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From the Editors

In this issue, we shift our focus toward domestic concerns, though we also look abroad with anxiety and trepidation.

Our last few issues have had international sections on Europe and on Asia and Africa. This time we look at the American scene. Dan La Botz provides a survey of recent independent and left political campaigns. Adam Gaffney and Lois Weiner look respectively at health care and education policy. Naomi Weisstein reflects on a moment in the history of the Women's Liberation movement of the 1970s. Martha Rees interviews Adelina Nicholls of the Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights, providing us with a window on the fight for immigrant rights. Dave Finkel critically examines President Barack Obama's foreign policy. Three of our book reviews also deal with American society and politics. Marty Oppenheimer reviews a new study of the Ku Klux Klan, Michael Hirsch reviews two books on the depredations of Wall Street, and E. Haberkern looks back at the radical social movements that once existed in today's red states.

We continue to examine the disturbing state of the world in essays on a variety of nations and situations. Concerned, as we know you have been, about the situation in Ukraine we offer three pieces: by Joanne Landy, Kevin Anderson, and Sean Larson. We have in addition Niall Reddy's assessment of Argentina under the Kirchners and Michael Pröbsting's discussion of Chinese imperialism; we are also proud to publish James Kilgore's Singer Prize winning essay on South Africa.

As always, we take up left theory as well: Ingo Schmidt considers Rosa Luxemburg's economic theory, Michael Thompson offers an analysis and critique of Thomas Piketty's *Capital*, and Kent Worchester reviews some recent books on CLR James.

Finally, and sadly, we remember some of our comrades, writers, and friends: Doug Ireland, Steve Kindred, and James Young, as well as cartoonist Phil Evans. Once again we thank Lisa Lyons for her illustrations on our cover and throughout the issue.

Dan La Botz
Stephen R. Shalom
Julia Wrigley

LETTERS

Isaac Deutscher

To the Editors:
Samuel Farber has done an excellent job exposing Isaac Deutscher's assimilationist views toward Jewish identity, but his conception of Jewish identity is barely superior. Farber will avow his Jewishness to defy anti-Semites and defend victims of anti-Semitism. That is not sufficient.

Does Mr. Farber belong to any Jewish organizations, support any Jewish charities and/or celebrate Jewish holidays? If he is a parent, did he provide his children with a Jewish education? Does he see anything of value in studying Jewish history or philosophy, reading its literature and folklore, learning Jewish languages, or partaking of other forms for Jewish culture?

The Editorial Board of New Politics appears to be half Jewish. I will make an educated guess that none of you are religious. I wonder then, how you express your Jewishness? You can say what you want about Stalinist/pro-Soviet Jews or about social democratic Jews, but in the early decades of the 20th century in the US and Canada, they established mutual benefit organizations, newspapers, magazines, publishing houses, adult schools, children's schools, summer camps, choruses and other institutions. They fought for social justice and other progressive causes as Jews. The Jewish Trotskyists or third camp socialists did nothing of the sort. Trotsky did not even consider himself Jewish. At best, according to Deutscher, he was a non-Jewish Jew.

So why is being a Jewish Jew so alien to those on the anti-Stalinist, anti-social democratic left? The only exception I can think of was Irving Howe who collected and edited many volumes of Yiddish literature in English translation and wrote *World of Our Fathers*, a classic book of American Jewish history. My sense is that other Jews from this background have turned their back on their Jewish heritage out of a misplaced commitment to "internationalism." In my opinion, the founders of *New Politics*, Julius and Phyllis Jacobson, are perfect examples of this phenomenon.

To this day, there are national Jewish organizations made up of people who call themselves progressive Jews, secular Jews, humanistic Jews or some combination thereof. They include the Workmen's Circle www.circle.org, the Congress of Secular Jewish Organizations www.csjo.org, and the Society for Humanistic Judaism www.shj.org. There are local affiliates in major Jewish population centers in the US and Canada. There are also two progressive secular Jewish magazines, Jewish Currents www.jewishcurrents.org and Outlook www.outlookmagazine.ca.

I have contributed to these magazines and I have also contributed to *New Politics*. But as far as I know, no one else has done so. It is evidence of the same disconnect.

I encourage Samuel Farber and other Jews associated with *New Politics* to investigate these options and resources. It is possible, I believe, to promote Jewish continuity from a progressive secular humanist perspective. But you have to care.

BENNETT MURASKIN
Parsippany, NJ

Socialism and Environmentalism

To the Editors:
In response to Christian Parenti's interesting essay (Winter 2014 issue), "Rethinking the State; Shadow Socialism in the Age of Environmentalism": he writes, "Climate change means that the state is coming back." As a revolutionary anarchist, may I comment?

His argument is that the total crisis of climate change requires action by "the public sector" and increased central coordination. This is undoubtedly true, but does it mean that ecological radicals should give increased political support to the national state?

For example, global climate change also

needs international action by "public sectors" and central coordination. But there is no world state and won't be one. If anything, people need to find ways of weakening the national states. They stand in the way of creating agencies which could organize such worldwide coordination.

Parenti argues that the US government has the legal and regulatory powers to decrease climate change, right now. He urges the left to pressure it to act on these powers. But he does not ask: since the US ruling class and its state have the power to seriously weaken climate change, and since climate change threatens their society, why then are they doing nothing?

As he writes, the function of this state is to support capitalism. Capitalism is a class-divided, competitive, and generally internally conflicted system. It needs the state to hold it together (which is why socialism will not need a state). Capitalism is composed of enterprises with a drive to accumulate capital. Therefore they are driven to treat the environment as a bottomless mine, and the state protects them in doing so. This is the root of the environmental/ecological/energy crises. Of all the enterprises supported by, and dominating, the states of the world, the most powerful is the petroleum industry (also the coal industry). Modern industrial capitalism is built on oil, coal, and natural gas, from transportion to energy to plastics to fertilizer. It will not be easy to re-organize our whole technological base—against the total opposition of the oil industry.

His reform proposals (on a national level) are not bad. I am for anything that would slow down the rush to catastrophe. But our rulers will not even give us these reforms (which are in their own medium-term interest!) unless they feel threatened by as militant, angry, and revolutionary a movement as possible, one that has no illusions in the state.

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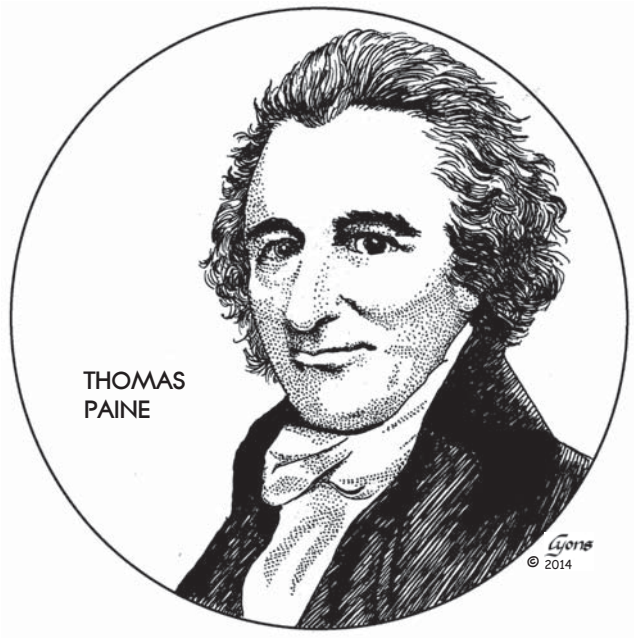


"When it can be said by any country in the world, my poor are happy, neither ignorance nor distress is to be found among them, my jails are empty of prisoners, my streets of beggars, the aged are not in want, the taxes are not oppressive, the rational world is my friend because I am the friend of happiness. When these things can be said, then may that country boast its constitution and government. Independence is my happiness, the world is my country and my religion is to do good."

—Rights of Man

"If there must be trouble, let it be in my day, that my child may have peace."

—The American Crisis, No. 1

"We have it in our power to begin the world over again." *—Common Sense*

—Thomas Paine, *American revolutionary*

THE AMERICAN SCENE

The Working Class and Left Politics: Back on the American Radar

DAN LA BOTZ

THE AMERICAN POLITICAL SYSTEM, so highly polarized between conservative Republicans and moderate Democrats, has experienced in the last year some interesting changes on the left-hand margin of the national political scene. From Bill de Blasio's victory in the mayoral election in New York City, to Kshama Sawant's winning of a city council seat in Seattle, from the late Chokwe Lumumba's popularly-based campaign in Jackson, Mississippi, to self-described socialist Bernie Sanders' talk of a run for the presidency, something new appears to be happening. Independent politics and socialist party campaigns, so long marginal to American political life and from discussion in the media, seem to be back on the radar again. This is all the more remarkable given our terrible election laws that make it so difficult in so many states to get parties and candidates on the ballot.

DAN LA BOTZ *is a co-editor of* New Politics *and a member of Solidarity: A Socialist, Feminist, Anti-Racist Organization. He was the Socialist Party USA candidate for the U.S. Senate from Ohio in 2010. He now lives in Brooklyn, New York where he is a teacher, writer, and activist.*

Surprisingly the Tea Party, the corporate-financed, populist, rightwing organization within the Republican Party, opened the door to the discussion by attacking President Barack Obama as a socialist in the spring and summer 2010—an accusation refuted by Billy Wharton, then co-chair of the Socialist Party, who like other socialists argued that Obama was actually working to protect the wealth of the top 5 percent of Americans. At about the same time, influenced by the conservative upsurge, an April 2010 NYT/CBS poll found that 52 percent of Americans believed that Obama was moving America towards socialism. Yet, surprisingly, a Gallup poll of February 2010 found that 36 percent of all Americans viewed socialism favorably, while an astounding Pew poll on December 11, 2011 found that younger Americans aged 18 to 29 favored socialism to capitalism by 49 percent to 43 percent, a finding that seemed, well, so un-American.

In November 2013, the statistics seemed to be confirmed by the stunning victory of socialist Kshama Sawant in Seattle that attracted the attention of both the U.S. left and the major news media. The victory of Socialist Alternative

candidate Sawant seemed to suggest that something might be changing politically in America. Now, U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont, who openly calls himself socialist but is not a a member of any political party, says that he is considering a run for President of the United States, though he is not clear about whether he will run as an independent or a Democrat.

At the same time, we are seeing other innovative, progressive political campaigns developed by labor unions, community organizations, and social movements, some of them at the far left edge of the Democratic Party, some within the Green Party, and others which are simply independent. We had the African American Chokwe Lumumba's Democratic Party campaign for mayor of Jackson, Mississippi, and now Howie Hawkins' second Green Party campaign for governor of New York, Dan Siegel's non-partisan campaign for mayor of Oakland, Mike Parker's Richmond Progressive Alliance campaign for mayor of Richmond, California, the Central Labor Council of Lorain, Ohio's successful campaign for city council, and the Chicago Teachers Union's creation of an Independent Political Organization (IPO), which may end up backing some Democrats but also running independent candidates. Taken together, this is a remarkable collection of political campaigns and a development worthy of considerable discussion and debate.

Several questions are raised by these cases: Has the erosion of America's economic and political system reached the point that significant numbers of Americans are willing to consider new and possibly radical alternatives? Are the labor and social movements strong enough to push forward and sustain political movements, organizations, and candidates? Are we witnessing the driving of a left political wedge into the country's fundamentally conservative two-party system? Or are the victories we have seen and are likely to see more dependent on charismatic candidates, local conditions, special circumstances, and non-partisan races than on the economic crisis and social movements? Perhaps most important, does the election of candidates on the left actually encourage the growth and strengthening of social movements, so that we enter into a virtuous cycle of movements leading to political campaigns which in turn build the movements? The goal, after all, is to build a working class mass movement that can challenge fundamentally the existing economic and political system.

The Crisis, Austerity, and the Attack on Unions

The political changes taking place on the left margin are the result in part of the economic crisis and the austerity drive. The crisis that began in 2007-08, a financial crisis caused by the collapse of the housing bubble, brought about the failure of banks and insurance companies, stopped economic growth, and threw millions out of work. The official unemployment rate, which was below 5 percent in 2007, rose to 9.3 percent among all Americans, while in the African American community it reached 16.7 percent, and among Latinos 13.1 percent. The real unemployment rate if one included discouraged workers was said by some analysts to be twice that of the official rate. Altogether, even after the recover, there was a shortfall of 7.5 million jobs. The economic crisis thrust into the forefront of public consciousness the disparities between the wealthy, and the working class that has been growing over the last forty years. Suddenly we became aware that a handful of very wealthy people continued to prosper even during the recession while many Americans suffered, losing jobs, homes, and, as so often happens, self-confidence and self-respect.

Insult was added to injury. The economic crisis was accompanied by a new emphasis on austerity. Government attacked the people. President Obama froze Federal workers' pay, setting a model for squeezing public employees. Republican governors and legislatures, sometimes accompanied by the Democrats, pressed

for reductions in state government accompanied by layoffs. Between April 2009 and June 2012 more than 700,000 state jobs were lost, as were many federal jobs as well. It was often African Americans and women who suffered most from the layoffs: 20 percent of African Americans worked in the public sector compared to 14.2 percent for whites and 10.4 percent for Latinos.

> The Occupy movement receded and all but disappeared, but then suddenly found expression in electoral politics.

At the same time, there were attacks on public employees' collective bargaining rights. Scott Walker of Wisconsin succeeded in stripping government workers of nearly all of their collective bargaining rights, and other state governors and legislators moved quickly to emulate him. Many states removed worker protections, reduced wages and hours regulations, and curtailed various aspects of union representation and collective bargaining. In both the private and public sector employers moved to raid workers' pension funds, freezing or reducing benefits that workers had counted on for their retirement. Meanwhile the media took an interest and we learned that the rich were getting richer and the "middle class"—read "the working class"—was getting poorer in ways that were turning the country back toward the Gilded Age of the late nineteenth century. Words like "plutocrat" and "oligarchy," usually reserved for the wealthy elites of Central America, suddenly took on new meaning for America. And then we suddenly saw the revival of another old word that became a shout: "Occupy!"

Occupy Wall Street!

The Occupy Wall Street movement that began in September 2011 turned the new reality into a slogan "We are the 99 percent!" That chant captured the national imagination. Throughout the country movement activists initiated the occupation of local squares and parks but were soon joined by ordinary working class folk of all sorts. In many areas local unions attempted to tap the energy of the new radical movement. In a few areas anarchists and socialists played a central role—anarchists in the mass actions on the West Coast and socialists in Chicago in Occupy's labor committee.

We had for the first time since the 1960s and 70s a mass movement in America from coast to coast involving tens of thousands in occupations, marches, demonstrations, and mass direct action. The occupation of public plazas represented a symbolic threat to power, became a springboard to urban action, and threatened (as at the Oakland port) to affect production and profits and to undermine governmental authority. While not socialist or even explicitly anti-capitalist, Occupy stood opposed implicitly to the whole governmental and economic structure. Taking public squares and parks raised the idea that there was a commons and that there were public goods—housing, education, health care, the environment—that were more important than private property and profits..

Only in New York was there much of a show of solidarity by the unions and only in the Bay Area did the Occupy movement carry out powerful mass action shutting down the Port of Oakland twice. Though the occupations of the parks were not economically or politically powerful demonstrations—this was not some sort of pre-revolutionary situation—there was a smell of rebellion in the air, and many young people got a whiff of it for the first time.

The demand to occupy public spaces in order to speak out against the 1 percent, the corporations, and the role of money in politics

soon led local government to demand that the occupations cease, followed by civil disobedience, mass arrests, and often violent police repression. Occupiers were pepper-sprayed, beaten, charged with serious crimes, and jailed for various lengths of time. The movement was crushed. Still, though swept from the streets by Democratic Party mayors and their police departments, Occupy had had an enormous impact, driving the Tea Party off the front pages of the newspapers and from the TV screen, changing the national debate to one about economic inequality, shifting the American consciousness to the left.

From Occupy to de Blasio

The Occupy movement receded and all but disappeared, but then suddenly found expression in electoral politics. With few left political options, the great beneficiary of the Occupy movement was, of course, the Democratic Party. Tired of the politics of Republican billionaire Michael R. Bloomberg—seventh richest person in the United States, thirteenth richest in the world—a mayor who had catered to the rich at the expense of the poor, New Yorkers rejected a Republican nonentity and voted in November for the Democrat Bill de Blasio running on a platform opposing the growing economic inequality in the city. A former activist who had been in Nicaragua as a supporter of the Sandinista revolution in the 1980s, de Blasio had long associated with unions like SEIU 1199 and community groups like Acorn. As city councilman and later as the city's Public Advocate, the local ombudsman, he made a reputation based on his concern for public education, health, affordable housing, and the environment. While unions and Democratic Party clubs were divided in the primary, de Blasio received the support of some important clubs and of SEIU 1199, gained the support of the city's multiethnic working class voters, won the nomination, and won a landslide victory in the November election. His opposition to stop-and-frisk—as well as the prominent display of his biracial family—accounted for the support he won among African American, Latino, and immigrant voters.

Speaking at his remarkably populist inauguration ceremony, de Blasio told his supporters, "We are called to put an end to economic and social inequalities that threaten to unravel the city we love." The cornerstone of de Blasio's political program has been his plan to tax the rich to provide pre-K education for the city's working class and poor communities, but—without the power to levy an income tax—he soon found himself in a struggle over funding for the pre-K program with the New York State Governor, Democrat Andrew Cuomo. Similarly on the fight over charter schools, de Blasio wants to slow their growth while Cuomo appears to support their expansion. The New York Democratic Party has divided over the issue of education between the more liberal de Blasio and the centrist Cuomo, raising questions about how this division might impact national politics. While de Blasio has taken up many important social issues—racial profiling, early childhood education, housing, and others—it remains to be seen if he can with the limited power of a mayor really affect the issue of economic inequality, that is the overwhelming power of capital in the world's preeminent financial center. To do so he would certainly have to break-up the long established relationships between the Democratic Party and the capitalist class, not something one mayor however well-intentioned can accomplish.

We see in the Democratic Party today what appears to be a new more liberal, more populist trend as represented by de Blasio and the woman who has been called "Hilary's nightmare," Elizabeth Warren, the U.S. senator from Massachusetts. "People feel like the system is rigged against them," Warren said, speaking to the 2012 Democratic Party Convention. "And here's the painful part: They're right. The system is rigged. Look around. Oil companies guzzle down billions in subsidies. Billionaires pay lower

tax rates than secretaries. Wall Street CEOs—the same ones who wrecked our economy and destroyed millions of jobs—still strut around Congress, no shame, demanding favors, and acting like we should thank them." The question is whether or not such populism will be sufficient to set Democratic Party voters in motion, and whether radicals can use such sentiments to set workers in motion against the political and the economic system and ultimately against the Democratic Party itself.

Socialist Victory in Seattle

The Battle of Seattle of 2001 and the Occupy Wall Street movement of 2011—interrupted by September 11, 2001, two wars, and a period of social quiescence—produced on the West Coast a hotbed of radical activism among the new Millennial generation of ethnically diverse young people, many of whom call themselves anarchists, anarcho-syndicalists, or left Communists. These young radicals, organized in loose networks or in collectives like the Black Orchid and Advance the Struggle, have been the moving force behind fights over environmentalism, racial justice, and workers' issues, the most important of these being the response to the transit police killing of Oscar Grant on New Year's Day 2009 and the two shutdowns of the Oakland Port during Occupy in 2011. By and large these young activists eschew socialist parties, abhor electoral politics, and—depending on their political theories—put their faith in either revolutionary shock troops or mass direct action. So it was a surprise when the West Coast left produced an astonishing left electoral victory.

In Seattle, Washington, in November 2013, Kshama Sawant, an economics teacher at a community college, a union member, and Occupy Seattle leader, ran for the Seattle City Council as an openly socialist candidate against Democrat Richard Conlin, a longtime council member. Sawant's campaign received endorsements from four major labor unions, environmental organizations, and many prominent individuals on the left. Similarly, Ty Moore, a former bus driver and a local community organizer, ran for the Minneapolis City Council with the backing of a major labor union, an LGBT organization, the Green Party, and a local group fighting evictions. Moore came within 229 votes of winning his election. Both campaigns were organized by Socialist Alternative, a Trotskyist socialist organization affiliated with the Committee for a Workers International.

Kshama's and Moore's strong showing in these elections is important because of the size and significance of the cities where they took place. Seattle has a population of 650,000 with 3.4 million in the metropolitan area, while Minneapolis has a population 400,000 with 3.3 million in its metropolitan area. Seattle is a major Pacific Rim city, tied economically to

Kshama Sawant
Seattle

the U.S. West Coast, Canada, and Asia, while Minneapolis is a major economic hub of the Midwest, second only to Chicago. Consequently the socialists' impressive runs in these cities represented a matter of national significance.

Why did Sawant and Moore do so well? Both are personable individuals and well respected activist leaders in their communities who built strong campaign organizations. Both candidates raised issues of concern not only to their local constituencies, but to the country as a whole. Sawant, for example, called for raising the minimum wage from $7.25 to $15 an hour, for taxes on millionaires and corporations to raise funds for jobs, education, and social services, for unionization of low-wage workers, for affordable housing, for an end to racial profiling and police brutality, for a moratorium on deportations and for citizenship rights for undocumented immigrants, and for adequate funds for public schools with lower class sizes. Sawant and Moore talked not only about immediate local issues, but also about the need to replace capitalism with socialism. Sawant's site declared, "The only solution is to fight to change this system, and replace the profit-driven, exploitative system of capitalism with a democratic socialist society. Join us in the struggle for a socialist alternative, to liberate the world from poverty, exploitation, and war."

One might speculate that the persistent economic and social crisis in the United States since the crash of 2008, accompanied by government austerity programs, had finally in Minneapolis and Seattle led to a political response. Certainly there were neighborhoods in both cities with high unemployment and hundreds of foreclosed homes, but Seattle and Minneapolis were not blighted rust-belt cities such as the devastated Detroit. Minneapolis and Seattle were actually among the better-off cities in the country, with strong, diverse economies that had unemployment and poverty rates far below the national average. Seattle's unemployment rate at the time of the elections was only 4.7 percent, as was that of Minneapolis, while the national unemployment rate stood at 7.2 percent, and Detroit's at 18.8. Seattle and Minneapolis, while they have their problems, are doing pretty well among American cities.

What then could account for the response the Socialist Alternative candidates received? Economics plays a central role in any explanation of politics, but demographics and culture play important roles as well. Both Seattle and Minneapolis are considered to be progressive cities that have a tolerant and liberal political culture. They also have cutting-edge economies and growing high-tech industries that attract well-educated young workers: a lot of geeks, nerds, and hipsters. Both cities made a recent CNBC list of the ten cities most hospitable to young people because of their green spaces, their diversity, their entertainment venues, and their "indy culture," that is, one encouraging to independent creative artists. Another list put them #4 and #5 for most livable for those under the age of 35, and they were also found to be on the list of the "gayest cities" in America, a statement about gay presence and acceptance.

What the Sawant and Moore campaigns may reveal is that the economic and social crisis are only part of an explanation of their success which also benefited from the changing attitudes of younger Americans who have become more critical of government and the corporations, more open to racial, ethnic, and gender diversity, and more concerned about environmental issues and the quality of life for themselves and for others. What we may be witnessing is the development of working-class consciousness together with the development of an anti-capitalist counter-culture. We saw something similar in the 1910s and 30s and again in the 1970s when radical labor and social movement coincided with the growth of counter-cultural movements.

That said, Sawant's victory was not a fluke. Socialist Alternative, fundamentally an activist organization, created in Seattle a professional

electoral machine capable of reaching voters with its message, raising funds, and ultimately getting out the vote not only as well as but better than any other candidate in the race. Still, perhaps the most important factor in her election was the fact that the municipal elections in Washington State are nonpartisan, which meant that Sawant did not have to directly counter-pose herself to the Democratic Party's candidates, party organization, and funding. Had she been in a partisan contest, the results might have been altogether different. Since her election, Sawant has used her political office to organize the Fight for $15 campaign to raise the minimum wage.

Chicago Teachers Union

We have new political ventures in independent politics in the Midwest as well. One of the most interesting developments is the more independent role being played by unions. Historically the AFL-CIO and other labor unions have supported the Democrats almost exclusively and fought fiercely against any attempt by unions to move to the left, arguing that independent campaigns divide the left and lead to Republican victories. Yet in a few instances local unions have been willing to defy the AFL-CIO and their own national unions to support Green, socialist, and independent labor candidates.

In Lorain County, Ohio—just west of Cleveland—the local labor council decided to run its own candidates after the mayor overturned the city's agreement to use local, minority, and union labor. "It took us three years to negotiate this historic agreement, and it took them three days to kill it!" said Joe Thayer of the Sheet Metal Workers Union. Faced with betrayal by the local Democratic Party, the unions decided to run their own candidates. "This was a step we took reluctantly," said Lorain County AFL-CIO President Harry Williamson. "When the leaders of the [Democratic] Party just took us for granted and tried to roll over the rights of working people here, we had to stand up." With the support of the unions, an immigrant workers center, and a student group at Oberlin College, the labor slate won two dozen seats on the city council. "Running independent wasn't our first choice, but hopefully this can help bring the Democratic leaders to their senses," said Machinist Art Thomas. "If not, we've shown them that we can work with our friends and elect our own!" There is no evidence that such an independent labor slate will become a regular feature of local elections, nor has it so far spread to other cities, though other things are happening in the Midwest.

> The goal, after all, is to build a working class mass movement that can challenge fundamentally the existing economic and political system.

In the fall of 2012, the 26,000 members of the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) struck, shutting down the city's schools that serve 350,000 children in the third largest city in the United States. The strike pitted the union against Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, the former chief-of-staff to President Obama, though in a broader sense it was a strike against Arne Duncan, Obama's Secretary of Education who has encouraged charter schools and pushed for "Common Core Standards" that call for standardized testing. Duncan was previously the CEO of the Chicago Public Schools, appointed by Mayor Richard M. Daley, the son of the famous Richard J. Daley who ran Chicago for the Democratic Party from 1955 to 1976, and was considered the king-maker who brought victory to President John F. Kennedy in the 1960 election.

Chicago's teachers rejected Duncan's education policies and stood up to Mayor Emanuel in a more than weeklong strike that won the support of other unions, community groups, parents, and student. It was, in effect—though no one said so at the time—a strike against the Democratic Party's policies by a union that had historically been part of the labor coalition that backs the Democrats and by teachers and parents who mostly vote for the Democrats.

While the CTU strike was impressive, it was not a total victory. Emanuel continued to close scores of schools. The CTU's newfound militancy, membership mobilization, and community alliances were not duplicated by any other area unions. With no other labor organization having undertaken the kind of self-transformation that had occurred among the teachers, the CTU found itself isolated in the Chicago labor movement. Yet the union had allies in the African American and Latino communities with which it might take on its political foes.

In early January the CTU voted to create an Independent Political Organization (IPO). The Resolution reads in part, "RESOLVED that the Chicago Teachers Union, along with key allies in the progressive labor movement and amongst progressive community organizations will launch an independent political organization (IPO) that is capable of leading strong electoral and legislative campaigns to benefit working families, our active and retired members, and our communities." The CTU's IPO calls for taxing the rich and raising wages, and it will endorse those who run on a social justice platform. These might be incumbent Democrats, new Democratic Party candidates, and possibly independent candidates, though who they might be is unknown at this time.

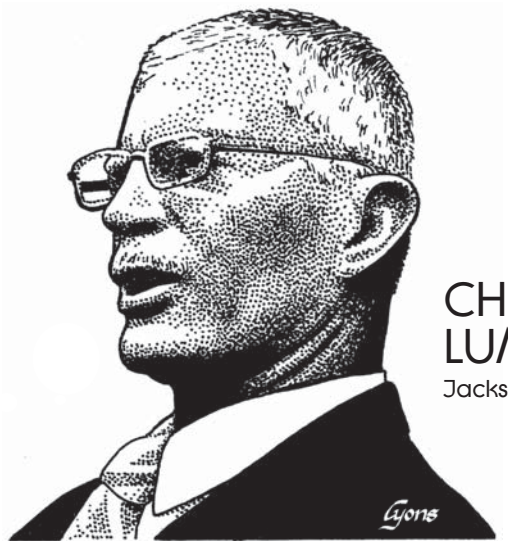
The idea of a major labor union in a big city breaking with wholesale endorsement of the Democratic Party and running its own slate of candidates—some Democrats and some independents—represents an important development. Throughout the country virtually all of the major unions endorse the Democrats, run the phone banks, do the door-knocking, get out the vote on Election Day—and get remarkably little in return. While it is not exactly clear what the CTU's new IPO will do, it is likely that the union will run at least one or two independent political candidates for office. If the union were able to recreate on the political level the solidarity it generated in the economic struggle and to run even one successful independent candidate, this could be a significant advance. Some have suggested that the CTU's president, Karen Lewis, should run for Mayor against Emanuel, though that is not on the agenda.

Interestingly, at the same time a group of about a hundred Chicago socialists from various organizations, inspired by the election victory of Kshama Sawant in Seattle, came together to organize the Chicago Socialist Campaign. The group met throughout the winter, forming committees to develop a vision statement, to write a platform, to assess possible races, and to find a treasurer and legal counsel. Like the Sawant campaign, the Chicago socialists' draft platform puts the $15 an hour minimum wage at the center of its demands. On May Day they nominated activist Jorge Mújica for alderman (city councilman) in the heavily Mexican-American near southwest side twenty-fifth ward.

Born in Mexico, the bi-lingual Mújica worked in print and broadcast journalism, before becoming an immigrant organizer for Arise, the faith-and-labor immigrant workers center. In 2010 he ran as the Democratic Party candidate in Illinois' third congressional district. Now, should he run as a socialist, he will be challenging Daniel "Danny" Solís who was first appointed to office by Mayor Richad M. Daley in 1996 and has remained the mayor's ally throughout his career. Danny Solís is also the brother of Patty Solís Doyle, former campaign manager for Hillary Clinton. If the socialists were looking for a real test of strength against the Democratic Party, they have found it.

There is little chance of winning, but can they contribute to building a movement? Mújica's connections to Latino activists might at least provide the opportunity to do so.

Many radicals and leftists still believe that progressive social-political movements can and must be built within the Democratic Party. After all, getting new parties on the ballot is difficult, and just about anybody can run in the Democratic Party primary. In Jackson, the state capital of Mississippi, a city of 175,000, 80 percent African American, Chokwe Lumumba, a civil rights attorney and longtime black nationalist—a former leader of the Republic of New Afrika—stood for mayor in the spring of 2013. As an attorney he had represented Black Panther Assata Shakur and the late hip-hop artist Tupac Shakur. As vice president of the Republic of New Afrika, he had advocated for "an independent predominantly black government" in the southeastern United States and reparations for slavery. He also helped found the National Black Human Rights Coalition and the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement.



CHOKWE LUMUMBA
Jackson, MS

Jackson ran in the Democratic Party primary, but identified himself as representing the traditions of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party that in 1964 broke with the regular Democrats over racism. His mayoral campaign was built by the Jackson People's Assembly, itself a project of the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement (MXGM). The assembly's "Jackson-Kush Plan," developed by MXGM, called for participatory democracy, a solidarity economy built upon producer cooperatives, and sustainable development combined with progressive community organizing and serious electoral politics. Lumumba won five out of seven wards and defeated his closest opponent by 3,000 votes. His idealistic young followers talk of organizing producers' cooperatives as laying the basis for building a black nation in the South. While his campaign never mentioned socialism, the Freedom Road Socialist Organization (FRSO) and others who supported him believed that it represents a step in that direction.Lumumba won the primary and went on to win the election.

Lumumba, in his short eight months in office before he died, pursued political strategies common to other mayors from the two major parties. Faced with the need to rebuild the city's infrastructure—and with no program or plan for squeezing money from the corporations— he passed a regressive 1 percent sales tax and raised residents' water and sewer rates. Wanting to encourage economic investment and deal with the city's food deserts, he welcomed anti-union Whole Foods, quoting *Fortune* magazine and praising it as one of the best companies to work for, though the United Food and Commercial Workers union has been fighting for years to organize its workers and improve their wages, benefits, and conditions. It is not that Lumumba was not sincere about his revolutionary, black

nationalist convictions, and a certain conception of socialism, but rather that he had no strategy or at least not the organized forces to fight capital, and therefore had to seek a partnership with it. Partnership with the corporations, dominated by the wealthy white corporate elite, may have been inimical to his radical black politics but proved to be integral to his practical management of the city in a period when there was no mass movement in struggle.

In a special election Chokwe Antar Lumumba, son of the deceased mayor, lost the election to Tony Yarber, a motivational speaker and city councilman, by a vote of 46 to 54 percent. The defeat was a blow to the movement the Lumumbas had built.

A Leftist Candidate for the Mayor of Oakland

There is also a new development in the San Francisco Bay Area where at the beginning of January Dan Siegel, a longtime leftist attorney and activist, announced that he will run for mayor of Oakland. Since the 1960s the San Francisco Bay Area has been one of the most radical regions in the country, whether one talked of labor unions, the LGBT movement, or militant ethnic communities. The current mayor of Oakland, Jean Quan, came out of the Maoist left and ran for office as a Democrat. When the Occupy movement took over a public plaza in Oakland, her police chief directed officers to clear it out using tear gas, rubber bullets, and flashbang grenades. Quan, who had been out of town (intentionally?), praised the police chief for his peaceful resolution of the situation, which led Siegel, an unpaid adviser, to break with her. Shortly afterwards he launched his own campaign, one of the first of sixteen candidates (as of April) in the traditionally non-partisan mayoral race including one endorsed by the Green Party, a couple of registered Democrats, a Republican, and various others.

His twitter home page described Siegel as a "Grown-up 60s activist and radical lawyer. Outdoors adventurer. Committed to ending the rule of capital." During his campaign announcement he was surrounded by labor union and community leaders who form the core of his constituency. Initially, Siegel made upping the minimum wage to $15 an hour the central plank of his platform, though by the time his website went up he was arguing that the first step to get there was an increase to $12.25. He has also called for making Oakland safe for its residents not by deploying more police officers, but by improving living conditions. He would make Oakland a "sanctuary city" for Latino immigrants too.

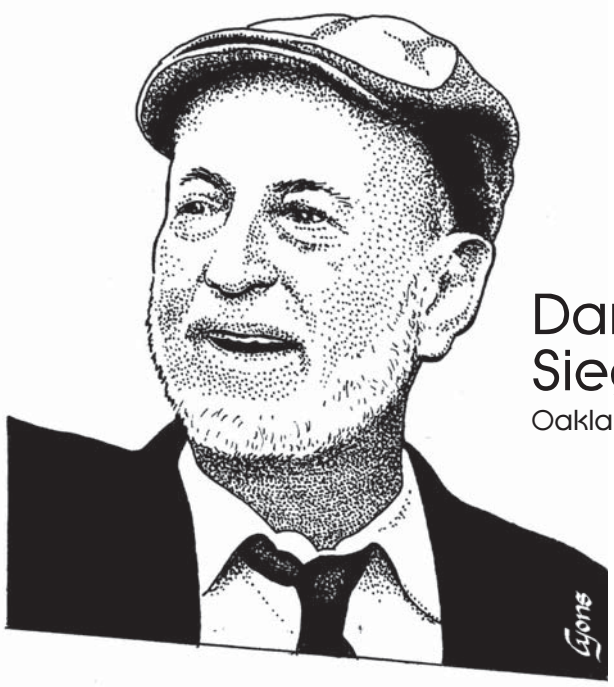
At the center of Siegel's program is the economy. His campaign web page—certainly the coolest web page of any campaign we have seen—calls in its "Vision" drop-down for a "21st Century Economy" based on "small business development," making the city attractive to "start up internet businesses by following the lead of Chattanooga, Tennessee," installing broadband and creating a municipal internet service provider, and for making Oakland "a leader in clean energy, solar financing, and green manufacturing." Finally, he wants to see "building, without public funds, a waterfront stadium for the Oakland A's."

In truth, as a young techy friend tells me, tech companies are already moving into Oakland—despite the recent proliferation of bumper stickers in the East Bay reading "Techie Scum Go to Hell!" and anarchist campaigns to trash yuppies' cars. Siegel's is an economic program for capitalist investment that might have been developed by Democratic or Republican party candidates. Combined with Siegel's emphasis on diversity, this is a plan for making Oakland—already in a process of gentrification—a center of California's high tech economy that would lead to the city's transformation into a new Silicon Valley, accompanied by rapid gentrification, likely leaving little room for Oakland's large, working class African American population.

Some other candidate from the major parties, without Siegel's leftist baggage, is likely to pick up his program and run with it all the way to the bank.

The Parker Campaign in Richmond, California

For eight years Richmond Mayor Gayle McLaughlin of the Green Party, and the Richmond Progressive Alliance that backed her, have fought the Chevron Company, to keep the company from dominating local politics and to improve the quality of life in this largely industrial, working-class Bay Area community. McLaughlin has been termed out of the mayor's office under California law, so she is running for city council, while Mike Parker, long one of the leaders of the Alliance, is running for the office of mayor. Chevron can be expected to throw its weight into the campaign against Parker.



As Parker wrote a year ago, "Chevron plays hardball in the Richmond community. Not only does the community surrounding the refinery suffer foul smells and elevated asthma rates, but Chevron through its political power continually finds ways to contribute less to the city. It has kept its taxes low while its profits soar; it refuses to pay utility taxes at the same rate as Richmond households and is currently taking legal action to reduce its county property taxes and eliminate its contribution for hazardous waste inspections."

Parker, self-identified as a member of Solidarity: A Socialist, Feminist, Anti-Racist Organization, is running as the candidate of the Richmond Progressive Alliance and mounting a working class-based campaign on a platform calling for protecting the environment, fighting racism and gender discrimination, and supporting labor unions, neighborhood organizations, and social movements. Chevron will certainly do everything it can to defeat Parker and reassert its influence. Though, as Parker said speaking at the Labor Notes Conference in Chicago in April 2014, mayors have little power to affect the major issues of unemployment, which are largely determined at the federal and state level, though a mayor could use the position to agitate and organize. Parker's campaign is based on the idea that the Richmond Progressive Alliance's ongoing organization and fight for democracy and social justice is the movement of which his campaign is just one expression.

Howie Hawkins—Green Party Candidate for Governor of New York

In New York State, Howie Hawkins will be running again for governor on the Green Party ticket, against incumbent Democrat Andrew

Cuomo and the Republican nominee. While a Green Party member, Hawkins runs as an open socialist, critical not only of his political rivals, but also of the banks and corporations and the capitalist system. He has run over the years for common councilor in the City of Syracuse, for state representative and senator, and governor. In his 2010 gubernatorial race, Hawkins received 60,000 votes, enough to qualify the Green Party for the New York State ballot for four more years.

A fund-raising email letter to his supporters laid out Hawkins' program: "We support a Green New Deal—living wage jobs to all who need them by investing in clean energy sources that will make our economy carbon neutral in 15 years. Ban fracking and phase out nuclear power once and for all. Sustainable, organic local food. Mass transit and bike paths. A $15 an hour minimum wage. An end to student and housing debt. Legalize marijuana and end the war on drugs. Make health care a right with single payer. Universal child care. Action to end hunger, homelessness and poverty. Fully and equitably funded education. Revenue sharing for local governments. Power to the people, not the corporations." Hawkins no doubt realizes that he has little chance of winning the election, but he hopes to increase the Green Party vote to 5 percent and keep it on the New York State ballot.

Hawkins' biggest problem in the coming election could be the Working Families Party (WFP), created in 1998 by organizers from the Communications Workers of America (CWA) and ACORN as a progressive fusion party that would run both Democrats and independents on its ballot line. Running Democrats—including Peter Vallone, Andrew Cuomo, Eliot Spitzer, and Barack Obama—the party has since easily won up to three times the required 50,000 votes to keep its ballot status. As Ari Paul wrote in *The Jacobin,* fearing it would lose its ballot status, in 2010 the WFP decided, even as the unions remained neutral, to endorse Andrew Cuomo. "Cuomo insisted the party endorse not just him but his entire neoliberal platform, which included a wage freeze for state workers and a property tax cap. The WFP agreed." And, wrote Ari, the WFP recently allied with the Democratic Party to defeat Hawkins' bid for the common council in Syracuse. Should the WFP endorse Cuomo again in 2014, it could well lose its ballot status as progressives turn away, but it might also take enough votes away from Hawkins to hurt the Green Party too.

Bernie Sanders for President?

All of these various labor and left campaigns might seem to be rising and converging in a Bernie Sanders for president campaign, which may be in the offing. Sanders, senator from the nearly all white and very small state of Vermont (population 626,000—only Wyoming has fewer inhabitants), calls himself a socialist (he has never been a member of any socialist party) and is currently the only independent Senator in Congress. Vermont's odd combination of old Yankees, immigrants from other states, back-to-the-earth counter-culturalists, and a small but intensely active labor and progressive community elected the independent Sanders to the Senate in 2006 and 2012.

As mayor of Burlington, Sanders' rhetoric often irritated local businessmen and political leaders, but he frequently ended up partnering with them on city programs. And as Ashley Smith wrote, in *Socialist Worker* in 2006, he is an "all but declared member of the Democratic Party" who has been dependent upon financial contributions and political support from the Democrats, and caucuses with them in the Senate. In 2004, Sanders worked to support Democrat John Kerry and spoke out against the independent campaign of Ralph Nader, who had been the Green Party standard bearer in 2000 and had been accused by Democrats of being the "spoiler" who caused Democrat Al Gore to lose the presidential election to George

W. Bush.

Sanders' voting record on U.S. foreign wars, the environment, labor, and social issues is among the most liberal in Congress. Women's organizations, environmental groups, labor unions, and immigrant rights groups give him their highest scores; most love him. His biggest financial contributors have not been corporations, but rather the labor unions and some liberal organizations. He is not beholden to the bankers and corporations that pay the bills for Republicans and Democrats alike. That's a real rarity.

At present, Sanders is considering the options of running as a Democrat or under some other label. He could run in the Democratic primary and, after losing there, run as an independent or a Green. Or he could simply run as a Green or an independent from the beginning. If he choose the independent path, the AFL-CIO, the National Organization for Women, and the inside the beltway African American and Latino organizations will all treat him as a spoiler who threatens the chances of the Democratic Party candidate. Unlike his situation in Vermont, he would receive virtually no union support, though with a sharp message he might win a significant portion of working class vote.

Could Sanders win the African American and Latino vote? While this does not at first seem very likely, we should remember that de Blasio—albeit with a different history—proved capable of winning the votes of people of color by speaking to their issues. It will be hard for Sanders to win the female vote. Politically active women will be overwhelmingly supporting Hilary Clinton or perhaps Elizabeth Warren. But Sanders might, if he can reach them, win support from working class and poor women, new. If he runs as an independent or as a Green, Sanders would be in a position to explain democratic socialism in popular language. He could criticize the Obama administration, the two party-system, and the capitalist and corporate domination of America. Such a campaign could have a significant impact on American politics and might move us a little to the left.

Building an Alternative to the Left

While it is gratifying to see the shift leftward represented by de Blasio's victory in New York City and the many creative and constructive efforts at politics at the left edge of or to the left of the Democratic Party, all of them aspiring to the political breakthrough we are waiting for, the question is: Can these political campaigns begin to interact with the social and labor movements in such a way as to inspire a virtuous circle of rising movements with militant strategies and more political challenges raising left political visions and programs? While it is not impossible for campaigns and candidates within the Democratic Party to initiate such a process, the organizational and political obstacles to building radical change as a Democrat remain enormous. At the same time, all of the more left campaigns we are discussing remain local and

often marginal, and, while inspirational, even when victorious are quite fragile.

Big political shifts on the left have historically been powered by a combination of deep economic and social crisis, leading to shifts in consciousness, and the growth of mass social and labor movements. At the national level, the Great Depression and the rise of the industrial unions produced local labor parties but could not escape the gravitational pull of the Democratic Party, especially as the Socialist Party and Communist Party after mid-1935 generally allied with it. The social movements of the 1960s—the Civil Rights Movement, the Anti-Vietnam War Movement, and the Women's Movement—produced the Peace and Freedom Party presidential campaign of Black Panther Eldridge Cleaver in 1968 and Dr. Benjamin Spock, the famous baby doctor, in 1972. But most activists stuck with Democrats Hubert Humphrey and George McGovern. More recently Ralph Nader's 1996 and 2000 campaigns picked up energy from the global justice movement that arose in protest against globalization, international trade agreements, and the declining economic opportunities for working people in the United States, but even so received only 2.74 percent of the vote in 2000.

The current crisis in its economic, ecological, and foreign policy dimensions has still not produced the levels of discontent and social struggle necessary to propel politics to the left on a very large scale, though, of course, we will continue with whatever energy is available to put forward political alternatives. While only a democratic socialist reorganization of society will be able to deal with these issues, we should continue to support such efforts as several of those described here which lay out a political vision and program to the left of the Democratic Party, and which in some cases find an electoral strategy for success. Every effort to build real political power to the left of the Democratic Party—particularly when it is linked to the social movements—deserves our support, whether it is carried out under the banner of the Green Party, a socialist organization, or some labor or independent flag. Still, the most important task is to put more steam in the piston, to increase the bandwidth, to build the social and labor movements, constructing the power to change politics.

Beyond Obamacare

Universalism and Health Care in the Twenty-first Century

A.W. Gaffney

The Affordable Care Act commentariat—including those confidently awaiting the day when all its promises are vindicated, those rooting for its ignominious demise, and those of us in a separate camp—have been kept occupied in recent months. Between autumn's website drama and winter's enrollment saga, the news cycle has been full of stories of IT dysfunctions tackled, right-wing challenges thwarted, enrollment goals met, electoral prospects threatened, and individuals newly insured (or variously dissatisfied).

Yet however important such details, stories, and analyses may sometimes be, we lose sight of the larger meaning of the ACA if we narrow our vision to its technological travails or to the latest enumeration of the insured. For those of us who are seeking a more fundamental and egalitarian change within the U.S. health care system, it seems particularly important at the current juncture to instead take a step back and appreciate the larger political, historical, and health policy significance of the ACA, to appreciate how we've come to have it, what it achieves, and what it leaves entirely undone. Understanding where we are and where we came from is, however, only the beginning of the story.

Moving forward, a focus on alternatives to the ACA, and of ways to achieve them, must increasingly be at the forefront of our discussions. A crucial question in this regard relates to how the struggle for true universal health care could fit within—and potentially propel—a larger popular mobilization against inequality. But to ask these questions, we should begin by looking back, to understand the road already travelled, as we seek to break off on a new, and bolder, path.

The Politics of Passage

The ACA fell well short of what many of us had hoped for at the end of the hundred-year war for health care reform, which had begun with the Progressive-era campaign of the 1910s. It eliminates neither uninsurance nor underinsurance, as we shall soon examine in greater depth. It also leaves intact a grossly inefficient (if profitable) system of funding and organization.

But why did the ACA fail to achieve what most construe as "universal health care"? I would argue that there are two ways to interpret the outcome. The first is to emphasize the particular proximate political conditions at the time it was passed, namely the role of corporate interests, the machinations of partisan politics, and so forth. The second interpretation—and one that has received less attention—would be to understand the ACA in the context of the dynamics of a much larger and lengthier neoliberal turn within the United States—and, arguably, global—political economy of health care.

Now with respect to the first approach, it seems fair to conclude that disappointment could have been predicted before the health care reform brawl even broke out. The boundaries of health care reform had been largely drawn by the time that the 2008 election delivered

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the presidency and both houses of Congress to the Democratic Party (including, by July 2009, 60 votes in the Senate). As sociologist Paul Starr put it, Democrats had committed to only "minimally disruptive" reforms going into the election.[1] Obama's health care proposal during the primaries, for instance, was less expansive than that of Hillary Clinton, and in some respects narrower than the ACA itself.

> The ACA fell well short of what many of us had hoped for at the end of the hundred-year war for health care reform.

But why? The role of the so-called "stakeholders" is one crucial factor here. In the years leading up to the election, a "rapprochement on health reform," as Starr calls it, had formed between mainstream liberal groups and key industries. The corporate interests within this rapprochement seem to have perceived that the status quo of rising costs and uninsurance was politically—and economically—unsustainable. In 2008 the Board of Directors of America's Health Insurance Plans (AHIP)—the national lobbying group for the health insurance industry—released a statement that actually endorsed "universal coverage," which it defined as a combination of "guarantee-issue coverage with no pre-existing condition exclusions with an enforceable individual mandate."[2] In other words, if the government required everyone to buy private insurance, the industry would be happy to provide it, and would even stop discriminating against the sick. The document additionally endorsed government subsidies for those making less than 400 percent of the federal poverty level to enable them to buy private health insurance. These proposals, ("guaranteed issue," an individual mandate, and subsidies for the purchase of private insurance) were core elements of the ACA, together with a limited employer mandate and a large expansion of Medicaid.

Other ideas that were not contained in the AHIP statement—for instance the proposal for a "robust" public option—had a less successful career. AHIP was, not surprisingly, rather lukewarm about the prospect of a competing public insurance plan, however "robust" or puny it might be. Though AHIP's president Karen Ignagni had earlier pledged support for Obama's health care reform, AHIP actually surreptitiously funneled some $86.2 million to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce for lobbying against the law in 2009 alone—just as debates about the "public option" got underway.[3] AHIP thereby succeeded in keeping its place at the bargaining table, while simultaneously working against the bill, which had the effect of making the final product more amenable to its interests.

The pharmaceutical industry similarly perceived it could both win and lose through health care reform. Most importantly, the industry needed to protect the great and treasured prize it had won in 2003, namely the clause in George W. Bush's Medicare Modernization Act (MMA) that explicitly prohibited Medicare from bargaining with insurance companies over drug prices. By some estimates, the elimination of that clause could have saved the public purse—and cost the industry—upwards of $500 billion over a decade.[4] The other option would have been to re-import drugs—allowing them to be purchased much more cheaply abroad where such negotiations do take place—which would be a more roundabout way to achieve a portion of these savings. However, after some tense negotiations between the drug industry lobby group (the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, known as PhRMA) and the administration, neither Medicare-drug negotiation nor re-importation was included in

the ACA.[5] This was, one supposes, the "politics of the possible," though this merely speaks to the sadly impoverished range of possibilities in a political system permeated by corporate dollars.

Neoliberalism and the Political Economy of American Health Care

While these machinations (and many others) are important to appreciate, it's also worth evaluating the Affordable Care Act in the context of the much longer neoliberal turn in American health care policy and thought. Though this is a separate and much larger story than can be told here, we can capture a glimpse of this multi-decade transformation simply by looking at the shift of the health care political center. In 1969, Edward Kennedy proposed legislation that would have created a program of national health insurance, with no copays, means testing, or cost sharing of any type. Nixon's counterproposal in 1971, on the contrary, looked very much like the ACA, with an employer mandate and an expanded Medicaid-like program for the poor. Like the ACA, it also involved copayments and cost sharing, not just to save money, but as a "matter of principle." To paraphrase the historian Beatrix Hoffman, health care couldn't be made a right; it had to remain something you paid for.[6]

But as corporate and business interests began their powerful push for renewed preeminence in the late 1970s, the Democratic health care proposal—which in 1969 was basically a social-democratic universal system in line with those enacted by left and labor governments in Europe—quickly transmogrified into Nixon's plan. Jimmy Carter, though he argued in an interview in late March 2014 that "Medicare-for-all" would have been preferable to the ACA, during his presidency actually made no substantial effort to pursue health care reform. Health care reform didn't return to the national agenda until the administration of Bill Clinton, who again didn't seriously consider a national health insurance system. Even his less ambitious plan for universal coverage via way of "managed competition" sunk. Mitt Romney's health care reform in Massachusetts, which drew heavily from Nixon's "mandate model" plan, was, conversely, successful.

However, evaluating the rise and fall of the health care reform agenda only tells part of the story. These same decades, as the work of Thomas Piketty has so clearly laid out, were also characterized by soaring inequalities in income and wealth; this was the result, in part, of amplified corporate dominance of the political system and the interrelated decline of the power of labor. It would almost be surprising if alongside these dynamics there *had not* been a corresponding shift within health care thought, policy, and organization that favored these ascendant interests. Such a shift is indeed visible, and the manifestations of it are multifold: the corporate takeover of the Health Management Organization (HMO) during the 1980s and

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1990s; a move by health policy experts and economists away from support for universal national health insurance to an obsession with the "moral hazard" of free health care; the growth of for-profit health care companies (hospices, hospitals, dialysis-centers, nursing homes); and soaring profits for pharmaceutical companies, which was mediated by key legislative victories (for instance, the Bayh-Dole Act of 1980 and the MMA of 2003).[7]

As the result of these changes, by the twenty-first century, the corporate health care sector

had both unprecedented capital to spend and imperative interests to defend: there shouldn't be any surprise that lobbying money would flood—and not merely season—the health care reform debate of 2009. According to the Center for Responsive Politics, lobbying from the health industry reached an all-time high of $554 million in 2009 alone. Physicians' organizations—which once were *the* central lobby that could single-handedly make or break a health care reform initiative—were relegated to a bit part. Yet though it placated powerful interests, the ACA still contained some redistributionist elements, particularly with respect to the Medicaid expansion. In yet another sign of the shift of the political center, it thereby managed to deeply offend the Republican Party, even though (as Obama pointed out) its roots were to be found on their side of the aisle. To summarize, after all was said and done, a social-democratic alternative was barely considered, a Nixonian health care plan was barely passed, and more stayed the same than changed.

To summarize, after all was said and done, a social-democratic alternative was barely considered, a Nixonian health care plan was barely passed, and more stayed the same than changed.

The ACA: Accomplishments and Shortfalls

Among those working towards more fundamental health care change (for instance, as I'll discuss below, a single-payer system), an assessment of the overall impact of the ACA is a frequent cause for disagreement. Is the law a (possibly wobbly) step in the right direction to be embraced and expanded, a harmful compromise to be denounced and discarded, or something in between? My own sense here is that global assessments are problematic and not that helpful: the massive law does many different things for many different people, and so is better dissected (and criticized) with respect to its specific effects and shortcomings rather than rejected or championed *en toto*.

For instance, whatever the failures of the law may be and whatever injustices will persist, moving individuals out of the vulnerable ranks of the uninsured is clearly a good thing, and no amount of political analysis should belittle the benefit to—and relief felt by—these individuals. The ACA reduces uninsurance mainly via two mechanisms. First, as mentioned, it expands Medicaid to everyone below 138 percent of the federal poverty level. Unfortunately, as a result of the June 2012 Supreme Court ruling that made state participation optional, only 26 states (and the District of Columbia) are participating in the expansion, excluding millions from the benefits of Medicaid. Second, the ACA requires the establishment of an insurance "exchange" where private insurance can be sold to those without Medicare, Medicaid, or employer-based insurance; those with incomes below 400 percent of the federal poverty level will receive government subsidies to purchase insurance on these exchanges. However, between these programs and the employer and individual mandate, the ACA will still leave an estimated 31 million uninsured (compared with an estimated 57 million without it).[8] In other words, triumphant proclamations notwithstanding, the ACA does not create universal health care in the United States.

Now if eliminating the problem of uninsurance was our only goal, it seems that the ACA would be at least be a clear step in the right direction. Unfortunately, however, there is another phenomenon that has been evolving for some time, that the ACA neither created nor fixed but to some extent codifies, and which confers

a highly inegalitarian element to our health care system: underinsurance. Underinsurance is often defined as having insurance but still having substantial out-of-pocket costs for medical care (i.e. greater than 10 percent of family income after premiums); it's clearly a growing problem, and it is by no means eliminated by the ACA.[9] The plans on the exchanges, for instance, incorporate high levels of cost sharing, or copays, deductibles, and coinsurance. They are graded into four metallic tiers based on their actuarial value (i.e. the percent of your health care expenses that insurance covers), beginning at a paltry 60 percent for the "bronze plans." Putting aside the deeply inegalitarian concept of dividing a population into different grades of metal (the allusion to Plato's *Republic* has somehow not yet been made), such plans fulfill the long-held concern of health policy "experts" that patients need more "skin in the game" (i.e. cost exposure), such that they don't whimsically procure medically unnecessarily procedures and diagnostic studies. Families will be subject to as much as $12,700 annually in additional out-of-pocket costs for health care (*after* premiums are paid) to keep the dreaded "moral hazard" of "free care" at bay.[10]

Putting aside what happens to the level of strictly defined "underinsurance," I would argue that there is a larger problem on the rise, which one might call "malinsurance," namely insurance that compromises the physical and economic health of the bearer. Malinsurance encompasses an even broader scope of problematic insurance plans: insurance where the price of the premiums impinges on a reasonable standard of living; insurance with unequal and inferior coverage of services, drugs, or procedures; insurance with "cost sharing" that forces individuals to decide between health care and other necessities; insurance with inadequate and inequitable access to providers or facilities; and insurance that insufficiently protects against financial strain in the case of illness.

Today, many (if not most) of us could in some ways be considered underinsured, while most (or maybe all) of us might be considered malinsured. This will, unfortunately, remain the case in coming years, even with the full and unimpeded enforcement of the ACA.

But what are the alternatives, and are they viable?

Moving Forward: A Single-Payer Solution?

A "single-payer system" is probably the best-studied alternative for the United States. Conceptually, it is quite simple: national health insurance, with a single entity (the government) providing health insurance for the country. Its core principles (as generally agreed upon within the single-payer movement) can be briefly summarized. First, everyone in the country would be covered by national health insurance. Second, the system wouldn't impose "cost sharing," so health care would be free at the point of care, with underinsurance thereby eliminated (assuming an adequate level of funding). Third, it would drastically reduce spending on health care administration and bureaucracy through elimination of the fragmented multi-payer system, and also through the global budgeting of hospitals. It would also contain costs through health care capital planning, and through other measures like direct negotiations with pharmaceutical companies over drug prices. Putting this together, a single-payer system would constitute a markedly egalitarian turn in American health care. Access to health care would be made not only universal but also *equal,* with free choice of provider and hospital to everyone in the country, provided as a right.

Now, in light of the formidable resistance that could be expected from a wide-spectrum of powerful and well-funded "stake-holders" (for instance, AHIP and PhRMA), the actual realization of such a system is, to put it mildly, daunting. We can predict that the impressive resources that have been deployed in opposition to the ACA might be multiplied many times to

counter even the specter of true universal health care. However, while our political prospects must always be judged soberly, there are also reasons for guarded optimism. The confluence of several of the following dynamics (and many others) may, for instance, create a political opening for such a project in the coming years.

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First, dissatisfaction with our health care system will almost certainly rise, which I think will occur as we become more and more a "copay country," with high-deductible, high-premium, and narrow-network health plans becoming the new normal. One could imagine considerable public outrage and mobilization against this new commodified status quo, just as there was against corporatized HMOs in the 1990s.

Second, though politics at the federal level may remain inhospitable to the cause for some time, single-payer campaigns at the state government level may provide an opening for the construction of more limited single-payer state systems, while also providing an opportunity for grassroots organizing and movement building that would, in turn, strengthen the larger national campaign.[11]

Third, support for a single-payer system among physicians (which already has majority support in some polls) might be translated into more vocal outrage in coming years. In particular, as patients pay more and more out-of-pocket at the time of care, physicians will increasingly be forced into the role of "merchants of health," basing medical decisions not only on clinical evidence, but on their patients' income and wealth. I believe—and deeply hope—that such class-based medicine will be rejected by the profession.

Fourth, and perhaps most important, a broader mobilization against the politics of inequality now seems to be in the making. As it is perceived that the excessive costs of American health care are actually contributing to the problem of inequality—for instance, insofar as high premiums indirectly reduce income or as cost sharing directly consumes a greater portion of already stagnant wages—one can imagine that the drive for a single-payer system might become closely linked with a much larger, and more powerful, political mobilization.

Of course, the precise road by which fundamental change in the health care system could be achieved remains obscure. Currently, the ACA remains at center stage, drowning out discussions of alternatives. With time, however, the changes instituted by the ACA will become subsumed within the fabric of the health care system: we'll no longer be debating the benefits or shortcomings of Obama's signature legislation; we'll be declaiming the persistent injustices of our overall health care system. However powerful the opposition, if allied with a larger popular movement against ever-rising inequality, true universal health care may yet have its day in the sun.

At the same time, I believe that the struggle for health care justice—the fight for universal and *equal* health care for all—could, in turn, powerfully inform, and bolster, this larger movement. In polls, universal health care (and single-payer) garners support from a surprisingly large proportion of the country, generally a majority. In addition, Medicare has long remained a highly popular program, even (to some extent) across class and political lines. Perhaps, one might conjecture, this is because the need for health care speaks to our intuitive commonalities as human beings.

We may have soaring inequality and a political system more and more indebted to corporate sponsors. But I believe that we'll ultimately reject the notion of class-based health care. The ideal of universalism still has great potential power; in time, we'll learn to harness it.

NOTES

1. Paul Starr, *Remedy and Reaction: The Peculiar American Struggle over Health Care Reform* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 195.

2. "Board of Directors' Statement: Now Is the Time for Health Care Reform: A Proposal to Achieve Universal Coverage, Affordability, Quality Improvement and Market Reform.," (America's Health Insurance Plans, 2008).

3. Drew Armstrong, "Insurers Gave U.S. Chamber $86 Million Used to Oppose Obama's Health Law," *Bloomberg*, www.bloomberg.com/news/2010-11-17/insurers-gave-u-s-chamber-86-million-used-to-oppose-obama-s-health-law.html.

4. Dean Baker, "Reducing Waste with an Efficient Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit" (Center for Economic and Policy Researcb, 2013).

5. Peter Baker, "Obama Was Pushed by Drug Industry, E-Mails Suggest," *New York Times*, June 9, 2012.

6. Beatrix Rebecca Hoffman, *Health Care for Some: Rights and Rationing in the United States since 1930* (University of Chicago Press, 2012).

7. On the Bayh-Dole Act, see H. Markel, "Patents, Profits, and the American People—the Bayh-Dole Act of 1980," *New England Journal of Medicine* 369, no. 9 (2013). On moral hazard, a good review can be found in J. A. Nyman, "American Health Policy: Cracks in the Foundation,"" *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law*, vol. 32, no. 5 (2007).

8. "Effects of the Affordable Care Act on Health Insurance Coverage—Baseline Projections," ed. Congressional Budget Office (2014).

9. The devil is very much in the definition here (i.e. what arbitrary cutoff defines sufficient versus insufficient coverage); using a conservative threshold, a recent study found that 12 percent of the U.S. population was insured but underinsured (in addition to the 18 percent uninsured). C. Schoen et al., "America's Underinsured: A State-by-State Look at Health Insurance Affordability Prior to the New Coverage Expansions," (The Commonwealth Fund, 2014).

10. In all fairness, however, we were already becoming a "copay country" even before the ACA. Those of us with employer-provided health insurance have, for instance, seen growing copay and deductibles in recent years. G. Claxton et al., "Health Benefits in 2013: Moderate Premium Increases in Employer-Sponsored Plans," *Health Affairs*, vol. 32, no. 9 (2013). I discuss the issue of "copay country" in greater depth in "Your doctor copays are too high!" *Salon,* August 5, 2013.

11. That being said, state single-payer requires federal waiver to allow for the incorporation of Medicare into the system, and so requires federal cooperation.

The Teachers' Trifecta

Democracy, Social Justice, Mobilization

Lois Weiner

Across the United States, we are in the midst of a great struggle over the nation's education system. On one side is a bipartisan effort to privatize schools and undermine the promise of public education. Opposing that effort are large numbers of parents and teachers.

However, working class parents of color see the current battle over public education quite differently than do those from the white middle class. For this reason, when I talk to teachers about what is driving the changes that they see destroying their careers and schools, I always start by sharing the story of my own education. In 1954, I was in the first grade in the David W. Harlan elementary school in Wilmington, Delaware. I could buy a hot lunch prepared by cafeteria workers who were employed by the Wilmington Public Schools (WPS). I took music lessons—violin—for free, using a violin the city schools lent to me. We had a school library, chorus, and band. We had art classes three times a week. However, schools on Wilmington's east side got the leftover musical instruments, and much less money for books, supplies, and maintaining school facilities like the playground. Harlan was all-white, intentionally segregated. Real estate developers and brokers in its attendance zone had homeowners sign racial covenants that prohibited the sale of homes to blacks. This information was subsequently used by the NAACP in its successful suit to desegregate the WPS.[1]

To be credible to the parents and community members who should be our strongest allies—the poor and working parents of color who are targeted by neoliberal propaganda —we must acknowledge the complicity of the education establishment, labor, and teachers unions in allowing this gross inequality to persist. Labor did not create residential and school segregation, but accepting it was an unarticulated assumption in its post-World War II pact with capital. Those practices and assumptions must no longer be accepted by parents, teachers, and our unions.

The rich and powerful, who control the media and educational policy of both political parties, use lofty-sounding slogans about "putting students first" and "making schools work" that obscure their aims. The linchpin of educational policy of both Democrats and Republicans is that schooling is, to quote Arne Duncan, "the one true path out of poverty."[2] This assumption obviates the state's role in ending poverty through economic policy by creating well-paying jobs that support a sustainable economy and by requiring a minimum wage that does not leave people in poverty. Schooling is not and cannot be the "one true path out of poverty" for the vast majority of children because our economy consigns millions to unemployment or work that pays poverty wages. Yet we are told students must be made "college and career ready" to have well-paying jobs, or as the U.S. Department of Education phrased its

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goal in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, "The goal for America's educational system is clear.... Every student should have meaningful opportunities to choose from upon graduation from high school."[3] The Common Core, the new national curriculum funded in good part by Bill Gates, is explicitly defended by its proponents, including teachers unions, to make individuals and the country economically competitive.[4]

Schools in the United States have been affected by inequality outside their walls while also functioning in ways that both challenge and reproduce it.[5] We have a remarkable body of high-quality empirical scholarship describing "schools as places where social reproduction occurs but also where human agency matters and makes a difference in students' lives."[6] Social movements effectively challenged the inequality of outcomes in education but, in the end, were unable to disrupt social processes in schools as fully as was needed. In good part this occurred because schooling was made to carry a weight that it cannot by itself bear and because education is enmeshed in social, political, and economic conditions that support or undercut what can occur in classrooms.

Probably the most important liberal defender of public education today is Diane Ravitch. In battling her former co-thinkers with the personal resources and connections she acquired in supporting neoconservative policies, Ravitch has contributed mightily to public awareness of the threat to democracy and to children in the current drive to create a privatized school system funded by public money but without collective, public oversight. *Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools*,[7] her newest book, is an authoritative compendium of why these reforms are so dangerous. Ravitch has almost singlehandedly developed and publicized a liberal rebuttal to neoliberal "reforms," in effect substituting not only for the teacher union establishment but for labor as well.

Still, while she has repudiated the policies she helped craft and promote under the George H. W. Bush administration, she has not yet distanced herself from assumptions that led to her support for the initial iteration of the current reforms. The central political flaw in her analysis

> This is not a past to which we should want to return, even if we could.

is seen when she argues about education's purposes, past and present. Public education was established in the 19th century, she explains,

> to educate future citizens and to sustain our democracy. The essential purpose of the public schools, the reason they receive public funding, is to teach young people the rights and responsibilities of citizens.... A secondary purpose was to strengthen our economy and our culture by raising the intelligence of our people and preparing them to lead independent lives as managers, workers, producers, consumers, and creators of ideas, products, and services. (p. 237)

She adds a third purpose, "to endow every individual with the intellectual and ethical power to pursue his or her own interests and to develop the judgment and character to survive life's vicissitudes." (p. 237)

Ravitch explains that education's purpose was—and is—to strengthen the economy and prepare people for work. Yet the book does not acknowledge that schools have educated most working class students for working class jobs, and most children of professionals for similar careers and the social status of their parents. She challenges the claim that education is the "one true path" out of poverty by making poverty exclusively to blame for inequality in education. Previously Ravitch contended that her own

education was ideal and it is to her credit that in *Reign of Error* she steps back from that assertion and argues that residential and school segregation do harm. Her shift in thinking shows a new willingness to address racial segregation, an unpopular but necessary step in equalizing school outcomes.[8] However, the overarching argument that U.S. public education was doing as well as could be expected given the effects of poverty is a serious flaw in her analysis and opens her—and the movement—to the charge that we want to defend an unequal status quo.

Ravitch does not address the contradiction between schooling's non-economic purposes, its role in educating the next generation of citizens and nurturing each individual's potential, and its use as a sorting mechanism to allocate a diminishing number of well-paying jobs. Unfortunately, neoliberal reforms resonate with poor, minority parents precisely because they want the same opportunity for their children to compete for good jobs as children of middle class parents have. Calls for schools that make children happy and develop creativity will not assuage parents' fears that their children will not be strong competitors in an increasingly punishing labor market. Arne Duncan's contemptuous dismissal of opponents of high-stakes testing and the new Common Core curriculum as "suburban moms" who can't face their children's limitations demonstrates that our opponents will fully exploit the utterly hypocritical and inaccurate claim that they protect poor, minority children against white liberals who want to maintain the status quo, to advantage their own children.

Ravitch marshals evidence that bipartisan reforms aim to destroy the template for mass public education in the United States that was created in the nineteenth century. Unfortunately the artificial national border she draws in telling the story of U.S. educational reform obscures the global dimension of the project and the relationship of the changes being made to U.S. schools to demands of capitalism globally and its transformation of schooling throughout the world. In effect she proposes a return to the post-World War II social democratic compact, inflected by commitment to the civil rights movement's campaign for school integration. One insurmountable problem with this strategy is that capitalism rejects the compact. But even if we could win back the compact, it was a

The 2011 Wisconsin teacher protests and strikes against Gov. Scott Walker's anti-union legislation contributed to an upsurge of teacher activism around the country, most importantly the Chicago Teachers Union strike of 2012.

Faustian deal. Teachers unions, like the rest of labor, were bureaucratized and greatly weakened by the quid pro quo that gave them collective bargaining but took away the capacity to intervene directly on issues that go to the heart of teachers' work, especially school organization and curriculum. This is not a past to which we should want to return, even if we could.

Her electoral strategy also reflects a desire to return to the (idealized) past. Ravitch recognizes that big money and corporations control the Democratic Party, and her solution is to push Democrats to be the defenders of public education she says they once were. She therefore encourages opponents of corporate school reform to embrace Democrats willing to criticize (however vaguely) privatization, testing, and charter schools and defend (however meekly) teachers unions. However, she (and those who agree with this political strategy) do not explain how we will hold candidates responsible to the activists who have worked on their behalf and avoid betrayals. Yet this issue is more pressing with each election cycle and each desertion of Democrats whom progressives have supported. Al Franken, liberal sweetheart, has endorsed Teach for America and charter schools, as has Howard Dean. Ras Baraka, campaigning for mayor of Newark, easily won support of activists, including Ravitch, based on his harsh criticisms of Newark's school closings and creation of charter schools. Yet Baraka has allied himself with the mayor of Jersey City, who was elected on a program to bring to the Jersey City schools precisely the reforms that Baraka criticizes in Newark, reforms that Democrats for Education Reform (DFER) and New Jersey's newest Democratic senator and Newark's former mayor, Cory Booker, embrace wholeheartedly.

Although pressed by activists to criticize teacher union leaders, in particular her longtime friend, Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), for endorsing the Common Core and commending legislation that links teacher evaluation to students' standardized test scores, Ravitch declines, arguing this creates divisions. But the divisions already exist because union reformers are challenging the local and national leadership in both of the teachers unions. The question is whether we will encourage activists to democratize their unions, to make them social movements, or whether we think the model of "service" or "business unionism" should remain the norm.

Deep, thorough union democracy depends on the union having a presence in the workplace where members understand that they are the union.

The "Trifecta": Mobilization, Social Justice, Democracy

A new generation of teachers is being politicized and radicalized very rapidly. While there is still much fear, nodes of resistance are emerging. In some cases organizations of parents and teachers opposed to testing are supporting creation of reform caucuses in unions. Teachers have been both energized and inspired by the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU), and terrified at the enormity of the task they face. Many are asking how they can apply lessons from those who formed the Caucus of Rank and File Educators (CORE) and then transformed the CTU.

In spring 2014, activists in Massachusetts, Colorado, and North Carolina formed statewide caucuses in their National Education Association (NEA) affiliates. After losing a contract fight, Newark, New Jersey's AFT union reformers won a majority in their union's executive committee; they lost the union presidency by only a few votes. Seattle, an NEA affiliate,

and Philadelphia's AFT local now have reform caucuses, as does Minneapolis. In school districts large and small, grassroots groups of teachers and parents that oppose testing or charter school co-locations are spawning change in the local teachers unions.

In the Los Angeles union, the second largest in the country, reformers elected to office years earlier failed to build a union presence at the school site and captured the union apparatus without developing a base of support. Activists learned from their mistakes and reorganized as Union Power; they nurtured a new culture and program of building a "member-driven union." While Union Power worked diligently to build the chapters, developing a program modeled on CTU's, out of 31,505 members only 7,158 returned ballots. The turnout was disappointing but was still a higher percentage of voters than in the 2011 citywide union elections. Alex Caputo-Pearl, who headed the slate, narrowly missed winning the 50 percent plus 1 he needed to be elected president but his opponent essentially ceded the run-off to him.

Clearly though, the Democratic Party is owned by forces that aim to destroy everything that teachers unions must defend.

Union activists seem in agreement about three issues: 1) mobilizing union members during contract disputes, 2) working with parent allies, and 3) developing contract demands that embed economic issues in a program for quality schools that names social inequality, corporate domination of the government, and racism as impediments to schools students deserve. While these are essential elements themselves, they are insufficient. Too often overlooked is the centrality of organizing a union presence "on the shop floor," that is, at the school site, developing new leaders and activists as well as fighting for democratic norms and procedures.

Unfortunately, marginalized in discussion of union reform is strengthening union democracy. This was apparent in the left media's coverage of the near-strike of the Portland Association of Teachers (PAT), an NEA affiliate. PAT's leadership used the contract to defend aspects of teachers' work that directly affect learning rather than focusing on salary. They reached out to parents and mobilized members, involving them in the contract fight. But key questions about the process were ignored. How were bargaining demands developed? Was the team elected directly by the membership? The contract campaign is the opportunity to involve more members as leaders, deepening the membership's participation in decision-making.

Chicago had an elected bargaining team of dozens of people and spent months gathering, refining, and voting on contract demands. Did PAT? Another question we should ask is how discussion and ratification of a proposed settlement occurs. Is the discussion organized so that union officers "sell" the proposed settlement to members—or does the process encourage members to raise questions, concerns, and problems? Contract ratification directly influences how strong the union will be in the school site after the heat of the contract fight subsides. Members have to defend the contract, so it is essential that they understand the specifics of the final agreement. In Chicago, in the midst of a strike, CTU's negotiating team brought the proposed agreement to the union's representative assembly, which refused to endorse it before taking it back to members for a closer look. CTU's process has to be the standard to which we hold unions.

The history of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), including its lawsuit against individual dissidents who formed an independent union, the National Union of

Healthcare Workers, illustrates why we need union democracy as well as social justice commitments.[9] Not just member voice is needed but also power that emerges from the ranks in the shops and that challenges and informs the leadership's actions. A social justice program combined with member mobilization is a volatile but unsustainable mixture. The combination can fuel militant struggles but it cannot translate those victories into the deep alteration in power relations on the shop floor that teachers unions need today to counter the vastly unequal power of teachers and administration.

Herman Benson, the unofficial dean of union democracy studies, has pushed left reformers to consider the relationship between union democracy and the other elements of their agendas, arguing that bureaucratization in unions is not neatly linked to union reformers' (left-wing) politics. Benson's challenge to understand how the struggle for democratic unions relates to our program for social justice is a matter of the utmost importance for teacher unionism today and yet it has been ignored.

I suggest that trade unionism's two essential principles, solidarity and democracy, challenge notions of individual competition and hierarchical relations embedded in capitalism and expressed in power relations at the workplace. These twin ideals, solidarity and democracy, are essential in creating societies that support the full flowering of human potential. Unions, due to their unique situation in the workplace, provide the filament that sustains democracy. When unions are not democratic, even if they fight for social justice, they perpetuate hierarchical relations that disempower working people, allowing bigotry and oppression to remain embedded in social relations. Undemocratic unions cannot educate workers to create a democratic society because the substance of union life reinforces workers' subordination to others that (purportedly) know best for them. And most often those others come from groups in the society that have more power and privilege.

However, democracy is very fragile, and vigilant enforcement of regulations that give members the right to decide policy and elect officers is a necessary but insufficient condition. Deep, thorough union democracy depends on the union having a presence in the workplace where members understand that *they* are the union. This process is in turn nurtured by the union defining its members' self-interest very broadly so that members bring their concerns into the union.

Nelson Lichtenstein notes that "Rights are universal and individual, which means employers and individual members of management enjoy them just as much as workers,"[10] but what makes unions unique is that unions represent members' individual interests through expression and struggle for their collective interests. The accuracy of Lichtenstein's observation is seen in the way neoliberalism has exploited the rights discourse against teachers and teachers unions, in lawsuits arguing that tenure and seniority protections conflict with the rights of children to equal educational opportunity. At the same time, a rights discourse also fueled social movements that created opportunities for millions of students who previously were excluded from education, those with special needs and native speakers of languages other than English. Neither NEA nor AFT helped these movements for increased educational opportunity, using their political clout only after legislation was introduced. The laws creating special education and bilingual education programs were flawed in taking "disputes out of the hands out of those directly involved," as Lichtenstein argues. Yet, millions of children once refused an education today receive services. Children in these groups are better off because they claimed their (human) rights—without support from the unions.

Teachers unions plant the seed of democracy in schools by giving teachers collective voice about the conditions of their labor. Even when collective bargaining restricts the union's

legal authority, a teachers union with a highly conscious, active membership that has assimilated the lesson that members are the union, not staff or elected officials, can exert pressure over many informal work arrangements. However, while the union's presence provides opportunity for teacher voice, it does not automatically do the same for parents, students, or community. To the extent the teachers union does not consciously push to extend democracy in the school to include those affected by union agreements, it undermines its legitimacy and contradicts labor's claim of speaking for working people. So while Benson is correct that as a rule when unions "raise the standards of those who are victorious, they tend to lift the standards of the class, even those not organized," it is also the case that support for unions, including teachers unions, eroded precisely because of the attenuated impact of union victories on those who were not union members.[11]

Bringing the "Trifecta" to Politics

Teacher union activists generally understand that the destruction of public education and the profession is a bipartisan project, even as they see individual candidates as more sympathetic to teachers' perspective. The question I think we need to consider is not whether we need a new electoral vehicle that will project the vision of a transformed teacher union movement, but how to achieve it.

In embarking on this discussion, it's important to acknowledge that electoral activity is not a substitute for the "trifecta" I have previously described. Nor can we ignore the success of neoliberalism's "scorched earth" war against unions. When teacher union reformers succeed in becoming leaders of newly mobilized unions, as they have in Chicago, they are often isolated in a fairly bleak labor landscape. Education is often the sector of the economy with the highest union density but public employee unions have been greatly weakened and private sector unionism is marginal. This puts newly elected teacher union reformers in a very precarious situation. On the one hand, they see that they have few dependable allies in the Democratic Party, which is controlled by capital. On the other hand, they bargain with the people who are elected. It is very, very difficult for union leaders to argue that we need to create an independent political vehicle because in the process of creating that vehicle we may lose elections that seem to jeopardize the union's ability to maintain the status quo, including members' jobs and benefits.

However, just as defending teachers and public education means doing battle with economic attacks while recognizing the dangers of doing so, advancing that struggle into the electoral sphere means facing dangers inherent in developing an independent electoral vehicle. The elite that controls the state, exercising their control through both the Democratic and Republican parties, directs the global capitalistic project that aims to destroy us. We contradict and undercut our efforts to contest that project when we support either party. Candidates cannot serve two masters—on the one hand, the Democratic Party of Arne Duncan, DFER, and Rahm Emanuel, and on the other, the movement opposing them.

Electoral activity is an extension into the public realm of the "trifecta" of principles and politics we use in building the union: democracy, social justice, mobilization. Candidates for office (and office holders) should have the same relationship to a union and the social movement of which it is a key element as we want union officers to have with the membership. We elect candidates to carry out our program but we in turn are responsible to help them push electoral initiatives by mobilizing. Elected officials are supported by and responsible to the people who elect them. On a local level teachers unions may be able to initiate the "trifecta" through an ad hoc political coalition but such a formation is unstable. In the longer run, locally and nationally, we need a new political party.

Many problems complicate the proposition of forming a new electoral vehicle, I acknowledge. Clearly though, the Democratic Party is owned by forces that aim to destroy everything that teachers unions must defend. We cannot give money and votes to a party that aids and abets our destruction. And if not now, when? When we are weaker as a result of unrelenting political attacks and the continued absence of political voice?

What will this new electoral movement and vehicle look like? We know it must be democratic with mechanisms that make leaders and candidates responsible to the activists and constituencies who have put them into office. Here again we can look to what occurred in Chicago: CORE activists did not delay their challenge to the old CTU leadership while developing a blueprint of what a transformed Chicago teachers union would look like. They brought principles and a vision, developed in struggle. They honed their strategy further in carrying out that vision as union officers and staff. The same process can occur in developing a new electoral vehicle, in Chicago and elsewhere. Union Power's victory in Los Angeles opens the door to teachers unions having an independent electoral vehicle in two of the three largest U.S. cities.

A vibrant new movement is emerging though it is under the radar of the mass media. Teachers and parents who were previously not political and not engaged are seeing that children and the profession of teaching are being harmed by policies over which ordinary people have no voice or influence. New national and international networks are emerging among teacher union activists. Much hinges on radical activists in the United States understanding that we cannot repeat the mistakes teacher unionism made in its birth in the 1960s. Fifty years ago teachers unions could trade off power in the workplace, voice about how schools are organized, what we teach and how, for improvements in members' wages and benefits. However, those days are gone. To protect teaching as a profession and public education we need to win the "trifecta" of democracy, mobilization, and social justice, in union life and politics.

NOTES

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The Chicago Women's Liberation Rock Band, 1970-1973

A Memoir and Reflection on Badass Boffo Revolutionary Feminist Music

Naomi Weisstein

In Chicagoland, in 1970, almost every teenage girl listened to rock. They considered it *their* music—hormonal, quasi-outlaw, with screaming guitars and a heavy, driving beat. But it was sooo misogynist! This wasn't the Beatles' playful woman-affectionate songs. These were vicious boy bands: the guitarists stood with their legs spread wide, pretending to fuck their guitars, while they sang about how stupid and weak-minded girls were, and how they were good for nothing but sex—often, rape.

All our lives, we girls had been taught that male abuse was sexy, but this stuff was a cultural carpet-bombing of girls, based on the amplified idea that male abuse—*brutal = sexy wow! shiver*—was all that we girls wanted to live for.

How could a feminist combat this? The magnificent (although folkie oriented) Michigan Womyn's Music Festivals didn't begin until 1976; and the Riot Grrrls-inspired feminist rock bands were at least twenty-five years away. (For example, Bikini Kill and Sleater-Kinney—not to mention Pussy Riot, which was still forty-five years away.)

As an ardent member of the Chicago Women's Liberation Union (CWLU), I decided to form my own women's liberation rock band. My day job was as a professor of psychology/neuroscience at Loyola University in Chicago; but I had a background in classical music and jazz, and in comedy, that seemed well suited to the bust-out, bad-ass feminist rock band that I was contemplating. My mother was a composer and concert pianist who sat me at the piano when I was five, teaching me the first movement of Mozart's A-major sonata, then packed me off to school, directing me to "play it for your 'little friends.'" I was thereafter classically trained until I broke away at thirteen and took three years of jazz piano with Johnny Mehegan instead. As for comedy, in Chicago I came *this close* to running off with Second City, with the encouragement of the fine, generous comedian David Steinberg. Comedy was in the Chicago air in those days. Many cultural innovations flowed eastward, only achieving legitimacy after their late arrival in New York City.

My rock band would have women playing instruments, and women singing about how smart, strong, funny, and hip we were, and how we would have sex only on our own terms, thank you. And we would get so good that soon we

Don't FUCK AROUND with love!!!!!

would saturate the air waves, inundating teenage girls—inundating all women—with a new kind of pop musical culture—hilarious, joyful, playful, and *taking no shit from no one*.

At the founding meeting in my Rogers Park living room of what we later called "The

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Chicago Women's Liberation Rock Band," there were six instrumentalists: three guitarists, one banjo player, a drummer, and myself on piano and, occasionally, bass. Surprise, boys! "Chicks" *could and did* play musical instruments. And we weren't even Phil Spitalny's All-Girl Orchestra, featuring Evelyn and her Magic Violin. However, there were, among those mentioned, eleven vocalists, so that my living room took on the chaotic look of a hippy version of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. (Three of them played instruments as well. The other relatively tuneless eight did not.) This many vocalists was no surprise because the boy bands tolerated "chick singers" fronting for them, so singing is what females gravitated towards. But what would we do with all of them? At first we just accepted them. In those early days, no woman's liberationist ever criticized another one. And our movement had proclaimed in its utopian early days (1965-68) that "any woman could do anything." If so, the monotone eight could easily learn to sing like Janis Joplin.

Four months later, on International Women's Day we played our first gig, in the bandshell at Chicago's Grant Park. The space was huge (you can see us, almost lost in the bandshell, at this link: www.feministezine.com/feminist/music/CWLRB-Cultural-Transformation.html), and we didn't yet know how to deal with the muffling effect of behemoth outdoor areas. So the piano couldn't hear the guitarists; the guitarists couldn't hear each other. The drummer kept losing the beat. The eight beatnik vocalists were flat and out of tune with each other.

It was a disaster.

We regrouped and retooled. First, we invited the tuneless hippy singers either to leave the band, or to take voice lessons. "You can't fire us," they protested. "We're women!"

The protest revealed a deep division in the goals of different players, which persisted for the life of the band and ultimately was a factor in destroying it, despite the addition of new and more skillful musicians from time to time. The

Naomi Weisstein playing bass in Chicago Women's Liberation Rock Band, 1972.

division was between those who wanted to play liberatory feminist rock to the widest possible audience, which meant getting good enough to record and broadcast; and those who just wanted to play with their sisters no matter how they sounded ("militant amateurism" was what Jesse Lemisch came to call it). These distinctions were to thunder through the Women's Liberation Movement, where in our utopian way we never solved the problem of differential abilities and talents.

After a stormy and tearful session, the monotone singers quit. But there were many more changes we had to make. We had been performing the popular rock songs of the day and substituting feminist lyrics. We had to start writing our own music as well, because otherwise our sound paled in comparison with the lavish studio-polished recordings that we were copying.

Also, along with our setting to music our moving, feminist poetry, I insisted that we add boffo comedy throughout. I wanted to overturn the Grand Poobah grim macho of the boy bands, and get everybody to sing, and laugh, and clap, and dance along with us. What better way to do this than with comedy?

I wrote a humorous introductory spoken rap. We added playful songs, like Amy Kesselman's "VD Blues":

> I went to the doctor
> I said, "Doctor can you help me please?"
> Flames came out of his ears
> He roared, "you've got a social disease."

We segued into "Love," a soft, ballad that started:

> Love is beautiful,
> Love is peace...

The lyrics got more and more bizarre as they went along:

> Love cures acne,
> Love cuts the grease

Until we startled the audience with the final line, which we shouted at the top of our lungs:

> Don't FUCK AROUND with love!!!!!

Then, on cue, the drummer (later, two drummers) fell over, face first on their drums, then on the floor.[1]

As I mentioned, we also had our serious songs. Guitarist-vocalist Pat Miller (née Matthews), bass guitarist-vocalist Susan Abod, and I set to music a 1904 poem by Japanese feminist Yosano Akiko that went:

> The mountain moving day is coming I say so yet others doubt it.
>
> Only a while the mountain sleeps. In the past, all mountains moved in fire.
>
> Yet you may not believe it.
>
> O man, this alone believe
>
> All sleeping women now awake and move.

Finally, the utopianism and egalitarianism of our movement led us to ask our audiences to participate actively and intensively in our performance. Describing the desire of the recently formed Chicago and New Haven Women's Liberation Rock Bands to generate a participatory feminist culture, I wrote, together with Virginia Blaisdell, "Feminist Rock: No More Balls and Chains" (*Ms.*, Dec. 1972):

> We have to involve our audiences as equals, include rather than insult them, respect rather than degrade them, play for them rather than at them … to violate the code that … says you can't explain what you are doing…. "If the audience doesn't get it, tough." So we rap a lot to our audiences …, and we do theatre and comedy for them, and we distribute tambourines and lyrics so that audiences can play and sing with us, and we even tell the audience what's hard for us and what's easy for us and why, and we jump up and down and hug each other and the audience when we sound good, and laugh and play and celebrate.… [S]exism says you gotta be cool, and never acknowledge when you're doing something better than you expected, because people might catch on that you're not great all the time.

Two months after our Grant Park debacle, our reconstructed band, boasting a brand-new playlist, and vocalists who could really sing, did our second gig at "Alice's Restaurant," the New Left coffee house in Chicago's near north side. The mixed-gender audience exploded with joy. They clapped and shouted. They picked up the words to some of our choruses, and sang and danced. After we finished, they mobbed the stage, hugging us and crying.

For the next three years, we traveled far and wide, making tours of the northeast and as far west as Colorado, playing to ecstatic audiences. I recall flying into Toronto with a joint in my pocket and totally unable to recall the name on the youth-fare card in my wallet. Who, I wondered, was this "Susan" that the Mountie was interrogating? I nearly spent the next ten years in a Canadian jail.

We were never that good musically, but our comedy, enthusiasm, and Marx-Brothers-style wrecking of the male-rock high priesthood triggered a massive collective participation—singing and dancing and shouting and clapping—and a massive euphoria as well.

Sometimes, the audience's wild response to us was astonishing. After we were done at the University of Pittsburgh, the crowd mobbed the stage, like at Alice's, hugging not only us, but our instruments and amplifiers too. Pat Matthews

found a note later in her guitar case: "I never knew women could play guitar. I'm going to sign up for lessons on Monday. Thank you so much!!"

At a "Y" camp in Michigan for inner-city pre-teen girls, they repeated the lyrics to "VD Blues" and, singing and bopping, they made us play it six times over before they let us move on.

It was the nearest I had come to utopia in my life.

At Cornell, where we played with our sister New Haven band, women stripped to the waist, held hands, and danced in a huge circle, even though they had heard that a fraternity had threatened to destroy the event. New Haven's vocalist sang out, "Put your shirts on, sisters. We're in grave danger." "No!" they shouted back, "We won't! We're FREE." This happened again and again, in different forms, in the three years that we performed.

Rock, with its transformatory power and energy, our lyrics with their visionary call, and the passionate participation of our audience transported the crowd into a realm of utopian desire. There were no vicious males outside, waiting to do violence. There were no longer constraints on bodies. There were no hierarchical distinctions. There were just sisters, all sisters, and the music and the dancing. It was the nearest I had come to utopia in my life.

The participatory culture that our band was generating intensified insurrectionary emotions. Music is said to be what feelings sound like. I would add that dance is what feelings look like. And with collective singing and dancing you see and hear your buddies palpably feeling the same things you're feeling. Participatory culture tightens solidarity, it amps up motivation, and best of all, it gives you courage you never thought you had.

In our time we have seen the amazing powers of participatory culture: huge crowds in South Africa, chanting and executing intricate steps, in support of the jailed Nelson Mandela. Many of us sang and marched for civil rights, drawing enormous courage from the collective outpouring of emotion, even in the face of billy clubs, dogs, or jail. Similarly, the band's audiences were morphing into revolutionary feminists.

Of course, there were a few mishaps. For instance, at an early feminist conference at Bucknell University in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, a celebrity feminist, who eventually became known for her public divisiveness ("all men are dogs"), gave the keynote speech the night before. She kept insulting and antagonizing the men in the audience. A group of fraternity boys threatened to—quote destroy us unquote—if we dared to play the next night. On top of which, half the band was in Columbus, Ohio, having taken the wrong plane. And there's nothing worse for bad vibes than a rock audience having to wait.

I hastily improvised—gulp, tremble—a much more propitiating intro. Then lead guitarist Sherry Jenkins and I noodled what now would be called "New Age Jazz composition while waiting for the rest of your stoner band to show up!" By the time our stragglers got there, the frat boys had gotten tired and bored, and gone home. We ran through a much-truncated playlist, as the audience continued to shrink. When we were finished, only the conference organizers were left. They clapped politely.

A truly comical misadventure occurred at the Second Annual Third World Drag Queen Ball in Chicago in 1971. Out of the blue, a male voice identifying himself as "Ortiz, Third World Revolutionary," phoned me to invite us to play there.

"Of course we will," I said, thrilled (as if the actual Third World was then into drag queens). We got there and swiftly realized that we were going to be out-bezazzed. Tall, gorgeous black men in glittering red ball gowns and Diana Ross

wigs were lip-synching to her recordings, which were being played at top volume.

When we got on the stage, with our politically-correct scruffiness (see the jacket photo on our CD, "Papa Don't Lay that Shit on me," from Rounder Records, we resembled, by comparison with the drag queens, supplicants at a Salvation Army catfish breakfast for the homeless. We played two songs and then quit. Nobody was listening. They had no idea why we were there. A disappointed Ortiz and his partner, wearing identical one-piece pink wool bathing suits, clapped politely. We fled the stage, just like at Bucknell.

We thrived as a chapter under the CWLU tent. Though we often toured, we also played all over Chicago whenever we were needed by CWLU, at conferences, dances, and Chicago street demonstrations. We stayed and played.

Recently, I saw for the first time an old photo of the band playing outside the Chicago Civic Center, in the Loop next to the Picasso sculpture. I noticed a row of CWLU women standing in back of us, some with their arms crossed, like Elijah Muhammed's "Fruit of Islam" bodyguards. What were they doing there? Answer: they were acting as our bodyguards because it was an unruly crowd. I teared up. They were protecting the band, although we never asked them to, and we were performing because they needed us to add festive vibes to their demo: *solidarity and sisterhood!*

Epilogue

We need a renaissance of the spirit and mission of the early Women's Liberation Movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Not the "lean-in" faux feminism of today that reduces feminism to crashing through glass ceilings in those little suits, while leaving behind those who, in earlier times, we thought of as sisters. Not the domesticated and depoliticized thing that often passes for feminism these days and whose arrival we unintentionally fueled. No, thanks. We wanted, and still want, a movement that is visionary, egalitarian, non-hierarchical, democratic, pluralist, non-sectarian, and aiming for a just and generous world.

In feminist Chelsea Dreher's words, "we mourn the movement, like a lover who walked out on us and never told us why." But in fact we have a pretty good idea of why Women's Liberation "walked out on us." As one compelling narrative puts it: at a certain period in our history almost everyone in the movement was savaged in one way or another. Brilliant, dedicated leaders, as well as bad ones, were—to use the language of the times—trashed. Women who didn't fit in, either socially or politically, were purged. Activists oriented towards empirical reality were discouraged in favor of endlessly bloviating "theoreticians." And we accepted the defoliation wrought by wave upon wave of left-wing female fronts for male-headed sects. New women's organizations were reduced to what Shakespeare might have called "Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang."

What about the CWLU and its Rock Band? How did they fare? CWLU, founded in 1969 according to principles first articulated by that savvy and humane organizer, Vivian Rothstein—activist orientation, pluralism, aversion to sectarian politics—seemed like a hardy evergreen. Those were the days, my friends; we thought they'd never end. And indeed they did last a full ten years, a lifetime as against the shorter spans of most feminist organizations in those days. At the end, many had good reason to conclude that it was the onslaught of left-wing sectarians who had soured the whole enterprise for everyone else.

Even as far back as 1972, in the eighth of my nine years in Chicago, the left sectarian invasion had begun. A woman who I'll call "Crouching Lion" (not her real name) would whip out her copy of Mao's little Red Book and, *in mitten drinen,* would begin reading aloud some random passage on the duty of the people to the Party. (Or was it the duty of the Party to the people?) At the time, most of us just laughed. But, as it

turned out, it was no joke (and still isn't, with female emissaries of unseen male gods).

The Chicago Women's Liberation Rock Band lasted only three years. That isn't bad as a life history of constantly schismatising rock bands. But we need to know what went wrong, and what can be done to achieve greater longevity for feminist institutions in the future. Blaming left sectarianism for sinking so many of the early Women's Liberation groups has finally the flavor of apologetics, like blaming the collapse of the Communist Party on the FBI. Although there is much truth to such narratives, by attributing failures to external causes they turn us away from necessary scrutiny of where we went wrong, how we might have done better, and how we might do better the next time.

So, what happened to our lovely Rock Band? To explain the collapse of the band, let me say a relevant word about what I was do-

Chicago Women's Liberation Rock Band cover photo (1972) for the remastered album "Papa, Don't Lay that Shit on Me," Rounder Records 2005

ing with the rest of my life in those years. As I struggled for feminist revolution, I was also struggling to help make what has since come to be known as the Cognitive Revolution—the rapidly expanding fields of cognitive psychology and neuroscience. As a graduate student at Harvard, I had abandoned my earlier trajectory towards clinical psychology, which I found at the time both remote from empirical reality and woman-hating, with its bearded patriarchs handing down *pronunciamentos* on what women want. I moved instead into hard science, at just the time when the work of a few brilliant dissenters, like psychologist Karl Lashley and linguist Noam Chomsky, were breaking the behaviorist lock that had impeded understanding of the workings of the human mind. (Each week for a semester, I schlepped myself over to MIT to hear Chomsky's lectures.) I chose to do my dissertation research on parallel (as well as serial) processing, and thus was part of a new wave of understanding how the brain works. But hard science was a minefield for women. Harvard eminences would not let a woman use their equipment "because they break it." (In fact, there was no way to break their tachistoscope unless you ran at it with a jackhammer.) Receiving the PhD in three years at the head of my class, I could not find a job: "How can a little girl like you teach a great big class of men?" said one chairman. After a few months as a Lecturer at the very Home of Misogyny, the University of Chicago, I was fortunate to find a job at Loyola University of Chicago, and Jesse and I moved out of Hyde Park up to Rogers Park, where I could joyfully walk to work in the new Science Building, whistling my way down Sheridan Road. The Jesuits knew this small Jewish woman as "Dr. Weisstein." Finally—yay!—I had my own Scientific Prototype Six-Field Tachistoscope, on which my passionately motivated graduate students ran subjects well into the night.

Within its limits, Loyola (and enlightened Psych chair Ron Walker) treated me well, and the remarkable *esprit* of a totally egalitarian lab sustained me. My experiments in visual perception began to filter out onto the world stage, and I even figured out that neurons in the brain fired in order to fill out recognition of objects that were in fact partially blocked from view ("Neural Symbolic Activity").

But, as I've said, hard science was a minefield for women. If I graphed a perceptual process as producing a U-shaped function, a barbaric and literally gun-toting Biggy, who ran not one but three journals, said, "She must have leaned over the data." Men's focus slides at the beginnings of their talks featured nude women. The editor of a leading journal in the field announced his intention to publish my research under his own name—a brazen theft to which women were subject. Writing grant requests to keep my lab going was a night-and-day job, especially with my ideas going against the grain of those of the boys' clubs that reviewed for the various funding agencies.

And then there was the band, my sisters. But in common with much of the New Left at the time, they had no notion of science as other than careerism, no notion of the glorious possibility that women might be able to look upon beauty bare. As far as they were concerned, my struggles to help make a cognitive revolution simply constituted unexcused absences. They literally sat on the stairs of my apartment house, sulking, sullenly awaiting my return. (The Catholic students in my lab were more supportive than my feminist sisters.) I had not only to show remorse for my inexplicable disappearances into the professional world. I had also to be Mother. Being Mother to the band taught me of the injustices of my earlier treatment of my own mother, who I had always seen as responsible for everything and to be blamed for everything. In the band, I had to monitor and resolve quarrels, and there was resultant festering resentment against me. Rehearsals turned into nightmares, with some band members abandoning sororal sweetness for trashing.

So I had two jobs at once. I would come back from a weekend playing New York, or Toronto, or Denver, or Boston, and rush to my lab to make sense of the newly generated data. Only then could I begin to recover from my travels: I would fall into a dead sleep.

In May of 1972, at the annual meeting of the Center for Visual Science at Rochester, Charlie Harris, a brilliant perceptual psychologist, invited me to spend a semester at Bell Labs in New Jersey to collaborate on some unorthodox research that I had previously suggested to him. Charlie had always seen the larger meanings of my research. Bell Labs Murray Hill! Wow! This no-longer existent Elysium was historically a place where scientific pioneers did basic research far in advance of the rest of the field. In addition, it was tech heaven: I could complete experiments there in half the time it would take with my aging equipment in my lab at Loyola. Plus I could burnish my thinking in that Acropolis. And the invitation was only for a semester, so I felt that I could take a leave of absence from the band without serious discontinuity.

In January of 1973 some sections of Interstate 80 had just opened up, and its gazillion-lane width was practically empty. It was a warm, sunny day. The radio in our new Toyota Corolla alternated rock with the sounds of Nixon being sworn in. Frolicking and singing, Jesse and I drove at excessive, celebratory speed, weaving like drunks across the Interstate's width, heading eastward toward New Jersey, just an hour from Manhattan!

Not too long after I left Chicago, the band broke up. Nobody told me. I found out by reading the next issue of the CWLU newsletter, which got to me in New Jersey. In the mystico-spiritual language of the day (perhaps anticipating the Age of Oprah), they put it out that the band had moved on to some Higher Stage of Existence. My name was signed to it, along with the other band members. A few days later, the members called me in New Jersey. They were all there, but they had designated Sherry, with her calm persona, as spokesperson. In the middle of the call, however she lost her calm:

"Why did you abandon us?" she shouted.
"I'm coming back, I promise!" I said.
Silence.
Then more shouting.
"You know we can't function without you!"

There were many features that led to the band's collapse. Resentment against leadership, no matter how egalitarian, was one. The simmering-and-then-boiling conflicts about unequal skills was another. About this last, one final telling incident.

Feeling that the band needed a sharper beat and fearing that we might fail to go platinum, one day I had suggested to one of our drummers that she take some lessons. She replied somewhat disdainfully, "I'm good enough for this band." The telling thing about this exchange was that nobody followed up. The myth about equality in skills was so strong that not one of us had the temerity to say, "but you undermine our sound. You make us worse! Please, puhlease, puh-leaze take lessons!"

She never did.

Even so, when the band was good—when Sherry did her lovely, imaginative guitar solos, when the piano harmonized with them, when the drums tattooed a strong, steady beat and the singers were also harmonizing with each other, we were transformative, moving, transcendent.

Some years back, I was looking at a video tape of a CWLRB performance that took place after I left Chicago. On the tape, I hear Susie Abod announcing to the audience that this is the band's "last concert." The tape is fragmentary, black and white. It makes me nostalgic, bringing back both the conflicts and the euphoria of the period. Through the poor tape, we nonetheless see Susie (a natural performer) working like mad to keep a lively tempo for "Papa Don't Lay that Shit on Me." Sherry's deadpan voice shouts out, "keep on truckin, everybody...." And Pat's slide

whistles and banjo-rhythmed guitar makes an old-time honky-tonk festival out of the song. The audience is delirious, cheering like crazy.

Why is the audience cheering so hard? Many of the other songs are done quite poorly, revealing—at least to someone familiar with the band's previous performances—the extent to which the band has disintegrated. The demoralization that even the expert band members are feeling is palpable as the drummer loses the beat and the singers can't stay in tune.

And yet, in the grainy shadows of that last tape, the audience is ecstatic, because beyond the CWLRB's flaws, beyond the disintegration of the last performance, the band still shouts out the news,

> I'm on my way, and I won't turn back,
> I'm on my way, and I won't turn back…

NOTES

1. I wrote "Love" with Virginia Blaisdell, one of the organizers, horn players, and later drummers of our sister New Haven Women's Liberation Rock Band. I got the idea from a song we used to sing at the Bronx High School of Science; Virginia arranged the music with a witty Doo Wop chorus, and added most of the lyrics.

For more on the CWLRB and related topics, see:

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Aquí estamos y no nos vamos—Adelina Nicholls on the Fight for Immigrant Rights

We're here and we're not going away

Martha W. Rees

On February 7, 2014, I sat down with Adelina Nicholls, executive director of the Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights (GLAHR) in Atlanta, to talk about the organization's history and achievements, as well as to reflect on the political role of Latino immigrants in the United States today.

Until the 1970s, American Latino immigrants were concentrated in just a few regions: Mexicans in California and the Southwest, Puerto Ricans in New York and Philadelphia, Cubans in Florida. During the period from the 1980s until the 2000s, millions of Central and South American as well as Mexican immigrants, many of them undocumented, spread across the entire United States, significant numbers of them settling in new destinations such as the Southeast. Atlanta, the capital of the South, became as well a capital of the Latino immigrant population. Georgia today has over 856,000 Latino immigrants, most (530,000) in the Atlanta metropolitan area. Latinos throughout the region created new social organizations—families and communities, churches and hometown associations, labor unions and political organizations. With the rise of the anti-immigrant movement in the mid-2000s, Latinos responded by forming self-defense groups to advocate for their rights, in alliance with groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union and the Southern Poverty Law Center, among others. The most important of these Latino groups is GLAHR, the Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights.

A sociologist from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), GLAHR's executive director, Adelina Nicholls earned her chops as a rural teacher in Mexico before moving to the United States, where she got immediately involved in the Latino community, creating networks of community leaders so they could join forces based on their shared experiences and common goals. A powerhouse of political astuteness and brainpower, Adelina—*adrenalina*—has forged alliances across the state, region, and nation, creating and supporting local groups, training and supporting local leaders, and organizing statewide and regional actions.

Adelina is not afraid, not for her reputation or anything else: she stands up. As a community organizer and leader, Adelina is a catalyst for solutions to the problems of the Latino community. She has motivated and inspired others, many of them afraid to act, to stand up, to speak out, or to take control of their own history and actions.

A description of GLAHR, including something about its history and achievements, provides a background to current thinking on the subject of immigration reform and the current political situation.

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In the early 2000s, what was then the Coordinating Council of Latino Community Leaders collected more than thirty thousand signatures from Latinos statewide in support of undocumented immigrants' right to obtain a driver's license. I testified at one of the public hearings with data that estimated the total number of uninsured drivers on Georgia roads based on survey research in the Latino community. This organization gave rise to GLAHR.

GLAHR

GLAHR was founded by Teodoro Maus, former Mexican Consul General in Atlanta, in 2005. Since then, GLAHR has grown in size, reach, reputation, and clout. GLAHR today is the largest *truly* grassroots Latino organization in Georgia—run by Latino immigrants for Latino immigrants. GLAHR has educated immigrants about their rights and defense strategies, and created a more organized, educated, and empowered community. By forging alliances, disseminating information about anti-immigrant actions and laws, and going to court on behalf of immigrants' human and civil rights, GLAHR has educated the general public as well as policymakers.

Specific actions include the mobilization of 70,000 marchers for immigration reform in 2006, in conjunction with the national movement calling for reform, as well as 20,000 on the Day of Non-Compliance (a national strike) in 2011. GLAHR's hotline receives 50-100 reports of detentions per week from detainees or their families. Each caller is supplied with information, referrals as needed, and follow-up, resulting in a massive database on detention sites, charges, outcomes, and abuses.

With allies such as the American Civil Liberties Union, GLAHR has served as plaintiff against anti-immigrant state laws, such as HB87 (which denies immigrants access to public higher education).

Adelina and I chatted in Spanish, as I taped; later I transcribed and translated our interview:

Marta: Can you start by giving us an overview of GLAHR?

Adelina: GLAHR supports Latino immigrants in developing local grassroots organizations to educate their communities about how to defend their human and civil rights. This includes seeking out alliances with other groups, training leaders, and creating a regional network of support and experiences. The main thrust of GLAHR has always been immigration reform for undocumented immigrants.

GLAHR's work over the last ten years and more has been to work with local communities in Georgia, to support emergent local leaders at the same time that we educate the public. Our work is based on local needs. We've created a network of participating groups—*comités populares*—where they get and give leadership training, and results in individual and community *concientización* (consciousness raising).

Marta: How many groups are there?

Adelina: We have 18 groups; some work more than others, but there are 18 groups. We just moved into South Carolina, we just formed a committee there. The result has been different kinds of actions, one of the most visible of which is the civil disobedience action last year when they arrested a number of activists. GLAHR decided, together with the National Day Labor Organizing Network (NDLON), to appeal to community members for volunteers to get arrested. All we had to do was make the call, the communities were ready. Fifteen people responded, including a few activists from here, from GLAHR. This was possible due to collaboration with the African American community, Project South, and the support of SONG (Southerners on New Ground) as well.

Marta: As allies?

Adelina: As allies. Preparations and logistics took two weeks; many of the activists were already trained to carry out this kind of action. We went to Washington, to Arizona. Sharing with other groups helped us a lot. Here in At-

lanta, we went to the gates of ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement, U.S. Department of Homeland Security) down on Spring Street, right in downtown Atlanta.

Marta: And in Washington, DC, at the White House?

Adelina: That was months before; that we did in collaboration with national groups—NDLON, groups from Arizona, and other sister organizations. That was the first action in which members of GLAHR participated, handcuffing themselves to the bars of the fence around the White House. It was a wake-up call to stop deportations, as part of the #Not1More campaign.

Marta: What happened when they were arrested?

Adelina: In Washington it was a simple arrest, they were all released in an hour or two.

Marta: Were they charged with anything?

Adelina: They were fined 50 dollars—that was all. President Barak Obama has been very careful to not escalate, to not allow civil disobedience actions to escalate and create a general rejection....

Marta: The arrestees in Atlanta were freed on bond?

Adelina: No, no. No. They were arrested and they were detained in the ICE building until seven o'clock at night, when everyone was released and given a ticket ordering them to present themselves in federal court. But almost three months have gone by and we haven't received a single notice, citation, or court date.

Marta: So, you think they're just going to let it drop?

Adelina: We don't know if they will take it up again in coming months. But we think, we understand from this that the struggle is political, not legal.

Marta: I have seen pride, growth, and more in the compañeros *and* compañeras *who've been arrested, a transformation that moves me.*

Adelina: That's so, and that's part of the leadership training. It isn't just the adrenaline of the arrest, of returning to the group after being arrested; it's the work of years. It's important, not just for those who've gotten arrested, but for the group. Currently, we've been holding meetings between the local police departments and undocumented residents. First, this is to break down the fear, the fear that "if I go to the police, they will arrest me."

Marta: Tell us about the meetings with local police departments.

Adelina: The federal government is working through the local police departments (through the 287(g) program that empowers local police as federal immigration officers). They use roadblocks as a strategy to enforce racial profiling, day or night, using the excuse that they are just enforcing the law. The police feel as if they can do anything, detain you at any time, for any reason. There's no defense against it. So, the community seeks ways to defend itself, and one of the mechanisms is to hold meetings with the local police. We've met with the police of Warner Robbins, Perry City, Athens, Doraville, Forest Park, and Fairburn. This all depends on what each community wants, be it a march, a meeting, or a discussion group. That's how we're working with the City of Albany, too, to see if the county stops working with ICE, by recognizing the Trust Act.[1]

Marta: What is that?

Adelina: It is an agreement that the city of Los Angeles has accepted—to not collaborate with ICE, to not call ICE to pick up immigrants detained for misdemeanors—such as not having a driver's license, having a broken tail light, etc.

The police's first response to our concerns in these meetings is to blame others: "It isn't us, it's the county." And the counties blame the cities. They are racially profiling, and they know it, so they are very careful and a bit defensive. Some of

them are open to working with the community. However, one meeting doesn't change a thing. But what it does do, is tell them, "We are organized, undocumented, and we're not leaving this place. I am a worker, so stop harassing me."

And they know it, we're there in front of them, and they say, "Well, this took a lot of guts," because just for coming to this meeting, we could be arrested, be thrown in jail for a few months, and be faced with deportation. This courage is our survival.

There are positive "results": in Fairburn roadblocks were cut by 90 percent; in Doraville, 95 percent. We continue to work in Warner Robbins, Perry City, and Albany to push for more change. We just met with the police in Forest Park—they've been one of the most aggressive departments. We also met with Clayton County police. They say it's not them, it's the city of Forest Park. The Forest Park police say, "No, we stop them, but we don't deport them." So that's the game they play.

But we all go in uniform, in T-shirts that say "GLAHR, Stand Up, Fight Back." For us, this is valuable; it leads to public acts of civil disobedience. It is a key moment in the process of consciousness-raising.

MARTA: Consciousness-raising for the actors, but also for the police?

ADELINA: Sure. But for us, what's important, for our community, is to ramp it up. Ramp up our action, that's the most important thing for us. We know what the police reaction is. We already know that.

The chief of police in Forest Park said, "Show me the cases of abuse. I asked (GLAHR organizer) Miss Morales to give me your abuse complaints." I told him, "If you want cases, I'll just send you an open records request, and I'll show you the cases. What we've come for today is for you to hear the voice of the community, to hear what's happening with respect to the police." The police are worried now, desperate even, because the immigrant communities do not collaborate with the police.

MARTA: What kind of collaboration do they want?

ADELINA: They want people to report crime, but that is something that not even the *comités populares* will do. People will trust the police once they stop persecuting them. As simple as that. We haven't discovered the *hilo negro* (reinvented the wheel), but they're crazy if they think we'll collaborate with them as long as they're stopping us all the time. It's not going to happen. They're worried that people don't report crimes. Some people do report crimes, but it isn't what it should be. The Forest Park police have a Citizen's Academy that includes ride-alongs, translating, and volunteering with the police. They passed out a lot of applications, and not one Latino applied to be a volunteer.

MARTA: How could they think that they'd get volunteers?

ADELINA: There are some people who do. But the majority of the community, given the high level of detentions, says no. We told them, "People are not going to go for this." For sure, people say, "We're not going to cooperate, we're not going to do their work for them, we don't have to go around helping anyone out, or investigate. We want them to stop detaining us. Then we'll think about it."

Everyone knows you went to see the Sheriff, and if you get arrested, you are a hero. But the important thing is not the individual change, but the change in the community that results from these actions.

MARTA: Have there been other accomplishments of GLAHR, specifically in terms of accusations of police abuses?

ADELINA: Since 2007 we have had a hotline that has allowed us to know where detentions are happening. There was a case of a person who had been beaten by the police, and they wanted to cover it up. It was reported to us and we called in the Southern Poverty Law Center

to help. He won the case, and they paid him compensation.[2] However, this was not enough to get the 287(g) program cancelled.

But these are achievements. Others include getting immigration officials to use prosecutorial discretion to let people out of detention, especially people with families—we got four to six people out in the last three weeks. We are fighting for this space for mothers and fathers of U.S.-citizen children.

Marta: With prosecutorial discretion, they let them go?

Adelina: Sometimes without any proceeding; with others, the proceedings continue. But we are appealing the August 23, 2013, memorandum of the Department of Homeland Security,[3] so that families with parents of U.S.-citizen children aren't broken up. For others, it depends on what kind of record they have. But sometimes these are infractions that have been judged, and paid for.

Marta: What are the serious offenses that you haven't been able to get discretion on?

Adelina: Shoplifting, that's a felony, or domestic violence, or a DUI. But we question this, because these people have paid for their offenses, but that's not even up for discussion. Their goal is to fill up the jails. They take them from the counties, to the courts, or to probation offices, where they move them to a separate room, and from there ICE detains them. Obviously it's Big Business—immigrants are a commodity, a commodity that brings profits to big corporations, at the cost of incredible suffering, separation of families, and the trauma.

There are 30,000 beds in the detention facilities. That's why we know that since 2009 there's a quota to fill of 400,000 people per year across the country. So the police, working with immigration officers, look for people. So, to deny that this is racial profiling is to lie, given this complicity.

They don't have adequate health services. If you get sick they just give you a couple of Advils. Obviously this is to keep costs low, since the owners of the jail have to pay for health care.

Marta: How much does the government pay per day to detain someone?

Adelina: Between 80 and 120 dollars.

Marta: Like a luxury hotel.

Adelina: You can't contact them; they have no telephones.

Marta: That's a violation of their civil rights.

Adelina: I don't know what criteria they use, but the jails are in very remote places, where it takes families three or four hours to get there, and they are in places with no services, no place for families to stay. It's a serious problem. There are people in ICE's Stewart Detention Center in Lumpkin, Georgia, who've been detained for driving without a license.

It's a jail, cold, no health services, bad food. Because they are detained temporarily, they can't work, but you can work in the kitchen, even if you don't even know how to cook beans. So, you fill up the jails with people, then you send them on and you fill them up again. The most contradictory part is that you're inside supposedly because you were working illegally in the United States, but in jail you can work.

Marta: How do they determine if a person is going to get out or be deported?

Adelina: The judges, immigration agents are there.

Marta: Another important topic is the development of art.

Adelina: Yes, really beautiful. I think that that is part of the work of community leadership, the work of organizing. Our banners, signs—in every possible color. And this has generated and inspired our creativity in the *comités populares*. And it's also a way of making community within the movement itself, and of expressing it through theater and art. Obviously none of us are actors, or ever took acting classes. It is street theater, with a direct message. And

it comes from the same communities that are being affected by the detentions.

Marta: They're really cool, the ones I've seen.

Adelina: The last one we did was on November 15, in Plaza Fiesta, and it was on immigration reform…. That was the last presentation that we did. We will be preparing others.

Marta: And this is to warn people about those who are trying to take advantage of the community, saying that they can arrange immigration papers, when, in fact, they can't?

Adelina: Sure. Art and street theater are part of the group's internal development, as well as to inform others—done by the very people affected by abuses, and telling others how to protect themselves against it.

Immigration Reform

Marta: What do you think about current proposals for immigration reform?

Adelina: We think that these proposals are political grandstanding; this do-nothing Congress (either the House or the Senate) has no intention of passing a law that will bring relief to our community. They broke a thirty-year record of legislative (in)action, by spending their time forging political discourse to the detriment of immigrants, women, and workers as well.

In addition, President Barak Obama has made it clear that immigration reform is not a priority on his agenda by continuing to insist on an imaginary bipartisan solution that we know he will never achieve. He continues to insist on this route, and almost two million deportees have paid the price.

Marta: Republican Speaker of the House John Boehner says they don't trust President Obama to enforce any law that the House might pass, even though, in enforcing the law, he has deported more immigrants than any other president.

Adelina: Personally, I feel that this lack of action by the House isn't just about immigration reform, but, as we have seen, any proposal that President Barak Obama puts forward will be and has been rejected, not just in their discourse, but also their actions. Conservatives and the Republican Party have the slogan to vote "no." They refuse to support any initiative Obama puts forward. It is an open secret that virtually no Republican will support any proposal by an African American president. This is a problem of racism.

What Boehner says is right! They will do nothing until the next administration enters office. President Barak Obama minimizes the extent of the racism, or maybe it doesn't matter to him, but the immigrant community is paying the price.

Marta: Do you think he could have stopped the deportations?

Adelina: For sure. For us, it has been in his hands, ever since his first term. We know that he has been caught up in an extraordinary confluence of political events. We understand the context, but we do not justify or forgive his lack of action with respect to immigration reform. He had the chance and he let it get away and he continues to play the bipartisan card. He could have signed an executive order in his first term, but he did not place a priority on immigration reform. It is not a priority for him, he is not interested, and he only exerts his presidential power at election time.

When he began his first term, he had a chance to pass immigration reform as he had promised he would on the campaign trail. But he didn't do it. We understand the context. However, the context in which he came in was extraordinary: a serious economic crisis. And we understand that there are priorities, but immigration reform was a campaign promise, a priority, but for the president, it isn't.

In fact, almost six years have gone by, and it is still not a priority for the president. He's not campaigning, and he's not working for immigration reform. We've seen this in the campaigns

for immigration reform. We don't believe that immigrants are a priority. Until election time.

Well, the community continues to grow, demanding a stop to deportations. In the last few years, we've seen an increase in marches and actions, but also a movement for civil disobedience has begun to grow in the community. Some might think that our community isn't prepared for civil disobedience, but we've seen, particularly in Georgia communities, people are prepared: "Go ahead and arrest me, you are lynching me anyway...."

Marta: How did they come to be prepared for civil disobedience actions?

Adelina: This is to the credit of GLAHR and the *comités populares*, as well as our alliance with NDLON with their technical support in linking groups.

Marta: Changing the subject a bit, what do you think of the proposed immigration reform laws that include a pathway to citizenship? Because many allied groups mention this as an important part of the law.

Adelina: We, from the very beginning of the discussion on immigration reform, always had two proposals in mind: One is what immigration reform should be in a perfect world. And the other is what communities need now. The challenge for all of us who are involved in this is to try to juggle the immigration reform proposals with what our community really needs.

Marta: What does the community need?

Adelina: Our community needs permits. A permit that allows them to get a driver's license, so the police will stop persecuting them. Our community isn't so complicated; we leaders sometimes make up elaborate narratives, when the thing is really very simple. Even so, we understand the necessity for a path to citizenship. But this rhetorical game of citizenship for 11 million, it's a lie, it's a fallacy in itself, ever since they started it last year—the campaign for immigration reform. Because when you see that proposed immigration reform law, citizenship not only isn't for the 11 million, but it isn't an immediate thing, but a long-term thing that will take from 13 to 15 years. In this process, they wipe you out.

Marta: And they continue creating two categories of workers.

Adelina: We understand that, in terms of protection, for our community, total protection is citizenship. As a citizen, you can't be deported; you have access to legal defense, and rights. But at the same time this is NOT a demand that comes from our community. They want a permit that will allow them to come and go, to see their families. It's not that complicated. They want a mechanism that will keep them from being bothered by the police. Then, truly, you realize when you look over these proposals for immigration reform, it's nothing but a rhetorical game. A rhetorical game that they use to try to fool our community, but national organizations push the citizenship item, for the 11 million. But it isn't the same community, today, not even the same as the one that existed in 2006.[4]

Marta: How?

Adelina: In terms of consciousness, of recognizing their own basic needs. But they also don't believe the line about the 11 million, about citizenship for 11 million. That's a lie. They don't tell you that either. There isn't a stipulation that your past offenses, your criminal background won't count against you as a crime that can get you processed for deportation.

People who had a DUI ten years ago are now being processed for deportation because today they were caught without a driver's license. Or a shoplifting charge, or whatever. We consider that this is double jeopardy. You're judging a person and punishing them for an offence that they committed and paid for. And this is not covered in the proposal in the Senate, for example. This is a serious problem. And that's why they say that 80 percent of the people who've been detained are criminals. Criminals?

With a DUI ten years ago, that they paid for with jail, or social service, or a fine? Well, this is the discourse game, again.

But they're detaining people because they don't have driver's licenses.

Marta: As you say, it's double jeopardy, that's a no-win situation, because you can't go to work without a license, you can't get a license, you get caught en route….

The Current Situation

Adelina: That's why we think that if something is going to come out of the president and the Democratic Party, it will be before the 2016 presidential elections. Because I don't think they want to risk losing the elections. The voting Latino community plays a role, for both the Republicans and the Democrats in national and all elections. That's why I tell you that these attempts are *llamaradas de petate*.

Marta: Llamaradas de petate?

Adelina: A palm mat, like the ones in Mexico, that when you set it on fire, it burns for a second, and then dies out. It doesn't catch fire. These immigration proposals are *llamaradas de petate*.

Marta: So, the effect of this is Latino support for Democrats?

Adelina: No. We think that that's the political game that they're playing. We say, "If the president, if the Democratic Party, Obama, wants to win the next election, they will have to do something before, make some change before." We don't know if they can win. Congress is not likely to come through. An administrative measure might help the Democrats win.

NOTES

1. Facilitating Parental Interests in the Course of Civil Immigration Enforcement Activities [http://nilc.org/nr100513.html]: "…California law enforcement will not submit to requests by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents to hold people who have been charged with or convicted only of minor crimes so that agents can buy time to transfer them to immigration authorities."

2. With information and support from GLAHR, the Southern Poverty Law Center, the National Immigration Project, and civil rights attorney Brian Spears filed a federal civil rights lawsuit against two Cobb County police officers over the stop, arrest, and beating of an unarmed Latino man. They called for an end to the county's 287(g) agreement due to the civil rights abuses perpetuated by the program. The lawsuit was filed on behalf of Angel Francisco Castro Torres, who was riding his bicycle in Smyrna when he was stopped by Cobb County police officers Jeremiah M. Lignitz and Brian J. Walraven. According to their own account, the officers, who are the named defendants in the complaint, stopped him after observing his race. The officers immediately demanded Castro's identification and questioned his immigration status. He was also beaten, resulting in a broken nose and eye socket, and arrested. The officers attempted to cover up the attack by transporting Castro to the Cobb County Jail, which has a 287(g) agreement that feeds arrested individuals into the federal immigration system. After being held for four months, Castro was released when the two officers named in the lawsuit failed to appear at a hearing regarding the charges they brought against him. He required surgery to repair the damage to his eye [www.splcenter.org/get-informed/case-docket/angel-francisco-castro-torres-v-jeremiah-m-lignitz-and-brian-j-walraven].

3. Facilitating Parental Interests in the Course of Civil Immigration Enforcement Activities [www.ice.gov/doclib/detention-reform/pdf/parental_interest_directive_signed.pdf].

4. A year of massive immigration marches, totaling millions of people in Los Angeles and many cities around the country.

Droning On, Fracking the Planet

Foreign Policy in the Obama Era

David Finkel

The moral collapse of the Obama administration on so many fronts—Guantanamo, Palestine, drone warfare atrocities, mass electronic surveillance and brutal prosecution of whistleblowers, presidential-ordered assassinations, and so much more—has rightly drawn shock and outrage from the peace and global justice movements. Indeed, this presidency has been a civil and human rights travesty both domestically and globally. Alongside our horror, however, must be a clear material and political assessment of the underlying strategic purpose of this administration.

President Barack Obama was elected at a moment when the U.S. population and elites were reeling from the foreign and domestic disasters of the George W. Bush-Dick Cheney regime. The period of real or apparent unchallengeable U.S. global supremacy was clearly ending. Briefly put, Obama's mandate was to separate *core imperial interests* from secondary considerations, and in particular to end the ideologically driven overreach that helped push the George W. Bush regime into its serial debacles.

Obama's foreign policy was intended to be driven by pragmatic calculation rather than the delusion, attributed to Dick Cheney, that "we create our own reality," which certainly enriched Halliburton and the private military contractor industry but was hardly beneficial to the system as a whole. The United States under the Obama doctrine was to extricate itself from the quicksand of Middle East ground wars, "reset" relations with Russia to cooperate on issues of mutual interest, and "pivot toward Asia" to both politically engage and militarily contain the growing power of China.

Through it all, the priority is to clear away obstacles to profitable U.S. corporate investment under the banner of modernization, "intellectual property rights," and free trade. (The crown jewel of the latter project, a monstrous free-trade NAFTA-on-steroids called the Trans Pacific Partnership, really requires its own discussion.) From an imperial perspective, the strategic concept was not stupid, but the implementation turned out to be messy, to say the least. I believe it was the distinguished political scientist Mike Tyson who observed that "the game plan lasts until someone smacks you in the mouth."

Is Obama "Weak"?

From the beginning, of course, the right wing has accused this president of "weakness." In some sense, the answer must be "Yes"—but the underlying weakness is not Obama's. The overwhelming, apparently unchallengeable U.S. power that emerged from the breakup of the USSR and the triumphal anti-Iraq Operation Desert Storm (1991) could only be temporary. Post-Soviet Russia would not be a basket case permanently. China was already a rising economic power. Although the hopeful Central American revolutionary upsurge of the 1980s had been curbed with massive bloodshed, Latin America was about to show that it wouldn't be the U.S. doormat in perpetuity.

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The inevitable re-balancing of global power was severely accelerated by the catastrophic miscalculations of the George W. Bush-Dick Cheney gang that the Middle East and Central Asia could be transformed into a giant American oil lake. The Iraq war turned into the biggest U.S. debacle since Vietnam, with even bigger strategic consequences—notably, the fact that the only real "victor" was Iran, which the neoconservatives had fantasized to be their ultimate target after quick victories in Afghanistan and Iraq (oops).

> This is not a past to which we should want to return, even if we could.

President Obama inherited the mess of what he had called the Iraq "stupid war," as well as what he thought was the "smart war" in Afghanistan, the festering disaster in Palestine and Israel's monstrous Operation Cast Lead assault on Gaza just as he prepared to take office, a regional Shia insurgency linked to Iran, a virulent Islamic fundamentalism of metastatic al-Qaeda franchises and various freelance manifestations, and beginning in 2011, of course, the Arab Spring.

Speaking of that, let's not forget how Obama's Secretary of State Hillary Clinton insisted that the dictator Mubarak would "lead Egypt's transition to reform" until the very eve of his regime's collapse. It's only necessary to recall Hillary's statement that "I really consider President and Mrs. Mubarak to be friends of my family." (http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2011/01/secretary-clinton-in-2009-i-really-consider-president-and-mrs-mubarak-to-be-friends-of-my-family/)

Leaving aside what Ms. Clinton's choice of friends might portend for her own presidency, we can note how problematic it can be to decide in real time where "strategic" imperial interests lie. The U.S. instinct to rely on Mubarak's survival lasted beyond the point where his demise was inevitable. There are other examples to illustrate the ambiguities that smacked the Obama administration in the mouth.

Was it a core strategic interest of United States imperialism to lead the charge for bombing Libya? The expert Marxist commentator Gilbert Achcar plausibly argues that in fact, it was: Early in 2011, the Qaddafi regime's imminent slaughter of the population of Benghazi would have left no choice for Western powers but to impose sanctions on Libyan oil, if they were to maintain their credibility. They wanted to avoid such sanctions for a host of economic and political reasons. (Achcar's analyses at the time can be found at http://zcomm.org/znetarticle/libyan-developments-by-gilbert-achcar/ and subsequently at www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/2401/natos-conspiracy-against-the-libyan-revolution.)

But whether by calculation or the momentum of events, NATO went on to become the air force of the anti-Qaddafi forces, leading to the collapse of the regime and the unforeseen disintegration of the Libyan state which has yet to be reconstructed, with consequences all the way from the Islamist near-takeover of Mali, to the death of the U.S. ambassador in a militant attack on the U.S. Benghazi consulate, to Putin's retaliatory support of the Assad regime in the unfolding Syrian holocaust. Whatever the outcome might be for the Libyan people—something yet to be determined, and a whole discussion in itself—it's hard to see how the regional reverberations have accrued to the strategic interests of U.S. empire.

To take another case: Is it really in Washington's interests, right now, to push the Venezuelan crisis to the boiling point? Despite the apparent impasse of the "Bolivarian revolution" and the fumbling policies of the Maduro government, the fragmented right-wing opposition is certainly in no position to take over. As

Maduro—who is certainly no Hugo Chavez—seeks accommodation with Washington and as much of the opposition as will talk to him, will the Obama administration take the offer to engage? Or will it try to repeat in Venezuela the "success" of the Honduran coup that restored the time-honored rule of the oligarchs and the death squads? The Honduran coup, although not strategically crucial to U.S. imperial interests, was essentially cost-free to the United States in political terms since it rapidly disappeared from view, something that's not likely to be repeated in Venezuela.

Whether he liked it or not, President Obama inherited the "war on terror" that has exploded since Washington's erstwhile anti-Soviet jihadist allies turned against it with such fury. George W. Bush's war in Iraq managed not only to empower Iran, but at the same to create an "Al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia" that didn't previously exist and now operates with horrific effect as the Nusra Front and the "Islamic State in Iraq and Shams (Syria)." Obama's famous victory in killing Osama bin Laden turned out to solve nothing, and since bin Laden was tracked down in part by a polio vaccination program fronting for the CIA, it's given the fundamentalist crazies in Pakistan a pretext to murder real vaccination workers.

Speaking of murder, the morality of replacing U.S. troops-on-the-ground with armed drones steered to their targets by invulnerable operators sitting at computer screens can be judged by each reader for herself. Obama's drone-warfare victims include Abdulrahman al-Awlaki—the American-Yemeni teenager who was no more "guilty" than Trayvon Martin, and evidently "profiled" for being the son of his jihadist father who'd been killed in another strike two weeks earlier—and numerous civilians from Afghanistan to Yemen whose deaths are routinely denied by the White House.

Some Lessons of Ukraine

In the early days of Russia's move into Crimea, President Barack Obama on March 3 sat in the White House firmly pronouncing that the Russian regime's actions were a blatant "violation of Ukraine's sovereignty, Ukraine's territorial integrity; that they're a violation of international law [and] of previous agreements that Russia has made with respect to how it treats and respects its neighbors."

What made the statement especially surreal was that *the U.S. president was sitting next to Benjamin Netanyahu when he said it*. The ludicrous absurdity of the occasion might have escaped much of the U.S. public, given our corporate media's almost unflinching justification of every Israeli atrocity in the name of "security," but it cannot have escaped the attention of most of the politically literate world.

The Israeli state, daily and routinely, violates every principle of international law regarding the changing of national boundaries by force; the colonial settlement of occupied territory and the treatment of the inhabitants thereof; the torture of prisoners and incarceration of children; the use of hunger as a weapon against a civilian population (Gaza); refusing the right of return of the population it expelled; and a host of others. It does all this in the name of both "security" and "preserving the Jewish and democratic character of the state"—which it demands that the Palestinian people, the very victims of its ethnic cleansing, "recognize" as the precondition for peace.

Israel commits these acts with the unconditional protection of the U.S. superpower, even when its actions fly in the face of stated U.S. policy itself, and when Netanyahu speaks before a joint session of the United States Congress, openly mocking the U.S. administration's verbal opposition to expanding Israeli settlement in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, 500+ honorable Representatives and Senators jump up and down in rapturous applause like so many trained chimpanzees. (Apologies to any chimpanzees whose dignity may rightfully be offended by this odious comparison.)

These facts are well-known to regular readers of *New Politics*, but by way of introduction to a discussion of "Obama foreign policy," I cite them here for a specific purpose. It's commonplace on the left to decry U.S. imperial policies on Israel/Palestine and so many other places, while the U.S. pretends to support democracy and human rights, as "hypocrisy"—but the term is somewhat misplaced, although the outrage it expresses is entirely appropriate.

Great-power states and the regimes that govern them in today's global system cannot be expected to act—consistently or otherwise—on ethical principles or norms of "international law," which they feel free to ignore since, after all, they wrote them. International law is useful (and important) to the extent it regulates state conflicts and prevents them from escalating beyond their real importance to state interests. We will see how this applies in the current Ukraine crisis as well as its general implications.

States and regimes behave, as we actually know but must remind ourselves, according to their own interests or more precisely, the perceived interests of their ruling classes or elites. Popular social and political movements (e.g. antiwar, civil rights, human rights, or solidarity movements) may act on moral principles, effectively so when they're able to appeal to both the real interests and the ordinary human decency of masses of people. We may hope that socialist governments of the future, representing such interests of a conscious and mobilized majority, may also act in that way; but those of us who seek to build democratic and popular struggles today must learn how to make an ethical public appeal without imagining that "our" government or any other will act morally and decently.

The Ukrainian crisis that's still erupting at this writing demands our attention in its own right, obviously, but also as an illustration of how great-power rivalries including "Obama foreign policy" work. Writing these lines shortly after Putin's puppet Constitutional Court and Russian Parliament ratified the seizure and annexation of Crimea, I'm proceeding on a basic assumption: This crisis will seriously irritate U.S.-Russia and Europe-Russia relations and complicate areas of joint interest, notably the Iran negotiations, *but will not rupture the web of economic connections and mutual interests* that make pushing the envelope toward full-fledged confrontation a risk not worth taking for anyone.

Europe's dependence on Russian natural gas, and Russia's reliance on western investment and technology and the global financial system, are the obvious difference between the political-military conflicts of the Cold War and today. Breaking those connections would impose severe costs on the Russian economy but also on Europe, and the accomplished fact of Russia's seizure of Crimea is not in itself a cause for doing so.

The dismemberment of Ukraine, however, would be at least an economic and financial *casus belli*. That's why I expect the provocations and counter-provocations to stop short of that point. If my premise turns out wrong and a nightmare scenario begins to unfold—for example, Russia moves troops or activates proxies in eastern Ukraine, Kiev unilaterally cancels its debts to Moscow, Russia cuts off natural gas to Ukraine and Ukraine shuts down electricity to Crimea, NATO begins moving military assets into Ukraine, etc., then the world could look very different and much more dangerous by the time this magazine is in print. But I doubt it. The vicious and amoral behavior of states is in general not crazy (with certain exceptions like Israel's threat to attack Iran, discussed below).

Russia's cynical "referendum" exercise in Crimea, obviously, had nothing to do with any substantive democratic measure of the opinions of the Crimean population. Held under military occupation with no debate or free media, no option to remain in Ukraine, no secret vote (the ballot boxes were transparent), no way to monitor the voter rolls or the count, it wasn't meant to be anything of the sort.

The referendum did have a clear purpose, however, in the pattern of Russian elections-al-la-Putin: It was to demonstrate the already established fact of Russia's effective control in Ukraine, and to confirm its capacity to bring out its base of support for the annexation. In that respect it was highly convincing, which may help explain the apparent enigma of why Putin so blatantly rigged a vote that he would have won fairly, if not by such an absurd claimed margin.

A part of the international left has disgraced itself by echoing the Kremlin line that the anti-Yanukovych uprising in Maidan Square was the work of fascist gangsters organized by the CIA, as if the people of Ukraine had no agency (and no right to act) in determining the future of their own country. As we've seen so many times from defenders of the Assad regime in Syria, or previously Saddam Hussein in Iraq, this is another sad case of what I call "the anti-imperialism of fools." (The current transitional government of Ukraine is right-wing, but neoliberal not "fascist." There are hardline and violent nationalist and even some Nazi-like elements within it, but these are not more influential than their counterparts in, for example, the government of Israel.)

Putin himself is not hobbled by ideological delusions, but one can understand how he views the situation from the hard-headed angle of Russian statecraft and imperial ambitions. With some reason, Putin feels double-crossed, and not for the first time. Wasn't there a deal on February 21, reached by European foreign ministers, for a "national unity" Ukrainian government and early elections? If that solution was no longer acceptable to the crowd in Maidan and the popular movements taking control of cities in western Ukraine, wasn't it up to Western powers to enforce it instead of letting the uprising force Yanukovych out?

And what about Libya? After Russia and China allowed the United Nations Security Council to authorize emergency action to prevent the Qaddafi regime from slaughtering the population of Benghazi, didn't the United States and NATO take the opening to launch an all-out regime-change campaign that was no part of the UN resolution? What now if NATO—which triumphantly expanded into Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Slovenia, the former East Germany, and the Baltic states after the "geopolitical catastrophe" (in Putin's mind) of the collapse of the Soviet Union—would move to incorporate Ukraine, on the Russian Federation's southern borders?

> Deep, thorough union democracy depends on the union having a presence in the workplace where members understand that they are the union.

Russia's seizure of Crimea is certainly a criminal action, but can also be viewed as both an opportunistic and "defensive" reaction to the West's breaking its own deal on Ukraine. Whatever may be the wishes of the population of Ukraine as a whole, or Crimea in particular, we can assume that the Russian occupation there will be long lasting though internationally unrecognized. (Israel's occupation of territories seized in 1967, after all, is now 47 years old.)

Even on the assumption of rational behavior by the various state actors, the Ukraine crisis seems unlikely to end well on either side for the people involved. Folks in Maidan who expect that an "association" with the European Union would mean honest government and modern economic management will have a rude shock to discover that the EU bailout of their collapsed economy entails austerity, privatization, and loss of essential services per the example of Greece. Indeed, in the absence of a strong Ukrainian left

emerging, the result could be a real upsurge in the popularity of far-right forces who thrive on misery and frustrated hope.

As for those in Crimea who believe that their "return to Mother Russia" means higher wages and improved pensions, let's see how that turns out after the nationalist euphoria wears off. Russia itself is in severe social crisis. International tourism on the Black Sea, which was supposed to boom in the wake of the nearby Sochi Olympics, is not likely to enjoy a banner season. The Crimean annexation itself may weaken the Russian regime's capacity to manipulate Ukrainian politics, at least on the electoral level, inasmuch as the pro-Moscow voting bloc in Crimea is out of the equation.

The Israel-U.S.-Iran Triangle

The most clear-cut case of separating central from secondary imperial considerations, surely, concerns the Israeli government's threats to bomb Iran. The above-mentioned U.S. Congressional chimpanzees are howling for the administration to support such an adventure. Such an Israeli action would immediately draw the United States into another Middle East war with all kinds of horrific consequences, and the Obama administration has firmly put the veto on it, the power of the toxic Israel Lobby notwithstanding. Since I have written about this issue elsewhere ("Will the Iran Deal Hold?" in *Against the Current* 168, January-February 2014, www.solidarity-us.org/node/4058), I will only summarize it here.

Very briefly, while the fate of Palestine matters intensely to many of us as a central issue of ethics, politics, and social justice, *it is of very little real importance to U.S. imperial interest* (aside from John Kerry's desire to have a Nobel Peace Prize in his trophy case). Given Israel's status as a strategic regional policeman, reliable partner of the Egyptian military dictatorship, and supplier of all manner of expertise to U.S. police departments and various dirty U.S. allies around the globe, to stop Israel from running amok in the Occupied Palestine Territories is not worth the political risks it would entail domestically.

So long as the endless peace process that never produces peace (aka "the peace-industrial complex") grinds on, there's no need for U.S. support of Israel to change in any substantive manner. This is precisely why the Boycott-Divestment-Sanctions (BDS) movement, an international network of grassroots campaigns targeting the Israeli occupation and the apartheid-like character of the Israeli state, is so important.

But Iran, which unlike the Palestinians has the capacity to shoot back and to create havoc for the United States from Afghanistan to Syria and Lebanon, is another matter and something that U.S. imperialism won't take lightly (doing so was the Bush-Cheney gangsters' biggest mistake). In fact, the Obama team's strategic "pivot," an extrication from Middle East wars, would depend on reaching an acceptable international deal on Iran's nuclear enrichment program, and indeed going beyond that to some kind of "grand bargain" with Tehran, even if only implicitly, on regional stabilization.

This is unacceptable to the rulers of the Israeli state, not because there's a real Iran nuclear threat to Israel (there isn't), but because leaving the Iranian regime in place compromises Israel's absolute monopoly of destructive military capacity in the area.

Israel cannot and will not attack Iran on its own, despite its threatening bluster—and if it did, global BDS would take off like a rocket. But the Syrian catastrophe and now the Ukraine crisis put a question mark over the viability of Russia's partnership with the United States and Europe, which produced the beginning of multilateral negotiations with Iran and at least the partial shutdown of the Syrian regime's chemical weapons stockpile. That wild card poses another big challenge to the Obama administration's efforts at pragmatic imperial "global management."

The Biggest Threat

A very longtime activist friend distinctly remembers Adlai Stevenson, the two-time Democratic presidential candidate of the 1950s, stating (in the gendered language of the time, obviously) that "by the time a man has attained his party's nomination for president, he has made himself unfit to hold the office." If this was true decades before *Citizens United,* the Crack (Koch) Brothers, the corporate ravages of deregulation, and the near destruction of the U.S. labor movement, how much more is it so today?

I cite this remark because it helps to explain why neither the current president, nor any other on the horizon from either capitalist party, is capable of addressing the biggest genuine threat to "national security," which has been clearly identified not only by Occupy Wall Street or the rest of us motley dissidents, but by the highest-level elite military and strategic thinkers: *Global climate change poses the near certainty of massive population displacements, agricultural collapses in fragile regions and perhaps our own heartland, floods, and droughts, all resulting in social upheavals and wars that cannot be contained*. (See among many other examples, www.weather.com/news/science/environment/climate-change-national-security-american-threat-multiplier-20140216.)

George W. Bush may have been blissfully ignorant of such realities, but President Obama can claim no such excuse. His White House has even launched a special promotional website (www.whitehouse.gov/energy/climate-change if you can handle the hype) on the issue. But the hard strategic realities were starkly revealed when the Russian tank rubber met the Crimean road: The Obama administration sees the opportunity to vastly expand U.S. energy production, particularly natural gas to be exported as liquefied natural gas (LNG) supercooled to -250 degrees F., to counteract Europe's reliance on Russian sources of energy. (For dangers and costs associated with LNG production, processing and shipping, see the Sierra Club's report at www.sierraclub.org/naturalgas/downloads/LOOK-BEFORE-YOU-LEAP.pdf.)

Along with the drive to make the United States the world's energy superpower comes the massive expansion of hydraulic fracturing that's poisoning communities all over the country, and now spreading around the globe from Poland to China. Capital is fracking the planet at the very moment when the threat to the survival of human civilization demands the most dramatic cuts in our reliance on fossil fuel.

The lie that "clean" natural gas replaces "dirty" coal is exposed by the fact that U.S. coal, formerly consumed at home, is now exported to China which eagerly uses it to manufacture the stuff it ships back here. Meanwhile the "energy independence" mantra embraced by the Obama team also increases the likelihood of approving the Keystone XL pipeline for shipping Alberta's super-dirty tar sands oil. That would confirm this administration's status as a worse environmental disaster than its predecessor—although this writer's guess is that this politically no-win decision will be kicked down the road until after the November 2014 midterm election.

Toward A New Policy

To sum up: Barack Obama has proven to be the environmental president just as much as the education, end-of-Guantanamo, immigration reform, and economic recovery president. If that's a dismal picture and the imminent political prospects look even dimmer, where do we look for an alternative?

For those of us desperately seeking a way out of the self-reinforcing cycle of war, corporate ravages, and environmental catastrophe that's already underway, some priorities stand out.

First, we need to embrace our heroes: Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden, CodePink and 350.org, and the DREAMers who call out the "deporter-in-chief" president and risk their own futures; the brave demonstrators in Russia who stand up against the chauvinist wave

to denounce Putin's annexation of Crimea; the Palestinian and international activists who confront Israeli teargas, rubber bullets, and live ammunition in the weekly protests against the apartheid Wall; the continuing popular resistance in Greece and other countries to the cruel austerity programs of the International Monetary Fund and the European Union.

The cynical rationalities of states, regimes, and ruling classes in global capitalism, even though they (probably) won't escalate today's Ukraine crisis to the point of a European war, are also the engines of massive inequality, injustice, environmental collapse, and conflicts that always threaten wider wars. If we want what socialists have called a "democratic foreign policy" based on principles of human rights, peace, and justice that existing states can't and won't respect, we have to look to the movements that embody those principles, and to the possibilities for unified action from below, both within countries and across national boundaries.

April 28, 2014

UKRAINE CRISIS ESCALATES

MAY 5 – The crisis in Ukraine is escalating, along with the international tension surrounding it, beyond the levels this writer anticipated when drafting this article on Obama foreign policy for *New Politics*. While I continue to believe that this conflict ultimately will not rupture the web of trade and financial relationships that mutually bind the Western and Russian economies, the external and internal forces involved are certainly pushing the envelope in their game we might call "Ukrainian roulette."

We may safely assume that the accusations Moscow and Washington are lobbing at each other—that the CIA and U.S. military are involved in Ukraine's military campaign in the east, and that Russian agents have assisted local "self-defense militia" seizures of town centers and police stations—are largely accurate, while each is lying about its own role.

More important perhaps, events on the ground appear driven by fear all around. As Ukraine's economy circles the drain, in the east the popular fear is that the European Union's "reforms" will turn their industrial base, what's left of it, into a rusted-out wasteland. In western Ukraine, the great fear is that "federalization" (fragmentation) of the country by Russian proxies will perpetuate the misery of poverty and rule by corrupt oligarchs. Both sets of fears seem entirely well-founded, and are now overlaid by toxic appeals to nationalism and linguistic identity.

Despite all this, the mounting death toll, and the massacre in Odessa, it doesn't appear—today—that Russia intends to invade, or that U.S.-European sanctions are intended to bite into the heart of Russia's energy export sector. Russia's appetites on Ukraine must be constrained by the cautionary maxim "you break it, you own it," as the United States so disastrously learned in Iraq, while Western powers know too well the costs of hitting Russian corporations—not merely the personal accounts of oligarchs who own them—that supply everything from Europe's natural gas to the United States' rocket launchers.

We are close to the point, however, where one explosion or tactical miscalculation might overtake the rational calculations of imperial state interests. By definition, the consequences of that would be beyond logic-based prediction.

D.F.

THE CRISIS IN UKRAINE

THE CRISIS IN THE UKRAINE HAS RAISED GRAVE PROBLEMS for the people of that country, significant dangers for world peace, and many contending views on the left. Here we offer three articles that we think help us make sense of what's going on, by Joanne Landy, Kevin B. Anderson, and Sean Larson. Landy and Anderson attempt to provide a political assessment of what has been going on, while Larson offers some important background on the Ukrainian elite. Obviously, the situation on the ground is changing daily, but basic political principles and background information won't be easily outdated.

—THE EDITORS

Ukraine Between a Rock and a Hard Place

Is There a Way Out?

JOANNE LANDY

THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE United States and Russia are attempting to shape events in Ukraine in their own interests, not for the benefit of the Ukrainian people. Ukrainians have long suffered from domination by Moscow, under the Russian czars and later in the Soviet Union, most horrifically under Stalin. With the end of Communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, millions hoped for freedom and a new beginning. However, the United States and Western Europe exploited the collapse of the Soviet system to expand their own military and economic power, extending NATO into a dozen formerly Communist nations (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Albania, and Croatia), and, they hoped, into Ukraine and Georgia as well. Equally destructive, the West attempted to use its economic heft, "shock therapy," and international financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to push a brutal capitalism on the people of the former Communist countries.

In late 2013 mass protests erupted in Ukraine against the government of Viktor Yanukovych, culminating in huge demonstrations of hundreds of thousands. Despite having been elected, Yanukovych was a repressive and grotesquely corrupt ruler who lavished upon himself obscene privileges, including a vast personal compound furnished with a spa, a zoo, a large

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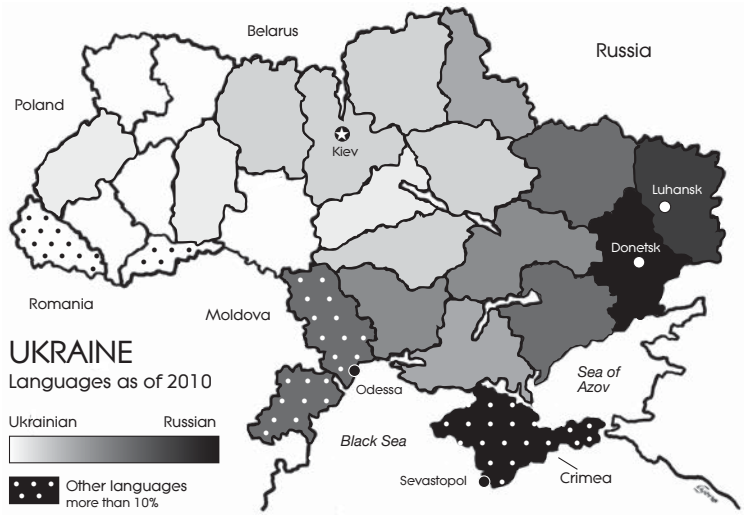
boat, a massive car collection, and a golden toilet (!), while defending the interests of the wealthy oligarchs who supported his government.

In January 2014, Yanukovych signed a series of anti-democratic laws similar to those already imposed on Russians under Vladimir Putin, which sharply limited freedom of speech and assembly. As mass protests mounted, the government sent riot police on February 18 to brutally repress the people in the streets. Two days later, riot police again fought against protesters, and the battle culminated in snipers who had taken positions on rooftops shooting at demonstrators. Some Maidan detractors have argued that the snipers were actually deployed by the opposition to create an incident that would discredit the government. The evidence for this theory is dubious; in any event, the corruption, repressiveness, and undemocratic record of the Yanukovich government are indisputable, and gave more than adequate cause for the uprising.

The Maidan was an expression of mass discontent that had been building for years, and cannot be explained away as simply the result of a false flag operation or a plot by Washington—though we know that the United States and other Western countries have worked to take advantage of popular dissatisfaction for their own purposes and will do everything they can to see that the radical democratic potential of the Maidan doesn't come to fruition. They will be helped in their efforts by the fact that the Ukrainian left and labor movements are very weak, leaving a vacuum to be filled by leaders who embrace the neoliberal austerity measures promoted by the United States and the European Union. These measures will cause bitter suffering for the masses of Maidan protesters, many of whom have been under the illusion that joining the European Union will bring them prosperity and a decent standard of living (an illusion held as well by millions in Greece and other southern European countries until bitter experience has begun to show them otherwise). In addition, though the far right forces of Svoboda and the Right Sector were only a small portion of the protesters, they played a key role in the physical defense of the Maidan against violent government attack. Today there are a number of far right figures in the temporary coalition government that was hastily constituted by parliament after Yanukovych left Kiev; it remains to be seen whether the Ukrainian people will permit these dangerous elements to remain in leading government positions.



After Yanukovych

Once in power, the new post-Yanukovych government took steps that were certain to make the country vulnerable to Russian attempts to undermine Ukraine's independence. First, parliament passed a law revoking the status of Russian—the native tongue of 30 to 40 percent of Ukrainians—as an official language in areas where Russian speakers consti-

tuted 10 percent or more of the population. This reactionary law was quickly canceled by the new acting Ukrainian president, Aleksandr Turchinov, who must have come to realize that it would set off an explosive reaction. But the damage had been done, fostering suspicion and hostility toward the new government among many Russian speakers, particularly in the eastern and southern regions of the country. Compounding this disastrous signal about language rights, the new government declared from the outset that it would adopt the crippling economic measures demanded by the European Union and Western financial institutions. Conscious of how hugely unpopular the social cuts and privatizations the West was demanding would be, when the new prime minister, Arseny Yatseniuk (famously known familiarly as "Yats" to U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Victoria Nuland), announced his determination to carry out harsh austerity measures, he conceded, eerily, that doing so would mean that Ukraine would be led by a "suicide" government.

The Rights of Less Powerful Countries

NATO was an imperial military alliance from its inception, and with the end of the Soviet empire it lost even its retrograde Cold War rationale for existence. The Campaign for Peace and Democracy, of which I am Co-Director, and anti-war movements around the world called for NATO to dissolve after 1989 (better late than never). Instead, NATO aggressively extended its reach into the former Soviet orbit. This fact, however, does not justify Russia's interference in the domestic affairs of Ukraine: supporting a lightning referendum in Crimea under the shadow of Russian troops and operatives or declaring, as Putin has, that eastern and southern Ukraine are "Novorossiya" (or "New Russia"), signaling that Moscow would be justified in intervening, by force if necessary, to defend Russian speakers in that region. Powerful countries have no right to turn neighboring nations into "buffer states" by invoking security as a justification. When real or concocted security threats are used to justify imperialism by the United States, Russia, or any other strong military power, prospects for peace and democracy suffer a terrible blow. Ukrainians face complex and pressing problems in establishing just and democratic structures in their country, but they need to work through those problems without imperial interference from either the West or Russia. The negotiating partners should be eastern and western Ukrainians, not the United States, the European Union, or Moscow.

Ukrainians face complex and pressing problems in establishing just and democratic structures in their country, but they need to work through those problems without imperial interference from either the West or Russia.

The Russian annexation of Crimea is to be condemned because of the intimidating way in which it was achieved (and the precedent that was thus set for future intimidation), and because of the fact that short shrift was given to considering the rights of Tatars and Ukrainian speakers, who together make up a third of Crimea's population. But there is good reason to believe that the majority of Crimeans would have freely voted to rejoin Russia in a fair referendum, and it seems doubtful that Crimea will ever return to Ukraine.

However, according to recent opinion polls conducted by the U.S.-headquartered Pew Research Center and the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, the situation in eastern and southern Ukraine seems quite different:

the great majority of the population in these regions say that they are suspicious of the Kiev government and want a measure of autonomy to protect their regional interests, but wish to remain part of Ukraine. Arguably people in the east and south should have the right to secede and become independent or integrated into Russia if they so desire, but their views should be expressed in legitimate votes that will either confirm or disconfirm the opinion polls, not in hasty "referendums" conducted under pressure from unaccountable armed groups and Russian military intimidation. (To those who say that Russia hasn't intervened militarily in Ukraine, my reply is twofold: 1) there are more than likely secret Russian operatives playing a role in eastern Ukraine and, in any case 2) even if the Russian troops massed on the border with Ukraine haven't fired a shot, they are being used as a weapon to intimidate the population. Daniel Ellsberg uses a metaphor to make this point in another context: he has often said that when the U.S. threatens to use nuclear weapons, it is in fact using them, just as someone who points a gun at someone's head in the midst of a confrontation is using that gun whether or not he actually fires it.)

Ukrainians need parties that can build an independent Ukraine unaligned with either NATO or Russia, outside of the German-dominated European Union and the Russian-dominated Eurasian Economic Union.

A peaceful resolution of the Ukrainian crisis will doubtless need to involve some kind of significantly decentralized structure for the country, though the extent of regional autonomy remains to be negotiated in hard bargaining by the representatives of both sides. However, a huge obstacle to democratic bargaining is the presence of ultranationalist and far right elements on *both* sides.

Ultra-Nationalists and the Far Right

The far right presence in the new Kiev government has been barely mentioned in the mainstream press in the United States, but it is significant and very troubling, even if its position in a ruling coalition is subject to change in the near future. For now, the far right Svoboda Party holds important positions: Svoboda's Oleksandr Sych is deputy prime minister, the party's Ihor Shvaik is agriculture minister, and Andriy Mokhnyk is ecology minister, while former Svoboda MP Oleg Mokhnytsky runs the general prosecutor's office. (For Svoboda's stated principles, see the All-Ukrainian Union "Svoboda" program—"Program for the Protection of Ukrainians."[1]) Svoboda denies that it is fascist, and has gone to some lengths to distance its reputation from its neonazi origins and present itself as simply a right-wing nationalist party. However Svoboda's racist and fascistic coloration persists: in 2004, Svoboda leader Oleh Tyahnybok gave a speech calling for Ukrainians to fight against a "Muscovite-Jewish mafia,"[2] and celebrated the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists for having fought "Moscovites, Germans, Jews and other scum who wanted to take away our Ukrainian state."[3] In 2012 a high level Svoboda member, Yuri Sirotyuk, charged that the selection of pop star Gaitana, who was born in Ukraine to a Congolese father and Ukrainian mother, was a bad choice to represent the country in the Eurovision song contest because she was not authentically Ukrainian. "It looks like we don't want to show our face and Ukraine will be associated with a different continent, somewhere in Africa."[4] Observers disagree about whether Svoboda is properly categorized as neofascist (I believe it is), but

there is no doubt that it is deeply reactionary.

[*Author's note, May 27*: This article was written before the May 25 elections. Election results indicate that, for now at least, the far right has very little popular support. As the Russian news service RT conceded about the presidential exit polls, "Ultra-right radical nationalists appeared to have completely failed in the elections, with Svoboda (Freedom) Party head Oleg Tyagnibok securing 1.17 percent of the vote and Right Sector leader Dmitry Yarosh less than one percent."5 At the time of writing this note, final voting results have not been confirmed, but they are described as approximating these very low figures. In the Kiev mayoral election, Svoboda may have fared somewhat better, though still not well: with 40 percent of the ballots counted, the party's candidate received 6.45 percent of the vote.[6]]

Although a strong case can be made that Svoboda is indeed neofascist, regardless of how one characterizes the party, Ukraine isn't today a fascist state; non-fascist neoliberal parties and Prime Minister Arseniy Yatseniuk [and, after May 25, Petro Poroshenko] lead the government and fascist measures have not been carried out. But it is an ominous sign that reactionary elements like Svoboda have been legitimized with government posts. In the absence of a successful left alternative, neoliberal austerity measures are likely to strengthen neofascist and far right forces—a dynamic we have seen in other parts of Europe, for example with the rise of Golden Dawn in Greece and the Front National in France. Recent steps taken by the new government give a foretaste of their plans: gas prices have been raised by 56 percent and it has been announced that 25,000 civil servants are to be laid off and child subsidies cut.

Ultra-nationalist and far right elements also play a significant role on the pro-Russian side. For example, as Tash Shifrin notes on her *Dream Deferred* website, "The Donbass People's Militia is led by Pavel Gubarev—a former member of fascist paramilitary organisation, Russian National Unity and of the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine, which despite its name is allied with the Eurasian Youth Union linked to influential Russian fascist Aleksandr Dugin."[7] In his article on the anarchist-leaning website *tahriricn*, Laurent Moeri reports that "there is very disturbing information about Chetniks having been invited to join Russians fighting together with the Cossack 'Wolves' (the 'Wolves' are a paramilitary organization known for their ruthlessness and have engaged in combat in Chechnya as well as in Georgia)."[8] And in April 2014, Aleksandr Ivanov-Sukharevsky, leader of the Russian neo-Nazi Peoples National Party, addressed the pro-Russian forces in South-Eastern Ukraine giving them his full support (cited, with a photo of Sukharevsky speaking; this site shows many other examples of far right elements among the pro-Russian forces[9]).

Within Russia, Vladimir Putin has used the Ukrainian conflict to foster ultra-nationalist sentiments that buttress the increasing authoritarianism of his government, which is marked by hyper-patriotism, harsh anti-protest laws, repression of journalists, vicious discrimination against gays, and an unholy alliance with the Russian Orthodox Church that we saw on display in the cruel persecution of Pussy Riot. It's no surprise, then, that Putin and the Russian government are praised by far right forces throughout Europe, including Hungary's neo-Nazi Jobbik party, the British National Party, Golden Dawn in Greece, the Italian Fronte Nazionale, and Marine Le Pen's French Front National. (Ironically, Svoboda had observer status with the ultranationalist Alliance of European National Movements until March of this year, leaving only after leaders of the Alliance endorsed the annexation of Crimea by Russia.) Inside Crimea, the repressive consequences of being brought into Moscow's orbit are illustrated by the (failed) attempt to ban this month's Tatar commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the day the mass deportation of their families began under the orders of Josef Stalin, and the cancellation of the Gay Pride parade scheduled

for April 22-23 in light of the Russian law banning "gay propaganda."[10]

MUCH HAS TO BE DONE to realize the democratic promise of the Maidan uprising. For starters, the Ukrainian people need to insist that Svoboda be removed from the governing coalition, and that the Kiev government repudiate its deadly deal with the EU and the IMF. But beyond these first necessary steps, ordinary Ukrainians across the country desperately need to create a democratic left movement, with member-controlled unions[11] and political parties that can represent them. They need new radical and socialist parties that can take major enterprises out of the hands of the oligarchs who dominate western, eastern, and southern Ukraine, nationalize them, and place them under the democratic control of workers and the larger society. They need parties that can build an independent Ukraine unaligned with either NATO or Russia, outside of the German-dominated European Union and the Russian-dominated Eurasian Economic Union, and free to develop unrestricted trade relationships with all countries.

Ukrainians need an international environment that nourishes rather than thwarts democracy in their country, and that's where we can help. We can express our solidarity with the Ukrainian people by demanding that Russia permanently withdraw its troops from the Ukrainian border and cease making interventionist threats, and that the West cease its escalating military presence in Europe, move to dismantle NATO, and withdraw its demands for privatization and austerity. We can call for aid without imperial strings to Ukraine and other countries in economic crisis. In supporting the Ukrainians, we are helping ourselves. After all, we all need a way out of the cruel world our masters have made.

May 20, 2014

Readers may also be interested in seeing the Campaign for Peace and Democracy's March 10, 2014 statement "Oppose NATO, Russian Intervention in Crimea, and the IMF," www.cpdweb.org/letters/Ukraine.shtml.

NOTES

1. http://en.svoboda.org.ua/about/program/.

2. David Stern, "Svoboda: The Rise of Ukraine's ultra-nationalists" www.bbc.com/news/magazine-20824693).

3. Cited in Per Anders Rudling, Ruth Wodak, and John E. Richardson, eds., *The Return of the Ukrainian Far Right: The Case of VO Svoboda* (Routledge, 2013), 229–247.

4. Maria Danilova, "Ukrainian party accused of racism in pop scandal," Associated Press, Feb. 22, 2012, cnsnews.com/news/article/ukrainian-party-accused-racism-pop-scandal.

5. "Ukrainian oligarch Poroshenko leading pres race with over 50% votes," *RT*, May 25, 2014, rt.com/news/161416-ukraine-exit-polls-poroshenko/.

6. "Klitschko receives over 56 percent of votes in Kyiv mayor elections after counting in 40 percent of wards," *Kyiv Post*, May 27, 2014, www.kyivpost.com/content/ukraine/klitschko-receives-over-56-percent-of-votes-in-kyiv-mayor-elections-after-counting-in-40-percent-of-wards-349594.html.

7. Tash Shifrin, "Ukraine slides towards civil war: don't choose a side in battle of reaction," Dream Deferred, May 5, 2014, www.dreamdeferred.org.uk/2014/05/ukraine-slides-towards-civil-war-there-is-no-good-side-to-choose/.

8. Laurent Moeri, "Excuse Me Mister: How Far Is It From Simferopol To Grozny?" May 19, 2104, tahriricn.wordpress.com/2014/05/19/ukraine-excuse-me-mister-how-far-is-it-from-simferopol-to-grozny/.

9. Anton Shekhovtsov, "Russian and pro-Russian right-wing terrorists spreading fear and hate in Ukraine," April 19, 2014, anton-shekhovtsov.blogspot.de/2014/04/russian-and-pro-russian-right-wing.html.

10. See Daniel Reynolds, "Russia's 'Gay Propaganda' Law Takes Effect in Crimea," *Advocate*, May 1, 2014, www.advocate.com/world/2014/05/01/russias-gay-propaganda-law-takes-effect-crimea, cited by Kevin Anderson in his article in this issue, "Ukraine: Democratic Aspirations and Inter-imperialist Rivalry."

11. Such unions are missing in Ukraine today. As Sean Larson notes in "Contradictions of the Ruling Class in Ukraine," in this issue, "The opinion [among the public] predominates that trade unions are relics of the communist era for the purpose of organizing vacations or children's summer camps (functions largely responsible for sustaining union membership) rather than fighting organizations pushing for the interests of workers on the job and in politics."

Ukraine: Democratic Aspirations and Inter-imperialist Rivalry

Kevin B. Anderson

Ukraine constitutes a test not only for democratic movements, or the unevenly matched imperialisms of the U.S./EU and Russia, but also for the global left. As with other "difficult" moments like the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo, Iran 2009, or the Libyan uprising, our support for democracy and human rights has in some quarters come into conflict with the long held stance that neoliberal capitalism, led by the United States, is the main danger confronting humanity. The Maidan uprising that toppled the oligarchical kleptocracy of Viktor Yanukovich in Ukraine was not socialist or even social democratic. Moreover, Maidan was cheered on by the United States and the EU, which clearly sought advantage from it against Russia. This has led some on the left to lean toward Putin's Russia and to shy away from supporting the Maidan uprising and Ukraine, even in the face of Russia's takeover of Ukrainian territory and threats to dismember the country. This article takes a different stance. In the tradition of the anti-Stalinist left and particularly the Marxist-Humanist stream of which I have long been a part, I maintain that we can and should support progressive democratic and popular movements, even when they undermine regimes that the U.S. government opposes, and at the same time, work to oppose U.S. war and hegemony.

The Maidan Movement: A Democratic Uprising on Putin's Doorstep

The 2013-14 Ukrainian uprising showed the creativity of masses in motion and the ultimate fragility of state power, even when surrounded by a repressive police apparatus and enjoying the support of a foreign imperialist ally. The overthrow of the pro-Russian government of Viktor Yanukovich involved large-scale street protests of over 500,000 people and the occupation of Kiev's central square, the Maidan, for weeks on end in the dead of winter. Despite support efforts by Russia and police repression that resulted in more than 100 deaths, in the end the regime collapsed. The police melted away, the army refused to attack the people, and Yanukovich fled for his life.

The Maidan uprising rattled Putin's regime in Russia, which has experienced persistent democratic protests over the past two years, despite ever-increasing state repression. As the British journalist James Meek wrote: "Putin's great fear is that the people of a future better Ukraine might inspire an entirely different unification with their East Slav brethren on his side of the border—a common cause of popular revolt against him and other leaders like him. The revolution on Maidan Nezalezhnosti—In-

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dependence Square in Ukrainian—is the closest yet to a script for his own downfall" (*London Review of Books*, 3-20-14).

In a similar vein, the Ukrainian sociologist Volodymyr Ishchenko held that in annexing Crimea, Putin was motivated not only by territorial and imperial motives, but also by the situation at home: "Crimea was necessary to increase patriotism among the Russian population, and to decrease any chance that the Russian opposition—which was very much inspired by Maidan—might attempt anything like that in Russia" ("For Ukrainians, as for any other people in the world, the main threat is capitalism," *LeftEast*, April 30, 2014).

The Maidan uprising exhibited several contradictions, however. One revolved around the emergence of far right groups. Though only a small minority within the movement, these groups were well organized and prepared for street fighting. A recent report from an anarchist correspondent speaks to the relative strength of such groups: "The Maidan self-defense was organized in 'groups of one hundred,' with organizations or currents setting up their own group. All together there were about fifty such groups of one hundred. However, despite the name many groups were made up of not more than thirty or forty people. About ten groups were dominated by rightists or fascists, others expressed nationalist tendencies but with more liberal or democratic elements." This account also mentions that the left was a very small, often marginalized part of the protests, sometimes due to attacks by right-wing groups. Nonetheless, some "anarchists, communists, and socialists" took part in an occupation by 300 students of the Ministry of Education in Kiev ("Ukraine: Report from a visit in Kiev in April 2014," *libcom.org*, April 29, 2014). Thus, while notions of the uprising as fascist or reactionary were a fantasy put forth by Russian state propaganda, the emergence of the far right as a tendency is certainly a serious danger for the Ukrainian democratic movement.

A second contradiction within the Maidan movement concerned a major part of its agenda, that of affiliating with the European Union rather than Putin's Eurasian Economic Union. This was the issue that sparked the initial protests in November 2013, as most Ukrainians were outraged by Yanukovich's rejection of a pact with the EU, which they evidently saw as a way out of Putin's increasingly authoritarian political and economic network. The EU offered a multibillion-dollar loan package in exchange for unspecified economic "reform." Little account has been taken by the Ukrainian democratic movement, then or since, of the terrible human costs of the austerity measures the EU and other international lending agencies would demand in return for loans, above all cuts in salaries and pensions and hikes in prices of basic commodities. And this in a country already teetering on the edge of economic collapse.

This lacuna was rooted in the fact that the working class did not appear under its own banner, and in the weakness of the left, which meant that the democratic uprising lacked a socio-economic, let alone an anti-capitalist, dimension. There have been some small protests with an economic dimension, however, as recounted by the abovementioned anarchist correspondent: "On April 9 we went to a protest rally of social workers in front of a government building near Maidan. [They] are the first to be sacked after the agreement with the IMF. About 200 people (from different parts of the Ukraine) came to this ... rally outside the government building. Many workers showed up with self-drawn banners and slogans like proposing to the government: 'Let's exchange salaries,' 'Start the cuts with yourself,' and 'The reforms suppose improvements and not unemployment and poverty!' Most workers are women."

A third contradiction involved the narrow form of Ukrainian nationalism that dominated much of the uprising, as well as the new Kiev government. Thus, as Yanukovich was falling from power, parliament, which by now had gone

over to the opposition, conducted a fateful vote to repeal the 2012 language law that had placed Russian on an equal footing with Ukrainian as a national language. Even though the repeal never took effect due to a veto by the acting president, huge political damage was done, giving a powerful propaganda tool to Putin and his allies in eastern Ukraine, where Russian speakers are the vast majority. Moreover, many eastern Ukrainians rightly feared that the kind of neoliberal policies favored by those coming to power in Kiev would open the industrialized Donbass region to competition from cheaper foreign imports of manufactured goods, resulting in mass layoffs.

Despite these contradictions, the Ukrainian uprising was on the whole a positive event, one that showed both the power and the creativity of a mass democratic movement in a region marked by increasing authoritarianism. Moreover, it actually succeeded in toppling a government, a rare event anywhere. This shook up not only Ukraine, but Russia as well, and also worried regimes as far away as Iran, where a dispute broke out between reformist and conservative newspapers ("La révolution ukrainienne dérange les conservateurs en Iran," *Le Monde*, 2-28-14).

Inter-imperialist Rivalries and International Solidarity

Within days of Yanukovich's fall, Putin moved to annex Crimea, a territory that Russia has long claimed and which has one of its most important naval bases. Crimea has a clear majority of Russian speakers, plus lots of Russian military personnel residing there, although there is also a significant minority of predominantly Muslim Crimean Tatars (12 percent of the population), as well as of Ukrainian speakers (24 percent). These minorities were almost completely silenced during a snap sham election in which an improbable turnout of 80 percent was claimed, and an old, USSR-style majority of 97 percent supposedly voted to break off from Ukraine and join Russia.

> The democratic uprising lacked a socio-economic, let alone an anti-capitalist, dimension.

Putin's annexation of Crimea resulted in sanctions and threats from the U.S./EU to isolate Russia, all of which carried the flavor of a new Cold War. The United States has shed its usual crocodile tears over Crimea, even as it occupies Guantanamo, an enclave carved out of Cuban soil. In fact, Putin's whole comportment since the Maidan uprising, with 40,000 troops massed on the border and belligerent statements about protecting Russian minorities everywhere, is nearly a mirror image of the way Washington has traditionally behaved toward Latin America.

A different type of international response was that of cross-border democratic and anti-imperialist solidarity. Inside Russia, the democratic opposition mounted a remarkably large, 50,000-strong demonstration on the eve of the Crimea referendum, March 15. Slogans included "Hands off Ukraine" and "No to war." A much smaller counter-demonstration took place under the slogan, "There will be no Maidan in Moscow" (*Le Monde*, 3-16-14). That is probably true for now, but the specter of Maidan surely haunts Putin, even as his jingoism has temporarily jacked up his popularity ratings. The annexation of Crimea was also condemned by a lopsided vote in the UN General Assembly.

It is often mentioned by those parts of the left that have been reluctant to support the Maidan uprising—and by international experts of the "realist" school—that NATO has extended itself into most of Eastern Europe and the Baltics since 1991, in violation of assurances given to Russia's leaders as the Soviet Union was collapsing. To be sure, NATO has acted in true imperialist fashion, taking advantage of its former rival's weakness, in a form of veiled aggression that sowed huge distrust from the

Russian state and people. Despite U.S./EU claims today that they are only interested in an economic partnership with Ukraine, not NATO membership, it should be remembered that Vice President Joe Biden declared during a visit to Kiev in 2009 that the United States would "strongly support" such a move (Ellen Barry, "Biden Says U.S. Still Backs Ukraine in NATO," *New York Times*, July 23, 2009, A8). Chastened by the disastrous wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, a public dead-set against more foreign adventures, and the sapping of its resources during the Great Recession, the U.S. government now speaks more softly. However, the overall goal of world domination has by no means been shelved.

What of Russian imperialism, vastly weakened since 1991? In this regard, it must equally be said that critics of U.S. and Western imperialism seldom mention that Putin has, like the United States with regard to NATO and Russia, violated the guarantees that Russia gave in 1994, when, along with Washington and London, it signed onto the Budapest Memorandum. In that agreement, the three powers pledged to respect Ukraine's territorial integrity in return for its agreement to give up its nuclear arsenal, then the third largest in the world. Ukraine did so by 1996, making it one of the only countries in the world, along with South Africa, to have given up its nuclear weapons.

Moreover, I would also argue that claims about Russia's sphere of influence being undermined by the United States and NATO follow an imperialist logic, one that the left needs to question in all of its forms, whether that sphere is dominated by Washington or by another global or regional power.

Kerry and Obama tout their democratic credentials in supporting the Maidan uprising or in opposing Russian thuggery in Ukraine, but they remain silent about issues closer to home like the conviction of Occupy Wall Street activist Cecily McMillan, whose "offense" consisted of elbowing a cop who had grabbed her breasts during a crackdown on a 2012 demonstration. In a remarkable expression of internationalism from below, two Putin opponents from the Pussy Riot group, Maria Alyokhina and Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, made a solidarity visit to McMillan at the Rikers Island jail. "It was a very bad decision to put her in jail," said Tolokonnikova. The two Russian activists knew of whence they spoke, having finished their own jail terms earlier this year. (James McKinley, "Like-Minded Russians Visit Occupy Wall Street Inmate at Rikers Island," *New York Times*, May 9, 2014, A19).

Eastern Ukraine and the Danger of Civil War

In a number of cities in eastern Ukraine where Russian speakers predominate, the largest of them Donetsk (population 1 million), heavily armed pro-Putin militants have taken over government buildings. The extent of the involvement of Russian intelligence operatives is unclear. The level of popular support for these irredentists who advocate breaking off and joining Russia is even less clear. First, it should be noted that they have not been able to take over Kharkiv (population 1.5 million), eastern Ukraine's largest city. Second, while some have seen an equivalency between these protests and the Maidan uprising, the level of mass participation is much lower. Third, a Pew Research Center poll released on May 8 found high levels of support for a united Ukraine in all regions: "Among Ukrainians, 77% say Ukraine should remain united, compared with 14% who think regions should be permitted to secede if they so desire…. A smaller majority (70%) in the country's east—which includes areas along the Black Sea and the border with Russia—also prefer unity." Finally, it should be noted that the public face of these occupations includes many very doubtful figures, for example, Denis Pushilin in Donetsk, whose earlier claim to fame was as a swindler in a large Ponzi scheme.

But as the Pew poll also shows, support for a

unified Ukraine is not the same thing as support for the current government in Kiev, composed of politicians from previous regimes, most of them with ties to corrupt oligarchs: only 41 percent of the population hold a favorable view of it, with some regional differences.

On May 11, secessionist militants held a much-disputed referendum on "self-rule" for the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. In the days before, Putin gave mixed signals about this step, even asking at one point for it to be postponed. The results of the poll were predictably one-sided, but the actual level of participation was unclear. It was also unclear whether Putin would actually move to incorporate these two eastern regions, as he had with Crimea. What was clear was that this exercise was designed to disrupt the nationwide Ukrainian elections scheduled for May 25, where almost all observers were predicting a landslide victory at a national level (although not in parts of the East) for candidates claiming to support the legacy of the Maidan uprising.

A week before the referendum, the first serious clashes between pro-Russian militants and those supporting a united Ukraine took place in the large southern port city of Odessa, with more than 40 pro-Russians killed. While the exact details are in dispute, the following account conveyed to me by a sociologist with good contacts in Odessa and longstanding ties to the anti-Stalinist left rings true:

> There was a "pro-Russian" encampment in the city. Its members are armed…. On Friday, the "pro-Ukrainian" forces marched for national unity. The "pro-Russians" attacked them. It is my belief … that the police stayed idly by when the "pro-Russians" attacked them. In the ensuing battle, the heavily outnumbered "pro-Russians" were defeated and split into two groups. One went into a building, and fighting continued. The armed "pro-Russians" were shooting from inside the building at their opponents—some of whom improvised Molotov cocktails and threw them. The building burned with horrible results…. What does all that amount to? The "pro-Russians" have been trying, without success, to seize Odessa; they tried to attack a demonstration that opposed them; and they were defeated. This is not a coldly calculated massacre—it is the kind of tragedy that happens when a near civil war situation is developing.

Even though it wasn't a coldly calculated massacre, which needs to be said, it of course also needs to be said that some grotesque emotions were expressed by some of the "pro-Ukrainians" as they saw the building burning and people dying. Odessa shows the danger, not only of Russian irredentism, but also of a narrow Ukrainian nationalism. This form of nationalism, as in the vote against the Russian language, or the more recent ill-conceived attempts by the very weak Ukrainian military to intervene with force in the East, are only serving to increase support for separatism there.

Putin's Amalgam of Neo-Stalinism and Pan-Slavism

Putin's regime espouses a neo-Stalinist ideology that regards the collapse of the USSR as a tragedy. Reeking of Russian chauvinism, this worldview also contains elements of older versions of Czarist Pan-Slavism, especially the notion of "protecting" Russian minorities abroad. This odd combination is seen in how Putin reveres the conservative Slavophile Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (who denied the existence of a Ukrainian nation separate from Russia), even as he expresses nostalgia for the Stalinist regime that imprisoned him. Putin confirmed that view on March 12 of this year when he telephoned Mustafa Dzhemelev, a venerated leader of the Crimean Tatar minority. Putin was ostensibly trying to reassure the Tatars that they would not be persecuted under Russian rule, as they had in the Soviet Union, which deported them en masse to Central Asia in 1944. But as a stunned Dzhemelev reported, Putin also suggested that Ukraine's 1991 independence from the former Soviet Union had lacked validity: "Putin noted the issue that self-proclamation of independent

Ukraine did not quite correspond to the Soviet norms that stipulated withdrawal procedure from the USSR structure" ("Ukraine withdrew from USSR not quite legitimately," QHA-Crimean News Agency, 3-13-14; see also Sylvie Kaufmann, "Après la Crimée, un autre monde," *Le Monde*, 3-17-14).

These issues have a deep resonance in Russian and Ukrainian history. Lenin castigated Russian chauvinism, going so far as to support Ukraine's right to independence:

> If Finland, Poland, or Ukraine secede from Russia, there is nothing bad in that. What is wrong with it? Anyone who says that is a chauvinist. One must be mad to continue Czar Nicholas's policy…. This is a repudiation of the tactics of internationalism, this is chauvinism at its worst. What is wrong with Finland seceding? … The proletariat cannot use force, because it must not prevent the peoples from obtaining their freedom" (Speech on the National Question, Seventh All-Russia Conference of the Russian Social Democratic Party-Bolshevik, April 29 [May 12], 1917).

Philosopher Slavoj Zizek has noted this revolutionary heritage in a recent article defending Ukraine's national rights against Russia:

> The golden era of Ukrainian national identity was not tsarist Russia—where Ukrainian national self-assertion was thwarted—but the first decade of the Soviet Union, when Soviet policy in a Ukraine exhausted by war and famine was "indigenisation." Ukrainian culture and language were revived, and rights to healthcare, education and social security introduced. Indigenisation followed the principles formulated by Lenin in quite unambiguous terms ("Barbarism with a Human Face," *London Review of Books*, May 8, 2014).

The tragedy of Russia 1917, a revolution that transformed into its opposite, continues to haunt both Russia and Ukraine today, even after the collapse of the USSR.

Some very telling indications of what the pro-Putin forces have in mind for eastern Ukraine are foreshadowed by the first weeks of Russian rule in Crimea. If one holds that the position of subordinated minorities, ethnic and sexual, is a key measure of a political order's progressive or reactionary character, two disturbing trends can already be noted. (1) Persecution of the Tatars: Dzhemelev has been barred from returning to Crimea after a trip to Kiev, prompting a demonstration by 2,000 Tatars at the border as he tried to return ("Crimée: heurts entre Tatars et forces de l'ordre," *Le Monde*, May 4, 2013). (2) Persecution of the LGBT community: the Pride parade scheduled for April 22-23 has been cancelled in light of Russian law banning "gay propaganda," as the entire community feels a deep chill, with some planning to emigrate as soon as possible (Daniel Reynolds, "Russia's 'Gay Propaganda' Law Takes Effect in Crimea," *Advocate*, May 1, 2014).

The terrible legacies of Stalinist famine and deportation, and of Nazi occupation and the Holocaust, as well as the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, all weigh down upon Ukraine and the region today, both as memory and as foreboding for the future. So does the danger of an ethno-regional civil war, as in the Balkans during the 1990s. Ukraine faces a deep crisis today, economically, politically, and culturally. It is caught between two rival imperialisms at a time of deep economic and social crisis. Its path forward is by no means a clear one, especially since its democratic movement has abstained from addressing the oppressions of capital and class, and is being hemmed in by U.S./EU austerity. Nonetheless, in staging not one but two mass democratic uprisings over the past decade, the Ukrainian people have shown a yearning for self-determination in the broadest sense, and for grassroots democracy. To be sure, Ukrainian nationalist excesses, as in Odessa, illustrate the deep contradictions within this democratic agenda. Overall though, the Maidan uprising and its aftermath have challenged the regional imperialist power, Russia, whose increasingly authoritarian regime is working night and day in an effort to make sure Ukraine's democratic experiment ends in miserable failure.

Contradictions of the Ruling Class in Ukraine

Sean Larson

Ukrainian capitalism today is distinguished by the most fortified oligarchy of the post-Soviet states. Politics in Ukraine have been subject to volatile lurches over the last decade, driven by the direct involvement of masses of Ukrainians. Meanwhile, shaping the economic, political, and ideological aspects of society and daily life in Ukraine is a ubiquitous inter-imperialist competition between Russia on the one side and the United States and the European Union on the other. Indeed, the accumulation of capital in this country is constantly conditioned and threatened both by these imperialisms and internal social upheavals. The actions and positions of the ruling class have been and will continue to be staked out upon the terrain delineated by their contradictions.

The following attempts to sketch the contours of the various sections of the ruling class in Ukraine, with an eye toward their fractures, determinations, and the central role of the oligarchy. In characterizing the different fractions of the Ukrainian ruling class, economic, and not political or ideological, determinations are decisive. The actions of the oligarchs are most productively explained through the prism of pure class interests, economic competition, and the political power blocs that derive therefrom, rather than fidelity to any transcendental ideologies of nationalism or democracy. It is hoped that this sketch of the balance of forces can contribute to further analysis of the often chaotic and confusing developments in the post-Maidan Ukraine of today.

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Oligarchy

Most of the oligarchs acquired control over large sectors of the Ukrainian economy during the rapid privatizations after the fall of the Soviet Union. A fifth of Ukraine's GDP is controlled by twenty people, and in 2012, the combined henchmen of two oligarchs (Akhmetov and Firtash) constituted a fifth of the elected representatives in the 450-person parliament. Oligarchs are essentially exempt from all taxes on their profits, and the Ukrainian state is frequently bent with surprising pliability to enrich them and deter domestic and foreign challenges to their power. These shared class interests have predominated even through all the maneuvers between rival groups of oligarchs for control of the state apparatus. The interests of the oligarchs have thus formed the horizon of possibility for Ukrainian politics, though their hegemony has been far from uncontested (see below). It is in the industrial sector (metallurgy, chemical industry, natural gas, machine-building, automobile- and ship-building, among others) that the presence of the oligarchs is most prominent, where a few individuals wield not only economic, but political power over entire industries. However, the largest and most powerful oligarchs have branched out into other sectors as well, with assets spanning the service sector, retail, media, and banking. In Ukraine, oligarchy thus represents a unique combination of multiple forms of capital (industrial, financial, commercial) with direct control over the levers

of state power.

To exemplify how this plays out, take two key areas of activity of Ukraine's richest man, Rinat Akhmetov: metallurgy and power engineering.[1] In June 2010, Akhmetov prevented a significant expansion of Russian capital in the metallurgical industry by having the recently appointed Prime Minister from his Party of Regions, Mykola Azarov, invalidate the sale of Ukraine's second largest metallurgical plant as an attempt at an illegal takeover. In 2011, Akhmetov's companies acquired from the state 1) leases over companies controlling over 50 percent of energy coal production in Ukraine, 2) controlling stakes in three power plant complexes as part of tenders (ensuring Akhmetov control of 30 percent of Ukraine's electricity production), and 3) demonstrable preferential treatment (even against state-owned companies) in the purchase of tenders for electricity export to Ukraine's neighbors. This meant that by the end of 2011, Akhmetov had secured himself an integrated production chain, using his own coal as fuel in his own power plants to produce electricity distributed through his own export contracts. This is not to mention that Akhmetov also has significant assets in media, transportation, finance (having recently merged two of his banks), and retail trade, and his group HarvEast is now one of the best positioned to seize large portions of the agricultural market as its privatization begins to accelerate.

> In Ukraine, the oligarchy thus represents a unique combination of multiple forms of capital (industrial, financial, commercial) with direct control over the levers of state power.

Orange Fragments

Given this context, Ukraine is not known for its free market. On the contrary, it is consistently ranked among the bottom rungs on so-called "economic freedom" indicators (155 out of 178 on the 2014 Heritage Index of Economic Freedom).[2] This state of affairs has led to discontent within the ruling elite during Ukraine's post-Soviet history. However, while the (largely industrial) oligarchs have been able to act in concert to institutionally dominate the state, other sections of the ruling class have struggled to maintain a coherent power bloc.

The so-called 'Orange Revolution' of 2004, although involving hundreds of thousands of protestors in the street, has been dubbed the "revolt of the millionaires against the billionaires" largely due to its outcome. This event brought a political alliance to power that was led by a small section of big capital and had its base mainly in small business owners. Although this alliance consisted of diverse tendencies and motivations, they have long been interested in the regulation of economic competition and establishing the 'rule of law' in order to level the economic playing field with the more powerful oligarchs. Even today, the Orange ideology consists primarily in making the exploitation of workers an equal opportunity affair. Many of the more powerful oligarchs feared the liberal reforms promised in the rhetoric of the Orange power bloc which had consolidated against them, not to mention the more populist slogans (e.g. "send the crooks to prison") of one of its leaders, Yulia Tymoshenko. The initial plan of the oligarchs was to have Viktor Yanukovych administer their political affairs as president, but mass protests at an election fraud and material support from Washington brought the Orange leader Viktor Yushchenko to power instead.

The delicate unity of the Orange bloc, along with its economic inferiority, made it weak and unable to sustain itself against the interests of the bigger oligarchs without the added pres-

sure from below. Less than two years after the elections, a split within the Orange bloc and an inability to form a parliamentary coalition paralyzed the state, preventing it from carrying out even minimal economic reforms. In these circumstances, the takeover of Yushchenko's erstwhile oppositional "Our Ukraine" party by sectional oligarchic interests was inevitable, which led to small business shuffling its allegiances within the Orange framework during the parliamentary elections of 2006 toward the more radical pole of the Orange coalition, 'Bloc Yulia Tymoshenko.' Between 2005-2010, the financial sector was also largely behind Tymoshenko's Bloc, including the brothers Buriak (owners of the Brokbiznes Bank, one of Ukraine's largest financial institutions) and Kostyantyn Zhevago, who heads the Finance and Credit Group. Ihor Kolomoyskyi and Henadiy Boholyubov of the Privat Group, who own Ukraine's largest bank, alternately backed different wings of the Orange coalition depending on their needs. In the run-up to the 2010 elections, however, Tymoshenko further undermined the economic backing of her own bloc through zealous populist policies that had particularly negative consequences for small businesses and the banking sector.[3]

The Working Class

All of these capitalists, of course, rely upon the continuous exploitation of the Ukrainian working class. In rough outline, slightly less than a quarter of Ukraine's working population is employed in the industrial sector, just over half of the workforce is in the service sector (healthcare, education, communications, trade, etc.), and almost a tenth of workers are in public administration, while the official unemployment rate has fluctuated around 8.3 percent over the last decade, peaking during the economic crisis.[4]

In the post-Soviet sphere, the development of independent workers' political and economic organizations faces its own particular difficulties. Such organizations are essentially nonexistent, and representation is instead directly mediated by the state in the form of the trade unions and the parties of the oligarchs. In an increasingly dire economic situation, with months of unpaid wages in some industries, shrinking pensions, and rising unemployment, the willingness of union members to take action is quite low. This is due not only to intimidation tactics by bosses, but also to a lack of confidence in both the efficacy of direct actions and in unions as an institution. Mounting discontent with this situation, in both the east and west of Ukraine, has for the most part been channeled through other ideological institutions. According to an opinion poll from the beginning of 2013,[5] Ukrainians had far less confidence in trade unions as institutions than they did in the Orthodox Church, the Ukrainian media, the courts, and political parties. The opinion predominates that trade unions are relics of the communist era for the purpose of organizing vacations or children's summer camps (functions largely responsible for sustaining union membership) rather than fighting organizations pushing for the interests of workers on the job and in politics. Even the minuscule attempts at rank-and-file activism must contend with the fact that the political influence of the unions is severely limited by their organizational weakness, as well as disunity among the different union federations.[6] Indeed, there is almost no mutual support organized for protest actions among unions, and alliances are merely formalities to satisfy requirements for political representation. In addition, trade unions in Ukraine have faced the same difficulty as their counterparts in Western countries when confronted with organizing the growing informal sector and 'precarious' service jobs.

The Imperialist Contradiction

In its economic, political, and even ideological aspects, the entirety of Ukrainian society is continuously animated by an inter-imperialist rivalry between the United States and the European Union on the one side, and Russia on

the other. By means of alternately suppressing and deferring this contradiction, the Ukrainian oligarchy has carefully prevented it from coming to a head, and thereby retained their power.

Before the emergence of the Maidan movement in late 2013 and early 2014, Russia sought to include Ukraine in the Eurasian Customs Union, which was and is an attempt to build an economic bloc capable of competing with the EU, but more powerful because it would have a common military strategy. Not only would it culminate in a powerful geopolitical bloc, but the EU itself would be almost completely reliant upon it for energy and natural resources. The position the Ukrainian oligarchs have taken with regard to the potential customs union has been contradictory, as has been evident throughout the years of negotiations. Ukrainian industry relies upon Russian gas, especially in the chemical sector. Remaining outside the customs union has kept gas prices significantly higher than otherwise, and has contributed to the decline in competitiveness of Ukrainian plants. Russian manipulation of gas prices has significantly increased Ukraine's trade deficit, a fact Russia has attempted to use to force Ukraine to either join the Customs Union or merge Ukraine's gas pipeline controller Naftogaz with the Russian state-owned Gazprom. Whether through access to a newly unprotected market by Russian businesses or the new possibility of unfettered manipulation of the gas supply, the sharp limitations upon Ukraine's economic sovereignty in either case would comprise the economic content of Russian imperialism.

Yet the Western alternative has not only threatened the living standards of ordinary Ukrainians, it has also posed an economic threat to many oligarchs. Despite their diverging and conflicting interests and fickle maneuvers in the contest over the state apparatus, all oligarchs have held an interest in common: preventing the introduction of regulated and strictly enforced free markets to Ukraine, as this would significantly impact their infrastructure of profit extraction, and open up the Ukrainian market to competition from Western corporations. From the perspective of the oligarchs, political candidates are to be selected and supported insofar as they are politically pliable and present a low risk of change being introduced into the system. The majority of oligarchs backed Yanukovych in the 2010 presidential elections against Tymoshenko precisely because he was considered a weak president (as was Yushchenko, in the last analysis). Affiliating with the West in the form of IMF loans and the EU Association Agreement would to a certain extent begin to reverse this form of oligarchs' direct dominance over the state as Western imperialist interests play an increasingly dominant role in the state and economy.

Thus, *maintaining the balancing act between imperialisms*, precarious and contradictory as it always was, has been the domestic and foreign policy interest driving the oligarchic bloc. Ukraine was hit hard by the economic crisis of 2007-08, with its GDP plummeting by 15 percent in 2009. The crisis dramatically impacted the country's capacity for economic independence, as up to 60 percent of Ukraine's GDP is reliant upon exports. When combined with the growing gas deficit, this situation made ever more urgent a decision on alignment with Russia or the West. Suppressing the imperialist contradiction through illicit protectionism or deferring it through postponing a decision was thus made all the more difficult. In mid-2013, the economic crisis in Ukraine reached its pinnacle,[7] fusing mounting economic and social discontent as they moved toward the surface. Yanukovych's rejection of the EU Association Agreement, the last attempt by the oligarchy to *defer the imperialist contradiction*, proved utterly impotent in the face of a social upheaval whose time had come.

Recomposition and Restructuring

Riding the wave of the Maidan movement, a neoliberal power bloc was brought to power and

promptly began betraying that very movement. The new power bloc attempting to consolidate hegemony over the state and society is comprised of three major economic trends: oligarchs increasingly reliant upon Western markets, finance capital domestic and foreign, and small business owners. The first group comes partly from within the industrial oligarchy itself, and is driven toward an association with the West by a combination of the collapsing Russian economy facing stagflation and capital flight, and a need for state stability after growing frustration with Yanukovych's overstepping his role through his personal usage of the state to enrich his family and attempting to enter oligarch territory. Although the westward-looking oligarchs remain to a significant extent dependent upon the Russian market, the undependability of the latter is making the long-delayed shift to the west increasingly unavoidable. Leading members of this group include oligarchs such as Pinchuk and Poroshenko, the latter of whom also had his imports into Russia restricted by Moscow. The second section of the rising new power bloc is finance capital. Today, independent finance capital in Ukraine is comparatively weak. In 2012, the banking sector—consistently described by international financial institutions as one of the weakest in the region—was distinguished by a large share of foreign investors (39 percent) and a comparatively low level of oligarch presence, with only two of the ten largest banks (which in total control 54 percent of the assets in the banking sector) owned by oligarchs (Privat and FUIB). The most powerful oligarch of the finance sector, Kolomoyskyi (whose Privat Bank is Ukraine's largest) has long been politically oppositional toward the ruling industrial oligarchs: he was staunchly in the Orange camp in 2004, and in early March of this year he was enlisted by the provisional Kiev government to be governor of the Dnipropetrovsk region in the East. The third major component of the aspiring power bloc is the class of 'entrepreneurs' and small business owners, in other words, the petty bourgeoisie. In Ukraine, this class has a history of coming out *en masse* against perceived oligarchic abuse of power.[8] Given the economic heterogeneity of this rising power bloc then,

> The opinion predominates that trade unions are relics of the communist era for the purpose of organizing vacations rather than fighting organizations pushing for the interests of workers.

its corresponding ideology is expressed as a motley mixture of 1) *pro-European sentiment* (with demands for both reliable rule-of-law in the economic sphere and political democracy), 2) *nationalism* (consolidating around "our" oligarchs and opposed specifically to the historic colonizer, Russia), and 3) *neo-fascism* (the fascist Svoboda party takes pride in its exclusively middle class funding). The militarization and xenophobia of the fascist component also play an important and increasingly dangerous role in diverting class anger away from the capitalists within this coalition.

These economic and ideological components of the new power bloc find their political articulations in the Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reforms (UDAR) party headed by Petro Poroshenko and Vitali Klitschko, the Fatherland party headed by Yulia Tymoshenko and Arseniy Yatsenyuk, and the Svoboda party headed by Oleh Tyahnybok. UDAR and the westward-looking oligarchs backing it occupy the strongest position in this coalition; their interests determine its direction in the last instance. The pro-European nationalism of the Fatherland party serves as an ideological palliative shoring up working and middle class support with anti-corruption rhetoric, but it has

also played a political leadership role along with UDAR, despite the inferiority of the economic forces behind Fatherland. Although initially relatively small, the influence of fascism (politically represented by Svoboda and the Right Sector) has grown in proportion to the inability of the new power bloc to consolidate hegemony over a unitary state. This is manifested most strikingly through the increasing reliance of this bloc upon militarized fascist militias and street gangs during the "Anti-Terrorist Operation" to quell rising discontent in eastern Ukraine.

> Ukrainian society is continuously animated by an inter-imperialist rivalry between the United States and the European Union on the one side, and Russia on the other.

Part of the difficulty this power bloc has had in retaining political power lies not only in its internal contradictions, but also in the nature of the state apparatus itself. The economic interests of the (primarily industrial) oligarchy, dependent as it is on the stability of the Ukrainian social formation, required, on the political level, *simultaneously* a weak state to instrumentalize and upon which to impose its interests, and a strong state with which to protect Ukrainian economic sovereignty and resist the ever-present imperial impositions from both East and West. The state inherited by the new power bloc had undergone a comprehensive centralization and shift to executive dominance under Yanukovych. It was thereby designed for maximum domestic instrumentalization by the powerful oligarchs, a group to which Yanukovych's family itself increasingly aspired. In practice this meant the continued deferral of imperialist impositions: under Yanukovych the size of the Ukrainian armed forces was considerably reduced while the riot police were fortified. This state apparatus was built to stabilize the teeming contradictions of Ukrainian social relations under the hegemony of the existing oligarch bloc and its interests, not the interests that comprise the current Kiev government. This is illustrated by the fact that the provisional government was plagued by inconsistent and undisciplined parliamentary support, with frequent failures to meet vote quotas and lack of motivation due to a blinkered focus on the May elections. But it is seen most apparently in the disintegration of the repressive apparatus that has led the provisional Kiev government to alternate repeated hollow threats to uprisings in the east with the mobilization of fascist militarized elements for spectacular displays of impotent violence, which are not a particularly telling sign of a stable hegemony.

In its attempt to secure this hegemony over the entirety of a unified Ukraine, the new power bloc has relied upon the political and economic supplement of Western imperialism. The intersection of its economic interests with its reliance upon the IMF loans points toward both more stable trade deals with the West as well as the introduction of neoliberal reforms in Ukraine. Although all oligarchs will benefit from the increased access to Western markets (even more of a necessity with Russia's impending economic downturn), there will be a trade-off for some of them (beyond the social disaster of austerity, which the oligarchs are more than willing to tolerate for the sake of profit). In order to make the investment climate more attractive, part of the neoliberal restructuring of the economy and the legal apparatus will involve combatting the arbitrary practices of the oligarchs used to support and expand their wealth, such as the raiding practices that reached unprecedented levels after Yanukovych took power and which affected medium-sized Ukrainian businesses and foreign businesses alike. This conflict in

oligarchic interests marks the Western aspect of the imperialist contradiction that has resulted in the political inertia of many industrial oligarchs. The intensity of this impasse has contributed to the halting and contradictory nature of the re-condensation of the state apparatus since February. However, the crisis in the social formation triggered by the autonomous actions of the Maidan mass movement has resulted in the majority of the oligarchs passively supporting the Western-backed Kiev government initially. What at first appeared to be the likely endurance of the neoliberal power bloc has begun to demand the tenuous participation of more of the larger industrial oligarchs, and will lead to a shift in their own economic activities should the process continue.

The most formidable challenge to the hegemony of the new bloc has been posed by the actions of Russia and mass discontent in eastern Ukraine. Based upon the interests in the Customs Union and the gas supply manipulation outlined above, Russia has attempted to undermine the legitimacy and position of the new Ukrainian authorities on the international stage through internal destabilization, thereby preventing the loss of Ukraine from the de facto Russian sphere of influence, and forcing a resolution to the crisis of Ukrainian society on Moscow's terms. At the moment, this is achieved through cynically emphasizing the legitimacy and independence of the eastern separatists. Should the turmoil in the East continue and gain the upper hand, oligarchs with industrial and political bases there will most likely use the resulting decentralization of the state or federalization to attempt to ward off the regulations of the EU association while keeping access to western markets open by retaining connection to the Ukrainian state. However, none of this should distract from the fact that working Ukrainians in both East and West have compelling reasons of their own not to accept either of the imperialist futures.

Internal Resistance

The Eastern Ukrainian economy has traditionally bankrolled the poorer West of the country, and the manufacturing and coal mining based there comprise 35 percent of Ukraine's exports. Association with the EU will lead to tougher production standards, the decline of Ukrainian coal and metallurgy industries, and loss of jobs in the East of Ukraine, whereas Russia has little need for Ukraine's coal mines. The social inequality already endemic to the oligarchic capitalist system will thus be amplified throughout these regions, regardless of which imperialism wins out. Protest against this inequality, whether targeting the oligarchs or the austerity programs from the West, has struggled to achieve a voice independent of the omnipresent inter-imperialist rivalry. Complete lack of organization makes the discontent of Eastern Ukrainians susceptible to Russian influence and the packaged solution on hand of separatism or federalization, and the discontent has as of yet no independent political expression. At present, the clashes in the East are spiraling Ukraine toward civil war. The very visible presence of fascists on both sides is a symptom of the growing embattlement of the ruling classes at the source of the conflict.

In recent years, many trade unions have been forbidden or had union leaders fired in enterprises belonging to multinational corporations—these are generally more difficult spaces in which to organize. The new trade agreement with the EU would open up Ukraine to a greater role for the multinationals, and thus further weaken the capacity of the working class to organize itself. The relative isolation of Ukrainian unions from practical solidarity with international unions will need to be broken as these multinational firms and their Western political backers begin taking over larger sections of the Ukrainian labor market and determining Ukrainian economic policy. The historically most class-conscious part of the working class and the best positioned politically right now are

the miners of the Donbass region. These miners' unions have already shown small signs of political activity and uneven involvement with the uprisings of the East, and even spoken of a political strike, which has once before (1989) proven to be the key link in the chain that exploded the entire contradictory social formation. Yet the trade unions of the mining industry have had divided allegiances, as Nick Evans points out: "Imperial competition between the U.S. and Europe, and Russia, and splits between the different oligarchic blocs in the Ukraine are reflected in the bureaucracy of the respective sections of the trade union movement."[9]

Prospects for a socially just resolution to the crisis are bleak. But the germs of genuine resistance persevere. The elements of the Maidan, drawn from all over the country, that fought for democracy and against the deterioration of their living standards, will soon be just as dissatisfied with the IMF-imposed austerity as they were with Yanukovych. Now, though, they have yet another experience of popular uprising that has played a determining role in politics, even if not carried all the way through due to lack of effective left organizations.

A grassroots anti-imperialism opposed to the ruling classes of both East and West is the precondition for the resolution of the imperialist contradiction on the terms of the working class. Crucial to any future unification strategy will be the linking of anti-austerity protests with anti-imperialism, the expansion of the trade union movement to the informal sector, and the creation of popular democratic institutions and eventually independent political parties. Popular struggle on all of these fronts, and their eventual unification, will be required to melt the ideological cement binding the workers of the West to the nationalists of the ruling class and replace it with a class-conscious counter-hegemonic project. The return of Maidan activists to their hometowns, spread all across the country, has laid the infrastructure of a united cross-regional movement in a way that can lead to grassroots protests exceeding the bounds of the narrow ruling-class political oscillations of the last decade. Today, as murderous imperialisms and the onslaught of Ukrainian capitalism rage on, one thing is clear as the dawn: it is the oligarchs of all stripes who are responsible for the misery of the Ukrainian people, and it is the oligarchs who will need to be targeted by workplace actions and political protests if the people of Ukraine are to begin taking their future into their own hands.

May 12, 2014

NOTES

1. Cf. Sławomir Matuszak, *The Oligarchic Democracy: The Influence of Business Groups on Ukrainian Politics*, (Warsaw: Center for Eastern Studies, 2012), 53-54, www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/prace_42_en.pdf.

2. Heritage Foundation, 2014 Index of Economic Freedom, www.heritage.org/index/ranking.

3. Cf. Sławomir Matuszak and Arkadiusz Sarna, *From Stabilisation to Stagnation: Viktor Yanukovych's Reforms*, (Warsaw: Center for Eastern Studies, 2013), 21, www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/pw_32_ang_net.pdf.

4. www.ukrstat.gov.ua/.

5. Ukraine-2013: In-Between Elections and Options (assessments), 2013, www.razumkov.org.ua/upload/Ukraine-2013_ukr.pdf

6. Cf. "Der lange Marsch zur Modernisierung: Gewerkschaften in der Ukraine," Dec. 2013. library.fes.de/pdf-files/id-moe/10438.pdf

7. Lyubomyr Shavalyuk, "Systematic Recession: Why Ukraine's economy and public finance are in a much worse state today compared to 2012," *Ukrainian Week*, July 5, 2013, ukrainianweek.com/Economics/83827.

8. "Mass protests by Ukrainian entrepreneurs against a new tax law," Nov. 17, 2010, www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2010-11-17/mass-protests-ukrainian-entrepreneurs-against-a-new-tax-law.

9. Nick Evans, "Ukraine, Russia and the miners of the Donbass," Revolutionary Socialism 21, April 16, 2014, rs21.org.uk/2014/04/16/ukraine-russia-and-the-miners-of-the-donbass/.

On Returning To Where the Heart Is

James Kilgore

[Ed. note: This essay by James Kilgore was the winner of the Daniel Singer Prize for 2013. Kilgore lived in South Africa from 1991-2002. During that time he was a fugitive from U.S. justice living under the pseudonym "John Pape." He worked as an educator and researcher for unions and social movements. In 2002 he was arrested on the streets of Cape Town, then extradited to the United States where he served six and a half years in prison. In July 2012 he returned to South Africa for the first time since his arrest. Here he presents his reflections on the journey.]

My connections to the "land of Mandela" and his African National Congress (ANC) sustained me during my years of incarceration. Part of it was maintaining the links to my wife Terri and our two sons who still lived there. But it was more than that. While the democratic South Africa may not have lived up to our expectations, the flow of letters, postcards, books, and pictures from Cape Town and Johannesburg was a constant and much needed reminder that the entire planet did not function with the misanthropy and racial hatred of a California state prison. A better world was possible.

Once I paroled in 2009, I was determined to go back for a visit. It took me two years to get a passport. Then the South African government declared me an "undesirable immigrant" because I had lived there under a false name. A mini-campaign by my friends and lawyer convinced the Minister of Home Affairs that I was a desirable after all.

Once I had the green light, I wasn't quite sure what South Africa would hold for me. Would it feel like the wonderful, comforting, engaging, and complicated home that it once was? Would I have anything to talk about with old friends and comrades? They, after all, had been carrying on with their normal lives during the intervening period. They hadn't climbed up onto a steel bunk every night and wondered if they would ever see life again outside a concrete box. They had been drinking their Rooibos tea, eating samoosas and pap, taking their kids to school and watching them grow up. We had travelled down very different paths. Even Terri, who would be coming with me and had spent five years there with our children after my arrest, wasn't sure how this visit would all turn out.

The travel itself went smoothly. I wasn't on any hit lists, didn't get pulled into any dark rooms by men in suits and sunglasses asking who I was visiting or if I planned to return to the United States. Laura and Rick, our most stalwart friends, were waiting at the airport. We shared hugs, smiles, laughter, followed by the tedium of retrieving bags, getting a sim card for the cell phone.

As we headed down the freeway toward Cape Town, everything looked at once totally familiar and foreign. The shacks were still there, by their thousands. At least they hadn't built

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walls to hide them. I began to recall that part of the psyche of South Africa is living with the intensity of the contradictions. Poverty is in your face, even in the suburbs. At every traffic light, around every corner someone lurks, flaunting their desperation—selling combs and sculptures

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that no one really wants, slapping water on your windshield before you have time to tell them not to bother, diving into a dumpster to sort through the day's pickings. Then there is the ample cohort of "tsotsis" [thugs] ready to simply jump on you and implement their own vision of democracy. Unlike the U.S., South Africa has not yet perfected the art of tucking poverty away so thoroughly.

We get off the freeway and enter South Africa's suburban fortress. There are new developments—more electric fences, more gated communities demanding a thumb print for entry. But then electric fences are familiar territory for me. I slept behind them for more than six years—only they were designed to keep me in rather than keep others out.

For my first few hours this all seems newly strange to me, as if I've landed in a place where I've never been at all. But after a day my old life resurfaces. I feel like John Pape again. I retrace old steps, walk past the house where I was arrested, a quiet dead end street. The last time I was there, November 8, 2002, a line of police cars and plain clothes detectives had created the first and only traffic jam on Dunluce Ave. I recall my then eight-year-old son as he stood confused next to me while the police closed in. The officers were polite, not like they are in the U.S. or in the townships of South Africa. They let me hold onto him. I felt his little heart pounding in his chest. At least I had the chance to whisper in his ear that I loved him. He didn't know how to respond.

On day two I return to Community House, where I'd worked for five years at the International Labour Research and Information Group (ILRIG). We did education and research for unions and social movements. During those years, we thought we could triumph, not in a full-blown revolutionary sense, but in squeezing out major concessions for the poor—housing, electricity, water, education. We never quite believed that the movement that produced Mandela, Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, and Lillian Ngoyi could totally abandon its roots.

By 2012, Community House has transformed. This once dingy building now carries the status of National Heritage site. An influx of state lottery money has yielded striking murals of local struggle heroes on the now shining walls. As I walk through the building, life size images of the martyrs—Imam Haroon, Ashley Kriel, Neil Aggett, and many others—greet me. Something has gone right.

I have been invited by my successor at ILRIG, Lenny Gentle, to sit in on the organization's mid-year review meeting. It's a strange way to re-connect, but it works. I dutifully take notes, reassured that in spite of it all, the ILRIG people still care about the working class. As the proceedings carry on, various familiar faces peak through a window into the meeting room. They have come to greet me. I bounce up and go outside for hugs and shrieks of disbelief. They all tell me I haven't changed, that I look the same. I don't quite believe them. I have changed but it's their way of saying they know I have survived prison and I am still that same John Pape they once knew. By reappearing I have reminded them that I am still on their side.

In the meeting Lenny and the others talk

much like we did a decade ago, searching for the resistance to the neoliberal path the government has chosen, identifying which social movements show potential and how education and research might help them. Service delivery protests take place nearly every day in South Africa, Lenny reminds us, but the problem is that they "lack structure," he says. Another issue is the energy many activists devote to supporting various factions of the ANC. Lenny argues that the factions all stand for the same thing. A counter view asserts that the factions actually represent different groupings on the ground, that it is important to know why this broad ANC church is now producing dissident voices.

They call on me for a few words. I can only add that I am pleased to see that such debates still continue. I inform them there are no discussions with this kind of passion and insight in Champaign, Illinois, where I now live. "I never found them in prison either," I add. They smile.

After ILRIG our trip takes a different course altogether. Terri and I run away to Nature's Valley, a magnificent resort area seven hours east of Cape Town. It has been almost a decade since I have climbed a hill, walked in a forest or dipped my toes in the ocean. We don't have such things in Champaign, and High Desert State Prison offered no hiking or swimming opportunities.

Terri and I spend a week there with friends surrounded by this thing called "nature." The corn fields of Illinois recede. We are gradually finding our place together in our New South Africa. We take time to hold hands, let the damp of the forest seep into our momentarily comfortable togetherness. "I wish the children were here," she says. Somehow this can't be "our" South Africa without them. But our two boys are grown up now. Our older son has just graduated from college and gotten a job in China. Our younger boy finished high school in May. They have grown too old to share sentimental moments with parents. Still, as we walk through the forest, it seems they should be tagging along behind us asking about the names of the trees and the songs of the birds.

After a week in the wilderness, we return to business as such. I am here to connect with old friends and comrades but also to talk about various things—my books, my experience of the last nine years, mass incarceration in the United States. Terri has important research to do on apartheid education.

My "tour" begins at the Book Lounge, a cozy shop in the center of Cape Town struggling to survive in the era of Kindle. The owner sets up about a dozen chairs, saying that only nine people have responded to their RSVP. Eighty-five people show up, mostly the ageing white left, my comrades from the unions, the social movements, the NGOs. As I open my talk, I'm overcome by emotion. I falter when I start to thank people for all their support over the years and try to remind them how important family and friends are. The tears come when I mention Terri and my sons. I have instructed the crowd that if I cry they must blubber with me in solidarity. They do, at least enough to get me back on track. I tell them how I wrote *Freedom Never Rests* in prison, that it is about the struggle of people in a fictitious town in the Eastern Cape to get water, and that I got the idea to write it when I saw steaming hot water pouring out of a shower at Dublin Federal Detention Center and no one bothered to stop the flow for a month. People in U.S. prisons could fill their cups of water with impunity while the poor of South Africa had to pay for every penny. Smiles and congratulations come from the crowd. I sign books, forget to eat dinner, go for drinks afterwards.

Two nights later it's heavier, back to Community House for what I call a "report back." The crowd is mostly black. Some trade unionists sing songs and toyi-toyi, the South Africans' fabled struggle dance. Their song proclaims me a "communist," a high form of praise for the man they know as "Comrade John Pape." I morph deeper into that identity, as I wend

my way through my arrest, my landing in the "new apartheid" of the California state prison system where even the showers and phones were segregated, where the hegemony of the white supremacists was so extreme that if I dared to give a black person a sip of water from my glass, I would be stabbed by someone with a swastika or SS lightning bolt tattooed across his forehead. I tell them how I survived all this by teaching math and running workshops on the global financial crisis—taking the experience I had with popular education in South Africa to the prison yards of the U.S. There is lots of head nodding. Racial segregation is familiar territory to them. So is fighting back. I feel home here, much more like John Pape than this other person who carries my birth name.

The next day, I meet with two ILRIG people to plan a workshop on "criminalizing the poor" for unemployed youth in Khayelitsha, Cape Town's biggest black township. Crime is crippling the community people tell me, mob violence is taking the place of the justice system. "People have lost faith in the police," one youth says. "They never come. Now the residents are killing those who steal their things." Others claim all the police do is kick them out of the meager shacks they are able to construct from scrap materials, then kick them off whatever small piece of ground they subsequently claim. I'm not sure what I have to say to youth from these communities. I know about the inside of prisons in the United States but I have never lived in a shack, never seen my children sleep by the side of the road with no food, but I agree to do what I can. We set the workshop for my last week in South Africa.

I walk home, rehearsing in my head what I might say to these youngsters, walking along the side of a busy thoroughfare with no sidewalks. Two youth sidle up to me. One asks me for money but I sense these are not beggars. I dig into my pockets and give them a couple Rands. "Give us all your money or we will rob you," he says. I dig deeper, clearing out my remaining few coins. "What about your bag?" he asks. I assure them there is nothing there but papers. He looks at my finger. "Give us the ring," he says. I tell him it's my wedding ring. I leave out the part about how Terri wore this ring around her finger for six and a half years while I was in prison, that one of the first things she did when I got out was put it back on my finger. "Give us the ring or we're gonna shoot you." Luckily I am older and wiser because he is a very small man and this wedding ring is perhaps the only possession I have that is worth fighting for. I am almost laughing at myself, a hardened "convict" so to speak, reared in the prison dogma that says if you let someone disrespect you today, you'll be disrespected by everyone forever. I never got "punked" or robbed in prison. No one ever laid a hand on me. I learned how to stand my ground but now I give in. I slide the ring off and it's over. Three minutes later a cop car pulls in behind me. The thieves are long gone by now. The cops pull over another young black pedestrian and pat him down. They let me walk past. I don't say a word. I don't talk to cops.

Terri doesn't balk when I tell her the bad news. As usual she sees the big picture. A ring, even with all the sentiment attached, is still just a piece of metal. Rick tells me that someone was murdered on a bus not long ago for refusing to give a thief their wedding ring. I have a cup of tea and a rusk, a great South African tradition, and move on.

From there our trip becomes a blur of speaking engagements, interviews, radio talk shows, and delightful dinners with old friends who ply us with home-brewed prawn curries, bobotie, and South African merlot. Each night surpasses the previous in cuisine and overindulgence. I repeat my Community House performance for a similar crowd in Johannesburg where we lived for six years. Once again there are hugs, smiles, books to be signed, gushing expressions of support and solidarity.

I take time out to visit my friend Ighsaan's new project in the decaying downtown area

of Germiston, about 15 miles east of Johannesburg. He has set up something called the "Casual Workers' Advice Office (CWAO)"—an effort to serve the fastest growing sector of the working class—casuals, part-timers, contract workers employed by labor brokers. The traditional unions don't quite know how to service them and don't seem to care. Ighsaan's office is a thrust of idealism in a non-idealistic time. Having worked nearly twenty years in an NGO educating workers and community people, he has sidestepped opportunities for promotion or securing a pension. He earns no salary, lives with the support from his partner, and hopes that somewhere, someone with a bit of money will realize this is work that needs to be done.

Things are quiet at the CWAO. Two admin assistants do something on computers and one woman comes in for advice. Ighsaan tells me of the biggest day yet, when the CWAO helped some postal workers win a judgment and some 300 of them danced and sang in the street in front of the office. He hopes there will be more days like that in the future as the word of the office's presence spreads. I try to remain as hopeful as he is for we are birds of a feather in a certain way, still knocking our head against the wall when we've lost so many more battles than we have won. As I hear him talk I ask myself if I have any real chance of living to see the target of my present passions, mass incarceration in the U.S., undergo substantive change. I don't bother to ponder it in those terms. For characters like Ighsaan and myself the victory is in the small steps and in knowing you are still fighting the good fight. Setting aside money for retirement or medical insurance in our old age is an elephant we don't allow to enter our room.

From Johannesburg we go to Durban and land in the company of Patrick Bond, an old friend and academic expert on South African financial markets and many other things economic and otherwise. In his whirlwind style Patrick has arranged a meeting for us with a few Zimbabweans in the middle of downtown Durban. Just an "informal" thing he says. Since Terri and I spent most of the 1980s in Zimbabwe we are anxious to hear what these people have to say.

We arrive at a rundown apartment building in the city center. They've filled the courtyard of the building with stacks of metal shipping containers, now converted into houses. They've cut openings in the metal siding to fit windows—a mini-refugee camp which houses 35 people.

> These youth can rattle off names of friends who have died either in gang warfare or at the hands of the police.

The residents and a few friends gather in the courtyard while a Zimbabwean tells them they have brought a writer all the way from the U.S. to speak to them. He holds up a copy of my book, *We Are All Zimbabweans Now*. In Shona, I hear people saying they are tired, that it is time to eat and they want to leave. The speaker continues, then finally introduces me. I am scared to death, feeling like I've been parachuted to another planet and then forced to deprive these exhausted people of their dinner. I dig deep and suddenly the Shona that I used to speak reasonably well back in the 1980s starts pouring forth. I apologize for stealing them away from their dinner, tell them back in the early days of Zimbabwean independence I would have never dreamed people like them would end up living in shipping containers in downtown Durban, unable to survive either economically or politically in their country of birth. Suddenly the crowd perks up. I pass the baton back to the M.C. The discussion carries on for another two hours. This is not about the writer from America but rather about their lives in South Africa and

how they must organize to fight back. They are victims of police harassment, of xenophobic attacks by local residents. They have become accustomed to being called "makwerekwere" and other derogatory names by South Africans, of being accused of stealing local women. Many have vocational qualifications—lab technicians, motor mechanics, teachers—but here they cut peoples' grass or sell packets of sweets on the street. Their life is a petty hustle to earn enough money to survive and send a few cents of surplus back home. They talk about the need to organize the other Zimbabweans in Durban, in the rest of South Africa. There is optimism in this dark, oil-stained space. They collectively vow that they will get back home, like all refugees must do from time to time to maintain their sanity and sense of identity. But of course no one can answer the two key questions that determine their future: when will President Robert Mugabe die or leave power and what will come next? As the meeting winds down, one of the men asks me to close up the session. I try to convey in my linguistic masala how inspiring they are, how their determination to carry on in such a situation is remarkable. I close by assuring them "muchawina" – you will win. Of course no one can be certain that they will but it is the best thing to say.

Time to return to Cape Town to that workshop on crime for the youth. I don't tell the group the story about getting robbed on the way home from the meeting. I decry the vagaries of the school to prison pipeline—the lockdowns, the drug searches, the fancily titled cops in U.S. schools known as Student Resource Officers (SROs). I tell them how I am presenting this message because I fear that some people in South Africa might be tempted to follow the American model, to go the way of "zero tolerance." I assure them that this is simply a way of criminalizing the survival activities of the poor, in the same way the so-called squatter camps where many of them live are regarded as lawless communities by the authorities.

In the discussions, one participant assures me that he can phone in and get a pizza delivered much faster than he could ever get the cops to come if a crime was in progress. These youth can rattle off names of friends who have died either in gang warfare or at the hands of the police. One young man tells us that when he walks the streets late at night, he fears the police much more than the drug lords. "They can beat you up, take your things," he says. "Anything is possible." I'm tempted to reference the apartheid days here, to find out if things are better or worse. But these people are 18-22 years old. They were toddlers or pre-schoolers when Mandela won the first election in 1994.

Like the Zimbabweans, they close their meeting with the determination to come to-

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gether again, to begin to take on these issues. Then they disperse, rushing to the plates of chicken and rice that ILRIG has provided. The next day the local paper announces that Cape Town is considering a proposal to place police officers in schools in five "troubled" areas. The idea has come from a visit by someone in the local government to the United States.

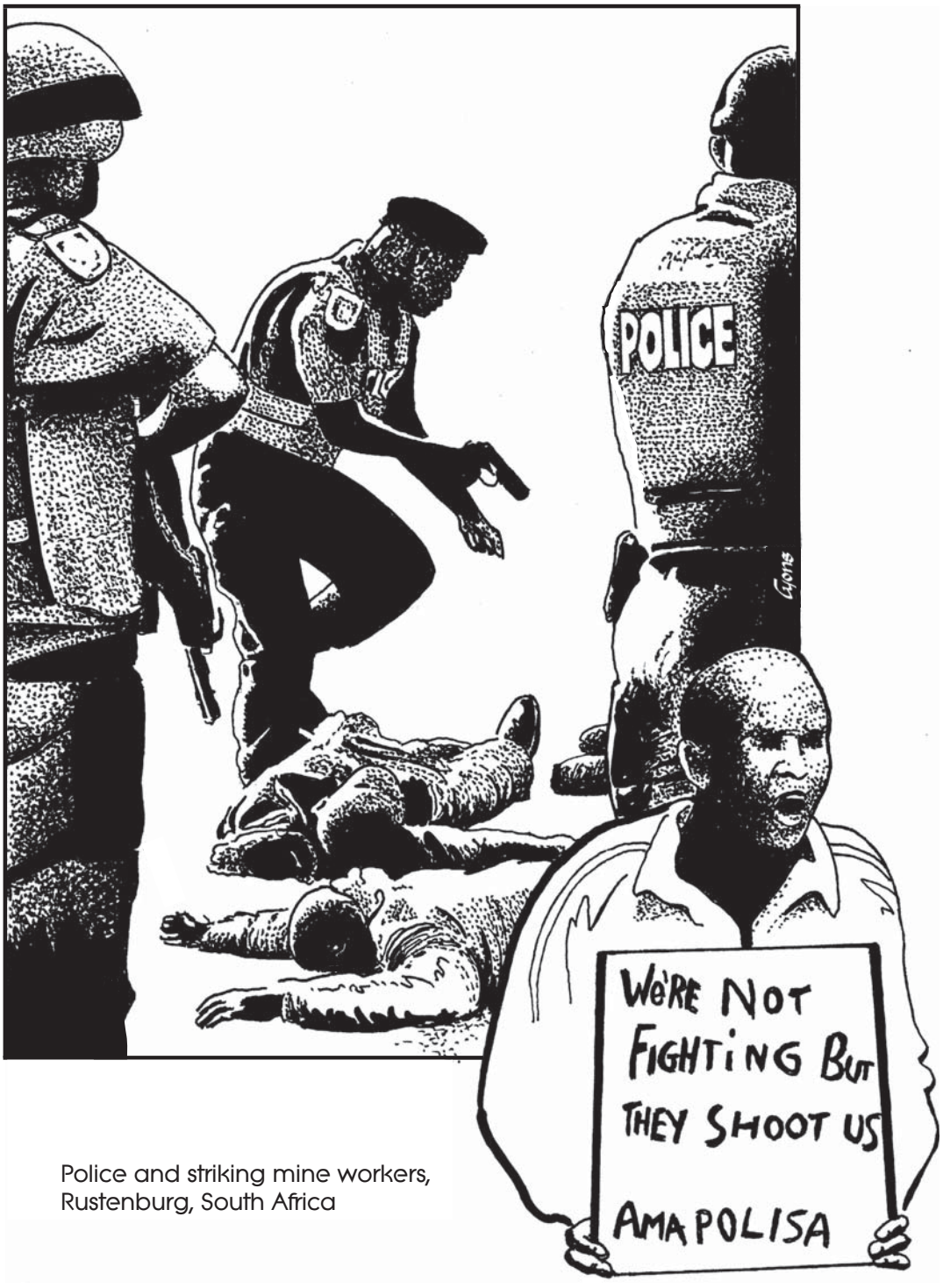
Our day to return "home" arrives and we are back on the plane to Champaign, where there is drought, 105 degree temperatures. Our sons are waiting for us. Terri and I reflect on our journey. She mentions something we didn't notice at the time. "We have never laughed that much in our entire time in Illinois." We usually associate South Africa with rage, outrage, or crying. But for us there was also another dimension.

We try to figure out why. The most important experiences of our adult life took place in southern Africa, our meeting, our marriage, the birth and raising of our children. We experienced the upbeat early years of independence in Zimbabwe and the transition from apartheid in South Africa. We lived life bigger than reality in those days. We were part of making history. We even wrote textbooks for schools entitled *People Making History* which landed in two thirds of Zimbabwe's high schools.

Now decades and many complicated journeys later, we live on a smaller, more joyless, but far less dangerous stage. We can walk our dog at two a.m., drive to the other side of town in fifteen minutes. Life is easy, smooth, but something is missing that can never be inserted into the equation of central Illinois or perhaps anywhere in the United States for that matter. That big part of us that still lives in South Africa remains like a big Trust Fund from which we can draw money only by going to the bank and making a withdrawal. There is no internet link to dispense emotion or feelings for friends and comrades. That kind of capital only accumulates through fighting complex battles together and emerging at the other side if not in triumph, at least intact and with the self-satisfaction that you have been on the right side. In the end, this is what makes you able to laugh together, even if it is laughing to keep from crying.

Two and a half weeks after we return to the United States the South African police shoot 34 miners dead in Rustenberg. In the wake of the shootings, the U.S. press reminds us these miners were armed with spears and knives and were charging the police. They also note that these killings look a lot like what used to happen under apartheid only this time the police are black. But they refuse to see the essential truth: that what the police did in Rustenberg is the result of bigger choices made long before. In South Africa, the government chose to abandon redistributing wealth and power to the historically oppressed. Instead, the new rulers opted for the trickle down and a few drops of redistribution have not proved adequate to upend the horrors of history.

Those police bullets cast a grim shadow on our joyous journey to South Africa. Our momentary connection to the past has been severed by new tragedies in a now seemingly distant land. We cannot capture that moment from Champaign. *A luta continua*, says the southern African slogan for the ages, the struggle continues. For the moment, all we can do is holler out the response, "*a luta*" from afar. Perhaps no one will hear our cries but we will keep hollering them anyway, at the top of our lungs.



Police and striking mine workers, Rustenburg, South Africa

Argentina: The End of Kirchnerism?

Niall Reddy

Scholars have sometimes noted that Argentinian history seems unusually punctuated by periods of booming prosperity followed by dramatic collapse. The most recent manifestation of this was of course the four-year economic crisis that culminated in 2001, in which attempts by successive regimes to apply neoliberal strictures and protect financiers led to a collapse in GDP of more than a quarter, skyrocketing poverty and unemployment, and a period of social upheaval that saw five presidents replaced in just 15 days.

From the flames of the *Argentinazo*—the civil unrest and rioting of 2001—left-Peronist candidate Néstor Kirchner assumed the presidency in 2003 with the lowest percentage of the popular vote ever in the nation's history—just 22.4 percent. The decade-long rule of Kirchner and his wife Christina Fernández Kirchner (CFK), who took over from her husband in 2007, is usually characterized as neo-developmentalism—a combination of consumption-led industrialization underpinned by welfare and rising wages, with windfalls from favorable commodity prices that allowed growth and incomes to rise rapidly and subdued the radicalism that was gripping much of the population. The mid-term elections that took place in October last year saw a collapse in support for the incumbent president and large gains for the center-right and revolutionary left, along with a looming economic slowdown that seemed to herald another inflexion point—one that could have major implications for the process of left resurgence taking place in Latin America.

Argentina's successes in heterodox macro policies following the largest-ever debt default in 2002 have earned the silence or derision of mainstream economic journalism. As much is predictable but less so is the negligible attention it has garnered from international supporters of the post-neoliberal "responsible" leftism, who have lionized Lula's Brazil (at least this is the case in South Africa where the centrist part of the labor movement and its intellectuals are enamored of a so-called "Lula moment"), perhaps because some of the Kirchners' methods seem too unorthodox for this group, even if hardly radical. In any case many of the progressive lineaments of neo-developmentalism seem to run deeper in Argentina than in its northern neighbor. Extreme poverty in Argentina dropped by more than 22 percent between the worst point of the crisis in 2001 and 2010. Part of this was due to a universal (per child) grant system that is relatively more substantial than Brazil's widely praised *Bolsa Familia*. In large part though, as in Brazil, progress on social indicators has been overwhelmingly driven by successes in the labor market. By 2010 unemployment was down 10 percent from ten years prior, settling at 8.0 percent. Inflation was substantial for the decade but was regularly exceeded by wage increases which also had a progressive structure—the ratios between the "top 5" and the "bottom 5" and between the median and the "bottom 5"

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both dropped.[1] Consequently, workers' share of the total value produced in the economy rose.

It is on the basis of this historic reversal of the social indexes of neoliberalism that the Kirchners have sought a redemption and renewal of the original Peronist program now termed "serious capitalism." Néstor dusted off an old concept on assuming office, telling a meeting of domestic bankers that "it is impossible to build a national project if we do not consolidate a national bourgeoisie".[2]

Like Peron himself, the Kirchners were successful in creating the perception of accountability and popular responsiveness.

Peronism's phenomenal durability, through all the permutations and disappointments, remains a compelling social mystery. Peron first swept to power in 1946 riding a wave of proletarian support that reached deep into the union movement, under a slogan of "Braden or Peron" (Braden was the U.S. ambassador at the time). He used his popular appeal to partially dislodge Argentina from the U.S. orbit, drive inward industrialization with the support of a national bourgeoisie, underpin a substantial welfare system with massive wage increases, and cement his own control, often by direct repression. Contemporary scholarly interpretation, in part influenced by Daniel James' seminal study in the 1980s, of course emphasizes the need to go beyond a narrow material lens in understanding the evolution of Peronism's hegemony.

As important as the real changes in living conditions, Peron's challenge to the naked oligarchism and rigid system of social stratification that marked the *decade infame* (the 1930s), was extremely important in indelibly associating his movement with the identity of the Argentine worker. Peronism appropriated the cultural tokens of class denigration and resignified them into symbols of proletarian pride and patriotic character—perhaps best exemplified by the image of the *descamisado* ("shirtless one"). The formerly anarchist workers rallied to Peronism. By the mid 1950s unsustainable trade deficits created by consumption-led growth generated an economic crisis through which the traditional elite resumed the initiative, exiling Peron and outlawing his movement in a military coup. During the decades out of power, Peronism retained its monopoly as the articulated form of proletarian aspirations, marginalizing the inchoate Communist Party and developing a powerful union bureaucracy, but also inspiring diverse movements by its proud history of resistance and the better memories of its years in power.

By the time of Peron's return to power in 1973, a spectrum of political groups and parties ranging from left-nationalist to semi-fascist claimed allegiance to the movement that had won the hearts of the Argentine masses. The basis for a developmental model based on class collaboration having been exhausted, Peronism's brief second-coming to executive office was far less receptive to workers and more openly repressive of the Guevarist, Maoist, and Trotskyist left, leaning in part on the union bureaucrats to achieve this. It was to fail once again to find a means of protecting Argentina from the vicissitudes of global capitalism and fell, contemporaneously with many other Latin America nations, to a vicious military dictatorship that began neoliberal reforms. Indicative of its ideological ductility, it was Peronism under Menem that oversaw the consolidation of this project in the 1990s, culminating in the *Argentinazo*.

Like Peron himself, the Kirchners were successful in creating the perception of accountability and popular responsiveness and restoring some legitimacy to the political class following the *Argentinazo's* cry of "Que se vayan todos" (Out with them all). Their reckoning with the

criminals of the military dictatorship—unique in Latin America—was important in this regard. But whilst aspects of Kirchnerism resonate with early Peronism—an association they've sought to amplify—their political project, separated by the better part of a century, is necessarily very different.

For one thing, it is unlikely that Kirchnerism will be able to rely on the same vast cultural resources to achieve the vertical integration with the labor movement that Peron himself managed. Favorable wage and employment trends were initially successful in keeping most workers onside and allowing clientelist operations to secure the support of important sections of an entrenched bureaucracy. This has been coupled with a deliberate campaign of co-option and division aimed against militant *piqueteros*—unemployed workers' social movements named after their main tactic of blocking roads. But important as union support has been, it hasn't been quite the bedrock of the Kirchnerist project in the way it was for Peron—under the latter union membership more than doubled whilst recent years have seen a massive expansion of precariousness and little improvement in factory floor organization past the initial recovery.

Allegiances with workers organizations have been more conjunctural and reliant on good economic results creating the space for a certain favorable distribution of value. As of now both of Argentina's weighty, heavily bureaucratized union federations, which organize around 36 percent of the workforce, are split into pro- and anti-government factions. CFK was the target of a general strike in November 2012 and another in April 2014, with hundreds of thousands of workers downing tools in protest against the slowing wage increases in the face of substantial inflation. Moreover, government maneuvers and the softening lines of social conflict have no doubt diminished the country's social movements. But they remain a political force and the experiences and efficacy of mass action learned in the *Argentinazo* have not been forgotten. Argentines from all sections of society are quick to mobilize—demonstrated in the ubiquitous 'pop-corn' protests around electricity cuts during the recent heat waves.

The factory occupations that garnered a lot of international attention have also been an important source of struggle experience even if they failed to meet some of the more optimistic expectations of the left. At present only a few more than 100 worker-controlled businesses continue to exist in marginal industries—with little or no expansion past the heat of the crisis in 2002. The occupied firms were ones abandoned by capitalists, which means they were generally less profitable with outdated machinery, and workers quickly felt the pressures of the law of value, combined with general hostility from the capitalist production chains with which they were integrated and other difficulties like tenuous property rights. Many firms quickly closed, others conformed to "normal" modes of doing business based on the supremacy of the bottom-line and lost their connections to the left. Nevertheless, the experiences in self-management of production, the politics and practicalities of takeovers, and indeed the limitations of socialism "in the interstices" are valuable advances and contributions to the radical traditions of the Argentine working class.[3]

The greater degree of social mobilization is crucial in distinguishing Argentinian neo-reformism from its more moderate variant to the North—only now are the managers of PT becoming subject to the same level of popular assertiveness that has been a constant specter for the PJ. The greater degree of social mobilization has at times forced the Kirchner regime into fairly frontal confrontations with capital in order to keep the neo-developmentalist project on a tight course, such as with the (re)nationalization of the energy company YPF. Despite the excoriation of the mainstream press, however, that move was by no means an anti-capitalist impulse. State control of energy is a fairly basic element in any moderate developmentalist

canon, and the recent energy crisis shows just how moderate this one is. Any doubts about this should have been dispelled by the $5 billion settlement that the Argentine government has just reached with YPF's previous owners. Other nationalizations have been highly selective—aimed at a coordinated industrial policy and not at impinging on capitalist power.

At this point it is worth mentioning that the progress on social indicators appraised above is certainly diminished when the base year is set before the crisis instead of at its nadir, although progress is still visible. Argentina's social programs, moreover, conform to the neoliberal "safety net" models that have become popular in the region and in no way function as a springboard to the kind of substantive redistribution needed to seriously challenge deeply inscribed inequality. Similarly, macroeconomic indicators look more modest when measured against pre-crisis levels. Indeed, the most unrelenting left critics are unwilling to credit Kirchnerism with anything more than turning the lights back on in existing factories and finding the fairies of international commodity markets. This is mistaken in my view. The boom of Néstor's first years undoubtedly masked the re-ignition of existing capacity but GDP was already at pre-crisis levels by 2005 and between then and 2011 it grew cumulatively by around 60 percent, despite the global downturn. A more important debate concerns the role of soya and mining exports in achieving this. The term "extractivism" is gaining increasing currency in political economic discussion of the region, but although this has merit in drawing attention to the growing weight of mining and destructive agriculture, its use has tended to purvey a certain reductionism. Exports as a percentage of GDP, including agricultural exports, actually decreased during the boom years of 2002 – 2008 and contributed only 7.6 percentage points to growth for the period, compared with 45.4 for consumption and 26.4 for investment.[4]

Cleaving to neoliberalism during spiraling crises of the early 2000s would have meant ruination for Argentina's ruling classes. The country's successes since then have been the product of sound heterodox economics, which won the acceptance of large sections of capital if only in the interests of self-preservation. Argentina was ostracized by international financial markets following the debt default, which not only protected it from the destabilization that has haunted other developing countries but provided the political space for alternatives. The Kirchners laid a path for wage-led growth but not one insensitive to the demands of the external sector, which was bolstered by high commodity prices. Investment to meet internal demand created by above-productivity wage increases and high government spending was secured by a smart industrial policy involving selective tariffs, promotion of small and medium enterprises, and improved credit access.[5] A carefully managed currency helped to keep exports competitive and encourage some measure of import-substitution. The result was an industrial boom in which the growth of non-traditional sectors like agricultural machinery and electrical equipment exceeded traditional exports.[6] Foreign direct investment had a minimal role to play in all this and minimal participation in international financial markets insulated Argentina somewhat from the worst effects of the global crisis.

The right and the far left have at times converged in dismissing the macroeconomic successes of Kirchnerism as simply the epiphenomena of a commodity boom, centered on soya. But whilst this is misguided, favorable commodity indexes have undoubtedly been important in providing external stability for a financial pariah, and their recent misfortunes are compounding current difficulties. The explosion of the soya sector has had other major political economic impacts. When the administration of Carlos Menem admitted the use of genetically modified (GM) seeds in 1996, soya occupied just six million hectares of arable land. By 2013

it had ballooned to nearly 20 million hectares—over half of the agricultural surface, setting off a major transformation in the rural areas. The soya industry is highly concentrated with just a handful of conglomerates controlling the vast majority of production and most of the bounty in the international value chains accruing to a clique of multinationals associated with processing, including Cargill, Bunge, and Dreyfus.[7] Production is capital intensive and the massive displacement of labor as traditional sectors are steamrolled is fermenting a social crisis in rural areas—one that will intersect with an even deeper ecological one if the GM seeds' environmentalist detractors are to be believed. Added to this, the Gadarene rush for land is causing a spike in brutal conflicts in rural Argentina, with one NGO recording almost 250 incidents in the North in 2011 alone, the overwhelming majority of which were related to land.[8]

The superprofits in the sector are engorging the power and influence of a particularly reactionary, metropolitan-oriented fragment of the bourgeoisie hegemonizing a number of smaller producers and conservative rural populations. This bloc has no love of Kirchnerist dirigisme or the national development project it claims to orchestrate. In 2008 soya barons and CFK faced off when the latter attempted to capture a portion of soya rents for state coffers via a sliding export tax, with the expected revenue intended primarily for foreign debt repayments. The reaction was fierce involving massive protests, hundreds of thousands strong, that succeeded in constricting the flow of agricultural products to urban areas. In the end, CFK was defeated and forced to back down, setting the tax at a fixed rate.

The debacle graphically exposed the limitations of Kirchnerism. Neo-developmentalism's ability to override fractional interests in service to the management of capitalism for the class as a whole depends on some degree of coherence between those interests or a balance of class forces that enforces such a coherence. It's not clear that the notion of a "national bourgeoisie" ever made sense in anything more than a conjectural sense but in a globalized world it certainly has even less application. As some have noted, developmental projects on which the concept has been premised have tended to be self-liquidating as the sections of capital that grow up under protectionism evolve different interests and fight to retain state sponsorship but resist efforts at planning and coordination. In Argentina, many of the most dynamic sectors are those that are plugging into regional and international markets and value chains where competitiveness is more important than guarding national markets. With the pace of accumulation slowing down, direct confrontations with sections of capital that no longer have use for an energetic state will become more necessary—but winning those confrontations in the face of dissipating elite support would entail involving the streets in ways that Kichnerism could not manage and would not allow. The very reason CFK needed the dollars from the export tax—to repay the restructured debt—belies the timidity of her heterodox program and the growing compulsion to reintegrate into global financial structures under normal conditions. During the rural crisis, which dovetailed with large-scale right-wing protests demonstrating the erosion of CFK's upper-class support, many proclaimed prematurely the death of Kirchnerism.

> Peronism's phenomenal durability, through all the permutations and disappointments, remains a compelling social mystery.

It survived. But the obituaries are again appearing. Signs of resurfacing debt woes have the business media baying with *Schadenfreude*—ea-

ger to prove to a recalcitrant economy that there is no choice but the low-road of neoliberalism and absolute deference to financial markets. As this is being written in March 2014 the Argentinian peso is in a particularly slippery patch having lost over 15 percent of its value in just two months. The peso decline is most immediately related to U.S. Federal Reserve decisions to tighten the tap on quantitative easing which have had the same effect on most "emerging markets;" the Russian and South African currencies are at multi-year lows and Turkish, Brazilian, and Chilean exchange rates have also plummeted. But the storm engulfing the Argentinian economy is larger than the headwinds of global capital flows.

Whilst growth is still above world averages it has plummeted from the "Chinese rates" that predominated over most of the last decade, and investment has tailed with it. CFK's commitment to odious debt repayments and her failure to capture soya rents has led to de facto money printing that has boosted inflation rates well above 20 percent despite systemic misreporting by state agencies. The inflation is beginning to take effect, rendering Argentinian exports less competitive. Added to this, the slowdown in commodity prices with easing of Chinese growth and the worsening outlook of key trade partners like Brazil is putting significant downward pressure on the peso. Attempts to counteract this pressure are draining foreign reserves, which are presently around US$30 billion—down almost a quarter over the course of 2013. In late 2013 a U.S. court ruled that Argentina must repay its debts to international lenders that refused the initial restructuring agreements—the so-called "vulture funds" that deliberately buy bonds at discount rates with the express intention of bringing borrowers to court in international jurisdictions when the inevitable default occurs. Argentina has refused to recognize the authority of these courts but a legal default, however odious its basis, will worsen relations with the financial markets that CFK is fighting so hard to repair. In all of this Argentina's historical predilection for crises is being repeatedly evoked by an indignant business press, spurring the jitters of investors and putting wind in the sails of burgeoning capital flight.

The doom mongering is probably unfounded in the near term at least; past mistakes are unlikely to repeat in the same way. CFK's new finance minister Axel Kiciloff—a former Marxist who wrote his PhD on Marx and Keynes and was instrumental in establishing the Economists of the Left—has already made moves towards a managed devaluation of the peso and the easing of certain capital controls, whilst railing against currency speculators. The devaluation will ease the pressure on foreign reserves and could give a shot in the arm to Argentine exports but could also stoke inflation, worsening the foreign-denominated debt burden and harming the workers and the poor. A raft of price controls announced last year to prevent the latter outcome contained loopholes that a container ship could fit through and seemed to amount to little more than a populist gambit.

It seems quite possible for Argentina to avoid another hard landing, but it will be much harder to restore the fortunes of the economy when consumption-based growth seems to have run into the familiar territory of an inflationary spiral and the international environment remains sclerotic. Kirchnerism has no vision of socialism—only one of "serious capitalism"—and all the signs suggest that "serious capitalism" in this conjuncture demands rationalization and deflation, squeezing workers to slip through the impasse. But whilst Kiciloff's erstwhile comrades hold little faith that he will rediscover his more radical heritage, his promotion does signify that austerity is not the immediate agenda and that a few more tricks in the post-Keynesian arsenal are still to be tried. Late last year he announced a US$21 billion stimulus program aimed to create 830,000 jobs and US$1.5 billion in government-backed

peso-denominated business loans. Whatever the outcome it seems that contemporary Argentina will make an interesting future case study on the fate of Keynesianism in practice.

Incipient signals of an economic turn for the worse and Kirchnerism's diminishing capacity to channel some of the economy's dividends downwards were behind the reversal in CFK's electoral fortunes in the October 2013 mid-terms. Although still the largest electoral formation, her Front for Victory managed only 33 percent of the vote—down more than 20 percent from two years earlier—and conceded the key constituency of Buenos Aires to a right-wing Peronist dissident, Sergio Massa. The far right governor of Buenos Aires, Mauricio Macri, and centrist Socialist Party leader Herman Binner also gained. The results put the handbrake on CFK's attempts to seek a third term through constitutional amendments. In recent months, affected by sickness, she has receded into the political background, maneuvering her Chief of Cabinet, Jorge Capitanich, into effective control of routine administration and setting him up as a potential successor candidate.

The other big winner in the mid-term elections was the Frente de Izquierda Trabajadores (FIT), the Workers Left Front, a coalition of three Trotskyist parties that won around 1.15 million votes—close to 6 percent—giving them three national deputies who will be remunerated at average wages (the rest of the far left added another half million or so votes). The result is a historic breakthrough for the Front, which formed in 2011, and comes on the back of a strong campaign that focused on concrete issues like nationalization and capping pension and income taxes. In certain regions such as Salta and Mendoza, FIT's achievement was even stronger, polling at over 15 percent. Trotskyism has historically been influential in Argentina given Stalinism's disastrous efforts to navigate around Peronism and its complicity in the military dictatorship. The Movemiento al Socialismo led by Nahuel Moreno during the 1980s was at one point probably the largest revolutionary party in the world; two of FIT's smaller parties trace their lineage to it. Today, the constituents of FIT are separated more by traditions, matters of form, and histories of animosity than any theoretical or programmatic questions. All of them retain a degree of orthodoxy uncommon in formations of their size, which has tended to incubate some of the more unfortunate traits of later twentieth-century Troskyism, such as an unbounded optimism of the intellect with a propensity to perceive bourgeois crisis and revolutionary upheaval where neither exist. A certain maximalist politics and sectarianism is concomitant with this.

> Kirchnerism has no vision of socialism—only one of "serious capitalism."

This is perhaps most visible in their critical view of Chavism and twenty-first century socialism, which they regard as an undistinguished and unremarkable variant of social democracy with all the usual overtones of betrayal and complicity. Their stance bears ample references to revolutionary experience from different historical times and locations, with little attempt to problematize the comparisons or acknowledge complexities, suggesting a dogmatism that will be severely limiting in the current context. FIT parties support a variety of dubious anti-Chavist groups, and in the recent unrest have called for resistance to right-wing violence but without lending any support to the government, however that is supposed to work. In part this stance is explained by the long shadow of Peronism over Argentine history and the extensive experience of revolutionaries with the dangers and limitations of military caudillos and nationalist populism. No doubt the hard-won lessons from

that experience will weigh in the advantage of socialism at a more advanced point of class struggle but it is hard not to think that at present they act to prevent the FIT parties from taking part in the broad left regroupment that will be needed to provide a credible alternative to Kirchnerism or whatever succeeds it. FIT's failure to recognize the genuine anti-imperialism in the Bolivarian movement in Venezuela, or its capacity to open up spaces for socialist advancement, puts it askance of important trajectories in the Latin American left.

Unlike with so many questions of internationalism during times of left weakness, the stakes here are not merely abstract principles. FIT's electoral success was greeted with great enthusiasm by a wide array of forces, some marching under a banner of "New Leftism" that calls for a serious re-appraisal of the "partial conquests" of the last decades and their importance for socialist strategy. Some of these groups called for a supporting vote. The current political landscape—with no credible left alternative to a Kirchnerism in decline—would seem to provide auspicious conditions for growth and indeed FIT activists are highly optimistic. An open-ended approach by FIT leaders, building on the electoral successes, could lay the ground for a serious phase of socialist convergence. But, regrettably, those successes do not seem to have generated the unifying enthusiasm that one would have expected, or even to have ameliorated centrifugal tendencies within the Front. The formation of FIT was in part compelled by changes in election laws that required a certain percentage for participation, and so far genuine unity does not seem to have displaced simple expediency in holding the group together. Each continues to engage in fairly vicious polemic and petty dispute with the other, holding up their own tradition as the authentic custodian of revolutionary politics and the vanguard-in-miniature.

It remains too soon to pronounce on the fate of Kirchnerism (or left Peronism) which has returned more than once from the brink. But whether it manages to reconstitute its support base and retain power in 2015 or whether it is replaced by a dissident right Peronism under Massa or some other coalition of forces (a Socialist Party alliance with the social liberal Radical Civic Union is one contender) may make only slight difference in economic orientation. The national bourgeois project in Argentina is facing far greater difficulties than it has so far faced and without any strong influence of mass forces over its political institutions its likely trajectory, so history would suggest, is a rightwards capitulation and efforts to restore "competitiveness" to the economy. We can hope at least that its demise will fertilize a political movement capable of deepening the post-neoliberal process in Latin America.

NOTES

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China's Emergence as an Imperialist Power

Michael Pröbsting

One of the most important issues in world politics today is China's rise as a great imperialist power. Most left-wing writers consider China either as a "socialist country," a "deformed workers' state," or as a "dependent capitalist country" exploited by Western monopolies. As I have elaborated elsewhere, I believe that such analyses, positions, and terminology deriving from Communist, post-Trotskyist, and dependency theorists fail to understand China's transformation into an imperialist Great Power during the past decade.

I am of the opinion that China has never been an *authentic* socialist country. Rather, under the Stalinist leadership of Mao Tse-tung and the Communist Party, in the early 1950s China became a state ruled by a bureaucratic dictatorship that devised and implemented a planned economy (what Leon Trotsky called a "degenerated workers' state"). However, given the worldwide decline of the Stalinist states in the 1980s, and following the repression of the Chinese workers' and students' uprising in May-June 1989, in the early 1990s leading circles in the ruling bureaucracy began the process of transforming the country into a capitalist-based economy. In contrast to the USSR and the Eastern European states, however, the Chinese leaders were determined to retain the previous state-form of a one-party dictatorship. Hence, they became what can be called a "Stalinist-capitalist ruling class."

China's Road to Capitalism

The consequences of this decision were a wave of privatizations, mass layoffs, and the emergence of private capital. In sum, China reintroduced what Marx had called the capitalist 'law of value,' i.e. that the country's economy is based on sale of labor power on the market which results in the exploitation of workers and the accumulation of capital and all its attendant side-effects and results. This becomes clear from a number of developments that resulted from the pro-capitalist switch in policy of the regime.

A major step in implementing the law of value in China's state-owned enterprises (SOEs) was a ruthless wave of layoffs. According to official figures published in the Chinese Communist Party's mouthpiece *People's Daily* (Oct. 27, 2002), more than 26 million workers were laid off from state-owned enterprises between 1998 and 2002.

Another report by a researcher working at the China Institute of Industrial Relations, the institute of the official trade union All China Federation of Trade Unions, gives the figure of "around 30 million employees, or half the total SOE workforce."

Another attack on the Chinese working class—i.e., those who don't own enterprises but

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only their own labor power and were forced to sell it on the labor market—was the shift from lifetime employment to a system of contract labor. Under this new system, workers had to sign and annually renew their contracts with the management on an individual basis. Despite prolonged resistance by the workers, the state bureaucracy eventually succeeded in implementing this policy. Thus, while in 1986 only 6 percent of workers in state-owned enterprises were employed under the contract arrangement, by 1994 this share increased to a quarter of all SOE workers. A further example of the regime's attack on Chinese workers was the introduction of piece-rate wages, where each worker receives varying wages depending on individual output.

The State Sector Transformed

Since the beginning of its transition to capitalism, China's state sector has substantially decreased in size. Today, most of China's production output is generated by the private sector. According to the World Bank and the Chinese Development Research Center of the State Council, non-state sectors today account for about 70 percent of the country's GDP and employment. Between 1998 and 2010, the share of State Owned Enterprises in total industrial assets fell from 68.8 percent to 42.4 percent, while their share of employment declined from 60.5 percent to 19.4 percent. The SOEs' share of China's exports also fell from 57 percent in 1997 to 15 percent in 2010.

While the state sector still plays an important role in China's economy, it has undergone a massive transformation since the (re)introduction of the capitalist mode of production in the early 1990s. This transformation was dictated by the primary goal of changing it from a state-bureaucratic into a state-capitalist sector. Consequently, a ubiquitous process of downsizing and restructuring took place during the 1990s, when thousands of the state-owned enterprises went bankrupt while many more were fused into larger units.

According to a report of the Chinese researcher Dongtao, by 2005 over 85 percent of all small and medium-sized SOEs had been restructured and privatized. The World Bank commented approvingly: "Many SOEs were corporatized, radically restructured (including labor shedding), and expected to operate at a profit.… As a result, the profitability of China's SOEs increased." (China 2030, *Building a Modern, Harmonious, and Creative High-Income Society*, p. 111.)

As a result of this transition, both the state capitalist and the private capitalist sectors significantly increased their rate of profit. According to calculations by two Chinese socialist economists, Zhang Yu and Zhao Feng, the rate of profit in Chinese manufacturing industries tripled between the late 1990s and 2004.

According to figures from the World Bank and the Chinese Development Research Center of the State Council, profits of SOEs and even more so of non-state enterprises continued to grow in the first decade of the 2000s. SOEs reported an increase in average return on equity from 2.2 percent in 1996 to 15.7 percent in 2007, before declining somewhat to 10.9 percent in 2009. During this period, the return on equity of non-state enterprises climbed to more than 20 percent. As we will see below this is the result of the massive drop of the workers' wage share in national income.

Despite its substantially lower share in the economy, the state-capitalist sector still plays an important role in the Chinese economy. Today, state-owned enterprises account for approximately 35 percent of the fixed-asset investments made by Chinese firms. More than two-thirds of Chinese companies in the global *Fortune* 500 are state-owned enterprises. The biggest state-owned enterprises, excluding banks and insurance companies, are directed by means of controlling stakes owned by a central holding company known as the State-Owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC). The majority of banks and insur-

ance companies are owned by other agencies of the state.

As we have said, these state-owned enterprises are operated as capitalist units, i.e. each company is run according to the principle of profitability (which was not the case before the 1990s). They are mostly stock companies for which the state holds the majority of shares (similar to what exists in many Western European countries). Their operation based on the capitalist law of value also finds expression in the fact that for these enterprises dividends—which have increased since a reform introduced in 2007 to between 5-15 percent of profits—do not go to the Finance Ministry, the formal majority shareholder, but are funneled into a special fund reserved for financing state enterprises, i.e., to themselves. As *The Economist* has accurately written, "SOE dividends, in other words, are divided among SOEs." (May 26, 2012). This shows again that the state enterprises function according to the capitalist law of accumulation for profit.

China Becomes a Major World Economic Power

Since the former bureaucracy introduced capitalism in the early 1990s the Chinese economy has grown rapidly. In terms of total world output measured by GDP, China's share has grown massively in the past two decades. While China produced in 1991 4.1 percent of global output, this figure rose to 14.3 percent in 2011. This makes it the world's second-largest economy. At the same time, the U.S. share declined from 24.1 percent to 19.1 percent in 2011.

In manufacturing—the core sector where capitalist value is produced—China has even become the world's leading economy. Doing so, it displaced the United States as the leading industrial commodities producer, a position which it had held for 110 years. By 2011, a fifth of world manufacturing came from China (19.8 percent) while 19.4 percent originated in the U.S. economy. Parallel to this, China has become the world's leading exporter.

China's economic strength is also reflected in its low level of indebtedness to the global financial market. As a share of its Gross National Income, China's external debt stands at only 9.3 percent and its debt service to exports is 2.5 percent. In fact, as we shall see below, other countries are indebted to China's financial capital. Hence, from this angle too, we see that not only is China not a dependent, super-exploited semi-colony, as some theorists have argued, but rather an emerging imperialist power.

Of course, this analysis cannot ignore the gap that still exists in labor productivity between the old imperialist economies and China's. While the manufacturing output of the United States and China is nearly the same, in 2010 U.S. capitalists produced this output with only 11.5 million workers compared to the 100 million workers needed by their Chinese rivals. China lags behind the old imperialist economies in technological development, having a substantially lower use of machinery in the production process. This is reflected in China's level of capital stock per worker which is less than a tenth of that of the United States (converted at market exchange rates). This does not, however, alter the fact that China has become one of the world's largest capitalist economies.

Is China immune to economic crisis and slump? Such a view has been spread by various Western authors praising China as the new economic model (before it was Japan, Germany, etc.). On the other hand, Paul Krugman has raised the issue of a coming slump of China's economy ("Hitting China's Wall," *New York Times*, July 18, 2013). Discussing this issue in detail is beyond the scope of this article, but it is clear that China, as a capitalist country, is subject to the law of value. Thus, sooner or later, it will inevitably face a sharp recession. This, however, is also true for the other Great Powers. In addition, China has accumulated sufficient economic and military power to remain a Great Power even if it experiences a slump. Remember

Japan, which remains an economic power even after two decades of stagnation and slump.

China's Monopolies

Despite significant Western and Japanese foreign investment in China, the ruling class in Beijing has avoided having its economy dominated by foreign monopolies. Quite to the contrary, it has developed strong Chinese monopolies that today have become so-called "global players." This becomes obvious when one examines the advance of Chinese monopolies among the largest global corporations. In *The Forbes Global 2000*—an index of the biggest, most powerful companies in the world—China already ranks third: 121 companies on this list are Chinese, being surpassed only by the United States (524 companies) and Japan (258 companies). In 2012, these 121 Chinese monopolies had an aggregate profit of $168 billion (7 percent of the total profit of the world's 2,000 largest companies).

In the *Fortune Global 500*—another index of the world's largest corporations that uses different criteria—we can see the same dynamic of China's important and growing share among the world's super-monopolies. Of the ten largest global corporations—the ultra-super monopolies as it were—three are Chinese: the petroleum corporations Sinopec and China National Petroleum and the energy corporation State Grid. If one examines the home country of these top 500 global corporations, we see that China has overtaken Japan and is now ranked in second place: 73 of these corporations are Chinese, 132 are American, 68 are Japanese, and France and Germany have 32 each. (For comparison: in 2001, only 12 corporations from China were listed.) Again, as was the case when we examined China's advance in its share of the world's output and exports, here too its advance has been paralleled by a decline in the leading position of U.S. imperialism. While in the early 2000s, 197 corporations among the *Fortune Global 500* were headquartered in the United States, by 2012, this figure was down to 132.

In short, we see that China's monopolies are among the world's most powerful. This is yet a further indication that China has become an imperialist Great Power.

Exploitation and Super-Exploitation of the Working Class

The material basis for China's leap to imperialist power has been the creation of a massive amount of surplus value through the super-exploitation of its working class. Throughout the twentieth century, with the exception of the imperialist fascist regimes, there has been no other capitalist power that could so effectively both exploit its working class as well as extract huge extra-profits by the super-exploitation of the majority of its proletariat. This is the "secret" behind the Chinese economic miracle.

As we described above, the regime successfully transformed the Chinese worker's labor power into a commodity by means of mass lay-offs, restructuring and shrinking the state sector, and the parallel nurturing of the private sector. However, the ruling bureaucracy also utilized specific laws promulgated during the Stalinist era to ensure the super-exploitation of the Chinese working class.

A decisive instrument for this was the utilization of the old household registration system set up by the Stalinist bureaucracy in 1958. According to this system (called *hukou* in China),

> residents were not allowed to work or live outside the administrative boundaries of their household registration without approval of the authorities. Once they left their place of registration, they would also leave behind all of their rights and benefits. For the purpose of surveillance, everyone, including temporary residents in transit, was required to register with the police of their place of residence and their temporary residence. By the 1970s, the system became so rigid that "peasants could be arrested just for entering cities." ("Migrant workers in China," *China Labour Bulletin,* June 6, 2008, http://www.clb.org.hk/en/

node/100259.)

Given extreme rural poverty and the opportunity for jobs in the cities, millions upon millions of mostly young peasants moved to the cities to seek employment. In China, these former peasants or peasant youth who moved to the cities are called "migrants." While this category is somewhat misleading, since the word "migrant" is most typically applied to those who move from one country to another, it is true that these rural-to-urban migrant workers move to cities where they often live illegally and—because of the *hukou* system—have no access to housing, recognized employment, education, medical services, or social security. Their living conditions are very poor; most of them reside in decrepit housing, tents, underneath bridges, inside tunnels, or even in the trunks of cars.

These migrants rapidly became a major source of grist in the capitalist mill of super-exploitation. According to the *China Labour Bulletin*, the total number of migrant workers from the countryside is somewhere between 200-300 million, of whom some 140 million are working in the cities. In the capital city, Beijing, migrant workers constitute about 40 percent of the total population, while nearly 12 million of Shenzhen's 14 million people are migrants. These migrant workers are usually pushed into work-intensive, low-wage jobs. Migrants make up 58 percent of all industrial workers and 52 percent of service sector workers.

Related to this predominance of migrant workers is the existence of a huge so-called informal sector that, given its precarious conditions, is a breeding ground for super-exploitation. According to official figures, the informal sector accounted in the first decade of this century for 30-37 percent of the total urban labor force.

This super-exploitation of the workers—in which the Stalinist-capitalist ruling class depressed workers' wages way below their value—is the main reason for the spectacular growth of Chinese profits. The other side of this same coin is the rapid decrease of workers' wage share in the national income. The share of industrial workers' wages in China's manufacturing value added dropped from 52.3 percent in 2002 to 26.2 percent in 2008. Total wages declined as a share of GDP from 57 percent in 1983 to just 37 percent by 2005.

The Chinese researcher Dongtao has published figures indicating a huge rise of the rate of exploitation of China's working class in the past two decades:

> Wages constitute less than 10 per cent of total cost of Chinese enterprises, while that for developed countries is about 50 per cent. In the Pearl River Delta, productivity is about 17 per cent that of the US, but workers' wages are only about 6.7 per cent that of the US. From 1990 through 2005, labor remuneration as proportion of GDP declined from 53.4 per cent to 41.4 per cent in China. From 1993 through 2004, while Chinese GDP increased by 3.5 times, total wages increased by only 2.4 times. From 1998 to 2005, in SOEs and large scale industrial enterprises, the percentage of total wages/profit dropped significantly from 240 percent to 43 percent. (Qi Dongtao, "Chinese Working Class and Trade Unions in the Post-Mao Era: Progress and Predicament," *International Journal of China Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2, October 2010, p. 420.)

The New Bourgeoisie

Based on such intensive super-exploitation of its working class, the Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy was able to create a new indigenous bourgeoisie from among its own ranks. A major result of this process of rapid capital accumulation has been the growth of a significant private capitalist sector.

The creation of a Chinese capitalist class is also reflected in the prominent place the country's super-rich increasingly take among the world's exclusive club of multi-millionaires. According to the *Hurun Report*, the number of millionaires in China surpassed one million for the first time in 2010. Of these, 251 are dollar billionaires, up from as few as only 15 billion-

aires six years ago. About half of the millionaires are business owners, and the rest are investors in stocks or real estate or are high-level executives. China's super-rich are mostly business owners.

This growing Chinese capitalist class is, of course, still substantially smaller than its U.S. rival, but it is already on an equal footing with other Great Powers. This reflects the rapid rise of China's super-rich. According to the *World Wealth Report 2012*, published by Capgemini and RBC Wealth Management, China ranks fourth in the number of super-rich, trailing behind only the United States, Japan, and Germany, but leading Britain, France, and Canada. The general picture, however, is pretty clear: China's emergence as a new imperialist power has been accompanied by the formation of a super-rich class of monopoly capitalists. To summarize, China's new capitalist class is playing in the top league of the capitalists alongside the super-rich of other imperialist Great Powers.

However, as we showed above, China's state sector remains important. Here too, the top positions in the state-owned enterprises are dominated by the sons and daughters of the leaders of the party bureaucracy. A study prepared by two scholars, Li-Wen Lin and Curtis J. Milhaupt, described the very close relations between and intermeshing of the party, state, and the state-owned enterprises. Justifiably, they conclude: "We call the organizational structure of state capitalism as practiced in China a networked hierarchy."

Capital Export as Bond and Loan Capital

One of the most important characteristics of an imperialist bourgeoisie, as Lenin and other Marxist theorists have argued, is its formation of monopolies that export capital. Indeed, such a development has been taking place in China during the last decade. Above, we have already given the figures for the Chinese monopolies that have become among the largest global corporations, which has resulted in China's enormously increased capital export.

China's rapid growth as a capital exporter has taken place on two levels: productive investment and finance capital (bonds, loans, etc.). As a result of its tremendously rapid accumulation of capital from production, Chinese imperialism has also accumulated huge volumes of finance capital. This finds expression in the extraordinarily rapid growth of the country's foreign exchange reserves. These reserves skyrocketed from $165 billion in 2000 to $3,305 billion in March 2012. As such, China's foreign exchange reserves equal the combined sum of the next six largest foreign exchange reserves holders! Of course, foreign exchange reserves are not bundles of paper money stuffed in a safe, but money capital which is put in circulation as loans to return to the holder a share of the surplus value created by the borrowing country. Usually, foreign exchange reserves are invested in relatively secure deposits like government bonds, deposits in the Bank for International Settlements, or Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) maintained by the International Monetary Fund. In fact about 83 percent of China's total assets of $ 3.4 trillion are foreign exchange reserves, and most of these are invested in foreign governmental bonds.

Recently, China's U.S. bond holdings have made it the largest foreign funder of the U.S. debt. Of all U.S. debt holders, with $1.73 trillion China ranks third behind only two U.S. domestic government institutions. Recently, China's state capital has also begun purchasing shares of the Eurozone's public debt.

China is also an active lender in bilateral loans. According to the *Financial Times*, Chinese banks have emerged as a major financier over the past few years. It is already lending more money to so-called developing countries than is the World Bank. In 2009 and 2010, the China Export Import Bank and China Development Bank signed loans of at least $110 billion to the governments and companies of developing countries. (By comparison, from

mid-2008 to mid-2010 the World Bank made commitments of $100.3 billion.)

Capital Export as Foreign Direct Investment

However, China's capital is active not only in the international loan and bond markets, but also in the form of foreign investments in the industrial and raw material sector. As China has only recently emerged as an imperialist power, it is still a weaker player in the global market than those imperialist powers that have dominated international finance for more than a century. Thus the old imperialist powers have an outward stock of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) larger than China's (as share of global FDI stock: United States: 21.1 percent, Britain: 8.1 percent, Germany: 6.8 percent, France: 6.4 percent, Hong Kong: 4.9 percent, China: 1.7 percent). However, the last is already not far behind imperialist Italy (2.4 percent).

Moreover, one must bear in mind that China started its massive foreign investment drive only a few years ago. While China's share of global FDI stock was only 0.2 percent in 1990 and 0.4 percent in 2000, since then it has more than quadrupled to 1.7 percent.

This phenomenal increase is attributable to China's rapid catch-up during the 2000s, its outward FDI having rapidly grown since 2005. According to official Chinese statistics, the country's FDI from 2005 to mid-2012 was $344.8 billion. In 2009-2011 China's annual FDI outward flows already surpassed those of rivals like Canada and Italy, and more recently has already reached the level of countries like Germany.

In which regions and countries is China investing abroad? Let us look at the destination of China's non-bond investments. According to the Heritage Foundation, the most important countries are (in billions of U.S. dollars, 2005-2010): Australia ($45.3), the United States ($42), Brazil ($25.7), Indonesia ($23.3), Nigeria ($18.8), Canada and Iran (each $17.2), and Kazakhstan ($12.3). Also important are investments of about $5 billion in Greece and about $8.9 billion in Venezuela.

Super-Exploitation of the Semi-Colonies

As we have seen above, China's monopolies channel a significant proportion of their foreign investments to semi-colonial countries like Nigeria, Indonesia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Greece, and Venezuela. One can conservatively estimate that 800,000 foreign employees of Chinese corporations are located in semi-colonial countries.

While it is true that China still lags substantially behind the old imperialist powers in outward foreign direct investment stocks, its role in the semi-colonial countries is rapidly increasing. In 2010, China became the third-largest investor in Latin America, behind the United States and the Netherlands.

Among other strategic investments like oil companies, Chinese monopolies focus on the control of vitally important infrastructure projects like ports. For example, China has already invested $200 million in building a modern port in Gwadar in Pakistan's southwestern province of Baluchistan, whose national minority is severely repressed by the Pakistani state (with the support of both U.S. and Chinese money and weapons).

Another example is the take-over of Papua New Guinea's $1.37 billion Ramu Nickel mine by the China Metallurgical Construction Corporation (MCC)—one of the largest and most profitable of China's state-owned enterprises—together with three Chinese steel companies. This represents China's largest investment in the South Pacific. During the next twenty years, this mine is expected to annually produce 31,650 tons of nickel and 3,352 tons of cobalt, all of which will be shipped to China. Local communities have resisted these projects as strongly as was possible, because they devastate the area and poison the water. Basamuk Bay located in this region is in danger of becoming

the dumping area for a hundred million tons of tailings from the Ramu mine over the next two decades. This will destroy the living conditions of the local population.

Similarly, China's state-owned shipping giant Cosco recently took over Greece's largest port, Piraeus, one of the most important ports in the Eastern Mediterranean region. Cosco signed a 35-year lease and paid $4.2 billion for the rights. According to reports, Cosco is seeking to transform Piraeus into a much larger port to rival Rotterdam in the Netherlands, currently the largest European port. It aims to double the traffic at Piraeus to 3.7 million containers by 2015. Cosco has also recently expanded in Italy, acquiring the port of Naples.

China's Military Forces

China is a rising power not only economically, but also politically and militarily. Between 2002 and 2011, China increased its military spending by 170 percent. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), China today has the world's second largest military budget, surpassed only by the United States. In addition, China is the world's fifth largest nuclear power behind the United States, Russia, Britain, and France. China's military has undergone rapid modernization during the past decade, and today possesses serious military capabilities for launching offensive wars. It recently proved that it can shoot down satellites. China is not only the second largest military spender and the fifth largest nuclear power; it is also home to large arms manufacturers. SIPRI ranks the Chinese arms monopolies as fifth among all competitors in the global armament market.

The background for this massive drive to arm itself is that China, as a new, emerging imperialist power, is plagued by an historic weakness: it is a latecomer to the arena of imperialist power. Consequently, its immediately neighboring areas are already within the spheres of influence of other hegemonial powers. To its north and west the main rival is Russia, while—and today, this is the more important theater—to its south and east are its rivals, the United States and Japan. The significance of this is that China can only create its own (semi-)colonial sphere of influence by openly confronting other Great Powers. In this respect, its fate is not dissimilar from the historic situation of Germany in the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries, which could only create its empire by challenging existing Great Powers like France, Britain, and Russia. It is this background that explains the increasing friction between China and neighboring countries like Japan, Vietnam, and the Philippines in the so-called East China and South China Seas.

Summary

To summarize, the continued existence of a strong, centralized Stalinist bureaucracy and the brutal suppression of China's working class enabled the new capitalist ruling class to subjugate and super-exploit the majority of the country's massively growing proletariat. On this basis, capitalists—both Chinese and foreign—were able to extract huge amounts of surplus value destined for capital accumulation. While foreign imperialist monopolies also profited from this super-exploitation of the working class, it was primarily the Chinese bourgeoisie that benefited. As a result, Chinese capital was able to develop monopolies that play an important role not only in the domestic market but also increasingly in the world market. Today China's monopolies are among the most important exporters of capital. China is not only an emerging economic power, but a political and military power as well. It already has the world's second largest military budget. In addition, it is the fifth largest nuclear power and the fifth largest exporter of arms. Thus China has become a capitalist Great Power on an economic, political, and military level. It is hardly surprising that the United States, the strongest Great Power until now, fears China's rise more than anything else.

Rosa Luxemburg: Economics for a New Socialist Project

Ingo Schmidt

Right-wing militias killed Rosa Luxemburg and dumped her dead body into the Landwehr Canal after the Spartacus uprising in Berlin. Social democrats and communists finished off her intellectual and political legacy by putting her on their respective pedestals. She became a principal witness against Bolshevik organizing practices for the former and was praised as a co-founder of the German Communist Party and a revolutionary martyr by the latter. Both united in denouncing her economic theory as fatalistic, if not plain wrong, and her political strategy as voluntaristic praise of spontaneity. The reason for these attacks is easy to understand: Luxemburg saw unions and parties as a means to achieve workers' self-emancipation, social democrats and communists saw them as indispensable engines for building organized capitalism or socialism in one country, respectively. The post-war boom, unprecedented in strength and duration, did its part in sinking Luxemburg's dire prognoses about capitalism's fate.

Only maverick thinkers Hannah Arendt, Joan Robinson, Michal Kalecki, and Tony Cliff[1] drew inspiration from Luxemburg's economic work during the long boom. This exquisite but largely unknown quartet, one Marxist, one Keynesian Marxist, and two non-Marxist women, illustrates the marginalization of Luxemburg's legacy during those days. In a way, it also foreshadowed the bitter disputes between socialists and feminists that would erupt in the aftermath of 1960s New Leftism. Ironically, very few feminists adopted the intractable Marxist Luxemburg.[2]

Leftists interested in Luxemburg's work looked at her politics but had little time for economics. Disgusted with dictatorial and ossified communism in the East and social democratic involvement in welfare state management in the West and the latter's complicity in imperialist wars and neocolonial exploitation, they sought democratic and participatory alternatives. Luxemburg's critique of top-down organizing and her focus on rank-and-file experiences and learning processes as a prerequisite for socialist transformation certainly offered brain fodder for these efforts.[3] However, the neglect of economics, which was widely shared across the left political spectrum, came at a price. The return of economic crises in the 1970s caught the left off guard while the right used it successfully to launch the neoliberal counterattack against labor and other social movements.[4]

It wasn't until the 1990s that a new generation of protestors, chanting "Our World Is Not for Sale," began to rally against the commodification of all aspects of life. Sadly, the rubble of Soviet communism also buried the traditions of critical or dissident Marxism. Henceforth, the political ideas of Rosa Luxemburg were only discussed on the margins of a marginal left.[5] Her economic ideas remained where they have

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almost always been: in oblivion.

But the series of economic crises, mass protests, and strikes beginning in 2008 led to a small resurgence of interest in Marxism in general and Marxian and Luxemburgian economics in particular.[6] The English edition of her collected works, including the first English-language edition of her "Introduction to Political Economy," certainly helps to broaden this discussion.[7] The mobilizing euphoria around Occupy Wall Street has ebbed and it is now time to Occupy Economics and put forward a new critique of political economy that will help build a new socialist project in the future.

Economics: Expansion, Accumulation, and Crisis

Much, but not all, of today's economic malaise can be analyzed within the theoretical framework that Marx established in *Capital*. His analyses of the production of absolute and relative surplus value in Volume I of *Capital* deliver the tools to understand the reorganization of labor processes and the technological changes that have occurred under the reign of neoliberalism. The same is true for corporate restructuring that brought the concentration and centralization of capital, another theme from Volume I, to new heights but also changed its character by shifting key control functions from industrial to financial capital. This financialization, along with its corollary financial manias and crashes, can be understood in terms of fictitious capital and the role of credit that Marx developed in Volume 3. His famous, though highly controversial, law of the falling rate of profit allows us to evaluate the successes and failures of the abovementioned restructuring efforts in boosting profits and accumulation.

Indeed, reading Marx' *Capital* today leaves the same impression as reading Luxemburg's *The Accumulation of Capital*. One wonders whether Marx and Luxemburg really wrote their books more than one hundred years ago. If not for their historical references to English industrialization and nineteenth-century imperialism, one might think they were written as analyses of neoliberal globalization from the late twentieth century until today. The question, then, is what Luxemburg has to offer that Marx has not already given us. One issue is politics, or, more precisely, the relation between economics and politics. Marx deals with the latter in a separate stream of writings, notably his analyses of class struggles in France from 1848 to 1871[8], but he never outlines their connection with his economic writings that, as already mentioned, focus largely on England.

Contrary to the strange separation between economics and politics in Marx' works, Luxemburg addresses the relations between them head on in *The Accumulation of Capital*. She shows how conservatives like Malthus, who recognized insufficient aggregate demand as the Achilles heel of capital accumulation, sought to fix this problem politically by protecting feudal classes of unproductive consumers.[9] She also points to suggestions to institute minimum wages to create effective demand.[10] Yet, she concluded from her analysis that the solution capitalists were seeking to this problem didn't lay in preserving pre-capitalist, as Malthus recommended, sectors of the economy or spurring domestic demand by way of rising wages. The former stood in the way of industrialization, the latter was considered as a threat to profits that capitalists would only accept if workers fought for it but would not impose voluntarily. Once industrialization had reached maturity and capitalists still being able to keep wages low, imperialist expansion seemed the only way to keep accumulation going. This expansion was pursued by means of international loans and militarism.[11]

Luxemburg's analysis of nineteenth-century colonialism also casts light on the mix of IMF structural adjustment programs and military intervention that the ruling classes of the West, typically in conjunction with comprador classes in the South, launched against twentieth century post-colonial regimes that tried to escape from

the imperatives of global capital accumulation. Her analysis of militarism shows that this imperialist policy is "a province of accumulation" in its own right. This understanding anticipates, albeit in embryonic form, the post-World War II arms economies in the West and the ideas of Keynesian demand management.

However, the key difference between Marx and Luxemburg is not the connections that they make between economics and politics but their treatment of non-capitalist milieus and their role for capitalist accumulation. Luxemburg insisted that Marx' model of expanded reproduction assumed sufficient aggregate demand without explaining its sources. From this critique, which takes up the entire first section, or 140 pages, of *The Accumulation of Capital*, she draws the conclusion that expansion into non-capitalist milieus is critical for the creation of effective demand and thus the continuation of capital accumulation. She explains this expansion in general terms as the replacement of natural, largely subsistence, economies by economies producing for commodity exchange that, using the abovementioned tools of loans and violence, would then be integrated into the circuits of capital accumulation.[12] The main areas of capitalist expansion during Luxemburg's lifetime were in the South, which was turned into capitalism's periphery as a result of nineteenth-century colonization. Yet, she made it abundantly clear that her model applies everywhere and that there were still significant non-capitalist milieus in the heartlands of capitalism.

With hindsight it is easy to see that the continued existence of craft producers, peasants, and shopkeepers, who produced commodities for sale but were not subjugated to the imperatives of capital accumulation, kept a lid on real wages and effective demand in the capitalist sectors of metropolitan economies. Wages in these sectors were in large measure determined by pre-capitalist social norms or, in E. P. Thompson's words, moral economies.[13] The actual or potential proletarianization of craft producers, peasants, and shopkeepers created an unlimited supply of labor beyond the industrial reserve army whose ranks were filled or depleted by the cyclical ups and downs of the capitalist business cycle.[14] Traditional sectors, embedded in the moral economies of pre-capitalist times, and capitalist sectors, driven by the imperatives of profit maximization, accumulation, and competition, were kept in a delicate balance that arrested the development of the kind of welfare capitalism that the revisionists in the Second International had envisioned. Tragically, it took the period of wars, revolutions, and counter-revolutions from 1914 to 1945, aptly called the "age of catastrophe" by Eric Hobsbawm,[15] to unsettle this balance and pave the way for the development of the welfare state.

The following decades saw not only the strongest growth in capitalist history but also wage increases and social reforms that went far beyond the temporary gains Luxemburg considered possible during the boom phases of the capitalist business cycle. Analysts sympathetic to the welfare state often present the post-World War II social compact as an institutional arrangement in which wage-led growth mitigated distributional conflict and class divisions.[16] Yet the main point these analysts make in support

of their thesis, linking real-wage development to productivity growth, calls this very thesis into question. If real wages follow productivity growth one has to ask why capitalists invest in more productive equipment and why these investments pay off. Unless one assumes that every investment produces its own demand, as (neo-)classical economists do, one has to explain where the demand that validates such investments comes from.

Luxemburg's demand-side Marxism offers an explanation to this puzzle. According to her, expansion into non-capitalist milieus, spurred by credit that allows individuals in these milieus to buy commodities from the capitalist sector, creates additional effective demand. This is the basis for capital accumulation and, as a dependent variable, wage-growth. Unions' "labor of Sisyphus" allows workers to obtain a wage that is "in accordance with the situation of the labor market." By "applying the capitalist law of wages … the depressing tendency of economic development is paralyzed."[17] In other words, wages don't drive capital accumulation but, if linked to productivity growth, can stabilize it. If they don't, as was the case during the "age of catastrophe" and again from the 1980s until the present, cyclical recessions turn into structural crises of capitalism. The defeats labor movements suffered after World War I and again during the 1970s were crucial for de-linking wages and productivity for decades and the subsequent build up for structural crises.

However, even when unions or accommodating labor laws allow wages to play their stabilizing function, accumulation still relies on increases in effective demand. Otherwise there is nothing to stabilize. Luxemburg, as already mentioned, saw these increases coming from colonial expansion in the South. The South also played a role in spurring demand after the Second World War. Faced with the spread of Soviet Communism, the Chinese revolution, and the radicalization of anti-imperialist movements, notably in Cuba and Vietnam, ruling classes in the West found it advisable to foster some level of industrial development in the post-colonial South. What some supporters saw as a way to self-reliance and auto-centric development soon turned out to be an outlet for Western investments and neocolonial domination.[18]

What was more important in economic terms, however, was the colonization of lifeworlds in the North.[19] The penetration of private households with mass-produced appliances and entertainment electronics replaced much economic activity that had previously been done outside the circuits of capital accumulation. The colonization, or commodification, of household production ranged from cooking and washing to canning and sewing. Sprawling cultural industries similarly colonized leisure time and also contributed to post-World War II prosperity.

Neocolonialism in the South and the commodification of lifeworlds in the North produced discontents that increasingly challenged the accumulation strategies underlying them. Some developmentalist projects that took the promises of self-reliance and auto-centric development seriously found themselves in ever-sharper conflict with neocolonial, and in some cases still colonial, realities and moved to the left. Examples of this are Chile under Unidad Popular or the wars of liberation in Angola, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe. Women in the North who took the promises of the welfare state at face value protested against the double burden of household and wage work that was one of the results of the commodification of Western lifeworlds. Environmental movements, pointing at the destruction of nature, can be added to this list as the resource-intensive character of capital accumulation went hand in hand with an accelerated colonization of nature. Things came to a head when workers who had been successfully integrated into welfare capitalism since the early 1950s began to rebel against capitalist control and exploitation on an unexpected scale in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Luxemburg concludes *The Accumulation of*

Capital by saying that capitalist development

> becomes a string of political and social disasters, and under these conditions, punctuated by periodical [sic] economic catastrophes or crises, accumulation can go on no longer. But even before this natural economic impasse of capital's own creating [i.e. the complete commodification of every aspect of nature and human life—IS] is properly reached it becomes a necessity for the international working class to revolt against the rule of capital.[20]

Written in 1913, this was a prophetic anticipation of the "age of catastrophe" that began just a year later. But it is also a proper description of the economic crises and domestic and international conflicts that marked the 1970s transition from welfare and developmental capitalism to neoliberal globalization.

Critics often charge Luxemburg with postulating an absolute limit to capital accumulation that was reached when the world was partitioned among late nineteenth-century colonial powers.[21] The argument she makes is different. She only points to the economic necessity to find additional demand in non-capitalist milieus to keep accumulation going. There is theoretically an absolute limit to this expansion but the actual development of capitalism in that direction will lead to political conflicts that will stop the complementary processes of capital accumulation and expansion into non-capitalist milieus. And, of course, the same move is punctuated with cyclical crises. Already in the introduction to *The Accumulation of Capital* Luxemburg distinguishes between cyclical crises and the long-term requirements of accumulation.

Luxemburg's argument that capitalist expansion inevitably runs into political troubles was vindicated in her own lifetime by imperialist rivalries and a rising tide of labor unrest, both of which contributed to the outbreak of the First World War. When the "age of catastrophe" that began with this war was over, the world was no longer divided among rival colonial powers—though they didn't completely cease to exist until the 1970s—but between Western capitalism, Soviet communism, and the post-colonial South. The last was torn between the East and the West, and struggled to carve out its own space beyond superpower rivalries. This "age of the three worlds" brought about forms of capitalist expansion entirely different from nineteenth-century colonization but no less prone to producing conflicts and discontent long before accumulation reached its theoretical limit. In fact, accumulation could have continued beyond the 1970s, as only a minority of the world's population had reached the "stage of mass-consumption"[22] and plenty of economic activity was still waiting to be commodified.

Yet, even lifting a minority of the world's population to mass-consumption status was enough to produce new social movements that struggled against continued colonization and commodification, and to revive labor movements asking for higher wages and shorter hours and challenging capitalist control over the labor process. Continued accumulation would have strengthened these diverse movements. In the worst case, they would have rallied around a common anti-capitalist program.

Luxemburg's disciple Michal Kalecki had already foreseen such a situation in the 1940s, when welfare capitalism was more of a dream than a reality. He wrote that

> full employment is not at all to their [the "business leaders"] liking. The 'workers would get out of hand' and the 'captains of industry' would be anxious to 'teach them a lesson.' … In this situation a powerful block [sic] is likely to be formed between big business and the rentier interests, and they would probably find more than one economist to declare that the situation was manifestly unsound.[23]

This is exactly what happened in the 1970s. The cyclical recession in 1974-75, aggravated by an oil-price hike in the previous year and currency turbulence due to shifting market shares between the then-leading export countries, signalled a turn to lower levels of investment

and eventually a frontal attack on labor in the North and anti-imperialist movements in the South. Interest-rate hikes, the Volcker shock from 1979 to 1983, caused another recession that broke the bargaining power of unions and caused fiscal crises in the North and debt crises in the South. These crises helped to shift policies from Keynesian demand management to neoliberal austerity and restructuring. Environmental and women's movements that in the 1970s had flourished alongside, though often in conflict with, militant labor and anti-imperialist movements, didn't disappear but lost much, if not all, of their zeal. However, rolling back or destroying anti-systemic movements is only a necessary but not a sufficient condition to revive profits and accumulation. The neoliberal wave of accumulation, beginning after the world recession from 1980 to 1982, was as dependent on expansion into non-capitalist milieus as the preceding Keynesian and late nineteenth-century colonial waves.[24]

Ironically, welfare and developmental states had prepared the ground for this new wave of commodification. Significant public sectors had developed under their reign that were partially detached from the imperatives of capital accumulation but ultimately existed under the proviso that taxes and credit could be mobilized for their financing. Fiscal and debt crises, along with tax revolts in some Western countries, cut these finances short and opened the door to large-scale privatization. Moreover, the reproduction of labor power had become much more dependent on commodity purchases during the post-World War II boom. Even though welfare and developmental states provided some measure of protection against unfettered labor market competition and its insecurities, they had also contributed to this rising dependency on purchased commodities as opposed to subsistence or household production. This dependency became a lever for the tremendous growth of consumer credit, construction, and homeownership.

Needless to say the collapse of Soviet communism and the capitalist turn of the Chinese communists presented even larger opportunities for capitalist expansion. The implementation of labor-saving technologies and the relocation of production to bypass unions in their long-established heartlands also created investment opportunities. The creation of global production networks that allow capitalists to switch from one supplier to another if labor unrest flares up required substantial investments in logistics, communication networks, and new plants. Thus, privatization and further expansion into non-capitalist milieus, a process David Harvey called "accumulation by dispossession,"[25] went hand in hand with further industrialization and industrial restructuring. On this abstract level, the neoliberal wave of accumulation wasn't any different from previous waves. What distinguishes it is the way it came to an end.

Neither Great-Power rivalries nor anti-systemic movements put neoliberal accumulation to rest. The War on Terror pales in comparison to the mutual hostilities prior to and during the two world wars and the Cold War. Likewise, the alter-globalization movement, despite its global reach, is far weaker than the anti-systemic movements that challenged capitalist and imperialist rule from 1917 to 1923, in the 1930s, and again in the 1970s. The Wall Street crash and the Great Recession were caused by capitalism's internal contradiction between the unlimited accumulation of fictitious capital and the limited accumulation of productive capital. They are distinctly Marxian, but with a Luxemburgian flavor. With the integration of formerly communist countries into global capitalism complete, global production networks in place, and the supply of privatization projects drying up, the accumulation of productive capital and the incomes derived from it was lagging behind profit claims generated by financial markets.

Stock market and banking crises triggered the Great Recession but underlying it was a slowing down of the accumulation of productive

capital. Non-capitalist milieus haven't vanished but they are not readily available for the accumulation strategies developed under neoliberalism.

Past systemic crises were only overcome after intensified class struggles and other conflicts led to new accumulation strategies. Whether such struggles occur, what forms they take, and whether they lead to new waves of capitalist accumulation or open the doors for socialist transformation is not an economic question. It depends on the making and remaking of classes, class alliances, and political strategies. This is a complex of questions on which Luxemburg's political theory can shed some light. This theory helps to understand how working classes and socialist or other anti-systemic movements developed in the past, how they were unmade, and what potential for rejuvenation they have.

Politics: Class Struggles and Struggles against Colonization

Luxemburg presents her views on the relations between economics and politics in the opening passages of *Reform or Revolution* by saying that

> the scientific basis of socialism rests … on three principal results of capitalist development. First, on the growing anarchy of capitalist economy, leading inevitably to its ruin. Second, on the progressive socialization of the process of production, which creates the germs of the future social order. And third, on the increased organization and consciousness of the proletarian class, which constitutes the active factor in the coming revolution.[26]

Her views on economic development changed quite a bit from *Reform or Revolution* to *The Accumulation of Capital*. Rather than stressing the "anarchy of capitalist economy" and the "inevitable ruin" it would eventually cause, she argued that the partition of the world among the colonial powers would lead to economic stagnation and growing domestic and international conflicts due to that stagnation. But the political implications of her economic analysis remained the same: faced with crises and stagnation, capitalists will always try to lower wages and increase hours in order to retain profits. The industrial reserve army produced by labor-saving technology and shortfalls in aggregate demand helps them in these efforts.

It is now time to Occupy Economics and put forward a new critique of political economy that will help build a new socialist project in the future.

Like other Marxists of her generation, Luxemburg didn't explore the production process beyond the point where Marx' analysis in the first volume of *Capital* left off. Yet she did elaborate her views on "organization and consciousness of the proletarian class." Some of these elaborations can even be found in *The Accumulation of Capital*, which she saw as a strictly economic work. Section two of the book, taking up almost 150 out of 450 pages, is devoted to historical debates about whether capitalist accumulation is plagued with insufficient aggregate demand. Most of the economists she discusses would have been forgotten if Luxemburg and other Marxists hadn't discussed them.

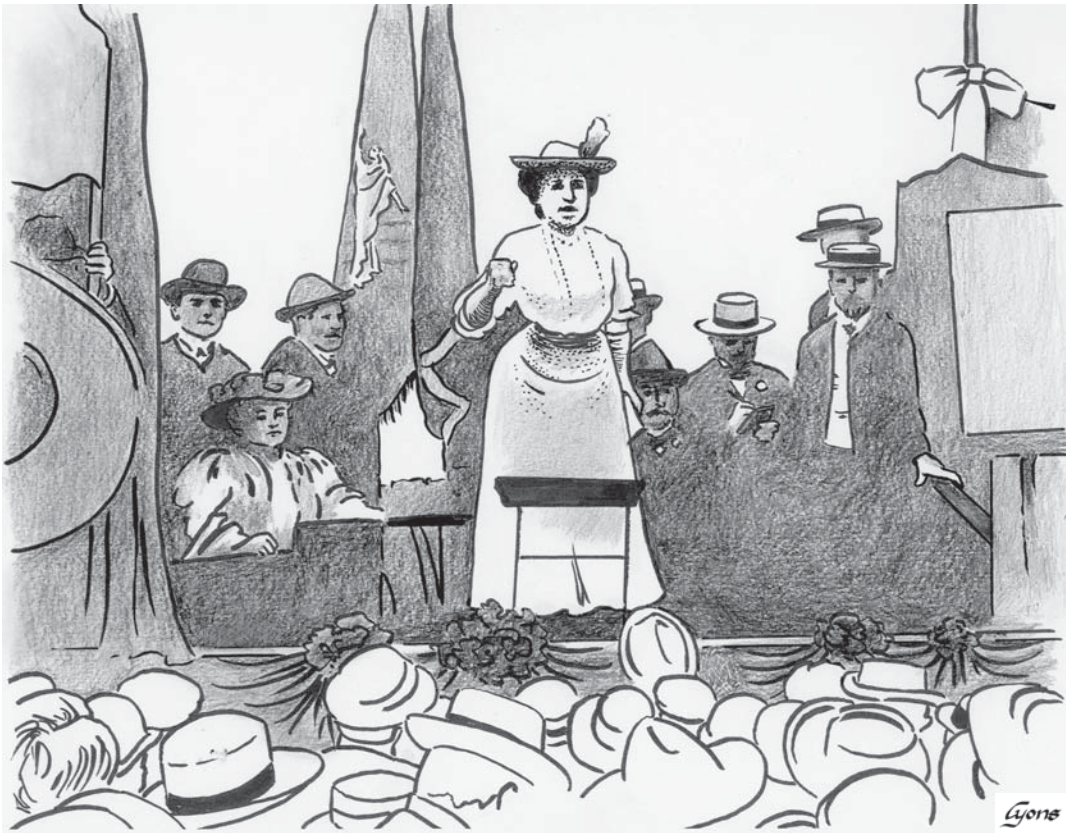
What is interesting with respect to working class formation and the development of labor movements is the way Luxemburg frames her review of theoretical discussions.

Each of the three "rounds" of discussion she included in the book is introduced with a reference to the class struggles and socialist movements of its respective time. She first mentions attempts in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England by skilled craftsmen to defend their livelihoods against the onslaught coming from capitalist machinery and large-scale industry, which Marx and Engels had called "reactionary socialism" in the *Communist Manifesto*. She then

proceeds to the "risings of the Lyon's silk weavers and the Chartist movement in England"[27] in the early decades of the nineteenth century, mentions "the hopeful and victorious striving of the workers for ascendancy in their trade-union movement and by political action"[28] in Western Europe by the end of the century, and ends this section of the book with a discussion of capitalist development and revolutionary strategy in Russia in which she counterposes the Narodniki and "legal Marxists."

This framing shows a progression from efforts to defend pre-capitalist ways of life against capitalism to movements confronting and trying to overcome capitalism. It also shows that this political progression coincides with the geographical extension of industrial capitalism and class formation from England to France, Germany, and Russia. Yet these two processes are also highly uneven. While Western European countries saw the rise of unions, mass socialist parties, and the illusion that economic and organizational growth would allow the substitution of revolutionary politics by a reformist transformation from capitalism to socialism, Russia was divided between pockets of highly concentrated capitalist industries surrounded by vast lands of feudal agriculture.

This tension between capitalist industry and feudal agriculture had contributed to the Russian revolution of 1905. Contemplating the lessons of this revolution, Luxemburg further sharpened her views on class formation, class struggle, and international solidarity.



Rosa Luxemburg speaking at a Spartacus League rally

Frustrated with the consolidation of reformism in Germany, where organizational growth had increasingly become an end in itself, she enthusiastically greeted the Russian revolution as proof that mass struggles stimulate organizational creativity. The contrary focus on existing organizations produces passivity among party and union members and does nothing to attract unorganized workers. In Luxemburg's view workers' experiences in their struggles over political and economic issues are key to making a viable socialist movement: "The most precious, lasting, thing in the rapid ebb and flow of the wave is its mental sediment: the intellectual, cultural growth of the proletariat."[29]

The other point Luxemburg stresses is the international dimension of class struggles. Writing for a German audience she argues that "it is much more important that the German workers should learn to look upon the Russian Revolution [of 1905] *as their own affair*, not merely as a matter of international solidarity with the Russian proletariat, but first and foremost, as a *chapter of their own social and political history*" (emphasis in the original).[30]

During the build-up to the First World War Luxemburg recognized more and more that learning from workers' experiences in other countries was a prerequisite for international socialism but concluded that resistance to imperialism, and the nationalism that ruling classes advocated in its pursuit, was more pressing. In her analysis of the Second International's failure to organize international action against the war she explicitly argued that workers in each country had to pursue their own foreign policies to further the cause of international socialism.[31]

Luxemburg's economic theory of capitalist expansion into non-capitalist milieus is a good starting point to strategize about anti-colonial struggles of all sorts but she never developed this question beyond the abstract quest for proletarian internationalism. In this regard, two issues must be distinguished: the difference between "centers" and "peripheries" in the North-South division of global capitalism and the distinction between struggles within capitalist sectors of global capitalism and struggles against capitalist expansion into non-capitalist milieus. Beverly Silver refers to these as Marx-type and Polanyi-type struggles, respectively.[32]

Luxemburg was very sensitive to the human suffering colonization inflicted on the peoples of the South[33] but she didn't ponder the potential for anti-colonial revolutions, which became much more important in the twentieth century than the workers' revolutions nineteenth-century Marxists had envisioned. National independence, the overarching demand of anti-colonial movements in the twentieth century, was anathema to her. But Luxemburg developed her views on the national question against the background of the industrialization of Poland, which turned the country into a hotbed of capital accumulation and working class activism within the Czarist Empire.[34] She didn't want to weaken the socialist labor movement by splitting Poland, and thus the Polish working class, from Russia.

> Contrary to the strange separation between economics and politics in Marx' works, Luxemburg addresses the relations between them head on.

Neither the economic conditions in Poland nor the strategic conclusions Luxemburg drew from them apply to the colonial South. However, a short piece she wrote in the midst of the German revolution on Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Point Program offers a glimpse of the direction her thinking about the national question might have taken if she hadn't been assassinated in January 1919. There she writes

that the "current world explosion of nationalism carries the most variegated jumble of special interests and tendencies in its womb. Yet, one overarching interest … points the way through all these special interests: the spearhead against impending world revolution of the proletariat" (author's translation).[35]

This remark anticipates some of the contradictions within the post-World War II developmental regimes but leaves no room for the main contradiction that eventually brought them to an end: the sharpening conflict between the "spearhead against impending world revolution," mostly a "jumble" of middle classes and comprador bourgeoisies, on one side, and coalitions of workers and peasants on the other side.[36] Moreover, Luxemburg didn't fully explore the relations between centers and peripheries and therefore had no understanding of the possibilities and limitations of peripheral development or of the impact of exploitation of the South on the condition of working classes in the North. The focus of her economic theory was really on explaining the role of non-capitalist milieus in generating aggregate demand to keep capitalist accumulation going. Since she explicitly denied the possibility of long-term real wage growth we can assume that she didn't see the potential for turning Northern workers into beneficiaries of Southern exploitation, a strategic option openly advocated by some of her revisionist adversaries.[37]

Lenin went even further and argued that a labor aristocracy already existed in the North during his and Luxemburg's lifetime and that it formed the social basis for revisionism. Supplemented with theories of unequal exchange that explained imperialist exploitation in value theoretical terms, Lenin's basic proposition became a staple of radical thinking during the post-World War II era. Neoliberal restructuring, welfare state retrenchment in the North, and continuing industrialization in parts of the South have changed the international division of labor fundamentally since the heyday of welfare and developmentalist capitalism. But these changes hardly created a homogenous workforce across the globe. Building a global labor movement is as great a challenge today as it has been in the past. Understanding the economic divisions between different groups of workers is an important part of such efforts as it allows us to identify the potential for the construction of cross-class alliances along national and/or racial lines against an international working class movement. Such alliances have been instrumental in the defeat of anti-systemic movements in the past and might play this role again in the future.

Anti-colonial struggles in the South were only one trigger for neoliberal globalization including its making of a global but fragmented workforce. Others were Marx-type labor struggles and the Polanyi-type new social movements in the North from the late 1960s until the early 1980s. As already mentioned, neoliberal restructuring was partly driven by the goal of bypassing the actual and potential strength of these movements.

Interestingly, the question of class-collaboration versus international solidarity that plagued Northern labor movements since the late nineteenth century was replicated in the relations between labor and new social movements. The dominant currents in organized labor saw women's and environmental movements as a threat to economic prosperity including rising standards of living for organized, mostly male, workers. Many activists in the new social movements responded in kind. Continuing New Left criticism of welfare states, imperialism, and monopoly capitalism, they saw labor and capital as undifferentiated parts of a system threatening the autonomous spheres of nature, women's lives, and, by extension, the colonial South whose liberation movements were a major point of reference for the new social movements in the North. Jürgen Habermas theorized their activities as struggling against the "colonization of lifeworlds by the system."[38] However, some

currents within labor and new social movements sought to find common ground.

Luxemburg's analysis of the relations between capital accumulation, fomenting Marx-type struggles, and capitalist expansion into non-capitalist milieus, causing Polanyi-type struggles, offers some guidance in dealing with this problem, which remains largely unresolved today.

In some respects the contradiction between labor and new social movements, or struggles over income distribution within capitalism and struggles against capitalist expansion, was not as stark as it may have appeared to be to leaders of those movements. After all, the struggle over the length of the workday, and thus the rate of surplus value, which is at the heart of capital accumulation, is also one to demarcate workers' subjugation to capitalist control from free time outside the labor process. Even within this labor process workers are constantly trying to carve out times and spaces of freedom from control and exploitation. In doing so, they defend their autonomy and dignity against their complete degradation into a totally malleable factor of production. At the same time, social milieus that lay beyond the purview of capital accumulation and control before the reign of neoliberalism have now been integrated into capitalism. Struggles against dispossessions of all kinds either withered away or turned into struggles within, and possibly against, capitalism. A higher share of the world's population than ever before is dependent on selling their labor power, and increasing numbers of poor people are coerced into new forms of slavery. These workers of the world, whatever else their differences, either surrender to capitalist exploitation and oppression or engage in a dual struggle for better incomes and working and living conditions, and against the reach of capitalist rule.

Neoliberal restructuring was extremely successful in unmaking whatever levels of working class identities were left after welfare state integration in the North. But it also created a much larger working class in itself that now includes most parts of the South and the former East. Whether this leads to the making of a global working class *for* itself is not a question of capitalist accumulation and expansion. These forces of capital have already produced high levels of discontent. Depending on workers' experiences in articulating this discontent and struggling against its manifold causes, ultimately rooted in the imperatives of capital accumulation, they might transform themselves into an agent of change, a class for themselves, capable of overcoming the destructiveness of capitalism and replacing it by a social order in which humans live in peace with each other and with nature.

NOTES

1. Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (Harcourt Brace & Company, 1968), 33-56; Joan Robinson, "Introduction, " in Rosa Luxemburg, *Accumulation of Capital* (London: Routledge and Paul Kegan, 1951), 13-28; Michal Kalecki, "The Problem of Effective Demand With Tugan-Baranowski and Rosa Luxemburg," in *Collected Works of Michal Kalecki*, Vol. II (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967, 1991); Tony Cliff, "Rosa Luxemburg – A Study, " *International Socialism*, 1959 (2&3).

2. Raya Dunayevskaya, *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* (University of Illinois Press, 1991); Andrea Nye, *Philosophia: The Thought of Rosa Luxemburg, Simone Weil, and Hannah Arendt* (London: Routledge, 1994), 3-53.

3. Lelio Basso, *Rosa Luxemburg: A Reappraisal* (Praeger, 1975); Norman Geras, *The Legacy of Rosa Luxemburg* (London: New Left Books, 1976).

4. Ingo Schmidt, "There Were Alternatives: Lessons from Efforts to Advance Beyond Keynesian and Neoliberal Economic Policies in the 1970s," *Working USA*, vol. 14, no. 4 (2011), 473-498; Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (The New Press, 2010).

5. See for example the debate on Luxemburg in the pages of this journal in the early 2000s, *New Politics*, Nos. 31-32.

6. See special issues of *Socialist Studies*, vol. 6, no. 2 (2010) and *Critique: Journal of Socialist Thought*, vol. 40, no. 3 (2012); Riccardo Bellofiore, ed., *Rosa Luxemburg and the Critique of Political Economy* (London: Routledge, 2009); Ingo Schmidt, ed. *Rosa Luxemburg's Akkumulation des Kapitals* (Hamburg: VSA Verlag, 2013).

7. Rosa Luxemburg, *Complete Works,* Vol. I: *Economic Writings I* (London: Verso, 2013), 89-300.

8. See his *Class Struggles in France, 1848-1850, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, and *The Civil War in France*.

9. Rosa Luxemburg, *Accumulation of Capital* (London: Routledge and Paul Kegan, 1951), chap. 14.

10. Luxemburg, *Accumulation of Capital*, chaps. 16 & 17.

11. Luxemburg, *Accumulation of Capital*, chaps. 30 & 32.

12. Luxemburg, *Accumulation of Capital*, Section III: The Historical Conditions of Accumulation (chaps. 25-32).

13. E. P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the 18th Century," *Past and Present*, vol. 50, no. 1 (1971), 76-136.

14. W. A. Lewis developed a model of development with unlimited supplies of labor to understand post-World War II developments in the South but it seems also applicable to the pre-World War I North. See W. A. Lewis, "Economic Development with Unlimited Supplies of Labor," *Manchester School*, 22 (1954), 139-191.

15. Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes* (London: Abacus Books, 1994), part 1.

16. Samuel Bowles and Robert Boyer, "A Wage-led Employment Regime: Income Distribution, Labor Discipline, and Aggregate Demand in Welfare Capitalism," in Stephen Marglin and Juliet Schor, eds., *The Golden Age of Capitalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 187-217.

17. Rosa Luxemburg, "Reform or Revolution," in *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks* (Pathfinder, 2011), 50-124; quotes from p. 100.

18. Samir Amin, "Self-Reliance and the New Economic Order," *Monthly Review*, vol. 29, no. 3 (1977), 1-21.

19. On lifeworlds, see Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 2 (Beacon Press, 1985).

20. Luxemburg, *Accumulation of Capital,* 447.

21. For a critique of such criticisms see Paul Zarembka. "Rosa Luxemburg's 'Accumulation of Capital': Critics Try to Bury the Message," in Jennifer Lehmann, ed., *Current Perspectives in Social Theory*, 21 (2002), 3-45.

22. W. W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge University Press, 1961), chap. 6.

23. Michal Kalecki, "Political Aspects of Full Employment," *Political Quarterly*, vol. 14, no. 4 (1943), 322-330.

24. Ingo Schmidt, "Rosa Luxemburg's Accumulation of Capital: A Centennial Update with Additions from Long Wave Theory and Karl Polanyi's Great Transformation," *Critique: Journal of Socialist Thought*, vol. 40, no. 3 (2012), 337-356.

25. David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), chap. 4.

26. Luxemburg, "Reform or Revolution," 58.

27. Luxemburg, *Accumulation of Capital,* 203.

28. Luxemburg, *Accumulation of Capital,* 250.

29. Rosa Luxemburg, "The Mass Strike, The Political Party and the Trade Unions," in *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks* (Pathfinder, 2011), 205-290, quote from p. 234.

30. Luxemburg, "Mass Strike, Party and Unions," 271.

31. Rosa Luxemburg, "The Junius Pamphlet: The Crisis in the German Social Democracy," in *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks* (Pathfinder, 2011), 342-439.

32. Beverly Silver, *Forces of Labor: Workers' Movements and Globalization since 1870* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 20.

33. Peter Hudis, "Accumulation, Imperialism, and Pre-Capitalist Formations: Luxemburg and Marx on the non-Western World," *Socialist Studies*, vol. 6, no. 2 (2010), 75-91.

34. Rosa Luxemburg, "The Industrial Development of Poland," *Complete Works*, Vol. I: *Economic Writings I* (London: Verso, 2013), 1-78.

35. Rosa Luxemburg, "Fragment über Krieg, nationale-Frage und Revolution," *GesammelteWerke*, Vol. 4 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag 1983), 366-373.

36. For a full account on the rise and fall of developmental regimes see Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World* (New Press, 2007).

37. Richard B. Day and Daniel Gaido, eds., *Discovering Imperialism: Social Democracy to World War I* (Haymarket Books, 2012).

38. Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action.*

Remembering Doug Ireland, Steve Kindred, and James D. Young

DOUG IRELAND, 1946-2013

DOUG IRELAND, RADICAL JOURNALIST, blogger, passionate human rights and queer activist, and relentless scourge of the LGBT establishment, died in his East Village home on Oct. 26. Doug had lived with chronic pain for many years, suffering from diabetes, kidney disease, sciatica, and the debilitating effects of childhood polio. In recent years he was so ill that he was virtually confined to his apartment. Towards the end, even writing, his calling, had become extremely difficult.

Doug wrote for the *Nation*, the *Village Voice*, *New York* magazine as well as his blog *Direland*, and in France *Libération* and the news website *Bakchich*. His scathing polemical style and the vast breadth of his knowledge were exceptional. Doug was a tireless champion of the oppressed of all kinds, but especially of those who are punished for loving members of their own sex, wherever they might be. For his uncompromising internationalism, his refusal to allow cultural differences to stand as an excuse for denying LGBT people their human rights, I can think of no one on the left, apart from Peter Tatchell, who was quite like him.

Doug was always a man of the left, a libertarian socialist, who nevertheless had long-standing ties to progressives in the Democratic Party—going back to Allard Lowenstein, George McGovern, and Bella Abzug, for whom he worked as a campaign manager. But he was never an apologist for mainstream Democrats, including Obama, never pulled his punches in his attacks on their cynical amoralism.

Doug had a special loathing for Clinton. One of his last published pieces was "Should We Forgive Bill Clinton?" in *Gay City News* (March 26, 2013), after the former president wrote an op-ed for the *Washington Post* against the Defense of Marriage Act, which he had signed into law in 1996. Noting that the *Post* piece was timed to prepare for the kickoff of Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign a week later, Doug wrote:

The truth is that an old and predatory libertine like Bill couldn't have cared less if a guy or a gal wanted to marry a Volkswagen. He wasn't a bigot himself—he just surfed on the bigotry of others like the opportunist he's always been. And it is that opportunism that led him to write his op-ed piece against DOMA on behalf of his wife's candidacy.

Doug reminded his readers that "there is a long list of vicious actions by President Clinton and his administration for which he owes LGBT people an unadulterated apology." One of the items on this list was the Clinton administration's use of aid and trade blackmail targeting Third World countries to stop them from buying or manufacturing cheaper, generic versions of the AIDS-fighting drugs needed to prolong life. . . . How many thousands died because Clinton, in his subservience to the greed of Big Pharma, engaged in this shameful arm-breaking? We'll never know for sure—but their blood, too, is on Bill's hands.

Doug was a friend of *New Politics* and of the Campaign for Peace and Democracy. In 1988, at a time when the Campaign was heavily involved in defending democratic dissidents in

the Soviet bloc, Doug reported for its newsletter on the persecution of gays in Eastern Europe. He wrote:

Of all the taboos in Eastern Europe, none has been more cruel or dehumanizing than the official attitude toward homosexuality. If one of the very first acts of the 1917 Bolshevik revolution was to abolish the laws making homosexuality a crime, . . . Stalinism recriminalized homosexuality, and the theory that 'fags are a product of capitalist decadence' has reigned malignantly in the Eastern bloc ever since, with anti-gay persecutions a favorite weapon of the political police throughout the bloc.

Doug's understanding of Stalinism's crimes, and beyond that of the whole history of the left's troubled relationship to alternative sexualities, was brilliantly expounded in a piece he wrote for *New Politics*, "Socialism and Gay Liberation" (Winter, 2009). In it, he paid tribute to the courageous gay socialist pioneers, John Addington Symonds, Edward Carpenter, Oscar Wilde (yes, he was a socialist), and Magnus Hirschfeld. But he also described the vicious bigotry that was made official in the Stalin-era Communist movement and persisted long after Stalin's death.

The great turning point, of course, was the birth of the post-Stonewall radical gay liberation movement in the United States, a movement, in Doug's words, that was "against the State, which made us criminals; against the medical and psychiatric professions, which declared us sick; and against the cultural heterotyranny which made us the target of disdain, ridicule, opprobrium, hate and violence." Like Doug, Gay Liberation saw itself as an integral, but never a subordinate, part of *all* liberation struggles—feminist, anti-war, civil rights.

What a contrast with the mostly narrowly parochial LGBT organizations of today, which support and shower gay dollars on any politician, of either party, who is "good on gay issues," no matter how reactionary he/she is on anything else. Since the late 90s, the gay movement has become tamed and institutionalized, symbolized preeminently by the corporate-oriented Human Rights Campaign. Doug never ceased railing against the established LGBT leadership for its political conservatism and for turning the movement into just another interest group—but he was especially critical of its near indifference to the persecution of LGBT people in other countries. Doug called for the aggressive defense of gays under attack in Uganda, Russia, Iraq, and Iran. In this, he was working in the great universalist tradition of the historic left, based on a single norm of human freedom and flourishing, a norm that justifies criticism of cultural traditions, wherever they might be, that support such practices as female subordination, racial and religious discrimination, and homophobia.

In his *New Politics* piece, Doug insisted on the need "to begin a serious and radical rethinking of homosexuality and gender identities so as to understand at a deeper level why the fear and loathing of same-sex love and gender variants are so deeply engrained in society and culture." Writing in 2009, he sensed "a hunger for a return to some of the earlier principles of sexual liberation for all with which our movement began, not just here but abroad." Doug is no longer with us, no longer able to make his own inestimable contribution to the revival of these principles. Let us hope, nevertheless, that they can be revived, for the sake of a truly liberated future.

THOMAS HARRISON

STEVE KINDRED, 1944-2013

THE OTHER NIGHT my wife and I went to have dinner with Ellen Goldensohn, the wife of my friend Steve Kindred. Steve died of cancer a few months ago. Ellen invited me to take a few of Steve's books from the shelves that held them. I found on the shelves three old copies of *New Politics*: one from the Summer of 1965, one from the Fall of 1970, and another from the Fall of 1971. I would not be at all surprised if the three

copies of the journal had once been stuffed in his rucksack, together with his compass, flashlight, maps, address books, radical newspapers, cigarette papers and tobacco, peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwiches, and a quart of milk, the usual stuff he carried as Steve traveled back and forth across America for decades as a radical student and later labor organizer.

Perhaps these were random copies that survived Steve's early peripatetic life as an activist in Students for a Democratic Society in Chicago, then as an editor of the student-worker-alliance paper *The Picketline* in Los Angeles, and later as a founder of Teamsters for a Democratic Union active in Detroit. Maybe, on the other hand, these were issues he had saved because they had a particular significance for him, articles in them having been written by his intellectual mentor Hal Draper and his friends Kim Moody and Mike Parker. Whichever may be the case, it was *New Politics*' commitment to supporting the radical left, to furthering reform in the labor movement, to fighting for equality for African Americans and other oppressed groups, and to democratic socialism that Steve had imbibed as a youth and that helped to maintain him through his years of activism. As a member of the International Socialists and Solidarity, Steve continued to have those politics as his north star.

Steve was that rare person, ingenious and fearless, who could walk into a difficult and sometimes dangerous situation—a confrontational student protest, a wildcat strike, or a rank-and-file group in its first local union election—and provide the kind of leadership that not only offered guidance but also inspired others to rise to the occasion. That character came from Steve's family and their fine values. But his politics came in good measure from *New Politics*. We will attempt to carry on that tradition in his memory and the memory of so many other activists, intellectuals, and social critics long associated with this journal who are no longer with us. The struggle continues.

DAN LA BOTZ

JAMES D. YOUNG, 1931-2012

THE EDITORS OF *New Politics* regret that we didn't earlier note the sad passing of James D. Young, a longtime friend and occasional contributor to *NP*. Young, known to his friends as "Jimmy," was a lifelong socialist and prominent labor historian. He came from a working class family in Scotland and left school at fourteen to work in a local sawmill. A few years later he became a railway worker, and as an adult received a trade union scholarship to study history at Newbattle Abbey College. He later attended Oxford University and received his Ph.D. from the University of Strathclyde, and for many years taught Scottish and labor history at Stirling University. For several years in the late 1950s and early 1960s he was a member of the Socialist Review Group, the forerunner to the International Socialists/Socialist Workers Party (UK). From the mid-1960s onwards he considered himself an independent socialist and a principled advocate of socialism from below. Young's first book, published in 1979 and reissued in 2011, was *The Rousing of the Scottish Working Class*. His other works include *Women and Popular Struggles* (1985); *John Maclean: Educator of the Working Class* (1988), *Socialism and the English Working Class* (1989), and *The Very Bastards of Creation* (1996). His autobiography, *Making Trouble: Autobiographical Experiences and Socialism*, was published in 1987, and his biography of C.L.R. James, *The Worlds of C.L.R. James: The Unfragmented Vision*, was published in 1999. He was completing a biography of James Connelly when he died. James Young was a prolific author, a lively public speaker, and a friend and mentor to numerous labor historians and socialists, both in Scotland and elsewhere. He is missed.

In Memoriam: Phil Evans, 1946-2014

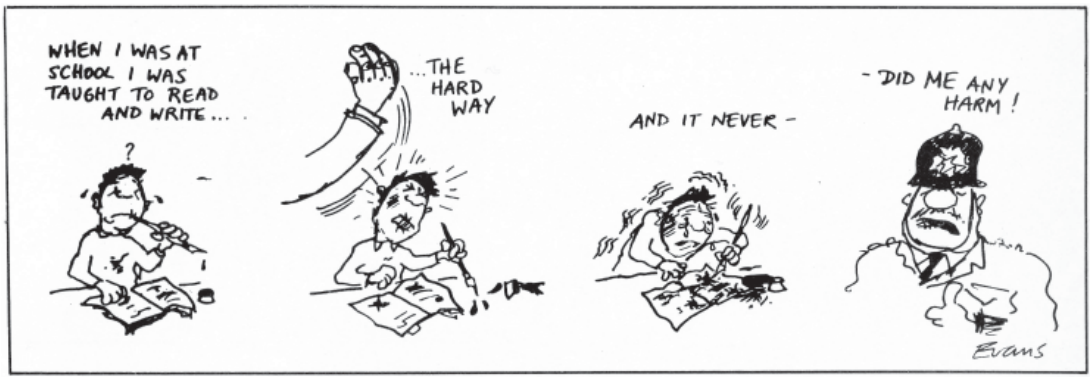
KENT WORCESTER

THE GIFTED POLITICAL cartoonist Phil Evans passed away earlier this year in the seaside town of Hastings, England. He was 68.

Philip James Evans was born in West Yorkshire and grew up in London, Uganda, and Scotland. His father taught English literature and his mother was an art teacher. As a teenager in Aberdeen he became active in the Youth Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. He studied at the Sunderland Art College and the Leeds College of Art, and started drawing political cartoons as a result of his involvement in the anti-Vietnam War movement of the late 1960s. He joined the International Socialists (IS) during this period and contributed numerous illustrations, gag cartoons, and comic strips to *Socialist Worker* and other IS publications. During the 1970s and 1980s his eye-catching work frequently turned up in labor, tenant, and anti-war periodicals.

The successor organization to the IS, the Socialist Workers Party UK, published a collection of his cartoons in 1982, titled *The Joke Works*. His illustrations and cartoons also appeared in *Trotsky for Beginners* (1980), *Marx's Kapital for Beginners* (1982), *Ireland for Beginners* (1983), *Commodities: How the World Was*

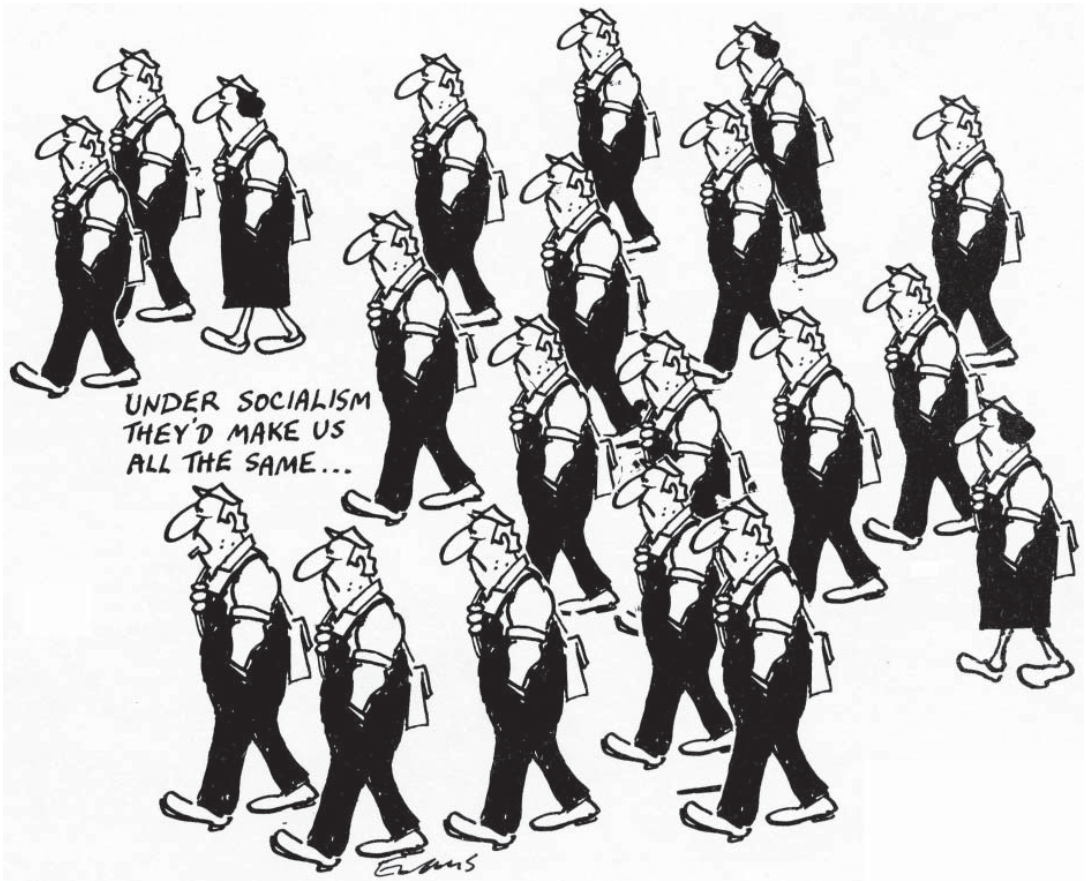
KENT WORCESTER's *latest book,* Peter Bagge: Conversations, *will be published by the University Press of Mississippi in 2015.*



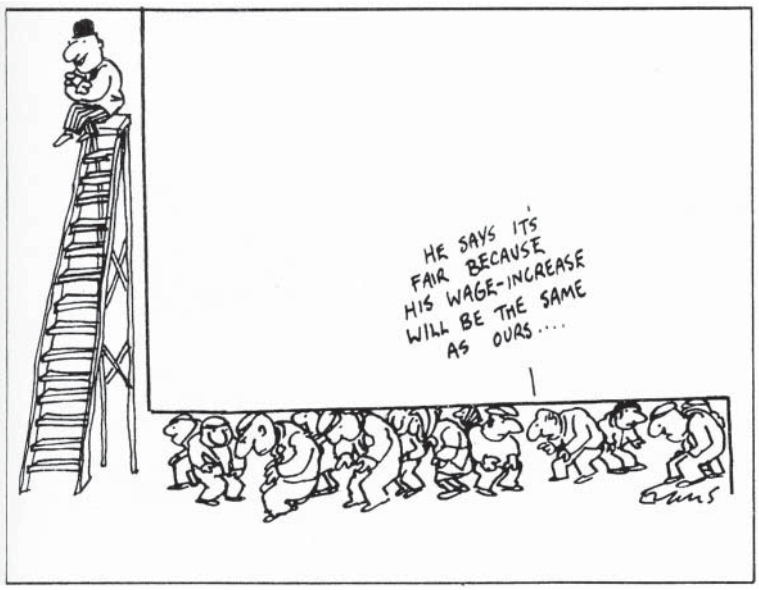
MUST GET MY PROBLEM SORTED OUT...
UNION OFFICIAL
OH – ANOTHER DOOR!
UNION OFFICIAL
OH - ANOTHER TINY WEENY DOOR!
UNION OFFICIAL
MAYBE I SHOULDN'T BOTHER HIM WHEN HE'S REALLY BUSY!
UNION OFFICIAL
Evans

Taken to Market (1987), *The Politics of Childhood* (1987), *Best Pubs in London* (1989), *Best Pubs in Devon and Cornwall* (1989), *Understanding Economics* (1995), *More Years for the Locust: The Origins of the SWP* (1997), and *London for Beginners* (1999). He dropped out of the SWP in the early 1980s but remained active on the left, supporting himself as a freelance cartoonist for labor movement and mainstream publications, including *Tribune* and the *Radio Times*.

In his introduction to *The Joke Works*, Evans reported that, "When I was younger I wanted to be an oil painter, a portraitist. More recently I realized that to be a cartoonist is just as difficult—more difficult perhaps—because you have

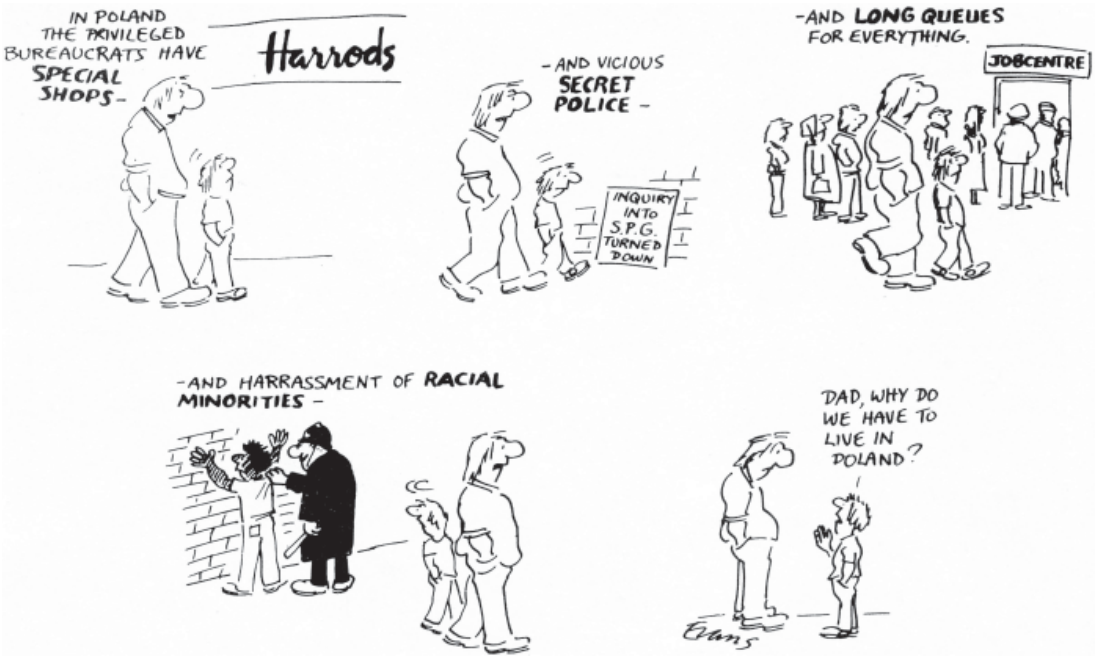


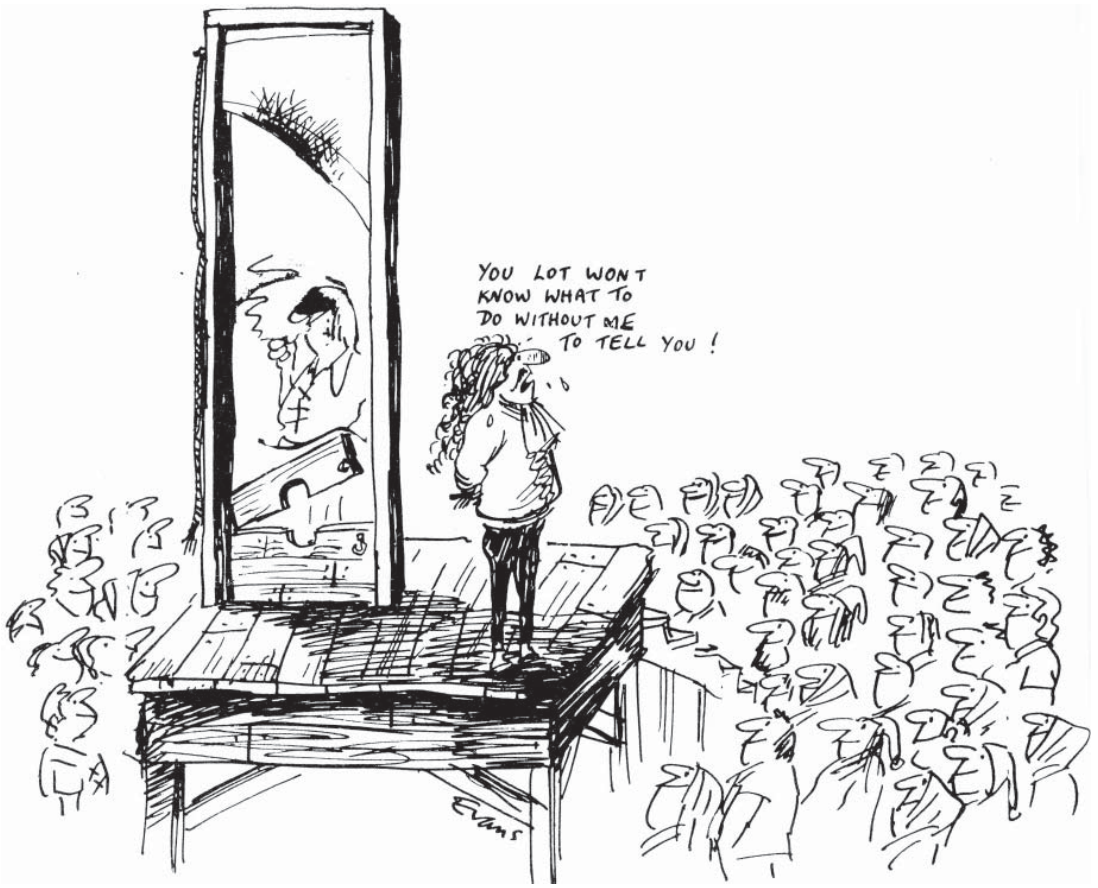
to get your hands dirty in the political fight. I have always been interested in propaganda—I've always felt that if you're good at something then why not try to make a point with it? A little pamphlet, with cartoons, on the struggle of a tiny group of ordinary seamen against their right-wing union leaders, or textile workers against a sweatshop employer, is more important than the cracks on the face of an important diplomat or princess."

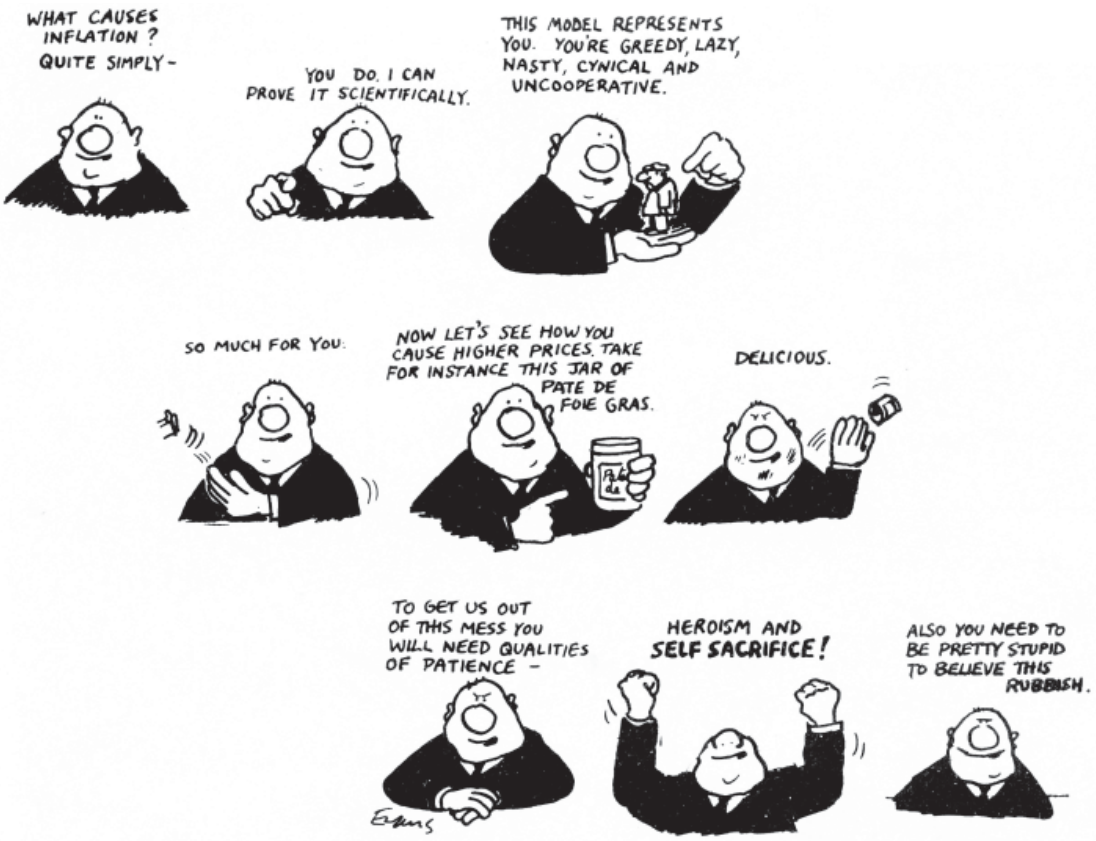


In an obituary for the *Guardian*, Murray Armstrong described Evans' cartooning as "funny, concise, and uncompromisingly on the side of the exploited and the oppressed." His style "was bold and simple, but his characters had doubts, idiosyncrasies, and conflicting ideas and attitudes.…Evans' keen observation of the detail of everyday life gave his cartoons an edge that was neither moralistic nor dogmatic." Armstrong also notes that he "could be difficult when disturbed at his work but usually, as one friend noted, 'he could charm the spuds off a hungry pig.'"

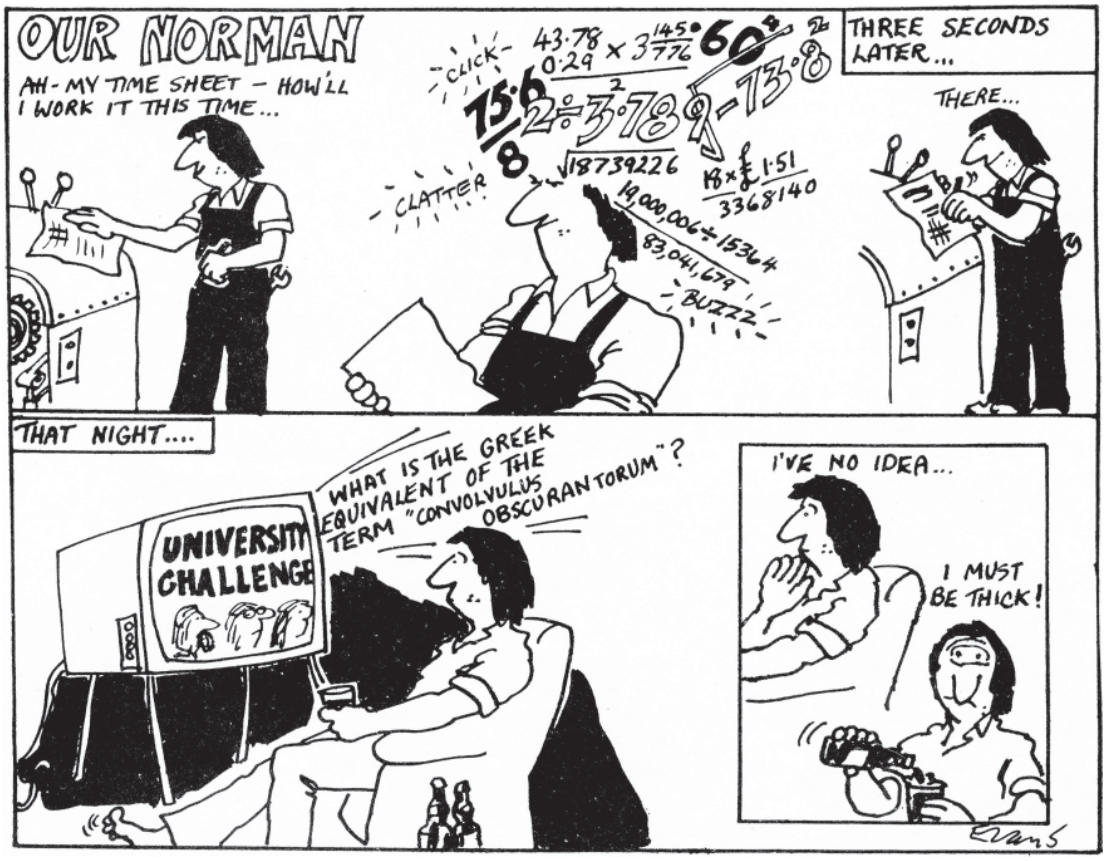
Phil Evans moved from London to Hastings in the early 1990s to be close to his mother. He is survived by his sister, his brother, and his three granddaughters. He left his papers, drawings, and royalties to his eldest granddaughter.


IN POLAND THE PRIVILEGED BUREAUCRATS HAVE SPECIAL SHOPS -
Harrods
- AND VICIOUS SECRET POLICE -
INQUIRY INTO S.P.G. TURNED DOWN
-AND LONG QUEUES FOR EVERYTHING.
JOBCENTRE
-AND HARRASSMENT OF RACIAL MINORITIES -
DAD, WHY DO WE HAVE TO LIVE IN POLAND?
Evans


YOU LOT WON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITHOUT ME TO TELL YOU !
Evans


WHAT CAUSES INFLATION ? QUITE SIMPLY -
YOU DO. I CAN PROVE IT SCIENTIFICALLY.
THIS MODEL REPRESENTS YOU. YOU'RE GREEDY, LAZY, NASTY, CYNICAL AND UNCOOPERATIVE.
SO MUCH FOR YOU.
NOW LET'S SEE HOW YOU CAUSE HIGHER PRICES. TAKE FOR INSTANCE THIS JAR OF PATE DE FOIE GRAS.
DELICIOUS.
TO GET US OUT OF THIS MESS YOU WILL NEED QUALITIES OF PATIENCE -
HEROISM AND SELF SACRIFICE!
ALSO YOU NEED TO BE PRETTY STUPID TO BELIEVE THIS RUBBISH.
Evans

OUR NORMAN
..TO PRESENT YOU WITH THIS CLOCK AFTER 150 YEARS LOYAL SERVICE
IT GIVES ME MUCH PLEASURE.
150?
I WORKED A LOT OF OVERTIME...
BOING!
Evans


OUR NORMAN
AH - MY TIME SHEET - HOW'LL I WORK IT THIS TIME...
CLICK-
43·78 × 3 145/776 60 24
0·29
75·6 / 8
2÷3·78 x -13·8
√18739226
CLATTER
19,000,006÷15364
83,041,679
BUZZZ
THREE SECONDS LATER...
THERE...
THAT NIGHT....
UNIVERSITY CHALLENGE
WHAT IS THE GREEK EQUIVALENT OF THE TERM "CONVOLVULUS OBSCURANTORUM"?
I'VE NO IDEA...
I MUST BE THICK!
Evans

RUSSIA
POLAND
I KNOW ITS CHRISTMAS - BUT I STILL DON'T LIKE IT!
Evans

Mapping the New Oligarchy

MICHAEL J. THOMPSON

INEQUALITY IS THE THEME OF OUR TIME. It should perhaps be said that it has always been so. But after the surge of globalization since the 1990s, the decreasing fortunes of the middle class, and the more recent shock of the 2008 financial crisis, it has come more sharply into focus. It is within this context that Thomas Piketty has published *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, a book that is exhaustively researched and brimming with empirical data and interpretation. Piketty, a French professor of economics, seeks to place himself in opposition to most of the standard wisdom of the economic profession which argues for the existence of strong forces of convergence among incomes and wealth. The disparity of economic inequalities cannot become excessive, this standard wisdom goes, first because of the diffusion of knowledge and skill throughout a population. Productivity increases as well as increased opportunities and wages result as education and skill-sets make mobility easier. A second force of convergence is that as people live longer, they will accumulate more savings. Improved living conditions and longer lifespans therefore reduce class friction and move societies in the direction of greater equality. The capitalist economy is not just self-correcting, it is also self-equalizing.

Capital in the Twenty-First Century
THOMAS PIKETTY
Translated from the French
by Arthur Goldhammer
Cambridge, MA: Belknap Harvard University Press, 2014. 685pp., $39.95

But Piketty's findings lead him to directly oppose these optimistic assumptions about the modern capitalist economy and to assert a central thesis that he sees as the core explanatory finding of his work. According to him, the forces for the divergence of wealth and income, indeed for the structure of inequality itself, are propelled by the difference between

MICHAEL J. THOMPSON *teaches political science at William Paterson University and is the founding editor of* Logos: A Journal of Modern Society & Culture *(www.logosjournal.com). A new edition of his book,* The Politics of Inequality: A Political History of the Idea of Economic Inequality in America, *was released last year by Columbia University Press. His email is: thompsonmi@wpunj.edu.*

the rate of return on capital on the one hand and the rate of growth of the economy on the other, summarized in the elegant inequality, $r > g$ (where r is the rate of return on capital and g the growth rate of the economy as a whole).

Empirically, what Piketty has to report is sobering. The contours of wealth and income inequality that he reveals are staggering, even for those who are familiar with inequality statistics.

Whenever this inequality is in play, there will be a powerful force for divergence between income and wealth groups. The more the rate of return on capital exceeds the rate of growth of the economy as a whole, the more that wealth will tend to concentrate and to be handed down generationally. The force for divergence expressed by $r > g$ means that there exists a force internal to capitalism that, according to Piketty, is responsible for generating inequality. His approach is historical, allowing him to test his hypothesis over a long time series of data reaching back to 1700 and, in some instances, going back to antiquity.

Piketty's procedure for tracking and analyzing inequality is to examine the share of income from capital in national income which is essentially the product of the rate of return on capital on the one hand and the capital/income ratio on the other (or $\alpha = r \times \beta$, where r is rate of return on capital and β the capital/income ratio). This he calls the "first fundamental law of capitalism" and it tells us the extent to which those who own capital are able to accumulate more than those who have less or none at all. Since Piketty's theory about the dynamics of inequality is driven by the ability of those who own capital to gain from investment returns as opposed to from labor, measuring inequality is centered on the relation of capital to incomes. Take the capital/income ratio. As the value of this ratio increases, the force for divergence will also increase since income from capital will be more dominant than income from labor. Further, if the rate of return on capital rises, then the power of capital to agglomerate more of itself increases again. Hence, the share of income from capital, or α, is an essential way to track the inequality dynamic. As fewer individuals command more capital, the gap between them and the remainder of society widens and the ability of the rest of society—literally the 99 percent as Piketty shows—to catch up to the 1 percent becomes impossible.

What this all basically means is that capital accumulation outstrips income from labor and over time is a major explanation for economic inequality. As a result, a very different kind of society begins to take shape than the one defended by liberals and conservatives alike: inherited wealth becomes dominant, social mobility from labor is neutralized, and economic elites are able to command high salaries from managing the firms sustained by capital and which continue to create more capital in the form of high super-salaries. If public policy is not able to change matters, Piketty's data suggests we will be living in a world where the wealthy will no longer need to labor as the remaining mass of society stagnates—effectively a re-feudalization of modern society.

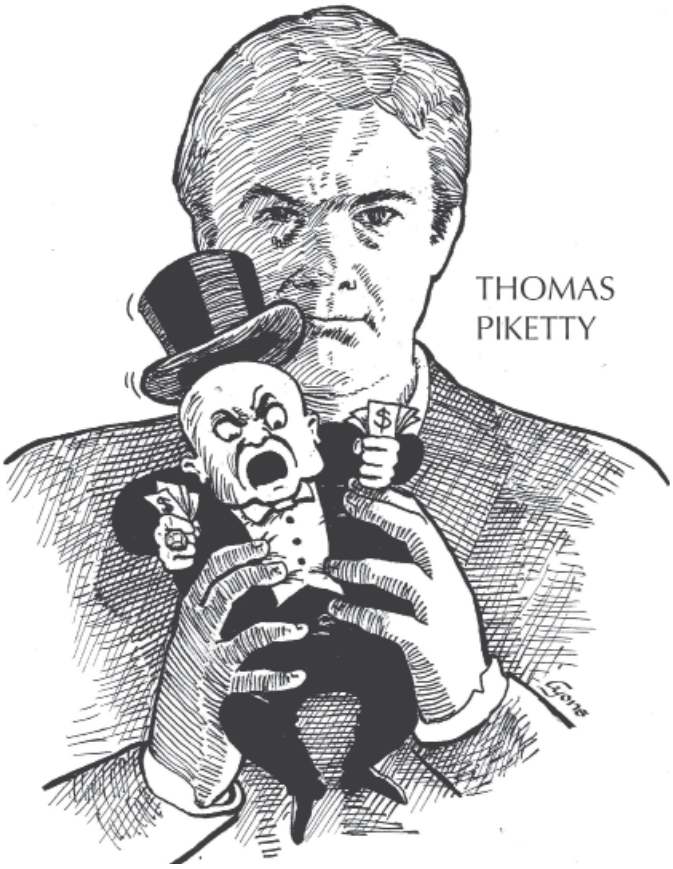
EMPIRICALLY, WHAT PIKETTY has to report is sobering. The contours of wealth and income inequality that he reveals are staggering, even for those who are familiar with inequality statistics. He finds that inequality has basically been constant historically, with the upper ends of the wealth scale earning about five times the amount of national income throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and again

in recent decades. One basic finding that the data make abundantly clear is that the concentration of wealth increases exponentially as you move up the wealth scale. The top decile (or 10 percent) of the wealth distribution in the United States, for instance, "structures the economic and political landscape." (p. 277) In terms of labor income, they receive 35 percent of national income in the United States compared to the bottom 50 percent of the population who receive only 25 percent of national income. In terms of capital ownership, the top decile owns 72 percent of the capital nationally compared to the bottom 50 percent who own a mere 2 percent.

But these facts are to be seen historically. Piketty shows that the patterns of inequality before World War I were extreme and our present conditions are headed in the same direction. The Great Depression, World War II, the rise of the welfare state and a patrimonial middle class capable of owning property and therefore gaining a small share in national wealth (largely through home ownership and pension funds) explain the compression of incomes between 1945 and 1980. But Piketty emphasizes that this was merely a blip on the screen, an exception to the fundamental laws of capitalism that tend toward divergence and toward capital concentration.

What has changed is the structure of inequality, or how that money is being produced and accumulated. In contrast to the pre-World War I era that was dominated by rentiers—people who lived off their rents from land, government bonds, and other investments and did not work—today's structure of inequality is dominated by hyper-salaried managers (Piketty calls them "supermanagers") who have "managed to obtain extremely high, historically unprecedented compensation packages for their labor." (p. 302) This has no economic basis, according to Piketty, and is instead the result of the creation of new social norms and values that serve to justify inequalities of income and wealth—a "hypermeritocratic society" where economic "superstars" are created and seen to be justly rewarded for their remarkable talents and ingenuity allowing for the toleration of extreme salaries by CEOs and other elites.

But it is only the top thousandth of the top 10 percent that has extreme control over capital ownership and control. These oligarchic elites earn returns to capital even as the rest of the top 10 percent increase their share of national income, but they will become a new class of super-elites whose offspring will live off of inheritance and, because of fiscal competition, lower tax rates in the long run. The forces of



divergence outweigh all of the classic mechanisms for redistribution and convergence that the liberal state has at its disposal. Economic growth can offset the inequalities gained from the rate of return on capital, but even this is no guarantee. What is needed, argues Piketty, is a modernized welfare state that can equalize incomes through public goods such as pensions, health care, education, and so on. But the essence of the story is clear: capital is centralizing, incomes at the highest end of the distribution are exploding, and the new patterns of inequality that we are witnessing show no sign of abating or dispersing. Piketty sees economic inequality returning to the rates of the *Belle Époque* and the Victorian era unless "new forms of property and democratic control over capital" (p. 569) can be invented.

But what about the theory behind the data? As much as Piketty claims to go against the grain of his profession, ... his empirical findings are more compelling than his explanation of them.

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE THEORY behind the data? As much as Piketty claims to go against the grain of his profession, as one labors through the almost 700 pages of this thick tome, it becomes increasingly obvious that his empirical findings are more compelling than his explanation of them. In fact, Piketty tries too hard to distance himself from Marx, whose theories seem to fit better with the data and their social implications than Piketty is willing to admit. An actual theory that penetrates the mechanisms creating inequality—i.e., a true theory of capitalism in the twenty-first century—is precisely what Piketty's book lacks.

If we begin with the two "fundamental laws of capitalism" that Piketty outlines in the first chapter, we see immediately some frustrating elements to the argument. Recall that the first fundamental law of capitalism was the share of income from capital, or $\alpha = r \times \beta$. Piketty sees this as fundamental because it is able to explain the historical dynamics of economic disparities. Similarly, he advances a second fundamental law of capitalism, which is that the capital/labor ratio is determined by dividing the savings rate by the rate of growth of the economy. Taken together these two "fundamental laws" are supposed to explain capitalism. But does it really explain anything other than his data? For one thing, it tells us nothing about the social mechanisms of capitalism let alone the mechanisms that produce inequality. It is an accounting equation, little more. If we simply see capital as the stock of "nonhuman assets that can be owned and exchanged on some market," (p. 46) we fail to see that capital, as Marx correctly hypothesized, can only grow by being employed for some purpose through human labor.

Capital is also the amount of money advanced in wages for the purpose of production. Indeed, the return on capital for Piketty is simply a rate of return, it possesses no social foundation. But this is an inadequate discussion of the matter. All capital grows through an exploitive relation between owners on the one hand and workers/consumers on the other. If person *A* invests *x* dollars in person *B*'s firm, the rate of return on *x* will be a function of the amount of profit, *p*, that *B* is able to accumulate from his enterprise. But *p* itself does not simply emerge from capital and appear as the rate of return; it is accomplished by a whole series of means of exploiting labor (i.e., suppressing wages, weakening unions, re-engineering regulatory laws, moving production to low-wage areas, making people purchase useless or superfluous commodities and services, and so on, none of which

Piketty mentions) as well as other factors of production that expand the value of *p* and, logically, expand the rate of return on capital, and therefore flow back to *A* as income from capital. This is what bolsters the wealth of hedge fund managers and venture capital firms: not simply the manipulation of fictitious capital, but the employment of capital for the expansion of exploitation and profit. And the same holds when someone invests money in a savings account or mutual fund, which then goes through the same circuit. Money does not make money—money requires that it exploit the labor of others for surplus to be created. The mistake that Piketty makes is that an accounting procedure *is not a theory of capitalism* since the latter requires that we have an insight into the mechanisms that generate profits and, by extension, more capital.

What is compelling about Marx's critique of capitalism is not his use of precise empirical data, which was largely unavailable in his day. Rather, it rests on the idea that he is able to unmask the forms of social power that underlie economic reality. The idea that profit was simply a by-product of the production process, or that inequality was the result of differentials in meritorious labor, were seen as absurd by Marx. Instead, he saw that the fundamental reality of capitalism as a social system was that it enabled those who own capital to extract benefit in the form of profits ("surplus value" in Marxian parlance) from workers. For Marx, this was expressed in the simple equation e = S/V, which Marx variously called the rate of surplus value or the rate of exploitation where S is surplus value produced and V variable capital, or the amount of capital paid to labor. This means we can discover the extent to which profits are made through the suppression of wages paid to labor. Marx's hypothesis, like Piketty's, was that the concentration of capital into fewer and fewer hands would result from the fact that capitalists would be able to extract increasingly more production from labor even while remuneration for that labor decreases, stays constant, or increases at a rate lower than profits over time. The super-salaries of CEOs are little more than this: the result of massive profits derived from increased extraction from workers whose average real income has not increased since the early 1970s. Economic growth, although slowing, is still going more to the owners than to workers.

Also recall that Piketty claims that the inequality $r > g$ is fundamental to understanding the dynamic that drives wealth and income dispersion. Here again, Piketty faces off against Marx on the issue of the law of the falling rate of profit. In fact, Piketty's $r > g$ equation obfuscates more than it clarifies. If the global rate of economic growth is declining and continues to decline, as Piketty suggests (from about 3.2 percent per annum in 2012 to about 1.5 percent in 2050) then the rate of return on capital will also fall, and perhaps fall to such an extent that increased investment will also fall, which was the essence of Marx's hypothesis about the crisis tendencies of capitalism.

How, then, can elites maintain *r*? One way would be through unproductive forms of economic activity such as derivative trading and the like. It could also be that they will continue to exploit global reserves of labor. Or we will revert to a largely rentier economy, with the wealthy living off of rents of varying kinds. But it is also possible that the rate of return on capital could also decrease as growth decreases. Once there

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are no more global reserves of cheap labor and natural resources become more scarce, the source for *r* will also erode. The fact that capitalists can earn a return on capital during a period of increased globalization is not surprising since they are able to exploit new reservoirs of low wage labor; the idea that this could continue indefinitely within a capitalist framework of growth imperatives is, however, not convincing.

What all of this means is that Piketty's empirical analyses seem to support hypotheses that he rejects. For Piketty, capital concentrates into fewer and fewer hands, but there is no sense that an increased exploitation of global labor is the source of increased profit; the stagnation of growth rates in the advanced capitalist economies since the 1960s is responsible for widening inequality, but the tendency for the rate of profit (and hence growth) to fall is invalid. The question really is, what is capitalism for Piketty anyway? Indeed, there is no sense that the theories he advances are anything more than a means to explain his data trends, not a means to explain capitalism as a social system. He really does not offer us a theory of capitalism *per se*, but a theory of what drives the data. These are not the same thing. The political and moral confrontation with economic inequality loses its edge once we leave the social sources of it behind and instead look only at the econometric data.

To be sure, Piketty lets his own moral disapproval of inequality show in passages throughout the book. He does not seem to approve of the high salaries of CEOs and of the widening gap between them and everyone else. Nevertheless, this book is not a critique of capitalism, as those on the right have been charging. It is a plea for its domestication. A global tax on wealth, a modernized social state, and a more progressive income tax sound nice, but they do not question the legitimacy of a social system that can only grow the more labor it exploits, the more resources it wastes, and the more that it relies on the minority of society to decide when and in what to invest their capital. They also have not worked in the past for very long. Oligarchic wealth grants elites stronger social and political capacities for wealth defense: to manipulate laws, cultural norms and values, and so on, for their own interest. Only through new ways of making private capital public in some sense can we begin to see a way out of the endless trap of inequality.

Inequality is a deeper problem than Piketty lets on. A society that allows private ownership of unequal capital reserves will always be able to orient the labor and consumption of society according to ends that generate profit, not valid social need. An unequal society will waste human capital and natural resources, and will orient the purposes of education, culture, politics, and society as a whole toward elite interests. And for this, Piketty should be taken to task. Economic inequality is primarily an issue of importance not because some have more than others, but because some are able to command the labor and efforts of the society as a whole according to their own interests and concerns, and not for those of the public interest and good.

For all of the personal discussion in his preface about his distaste for contemporary economic thinking, he is unable to break out of its stranglehold. Economics is still for him a statistical matter of numbers, not the social context within which it is embedded, and certainly not a system of power relations between people. For this reason, it is important to take Piketty's powerful analysis of the data and synthesize it with a critical political economy, one that grasps the ways that wealth, profit, and bloated incomes thrive off of extractive power, the exploitation of the many by the few. And this is not the theme merely of our time, but all of history as well.

New Light on the KKK

MARTIN OPPENHEIMER

SIT-INS AT LUNCH COUNTERS by black students began in Greensboro, North Carolina, on February 1, 1960. Blacks had traditionally not been served there or anywhere in the South at that time. Within a week the sit-ins spread to Durham and Winston-Salem. Eleven of the first sit-ins were within 100 miles of Greensboro. After many arrests, and assaults by white hoodlums, on July 25 all Greensboro stores targeted by the sit-ins agreed to serve blacks on an equal basis. Local governments in those three cities plus Raleigh (the capital), High Point, and Salisbury had by then created biracial "race relations" committees, which in most cases led to negotiations, considerable stalling, but finally desegregation of local stores.

Klansville, U.S.A.: The Rise and Fall of the Civil Rights-Era Ku Klux Klan
DAVID CUNNINGHAM
Oxford University Press, 2013. 231 pp. text plus footnotes and index. Hardcover $29.95; paperback $24.95

David Cunningham, a sociologist at Brandeis University, tells us that North Carolina was "a state widely perceived as a bastion of Southern liberalism." It had elected two governors, Terry Sanford in 1960 and Dan Moore in 1964, considered moderate: although officially opposed to integration (essential to election in a state where the voter registration rate of blacks was half that of whites), they were not part of the massive resistance to school integration and later to the Civil Rights and Voting Rights acts we associate with such governors as George Wallace of Alabama or Ross Barnett of Mississippi. In 1953 North Carolina had even passed an "anti-masking" law, after which the klan[1] marched robed but with faces uncovered.

In the decades following the defeat of Reconstruction (1877), and the effective end of black suffrage (by amendment to the North Carolina Constitution in 1900), the introduction of Jim Crow (segregation) laws was seen as "essential for social stability and … economic prosperity." The suppression of blacks guaranteed low wages for both blacks and many less-skilled whites. But after World War II, economic growth required a different, more progressive environment to encourage investment from the North. Soon "the industry-friendly pro-growth tenor of state politics severely limited the support—financial and otherwise—of strong segregationist candidates" in North Carolina as well as in some other Upper Southern states. Moderation (the preservation of segregation "by means other than outright resistance to federal statutes") would seemingly provide ways of dealing with both civil rights protests and white backlash.

And yet moderate Greensboro was a hotbed of klan activity. In response to the *Brown v. Board of Education* school desegregation decision (1954), a "third wave" of klans developed rapidly

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in the late 1950s.[2] In 1960 the United Klans of America (UKA), cobbled together from several earlier groups, surfaced as the dominant klan organization in North Carolina. By 1965 the North Carolina UKA was larger than the total UKA membership in the other 18 states where it had members. A year later it claimed 10,000 to 12,000 members in some 200 klaverns or chapters—more than half of UKA membership in all the Southern states. Mississippi had only 76 klaverns, a mere 5.2 percent of the total of all UKA klaverns in the South.

How can we explain this apparent paradox—the largest klan in the most "progressive" state? And the weakest UKA in the most hardcore segregationist one? And what led to the rapid collapse of the UKA after only a few more years—a rise and fall that oddly paralleled the early success and decline of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the organization that came out of the sit-ins, also by 1970? Cunningham focuses on the UKA in this book. In his earlier work, *There's Something Happening Here: The New Left, the Klan, and FBI Counterintelligence* (Univ. of California Press, 2004) he devotes some attention to SNCC among other civil rights and new left groups.

What was happening, not that startling to most civil rights veterans, takes us first to Mississippi (with close parallels in other Deep South states). Who needed the UKA, when the entire state apparatus from the governor down to the local sheriff was totally segregationist and completely hostile to civil rights activities? In 1956 the Mississippi legislature created the State Sovereignty Commission, whose agents "carried out the most extensive state spying program in U.S. history," compiling secret files on more than 87,000 people and organizations in order to preserve Mississippi's sovereignty, that is, its right to remain segregated. As early as 1957 it began to recruit black informers. Indeed it even recruited, using a contract detective agency, a vice-president of the Mississippi NAACP. After Ross Barnett was elected governor in 1960, the Commission began to fund the (white) Citizens' Councils, which were considered less uncouth than the Klan, making them a "quasi-official arm of state government."[3] "Mississippi's segregationist field," Cunningham relates, "was crowded with players" including the murderous White Knights of the KKK, which outnumbered the UKA and contained within its ranks many local law enforcement officials.

North Carolina was different. The UKA was the only "'true' organized segregationist game in town…." In a state where staunch segregationists had few outlets, given a political environment where "mainstream" institutions were prepared to bend, albeit slowly, to the demands of civil rights organizations, the UKA became "the central outlet willing to resist the fall of Jim Crow segregation." In Greensboro, moreover, unlike some other North Carolina cities, in particular Charlotte, policing of the KKK was limited to preventing violence, rather than actively harassing, much less suppressing it. Charlotte, in contrast, "instituted reforms more rapidly and completely," Cunningham tells us. Charlotte's business and political elites, supported by many citizens plus active policing, made it impossible for the UKA or even the Citizens' Council to get a foothold. But in other parts of the state, particularly in the agricultural "black belt" of eastern North Carolina, the UKA flourished. In seven counties in the northeast of the state, an average of 40 percent of the population was black, double the rate of the rest of the state, whereas in western North Carolina, in the Appalachian area, 95 percent of the population was white, and the UKA was barely able to hold on. The UKA understood this dynamic quite well. As one klansman pointed out, "there ain't no niggers in the mountains." Paradoxically, in a few counties where blacks constituted a *majority* the UKA was weak for the simple reason that there weren't enough whites with the resources to maintain a klavern.

Blacks were barred from employment in the textile industry because white women

worked there. But as some other companies became willing to employ blacks, even while maintaining job assignment by race, having both blacks and whites in the same workplace exacerbated the fear of "miscegenation." As anti-discrimination policies threatened to desegregate job assignments, this led to a realistic fear that whites would lose out in the competition for better jobs. It is no surprise, then, that UKA recruitment was successful in most of the eastern part of the state, where "large swathes of white residents felt their social, economic and political standing acutely threatened by civil rights reforms." The UKA's strength lay, in Cunningham's summation, "in its insistence on elevating racial identity as the political, moral and social center of American citizenship." The UKA held little attraction for professionals and others striving for respectability.

The klans' fortunes depended in part on the different states' willingness to tolerate them, meaning a refusal to do more than policing outright criminal acts, if even that much. A laissez-faire attitude, as in North Carolina in the early 1960s, meant that the UKA was able to recruit, hold rallies, and march—hoods and all. The FBI was similarly ambivalent, refusing to intervene when mobs, klan-led or not, attacked civil rights demonstrators or blacks attempting to register to vote. Yet, within a single year, 1965 to 1966, the UKA's dues-paying membership dropped from 12,000 to half of that, and by the Spring of 1968 the FBI estimated that less than 1,000 klansmen were still active in North Carolina. What happened?

There were a number of factors, of course. There was the usual in-fighting (some instigated by police agents). But Cunningham points to one factor as critical: "the fall of the UKA is predominantly a policing story." Following the murder of James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner by members of the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan at the beginning of Freedom Summer (the voting rights campaign in Mississippi) in 1964, President Johnson and his attorney general, Robert Kennedy, ordered FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover to get off his butt and go after the klans throughout the South. The FBI in Mississippi at that time was all-white, and most agents were native to the state. It is well established that they took no action in the critical two days between the disappearance of the three and the time of their murders, although Cunningham does not pursue this matter.

Prior to that moment, the Bureau's attitude seemed to be that civil rights groups, by virtue of their very existence, aroused the KKK to action, so that policing the former would be the most effective way to inhibit the growth of the latter. Hoover had had experience with the KKK in the 1920s, and although he was a racist and anti-Semite, he was also notoriously fastidious, and the KKK, "a group of sadistic, vicious white trash," offended him. He nevertheless saw the civil rights movement, pro-Communist in his view, as the greater danger. But he also grasped the idea that vigilantism, whether klan or SNCC or Black Panther, was a challenge to the state's (synonymous with the FBI) legitimate monopoly of the use of violence, and he proceeded to extend his 1956 Counterintelligence Program (Cointelpro) to white hate groups. He sent 153 special agents to Mississippi, and set up a new field office in Jackson, the state capital.

Hoover then proceeded to use the same (illegal) tactics against the various klan organizations that had already been well honed in the FBI's efforts to undermine—and in a few cases substantially contribute to the destruction of—civil rights groups. The FBI did the usual: in North Carolina they disrupted the UKA by writing anonymous letters in order to sow dissent, for example stating that its leaders were exploiting their members financially and that their night missions were a cover for adultery. The FBI sent out fake meeting notices to confuse the members, its agents persuaded media not to advertise klan social events, local officials to block rally permits, newspapers to refuse klan

ads, and the like. Indeed by early 1966, with hundreds of klansmen on the payroll, a number of "highly-placed informers exerted control over the UKA's top-level decisions." The UKA's top chaplain, George Dorsett, a long-time informer, managed to foment a split and formed a rival klan group; "FBI handlers … helped draft the group's first recruiting letter." The objective was to tightly rein in, not eliminate, klan activity, which served also to prevent klansmen from going underground. So there were klan units in fact controlled by the FBI.

After a white civil rights volunteer, Viola Liuzzo, was murdered by a carload of klansmen during the 1965 Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, voting rights march, President Johnson insisted on quick action and the perpetrators were swiftly arrested. This thanks to the fact that one of the passengers in the klan car was an FBI informer, Gary Rowe, who had been on the payroll since 1960. By 1966, according to Cunningham's earlier book, about 6 percent of total klan membership consisted of FBI informers.

Meanwhile—to the astonishment of civil rights activists—none other than the House Committee on Un-American Activities, better known as HUAC, initiated hearings on the klans of the South. The hearings made it clear that North Carolina was "far and away the most highly organized klan state in the nation," to the consternation of state officials and local media. Cunningham provides some details in *There's Something Happening Here*. "Between July 1965 and February 1966 over two hundred Klan members were called" before the Committee, most of them taking the Fifth. Upon refusing to provide klan records, three top klansmen went to jail for a year, "providing an opportunity for Cointelpro actions to exploit the resulting disarray in the UKA leadership hierarchy." The HUAC hearings cost the UKA $100,000 in legal fees. The Black Panther Party and other civil rights and peace groups were not alone in suffering a crippling diversion of resources from normal activities due to judicial proceedings.

While state law enforcement agencies in the Deep South were pretty much laissez-faire about the klans, when they were not directly complicit, North Carolina was again different. The State Bureau of Investigation and the State Highway Patrol, as well as local police forces, Cunningham claims, "did not infringe directly upon UKA members' constitutionally protected freedom of speech or assembly," they merely harassed klan activities to such a degree that "all available organizing opportunities" were virtually closed off. Local police removed "unpermitted signs," arrested leading klansmen for a range of driving violations, and the highway patrol monitored rallies, wrote down license plate numbers, and persuaded farmers not to allow klan rallies on their properties. In 1968 the *Raleigh News & Observer* actually published the highway patrol's collection of license plate numbers with the names of their owners, which led to numerous UKA resignations.

By the 1970s UKA membership had declined to less than a thousand. "Much of its base fled to right-wing political candidates…" as the Republicans' "Southern Strategy" opened up outlets for racists. Then in 1981 a lynching in Mobile, Alabama, led to a civil suit against the UKA, and an all-white jury awarded $7 million to the victim's wife. The UKA signed over its property. In 1987 the UKA folded for good.

"To varying degrees," Cunningham concludes, "local sheriffs, the [state bureau of investigation] and Highway Patrol, the governor's secret anti-klan committee, the FBI and [HUAC] all sought to suppress the KKK's activities," and at least at the formal organizational level, they succeeded. Meanwhile, Cointelpro did its share to assure the downfall of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, which in 1973 was declared effectively dead by the FBI. Very little of these unconstitutional tactics raised many eyebrows at the time; the American Civil Liberties Union was almost AWOL when it came to violations of the klans' rights. In March, 1966, it did criticize a court order barring the UKA from

holding a rally near Maxton, North Carolina. This was to be held on the anniversary of an earlier rally (January 18, 1958) in which a klan group had targeted local Lumbee Indians. (That rally was famously routed by armed Lumbees.)

In his earlier book Cunningham described the FBI's "central concern with policing expressions of political radicalism" going back to the 1920 Palmer Raids. In a delicate understatement he concludes that agents "arguably failed to limit themselves to constitutional means." He attempts to distinguish between the FBI's legitimate use of intelligence to pursue a criminal investigation, and counterintelligence "to repress a target's ability to legally act." But he admits that the FBI used illegal methods even in pursuing criminal investigations (including one involving the klan's 1963 church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama), and of course Cointelpro was illegal from the start regardless of the political target, right or left. The FBI's informers were often indistinguishable from *agents provocateurs* and the inescapable conclusion is that a good chunk of political activity by the klan as well as by groups such as Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) would not have been possible without the help of the government.[4]

By no means should it be thought that the FBI, or law enforcement agencies in the "moderate" states were "equal opportunity," balanced forces against both klans and civil rights and new left groups. Generally these agencies considered the klans more of a nuisance than a threat, whereas virtually all civil rights organizations were deemed by many local police and sheriffs as subversive, Communist, and/or Jewish-inspired or controlled, as well as a danger to the American Way of Life. As Cunningham pointed out in *There's Something Happening*, the FBI's strategy vis-à-vis white hate groups was to steer them to "selected 'acceptable' groups (those not actively engaged in violence) [which] … involved actually strengthening acceptable White Hate alternatives…." Its strategy towards New Left organizations such as SDS and civil rights groups like SNCC was to "delegitimize and eliminate" them.

Moreover, no police agency North or South ever ordered a klansman out of town on threat of death, as happened countless times to both black and white civil rights volunteers attempting to organize in local black communities in the Deep South. Nowhere was a klan march attacked by police clubbings, dogs, and tear gas (as was the Selma, Alabama, march of 1965, among many others). No klan demonstrators were ever rounded up, held in a stockade, and hosed down in freezing weather (Orangeburg, South Carolina, March, 1960). No klansman was ever murdered by vigilantes assisted by the local sheriff's office (Mississippi, June, 1964). In North Carolina, however, aside from many arrests, and sometimes standing aside while hoodlums attacked civil rights demonstrators (and in 1979 murdered five anti-klan marchers), law enforcement seems to have been nearly alone in the South in abstaining from massive violence against civil rights activists.

What was the legacy of the UKA following its organizational demise in 1987? It had begun to move towards electoral politics in 1968. It supported George Wallace that year; he was edged out by Richard Nixon, 39.5 percent to 31.25 percent, with Hubert Humphrey coming in a dismal third in North Carolina. Cunningham holds that the UKA played an important role in "the ascendance of a new and powerful wave of conservatism that heralded the South's transition to the Republican Party." Senator Jesse Helms was symptomatic of this shift. A notorious reactionary (anti-civil rights, anti-feminist, etc.), he had been a typical Southern Democrat, but changed to Republican and was elected as such in 1972. He served five terms in the Senate.

As Cunningham makes clear, "The Klan … did not operate in a vacuum. [it was] woven into the fabric of Neshoba County [Mississippi] and hundreds of other communities," so that even today its legacy "permeates the whole cloth

of communities." The continuing influence of KKK-white-Christian-identity thinking on the reactionary politics of the South is one aspect of this legacy; the other stems from the klans' "trappings of violence." Cunningham points out that communities where the UKA had been active suffered significantly higher rates of violent crime and homicide (not only against black citizens) for years after its demise.

Many liberals thought that segregation would be tamped down as Northern capital and personnel moved south. Segregation, the theory went, was inconsistent with the rational deployment of human resources. However, it seems today that rather than the North converting the South, it was the reverse. White Northerners who moved south resisted "policies designed to remediate structural barriers to equal opportunity, including busing and affirmative action," and the Republican Party, beginning with Richard Nixon, took advantage of these sentiments. In fact, Cunningham reminds us, "the Klan's influence endured most clearly in affluent communities." It was only through the civil rights movement that the culture of the South began a process of change that is, as we can see from recent attempts to stifle the black franchise, far from complete. The klans were unsuccessful in stopping that process, but in the long term, as Cunningham shows us in this insightful and informative book, they did succeed in slowing it down.

NOTES

1. I use the term "klan" as generic for any KKK organization. There were more than a dozen different klans operating in the South at that time. The term KKK is also generic for any klan.

2. The first wave was after the Civil War during Reconstruction; the second was in the 1920s.

3. Rick Bowers, *Spies of Mississippi: The True Story of the Spy Network That Tried to Destroy the Civil Rights Movement* (National Geographic, 2010).

4. For a history of the FBI and Cointelpro see Betty Medsger, *The Burglary: The Discovery of J. Edgar Hoover's Secret FBI* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2014).

Sleeping Through the Pirate Raid

MICHAEL HIRSCH

THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA was never true to its pretension of comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable—which was Gilded Age humorist Finley Peter Dunne's point—but there were exceptions, and exceptional practices. "Accountability reporting," or investigative reporting, is one of them.

That's journalism's in-house state-of-effect sanctifying greed as normative.

This shift toward "greed is good" as an ideological trope (the phrase comes from Michael Douglas's character in the Hollywood film *Wall Street*, along with the less-well-remembered but remarkably prescient, "The most valuable commodity I know of is information,") accelerated after the introduction of CNBC in 1989 and an almost endless supply of websites for the 24/7 news era. The *New York Times* Deal Book, launched in 2001 and honchoed by Adam Ross Sorkin, who got his break as a Timesman at age

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the-art term for writing—including business writing—that goes deep, asks hard questions, examines systems as well as individuals, and, in its purest form, is not just descriptive and true, but subversive of existing power relations. Always the runt in a world of money-eyed press giants then and Earth-straddling corporate media now, investigative journalism is shrinking further. Despite this year's Pulitzer for Investigative Reporting going to Chris Hamby of The Center for Public Integrity for his riveting exposé of Appalachian miners denied healthcare benefits by Johns Hopkins doctors under the sway and pay of the energy industry, the predominant form of news writing isn't investigative.

What sadly predominates is incremental, contextless, and moralistic where it should be cumulative, historical, and moral. It's "access reporting," which in most mainstream-media business coverage—with such notable and singular exceptions today as the *New York Times*' Gretchen Morgenson—is little more than insider market-messaging for investors and the tops of the business class. At its worst it's rewritten press releases, mergers and acquisitions horse-race results, and stock quotes for market junkies. It's the Gog to investigative reporting's Magog.

Dean Starkman, a longtime *Wall Street Journal* writer and now a Columbia University J-School prof, does a huge public service in his richly detailed and highly readable *The Watchdog That Didn't Bark: The Financial Crisis and the Disappearance of Investigative Journalism* in teasing out what little was good about mainstream press practice. While his scope is on established institutions—he pays too little attention to outside voices such as the socialist, labor, foreign-language, or underground press—he knows there were enough examples of solid reporting to make his counterintuitive case that the media has and can do better.

The Watchdog That Didn't Bark: The Financial Crisis and the Disappearance of Investigative Journalism
DEAN STARKMAN
Columbia University Press, 2014. 368 pp., cloth, $24.95

The Divide: American Injustice in the Age of the Wealth Gap
MATT TAIBBI
Spiegel and Grau: Random House, 2014. 448 pp., cloth, $27.00

Among those few who did were the Muckrakers, including Ida Tarbell, whose classic *The History of the Standard Oil Company* didn't castigate the Rockefeller mega-empire for being huge and financially bloated; she wasn't a socialist and didn't see corporate culture and structure as inherently depraved or destructive. What she faulted the senior Rockefeller and his business-plutocrat compadres for was acting like Barbary pirates.

There's also Bernard Kilgore, the quondam *Wall Street Journal* editor and Sparkman mentor-of-sorts who, despite the rampant ideological mendacity of its editorial pages, "brought storytelling, narrative, in-depth reporting and investigations to financial news and, in doing so, revolutionized both it and American newspapers in general." He also has kind words for Drew Pearson, I.F. Stone, Michael Harrington, Rachel Carson, Ralph Nader (though the last three were sizably book writers), and others.

Conversely Starkman blames much writing now as then for its lopsided prizing of elite over dissident sources, for a sycophantic management bias, for targeting investors rather than the broad public as its audience, for decontextualizing facts, and for putting the quantity of scoop reporting ahead of quality work. Now it's all prizing institutional over insurgent sources and scoop reporting over long-form analysis. In short, it's prizing profiling over probing and in

22 reporting on mergers and acquisitions, was itself an insiders' e-newsletter.

Sorkin is a poster boy for the we-don't-probe genre. *Too Big to Fail,* his best-selling 2009 post-mortem on the 2008 economic crash he never saw coming, is so centered on the doings at the executive-suite level that, says Starkman, he "steadfastly declines to look beyond the months leading up to the crash, so readers are left without the context to understand that nearly every individual named in the book played significant roles in causing the crisis."

Probing would have exposed the thievery of the mortgage-lending big bankers and hedge fund yuppies, while profiling turned superannuated frat-boy towel snappers into cultural icons. To stretch the metaphor, if business journalism were a dog show, the favored animal would be the French bulldog, not the Rottweiler. Even the St. Bernard would be left out in the snow. How the profession and its handlers missed the biggest cases of corporate misfeasance since the Great Depression is Starkman's story. Read it!

One outcome of the press's business-enabling reporting is losing any coherent understanding of the dangers in the growing gap in wealth, income, and political power. Former *Rolling Stone* contributing editor Matt Taibbi's *The Divide: American Injustice in the Age of the Wealth Gap*, vividly exposes the pattern of elite water-carrying by the American justice system that Starkman demonstrates is business as usual for the media. And that's irrespective of which of the two parties controls Congress and the White House. (Remember President Obama's insistence that Wall Street tycoons "broke no laws" in crashing the economy.)

Taibbi starts with a fair question: why, when poverty rates rise and crime declines, did the prison population correspondingly explode. He then looks at how history's greatest single plundering of wealth—the knowing and repeated sale of toxic, subprime-mortgage-based securities by the biggest banks to pension funds and municipalities—led only to a flurry of civil trials but not to criminal prosecutions. He contrasts that to the routine, extreme brutality of police toward inner-city residents and the disregard for the humanity of undocumented workers in ICE sweeps and routine traffic stops. Why are single mothers living on public assistance jailed for minor drug offenses when corporate looters who in one case were money launderers for a Mexican drug cartel still operate? Why does the alien crossing the street and picked up in a random stop have less right to counsel and bail than would an accused axe murderer with papers who is suspected of bloodying a meeting of Rotarians? Why does a fair jumper at 125th Street get punished for breaking a municipal law while a bank that breaks fifty state laws receives a financial slap on the wrist?

Taibbi's reporting, most of it original, is superb and alarmingly descriptive—even this hardened Marxist reviewer was struck by the casualness with which brutality is routinely administered in everyday life—though I'm not satisfied with Taibbi's answers. Yes, he makes the case that the rich are advantaged in hiring a string of $1,000-per-hour legal help to frustrate even the most committed prosecutors. Yes, the Securities and Exchange Commission is derelict to a degree that makes Mr. Bean look like Mr. Spock. Yes, key Wall Street financiers move through government circles like extended, in-bred family at a July 4 picnic. Yes, the Bush and Obama administrations' concerns with the suspected collateral damage if corporate leaders were made to pay for their crimes (a largess not extended to one tiny Chinatown bank, he notes) is gutless and itself destructive. Yes, police in major cities are held accountable and their budgets padded not by maintaining low crime rates but by meeting arrest quotas and working the media. All true, and his reporting on it is must reading. The big question is: why is it tolerated? Why, as Robert Tressell asked more than a hundred years ago in his classic *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, do even working people spit on those they consider beneath

them even as they ape their betters and vote for their candidates?

Throughout the book Taibbi refers to such insidiously disproportionate behavior as insane and racist (which it is), and to its effects as likely to spread to the so-called middle class as the wealth and power divide widens (ditto), but he spends almost no time investigating why the culture so deeply supports and even applauds such blatant discrimination, the scapegoating of "losers and the fronting for the powerful." And just when you think he will (racism, though not white supremacy—they're not synonyms, is given some credence as a cultural constant) he lards on one more excruciating but true story of blatant abuses. Taibbi's case for a dominant culture that brutalizes the poor and lionizes the powerful is unshakeable. Why it persists and what can be done to challenge it isn't part of his book's mandate. But it is ours.

When the Red States Really Were Red

E. HABERKERN

THE LABOR- AND THIRD-PARTY movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have been studied and written about extensively by academics and writers on the left. Most readers of this journal are probably familiar with much of this material. This book, however, is of particular interest today for a couple of reasons. For one thing, the author concentrates on the South and emphasizes the biracial nature of the movement. Not only were African Americans a part of the movement, they played a significant role in it and there were integrated locals as early as the 1870s when Grange locals in northern Louisiana accepted black members. Obviously this did not happen without controversy.

Greenbackers, Knights of Labor, and Populists: Farmer-labor Insurgency in the Late-nineteenth-century South
MATTHEW HILD
Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 2007. 327 pages. Notes, Bibliography, Index.
Hardcover $44.95, Kindle $31.69.

Hild argues that what most authors have underemphasized is the natural alliance of farmers and laborers. Most laborers were not only of rural origin, they were largely employed in rural enterprises. And the farmers who employed them saw the banks, corporations, and the politicians who served them as the enemy. This enemy, in turn, could only continue to dominate the region by whipping up the racist sentiment that had such a powerful hold on the popular mind in the South. In large part what fueled this racist epidemic was the recent memory of Reconstruction.

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As early as the 1870s the Grange was calling for a national graduated income tax. In Alabama the Greenback Labor Party organized farm workers. As early as 1882 one of the 22 seats in the state legislature won by the GLP was an African American. And by 1885 the Knights of Labor was organizing African Americans and women in Alabama and Tennessee.

So, what happened? Why did this movement disappear? Hild details the exclusionary voting laws and other attacks by the Democratic Party backed up by lynch mobs that played a significant role in the eventual destruction of this movement. But Hild emphasizes another factor. That is the role of the AFL under the leadership of Samuel Gompers. Under Gompers the AFL consciously aimed at limiting union membership to skilled (mostly male, mostly white) craftsmen. The broad class movement of the Knights of Labor and its predecessors was abandoned. Hild sums it up as follows:

> Violence and antilabor laws alone, however, do not explain the slow growth of trade unions in most of the South during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. To a considerable extent the exclusionary nature of the AFL contributed to the problem. While trade unions of unskilled workers, such as hod carriers and streetcar railway workers, could and sometimes did affiliate with the AFL, as did semiskilled factory workers' unions and the United Mine Workers of America, skilled workers' unions represented most of the AFL rank and file. The AFL made far less effort to organize unskilled workers than had the Knights of Labor, and in the South in particular those workers constituted a large majority of the industrial workforce. Furthermore, the Knights had organized women and African Americans in limited but nevertheless substantial numbers. The AFL, however, did not follow suit. During the 1890s, according to historian Bruce Laurie, the "hardening of white male chauvinism, racism, and xenophobia in the context of trade autonomy all but slammed shut [AFL] doors to women, blacks, and eastern Europeans." While the last of these groups was relatively scarce in the South circa 1900, the first two were quite plentiful. But prejudices and the relative scarcity of those two groups in the skilled trades (a scarcity that AFL unions sometimes worked to ensure) meant that few women or blacks joined the ranks of the AFL. Unlike the Knights, the AFL did not organize domestic workers or farmers of any sort. The exclusion of the latter, of course, meant that the AFL trade union movement would not emulate the Knights of Labor as a farmer-labor movement.

The contemporary labor movement has abandoned the broad movement represented by the CIO of the thirties in favor of Gompers' approach. Today it is not so much skilled workers but public workers who are the easiest to organize. Unlike industrial workers who were the backbone of the AFL-CIO from the thirties to the fifties, their jobs cannot be moved overseas in the great globalization of modern capitalism. They depend, as Gompers did, on an arrangement with sympathetic politicians whose votes they can buy. But the consequence is that the labor movement is increasingly isolated from the majority of the working class.

A small footnote is in order. In the San Francisco Bay Area, as liberal a locale as can be found in the present day United States, the unions of the Bay Area Rapid Transit system (BART) were forced into a strike last September by a management that is counting on financing a 15 billion dollar renovation in part by cutting back the wages, working conditions, and safety of its employees. The result was a wave of public anger directed, not at management which provoked the strike, but at the employees who were portrayed by the news media as privileged exploiters of the working poor who use the system to get to their mostly non-union jobs.

This is the result that can be expected when unions depend on contributions to Democratic Party politicians rather than on an appeal to the majority of the working class to defend their members.

Renegades and Castaways

KENT WORCESTER

FOR MANY YEARS the dominant trend in scholarship on C.L.R. James has been to emphasize his cultural and literary writings. Arguably the most popular way to frame his legacy has been to situate him as a forerunner to cultural studies, post-colonial studies, and identity politics. Grant Farred, for example, has criticized "earlier modes of James studies" that addressed "debates that occupied sectarian James scholars" and welcomed "the centrality of cultural studies within James scholarship," while Brett St. Louis has argued that the "march of identity politics and post-modernism" is "irresistible," and that James's work is of value precisely because it "grapples with a proto-post-marxist problematic."

C.L.R. James in Imperial Britain
CHRISTIAN HØGSBJERG
Duke University Press, 2014, 312 pp., $24.95

Mariner, Renegade & Castaway: Chris Braithwaite: Seamen's Organiser, Socialist and Militant Pan-Africanist
CHRISTIAN HØGSBJERG
Redwords/Socialist History Society, 2013, 128 pp., £4

Toussaint Louverture: The Story of the Only Successful Slave Revolt in History
C.L.R. JAMES
Edited and introduced by Christian Høgsbjerg
Duke University Press, 2013, 222 pp., $23.95

Anyone familiar with James's life and work will recognize that this culture-centered reading of James is at best incomplete. Cyril Lionel Robert James (1901-1989) wrote on a formidable range of topics and participated in all kinds of struggles and causes. Some of the topics he thought and wrote about included Hollywood movies and team sports. He certainly wasn't an "orthodox" historical materialist who downplayed the significance of social, cultural, and even psychological forces. Yet it is worth insisting that he consistently and explicitly located himself within a Marxist framework, initially Trotskyist and later on, by the 1950s, self-declared independent Marxist. With this bedrock political commitment came an unfettered sense of intellectual freedom and curiosity. His corpus includes books on Pan-Africanism, Hegelian dialectics, Herman Melville, Soviet foreign policy, West Indian party politics, the politics of socialism, and the Haitian revolution, as well as a novel and a number of short stories. He also wrote essays and delivered lectures on the vanguard party, the British Empire, Shakespearean tragedies, literary criticism, Abraham Lincoln, Picasso, Toni Morrison, cricket matches, strike waves, Athenian democracy, the Atlantic slave trade, the Paris Commune, China under Mao, and the civil rights movement in the United

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States. Even his biographers have wrestled with the challenge of accounting for and doing justice to the diversity of his interests.

Having spent much of his life in relative obscurity and genteel poverty, James achieved the status of *éminence grise* during his final years. Many (but not all) of his books and essays found their way back into print, and journalists traveled to his modest lodgings in the Brixton section of London to conduct interviews and research magazine profiles. A few years before his passing the London *Times* memorably described him as the "Black Plato" of the twentieth century. After his death, the academic world began to pay closer attention to his ideas, and for the past couple of decades roughly a book a year has been published in Britain, the United States, and the Anglophone Caribbean on various aspects of James's life and work. He has also been the subject of numerous academic conferences and workshops. C.L.R. James is arguably one of a small number of twentieth-century radical thinkers whose intellectual agenda inspires and provokes new readers in the twenty-first.

More than any other contemporary writer on James, Christian Høgsbjerg appreciates how provisional and incomplete our understanding of this intellectual agenda has actually been. Given the proliferation of fresh editions of James's books and essays, and the availability of several biographies, it would seem as if this ground would have been thoroughly canvassed. But the gaps are enormous, both in terms of thematic development and the material record. There are still numerous C.L.R. James speeches, reviews, letters, poems, videos, signed and unsigned essays, and even book chapters and manuscripts deposited in archives, libraries, and personal effects that have been scarcely touched by academics, let alone publishers. Furthermore, we conspicuously lack reliable and detailed accounts of any number of Jamesian episodes, from his role in the 1941 Missouri sharecroppers' strike, and his occasional interventions in mainstream Trinidadian politics, to his relationship to the New Left, not only in North America but in the eastern Caribbean. Høgsbjerg's research takes aim at what is perhaps the most productive and fruitful of these episodes, his six-and-a-half-year sojourn in Britain in the 1930s.

A little over a year ago, Duke University Press published the first result of Høgsbjerg's archival investigations. Rummaging through the papers of Jock Haston, a working class Trotskyist from Scotland, Høgsbjerg stumbled across "the long-lost original playscript" for James's three-act dramatization of the life of Toussaint Louverture, the leader of the "only successful slave revolt in history." James's drama had been staged in London in the mid-1930s, with Paul Robeson in the starring role, but until Høgsbjerg's fortuitous discovery only a small portion of the script had weathered the passage of time. The resulting volume features the recovered script, the original theatrical program, and nearly two-dozen reviews of the 1936 production. It also includes a thoroughly researched introduction by Høgsbjerg as well as a forward by the historian Laurent Dubois, and a sampling of letters and essays by James and Robeson that more or less date to this period. Whether the play represents, as Høgsbjerg argues in his introduction, "the last major missing piece of his writing yet to be published" is debatable. But the publication of James's foray into theatrical prose is not only a delightful literary event in its own right but provides a welcome opportunity to revisit the historical and intellectual context in which James produced his landmark work of comparative historical analysis, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint Louverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (1938).

Earlier this year, Duke published a substantially upgraded version of Høgsbjerg's dissertation, which uses interviews, archival findings, and published materials to track James's intellectual and political progression during the Great Depression, a period in which he embraced Marxism and wrote some of his most consequential books and essays. The result is one of

the most impressively researched biographies of a prominent radical to appear in recent memory. As Scott McLemee notes in his blurb for *C.L.R. James in Imperial Britain*, Høgsbjerg "follows him into the meeting halls and radical bookstores, the cricket grounds and bohemian haunts where this displaced 'Victorian with the rebel seed' emerged as a leading figure in the Trotskyist and Pan-Africanist movements." Thanks to Høgsbjerg, we have a much clearer picture of what James was up to from 1932 to 1938, when he first lived in Nelson, a proletarian stronghold in the county of Lancashire and then in London, before relocating to the United States in his late thirties, at the request of Leon Trotsky, in order to embark on a major speaking tour for the Socialist Workers Party on the eve of World War II. We learn about James's friendships with labor militants in Nelson, his work as a sports columnist, his immersion in anti-colonial and radically socialist political campaigns, his encounters with publishers, well-known writers, Communists, and Labour Party officials, and his efforts to join the Ethiopian military in response to the Italian invasion of 1935-1936. Anyone with an interest in black protest, literary London, and/or left politics in the 1930s will enjoy this smart, factually grounded yet thematically rich biographical study.

Høgsbjerg's slim monograph on Christopher M. Braithwaite (1885-1944), which was co-published last year by the radical bookshop Bookmarks and the Socialist History Society, offers additional insights into interwar black radicalism and the ways in which politically minded West Indians and Africans joined together in places like London and Paris to advocate and agitate on behalf of anti-colonialism. While James was a leading member of the International African Service Bureau and other pro-independence organizations, he worked alongside a number of powerful thinkers and writers who were similarly wedded to what has been described as "class struggle Pan-Africanism." Chris Braithwaite, who often operated under the name Chris Jones, was a Barbadian trade union activist who chaired the Colonial Seamen's Association and regularly spoke at rallies and at the Speakers Corner section of London's Hyde Park. Like James, he contributed political pieces to *International African Opinion* and other anti-colonial periodicals, and, like James, he was a leftist critic of Stalinism who believed in the power of the organized working class to change society. In contrast to James, of course, the story of Braithwaite's trans-Atlantic activism has been largely overlooked; Høgsbjerg's characteristically sturdy study goes a considerable distance toward rectifying this oversight. The book includes two obituaries, five black-and-white photos, and eight of Braithwaite's short essays.

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