Free Voice of Labor, 1890-1976).

Forty Years in the Struggle recalls an FAS loyalist or *Khaver* (roughly, "Comrade"), one Chaim Weinberg, who took part in most of the activities of anarchists from the 1890s to the 1930s around him in Philadelphia. He propagandized, worked in unions, organized collective or cooperative businesses, farms, and households, but most of all he was an orator and debater of great skill, at least in Yiddish. His friend Thomas Eygnes, in a fascinating introduction written for the 1952 Yiddish-language version of this text, describes Weinberg as one of the great "free thinkers" of the era, at least as eager to debate the pious as to debate the bosses' representatives, to raise money for the cause (often to keep a publication going, or to support members persecuted by the authorities), or just to entertain an audience eager for a night out with a luminary.

When he left London for the United States, Eyges recalls first-hand, the audience begged him not to depart. Long before he reached thirty years here, he had drifted into obscurity. There hangs a tale.

In no small part, with the coming of the First World War, the heroic era of anarchism had passed almost everywhere, albeit not in Spain and selected other locations. Perhaps, at least many argued or complained at the time, the Bolsheviks had stolen their glory with their own forms of direct action. More likely, in my reading and my interviewing of oldtimers, the optimism demanded by anarchist causes (and not only theirs) had simply died when workers, by tens and hundreds of thousands, slaughtered each other in a conflict that had no right or wrong side, and most arguably had its founda-

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tion in the craving for empire.

The vanished success of American anarchism, English-language style, had been dependent upon causes like birth control, Greenwich Villager free love and free art, and upon the I.W.W. Here lay the great contradictions of the anarchists — and the central problem of this intriguing memoir volume.

> The optimism demanded by anarchist causes (and not only theirs) had simply died when workers, by tens and hundreds of thousands, slaughtered each other in a conflict that had no right or wrong side.

In later generations, it was noted that Jewish anarchism and Zionism had many points of continuity. The wish to create a changed society before the fall of capitalism lay behind the kibbutz movement, and those radicals who reviled Leninism (whether for good or bad reasons) often found common enemies and common friends. There was also a certain mistrust of the gentiles, including *goyishe* working people who might be faithful to calls for class solidarity but might, at some moment, turn against Jews — or so they believed. And so Jewish anarchists in particular early and often sought institutional support from notably non-socialist, non-anarchist allies.

Chaim Leib Weinberg, militant anarchist, was thus more than indifferent toward the IWW, and more than friendly toward the most conservative labor movement within the industrialized world, the American Federation of Labor. Time and again, Weinberg recalls, he was sent on missions to win garment workers back from the awful lure of the IWW, to the safety of the AFL. Resisting a certain socialist demand to abandon the AFL back in the 1890s, a bloc of Jewish anarchists had already gone over to Gompers (who had early made his fame lobbying against Chinese immigrants, and continued to lobby against new immigration, including that of Jews). In return, they received patronage, jobs, and money. Weinberg followed in their footsteps. The Yiddish speaking anarchists continued anarchist propaganda activities of various kinds in various locations, and received financial assistance from AFL in return, that of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) becoming the most important. They did not seem to feel the need to rationalize their loyalty, and continued on unchanged when the assigned enemy was the mostly youthful Communist cadre in the garment unions of the 1920s. The machine could count upon them, and did.

Then there was the issue of the War. Jewish-Americans overwhelmingly opposed the U.S. entry, and it is likely (although no certainty exists) that Jewish anarchists, in every category, felt much as Emma Goldman did, that this was a war among bosses, dragging working people to their doom. The *Fraya Arbeter Shtimme*'s editors felt otherwise, arguing (with Peter Kropotkin) that the spectre of Russian tyranny demanded support of the allies. When Russia fell, it was the spectre of German tyranny. And then the danger of the Bolsheviks, or (for this milieu) the promises offered by Woodrow Wilson legitimating union activity of the AFL while driving the IWW to the brink with persecution.

It seems harsh to put matters quite this directly, but the context is unavoidable. Italian-American anarchists, bitterly opposed to the war, were suppressed, alongside the IWW, with violence as no radical group since the Haymarket anarchists of the 1880s and not until the Black Panthers. A number of prominent anarchists or former anarchists emerged as labor editors, foremost the editor of the *Fraya Arbeter Shtimme* himself. Former socialists who supported the war and now supported Gompers and his successors got similar sinecures.

There is, of course, much more to the story. The FAS had become a sort of organ of free thought and literary-cultural considerations in Yiddish, and we might expect Weinberg to be part of an aging crowd along these lines, bringing in cultural speakers to local venues, and so on (unfortunately, there is no mention of this in the book). The anarchist movement took on new life, but not many younger members, when the Spanish Revolution broke out and the need for logistical and financial help became enormous. Once again, Emma Goldman was often at the center of the picture, more than occasionally resented for her celebrity but also supported by many of the faithful. Weinberg himself passed away in 1939, just as anarchists faced yet another crisis, the Second World War. Many anarchists, Wobblies in particular, were to become passive resisters and go to jail; others took the cause of a U.S. victory with a renewed determination and for better reasons than before. But most of these followed up with the cause of anti-Communism, and key anarchist or anarchist sympathizers of another and smaller generation were rewarded with plum positions, this time mostly within Jewish institutions. Throughout, the importance of memory, anarchist memory of holding up the banner of freedom had remained crucial, but also definitely partial and in many ways deceptive.

None of this should bar readers from reading and enjoying *Forty Years in the Struggle*. Indeed, the historical ambiguities may provide food for contemplating the role of erstwhile sixties radicals who have become energetic imperial hawks (often, not always, to the considerable benefit of their careers) in the decades since. Immigrant anarchists, at least the Yiddish speakers, are fascinating partly because they never quite lost their belief in the wisdom of Kropotkin and others, or their love for Yiddish language and culture, even as they turned from the Cold War to the occupation of the West Bank in their main sympathies. (*A Living Revolution* by James Horrox, another recent volume, offers a well-researched and written history of kibbituzim as deeply sincere and semi-anarchist in tradition but also nurseries for anti-Palestinian nationalism and Israeli soldiers' brutal behavior, filling out this picture painfully.) The oldtime Yiddishists were unique, rooted however distantly in blue collar life, and are now gone forever. The claims of their successors are awfully thin by comparison.

Zirin's Zinnish Look at the History of Sports

BILL LITTLEFIELD

A People's History of Sports in the United States
DAVE ZIRIN
New York: The New Press, 2008
302 pages, $26.95

EVERYBODY KNOWS that Jackie Robinson broke Major League Baseball's color line in 1947.

Fewer people know that a decade and a half later, shortly after basketball star Bill Russell had been given the key to the city of Marion, Indiana, Russell was denied service because of his race in the dining room of the Marion hotel where he was staying for the festivities. (He allegedly returned the key to the mayor.)

Everybody knows Muhammad Ali refused the draft, thereby making a statement against the war in Vietnam and short-circuiting his boxing career for several of what certainly would have been his most profitable years. (The boxing establishment stripped him of his title and prevented him from fighting until the U.S. Supreme Court supported his draft refusal on religious grounds.)

Fewer people know that celebrated Ohio State football coach Woody Hayes once opined as follows: "You can bet your ass if you have women around — and I've talked to psychiatrists about this — you aren't going to be worth a damn . . . Man has to dominate."

In *A People's History of Sports in the United States*, Dave Zirin cites some of the lesser-known stories to remind his readers that the politics of exclusion, oppression, and stupidity have been evident in our games at all levels for a long time. Jackie Robinson and Muhammad Ali are among Zirin's heroes, certainly, but so is heavyweight champion Jack Johnson, who was hounded by the authorities and eventually imprisoned, less because he had broken the law than because he was black, proud, outspoken, and the triumphant conqueror of various "Great White Hopes."

Zirin also celebrates Martina Navratilova, who said at one point late in her career, "I hope when I stop, people will think that somehow I mattered." She HAS mattered, of course, not only as a brilliant and accomplished tennis player, but as an outspoken advocate for gay rights, and a critic of sexism and athletes less willing to take a stand than she has been. Navratilova has advanced the agenda of another of the athletes whom Zirin admires, tennis champion and activist Arthur Ashe, who maintained that "athletes have an obligation to the civil rights cause."

That's a position Zirin endorses, and not merely as it applies to athletes. High in the pantheon of his heroes is Lester "Red" Rodney, who died in December. Rodney was the sports editor for the *Daily Worker* from 1936 until 1958. He agitated for the integration of Major League Baseball a decade before it happened, and he launched what Zirin calls "a political sports page that was light years ahead of its time," "covering sports with an eye to their social impact."

In this book, and in his work for the *Nation* and his own website, Edge of Sports, Zirin has sustained that good fight. In doing so he has expressed his contempt for athletes who have sidestepped what Zirin regards as their social responsibilities. Of the man many regard

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as the greatest basketball player of all time, Zirin writes, "no athlete has ever had more and done less than Michael Jeffrey Jordan. While Ali shone so brightly for his acute social conscience, Jordan shines as the ultimate salesman."

Zirin's judgment regarding Jordan is probably safe. Less certain are some of his conclusions about the active athletes he admires. His contention that "the Williams sisters are well-adjusted adults" took a hit at the U.S. Open last year, when Serena Williams berated and threatened a female official in a profanity-laced tirade that earned Williams a record fine and suspension. Certainly adults are entitled to lose their tempers, and some might argue that race and gender had something to do with the severity of the punishment levied against Williams, but the victim of her public outburst was also a minority woman, and a considerably smaller, less wealthy, and less muscular minority woman at that.

That risk notwithstanding, lots of what Dave Zirin has to say about specific athletes who have stood up to racist, authoritarian, jingoist authority figures or invited the wrath of fans by choosing not to salute the American flag is inspiring as well as revealing. Some of Zirin's generalizations are perhaps less worthy. He contends that the 20th century ended "with people loving the games, but hating the athletes," which would be difficult to certify. Looking forward, he claims that "we will see more athletes serious about reclaiming politics from the 'experts' that have so thoroughly failed us." Perhaps, though it seems likely we will also continue to see lots of athletes wrap themselves in the flag, adopt the poisonous macho poses that have often characterized male pro and college sports, and concern themselves with their own salaries rather than the preposterous gap between the rich and the poor outside the bubble of their games. Our culture pressures even potentially progressive citizens into those postures, and elite athletes are not often among the most progressive citizens. Beyond that, even Zirin acknowledges that lots of the athletes who have chosen to speak out against injustice within and beyond their vocations have found themselves to be expendable, and the number of stars who are both so valuable that they can get away with

> The politics of exclusion, oppression, and stupidity have been evident in our games at all levels for a long time.

political activism without fear of retribution and so confident and articulate that they can speak out effectively remains relatively small.

It is perhaps to Dave Zirin's credit that he decided to end his history on an optimistic note, contending that if "we challenge sports to be as good as they can be — a force to break down walls that divide us, a motor for inclusion — they can propel us toward a better world, a world worth playing in — and worth fighting for." But although the greatest athletes, like the greatest artists in other fields, delight and inspire us, the superstructure of the major college and professional sports makes it unlikely that the games about which so many people care so much will "propel us" toward anything positive in political terms. The leagues are large, corporate businesses that discourage dissent and subordinate the interests and health of their workers to the maintenance of the corporation's profitability and image. Despite recent admissions that getting hit in the head over and over may, in fact, have something to do with consequent brain damage, dementia, depression, and various other debilitating conditions, the National Football League is still reluctant to adequately compensate the men who've been permanently damaged in their workplace. Tickets to pro and major college contests, not to mention the Olympics, have become prohibitively expensive for most people. The marketing of sports at all levels, including five televised NBA games on Christmas and the commercial broadcasting of little league baseball, has been rampant. Beyond all that, as a group we have been encouraged by those who promote each of the dozen or so allegedly critical games each night to watch highly compensated athletes perform rather than climb off the couch to engage in healthy exercise. All this suggests a context within which Dave Zirin's optimism regarding how those engaged in big time sports might influence the public is open to question. It may be delusional.

Bringing the Elite to Jesus

MATTHEW N. LYONS

The Family: The Secret Fundamentalism at the Heart of American Power
JEFF SHARLET
New York: HarperCollins, 2008
464pp., $15.99 (paper)

SINCE THE "NEW RIGHT" UPSURGE of the late 1970s, right-wing evangelical Christianity has established itself as one of the largest and most sustained political movements in U.S. history. From international media empires to living room prayer groups, from think tanks and lobbyists to rock bands and homeschoolers, the Christian Right encompasses a vast infrastructure and subculture with tens of millions of participants. Among opponents, stereotypes and myths about the Christian Right are common: that it represents a monolithic, fanatical fringe; that it's a backward-looking movement of people out of touch with the modern world; or that it's on the verge of collapse. In 1993, the *Washington Post* famously derided Christian rightists as "largely poor, uneducated, and easy to command" (337). In reality, Sunbelt suburbanites are at the heart of the movement, and tens of thousands of its members have taken on grassroots leadership roles.

Starting with Sara Diamond's 1989 book, *Spiritual Warfare: The Politics of the Christian Right*, a number of writers have challenged these stereotypes and presented thoughtful critiques of the Christian Right and, often, its interconnections with a larger oppressive social order. Jeff Sharlet's *The Family* is squarely in this tradition. Sharlet highlights "the almost sexual tension of [the movement's] contradictions: its reverence for both rebellion and authority, democracy and theocracy, blood and innocence" (345). He portrays not only the repulsive side of Christian Right politics — the authoritarianism, the misogyny, the callousness toward human suffering — but also the sense of excitement and vitality that have helped make it a mass movement. He shows rank-and-file Christian rightists not as mindless followers but thinking people who don't always agree with their leaders. And he emphasizes that "American fundamentalism," as he calls it, is not some recent aberration but something deeply rooted

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in U.S. cultural and political history. None of these are new ideas, but they are all worth repeating.

What's new and different about Sharlet's book is that he focuses on a major branch of the Christian Right that most previous writers have simply missed. "The Family" is a secretive evangelical network that has attracted a startling array of high-ranking political figures in the United States and around the world. Shortly after Sharlet's book came out, a series of sex scandals involving prominent Republicans brought the organization known as the Family to national attention and made the book a *New York Times* bestseller. But sex scandals are at most a side issue here. Sharlet lists ten current U.S. senators and several congressmen as members, along with deceased members such as Senator Strom Thurmond, Supreme Court Chief Justice William Rehnquist, and Attorney General John Ashcroft. Overseas participants include Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni and Zulu chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi of South Africa. The Family's Youth Corps project, which grooms recruits for leadership roles in government and business, operates in over a dozen countries on four continents. The National Prayer Breakfast, the Family's one public activity, draws thousands of U.S. and foreign political and business leaders to the Washington Hilton each February. Under various names (the Fellowship, National Committee for Christian Leadership, International Christian Leadership, and others) the Family has been around since 1935.

> The Family teaches that those who hold worldly power, as long as they pledge obedience to Jesus, can kill, torture, rape, steal, and lie on a mass scale with no moral constraints whatsoever.

Sharlet describes the Family as a vanguard of American fundamentalism, "a movement that recasts theology in the language of empire" (3). Strictly speaking, Christian fundamentalists believe in a literal interpretation of the Bible, and I prefer this usage for reasons of clarity. But in this review I will follow Sharlet, who uses the term *fundamentalism* more broadly to denote those who believe in "a Christ of absolute devotion, not questions," "a story that never changes," and who want to "conform every aspect of society to God" (4-5). He calls this movement *American* "not because it is nationalistic but because it is a melting pot movement," which brings together "traditional fundamentalists and evangelicals, Pentecostals and Roman Catholics, Democrats and Republicans … in the service of an imperial ambition. Not the conquest of territory; the conquest of hearts and minds" (3).

Sharlet argues that American fundamentalism encompasses two major strands: *populist fundamentalism*, which includes most of the major Christian rightist organizations, such as Focus on the Family, the Christian Coalition, and Concerned Women for America; and *elite fundamentalism*, embodied in the Family. Both of these strands:

- regard Jesus's divinity as absolute truth and all other belief systems as evil;
- advocate expanded Christian influence on or control over public policy;
- promote a hierarchical social order, including patriarchal gender roles, heterosexism, European ethnocentrism, and "free market" capitalism; and
- regard the United States as the greatest country in the world and promote U.S. global dominance.

But within this shared framework, the contrasts between the two strands are striking. Populist fundamentalism has focused on a core set of domestic social issues, notably opposition to homosexuality and abortion rights, as tools for recruiting millions of supporters and thereby amassing political power. Most Christian Right groups have carved out a sharply defined political niche on the right wing of the Republican Party; many have embraced a loud, confrontational style.

The Family is different. Its strategy centers not on building a mass base, but forging ties with powerful political figures — regardless of their religious or political beliefs. Although closest to conservative Republicans such as Kansas Senator Sam Brownback, the Family is also happy to work with moderates or liberals of both major parties, such as Hillary Clinton, who in 2005 participated regularly in Family prayer events, or Al Gore, who has publicly referred to Family head Doug Coe as a "friend." The Family operates mostly behind the scenes and approaches conflict with a genteel subtlety geared toward cultivating elite unity. "The big Christian lobbying groups push and shout; the Family simply surrounds politicians with prayer cells. They don't try to convert anyone. They don't ask for anything. They're as patient as a glacier" (259).

Compared with most Christian rightists, the Family is also less focused on enforcing so-called traditional values and much more concerned with bolstering capitalist rule and U.S. global power. The Family began as a union-busting initiative, and it operates today largely as a religious adjunct to American empire — arranging prayer meetings, for example, between representatives of authoritarian regimes in Asia, Africa, Central and South America, and Eastern Europe, and top officials of the U.S. government.

The Family is all about power. It believes that the wealthy and powerful are chosen by God, and its mission as an organization centers on bringing them to Jesus, bringing them into a spiritual "covenant" of total unity with each other. "Hitler made a covenant," Doug Coe is apparently fond of saying. "The Mafia makes a covenant. It is a very powerful thing" — all the more so when it is based on submission to Jesus (54). The Family teaches that those who hold worldly power, as long as they pledge obedience to Jesus, can kill, torture, rape, steal, and lie on a mass scale with no moral constraints whatsoever. This, too, sets the Family apart. Christian rightists generally present themselves as defenders of civic morality. However twisted or hypocritical that claim may be in practice, it's a far cry from the Family's absolute repudiation of ethical principles.

The Family's orientation toward bolstering worldly power has helped it maintain a low profile. "It so neatly harmonizes with the political shape of worldly things," Sharlet notes, "that it's nearly indistinguishable from secular conceptions of social order" (57). Almost, but not quite, indistinguishable. As Sharlet writes of the elite religion promoted by Family founder Abraham Vereide, "In one sense, it was nothing more than a defense of the status quo. It neither challenged power nor asked for anything from the powerful but their good intentions. In another, it was the most ambitious theocratic project of the American century, 'every Christian a leader, every leader a Christian,' and this ruling class of Christ-committed men bound in a fellowship of the anointed, the chosen, key men in a voluntary dictatorship of the divine" (91).

Sharlet traces the roots of elite fundamentalism to the eighteenth-century New England revivalist Jonathan Edwards, who fostered intense religious zeal among his followers (to the point that some of them committed suicide in order to wipe out sin and be closer to God), but blended it, in Sharlet's reading, with "an adoration of power, divine and worldly" (61):

> His religion was radical, available to all classes and even to slaves, an inspiration to the nascent sense of individual liberty that would become the American Revolution, but his politics were warlike and controlling. Empire struck him as an ideal vessel for the Gospel.

> He preached often against envy, but named as envy only that feeling which filled those of lesser wealth, or lesser land, or lesser status, who determined to band together to wrest power from above (69).

Jumping forward, Sharlet relates how Vereide, a Norwegian immigrant, founded the Fellowship (the organization now known as the Family) in Seattle in 1935, in direct response to a wave of militant strikes along the West Coast. First regionally and then nationally, business leaders rallied to Vereide's prayer circles as a way to inject a new spirit of purpose and unity into their fight against organized labor and the New Deal. With the Cold War, Vereide's "International Christian Leadership" spread to western Europe, notably West Germany, where it helped to rehabilitate a number of former Nazis into anticommunist respectability. (Sharlet describes Vereide's relationship with fascism as "weirdly ambivalent" [124]. He cultivated Nazi sympathizers Henry Ford and Charles Lindbergh and recruited at least one genuine fascist, Merwin K. Hart, to the Fellowship board, but was ultimately more at home with conservative Republicans than far right rabble rousers such as Father Coughlin.) In the 1960s, Coe succeeded Vereide as organizational leader and made two important changes: Following the trajectory of U.S. Cold War policy, he shifted the Fellowship's international focus away from Europe toward Latin America, Asia, and Africa, and he took the organization "underground," moving it out of the public eye as much as possible, as a protective measure against sixties radicalism and upheaval.

Over the past seventy-five years, the Family has been remarkably successful at embedding itself in the U.S. and international power structure. Using prayer events and quiet meetings, it brings together politicians, businessmen, and military leaders in configurations of its own choosing. Sharlet sees the Family's influence in a wide range of diplomatic initiatives. In the 1960s, it brought members of Congress together with dictators from Brazil, Indonesia, and South Korea; in the 1980s, it organized face-to-face meetings between Salvadoran and Honduran generals and Reagan administration officials. In domestic politics, a Family-groomed bureaucrat oversaw President George W. Bush's Office of Faith-Based Initiatives, which drove "irreparable cracks into the wall of separation between church and state" (383).

From the standpoint of political and business elites, the Family appears to perform several useful functions. Its international network offers a convenient way to make contacts and cut deals away from public scrutiny. Like some weird throwback to the divine right of kings, its ideology enables members of the ruling class to justify their power — not to those they rule over, but to each other and to themselves. Offering a belief system specifically for elite consumption, it also fosters a sense of class unity — one that is rooted in a specifically American culture but accessible to any dictator, general, or CEO anywhere in the world who is willing to pray to Jesus.

Some members of the elite are drawn to this "covenant" more than others, for reasons of both culture and self-interest. Allowing for individual variations, it would be useful to explore this in structural terms: Which specific capitalist sectors has the Family cultivated most successfully? This is beyond the scope of Sharlet's work, but he does offer helpful bits and pieces, as when he notes traditionally strong ties between the Family and the oil and aerospace industries (19), or Family-organized seminars for executives in oil, defense, insurance, and banking (22). All of that is broadly consistent with previous accounts of capitalist support for the Christian Right. (See, for example, Mike Davis, *Prisoners of the American Dream*, or Thomas Ferguson and Joel Rogers, *Right Turn: The Decline of the Democrats and the Future of American Politics*, both published in 1986.) But do the differences between elite and populist fundamentalism translate into any differences in their elite connections?

Sharlet's approach to historical narrative, which makes up a good half of the book, presents certain problems. The account of the Family and its forerunners draws on extensive primary and secondary sources, including the Family's organizational records archived at the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College. Sharlet has dramatized this material into an engaging story, but it's not always apparent which parts are documented and which are his interpretation or inference, especially when he gives us historical figures' dialog, thoughts, or feelings.

Sharlet's narrative approach also makes it difficult to answer a key question: Given that the Family has adopted a strategy of swimming with the ruling class current, to what extent has its involvement actually altered the course of events? The answer is not always clear, and by depicting history through the lens of the Family's role, Sharlet sometimes risks exaggerating its impact. In the deepening Cold War of the late 1940s, Vereide and his associates helped legitimize a number of former Hitler supporters in West Germany, but so did major sections of the U.S. government, military, and intelligence services. In the early 1980s, the Family opened doors at the Pentagon for Somali dictator Siad Barre, but the Reagan administration began funding him as a counterweight to Ethiopia, which had recently allied itself with the USSR. Sharlet's discussion of these and other policy moments doesn't include enough about other actors to let us clearly assess the Family's influence.

In focusing on elite fundamentalism, Sharlet also misses a number of important points about the larger Christian Right. He offers a thoughtfully nuanced portrait of the movement's "sexual purity" campaign, but never addresses the fact that this is the first mass movement in U.S. history to put male supremacy and heterosexism at the center of its program. (For more on the movement's gender politics, see Kathryn Joyce, *Quiverfull: Inside the Christian Patriarchy Movement* [2009], or Jean Hardisty, *Mobilizing Resentment: Conservative Resurgence from the John Birch Society to the Promise Keepers* [1999].) Sharlet also underplays populist fundamentalism's elite dimension. In the late 1970s, the movement's big national boost relied on the Moral Majority's top-down direct mailings more than the grassroots organizing Sharlet emphasizes (which came into its own only gradually over the following decade). In the 1980s, major Christian Right groups put a lot of energy into foreign policy (aiding counterrevolutionary forces in Asia, Africa, and Central America) not just domestic policy. And mass-based Christian Right groups have attracted significant capitalist support and spawned leaders who are major business figures in their own right.

At the same time, in describing the Christian Right as "a cultural front without a politics" (289), Sharlet also neglects tendencies within that movement that challenge the established order at a systemic level. Although most Christian Right groups work within the existing political framework, a hard-line minority aims to sweep away all pluralistic and secular institutions and impose its version of biblical law on all areas of society. The clearest expression of this tendency is Christian Reconstructionism, which Sharlet ambiguously labels "a defunct but subtly influential school of thought" (347). Reconstructionists helped build the paramilitary wing of the anti-abortion rights movement, which assassinated several abortion providers in the 1990s, as well as the Constitution Party and sections of the Patriot movement. More broadly, Reconstructionism has helped foster and intensify theocratic tendencies throughout the Christian Right.

Fundamentalism's relationship with its political opponents, while not a central focus of the book, helps to frame the story Sharlet is telling. "The lesson of elite fundamentalism" in its battle with secularism, he writes, "is that the sides are not just blurry, they're interwoven"

(288). Sharlet astutely criticizes secular liberals for both complacency ("Our refusal to recognize the theocratic strand running throughout American history is as self-deceiving as fundamentalism's insistence that the United States was created as a Christian nation" [367]) and complicity ("The Cold War liberalism that led to American wars and proxy wars…ran parallel with elite fundamentalism's sense of its own divine universalism" [288]). These comments are a welcome contrast to those critics of the Christian Right who demonize "religious extremism" while mythologizing a supposed democratic center.

More problematic is Sharlet's effort to portray fundamentalism as the mirror image of the radical left, as when he labels mass-based Christian Right groups "the popular front" or titles a chapter "The Romance of American Fundamentalism," referring to Vivian Gornick's *The Romance of American Communism*. Yes, there are resonances and interconnections to be explored, such as the Family's stated admiration for Lenin and Mao or its adoption of a Communist-inspired cell structure. But Sharlet doesn't explore them far enough and at times sounds uncomfortably like a centrist of the "radical left equals radical right" school. He is simply wrong when he claims that in targeting secularism, the Christian Right is "rail[ing] against the same familiar enemy" as 1930s labor organizers did when they identified capitalism as their opponent (289). There is a basic difference between blaming your problems, even crudely, on class exploitation and blaming them on disrespect for God's law.

Despite its limitations, Jeff Sharlet's *The Family* is a valuable book that enriches our understanding of right-wing politics, elite networks, and the role of Christianity in U.S. society. Exposing politicians' sex scandals is easy; tracing the underlying dynamics of ideology and power takes work.

The Counter-Revolutionary from Arkansas

CHRISTINE L. WILLIAMS

The Retail Revolution: How Wal-Mart Created a Brave New World of Business
NELSON LICHTENSTEIN
New York: Metropolitan Books
2009, 311 pp., $25

FIFTY YEARS AGO, the largest corporation in America was General Motors. It was a different company then, and a different country. A third of the U.S. labor force was unionized, with autoworkers leading the way and setting the standards. Even many in nonunionized jobs reaped benefits from their nervous employers who feared the spread of the industrial unions. The powerful UAW added some truth to the old bromide, "what's good for General Motors is good for America."

Today the largest corporation in America is Wal-Mart, which is infamously and proudly anti-union. Fifty years ago, its founder, Sam Walton, was operating a handful of Ben Franklin franchise stores in the rural counties of Arkansas, Missouri, and Okla-

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homa. In a very short time, he revolutionized the retail industry and established a shopping empire that today employs nearly 2 million workers worldwide. Other corporations—not only those in the retail industry—now look to the giant retailer as a role model, leading some to claim that the entire global economy is undergoing "Walmartization." And yet, virtually no one outside of Bentonville, Arkansas would claim that "what's good for Wal-Mart is good for America"—or anyplace else for that matter.

> Today the largest corporation in America is Wal-Mart, which is infamously and proudly anti-union.

The Retail Revolution is the story of this spectacular transformation in American business, as told by labor historian Nelson Lichtenstein. The book examines the past, present, and future of Wal-Mart, with a focus on the workers who produce, transport, and distribute the commodities it sells. Lichtenstein's previous books include a biography of Walter Reuther *(The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit*), and histories of the union movement (*State of the Union*; *Labor's War at Home*). In this book, he explains in vivid and depressing detail how the retail revolution sparked by Sam Walton has crushed organized labor. The Wal-Mart enterprise was militantly anti-union at its inception and has managed to stay that way (at least in North America) despite many Herculean efforts. How has the biggest and most powerful company in America managed to keep unions out?

Anti-Unionism and the Founding of Wal-Mart

PART OF THE ANSWER has to do with gender. Retail is a female-dominated industry in the service sector, which has historically lagged behind manufacturing in union density. The sexist priorities of union leaders at mid-century are partly to blame for this. Most of Wal-Mart's original front-line employees were farm women who lacked education and job opportunities. Walton sought out this group to staff his stores, aware of their desperation and their lack of paid work experience. Lichtenstein calls this target group "cheap and grateful" (p. 59). New to waged work, they were also typically ignorant of their labor rights. This hiring preference is known today as the "greenfield" strategy, and it is practiced vigorously by labor-intensive manufacturing firms around the globe. The goal is to employ young women who are socially defined as dependents—they are not perceived as family breadwinners, even if they are—and who therefore can command very little compensation. The company still profits from this greenfield strategy: Young women are the majority of workers in the 6000 global manufacturing firms that supply Wal-Mart with its goods, most of which are now located in China.

Race also played a part in the establishment of the company as union-free. The women hired into the front line positions were virtually all white, as were the Ozarks at the time of the company's formation. Had the company been founded in the nearby Mississippi Delta instead, it is possible that labor policies would have evolved differently, under the influence of the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement. According to Lichtenstein, this scenario very nearly unfolded: Walton's first Ben Franklin discount store was in Newport, Arkansas, a biracial town on the Delta, but he lost his lease in 1950 when the owner of the building decided to take over this successful store. The rest, as they say, is history.

Geography figured into Wal-Mart's labor policies in another way. Unions were not altogether absent from retail stores when the first Wal-Mart opened in 1962, but their strongholds were in the urban centers of the West and

Northeast. Wal-Mart is a Southern company. Arkansas was the first state to pass a "right to work" law in 1944. These laws, which are now pervasive throughout the South, make it illegal to require workers to join a union. The geographical expansion of Wal-Mart in the 1970s and 80s was concentrated in these states, which was key to keeping unions at bay.

Wal-Mart's anti-union agenda from the outset also benefited from the Taft-Hartley labor law. This law permitted among other things employer "freedom of speech," enabling management to hold captive meetings to dissuade workers from forming a union. "Mr. Sam" used his homespun charm to convince workers that he had their best interests at heart. Without the charisma, it would have been a hard sell, since his front-line jobs paid rock-bottom wages (Walton originally refused to abide by minimum wage laws). Granted, he supplemented workers' pay with profit sharing plans, but Lichtenstein dismisses this as a brazen ploy to avoid paying guaranteed pensions. (This program, long since discontinued, did make many of the original store workers extremely rich.)

According to Lichtenstein, religious beliefs also flavored Wal-Mart's original hostility towards unions. The merchants of the Northeast who were friendly towards unions were German Jews, whereas Walton's roots were in native evangelical Protestantism. Throughout his lifetime, Walton cultivated ties to small Southern Christian colleges to fill his management ranks, required managers to practice a Biblical model of "servant leadership," and refused to sell merchandise that might offend the sensitivities of his evangelical right-wing customer base.

Lichtenstein sees a resonance between Walton's religious beliefs and his anti-unionism. From an evangelical Christian standpoint, unions supposedly detract from the will of God. In this worldview, the free market rewards Christians and punishes nonbelievers. Thus labor consultants to Wal-Mart can audaciously promote "the morality of a union-free environment" (p. 138). The presumed connection between profitability and religiosity is also preached in the mega-churches that seem to accompany huge Wal-Mart stores wherever they are established.

Lichtenstein also detects elements of a Protestant ethic in Walton's streamlined approach to doing business, in particular, in his notorious animosity towards salesmen. Wal-Mart was one of the first retail operations to buy factory direct from East Asia, eliminating the middlemen who traditionally supplied clothing, housewares, and toys to national retail chains. Walton hated salesmen. He thought he knew his customers better than they did, plus he objected to what he considered their profligate ways. The culture of selling in mid-century America mixed business and pleasure, as salesmen spent money on travel, gifts, and martini lunches to cement relationships with clients. All of this upset Walton's Christian asceticism, plus it added unnecessary costs to the bottom line. So from the very beginning, he insisted on dealing only with executives, never manufacturing representatives. As the company grew in size, and his orders swamped those from their other clients, manufacturers had no choice but to deal directly with Walton on his terms.

Wal-Mart's Anti-Unionism Today

ALL OF THESE FACTORS account for how Wal-Mart developed as an anti-union stronghold during Walton's lifetime (he died in 1992), but none explain the corporation's effectiveness at undermining unions today. Wal-Mart is located in every state; it is the country's leading private employer of African-Americans; and it has taken a number of positions that have offended right-wing religious conservatives, including a decision in 2005 to offer domestic partner benefits to some of its gay and lesbian employees. While union organizers have won limited success with other companies in the service industry, the Wal-Mart fortress has yet to be breached, despite having some of the worst labor conditions in the economy.

Wal-Mart asserts that its associates are paid on average $10.86 per hour (one dollar more than the industry average for retail workers.[1] The company defines a "full-time" worker as one who works 34 hours per week, but at least 20 percent of their associates work less than that. All associates are required to work "flexible" schedules that vary from day to day and week to week, contributing to high turnover rates. Only half of Wal-Mart workers receive health benefits. Waiting periods to qualify for these benefits are long; enrollment and deductible costs are high; and coverage is spotty and confusing. Some workers are able to work their way up into management positions—over 70 percent of Wal-Mart managers are drawn from the ranks of associates—but these opportunities are few, especially for women. (All of these facts, which are discussed by Lichtenstein, are updated regularly on the website of Wal-Mart Watch[2], a pro-labor organization that also tracks the company's environmental and consumer records.)

> But if consumers demand stronger government regulation to ensure product safety, Wal-Mart will be forced to rein in the excessively hazardous and exploitative conditions it cultivates overseas.

Wal-Mart's labor practices are unfortunately common throughout the retail industry. The other discount behemoths, including K-Mart and Target (the store that Democratic shoppers seem to favor), are as bad if not worse. But Wal-Mart is the biggest, six times the size of its nearest competitor. Its innovative practices are taught not only at the Walton Institute at the University of Arkansas, but in virtually every business school in the country. In a word, it is hegemonic.

The size and importance of Wal-Mart has made it a focus of many union drives, but every single one of these has been squelched by the company's "union prevention effort." Housed in its corporate "people division," and employing several high profile racial/ethnic minority managers, this powerful department is devoted to the single purpose of keeping Wal-Mart union-free. Lichtenstein reveals the operations of this nefarious department through wrenching case studies of failed organizing attempts.

Anti-unionism is also institutionalized in the reward structure for managers. According to Lichtenstein, Wal-Mart's home office in Bentonville calculates a "Union Probably Index" (UPI) for each of its stores. If the number rises above a certain score, store managers must find ways to raise morale (thus decreasing their UPI) or they are threatened with demotion or relocation.

Wal-Mart's anti-unionism also threatens established unions in other stores, a fact that many grocery store workers know all too well. Wal-Mart began opening "supercenters" in the 1990s. These are megastores that offer a full line of groceries in addition to the traditional discounted dry goods. Wal-Mart supercenters directly competed with unionized Safeways, Raleys, Piggly Wiggly's, and Krogers, all of which offered higher wages, and better hours, pensions, and benefits than Wal-Mart. Wal-Mart's guaranteed "everyday low prices" beat them hands down, causing the bankruptcy of 25 regional grocery chains and the loss of thousands of unionized jobs between 1992 and 2003.

Lichtenstein sees little hope for Wal-Mart's struggling retail workers. These hard working people deserve living wages, guaranteed health care, decent opportunities, and dignity. But since unions have been effectively shut out by Wal-Mart, he believes that achieving these goals will require strong government initiatives, the likes of which we haven't seen since the New Deal. Perhaps the current economic crisis will provoke some of these necessary changes. For instance, Lichtenstein points out that if health care reform passes, Wal-Mart could lose its $3/hour labor cost advantage over unionized grocery store chains (p. 256), which would surely help competing firms stay in business. But as long as the company can legally get away with its anti-unionism, it is simply not clear how the economic and psychological distress of Wal-Mart workers can be alleviated.

Globalization and the Future of Wal-Mart

WAL-MART'S PROFITS come not only from the company's draconian labor practices, but also from its hugely efficient operations. Lichtenstein emphasizes throughout the book that Wal-Mart is a distributor of goods, not a manufacturer or a merchandiser. The company does not add value to the commodities it sells. Instead, it has prospered because of its innovative logistical systems. Wal-Mart pioneered the use of bar codes, private satellite communications networks, and shipping containers, all of which make it possible to order and restock goods quickly on an as-needed basis.

It's really quite stunning to contemplate how this works. When a customer buys a toy in a Wal-Mart store, a signal is sent to Bentonville to order the toy's replacement from a factory in China. The factory will either manufacture the toy itself or subcontract its production to another firm. Following Wal-Mart's tight scheduling and detailed packaging instructions, the toy will be delivered to a container ship and will travel to a port in Los Angeles. There it will pass through a distribution center (DC) and then be trucked to a regional distribution center. Wal-Mart's DCs are not warehouses; they are more like luggage handling systems in airports (except that the regional DCs are typically located in the middle of nowhere where labor is plentiful and cheap). The toy will not stay in any DC long enough to gather dust. It is immediately placed on a conveyer belt and loaded inside another truck bound for the Wal-Mart store that originally sold that toy.

It's hard not to admire the elegant choreography of this operation. Wal-Mart's technological prowess has set the standard for the industry. Many credit Wal-Mart's hyper-rationalized and streamlined system of distribution with lowering prices for American consumers and keeping inflation down. But the logistical system that brings universal accolades to the corporation has been showing signs of cracking lately. And in those cracks lies hope for change.

As I'm writing this, the news has just been reported that Wal-Mart sold toys made in China out of cadmium, a metal known to cause cancer in children.[3] I have no doubt that Wal-Mart's publicity department will soon calm the consumer outrage around this issue, as it has done so many times in the past. (Indeed, checking again just now, Wal-Mart has put out a bulletin on its website promising "to take swift action" to remove the tainted toys from its shelves.[4]) But this event, like the others before it, indicates that Wal-Mart may be losing control of its global suppliers. The problem, alluded to earlier, is that Wal-Mart suppliers are increasingly turning to their own subcontractors to produce goods for Wal-Mart. These sub- subcontractors operate in a Dickensian underworld free of regulation and oversight. They have become central to the production system because of the relentless pressure that Wal-Mart puts on its suppliers to deliver goods quickly and at low cost. Companies that are subject to local labor and safety inspections (as well as Wal-Mart oversight) are often unable to meet these demands, so they feel compelled to turn their orders over to these marginal firms. Thus, as Lichtenstein rightly observes, the system "generates incentives for the most exploitative and hazardous conditions" (p. 160). Those cadmium toys that are poisoning American children are probably even more devastating to the Chinese workers who made them.

Who are the workers in this underworld of unregulated factories? According to Lichtenstein, millions are rural migrants who have flocked to manufacturing cities where their labor is in high demand. But in China, those who leave their hometowns have no citizenship rights. Lichtenstein documents how these legions of stateless workers are contributing to unprecedented labor unrest throughout China.

Their future prospects would be helped enormously by U.S. consumers. Herein lies the glimmer of hope for workers. U.S. consumers could demand better government regulation and oversight of the products they buy. There is a rich history of consumer activism in this country, but in recent years, many of these movements have foundered because they have attacked the wrong target, typically the brand or designer label manufactured in sweatshop conditions. (Remember Cathy Gifford?) Wal-Mart is invulnerable to such protests because it does not manufacture "brands"; it simply sells them. But if consumers demand stronger government regulation to ensure product safety, Wal-Mart will be forced to rein in the excessively hazardous and exploitative conditions it cultivates overseas. It might even have to start buying goods locally manufactured in order to guarantee the proper oversight during production, a change that could benefit U.S. workers as well as consumers.

Readers will come away from this book with a deep appreciation of the historical and sociological significance of Wal-Mart. The destructive power of the corporation and the "brave new world" it created defy easy solutions. But this is not the time for labor activists to start popping soma pills. Fifty years ago, no one would have predicted that the big three automakers would be nearly out of business, and that General Motors would be majority owned by the U.S. government. Fifty years from now, the economy will have a new role model.

NOTES

1. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2010-11. www.bls.gov/oco/ocos121.htm#earnings, accessed January 14, 2010.
2. Walmartwatch.com, accessed January 14, 2010.
3. "Wal-mart pulling jewelry cited in AP cadmium report," by Justin Pritchard and Jeff Donn, January 12, 2010. www.ap.org accessed January 14, 2010.
4. "Wal-mart Statement on Media Reports Regarding Cadmium in Children's Products." January 11, 2010. http://walmartstores.com/FactsNews/NewsRoom/9593.aspx, accessed January 14, 2010.

Chomsky, Anarchism, and Socialism

GEORGE FISH

Chomsky on Anarchism
NOAM CHOMSKY
Selected and edited by Barry Pateman
Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2007, 241 pp.
paper, $16.95

FOR SEVERAL YEARS I worked closely with an anarchist youth collective in Indianapolis that ran a left-wing bookstore. While they were a bold, feisty group of determined activists (a welcome change from the timid and hidebound peace church "progressives" that dominate the left in Indianapolis) with whom I very much enjoyed working, I did find their anti-intellectualism disquieting. When I raised this to one of the members of the collective as a blemish on their otherwise sterling radical commitment and activity, he objected, "But we have people who don't even read Chomsky!"

That makes this Noam Chomsky collection published in 2007, *Chomsky on Anarchism*, all the more relevant. Good activism requires good intellect and knowledge, and activism alone is simply insufficient, and ultimately ineffective, without these. Which makes it even more disquieting; for, I'm afraid, these young anarchist youth "who don't even read Chomsky" would find this compact volume simply above their heads — for all the wrong reasons. For Chomsky is nothing if not erudite, knowledgeable and scholarly, truly the MIT professor he is both as anarchist and as distinguished linguist. He is indeed these, even though he can also be repetitive, simplistic, and given to misplaced sarcasm — all of which can be found in *Chomsky on Anarchism*, but which judicious editing and selection has thankfully kept to a minimum. Which means *Chomsky on Anarchism*, a compendium of selected interviews, essays and book excerpts from 1969 to 2004, plays on Chomsky's strengths — his erudition, knowledge, and scholarly approach — and much less on his weaknesses. This makes *Chomsky on Anarchism* both valuable and informative, even for those of us on the left who question his basic anarchist premises.

Chomsky is quite straightforward about the appeal anarchism holds for him. He raises it at the beginning of an interview from 1995, where he notes that he was drawn to anarchism as a teenager because it expressed to him "the conviction that the burden of proof has to be placed on authority, and that it should be dismantled if that burden cannot be met." (p. 178) But he also affirms the desirability of democracy and generally accepting community norms unless they are intolerable (and for Chomsky, mere disagreement with them is insufficient for violating them), and objects to the notion (held by many other anarchists) that democracy is simply "a tyranny of the majority." Chomsky further refuses to conflate democracy with parliamentary or legislative rule, and bluntly notes that the Founding Fathers wished to establish

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a system that, while democratic as compared to the political systems then extant in Europe, would first and foremost prevent "crimes" against property, and that U.S. legislative de-

Chomsky refuses to conflate democracy with parliamentary or legislative rule.

mocracy was used in the 19th century to uphold both the chattel slavery of Blacks as well as the wage slavery of industrial workers. (p. 182) So there is much in Chomsky's somewhat unorthodox notion of anarchism (many anarchists see Chomsky as essentially a reformist) that we "state socialists" would agree with, defend and applaud! Indeed, much that as a Marxist I could readily accept, so already there is an important political common ground here.[1]

Of course, an important parting of the ways between anarchists and many socialists occurs on the nature of the Bolshevik Revolution and its course, not just on Stalin and afterwards, but also on the nature of the Revolution under Lenin and Trotsky. Here Chomsky gets simplistic, as not only does he question whether the Bolsheviks were harbingers of socialism at all, but also, he sees the authoritarian rule of Lenin and Trotsky as laying the foundations for the totalitarian rule of Stalin, and sees the demise of an authentically working-class, democratic socialism in Russia and elsewhere as stemming in part from the doctrines and practices of Marx and Engels themselves.[2] The nefariousness of the Bolsheviks is a topic extensively featured in *Chomsky on Anarchism.*

Against Leninism and Bolshevism Chomsky upholds for keen political insight not only Bakunin (whom he holds as prophetic); Daniel Guérin, for whose *Anarchism: From Theory to Practice* he wrote an introduction; and anarchist theorists Rudolf Rocker, Emma Goldman, and Alexander Berkman; but also Marxists such as Rosa Luxemburg, Paul Mattick, Anton Pannekoek, Karl Korsch and even the pre-Bolshevik Trotsky, whom he sees as libertarian foils and correct prognosticators of Leninism and its disastrously authoritarian, anti-socialist consequences.[3] Chomsky's position on Leninism, while oversimplified, is not without elements of merit and political insight for revolutionary socialists to seriously consider.

For Chomsky, the democratic aspirations and practices of the "primitives" are the core of any truly socialist revolution, and their democratic self-determination its very heart and soul. *Chomsky on Anarchism* devotes three substantive sections to affirming this: first, Chomsky's discussion of the initial anarchist success and later destruction of the Spanish Revolution of 1936-1939 (pp. 40-74); and again, in the resistance to dismantling egalitarianism in the former Communist countries by the working people there (pp. 196-198), and of factory workers and organized labor in the United States in the 19th and early 20th centuries (pp. 202-205).

Suppressing this "inner nature" through elitist manipulation of people's consciousness and outright imposition of anti-democratic values and practices by technocratic intellectuals serving private and state-sponsored tyrannies, both "socialist" and capitalist, is a key concept in Chomsky's political thought, and is discussed at length a number of places in *Chomsky on Anarchism*, notably in regard to the "pacification" of Vietnam in the 1960s (pp. 11-39, 74-75); the "engineering of consent" and dulling of the "instinct for freedom" in the political, economic, and social realm of modern societies against the "rabble" (pp. 158-172); and the role of Taylorism and the undermining of the liberating aspects of labor-saving technology to impose and maintain "industrial feudalism" (pp. 224-230).[4] For Chomsky, there is a direct confluence of ideas in the elitist notions of liberal capitalist intellectuals such as Daniel Bell (of *End of Ideology* fame), Walter Lippmann, and Edward Bernays, "father of public relations," and the "Leninist idea of a vanguard party that leads the stupid masses to a better life that they cannot conceive or construct on their own." (See p. 41 for Bell, pp. 167-169 for Bernays and Lippmann. The quote on Leninism occurs on p. 169.) While some of this "confluence" is a typically Chomskian oversimplification, there's a strong kernel of truth to it that dare not be denied, dismissed, or ignored by we of the Marxist left. Just think of Richard Nixon chummily hobnobbing with "Leninists" Mao Zedong and Leonid Brezhnev!

Another oversimplification by Chomsky here lies in his negative view of intellectuals, which deterministically reduces them to careerists, commissars, or apologists, regardless of ideology. Perhaps it's just in the hyperbolic and absolute way he describes intellectuals, but, by Chomsky's own use of language, he can't describe how a Noam Chomsky could arise out of this pile of bought-off satraps called the intelligentsia! Starting with a very valid distinction between "aristocrats" and "democrats" which he attributes to Thomas Jefferson, he then asserts that this distinction was further developed by Bakunin, who predicted the rise of a "new class" of intellectuals who would impose their rule on the masses in the form of a "Red bureaucracy" should a Marxist movement come to power. (pp. 205-6) However, Chomsky does develop out of this a very telling critique of the intellectual faddishness of Postmodernism and especially Derrida, and properly calls on "young radical activists" not to be "intimidated by the incomprehensible gibberish that [often] comes out of left-wing intellectual movements . . . which is just impossible to understand." What this "incomprehensible gibberish" does, in his eyes, is "[make] people feel they're not going to do anything because, unless I somehow understand the latest version of post-modern this and that, I can't go out in the streets and organize people, because I'm not bright enough." (p. 217)

As with the confluence notion above, despite Chomsky's oversimplification there is an important kernel of truth in what Chomsky expresses; once again, a kernel the left ignores only at its own peril. And yes, some intellectuals are indeed "aristocrats," of both the capitalist and "communist" variety. But others choose to be "democrats," learned tribunes of the people — and among them are many of the people Chomsky expresses admiration for in this book, not to mention Chomsky himself!

Indeed, there are many kernels of truth contained in *Chomsky on Anarchism*, much that is perceptive, insightful, and establishes common political ground between those who are more traditional socialists and those who are anarchists. Of especial interest in this regard is the discussion of the nature and restructuring of work (pp. 141-148) and the nature of language, and how it relates to freedom (pp. 101-114).

Especially relevant here for establishing common ground for productive political work that unites both socialists and anarchists is Chomsky's limited, pragmatic support for state authority in order to protect the people's rights and gains, which even calls for a strengthening of state authority in some cases. (pp. 193, 214, and 231)

This is the traditional socialist notion of using the state to advance the people's struggle, to achieve positive gains for the people. Chomsky even admits he votes, especially in local elections, but also supports voting for Greens and other independents in national ones. Common political ground between socialists and anarchists indeed.

And last, *Chomsky on Anarchism* even offers us left activists important caveats for improving and strengthening our work, and not simply getting stuck in the routine of going to meeting after meeting despite the lack of results. One of those caveats, as expressed above, is brooking no tolerance for "incomprehensible gibberish" from supposedly left-wing intellectuals. Two others involve considering the dangers inherent even in democratically structured meetings, and properly emphasizing the importance of tactics as well as principles. Chomsky writes very perspicaciously on the last:

> Talk of tactics sounds sort of trivial, but it is not. Tactical choices are the ones that have real human consequences. We can try to go beyond the more general strategic choices — speculatively and with open minds — but beyond that we descend into abstract generalities. Tactics have to do with decisions about what to do next, they have real human consequences. (p. 237)

In short, *Chomsky on Anarchism* is a valuable political text on a myriad number of subjects. Which is precisely why the book's lack of an index is a glaring flaw in an otherwise highly useful and valuable book.

NOTES

1. This is noted significantly in two writings by Marxists themselves, rather gushingly by Ursula McTaggart in her article, "Can We Build Socialist-Anarchist Alliances? Revolution Meets Apocalypse," in *Against the Current 141* (July/August 2009), more realistically and soberly by Marvin Mandell in his book review, "Anarchism and Socialism," in *New Politics 47* (Summer 2009). Mandell ends his review by writing, "I think Marxists and Anarchists can learn from each other and, in fact, need each other."

2. Chomsky quotes the following from council communist Paul Mattick's *Marx and Keynes* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1969), p. 295: "The anti-Bolshevik, left-wing labor movement opposed the Leninists because they did not go far enough in exploiting the Russian upheavals for strictly proletarian ends. They became prisoners of their environment and used the international radical movement to satisfy specifically Russian needs, which soon became synonymous with the needs of the Bolshevik Party-State. The 'bourgeois' aspects of the Russian Revolution were now discovered in Bolshevism itself: Leninism was adjudged a part of international social-democracy, differing from the latter only on tactical issues." On Marx, Chomsky writes on p. 185 of *Chomsky on Anarchism*, "There are continuities from Marx to Lenin, but there are also continuities to Marxists who were harshly critical of Lenin and Bolshevism."

3. This is the proper point to discuss my own assessment of Bolshevik authoritarianism and its relation to the liberatory goals of the Russian Revolution. I begin by noting the famous remark of the U.S. general on the destruction of the Vietnamese village in Ben Tre in 1970: "We had to destroy the village in order to save it." I then note Marx's classic remark at the beginning of the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*: "Hegel remarks somewhere that all facts and personages of great importance in world history occur, as it were, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce." "Saving" Ben Tre in this context was thus the farce, "saving" the democratic, socialist character of the Russian Revolution under the authoritarian rule of Lenin and Trotsky the tragedy. Which, however, was still a far cry from the totalitarian destruction of that legacy by Stalin. An important critique of Bolshevik authoritarianism under Lenin and Trotsky is found in Tom Smith's "Beyond Hero Worship: A Marxist Critique of Bolshevik Terror and Its Indebtedness to Jacobinism," *Socialism and Democracy 20* (Summer 1996). In *Socialism and Democracy 43* (March 2007), Theodore Allen notes perspicaciously in "Base and Superstructure and the Socialist Perspective," p. 84: "After the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks in Russia, Lenin declared, 'We shall now proceed to build the Socialist order!' But it was not to be; instead, beset by enemies in all directions and lacking elementary resources and technical personnel, the Bolsheviks embarked upon what would prove to be the irretrievably slippery slope into bourgeois habits of administration and production in the hopeless expectation of establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat over a population 90% peasantry." Stephen F. Cohen notes pointedly of Trotsky's struggle for inner-party democracy in *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography, 1888-1938* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), p. 155, "his sudden commitment to democratic procedures being [considered] suspect if only because previously he had been among the most authoritarian of Bolshevik leaders." And even Lenin had to admit in 1921, "Our present state is such that the entire organized proletariat must defend itself; we must use the workers' organizations for the *defense of the workers from their state* and for the defense by the workers of our state." (Emphasis added.) *Against the Current 131* (November/December 2007), in carrying two articles commemorating the 90th anniversary of the Russian Revolution, omitted to note that the working masses of the Soviet Union itself had backed the dismantling of the state and "socialism" that came out of that upheaval of 1917 *even before that revolution's 75th anniversary!*

4. Chomsky pointedly says in regard to Taylorism, "Lenin was very enamored of it. He had about the same conceptions as capitalist managers and the idea was to robotize work." (p. 224)

Born on the 4th of July

Eric Schuster

> Founding Corporate Power in Early National Philadelphia
> Andrew M. Schocket
> DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2007, 288 pp., $42.

The current recession has left corporations and their allies with some explaining to do. They've ducked, naturally, instead amping up their corporate responsibility budgets, saturating the airwaves with commercials about how green they've suddenly become, and trying in vain to cloak their intensified lobbying activities — some directly financed by TARP money. All of which indicates how worried they are about ideological and social legitimacy, issues that are critical to both political hegemony and market share. Thus "Rebuilding Trust," the topic of a recent *Harvard Business Review* (June 2009, wherein restauranteur and 1960s icon Alice Waters — "we're trying to make [restaurant Chez Panisse] work with fewer people" — is upheld for her "relentless idealism"), vigorously argues that restoring faith in the world of commerce is essential to the functioning of the modern economy. Even *HBR*'s own readers, they report, have lost trust in senior management.

If the corporate world is this acutely self-aware now, how does it think it got here? There's considerable puff in *HBR* about Bernie Madoff, but no history, save for a brief timeline which begins with the panic of 1907 (solved by J.P. Morgan himself), and which all of the articles studiously ignore. Bhopal, Enron, and Ralph Nader's *Unsafe at Any Speed* are mentioned; missing is Three Mile Island, anything about labor or social movements, and anything before the 20th century. In fact, the origins of the development of the corporate model in early America have not heretofore been integrated in U.S. history curriculums and texts, including most labor histories. Though the market revolution (1790-1860) of industry, commerce, and transportation, and its significance to class formation, is widely recognized, the parallel development of business and municipal corporations in early America, and the origins of corporate political power, is not.

Historian Andrew M. Shocket's overlooked study, *Founding Corporate Power in Early National Philadelphia*, places the corporate structure at the crucial pivot of economic development and political power in the early Republic. Though citizens in the early republic were fearful of "tying control over capital or crucial technologies and services to the corporate form," Shocket argues for understanding corporate power as present at — and fundamental to — the dawn of American national formation. Whereas the accepted historical archetype is that of a merchant capitalist elite that comes to adopt the corporate toolbox as owners and organizers of the new manufactory system, exemplified by the Lowell textile mills or the Erie Canal enterprise, Shocket demonstrates that "corporations and corporate power were bound inextricably with the founding and development of American democracy." At the post-revolutionary moment when white American men are exercising previously unheard of economic and political freedoms, "certain kinds of economic questions . . . came to be decided more and more outside the public arena, closed off from the

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reach of an increasingly confident and demanding electorate." From this perspective of increasing political democracy in parallel with decreasing economic equality, which Shocket believes is more complementary than paradoxical,

Share prices were kept high to eliminate popular participation.

"rather than considering the state's actions toward corporations," now the historians' task is to "ask how corporate men influenced the state through their activities."

Several elements shaped the new state in the era of revolutionary adjustment. One was the recession of 1781 to 1788, which reduced the number of smaller business and favored more highly organized business communities. It also coincided with Philadelphia's first post-independence strike wave, initiated by 26 journeymen printers in 1786, followed over the next few years by carpenters, chair makers, and cordwainers.

A second element was the democratic and egalitarian character of national politics, exemplified by the democratic traditions of Philadelphia's mechanics societies. This left the urban elite "in an unfamiliar position in that they no longer had their hands on the controls of state government." Once Pennsylvania's post-revolutionary charter extended suffrage to white males (all taxpaying freemen), the state's mechanics and western farmers promptly removed the old landed and urban elite from office. In 1788 Pennsylvania forbade its citizens from engaging in slave trading, and the nation's first independent black church emerged in Philadelphia, led by the influential minister and educator Richard Allen. It was also the home to the wealthy African-American sail maker James Forten, who opposed black migration to Africa as racist and is known as a key link between the pre-revolutionary anti-slavery movement and Frederick Douglass. Philadelphia's revised penal code of 1786 implemented new concepts of imprisonment that replaced corporal punishment.

Another factor in shaping the new state was the need for large, focused investment in infrastructure-building, including transportation projects and other internal improvements. By establishing corporations — which the British had forbidden in the American colonies — wealthy men in American cities found ways to create diversified investment structures to minimize risk and improve credit, advance transportation and urban improvements for commercial benefit, and create a base of power over public activities, labor and politics that was sheltered from public view.

Beginning in 1790 merchants and their allies among professionals and wealthier artisans recaptured Philadelphia's city government, consolidating political and economic power in part by promising to overcome problems that were impeding commerce. One was transportation. The region's virtually nonexistent roads troubled both western farmers and Philadelphia's merchants. Inflation, lack of credit, and an unstable system of paper money inhibited consumer markets and trade. Also, an acute lack of fresh water plagued residents, and was blamed for a yellow fever epidemic. A British-designed water supply system, funded with municipal bonds, was commissioned in 1798.

Schocket notes that wealthy Philadelphians, who had become rich via their participation in the Atlantic trade, and who were part of the "Anglo-American Atlantic world," were familiar with Britain's long and successful record of chartering corporations for internal improvements. Examples abounded. The British Parliament was reliant on the corporate model, propelled by the success of the Bank of England (founded 1694) in funding the empire's expansion; Scotland's enviable economic growth was due in part to its innovative use of banknotes and credit, and influenced the Scottish philosopher Adam Smith (his *Wealth of Nations* was published in 1776); and the success of Britain's inland infrastructure financial model, which was dependent on canal construction organized and financed by corporations. In America, state governments would charter 42 canal companies between 1792 and 1796, predating the Erie Canal construction boom of the 1820s.

Naturally, American corporations sought and obtained from the Atlantic World. British investors owned at least $34 million in stock in U.S. banks by 1803, paving the way for heavier English investments in transportation projects following the Erie Canal (proposed in 1808 and completed in 1825), including the joint development of railroad projects. As in Europe, the new corporations "contributed significantly to the coalescence of a stable economic elite in the early republic." Share prices were kept high to eliminate popular participation, and ensured that only amenable domestic and trans Atlantic investors were allowed a slice of the pie. The corporate structure also solved a series of vexing problems for city and state government: its need to minimize taxes, corruption, and land speculation; pressure to reduce the appearance of favoritism to specific counties or projects; and the potential to solve expensive local problems, such as Philadelphia's water system, by leaving it to the local population, and local municipal corporations. Pennsylvania had chartered 23 business corporations by 1800, New York 28, Massachusetts 60.

Schocket also addresses resistance. Farmers and tradesmen constituted the leading opponents of corporations. To these communities corporations meant banks, and ordinary Philadelphians resented the high interest charged by lending institutions, and in particular loss of public control over profits and public debts. Westerners despised bank policies which only offered short term loans to farmers, while merchants got longer terms at much better rates. The republican ideal of standing against inequality in property was also challenged by the corporate financing of large projects such as canals, where considerable public assets were ceded to private interests. With bank stock prices set at $400 per share, nearly twice the annual salary of a Philadelphia tailor, there was also objection to privilege afforded to wealthy share holders, and to the clear danger of monopoly. In short, corporations "symbolized a retreat from the Revolution's egalitarian ideals." Bowing to popular pressure, the state legislature revoked the charter of the Bank of North America in 1795. But one prominent proponent of that de-chartering, John Nichols, soon became a partner in a large land speculation empire, and worked to charter the Bank of Pennsylvania soon thereafter.

But corporate advocates played on two sentiments to reshape politics. One was that corporations would enhance economic growth, and so benefit the community at large, specifically by increasing the money supply and expanding trade. The second appealed to the goal of unifying a geographically and economically disparate nation. Inland transportation, for example, would link "individual members of the Union," which required a "powerful cement to bind them together," as the 1812 petition from the Union Canal Company claimed. Financial profit was rightful motivation, as all would profit from advancing the public good, and thus "reinforced the new liberal theme of legitimizing individual interest." Despite a groundswell of opposition, which included the election of Pennsylvania governor Simon Snyder (elected 1808, 1811, and 1814) — who was hostile to corporations, and who favored public education, debtor relief, and direct state funding of public improvements — Pennsylvania had chartered 122 business corporations by 1815. Political opposition all but collapsed with the launching of the state's anthracite coal market in the 1820s, enabling corporate leadership to become "less divided over politics and more united in terms of class solidarity."

Most compelling is Schocket's interpretation of the role of municipal corporations. The construction of urban infrastructure, financed privately through corporate structures, transformed Philadelphia into an industrial metropolitan area by "exploiting citizen's dependence upon [urban facilities] to consolidate legal, financial, and technological leverage over city and suburban residents." The municipal corporation both removed "crucial fiscal decisions from electoral politics," shifting the costs of water works, canals, and the like to residents — by way of regressive tax policies — and funneling profits to those who "could afford to be bondholders." Qualitative improvements in infrastructure benefited entrepreneurs and the broad middle class, facilitating the vigorous economic and population growth that characterized early 19th century America. Philadelphia's steam powered water system (which returned a city-mandated six percent to investors, along with free city water to each bondholder), for example, made the city into a national leader in steam technology and related heavy industry. Thus economic promotion, primarily via allocation of public property and resources, along with market regulation, became the principal task of city government, which in turn enjoyed enhanced economic influence and political patronage.

By the 1810s and 1820s a small and powerful corporate elite had jelled in Philadelphia. Numbering around 300 men, they directed the city's and the region's economy through municipal corporations, internal improvement companies, banks and insurance interests, and government agencies. Primarily merchants whose initial wealth came from trade, they would soon move into manufacturing. But their goals remained steady, to "emphasize extensive urban growth, privileging the wealthy over the poor, the city over the country, insularity over transparency, and elite policy making over democratic rule." Annual retention rates of more than 90 percent on corporate boards attest to their stability; at least 25 percent of corporate business board members also sat on the boards of municipal corporations, many had relatives sitting on boards of other companies, and many rotated in and out of political office, indicating considerable unity and influence. Under their guidance Philadelphia expanded from a seaport and trading center into a manufacturing center, while its leaders sat "at the forefront of the formation of a new corporate class in and across the industrial cities of America." The concentration of wealth and power accelerated: by the 1830s, when the county's population approached 200,000, the poorest three-fifths of Philadelphia possessed less than 1 percent of the wealthiest.

Yet Schoket's belief that "the rise of both capitalism and increased democracy" was complementary, rather than paradoxical, is curious. Shocket notes that Tocqueville, blinded by the vitality of 1830s Philadelphia, had "not struggled to secure a bank loan," and could not discern the "bifurcation of electoral and economic power" that divided the city between "a public sphere of politics, taverns, and newspapers" and "the corporate sphere of boardrooms." Though increases in city services, transportation, and the money supply had positive impacts on farmers and workers, it is also so that the rise of corporations "demonstrates a strong counterpoint" to the common belief that this period experienced "broad social and economic fluidity" that was "bereft of a strong economic elite." However, the new corporate leaders were "not running a malevolent oligarchy," nor were they omnipotent — building trades, for example, did not use bank credit. Indeed, wages and productivity increased; the city's growth rate was exceeded only by Baltimore and New York; and Philadelphia and its surrounding counties — which grew to more than half a million people — flourished on coal mines, textile mills, ironworks and trade. But it is also true that the corporate structure was present at the earliest period of American independence, "reflect[ing] the prevailing differences in power among the groups involved," and that corporations were indisputably "among the new governing institutions of the early republic." Their growth was indicative of diminishing degrees of egalitarianism, even as the electoral franchise underwent expansion.

Disdain towards commoners and hostility towards representative popular government was the enduring legacy of these businessmen, who perfected the art of actively using "finance, technology and ideology . . . to limit the level of public scrutiny and input" into their actions. But it is also the case, albeit outside of Schoket's purview, that Philadelphians who opposed corporate expansion were active and organized. The city's Mechanics' Union of Trade Associations assisted strikers in the 1820s, established a workers' library and free press, and was a founder of the Philadelphia Working Men's Party, the first of more then 60 independent workers' parties of the Jackson era. A key issue for all was opposition to chartered "monopolies," the worst of which were the powerful banking corporations, which were condemned as obstacles to democracy and were particularly hated on payday for their unstable and frequently worthless banknotes. Sixteen Working Men's Party candidates were elected in the 1829 Philadelphia elections.

"Expectations about the corporation's role in social issues," says the *Harvard Business Review*, with some apprehension, "have risen sharply." Perhaps not yet as sharply as they had in early national Philadelphia.

Baudelaire Between the Lines

CAREY HARRISON

> Baudelaire & Co.
> MELVIN ZIMMERMAN
> Toronto: Editions du Gref, 2009, 163 pp., $28 (Canadian)

THIS IS A HIGHLY ENJOYABLE COLLECTION of short essays by the learned Baudelairean Melvin Zimmerman, Senior Scholar in French Studies at York University, Toronto. The collection, first published some years ago in French, unpicks and holds up to the light the contradictions to be found in Baudelaire's writings on matters spiritual, cultural and political; Zimmerman returns repeatedly, in overlapping meditations, to the question of Baudelaire's resistance to the work and ideas of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, perhaps an unlikely-seeming potential influence and yet, as Zimmerman shows, one far closer to him in intellectual complexion than Baudelaire seems to have been willing to admit.

Zimmerman's project in this volume is, as he puts it himself, to "shed new light on categories (of allies and adversaries, elective affinities and bêtes noires), considered to be definitive." This is in itself a valuable mission in a field — intellectual history — where we often take too much for granted the alliances and hostilities that we suppose to have been formed, consciously or unconsciously, among its major figures. "Posterity," Zimmerman points out, "is in error when it idealizes a great author by sim-

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plifying his work (or, to put it another way, by purifying it)." This applies not only to Zimmerman's primary subject, Baudelaire, but *de plus forte raison* to Rousseau, whose ideas were so rapidly "purified" that he was barely dead before he was traduced by all-too-avid supporters and by enemies alike, and held up as the proponent of an unreserved belief in primitive goodness and the potential transformation, or reformation, of human society into its paradisal, primitive state. It seems as if this was the Rousseau to whom Baudelaire was exposed, with the result that in revealing his prejudices with regard to Rousseau, Baudelaire shows us more about his reaction to the Rousseau myth than to Rousseau's work itself.

Should we ask of Baudelaire that he censor the echoes of Africa he found in Jeanne and Dorothée, so as to appear more color-blind and more politically correct?

Nonetheless, an intriguing question emerges: why was Baudelaire so reluctant to channel his inner Rousseau, even if we are speaking now of the Rousseau of myth and misapprehension, the eternal optimist Rousseau, rather than the true, the more nuanced, meliorist Rousseau? Zimmerman cites a series of comments on Baudelaire's part, concerning 'civilized' and 'uncivilized' man, which chime remarkably well with both the real and the 'purified' Rousseau: "Civilized peoples," wrote Baudelaire, "you who always stupidly speak of savages and barbarians, soon, as D'Aurevilly says, you will no longer even be worthy of being idolators." And again, in *Mon coeur mis a nu*: "Nomadic peoples, herdsmen, hunters, farmers and even cannibals, all can be superior, by energy, by personal dignity, to our Western races." Even cannibals! *Superior* in dignity! It is not the least pleasure of Zimmerman's book to restore to us these still splendidly shocking observations of Baudelaire's that vault him across the 150 years that separate us, and show him still challenging the vanity of our Western-centric cultural values. Reading Baudelaire's words, still alive, right here, on the page, we "moderns" seem indeed to have slipped back, not moved forwards, since he wrote.

But to return to the question of Baudelaire's resistance to Rousseau, which appears to have remained fairly consistent through the different periods of Baudelaire's life, with their widely differing degrees of energy and self-confidence and their differing political and cultural positions. It's interesting to note that, as Zimmerman points out, another fixed star in the Baudelairean firmament of affiliations is Proudhon, to whose form of socialism Baudelaire remained faithful all his days, even as he moved across the revolutionary/counter-revolutionary spectrum, into the self-proclaimed "depoliticized" stage of his life. Perhaps we should remember Zimmerman's warning that Baudelaire was not in the business of erecting a monumental or consistent self — this is another aspect, in fact, of Baudelaire's enduring modernity. He is the eponymous hero of Zimmerman's title, *Baudelaire & Co*: as much "& Co" as Baudelaire.

Unless we are in the business of sealing our own celebrity and reproducing an unchanging self, we are all liable to behave like Baudelaire in this regard. Where our favorite or unfavorite authors are concerned, where politicians and even family members we exalt or ridicule are concerned, the ones we repudiate most passionately are often those who in some measure incarnate a part of ourselves from which we are in flight. Timothy Raser, quoted by Zimmerman, argues that Baudelaire may have been "more aware of 'rousseauisme' than of Rousseau, of received ideas regarding the writer than of the writings. This might explain," Raser continues, “Baudelaire’s unfairness regarding Rousseau, and his apparent self-contradictions.” Yet the intriguing question of Baudelaire’s resistance to Rousseau does not collapse like a tower of cards under the possible discovery that it was not Rousseau himself but rousseauisme to which Baudelaire was resistant. Far from it. If, indeed, Baudelaire had read Rousseau, or read him properly and extensively, to the point of confronting their intellectual kinship, his comments on Rousseau would tell us little or nothing new about Baudelaire. It is his resistance to the spectre of Rousseau that reveals to us, thanks to Zimmerman’s coaxing, what it was that haunted Baudelaire: the last thing our admired poet wanted was to be taken for an innocent, for history’s dupe and booby, a role for which the “purified” Rousseau and his followers were clamorously modeling.

And who can blame Baudelaire? The glory of his verse is its provocativeness, its elusiveness — although its initial appeal is so lapidary that not even Gautier, the dedicatee of the *Fleurs du Mal*, could have asked for gretaer precision. On second thoughts we realize that his triumphant lines continue to torment us: is he sage or decadent, nihilist or revolutionary, and can one be all those things at once? As a poet, one can, of course, as long as the music of the poetry lasts. And next comes Rimbaud: Rimbaud adoring Baudelaire as a poetic god, yet castigating him for his lack of formal novelty — at once praising Baudelaire as eternal revolutionary and discarding him as a compositional reactionary.

Zimmerman’s book covers many ‘intertexts,’ examining Baudelaire as a reader of Pascal, of Poe, of the Laclos of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses.* The book climaxes in an especially perilous area of Baudelaire studies: with *Jeanne Duval & la belle Dorothée*, a splendid evocation of Baudelaire’s black lovers, Zimmerman takes time to inspect the painfully provocative terms Baudelaire found to use, when evoking his “negresses.” Should we ask of Baudelaire that he censor the echoes of Africa he found in Jeanne and Dorothée, so as to appear more color-blind and more politically correct?

Can we read, in *Les Ténèbres*, Baudelaire’s hymn to Jeanne, the words ‘black and yet luminous’ as something more, or less, than the insult they appear to convey? Zimmerman picks his way confidently and convincingly through this quagmire, arguing that the black/luminous oxymoron is one that lends force and beauty to both elements of the apparent contradiction; and indeed that the whole point of an oxymoron, an ‘and yet,’ is not for one part of the equation to deny, replace or contradict the other, but rather to demonstrate the new thing, the new beast that was two and is now one. (The very word *ténèbres* — recurring in Baudelaire’s celebrated *Bientôt nous plongerons dans les froides ténèbres* — has a function in the evocation of human black and white that surfaces once more in Faulkner, for whom “tenebrous” is a favorite adjective, luring both races into a metaphorical territory where shadow replaces pigment, just as the *soleil noir* of Nerval and Baudelaire evokes more than the extinction of color.)

The argument for Baudelaire’s freedom from racism, or at least from racist cliché, Zimmerman indicates, has yet to win over all scholars. It is among the topics raised by this volume, which we would like to see completed in Zimmerman’s hands, just as the literary psycho-analysis of Baudelaire that the reader will feel sure Zimmerman is especially well qualified to bring off, is a project for which this book and its essays could serve as a series of *esquisses.*

A few small cavils: the book is not free of proofreading failures, sometimes glaring ones, as when pages 5 and 6 are reversed. Such things will not detain the interested and diverted reader; but he or she should be warned that Baudelaire’s verses are mostly offered in English. This is a mixed blessing, given the difficulty of translating French into English at the best of times, and given the attention the author is according to the nuances of Baudelaire's original. In three of the essays there are passages of Baudelaire's verse in French, untranslated, and also passages with an accompanying translation — which would seem to have been the logical way in which to present Baudelaire's poetry to the reader. Clearly these separate essays were prepared for different audiences, but it is hard to see why a common policy was not devised for publication — since the great majority of the quotations from Baudelaire in this volume are in English translation with no sign of the original French — to suit both the specialist reader and the general reader, who will find Zimmerman's style to be lucid and simple, and free (with rare exceptions) of jargon. Besides, even if specialists will proceed to Zimmerman's work in French, there will surely be Francophone readers for this, the English edition, whose memory of Baudelaire's verses is not so perfect that they would not be grateful to have had before them, once more, the original as well as the translation.

As such the translations are serviceable; but where French into English is concerned, serviceable has to be held to a lower standard than usual. And here and there Zimmerman makes an odd choice. Quoting Baudelaire's celebrated text, *Enivrez-vous,* usually translated as "Get drunk," these words are rendered by Zimmerman as "you must always be tipsy." His reason for this choice, we suspect, is not decorum. The fact is that "*ivre*" in French and "drunk" in English are not exactly co-terminous; it's the word *saoul* that renders the more brutal aspects of 'drunk,' while *ivre* communicates 'intoxicated' as well as "drunk." But "intoxicated" is an overly self-explanatory word to use for Baudelaire's *ivre*, which leaves invitingly inexplicit what the intoxicant will be, until the text itself offers wine, poetry, or virtue as the drug of choice, according to preference. "Tipsy" has the advantage of implying something less than falling-down-drunk; but "tipsy," alas, is forever connected to silliness, and to mild but comic drunkenness, which is hardly what Baudelaire seems to be urging on us. *Pour ne pas sentir l'horrible fardeau du Temps* … — So as not to feel 'the horrible burden of Time, which breaks your shoulders and bends you to the ground…" — "tipsiness," in Baudelaire's world, will hardly do.

These reservations notwithstanding, *Baudelaire & Co* is a singularly readable contribution to its field, and a treat in store for the ordinary reader with a yen for Baudelaire. Fellow-scholars are amply cited, some with more welcoming warmth than others, and the overall impression is of a work fully up-to-date and rewardingly focused on the details of Baudelairean scholarship.

"The Piano Ain't Got No Wrong Notes"

MICHAEL WRESZIN

Thelonious Monk:
The Life and Times of
an American Original

ROBIN D. G. KELLEY

New York, Free Press, Simon and Schuster, 2009, 588 pp. $30

ROBIN KELLEY'S ASTONISHING LIFE of Thelonious Monk evokes both vivid memories and pleasurable nostalgia. The book brought to mind a late evening in the mid fifties at the Café Bohemia just off Sheridan Square in New York's Greenwich Village. While seated at the bar I saw Monk come in to listen to Art Blakey's Quintet. He was soon asked to sit in, and he played for over an hour. That gig, among hundreds of others, finds its place in this meticulous record of Monk's life and musical career. It is the result of 14 years of exhaustive research, hundreds of interviews, and an enormous correspondence. Kelley tracked down what appears to be every gig, concert, recording session, festival, late night jam session, rent party and evenings in his apartment where Monk played and taught other musicians. He was, throughout his career, a superb teacher, and many fine jazzmen express their debt to him. He worked in all of the famous jazz joints in the country and Kelley often provides a thumbnail sketch of their history. He brings to life many of the New York clubs: the legendary Minton's Playhouse, the Village Vanguard, the Village Gate, Birdland, the Royal Roost, the row of jazz clubs on 52nd Street in the fifties, and many more.

Robin D.G. Kelley is a distinguished American historian, currently the Professor of American Studies and Ethnicity at the University of Southern California .He has written several prize winning histories such as *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression (1990); Race Rebels: Culture Politics and the Black Working Class (1994); Yo' Mama's Dis-Funktional: Fighting the Cultural Wars in Urban America (1997); ThreeStrikes: Miners, Musicians, Salesgirls and the Fighting Spirit of Labor's Last Century (2001)*. Many of Kelley's essays and articles were written on jazz. He has lived with this music since early childhood in Harlem and has played the piano since 1987. Kelley is well versed in the technicalities of musical construction, chord progression, and thoroughly familiar with Monk's harmonic language. This is an author who is an accomplished American historian with a vast knowledge of jazz and its history. I should disclose that I am a fanatical jazz fan of over sixty years but no expert on the technicalities of musical construction.

Kelley's biography begins with Monk's great-grandparents and a detailed slave history that goes up to his birth in North Carolina on October 10, 1917. North Carolina has no part in his development since his mother insisted on moving to New York City in June of 1922 because she did not want to bring him up in the South. Thelonious spent the rest of his life in the city and its environs.

Monk's family were all musically inclined, and he studied and played the piano by his early teens. Initially he played evangelical music as his mother often sang the gospels. He dropped out of high school after completing his sophomore year to take a job as a pianist for a travel-

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ing evangelical and faith healer. When the evangelist hit Kansas City for an extended stay, Monk met such well-known musicians as Mary Lou Williams, Hot Lips Page , Andy Kirk, and Jimmy Blanton. He sat in at the clubs and played in jam sessions. It was during this early period, Kelley points out, that Monk began his minimalism on the keyboard. Like Basie, he "chose his notes carefully and lived by the injunction that 'less is more.'" Much later on he remarked that the "loudest sound in the world is silence." His spaces and the silences are compelling and uniquely Monk. Kelley's detailed history encompasses the cultural, political, and social context of the time. He records the blatant racism of the period, the constant violence, intra and inter racial, in his West 63rd Street neighborhood known as San Juan Hill. When Monk's family moved to 63rd Street it was still all black. There was also always the bigoted conduct of the New York police. They could suspend his cabaret license on minor or framed drug charges and they did so a number of times.

Monk used both an active left and right hand and fused stride with his angular rhythms.

Ameliorating the roughness of the neighborhood was the loving close-knit family life; they always encouraged him in his budding musical career. The family stuck together through many crises: unemployment, his wife Nellie's illness, and his debilitating bipolarity. But there was always the saving grace of a piano, and Monk invited his fellow musicians to work with him on his compositions and inventive treatment of well-known standards. The Baroness Pannonica (Nica) Koenigswater, a scion of the Rothchild family, became a life long friend who encouraged his musical aspirations and gave him both financial and emotional support.

Monk became known in Harlem with his own quartet playing in local bars and clubs, as well as at the Apollo Audition Nights and Minton's Playhouse in the basement of the Cecil Hotel on 18th Street. Kenny Clarke, the club's bandleader, hired Monk as the pianist. Clarke and Monk learned quickly to work well together; Clarke, known as the bomb dropper with off beat rhythm, fit right into Monk's own "chord substitutions and rhythmic innovations." Monk always denied the legend that the band at Minton's and musicians who played at Clark Monroe's Uptown House on 134th deliberately played in an unfamiliar manner to discourage lesser players from sitting in. He insisted that he simply wanted to play his way with others interested in the new sounds. He met Dizzy Gillespie at Monroe's Uptown House a few years earlier and Dizzy had great respect for what he felt was Monk's inventive genius. The same can be said of Miles Davis although the two seldom got along.

Many historians of jazz believe that bebop originated in 1940-41 at Minton's and Monroe's. As to who is awarded the credit as the chief innovator — that remains up for grabs. Initially in the media, Gillespie and Charlie Parker were seen as the major musicians leading the bebop style. According to Kelley's account the attention that they received irritated Monk, who always felt neglected and could not find employment as easily as they did. He complained throughout his career in several interviews that Parker, Gillespie, and others associated with the new music took their cues from his stylistic improvisations. Monk insisted that the music simply developed over a period of time.

Bop, as Ralph Ellison has noted, was a "nonsense syllable . . . .an inadequate word . . . which throws up its hands in clownish depreciation before all the complexity of sound and rhythm and self-assertive passion which it pretends to name; a mask word for the charged ambiguities of the new sound, hiding the serious face of art."

As a Monk devotee I never thought of him as a bopper. He seldom played at such a high tempo and refused to neglect the melody. Monk used both an active left and right hand and fused stride with his angular rhythms. It was his modernist risks, his dissonance and timing that made him a part of the new modern jazz. He often criticized bop for neglecting the melody and claimed he had learned nothing from Gillespie and Parker.

Monk was a traditionalist. Dan Morgenstern commented that Monk "knew where he is at and so does the listener . . . This knowing gives Monk's music that dimension of balance and structure which is so clearly lacking in much of contemporary jazz." Monk lamented "the loss of melody and beauty in modern music….What they call avant-garde is ruining jazz. They do anything, make any kind of noise." To one of his producers he insisted: "I want it to be as easy as possible so people can dig it. And then it should be good. A song is like that." "or Monk the melody was the song's essential quality.

All of the great jazz men of those years played at Minton's and Monroe's: Ben Webster, Lester Young, Coleman Hawkins, Charlie Christian, Dizzie Gillespie, Charlie Parker, Milt Jackson, John Lewis, Roy Eldridge, Bud Powell, Art Tatum, Milt Hinton, and on and on. Monk played with all of these musicians and he had an impact on many of them. Kelley gives a vivid picture of the excitement of the place, with its ferocious cutting sessions. This was their chance to hear all of the resources of jazz, the varied techniques, inventive ideas, harmonic structures, and the possibility of new rhythmic patterns and constant reinterpretations.

Monk played in those two clubs for several years. He did not last long as the Minton club pianist. His personal life and his unrecognized bi-polarity made him increasingly unpredictable. He would walk off the stage in the middle of a number, do a little dance during a sideman's solo, fall asleep at the piano and frequently show up an hour late for the first set. The director of the club let him go at end of 1941. All of this was chalked up to Monk's weirdness, his eccentricity, his personal craziness. This picture of Monk as the erratic nut became the focus of whatever attention was paid to him. He felt it made it more difficult for him to find work.

After leaving Minton's, Monk was always seeking work. He did play briefly with Kenny Clarke's band, Lucky Millender, and in 1944 with Coleman Hawkins for a lengthy engagement. Hawkins had long appreciated his work, but Monk's life was tough. He was always in financial straits. One of the main problems was that many people, musicians included, did not know what Monk was doing. Hawkins said he constantly was asked, "Why don't you get a piano player?" and "What's that stuff he is playing?" When told he had played a wrong note he responded, "There ain't no wrong notes on a piano." There were others like Herbie Nichols, Bud Powell, and Art Blakey, who knew and admired what Monk was doing. In one of the first published articles on Monk in the *Music Dial*, Nichols wrote that Thelonious was the "author of the weirdest rhythmical melodies" he had ever heard." They are very great too… .I would rather hear him play a 'boston'[stride piano] than any other pianist. His sense of fitness is uncanny."

By 1945 Monk's work was widely known and often copied. His most successful composition, "Round Midnight " was recorded by Coleman Hawkins, Cootie Williams, and played by Miles Davis. However, Monk couldn't get a recording contract. He was furious at how Parker and Gillespie found gigs so easily and he had to struggle. He did work for Gillespie in 1945 but it didn't last long because of his constant tardiness. In addition, some in the Gillespie band did not like his playing. The bassist, Ray Brown, complained that Monk would "not comp properly behind the band, choosing to do his own thing." He would frequently do nothing while the band played and then there might be a pause and he would hit one note — "plink."

Nevertheless, by the late 40s Monk's work was increasingly known and played: "Round Midnight," "Epistrophy," "I Mean You," "Evidence," "52nd Street Theme," and many others. Frequently he got no credit for his works and he still could not gain a recording contract. When he did a gig he often received hostile reviews. Even after he had been touted as "The High Priest of Bop," Leonard Feather wrote a devastating put down of Monk as "a pianist without technique who has written a few attractive tunes."

These were hard times for the pianist. He was picked up by the police for carrying marijuana. He spent thirty days in the Manhattan House of Detention, and his cabaret license was revoked for a year, making employment even more difficult as he could play in no club that served liquor. He did find a gig at the Village Vanguard, and while it was not a commercial success, (people couldn't dance to his rhythm), he made a life long friend of Max Gordon, the owner, who defended him and offered him work during the rest of his career.

Again, Kelley writes about Monk's personal life, the atmosphere of the city, the prevalent racism and disrespect in the most evocative way. The history of the jazz clubs is developed in fascinating detail. The book supports the view that jazz was never a popular music, and was only appreciated by a limited audience. Well-known jazz musicians often made very little money. Miles Davis, Dizzie Gillespie, and Dave Brubeck are seen as successful, wealthy musicians but they are not representative of the financial struggle of many accomplished jazz sidemen.

It wasn't until the mid 1950s that Monk could count on feeding his wife and two children. At the height of his career in 1964 he brought home $42,000. He had been arrested for narcotics possession once again, this time taking the rap for his good friend, Bud Powell. This meant he could not work in the city for six years and was forced to take out-of-town jobs and play in off beat neighborhood clubs in Brooklyn and the Bronx. By now he has made some recordings that earned him a larger reputation. On the first of several European tours he recorded his initial solo album, which gave his reputation a boost. Then in 1955 he signed a genuine contract with Riverside and recorded several brilliant albums that firmly established his reputation. Soon his "Monk's Dream," "Body and Soul," "Five Spot Blues," "Sweet and Lovely" were Monk tunes familiar to his jazz audiences and his fellow musicians.

When the marvelous " Solo Monk" album was recorded in the mid sixties it contained a host of standards reinterpreted in a delightfully humorous way: "Dinah," "Sweet and Lovely," "I'm 'Confessin'," "Everything Happens to Me," "These Foolish Things," as well as such originals as "Monk's Point," and "Introspection." Later his rendition of "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You," became his favorite standard and there was simply no end to the innovations he employed along with stride interludes.

On the 4th of July 1957, Thelonious Monk began a six-month stay at a relatively new small club, the Five Spot, on the Bowery. It already had a history as a hangout for the Beats and other dissenters and intellectuals. Leroi Jones and Ted Joans, the poet, became regulars. Jack Kerouac read poetry there. Monk's quartet fit in perfectly and within a few nights the word was out that this mad pianist was on the scene. The bohemian artists and the Beats and their followers looked upon Monk as the guru to replace Parker. Kelley writes that "Monk's name and his mystic utterances made him seem like the ideal Dharma Bum to an audience of hipsters." Because he was black, and thus by definition, according to Norman Mailer, an outlaw against bourgeois white America, many of the new fans assumed he was also a part of the growing black nationalist movement. Monk supported the Civil Rights movement and played for benefits to raise money for groups in the movement. But he was never a nationalist. He often employed the familiar tone of the artist who insists he is not a "black artist but just an artist." Monk could never have bought an argument that would separate white and black musicians.

Leonard Bernstein was to declare Monk "the most original and creative pianist in the world."

It was around this time that he recorded the album "Thelonious Himself," in which there is an exciting rendition of "Round Midnight." It contains a twenty-two minute rumination on the theme with starts and stops and "unfinished creative journeys." It is one of his most moving and evocative performances that was received enthusiastically by jazz fans and all serious musicians. Monk was becoming increasingly well known at home and abroad. Leonard Bernstein was to declare Monk " the most original and creative pianist in the world." He won the highly respected International Jazz Critic poll reported in *Downbeat*. He had topped Errol Garner, Oscar Peterson, and Earl Hines. By the early sixties he was a celebrity. When a manager informed him that his name appeared in an encyclopedia and that he was famous he responded: "I'm famous ain't that a bitch." Soon to come was his portrait on a *Time* cover. He was indeed "famous"!

The extended *Time* article on Monk was for many fans a bitter disappointment. The journalist Barry Farrell brought forth all the old clichés about Monk's eccentricities, his weirdness, and unpredictability. He was pictured as a "strange, reclusive genius," an "idiot savant," with an eccentric taste for crazy looking hats. Monk, he reported, had a "childlike demeanor" and was dependent on women to look after him. At the same time it recognized Monk as a devoted family man who cared deeply for his wife and children. The piece by Farell seemed as schizophrenic as its subject. He recounted many of the instances that Monk had been confined to mental institutions and of his arrests for drug use. Monk had always been angered and hurt by this portrait, but with his fame and age he grew to tolerate the emphasis on his eccentricities. It was good copy, and the antics attracted more and more people. Kelley suggests that he came to feel that "his fame had more to do with his image than his music."

There was never widespread recognition or understanding of the serious bipolarity that helped to explain his frequently strange moods and actions. He had been on Thorazine and other drugs that were prescribed by his doctor (whose license was ultimately suspended for administering narcotics to known addicts). But later, with the diligent attention of his wife, he began taking Lithium, which was the preferred treatment for mania and depression in bipolar disorders. While it stabilized his moods it led to fatigue, lack of interest and reduced creativity. For the last decade of his life Monk seldom played the piano, but there were a few remarkable performances before he ended his career. He died in his wife's arms on February 17,1982.

Kelley spent 14 years tracking Monk's every step. There is much more to the story than is noted here. He ends this fine volume with his deep appreciation of living with Monk:

> To know the man and his music, requires digging Monk — out of the golden dustbins of posterity, out of the protected cells of museums — and restoring him to a tradition of sonic disturbance that forced the entire world to take notice. He broke the rules and created a body of work and a sound no one has been able to duplicate.

The Life and Times of Hubert Harrison

A Forgotten Synthesis of African-American Socialism and Black Nationalism

LARRY A. GREENE

HUBERT HARRISON EMERGED in the first two decades of the twentieth century as one of the leading voices of Harlem radicals rejecting American claims to an egalitarian democratic heritage and commitment to such a future based on the undeniable persistence of massive racial and class inequalities. Jeffrey Perry's exhaustive biography of Hubert Harrison elevates the lesser-known Harrison to the stature he so richly deserves as one of America's most perceptive public intellectuals on the critically intertwined issues of American democracy, race relations, and class structure. Harrison, a St. Croix immigrant from the Virgin Islands, was one of the first to combine the divergent strands of socialism and Black Nationalism. Hubert Harrison emerges as the principal black spokesman for the Socialist Party in its heyday in the early twentieth century. His ability to articulate a coherent philosophy synthesizing essentially a class and racial analysis was unique among Harlem radicals and "soap box orators" on its major thoroughfare of 125th Street. A future second volume will explore Harrison's life from 1919 through the apex of the Garvey movement and the Harlem Renaissance till his death in 1927.

Hubert Harrison: The Voice of Harlem Radicalism, 1883-1918
JEFFREY B. PERRY
New York: Columbia University Press
2009, 600pp., $26.32

In this volume, Perry explores the interaction, cooperation, and conflicts between intellectuals and radicals such as A. Philip Randolph, John E. Bruce, Arturo Schomburg, Cyril Briggs, and others in pre-Marcus Garvey Harlem. Against this background of contending local leaders and intellects in the cultural capital of black America, Harrison will distinguish himself as a preeminent thinker analyzing the philosophical and tactical positions of nationally known black leaders like the Harvard trained historian W.E.B. Du Bois and the president of Tuskegee Institute, Booker T. Washington. He examines the protest-oriented philosophy of Du Bois and the less militant, more accommodating approach of Washington to segregation, political disfranchisement, and lynching. While critical of the Du Bois concept of the "Talented Tenth" of a college educated elite leading the black masses into the promised land, Harrison was even more critical of the accommodationist approach of Washington, which he saw as little more than collaborationist. Harrison, throughout his debates with his Harlem counterparts and the "Tuskegee Machine," remained true to his core beliefs of socialism, race consciousness, and committed "free thinker" unfettered from the confines of orthodox religious thought. As Perry so cogently notes, Harrison was "more race conscious than Randolph [a socialist] and more class conscious than Garvey [a nationalist]" and

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was the "key link in the ideological unity of the two great trends of the Black Liberation Movement — the labor and civil rights trend associated with Martin Luther King, Jr., and the race and nationalist trend associated with Malcolm X." (p.5)

Harrison argued that racism had economic causes and that capitalists deliberately fostered race prejudice, which divided workers along racial lines to the benefit of capitalism and the detriment of workers.

Harrison became the chief black organizer, activist, and theoretician of the Socialist Party in New York City during its peak in the 1912 election. He was the only black speaker at the landmark Patterson Silk strike that had such leftists and International Workers of the World (IWW) notables as "Big Bill Haywood, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Carlo Tresca, and Patrick Quinlan. Eventually, Harrison will part company with the Socialist Party over their failure to aggressively address the issue of white racism both within the party and nationally as well as their indifference to the recruitment of black workers into the party. As Winston James noted in his excellent study of Caribbean radicalism in twentieth century America, Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia, "American socialism did not keep faith with Hubert Harrison, Harrison kept faith with socialism."[1] The Socialist Party, according to James, "did not keep faith with the radical egalitarianism of Marx," and for some black socialists like Harrison, "black nationalism was the last resort of a black socialist in a racist land where race is elevated above social class in politics as well as in social life."[2] One of the many strengths of the Perry biography is the detailed exposition of the transformation of Harrison from a socialist to both a socialist and Black Nationalist, who while not rejecting socialism will put race first in the organizing of black workers and the black community.

The Perry study is a comprehensive biography of Harrison which explores his genealogical and educational roots in St. Croix and his early intellectual development in St. Benedict's Lyceum, a Roman Catholic church, with an interracial congregation and St. Mark's Lyceum, a black Methodist Episcopal church, after his 1900 arrival in New York. It was through the lyceums that Harrison deepened his exposure to the philosophical and historical traditions of Europe, America, and Africa. Through Perry's detailed analysis of the Harrison critique of capitalism and racism in the United States, we witness the maturation of a serious working class intellect and his intellectual evolution toward socialism. Of particular importance is a five part series of articles beginning in 1911 that Harrison wrote for the *Call*, the Socialist Party newspaper in New York, which contains some of his most trenchant writings on racism, capitalism, and socialism.

In his first article entitled, "The Negro and Socialism," Harrison asserts that the so-called "Negro Problem" is not one of "social adjustment" or social control of relationships, and he rejected the argument of a biological basis for racism based on the idea of superior and inferior groups. Rather, Harrison found the roots of racism, like that of the class struggle, in economic relationships related to the means of production. Harrison clearly asserts a "materialist" basis for the emergence of white supremacy ideology rooted in slavery and the need to rationalize that exploitative superior ordinate and subordinate nature of black-white relationships derived from that institution. The contradictions between the democratic rhetoric of the Enlightenment as manifested in the founding documents of American republic — the Declaration of Independence and Constitution — necessitated the designation of blacks as racial inferiors undeserving of the democratic and egalitarian rights of the nation and consigned by God and nature to slavery.

In his second article, "Race Prejudice," Harrison argued that racism had economic causes and that capitalists deliberately fostered race prejudice, which divided workers along racial lines to the benefit of capitalism and the detriment of workers. It was in the interest of employers to maintain the inferior economic status of African-American workers and to use them as a source of cheap low wage labor to threaten the unionization and striking tactics of white labor. This pitting of black and white workers against each other, according to Harrison, kept the wage level as low as possible. In asserting this line of analysis, Harrison challenged the defenders of white supremacy who maintained that racial prejudice was innate and based on a natural aversion of the superior white race to the intellectual and moral degeneracy of the inferior races as seen in African-Americans. Certainly, this belief system was manifest in the speeches of southern politicians like James K. Vardaman, writers like Thomas Dixon in his novel, *The Clansman* (1902), and in D.W. Griffith's movie, *Birth of a Nation* (1915).

Harrison's third article, "The Duty of the Socialist Party," in the *Call* series called upon the party to condemn racial prejudice and reject what he termed "southernisms" or the ideology of Southern Jim Crow with its demands for racial segregation, disfranchisement of black voters, and anti-black pogroms throughout the South. The historic mission of the Socialist Party was to unite all workers across racial, ethnic, and religious lines. This duty involved the reeducation of white workers about the threats to their economic well being from racism, and it dictated that the party reach out to and aggressively recruit black workers. Harrison did not believe that socialism would immediately remove all racial prejudice, but he did think it would reduce the oppression on white workers and their susceptibility to racist propaganda and use as a tool to repress blacks. Perry cogently notes, Harrison considered this "duty" of the Socialist Party to be sacred and virtually a litmus test of sincerity, commitment, and ideology. In a following article, "How to Do It — And How Not," Harrison gave advice warning against paternalism and condescension in addressing and recruiting black workers and urged party members to treat them as they would any white workers. In "Summary and Conclusion," the fifth and concluding article in the series, Harrison believed that a trans-racial working-class movement held out the promise of a socialist victory over capitalism and racism. In 1911, Harrison was optimistic and saw social, economic, and racial justice on the horizon. Perry's close reading of the writings of Hubert Harrison results in a clear and through analysis of his political philosophy.

In the following presidential election year of 1912, Perry explores the evolving political thought of Harrison in a discussion of a new set of articles by Harrison which appeared in the Chicago based *International Socialist Review* amid a growing, but not fully manifest tension between Harrison and the Socialist Party, which masked his simmering disillusionment with the party. In an article taking off on Rudyard Kipling's 1899 poem, "The White Man's Burden," Harrison's "Black Man's Burden" depicted the suffering of African-Americans under white over-lordship. Over eight million African-Americans were disfranchised in sixteen Southern states by fraud and force, lacking political rights to protect their economic rights (i.e. property and jobs). Part two of the "Black Man's Burden" demonstrated how the southern state school segregation laws contributed to the underfunding, creation of industrial education or "labor-caste schools" and miseducation of African-Americans. In these two articles, Harrison aimed a devastating critique at the accommodationist philosophy of Booker T. Washington, which publicly eschewed voting rights and a liberal arts college/university education. Washington's lieutenants had successfully conspired to obtain the removal of Harrison from his $1,000 a year job at the post office for two anti-Washington articles in the *New York Sun* newspaper, thus causing great economic hardship to Harrison's family. Harrison's final article in the *International Socialist Review*, "Socialism and the Negro," was based on an earlier pro-IWW speech, in which he asserted African-Americans rather than constituting a reactionary hindrance to socialism, as some socialist theorists like Algie Simmons and Charles Vail claimed, were indeed the key component in the struggle by the American proletariat without which socialism in America stood little chance.

Perry's detailed description of the Socialist Party failure to confront racism within its own ranks and nationally is quite convincing and explains Harrison's continued criticism and his eventual suspension by the party in 1914. Despite the logic of Harrison's analysis of the intertwined race and class problem in America, the Socialist Party was moving in a more conservative and even racist direction. The Socialist Party right wing triumphed over the left IWW members in the party, ended the Colored Socialist Club in New York, pushed through majority and minority reports at the 1912 party convention, which banned Asian immigration, and refused to take aggressive action in support of African-American recruitment. Southern white socialists supported segregated organizing and Harrison's relentless denunciation of what he called "southernisms" placed him on the collision course with the party.

From this experience, Harrison will enter a Black Nationalistic phase in his political evolution in which he will place "Race first" before class as an organizing principle in the black community. Harrison will play a founding role in the organization of the Liberty League and its weekly publication, *The Voice*. He will embrace black self-determination, organizational autonomy, and black leadership for black organizations, unlike the predominantly white-led National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Harrison's involvement in the "New Negro Manhood Movement," a related precursor to the Harlem Renaissance, as a cultural theorist and literary reviewer is examined by the author. Perry's work covers new ground in demonstrating Harrison's role in establishing some of the ideological principles of Harlem newcomers and fellow public orators, Marcus Garvey, and his nationalistic Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and young socialists, A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen. Garvey's *Negro World* newspaper and the Randolph and Owen magazine, *The Messenger,* both borrow from Harrison. Harrison will be eclipsed by the more dynamic Garvey and although for a time will assume an editorial role at the *Negro World*, Harrison will continue to harbor some repressed resentment at being superseded by Garvey in the hearts of the Harlem masses.

The author, in exploring with great thoroughness the political evolution of Hubert Harrison from Socialist Party spokesman and organizer to Black Nationalist activist, has raised significant questions about the ineffectiveness of the left in America and the estrangement of some its more devoted followers. Harrison's suspension and disconnect from the Socialist Party parallels the estrangement of later black intellectuals like George Padmore and Harold Cruse from the Communist Party. Caribbean radicals did not arrive in New York with a socialist orientation. It was the more blatant and intense racism that they experienced in the United States as they moved from a majority status to a minority status compared to the Caribbean that steered many in this direction and generated the desire to form ethnic political alliances, according to Joyce Moore Turner in her highly informative study of Caribbean activists in Harlem.[3] Certainly, the 1910s and World War

I years were radical times of assertive dissent. Yet, the estrangement of black socialists and later black communists suggest that the left did not always hear their black members, either out of a myopic ideological commitment to a political analysis that did not consider the interplay of both class and race factors in shaping the American political landscape, or a kind of racial arrogance that relegated black members to the periphery of the policy making process. For some black members, this estrangement resulted in the integration into the American political mainstream, and for others, it meant the pursuit of another strain of political radicalism, Black Nationalism. Harrison is different from some of the disillusioned in that his embrace of Black Nationalism did not mean a rejection of socialism, but a rejection of the Socialist party.

Scholars and students of Harlem, Afro-American, and Afro-Caribbean history in the United States are indeed indebted to Jeffrey Perry for this magisterial study of Hubert Harrison whom A. Philip Randolph called the "Father of Harlem Radicalism." Volume one of this biography should be read in conjunction with Perry's edited volume of Harrison's writings, *A Hubert Harrison Reader*.[4] Readers will eagerly await volume two of Perry's biography as he takes the Hubert Harrison saga from 1919 to his death in 1927, covering Harrison involvement with Garvey, the Harlem Renaissance, and other political and cultural currents in black America.

NOTES

1. Winston James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth Century America* (London: Verso, 1998), 126.
2. *Ibid.*, 127,128.
3. Joyce Moore Turner, *Caribbean Crusaders and the Harlem Renaissance* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 43.
4. Jeffrey Perry, ed., *A Hubert Harrison Reader* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001).

Peasants or Empire?

RICHARD W. FRANKE

The New Peasantries: Struggles for Autonomy and Sustainability in an Era of Empire and Globalization

JAN DOUWE VAN DER PLOEG

London and Sterling, Virginia: Earthscan Books, 2009, 287 pp. plus notes, bibliography and index, $36.10

THE COMMUNITY OF San Juan Bautista de Catacaos lies in the far northwestern corner of Peru. In the 1970s more than 10,000 hectares of irrigated land plus a large amount of barren land were converted into state-controlled cooperatives by the leftist military government of General Juan Velasco Alvarado. The politically mobilized peasants of Catacaos used the breakup of the power of the traditional haciendas to create their own "communal units of production." The communal units forged processing and marketing alliances with the local state-controlled coops. These units eventually encompassed 6,750 hectares on which 4,500 worker-owners produced food and generated employment. In the 1990s, however, the right-wing government of Alberto Fujimori broke up the state co-ops

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and undermined the local communal units by making bank credit harder to acquire and by supporting private competitors' efforts to control the nearby water supply that comes mainly from the Chira River. As peasant resources declined, a private agribusiness enterprise bought up cheaply 2,670 hectares to produce organic bananas and other foods including asparagus that goes to the nearby port for loading onto Maersk cargo ships. "Fresh" Peruvian asparagus is shipped to Poland where it is scattered onto frozen pizzas for West European consumers.

In the village of Zwiggelte, in the northeast Dutch Province of Drenthe in the first decade of the current century a group of farmers began meeting to discuss ways to overcome the declining value of their potato harvests and the small additional income from dairy farming and pig raising. Having heard of a new kind of natural gas pump recently developed in Germany, they devised a plan to integrate it into a combination of agricultural waste, selective and careful use of forest reserves and manure that produced high quality natural gas. In addition to selling the gas to the national company they added an electrical generator for local power. The heat from the electrical generator was channeled into a local bungalow park and outdoor swimming pool that extended the local tourist season.

The two case studies of Catacaos and Zwiggelte illustrate two extremes in the power struggle between peasants and "Empire." In Catacaos, Empire won out while in Zwiggelte a local, decentralized peasant movement succeeded in raising the quality of life while maintaining or even expanding local autonomy. The many dimensions of this struggle make up the central themes of the ambitious book by Jan Douwe van der Ploeg here under review.

In *The New Peasantries,* Ploeg covers a wide range of empirical data and analytical issues. The first chapter sets out a complex scene with capitalist, peasant, and entrepreneurial farming types interacting with various societal linkages and historical transitions. The second chapter contains a lengthy overview of differing conceptions of peasants. Chapters three through eight provide case studies of peasants in Catacaos, Italy, and The Netherlands competing with various emanations of Empire including the Italian-based dairy multinational Parmalat, the "global cow," entrepreneurial farming in general and the production of what the author calls "lookalike" food products (e.g. reconstituted milk sold as "fresh"). The final two chapters include a synthesis and some predictions about the future of especially European agriculture.

> Empire never produces anything — peasant farmers and others do that. But Empire extracts value by moving, rearranging, repackaging and rebranding products.

Ploeg's overall thesis is that "a crisis [in agriculture] is looming that for the first time in history concerns…quality of food, security of food delivery, the sustainability of agricultural production…" (p. 11) while negating the autonomy and self-worth of the primary producers of food. The main cause of the crisis is Empire, conceived in the Hardt and Negri sense — a "new order" that is controlled by the United States and the G8 nations, NATO, the IMF, the WTO, and multinational corporations. Ploeg, however conceives of Empire more abstractly as essentially an ordering and controlling mechanism, a connection maker, a rules drafter and enforcer. At one point he uses the metaphor of the railway system that facilitated to some extent the spread of the 19th century European empires.

Why is Empire so destructive of peasant

agriculture? According to Ploeg, Empire never produces anything — peasant farmers and others do that. But Empire extracts value by moving, rearranging, repackaging and rebranding products — Peruvian asparagus on European pizzas via Polish food factories. Shouldn't it be cheaper to grow the asparagus in Europe? Empire attempts to find the cheapest production locales and link them to the most expensive consumer markets. Fortunes are made by those who produce nothing and who sometimes crash their own multinationals — as in the case the author details of Parmalat — a sort of Enron of the food industry. The process of Empire sucks peasant farmers into giant systems of control. Information Technology tentacles reach out to every farm and cowshed with regulations, criteria, bookkeeping demands, inspections, and fines to keep small farmers under Empire's control. Everything is homogenized, leaving the land and other resources to succumb to neglect. Food is no longer fresh or nutritious or grown with sustainable practices: it is merely profitable.

Yet underneath the powerful forces of Empire, peasants find ways to resist and even to create somewhat viable alternatives. The farmers in Zwiggelte made use of their own genius and of democratic space in The Netherlands not yet taken control of by Empire. In a more extensive resistance, farmers in the nearby northern Dutch province of Frisia (or Friesland), an ethnic minority with their own language, managed to establish a network of cooperatives under the umbrella of the Northern Frisian Woodlands NFW [association]. With 80 percent of farmers in the area among its 900 members, this cooperative covers 50,000 hectares. Using energetic and sophisticated approaches to the national parliament, the co-op has been able to spar with the Ministry of Agriculture — otherwise an agent of Empire — to defend and improve several features of the local farming culture and environment including the hedgerows that mark off the fields, help in water absorption, offer shelter for meadow birds, reduce wind, and provide medicinal foods for cattle. Most dramatically, the NFW demonstrated that local farmers could more effectively reduce nitrogen runoff from the fields with a locally-developed system of injecting cattle manure onto and into the fields rather than by following the EU rules for managing nitrogen that the Dutch Government attempted to impose. Empire lost — and the soils are richer, the cows healthier, the milk is higher quality and the farmers are financially better off. Nitrogen runoff is also under control.

Ploeg provides fascinating technical details of this struggle and the science related to it, but let me add something about the international ecological significance of his nitrogen case study. Nitrogen comes in organic and inorganic forms. Organic nitrogen results from life processes. It is a fairly stable compound that recycles well in properly designed systems. By contrast, inorganic nitrogen is manufactured via the Haber-Bosch process developed in Germany in the early 20th Century. Industrial inorganic nitrogen is now about 50 percent of all nitrogen found in soils and waterways on earth. Industrial nitrogen is unstable and tends to react with other chemicals. This "reactive nitrogen" is now considered one of the three greatest environmental threats to the earth's life support system — possibly equal to climate change and biodiversity loss in magnitude.[1] According to the 2005 Millennium Ecological Assessment, reactive nitrogen is a major cause of biodiversity loss, ozone destruction, eutrophication of waterways and the creation of "dead zones" such as in the Gulf of Mexico, and numerous human health problems (www.millenniumassessment.org/en/index.aspx). In Frisia, Empire pushed for regulations that were inferior to the creative impulses of local farmers who were able to actualize their innovations through the political agency of their territorial cooperative. It is an instructive and inspiring story.

The New Peasantries is a technical study that will fascinate experts and advanced students of Empire, of peasants and of post-modern theory. Other readers might find some of the material daunting and the dense and sometimes idiosyncratic flow of the text will be a challenge for many. One means of approaching this complex study is to read first a more introductory text that covers some of the basic issues. Brian Halweil's *Eat Here*[2] gives an overview of the problems of long-distance food production and its problems along with interesting examples of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) — a means found in many parts of the world to connect consumers directly to farmers who sell shares of the harvest in advance. CSAs guarantee fresh organic food to the buyers and a stable income to the farmers. CSAs can be taken to a higher level of aggregation when a farmers' market or cooperative supermarket is added to the process. One example comes from Ithaca, New York, where Greenstar Cooperative Market links its 7,000 member-shoppers with dozens of organic farms within 30 miles (www.greenstar.coop/). Greenstar itself is part of a network of 45 natural food coops in 12 eastern U.S. states.

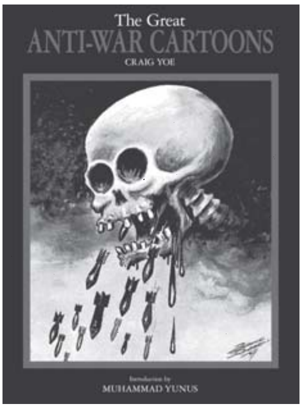
Much of the material in *The New Peasantries* can be applied to North American farming and food networks. We should look forward to studies that will further explore the rich set of ideas presented in this book.

NOTES

1. Rockström, Johan, et al. 2009. A safe operating space for humanity. Nature 461:472-475.
2. Halweil, Brian. *Eat Here: Reclaiming Homegrown Pleasures in a Global Supermarket*. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2004)

Anti-War Imagery

"THE CARTOONIST makes people see things!" In a different context, this phrase might refer to the way illustrators can conjure new worlds with a few pen lines or brush strokes. In this 1918 cartoon by James Montgomery Flagg, these words have a less beguiling resonance, as a military officer is stunned to find his own skull mocking him in the mirror.



Far from being stranded be-

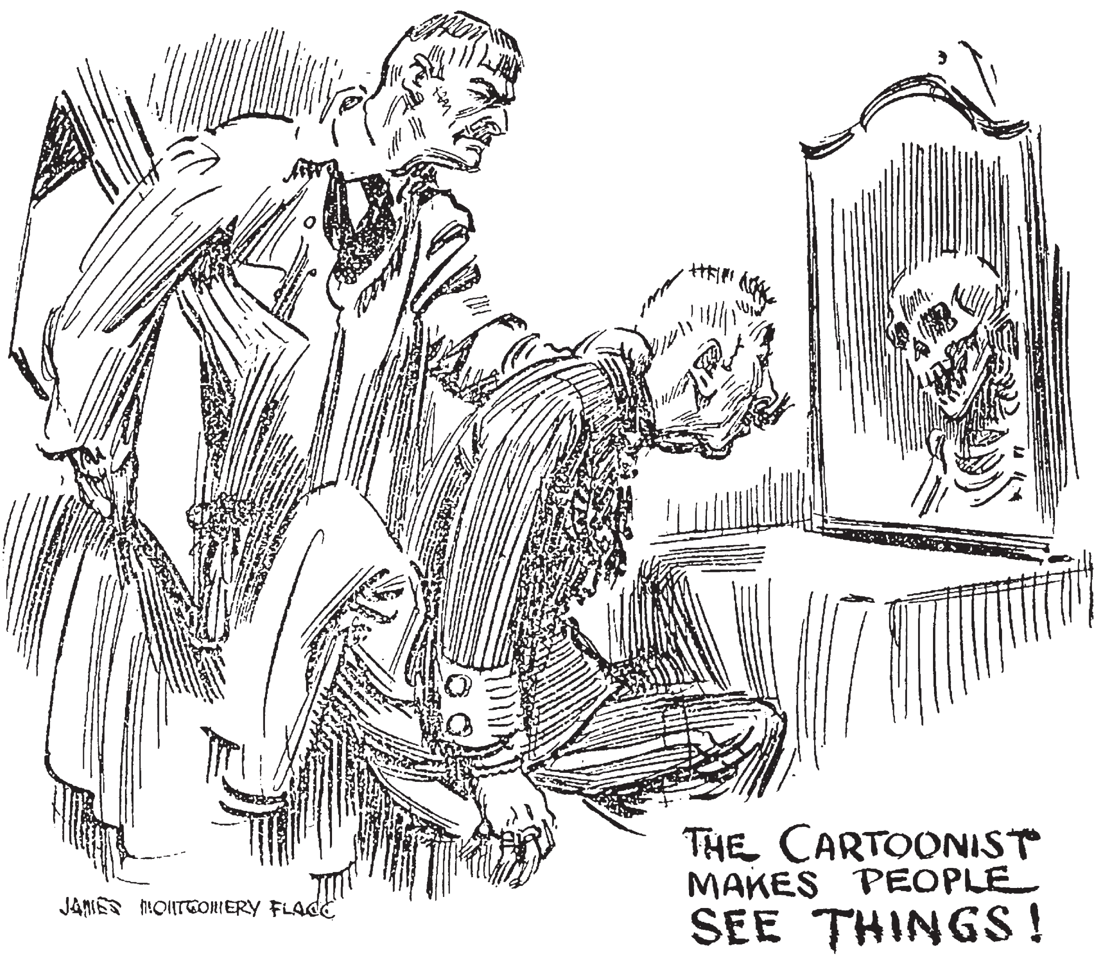
Oscar E. Cesare, 1916, United States

The Great Anti-War Cartoons
CRAIG YOE (ED.)
Seattle: Fantagraphics.
2009, 190 pp. $24.99

hind a drawing board, the cartoonist depicted in this single-panel image is a commanding moralist who is able to force those in charge to see past their illusions. Here, the phrase "the cartoonist makes people see things!" is another way of invoking the vintage Quaker dictum of speaking truth to power.

By placing Flagg's delightful cartoon at the opening of his new book, editor Craig Yoe gives the reader a catchphrase that helps make sense of the entire undertaking. Rather than exploring the cultural history of antiwar cartooning — who were these artists? what kinds of political and social views shaped their work? how did readers respond to their visual sallies? and so on — Yoe has spotlighted the cartoons themselves.

Collections of editorial cartoons tend to be crammed with pictures and commentary. This volume eschews long essays in favor of generous image reproduction. Instead of squeezing as many cartoons as he could in the available space, Yoe has arranged the book in the manner of a well-run art museum or gallery. The



James Montgomery Flagg, 1918, United States

Billy DeBeck, 1914, United States

whose fiery one-panel polemics seethe with a hard-won hatred of modern warfare.

Some of the pieces are by pre-20th century painters and illustrators, such as Honoré Daumier, Francisco Goya, Thomas Nast, Johann Heinrich Rambert, Sir John Tenniel, and David Vinckeboons, the seventeenth-century Dutch painter and printmaker. A fair number are by socialists and Communists whose work appeared in publications like *The Masses*, *The Liberator*, and *The New Masses*, as well as their European counterparts — including Will Dyson, Hugo Gellert, William Gropper, George Grosz, Albert Hahn Sr., Franz Masereel, Robert Minor, and Art Young.

A few contemporary figures show up, such as Ron Cobb, Robert Crumb, Gerald Scarfe, Ralph Steadman, and Art Spiegelman, whose 1967 drawing of two military recruiters kissing (beneath a sign that reads, "Make Love, Not War!") anticipates subsequent controversies over gays in the military. Yoe has also dug up some lovely cartoons by artists who are not generally remembered for their political work, such as Billy DeBeck, Reuben "Rube" Goldberg, and the great Syd Hoff. He somehow managed to overlook the 1940s cartoons of Jesse Cohen ("Carlo") that mainly appeared in the pages of *Labor Action*. But that's an oversight others have made as well.

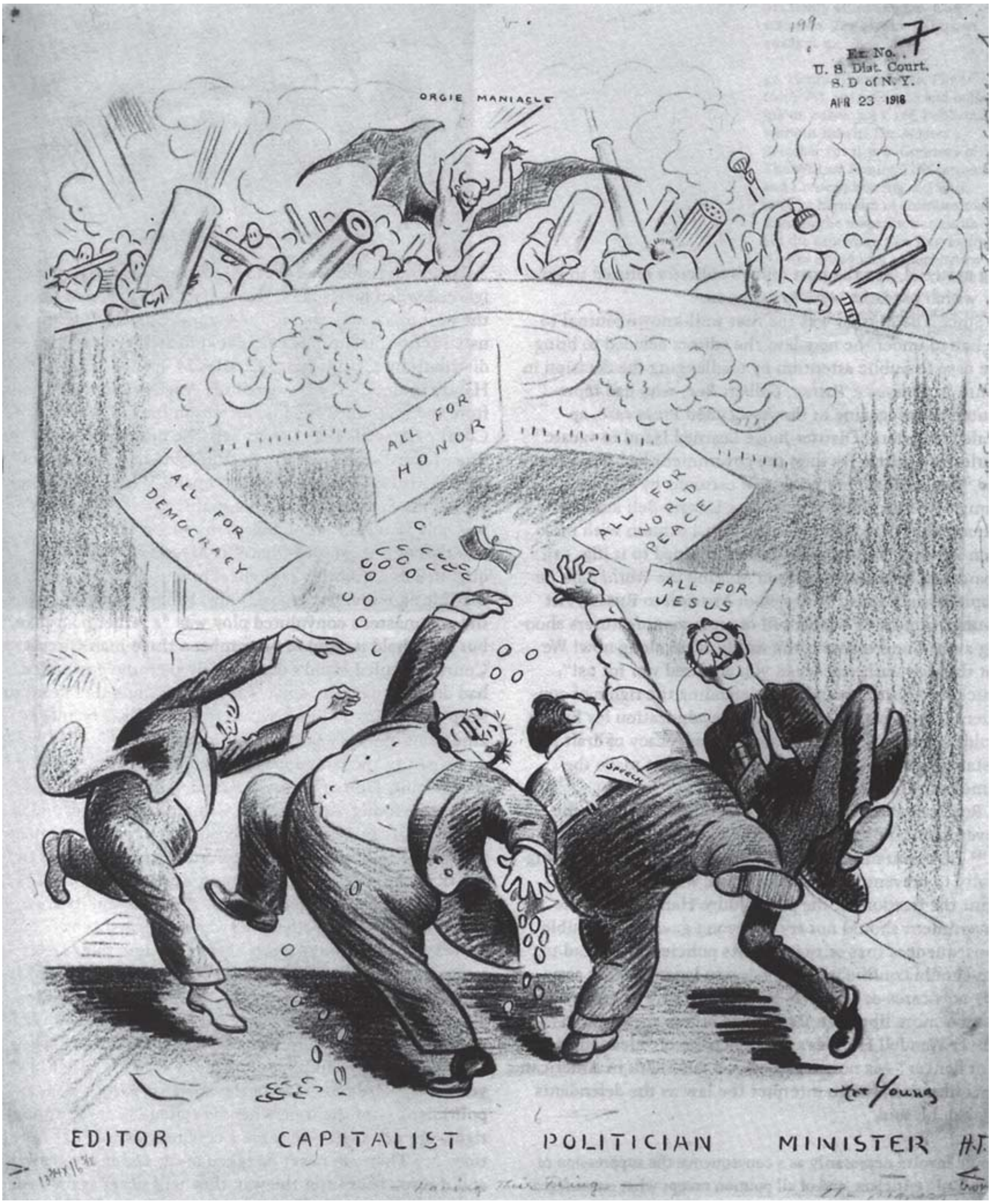
images are clean and the presentation stately. Many of the pages feature a single cartoon plus a caption. It is difficult to think of another recent collection of political cartoons that is as good looking or art-friendly.

The Great Anti-War Cartoons features works by no fewer than 119 artists. Most of the images are black-and-white, which makes sense given the constraints imposed on the newspapers and magazines that first published this type of work. Yoe has nevertheless included a color section that features work by painterly types such as John T. McCutchen, Henri Lanos, Bernard Naudin, Bruno Schulz, and the stunning Louis Raemaekers,

When I first spotted *The Great Anti-War Cartoons* in my local bookstore, I wondered whether it would be a little heavy, not so much in terms of subject matter but visual style. The cover illustration, for example, by the *Los Angeles Times* cartoonist Bruce Russell, is a little

He's Made His Pile. *Gabriel Barlow, early 1900s, United Kingdom.*

dreary for my tastes — bombs dropping out of a giant skull; thanks, I get it — and I have never been a big fan of the murky charcoal look that many early twentieth century illustrators favored. The illustration on the back cover, by Oscar E. Cesare, which depicts a mother hold-



Having Their fling. *Art Young, 1917*

ing up her baby in the midst of battle ("Cease Firing!"), has a similarly didactic, belabored look. Thankfully, there is a great deal of stylistic variation inside the book itself, and the "grey skies" approach favored by many illustrators of a certain era does not predominate. Some of the images are even lighthearted.

KENT WORCESTER

Ernest Erber (1913-2010)

I remember Ernest Erber, who died in February at the age of 96, as one of those few remaining friends and comrades whose political life and ideas so closely followed my own, from our formative years in the mid 1930s through the next 20 years. As a very young man, he joined the Socialist Party-affiliated Young People Socialist League (YPSL) in the thirties. While president of the YPSL in 1937, Erber visited Spain and wrote a pamphlet about the Civil War. The SP helped form and fund a Debs column and Erber himself joined the staff of *La Battala*, the POUM newspaper. In 1938, he left YPSL with the Trotskyists to form the Socialist Workers Party; in 1940, after the Soviet Union invaded Finland, he became a founding and leading member of the Workers Party (later reoriented as the Independent Socialist League.) Some time in 1948, then looking for a socialist philosophy which rejected both right-wing social democracy and leftist Leninism, he resigned from the WP/ISL. At that point our ways parted and I lost track of where he went politically. I do know that he became a city planner; he worked briefly for Jessie Jackson as a volunteer; and remained steadfast as a democratic-socialist.

I knew him and respected him (as did most everyone) as a fine human being, intelligent, of absolute integrity, modest, independent-minded, decent — a great educator. He was a leader in the WP/ISL; under the name Ernest Lund he wrote our popular booklet “Plenty for All.” He was a member of the National Committee, served for a time as managing editor of the *New International*, and was on its editorial board until 1948. At the WP (or ISL?) convention around 1948, at a time when we were trying to redefine our role as a movement, he was a lone voice suggesting that we function as a “small mass party,” an idea that went nowhere and seems to have left little impression even on his own thinking. When he presented his resignation, indicating that he had abandoned the Leninist, Bolshevik, whatever tradition, Max Shachtman wrote a whole little booklet denouncing him for his apostasy. Erber wasn’t sure where he wanted to go but he knew what he rejected. In that respect he was a kind of pioneer for a myriad of followers who never will know of him! At the time, I agreed wholeheartedly with Shachtman, but looking back, I am convinced that Ernie, all alone, was (more) right.

Herman Benson

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The crisis in the mid 1970s rocked the system. The breezy confidence of the post-war era that the business cycle had been vanquished evaporated overnight.

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PAKISTAN: THE MYTH OF CIVILIZING WAR

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