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From the Editors

WE HAVE HAD AN EXTRAORDINARY presidential primary in 2016: in addition to the establishment candidate, Hillary Clinton, we have an authoritarian demagogue, Donald Trump, who has unleashed a reactionary rage which harkens back to fascism, and another, Bernie Sanders, who calls himself a democratic socialist.

Unprecedented numbers have attended Sanders' rallies, seven million donors have given an average of \$27 to his campaign, but Trump has also mobilized enormous numbers of voters, and Clinton has the backing of her party officials, most of the capitalist class, and the undemocratically chosen super-delegates as the races lead to the conventions this summer.

Where has this surprising, exhilarating, and also deeply disturbing, political year come from? We owe this election tension in large measure to the Great Recession of 2008 and to the social movements it engendered: the Tea Party, on the right, and Occupy Wall Street and Black Lives Matter on the left.

The furor on the right, in large part started with the election of a Black man to the presidency, but is also a reaction to the changing demographics of American society. Today Blacks, Latinos, and Asians make up over one third of the American people, a development that is a particular threat to the white supremacy of the Republican Party and is perceived as a threat by much of its base.

White men, many of whom were affected by the economic crises that began in the 1970s and deepened in 2008 have lost both their economic stability and their status due to the attack by neoliberal capitalism and now face competition from the Black, Latino, and Asian parts of the working class, as well as from the increasing proportion of women in the workforce, now 47 percent, as well as feeling threatened by the increasingly visible and confident LGBT population.

This resentful older, white male voter forms the core of Trump's enraged constituency. We need a progressive political alternative that can speak to the legitimate needs of these men and can win significant sections of them away from Trump and reaction in the name of a program that convincingly assures security and a decent life to all in America.

Trump's nativist and nationalistic attacks on Mexicans and Muslims, his violent rhetoric, and his misogyny represent the revival of a far right. This is part of a racist rightwing resurgence that is taking place in Europe in reaction to the Syrian refugee crisis and in Latin America as well where the Pink Tide is receding under attack by local elites, foreign economic interests, and, in the shadows, the U.S. State Department.

We on the left are everywhere being challenged to put forward our alternative of socialism as democracy from below.

As always, we try to do that in the current

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issue of *New Politics*. Two of our editors, Joanne Landy and Dan La Botz, offer their views on different aspects of this election season, while also on the American scene Juan M. Floyd explores the legacy of welfare reform and David Cochran explains the politics and poetics of jazz legend Mose Allison. Turning to foreign affairs, Jeff Abbott describes the place of Central America in the American empire and Aaron Amaral offers a critical look at the Syriza government in Greece.

Rosa Luxemburg's defense of democratic rights is well known, but, as Michael Löwy shows, she was also a sharp critic of bourgeois democracy. *New Politics* editor Nancy Holmstrom examines the many varieties of leftwing feminism, and, continuing our discussion of C.L.R. James from last issue, editor Reginald Wilson remembers his days as managing editor

of *Correspondence*.

Two articles address the environmental crisis. Richard Smith makes the case for ecosocialism, while Nancy Romer and Linda Farthing look at the food justice movement.

We remember Art Lipow and Bogdan Denitch, and Kent Worcester highlights the work of British cartoonist Donald Room. And, of course, we present a wide-ranging selection of book reviews.

We hope you enjoy this issue and our website (newpol.org) and we look forward to hearing from you.

SAULO COLÓN
NANCY HOLMSTROM
DAN LA BOTZ
JASON SCHULMAN
JULIA WRIGLEY

CHAMPIONS OF JUSTICE



"It was we, the people; not we, the white male citizens; nor yet we, the male citizens; but we, the whole people, who formed the Union.... Men, their rights and nothing more; women, their rights and nothing less."

—Speech after her arrest for voting in the 1872 presidential election

"Join the union, girls, and together say Equal Pay for Equal Work."

"I was born a heretic. I always distrusted people who know so much about what God wants them to do to their fellows."

"When Susan Anthony, at eighty, went to hear Eugene Debs speak (twenty-five years before, he had gone to hear her speak, and they had not met since then), they clasped hands warmly, then had a brief exchange. She said, laughing, 'Give us suffrage, and we'll give you socialism.' Debs replied, 'Give us socialism and we'll give you suffrage.'"

—Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*

Susan B. Anthony 1820-1906. *A primary leader of the nineteenth century women's rights movement in the United States.*

The Foreign Policies of Sanders, Trump, and Clinton

America and the World in 2016 and Beyond

JOANNE LANDY

THE WORLD TODAY IS FACED WITH CRISES on virtually every front, and any assessment of the foreign policy positions of the two major parties' 2016 presidential candidates must measure how well they respond to these crises.

Bernie Sanders

The Sanders campaign has been a breath of fresh air on the American political scene. Bernie has taken into the political arena the Occupy movement's outrage at the domination of the United States by the 1 percent. Whether or not he wins the nomination, his astounding success is a sign of the real potential for a new kind of politics in the country—inspiring, whether or not one shares his Democratic Party strategy.

Bernie has a strong domestic program—it calls for ending the domination of big money in politics, single-payer Medicare for All, free tuition at public colleges and universities, breaking up the big banks, raising taxes on corporations and the wealthy, support for workers and their unions, confronting climate change, and questioning the government's mass surveillance programs. Moreover, despite his stubborn tendency to sound at times (though less and less as the campaign goes on) like he believes that economic inequality takes precedence over

social inequality, Sanders does have good positions in favor of abortion rights, reform of the criminal justice system, demilitarization of the police, and the need to oppose institutional racism. If his campaign doesn't end up as a faction entrapped within the Democratic Party, these positions could be the basis for beginning to build a lasting independent political party that can offer an alternative to the status quo.

Sanders' foreign policy positions are better than those of his Republican and Democratic opponents—though that's not a terribly high bar, it must be said. He is the least hawkish of the major party candidates. As he has stated repeatedly, he's proud that he voted against the war in Iraq—in contrast to Hillary Clinton, who has only grudgingly said that her pro-war vote was a mistake,¹ and note that even now she calls it a “mistake,” not a decision that was fundamentally wrong. Like Clinton, Sanders supported recent moves toward normalization of relations with Cuba. He also supported the nuclear deal with Iran; though Clinton too supported the Iran deal, with her trademark “muscular” approach to foreign policy, her tone is quite different from Sanders': she has emphasized that, if elected, she would back up the U.S.-Iran nuclear agreement with the threat of military reprisal if Iran violated any of its terms.² Indeed, she seems coiled and almost looking for a justification to spring into action. Sanders condemns past U.S. interventions in Guatemala, Central America, and Iran, and has sharply criticized Clinton's embrace of Henry Kissinger. (Note, by the way, that Clinton doesn't

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stand alone in Democratic Party establishment circles in her enthusiasm for Kissinger; in May 2016 President Obama's Defense Secretary Ash Carter presented him with the Department of Defense's Distinguished Public Service Award.)

Obama, despite his frequent impassioned anti-nuclear rhetoric, has called for a trillion dollar modernization of U.S. nuclear weapons.

Notwithstanding his criticisms of Hillary Clinton for her inclination to favor U.S. military intervention around the world, Sanders himself has generally supported America's wars.

Sanders strongly opposes the plan. In contrast, Hillary Clinton has been, in the words of Lawrence Wittner,

more ambiguous about her stance. . . . Asked by a peace activist about the trillion dollar nuclear plan, she replied that she would "look into that," adding, "It doesn't make sense to me." Even so, like other issues that the former secretary of state has promised to "look into," this one remains unresolved. Moreover, the "National Security" section of her campaign website promises that she will maintain the "strongest military the world has ever known"—not a propitious sign for critics of nuclear weapons.³

Sanders favors the eventual complete elimination of nuclear weapons and says he would work to get U.S. and Russian weapons down to a thousand each—a goal that Clinton too says she favors. Sanders calls for cuts in the military budget, but he gives no specifics and makes it sound as if the cuts will all come from eliminating waste and cost overruns—a standard politician's evasion to avoid discussing

policy. Such trimming of the fat in a military budget that stands at close to \$600 billion will be too small to provide a real revenue source for Sanders' social and infrastructure programs, and the promise is too vague to generate a useful conversation about a different sort of U.S. foreign policy, one that doesn't depend on overwhelming military power. (The likely Green Party presidential candidate, Jill Stein, on the other hand, calls for a 50 percent cut in military spending and indicates how the saved funds will be used. *Full disclosure*: Stein is the candidate I intend to support.)

The Middle East

Sanders has reflected and amplified a growing feeling in the American public—including among younger American Jews—that the United States shouldn't automatically fall in line to uncritically support the Israeli government no matter how badly it treats the Palestinians. Sanders hasn't gone far enough: Crucially, he hasn't called for an end to the U.S. military, economic, and diplomatic support that sustains Israeli policy toward Palestinians. However, his sharp words of criticism of Israeli policies during the Democratic presidential debates, even if those criticisms were limited, have helped further a much-needed public debate about the future of the U.S.-Israeli relationship. Moreover, Sanders' surprise appointment of prominent defenders of Palestinian rights Cornel West and James Zogby to the July Democratic Party convention platform drafting committee will accelerate and deepen the division on Israel within the party.

Unfortunately, Sanders' foreign policy positions are too often inconsistent with his democratic and anti-elitist domestic politics. Taken as a whole, his foreign policy approach doesn't come anywhere near constituting an agenda that addresses the needs of the global 99 percent (or, say, 90 percent) who suffer from today's wars and the cruel global economic order of neoliberalism and austerity that the United

States promotes.

As recently as October of last year Sanders has said that he supports keeping U.S. troops on the ground in Afghanistan.⁴ He voted for NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999, which caused one of his staffers, my friend Jeremy Brecher, to resign in protest.⁵ And Sanders voted for the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force Against Terrorists, which has been used to justify U.S. military action in the Middle East (apart from the 2003 Iraq invasion) ever since.

Notwithstanding his criticisms of Hillary Clinton for her inclination to favor U.S. military intervention around the world, Sanders himself has generally supported America's wars. Rather than putting forward a progressive, non-imperial alternative to ISIS and al-Qaida that can appeal to ordinary people in the Middle East, as Jeremy Scahill reminds us, in the 1990s Sanders supported the Iraq Liberation Act and the brutal economic sanctions that killed hundreds of thousands of Iraqis and that supported President Clinton's bombings in Iraq that were packaged as part of the so-called no-fly zones. And this support for America's wars is not just in the distant past. For example, in October 2015 Sanders said he wouldn't end Obama's drone strikes in countries such as Pakistan and Yemen, saying only that strikes must be deployed "selectively and effectively."⁶

On MSNBC's April 25, 2016, town hall meeting moderated by Chris Hayes, Sanders repeated his endorsement of drone strikes and said that he supported a "constitutional, legal" presidential kill list. He agreed with Obama's action in sending 250 Special Forces operators to Syria, saying to Hayes, "I think what the president is talking about is having American troops training Muslim troops, helping to supply the military equipment they need, and I do support that effort. We need a broad coalition of Muslim troops on the ground. We have had some success in the last year or so putting ISIS on the defensive, we've got to continue that effort."⁷

The basic problem with Sanders' approach is that he believes that the solution to the threat of ISIS, al-Qaeda, and their ilk depends on resolute action by reactionary Middle East governments, backed by the United States, Russia, and other powerful countries. But the solution actually lies in the opposite direction. What is needed is an end to intervention by outside powers (including regional heavyweights like Saudi Arabia and Iran) and a thoroughgoing transformation of the Middle East, a transformation that can only be begun by the revival of the grassroots democratic movements of Iran's Green movement and the Arab Spring that challenged and threatened to replace despotic rulers across the region.

Sanders summed up his anti-ISIS strategy on November 19, 2015, when he said,

While the U.S. and other western nations have the strength of our militaries and political

It is to be hoped that the millions of Sanders supporters will come to see that they need to build a new political party not only to reverse America's militaristic, anti-democratic, and imperial foreign policy, but even to achieve many of the more limited goals for which they are fighting today.

systems, the fight against ISIS is a struggle for the soul of Islam, and countering violent extremism and destroying ISIS must be done primarily by Muslim nations—with the strong support of their global partners. ... A new and strong coalition of Western powers, Muslim nations, and countries like Russia must come

together in a strongly coordinated way to combat ISIS, to seal the borders that fighters are currently flowing across, to share counterterrorism intelligence, to turn off the spigot of terrorist financing, and to end support for exporting radical ideologies. ... Countries in the region like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, UAE—countries of enormous wealth and resources—have contributed far too little in the fight against ISIS. That must change. King Abdallah [of Jordan] is absolutely right when

The core of Trump's foreign policy is the conventional establishment doctrine—treated as gospel by Hillary Clinton as well—that the United States needs to possess overwhelming military superiority. What's distinctive is Trump's crude, macho tone and his single-minded emphasis on the military, almost to the exclusion of other ways of exerting U.S. power.

he says that the Muslim nations must lead the fight against ISIS, and that includes some of the most wealthy and powerful nations in the region, who, up to this point, have done far too little.⁸

The governments of these reactionary "Muslim nations" can't possibly offer to the millions of people in the Middle East an attractive alternative to ISIS. Jordan uses a broad and vague counterterrorism law to strictly curtail freedom of expression and outlaws criticism of the king, of the government, and of Islam. Kuwait's government aggressively cracks down on free speech. Qatar engages in the trafficking

of ruthlessly exploited forced labor and provides for penalties of up to five years' imprisonment for criticizing the emir or deputy emir. UAE courts have invoked repressive laws to prosecute government critics, and a counterterrorism law poses a further threat to government critics and rights activists. And Saudi Arabia's hideous police state is a byword for blind and bloody repression—against women, religious minorities, and even the most peaceful of government critics⁹—little different from ISIS itself.

These regimes are part of the problem, not part of the solution. But that's equally true of the "U.S. and other Western nations" that Sanders believes can play a crucial role in the fight against ISIS. The international financial institutions that the United States and other Western nations dominate, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, have helped to create the conditions that gave rise to ISIS in the first place. They pressed governments across the region to adopt policies of privatization, cutbacks in state investment, and government subsidies for energy and other day-to-day essentials. These governments—from Tunisia and Egypt to Libya and Syria—acquiesced to Western pressure and implemented neoliberal policies, using their repressive state apparatuses to squelch popular discontent, with painful consequences. The Arab Spring was a rebellion against both despotism and the economic suffering inflicted by the despots.

Sanders, then, is looking in all the wrong places for a lasting victory against ISIS. Bombings and military intervention by the United States and NATO, with their killing of hundreds of innocent civilians, have only succeeded in creating more terrorists and driving millions of people in the Middle East into passive acquiescence or sometimes actual support for ISIS and other reactionary fundamentalist forces. Likewise, Syria's murderous Assad regime, with critical assistance from Iran and Russia, has killed hundreds of thousands of Syrians. Assad's war against his regime's opponents is

not, as Sanders seems to think, the first step toward defeating ISIS. In fact, the effect has been the opposite, and the only way Assad can triumph is by turning Syria into even more of a wasteland than it already is, which will actually serve to encourage groups like ISIS.

Unlike Donald Trump, Bernie Sanders isn't drawn to dictators. Nor is he a macho warmonger by nature. The problem is that he hasn't systematically broken with the foreign policy of the 1 percent. What is needed is a new, independent foreign policy of solidarity with grassroots movements for democracy and social justice around the world—an internationalist extension of Sanders' domestic program. To the extent that Sanders enmeshes himself in the Democratic Party, an institution deeply entwined with corporate and financial interests, he will be unable to champion political or social revolution abroad, or, for that matter, at home. It is to be hoped that the millions of Sanders supporters will come to see that they need to build a new political party not only to reverse America's militaristic, anti-democratic, and imperial foreign policy, but even to achieve many of the more limited goals for which they are fighting today.

Foreign Trade

Sanders opposes the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement. So does Clinton, although many pundits consider her position to be totally opportunist, designed for battling Sanders in the primaries, and the president of the Chamber of Commerce has suggested that Clinton will switch to backing the deal if she wins the election.¹⁰ Certainly, Clinton has been an enthusiastic supporter of corporate-oriented free trade deals for her entire career, whereas Sanders has consistently opposed them. Trump opposes the TPP too, but his stance is based in part on his belief that no one can negotiate a deal like he can and also on his economic nationalism—which also leads him to threaten China with a 45 percent tariff.¹¹ Given the current U.S. tariff

rate of about 3.5 percent,¹² Trump's policy could not fail to create havoc in the U.S. and world economies.

Sanders emphasizes fair trade over free trade and insists that workers, not corporations, should be the beneficiaries. But he has done a poor job of articulating a progressive foreign trade policy that is not narrowly nationalist. It has to be admitted that the left as a whole has failed to outline such a policy, and that's a challenge that lies before all of us. One thing certain, though, is that the type of global democratic economic planning that would be required to achieve economic security and well-being for all will never be adopted by the 1 percent.

Donald Trump

As I write this article in May 2016, Donald Trump's foreign policy views have captured public attention. He said the United States should not tolerate the continuing failure of its NATO, Middle Eastern, and Asian allies to pay their fair share of military costs—a common complaint in establishment circles—but then shocked the pundits by saying that Washington should be prepared to tell these allies that they must fend for themselves if they don't pony up their contributions to the United States in return for Washington defending them. He has even said that he's willing to have Japan, South Korea, and Saudi Arabia acquire their own nuclear weapons.¹³

"Strength"

The core of Trump's foreign policy is the conventional establishment doctrine—treated as gospel by Hillary Clinton as well—that the United States needs to possess overwhelming military superiority. What's distinctive is Trump's crude, macho tone and his single-minded emphasis on the military, almost to the exclusion of other ways of exerting U.S. power: "The Trump doctrine is simple. ... It's strength. It's strength. Nobody is going to mess with us. Our military will be made stronger."¹⁴ In his

April 27, 2016, foreign policy speech, he blasted the way that U.S. military power has, in his view, been dangerously diminished: “Our military is depleted, and we’re asking our generals and military leaders to worry about global warming. We will spend what we need to rebuild our military. It is the cheapest investment we can make. We will develop, build, and purchase the best equipment known to mankind. Our military dominance must be unquestioned.”¹⁵

Concerning nuclear weapons, Trump has said, “It is highly, highly, highly, highly unlikely that I would ever be using them.”¹⁶—a not very comforting statement given the built-in danger of nuclear war erupting out of the conflicts among nuclear-armed states, and especially given Trump’s mercurial temperament. Trump has complained that Obama has allowed the U.S. nuclear arsenal to “atrophy”;¹⁷ his willingness to countenance nuclear weapons for Japan, South Korea, and Saudi Arabia has been noted already. Concerning nuclear non-proliferation treaties, he declared, “I oppose such agreements for the same reason I oppose gun controls—when weapons are banned, only the outlaws have them.” Trump approved Israel’s bombing of Iraq’s nuclear reactor in 1981, saying he would do the same to North Korea (“Am I ready to bomb this reactor? You’re damned right”¹⁸). He has also said he would abrogate the nuclear deal with Iran, and he refuses to rule out the use of nuclear weapons against ISIS.¹⁹

Trump reassures Americans that his insistence on a gargantuan U.S. military doesn’t mean he’s trigger happy. Asked whether he supported the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons, Trump replied, “No, no, we wouldn’t get rid of the weapons. Because you have so many people out there. But I would be somebody that would be amazingly calm under pressure.”²⁰ He says, in a not-so-veiled attack on Hillary Clinton’s and perhaps Ted Cruz’s hawkishness, “Unlike other candidates for the presidency, war and aggression will not be my first instinct.” He adds, “You cannot have a foreign policy without diplomacy.

A superpower understands that caution and restraint are signs of strength. ... The world must know that we do not go abroad in search of enemies, that we are always happy when old enemies become friends, and when old friends become allies.”²¹ Given Trump’s xenophobia, truculence, and obvious instability, these words are hardly reassuring, however.

Trump says the United States should forget about “nation-building,” and must drop the “dangerous idea that we could make Western democracies out of countries that had no experience or interest in becoming a Western Democracy.”²² In other words, what we need is a “stable” Middle East, not democracy in the region: those people “over there” don’t want democracy anyway—they’re not like us. Of course, U.S. policy is not and has never been aimed at making “Western democracies”; the United States has preferred authoritarian states whenever there’s a threat that democracy would lead to defiance of orders from Washington, a very real threat given the nature of U.S. foreign policy. In any case, Trump’s objection to nation-building doesn’t arise out of respect for the national self-determination of smaller countries whose people might prefer to build their own nations rather than living under the thumb of imperial powers; for him, it’s simply a cost-benefit issue.

Strongmen Are the Answer

Though well known for contradicting himself, Trump has been remarkably consistent in his admiration for authoritarian strongmen. He said in a February 2016 press conference, “You know, Saddam Hussein was a bad guy,” but immediately added, “[However] one thing about him: He killed terrorists.”²³ In an interview with CNN’s Jake Tapper last October, Trump declared that the world would be “100 percent” better off if Saddam Hussein and Libya’s dictator Muammar Gaddafi were still in power.²⁴ His liking for Gaddafi is nothing new; recall that in 2009 Trump invited Gaddafi to pitch

his large Bedouin tent on Trump's Bedford, New York, estate while in New York to attend the UN general assembly.²⁵ In another instance of his warm appreciation of dictators, Trump complained that President Obama abandoned Egyptian dictator Hosni Mubarak in his time of need, tweeting, "Egypt is a total mess. We should have backed Mubarak instead of dropping him like a dog."²⁶

Trump's embrace of authoritarian leaders goes beyond the Middle East. He famously praised Vladimir Putin with statements like, "I've always felt fine about Putin. I think that he's a strong leader; he's a powerful leader."²⁷ And on MSNBC's *Morning Joe* he said of the Russian president, "He's running his country, and at least he's a leader, you know, unlike what we have in this country," casually shrugging off accusations that Putin has journalists and political adversaries assassinated.²⁸ The Putin-Trump mutual admiration society has its parallel in Europe, where Putin and the far right—from Britain's UKIP party to Jobbik in Hungary, Marine Le Pen's National Front in France, Golden Dawn in Greece, the National Democratic Party of Germany, and Bulgaria's Ataka party—are warmly supportive of one another. National Front founder and former leader Jean-Marie Le Pen, notorious for, among other things, claiming that the Nazi occupation of France was not "particularly inhumane" and suggesting that Ebola might solve Europe's "immigration problem,"²⁹ has endorsed Trump's campaign.

Trump did appear to snub a far-right delegation led by Marine Le Pen, the National Front's current leader,³⁰ but that occurred right after his campaign was embarrassed by the endorsement of David Duke, a former grand wizard of the Ku Klux Klan—which Trump refused to repudiate at first, finally declaring petulantly, "David Duke, he endorsed me, OK? I disavow. OK?"³¹ In any case, Trump clearly belongs to this international semi-fascist bloc, for which racism, especially Islamophobia, is fundamental. And he is not even the most

moderate member; only one of its leaders, Geert Wilders of the Dutch Party for Freedom, has, like Trump, explicitly called for a complete ban on Muslim immigration.

Attempting to take advantage of popular war-weariness, Trump says the Iraq war was a

Despite what she might say during the campaign to attract Sanders supporters, Hillary Clinton stands squarely within the longstanding bipartisan consensus on foreign policy, and indeed, along with many Republican politicians, is on the more aggressive end of that consensus.

terrible idea—by now a widely accepted truth, though despite his current claims, there's no evidence that he opposed the war before it began.³² On Libya, Trump now excoriates Obama and Clinton for their intervention, while at the time he said the opposite: "But we have got to go in to save these lives; these people are being slaughtered like animals," Trump said. "It's horrible what's going on; it has to be stopped. We should do on a humanitarian basis, immediately go into Libya, knock this guy out very quickly, very surgically, very effectively, and save the lives."³³

Trump stunned the media when he said in February 2016 that the United States should remain "neutral" between Israel and the Palestinians so as to be in a position to broker a deal between the two sides. He later tried to deflect criticism of his stand by criticizing Obama for strengthening Iran, saying, "President Obama has not been a friend to Israel. He has treated Iran with tender love and care and made it a great power in the Middle East—all at the

expense of Israel, our other allies in the region, and, critically, the United States.”³⁴ In May 2016, he went even further to prove his loyalty to Israeli government policy, saying in an interview with the UK’s *Daily Mail* that Israel should just “keep moving forward” in building settlements in the occupied territories.³⁵ Trump has acquired the endorsement of Sheldon Adelson, a leading supporter of Israel’s right-wing government, who said he believes that Trump “will be good for Israel.”³⁶ Two Republicans with access to his views have reported that Adelson is willing to contribute more to Trump’s campaign than he has to any previous campaign, and could exceed \$100 million.³⁷ Where Trump ends up on this and most other issues is anybody’s guess, but it appears increasingly likely that his “neutrality” between the Israeli government and the Palestinians will evaporate.

Some might have assumed that Trump could be a kind of ally of the peace movement because he expressed a reluctance to go to war and has challenged some of the basic assumptions of the foreign policy establishment by questioning the uncritical alliance with Israel (though, as suggested above, he seems to be dropping that stance like a hot potato) and by implying that he’s willing to walk away from historic commitments to defend NATO nations and countries like Saudi Arabia. But that would be a seriously mistaken assumption. A bully like Trump is as likely as not to explode and take deadly military action when the going gets rough—for instance if ISIS, the Chinese, the Iranians, or any other adversaries don’t fold in the face of his threats and bluster. He has already said that if elected he will abrogate the Iran deal.

More fundamentally, Trump’s worldview—a misogynistic, crudely violent nationalism with fascist overtones—is diametrically opposed to what are, or should be, the anti-war movement’s basic values: anti-militarism, democracy, egalitarianism, social justice, and a vision of an ecologically sustainable world of cooperation

among peoples and, as long as they exist, nations. This Trumpian worldview gives a different meaning to even those positions that, taken out of context, seem on the surface to be the same as ours. Trump opposes the Iraq War (at least in retrospect), but says he will “quickly and decisively bomb the hell out of ISIS.”³⁸ He avidly endorses waterboarding: “What do you think about waterboarding, Mr. Trump?” I said I love it. I love it, I think it’s great. And I said the only thing is, we should make it much tougher than waterboarding.”³⁹ He supports bombing the families of those presumed to be terrorists. Asked in March 2016 about the head of U.S. Central Command’s statement that more troops on the ground are needed to defeat ISIS in Syria and Iraq, Trump said, “We really have no choice, we have to knock out ISIS. ... I would listen to the generals, but I’m hearing numbers of 20,000–30,000.”⁴⁰

And of course Trump’s ugly climate-change denialism, his racist views on immigration, and his plan to block all Muslims, including utterly desperate refugees, from entering the United States are completely contrary to the peace movement’s goals and values. He is no ally of ours.

Hillary Clinton

Despite what she might say during the campaign to attract Sanders supporters, Hillary Clinton stands squarely within the longstanding bipartisan consensus on foreign policy, and indeed, along with many Republican politicians, is on the more aggressive end of that consensus.

It is highly significant that the Republican Party’s hawkish foreign policy elites, including many of the leading neoconservatives, prefer Clinton to Trump, even if some have said that they could not actually vote for her. One of the foremost neocons, Robert Kagan, told the *New York Times* that “I feel comfortable with her on foreign policy. ... It’s something that might have been called neocon, but clearly her supporters are not going to call it that.” Kagan

himself prefers the term “liberal interventionist.”⁴¹ Another neocon, Eliot Cohen, has said he would “strongly prefer a third party candidate” to Trump, but added, “Probably, if absolutely no alternative: Hillary.” And one more luminary in this warmongering clique, Max Boot, has declared that Clinton “would be vastly preferable to Trump.”⁴²

Moreover, Clinton has made no secret of her closeness to arch-war-criminal Henry Kissinger. “I was very flattered when Henry Kissinger said I ran the State Department better than anybody had run it in a long time,” she has said. And in a 2014 review of Kissinger’s latest book, she was forthright: “America, he reminds us, succeeds by standing up for our values, not shirking them, and leads by engaging peoples and societies, the sources of legitimacy, not governments alone.” She went on to call Kissinger “surprisingly idealistic.”⁴³

In fact, before the campaign for the nomination began, Clinton was more bellicose than Obama. She advocated extending the pullout date for U.S. troops in Iraq⁴⁴ and urged a longer troop presence in Afghanistan.⁴⁵ Once the campaign was under way, Clinton pointedly promised that she would invite Benjamin Netanyahu to visit the White House during her first month in office—a jab at Obama for his frosty relations with the Israeli Prime Minister. In a speech on March 21 to the Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), she declared, “The United States and Israel must be closer than ever, stronger than ever.” “We must take our alliance to the next level,” she said, calling for “even more intense security and diplomatic cooperation” and demanding that the United States arm the Israeli military “with the most sophisticated defense technology.”⁴⁶ Clinton continues to support the U.S. policy of nominal opposition to the settlements and backed the Iran deal, but when she called, in her AIPAC speech, for taking the U.S.-Israeli alliance “to a new level,” she was actually taking “her belligerence to a new

level,” as Ben Norton commented in *Salon*.⁴⁷

Several progressive and left-wing writers have scrutinized Clinton’s foreign policy history and reminded us of her dreadful record. For example, Greg Grandin wrote a *Nation* article, “A Voter’s Guide to Hillary Clinton’s Policies,”⁴⁸ recounting her anti-democratic policies

It is highly significant that the Republican Party’s hawkish foreign policy elites, including many of the leading neoconservatives, prefer Clinton to Trump, even if some have said that they could not actually vote for her.

in Mexico, Paraguay, El Salvador, Panama and Colombia, and Honduras, where she helped to legitimize the 2009 coup against the democratically elected government of Manuel Zelaya.

Of El Salvador, Grandin writes,

In 2012, Hillary Clinton’s State Department, acting through its ambassador, Mari Carmen Aponte, threatened to withhold critical development aid unless El Salvador passed a major privatization law. ... It wouldn’t be the only time that Ambassador Aponte, a political ally of the Clintons, menaced Salvador’s leftist FMLN government. Recently, she warned Salvadorans about the need to buy corporate-manufactured GMO seeds, insisting that the FMLN’s seed-cooperative program violates the terms of the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA).⁴⁹

Beyond Latin America, Stephen Zunes reminds us of Clinton’s obscene comment on Egypt’s dictator just before his fall: “I really consider President and Mrs. Mubarak to be friends of my family.” (She surely hopes we will forget that gaffe.) Zunes notes that,

After Saudi Arabian forces joined those of the

Bahraini monarchy in brutally repressing non-violent pro-democracy demonstrators, the following month the *Wall Street Journal* reported that Clinton had emerged as one of the “leading voices inside the administration urging greater U.S. support for the Bahraini king.” She has long considered a “top priority” the promotion of arms transfers to Saudi Arabia, which is not only one of the world’s most repressive regimes but has been using U.S. jets and ordinance in air strikes in Yemen that have killed thousands of civilians. In her last visit as secretary of state to Uzbekistan—a brutal dictatorship that has gunned down hundreds of pro-democracy demonstrators, boiled opponents to death in oil, and sends hundreds of thousands of school-children annually into forced labor in the cotton fields—she declined to meet with leading human rights activists. Instead, she emphasized “the importance of Uzbekistan to the region and to our national interest.”⁵⁰

On Libya, Jo Becker and Scott Shane note in the *New York Times* that Hillary Clinton’s voice was critical in persuading a hesitant President Obama to join in bombing Gaddafi’s forces. They write, “In fact, Mr. Obama’s defense secretary, Robert M. Gates, would later say that in a ‘51-49’ decision, it was Mrs. Clinton’s support that put the ambivalent president over the line.”⁵¹

THE FOREIGN POLICIES OF BOTH Donald Trump and likely Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton, despite their differences, promise a future of endless militarism, drone attacks, support for dictators, and savage neo-liberal economic policies throughout the world. Far from defeating political fundamentalism and terrorism in the Muslim world, their policies—America’s own brand of terrorism—are guaranteed to strengthen these reactionary forces. A U.S. government that carried out a different foreign policy based on principles of democracy and social and economic justice could indeed come about only through a “political revolution”—but, alas, the foreign policy of Bernie Sanders remains far from that goal.

At the same time, however, the aspirations of the millions who have rallied to Sanders point toward just such a revolutionary foreign policy. These millions need to go beyond Sanders and declare their complete political independence from the Democratic Party, which has shown itself to be a pillar of the status quo.

—May 25, 2016

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The Contemporary Crisis of the American Ideology

DAN LA BOTZ

SURVEYING THE POLITICAL SCENE in America, we are now witnessing the shattering of the last remnants of the American ideology that has maintained itself—despite strains—for almost 70 years. The ideas that justified the American economic and political system in the minds of most of our citizens throughout that long period came under stress during earlier storms—from the 1950s to the 1970s in particular—and a few beams and joists cracked but did not give way. Today the manifold crises of capitalism mean that the entire existing intellectual structure of American capitalism is breaking up. And because of the role that the U.S. capitalist class plays in the world, this represents a crisis of world capitalist leadership and legitimacy. The question then arises: What will the country's rulers attempt to put in its place, and what alternative explanation will we on the left and in the labor movement be able to offer to the country's workers?

After World War II, Republicans warily accepted Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal as the basis for the American economy—once the conservative Taft-Hartley labor law was passed—and the two parties united around a bipartisan foreign policy aimed at containing Communism. American hegemony in the capitalist world, based on the destruction of Europe and Japan and the dangerous balance of the Cold War with the Soviet Union, made possible both a Pax Americana and economic

prosperity in the United States. At the same time, the American elite, the establishment that ruled and reasoned on behalf of the capitalist class, promoted a new explanation and rationale for the structure of American society. American politicians and government officials, the media and the churches, schools and universities, beginning in the late 1940s and continuing through the 1960s, created and propagated a set of interlocking and mutually reinforcing explanations, an ideological structure that came to be accepted by most Americans most of the time. These ideas—fundamentally different from the Gilded Age ideology of 1870-1900 or the Progressive Era ideology that was dominant roughly 1900-1941—constituted a genuine worldview.

The American ruling class constructed a set of ideas that not only justified its economic and political domination but one that also encompassed virtually every aspect of life, from the boardroom to the bedroom, from the factory floor to the football field, from the house of prayer to the counting house. American capitalists believed themselves not only to be justified in ruling the United States but also vindicated in their attempts to impose their model of capitalism together with its particular conception of democracy upon the entire world. America, they argued, with its unlimited natural resources, its free enterprise system, its profusion of products and the high standard of living they provided, its equal opportunity and religious toleration, its slow but steady progress toward full racial integration, and its opposition to totalitarianism, was the model not only for North America, but for everywhere.

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While “the ruling ideas of every period are the ideas of the ruling class,” as Marx once wrote, the rulers’ ideas do not sit lightly and comfortably on every social group and certainly not on every individual. After all, all the civilizations we know have been class societies based on oppression and exploitation, producing resistance and sometimes rebellion. Every society even in the most stable times has its dissidents. However, what makes an ideology successful is its ability to dominate the intellectual, cultural, and moral universe of a society for most people most of the time. That was certainly true of the post-World War II American ideology until finally, in the 2000s, when a host of economic and social forces blew the ideological framework apart. Once, the American elite’s worldview held everything together. Today, ideas, facts, and opinions—ripped from their ideological mooring—blow through the social media and the popular consciousness like the debris scattered by a hurricane.

The 2016 Bernie Sanders campaign has not been responsible for shattering the old American ideology; that process began years before and peaked more recently with the Occupy Wall Street movement and then Black Lives Matter. Sanders took up the issues of those movements and honed them into a powerful message about the role of money in politics, the growth of economic inequality, the need for racial justice, and even ending a foreign policy based on “regime change.” By taking the criticism of the status quo to the level of national presidential politics, Sanders’ campaign shone klieg lights on the class character of our government and the inequalities in our society. By that light we see the wreckage not only of an ideology but of a social order.

The Postwar American Ideology

What was the American ideology that first emerged in the postwar period as a result of the country’s victory in World War II and its domination of the world economy? What was

the worldview of the capitalist class and its constellation of political and intellectual associates? How did American capitalists and their political representatives see the world, and how did they explain it to others?

A Middle-class Society: America has achieved social harmony within a relatively egalitarian society in which distinct social classes no longer exist and therefore class struggle has also disappeared. This was made possible by social mobility based in part on individual initiative and in part on meritocracy that enabled an individual to move from one social layer to another (as defined by education and income—not production relations). In America everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed—and most do. (See for example Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology*, 1960, for a summary of this view.)

A Pluralist Democracy: America represents a middle way in the philosophy of government between the dangerous extremes of Communism and Fascism. American government is fundamentally democratic in character, not only because it is a representative republic, but also because of capitalist competition tempered by government regulation. The two-party system, organized respectively around conservative and liberal ideals, serves to incorporate all citizens in a uniquely stable political arrangement. Above all, however, America is democratic because it is subject to pressure groups of all sorts, from business and labor to farmers and homeowners. (See for example Robert A. Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory*, 1965.)

An Economic Model of Prosperity: America’s corporations produce a consumer society that makes life better for all. American corporations, collaborating with the labor unions that represent about a third of our country’s workers, provide long-term stable jobs, decent wages, and benefits such as health insurance and pensions, contributing to a high standard of living that improves with every generation. To protect Americans from monopolies that might cause economic harm, the government regulates utilities such as electric power, gas, and telephones, but otherwise the market

prevails. Since markets don't always work perfectly, following John Maynard Keynes, the government intervenes to help the unemployed, the poor, and the elderly. (See for example Paul Samuelson, *Economics*, 1948.)

A Social and Racial Democracy: In America, all immigrant groups are gradually assimilated and find security and opportunity. Negroes, Latins, and Orientals in the North and West might encounter difficulties, but they too will eventually find a place in America through modest government encouragement and their own initiative. If there is poverty and crime in the Negro and Latin ghettos, it is because of economic and social problems that can and will be ameliorated. The South represents a distinct region with its own history and customs, but it will be gradually reformed and become part of the American mainstream.

A Judeo-Christian Society: America is a nation based on Judeo-Christian values. While Protestants founded this country, religious toleration made it possible for Catholics, Orthodox Christians, and Jews to participate in all of the country's economic, social, and political institutions. The American economic and political elite will be strengthened by the inclusion of these other groups, and the rest of the society will also be enhanced by their incorporation. (See for example E. Digby Baltzell, *The Protestant Establishment: Aristocracy and Caste in America*, 1964.)

Equality and Fulfillment for Women: Women in America enjoy full equality—not only the right to vote, but also the right to work in virtually any and every field. Many more women and girls now seek higher education and work in the professions. Even women who work find fulfillment as housewives and mothers, as leaders of the Parent Teacher Association, Girl Scouts, and other organizations in their communities. Women today, relieved of many of their domestic chores by such labor saving devices as washing machines, have freer and fuller lives than ever.

Individual Self-realization: Through a combination of faith, psychological counseling, and if necessary medication, all Americans can become well adjusted, finding not only

contentment but self-realization. The new psychologists approach the patient without prejudice, offering their unconditional respect for each individual so that he or she can find their own solutions to life's challenges. American society not only offers a higher standard of living but also personal fulfillment. (See

This ideology—propagated through schools, churches, ethnic organizations, and government at all levels—was largely the creation of Democratic Party-aligned liberal intellectuals.

for example Carl Rogers, *Client-Centered Therapy*, 1951.)

Inexhaustible Natural Resources: America is a land blessed with inexhaustible natural resources of every sort, from rich soil and great forests to coal and iron and gas and oil. Modern science, particularly chemistry, has provided herbicides and pesticides that have made possible an agricultural revolution. We now provide food not only for America but for the entire world. While corporations exploit our natural resources for the benefit of all, our country also wisely sets aside land as nature preserves in national parks in the mountains and along the seashore to protect wilderness and wildlife.

American Exceptionalism: Our nation is exceptional: a city on a hill, an example to the world. Americans, thanks to our democracy and prosperity, are a superior people: better fed, housed, and clothed, better educated, and better paid. Our people embody in their lives as business people, professionals, and as working people the American ideals of democracy and free enterprise. Our history, our culture, and economic and political system allow us as a nation to play a leading role in our hemisphere and in the world at large, helping through

our example, through foreign aid, through diplomacy, and when necessary through military intervention to move the world forward toward peace and prosperity.

A Benevolent World Power: On the world stage the American government, working with its NATO allies as well as with the bloc

The U.S. war against Vietnam tested and nearly demolished another of the principal elements of the American ideology—that the United States was a benevolent world power.

of democracies in the United Nations, is a benevolent force, dedicated to world peace, economic development and prosperity for all, and democracy throughout the globe. Communism threatens world peace and prosperity and must be contained and deterred. Over time America's democracy and its higher standard of living will vanquish Russian and Chinese Communism, and those countries will join the free world.

As one can see, there is an architecture here; the ten different beams and joists of this structure fit together forming a unified whole that explains virtually every aspect of American life. The ideas of economic prosperity and equality of opportunity provide the foundation.

The ideology described in this piece—propagated through schools, churches, ethnic organizations, and government at all levels—was largely the creation of Democratic Party-aligned liberal intellectuals. The Democrats largely created the American postwar political economic regime. Republican President Dwight D. Eisenhower left the New Deal structures in place and thereby institutionalized the American postwar order. The Democrats—who had

led the nation during World War II—also endorsed the Korean War and led the Vietnam War, playing the leading role in creating the nation's imperial foreign policy.

Liberals provided the strongest justifications for the Cold War and the anti-Communist crusade: the defense of democracy. Historians Henry Steele Commager, author of textbooks such as *The Empire of Reason: How Europe Imagined and America Realized the Enlightenment* (1977), and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., the biographer of Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and both John F. and Robert Kennedy, represent the archetypal liberal intellectual who justified both the imperial foreign policy and America's social welfare system, so limited in comparison to the entitlements in the Western European social democracies and the Communist bloc.

The majority of Americans, especially in the prosperous period of 1945-1960, the era of the G.I. Bill and the Veterans Housing Administration, strongly embraced these ideas and used them to understand the world and their place in it. America's dominant place in the world capitalist system, its prosperous national economy, and its strong state and domestic social programs meant that most people could see themselves in and through this world view as it came to them daily in the newspaper, over the radio or TV, in church or temple, or in public schools as well as colleges and universities.

Still, a number of developments—the failure of the South to modernize and democratize, the expansion of mass higher education, the development of the counterculture, the sexual revolution, the war in Vietnam, repeated economic recessions, the development of economic competition with Europe and Japan—like so many quakes and tremors would shake the intellectual edifice that had been built.

The Postwar Worldview Put Under Stress

It is clear that some of these explanations of

American society were weaker than others, most obviously the point dealing with racial equality. Black people clearly were not full citizens anywhere in America, and they did not enjoy equal opportunity economically or socially, as Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (1944), an indictment of America's racial policies, had documented so thoroughly. So it is not surprising that it was that weak beam that first gave way with the rise of the civil rights movement of 1956–1965. Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., the movement he led, and his book *Why We Can't Wait* (1963) challenged the myth of racial equality. And that beam in the intellectual superstructure broke.

Still, the structure did not collapse—even after the civil rights movement became “Black power” and ghetto rebellions, often in the form of riots and arson, swept the country, while Malcolm X's speeches slashed at the remainder of the doctrine of racial equality. The passage of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights acts; the corporations' opening up of skilled, white collar, and managerial positions to Blacks; and social welfare programs calmed the Black rebellion. The elite's intellectual carpenters spliced onto the old beam a new one: With civil rights laws and social legislation, it was now claimed, Blacks had achieved equality in America. The society, it was declared, was colorblind. The ideological structure had trembled and creaked, but it did not fall.

The U.S. war against Vietnam (1955–1975) tested and nearly demolished another of the principal elements of the American ideology—that the United States was a benevolent world power. The Vietnamese people's struggle for their independence and self-determination, combined with huge anti-war demonstrations in the United States and around the world, damaged confidence in America's benevolence and good will both abroad and at home. The Students for a Democratic Society's *Port Huron Statement*, projecting the unity of the civil rights,

student, and peace movements, continued the pressure on the concept of racial equality and also challenged the notion of America as a benevolent world power.

After the death of 58,000 Americans and between two and three million Vietnamese and other Southeast Asians, the United States finally lost the war. After that it proved impossible for the ruling elite to reconstruct the foreign policy element of the American ideology. Some liberals drew the conclusion that there should be no more large-scale foreign wars, while some conservatives drew the conclusion that there should be no more limited wars. The American elite, while in the broad sense still committed to the bipartisan foreign policy of defending U.S. corporate interests around the world, no longer had a common notion of how to do so. One pillar of the ideological construct seemed practically irreparable; and that weak beam meant the entire structure became far less stable.

Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), which signaled the start of the mass women's movement in America, took an ax to another of the central ideological columns of the postwar ideology. Women in America, she argued, were not happy and were not fulfilled in their supposed roles as sometime workers and full-time wives and mothers. Friedan went on to launch the National Organization for Women, while other women created thousands of consciousness-raising groups in communities across the country. The women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s then demanded genuine equality in every aspect of women's lives, from education and sports to employment and political representation. The Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion represented one of the most significant victories, both a practical and symbolic achievement of the women's movement: control of their own bodies.

Once again, however, the establishment's intellectuals spliced on to the old beam a new one arguing that with the many federal and state laws regarding women—even without the Equal

Rights Amendment that died in 1982—women had finally achieved full equality. Year after year, however, statistics showed that women, particularly working-class and poor women, had not achieved parity in virtually any area of American life, and so that beam too creaked when trod upon.

Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), an attack on the indiscriminate use of pesticides and the chemical companies that produced them, suggested for the first time to a broad public audience the notion that U.S. corporations and the government might be endangering the environment. Barry Commoner's *Science and Survival* (1966), examining the impact of science and technology on the environment, and especially his *The Closing Circle: Nature, Man, and Technology* (1971), warning of the need to change the country's and world's policies and behavior, offered a profound ecosocialist critique of the old notion of unlimited resources. E.F. Schumacher's *Small Is Beautiful* (1973), coinciding as its publication did with the country's petroleum energy crisis and arguing as it did that our economy was unsustainable, turned many into environmentalists. By the time of the first Earth Day in 1970, many Americans had come to doubt that the country had unlimited natural resources or that those resources were being conserved. The new environmental movement set thousands in motion and millions began to question the entire economic system, and President Richard Nixon responded in 1970 by creating the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Again important political reforms repaired some of the damage to the ideological structure, even if they did not provide anything like adequate protection to the environment.

Democratic Party liberals, who held power through much of the 1960s and 1970s, responded to the challenges of the era if only in an attempt to shore up the system. Democratic President Lyndon B. Johnson (1963-1969) expanded the role of the federal government in a

manner not seen since the 1930s. Johnson not only oversaw the passage of the Civil Rights, Voting Rights, and the Economic Opportunity acts, but he also pushed through Congress his War on Poverty programs: Medicare, Medicaid, Head Start early education, and the Model Cities urban renewal and housing programs. Nixon too expanded the government's role, not only by creating the EPA but also by establishing the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Nevertheless, the Vietnam War, combined with the Black urban rebellions at home, frustrated Johnson's attempt to resolve the political conflicts that tore at America's ideological system. The country's elite could not simultaneously manage America's world empire and control its restive Black population without tearing apart the intellectual justifications for American liberal-democratic capitalism. Millions ceased to believe in the dominant ideology during those years.

And then capitalism went into crisis. The resurgence of Germany and Japan—their capitalist industries rebuilt after World War II with the most modern technology—created stiff competition for the U.S. in the domestic and world markets by the late 1960s. Within a decade American corporations were closing older steel mills and auto plants, laying off hundreds of thousands. OPEC raised gasoline prices. The economic crises of 1974-1975 and 1979-1981, occurring in times of inflation while leading to official unemployment rates of 10 percent, challenged the fundamental notion that the American economy could deliver prosperity to the majority of its people. Profit rates fell and employers went on the offensive; the postwar social pact ended. Class struggle resumed—but it was largely a one-sided fight, as employers attacked, unions retreated, and workers lost ground. There were no repairs to that part of the ideological structure; like a bad landlord, the ruling class ideologues simply ignored the fact that the ceiling was falling.

The Conservative Attempt at Ideological Reconstruction

The social crises and social movements of the 1960s and 1970s and then the economic crisis of the 1970s and 1980s had made it clear that the postwar ideological structure—even with the repairs and renovations that had been made—was failing. The ruling class's lack of a coherent ideological explanation for the various crises taking place in the society itself became a cause of further stress, as the elites recognized. The gods seemed to be failing and the catechism no longer seemed to explain the world.

A group of right-wing ideologues and politicians—first presidential candidate Barry Goldwater, then presidential aide and speech writer (and later presidential candidate) Patrick Buchanan, the Rev. Jerry Falwell, and a number of others—recognizing the opportunity to create a new ideological framework, attempted to construct an alternative worldview organized around a different set of propositions derived from conservative economic and religious principles. Unlike earlier groups that had sought to refurbish the post-war intellectual edifice, this group wanted to demolish it. They took as their model something resembling nineteenth-century notions of laissez-faire capitalism and combined them with fundamentalist Christianity and a mythical and idyllic vision of an early twentieth-century America of family farmers, small businesses, and pious congregations living in blissful harmony. This remains one of the two or three principal conservative visions even today.

With the fall of Communism, some conservative intellectuals attempted to create a new version of Daniel Bell's *The End of Ideology*. In his 1989 essay "The End of History," Francis Fukuyama wrote, "What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of postwar history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the

universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government." All would now discover that liberal-democratic capitalism was the best system. A series of wars, economic crises, and domestic conflicts called that conclusion into question within a few years.

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reversing not only the gains of the Black and women's movements, but also attacking labor unions and dismantling social programs. Ronald Reagan attempted these during his presidency (1981-1989), and had some successes, most notably his destruction of the Professional Air Traffic Controllers union in 1981, which initiated a wave of government and private employer union busting. But dismantling the New Deal and War on Poverty programs proved more difficult than Reagan had imagined, while his military programs were essentially Keynesian. His rhetorical offensive against liberalism and big government only put more stress on the postwar ideology, especially as it came into conflict with his actual practice of expanded military budgets and a growing national debt, though the American economic and social system remained, with some regressive alterations, fundamentally as it had been since 1948.

Reagan's successor, former CIA Director George H.W. Bush, took office in 1989 and

plunged into the Gulf War (or First Iraq War) just one year later. Provoked by former U.S. ally Saddam Hussein's defiant invasion of Kuwait, it was the largest U.S. military intervention since Vietnam; the entire war, from preparations to U.S. victory, lasted just one year. The Gulf War would prove to be the first step into what would be a series of disastrous wars and military actions in the 2000s against Iraq, Afghanistan, and other Middle Eastern, African, and South Asian nations. At the same time the American economy faltered. Bush had inherited a tremendous budget deficit from Reagan, forcing him to work with Democrats to raise taxes. The economy went into recession with unemployment reaching 7.8 percent, the highest since 1984, just on the eve of the election in 1992, dooming the first Bush presidency to just one term. Disappointed in the Republicans, America turned back to the Democrats.

Into the Neoliberal Era of Austerity

President Bill Clinton, while espousing the Democrats' historic liberal rhetoric, undertook to strengthen the financial sector and expand corporate power and began to roll back the social welfare system while intensifying repression of the lower classes. In what was in fact a period of renewed economic expansion, and even very modest wage gains, the United States entered the age of austerity. Clinton took up the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996—which had been a central element of the Republicans' "Contract with America"—saw it through an obliging Congress, and signed it. Hundreds of thousands of mostly women and children lost their welfare benefits. Clinton also supported and signed the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, a huge and complicated law that provided billions in funding for police, 100,000 new officers, and vastly increased incarceration that fell disproportionately on Blacks and Latinos.

One of the most important acts of the Clin-

ton administration was the final negotiation, passage, and signature of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which had been initiated by Bush and which facilitated the movement of capital and goods between Canada, Mexico, and the United States, though workers could not move freely. While in many ways a ratification of long-term trends toward the integration of the North American economies, it formalized and institutionalized the domination of the great corporations on the continent, giving them access to the capital, land, and natural resources of all three countries, while taking advantage in particular of the cheap labor of Mexico. Labor unions and environmental organizations fought for "side agreements," but they had little impact on future developments. Unions continued to shrink in size, lose their economic power, and decline in political influence.

NAFTA's enactment signaled America's entry into the age of globalization and neoliberalism. The old social pact and ideological paradigm had never bargained for a common market of North America, nor had it contemplated the world production of automobiles in several nations. When the World Trade Organization (WTO) met in Seattle in 1999 with a proposal on the agenda to admit China—a country where there were no workers' rights and virtually no environmental regulations—environmentalists and labor union activists joined together and with demonstrations of 40,000 people paralyzed the city's streets. While that WTO meeting was a failure, China was admitted two years later. American foreign trade would expand exponentially after NAFTA and the WTO's expansion to include China, but after the brief boom of the 1990s, there was no significant increase in workers' wages or the American standard of living.

A friend of Wall Street, Clinton signed the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act of 1998 that repealed two key provisions of the Glass-Steagall Act, thus granting greater latitude to financial in-

stitutions by permitting banks to affiliate with securities firms, changes that led to the growth of financial speculation and to the Great Recession of 2008. While Clinton's administration coincided with a period of economic expansion and rising profits, of greater employment opportunities and even briefly of higher wages, his policies accelerated the trends toward increased economic inequality and put unbearable weight on one of the key girders of the postwar ideology, namely that America was a classless society. The voters turned to the Republicans.

By the millennium, when President George W. Bush (2001–2009), son of the former president and himself former governor of Texas, became president, one could hear the postwar ideological structures groan and whine. Though Bush was a Republican and an ostensible conservative, he expanded government social programs more than any president since Johnson. As under Reagan, with both the military and domestic budgets expanding, the government plunged deeper into debt. All of that would put him at odds with right-wing, fiscally conservative Republicans. Bush, like his father, would probably only have served one term, but the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon turned him briefly into a national hero as he pledged that America would have revenge.

Bush had surrounded himself with a hawkish group known as the Vulcans—Vice-President Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, secretaries of state Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage—who together used 9/11 as the rationale for wars against the Taliban in Afghanistan and against Saddam Hussein in Iraq, despite no Afghan or Iraqi being implicated in the World Trade Center attack. The “Vulcans put forth a remarkable series of new doctrines and ideas, ones that represented a dramatic break with the foreign policies and strategies of the past” (James Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans*,

Viking, 2004, xii). These included an aggressive posture toward North Korea that went beyond containment and deterrence, a justification of “preemptive” attacks on other nations, as well as calls for regime change throughout the Middle East, often wrapped in the rhetoric of democracy; the fundamental notion was U.S. world military supremacy and domination.

The Vulcans and their views provided theoretical justification for Bush's war on Iraq, though it had had nothing to do with the 9/11 attacks, explained to the public by the outright lie that Saddam was a threat to America. Though Bush proclaimed victory over Iraq in his “Mission Accomplished” speech of 2003, the war continued into the 2010s, killing hundreds of thousands and virtually destroying the nation of Iraq. (In fact this disastrous war continues today, now having spread to Syria, taking tens of thousands more lives, displacing millions, and virtually destroying that nation too.) Neither the Iraq nor Afghanistan wars ever ended. To many it was now clear that far from being a beneficent power, the United States was engaged in permanent war around the world. Moreover, increasingly the United States was losing these wars or at least being stalemated.

Then, the disgrace of Hurricane Katrina. The shameful mishandling of response to the hurricane, in which 1,836 died and 705 went missing as the Bush administration bumbled, completely discredited his administration. The Wall Street economic crisis of 2008 utterly demolished what little remained of Bush's reputation. With the financial crisis—an economic storm of dimensions unseen since the 1930s—the superstructure of American ideology began to burst apart, though it would take eight more years and a presidential primary before we could understand all of the damage and what it meant for conceptions of American society both in the minds of the rulers and the ruled.

The Old Paradigm Collapses

While we did not necessarily recognize it at the

time, the U.S. failure in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars and the 2008 economic crisis spelled the end of the dominant ideology. The old ideas no longer explained or justified things, and so they were accepted no longer. Yet the structure did not simply collapse but was held up by the desire of millions to continue to believe. The election of Barack Obama, America's first Black president, obscured at first just how much things had changed. Elected on the slogans of "Hope" and "Change," many expected Obama to deal boldly and forcefully with the Great Recession and end the U.S. involvement in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Many said that the country needed a new FDR, someone who would rescue the financial system, save the failing corporations, create jobs, and lift up the poor. Someone who would save the country's working people—for that's how they understood Roosevelt's New Deal. Someone who would restore the social pact and restore to their place the nation's ideals as enshrined in the postwar ideology.

Obama couldn't, wouldn't, and didn't. His \$787 billion stimulus program for infrastructure, health, and education proved to be inadequate to set the economy in motion—it would take years for the recession to end, and for many it never did. Unemployment rates remained high for years, as did home foreclosures and evictions. Nor did Obama push for labor law reform, for immigrant rights laws, or for the environmental legislation that he had promised. The president did work in 2010 to pass his Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act—dubbed Obamacare—a private insurance plan written by the insurance companies, the health and hospitals corporations, and the pharmaceutical industry, a vast and complicated law that would expand coverage for some, but in deference to the profit imperatives of the private insurance and drug companies, still left 30 million uninsured and millions underinsured and facing unrestrained increases in premiums and cutbacks in benefits.

The far-right Tea Party movement, an ersatz grassroots movement financed by

the energy baron Koch brothers and other wealthy conservatives, took to the streets in protest against what they called the "socialist" Obamacare bill. A movement of mostly white, suburban, middle-class conservatives, it was the first major right-wing movement to take to the streets since the segregationists of the 1960s. And with its racist caricatures of Obama and its Aryan Nation and Nazi hangers' on, it resembled them. The Tea Party, taking up all of the right-wing causes from opposing abortion to opposing concealed-carry restrictions, soon became a political movement that elected more than 45 congressional representatives, not only making the Republicans the majority in the House but also moving the Republican Party further to the right. Tea Party legislators adopted the strategy of making the Republicans the "party of 'No!'" and working to paralyze government. Ironically, it was the Tea Party with its claim that Obama was a socialist that—after decades of anti-Communism—unwittingly reintroduced and legitimated in American society a discussion of socialism.

Meanwhile, sentiment grew that presidents Bush and Obama had acted to save the banks but not the unemployed or those facing foreclosure. On September 11, 2011, protesters planted themselves in Zuccotti Park in the middle of New York's financial district under the banner "Occupy Wall Street." The occupiers called themselves the 99 percent as opposed to the 1 percent who owned the nation's wealth and dominated its political system. The occupation grew rapidly in New York and spread within a few weeks across the country as tens of thousands occupied public places, marched on banks and corporations, and demanded an end to the role of money in politics and to the tremendous economic inequality that had come to exist in America. The Obama administration discretely coordinated the suppression of the movement, working with the mostly Democratic mayors in cities across the country. There were many beatings, pepper sprayings, and some 7,361 ar-

rests in 117 cities in the United States between September 2011 and July 2012, including some indictments for terrorism, and Occupy was crushed. Nevertheless, its impact on the country had been enormous, driving the Tea Party from center stage and making the issues of economic inequality and the role of money in politics the subject of a national discussion.

Obama's foreign policy proved to be equally unfortunate, and because the anti-war movement of the Bush years had collapsed upon Obama's election, there was very little organized opposition. While the United States reduced its troop commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan, Obama failed to extricate the country completely from the two wars. The challenge of the Arab Spring revealed that the United States—after initially supporting the repressive regime of Mubarak in Egypt, then dallying with political democracy in one or two countries—preferred alliances with dictators to the risks of social upheaval that might lead to more independent or radical regimes. Then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's program of regime change in Libya became a disaster, while in Egypt the United States supported the repression of the movement and endorsed General Sisi. In Syria, after a failed attempt to oust President Bashar al-Assad, the Obama administration reversed itself and seemed to accept the notion of leaving him in power, with the rationale that this could end the incredibly destructive and disastrous war that Obama had helped to encourage. And every week the president sat down and put his initials on the drone kill list, sending missiles into Pakistan intended to assassinate terrorists but often taking the lives of innocents. For liberals, there was deep disappointment in Obama, who had seemed to promise so much and had delivered so little.

There was also a war at home. Police officers around the country shot Black men on a regular basis, hundreds of them each year. The shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, on August 9, 2014, was taken up as a cause by

the Black Lives Matter movement. Within a month there were tens of thousands marching in protests from New York to Los Angeles. The demonstrators, though largely nonviolent, were militant; they blocked highways, disrupted public events, and challenged government officials and politicians. Like Occupy, Black Lives

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Matter represented a challenge to the entire economic and social system, a system to which racism was in fact integral. Occupy and Black Lives Matter, and the country's apparently permanent war footing, operated like so many wrecking balls on the old ideology. On the right, ideologues such as Senator Ted Cruz, a Republican presidential contender, attempted to lay the foundations for a new national ideology based on Christianity, the Constitution, and capitalism. On the left there was Bernie Sanders.

When the longtime independent and self-identified socialist Bernie Sanders entered the presidential primaries in April of 2015 he campaigned as a Democrat, but simultaneously his campaign seemed to challenge the Democratic Party and everything it stood for. Sanders criticized the party's leaders, its funding, its structures, and its policies. Not surprisingly, the Democratic National Committee worked to prevent him from accessing files, few if any prominent Democrats endorsed him, and no Democratic Party fundraisers supported him, nor did the party's think-tanks. Sanders campaigned on the most progressive campaign platform seen in the Democratic Party in decades:

ending economic inequality, getting corporate money out of politics, setting a \$15 an hour national minimum wage, providing free college education, combatting climate change, fighting for racial justice, strengthening and expanding social security, defending and expanding women's and LGBT rights, and so on—it was as if someone had turned on the lights. To achieve this, Sanders called for a struggle against the “billionaire class” and for a “political revolution.”

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Sanders' social democratic program lit up the American political scene, revealing by contrast the dark and dismal social and economic reality that had developed in recent decades of so much underemployment, low wages, and falling living standards. When Sanders' light came on we could see in striking chiaroscuro not only the struggles of the working class, the suffering of the poor, the selfishness of the rich, and the meanness of government, we could also see the wreckage of the once dominant American ideology.

The long overdue collapse of the postwar ideology will lead conservatives, liberals, and the left to propose alternatives, and it is important that we do. Socialism as Sanders defines it—social-democratic, universal entitlements—seems to many people to be the alternative. Their intuition is right; if limited, it is certainly a start.

A New National Ideology

Yet Sanders' platform by itself will not be enough. Sanders himself has admitted this, saying repeatedly in stump speeches that real change only comes from the bottom up. We are at a moment when it is possible to see a

new, radically democratic ideology emerging from those involved in Occupy and Black Lives Matter and amongst Sanders' supporters. They want real democracy, not government by banks and corporations. They want a comprehensive national health care system and free public education. They want an end to racism and real economic and social equality for all. They want the government to take steps immediately to deal with the environmental crisis. All of this is excellent, yet it does not go far enough to create a new *socialist* movement. We will have to discuss and debate with the millions of newly politicized Sanders' supporters our notions of a more comprehensive and more profoundly democratic and socialist worldview.

What would such a socialist worldview and socialist program look like?

The Socialization of the Economy: The means of production and distribution must pass into the collective hands of the American people. Democratic planning, not market forces, must coordinate the moving parts of a complex modern economy. This would end the capitalist system and represent a revolutionary change, breaking the power of the capitalist class and taking a first step toward socialism.

A New Sort of Government: The American political system has a *capitalist* character and is far from truly democratic. While we have a liberal state and elected representatives, legislators should come not typically from the corporate-lawyer elite as most do today, but overwhelmingly from the working class—from among teachers and truck drivers, computer programmers and restaurant workers.

Democracy at Every Level: Even radical political democracy will be insufficient to create a classless society. Popular participation, community control, and workers' control in the workplace will be necessary to allow all Americans to have a voice and a vote in matters of concern to them.

Self-organization of the Oppressed: Socialism will only function when all groups in society, particularly groups that have historically suffered greater oppression and exploita-

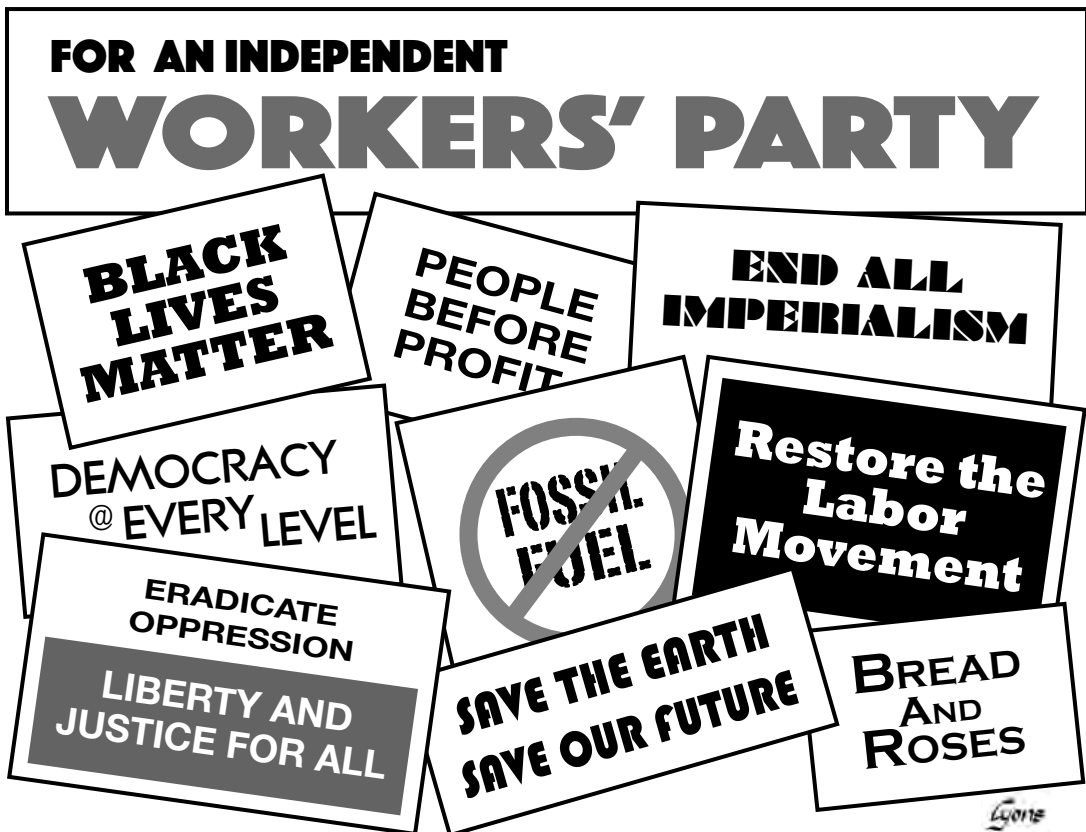
tion—Blacks, Latinos, women, LGBT people, the disabled—can organize independently and on their own behalf. Self-organization must be supported within the left itself, in social movements, labor unions, and political parties.

An Ecologically Sustainable Economy: All of these democratic principles will make it possible for people to work together to plan a new economy that will meet human needs in the broadest sense, to work not for warfare but for our common welfare, and to avoid ecological catastrophe. We must abandon the idea of constantly increased production, overwhelmingly based on carbon fuels, and create a new conception of a society that is rich not only because of the stuff it produces but because of the more fulfilling life it makes possible both for communities and individuals.

Social Solidarity: Such a society will be based

on the principle of social solidarity, of mutual and reciprocal cooperation. We must be committed to working with each other and taking care of each other throughout our entire lives. Our new socialist institutions and values will ensure that working-age adults help provide for children and the elderly, and that those who are well work to provide for those who are not.

The achievement of such a society will require the construction of enormous and powerful social movements, and we can be sure that the capitalists will work at every moment to coopt or crush them. A major obstacle to the building of powerful labor and social movements in the United States has been the role played by Democratic Party elites, always functioning to ideologically disarm, organizationally disrupt, and institutionally incorporate such movements



back into the capitalist system. We must work to build powerful independent movements that find political expression in equally independent parties. What kind of mass movement will we need?

New Social Movements: Past social movements—the abolition movement of the first half of the nineteenth century, the 1930s labor movement, the civil rights struggles of the 1950s, the student, anti-war and women's movements of the 1960s and 1970s, the global justice movement of the 1990s, and more recently Occupy and Black Lives Matter—are evocative. We need to build powerful social movements that challenge all of capitalism's manifestations in every area of our lives.

A New Labor Movement: A reconstructed, democratized workers' movement is critical because workers organized in unions represent potentially the most powerful positive social force in any society. Representing large numbers, the majority of the society, concentrated in significant numbers in workplaces of all sorts from farms, factories, and mines to offices, universities, and hospitals, organized workers can exert enormous economic and social power. We will need rank-and-file movements within the unions to make them more democratic, egalitarian, and militant if we are to change our society.

An Independent Workers' Party: While the

Sanders campaign has been inspiring, it remains within the Democratic Party. America's workers need our own political party to fight for power if we are to create not only a new majority in Congress and a new administration in the White House, but a fundamentally new sort of government. Major party realignments in American history have been few and they result from major economic, social, or political crises, but we can and must begin now to make the political arguments for independent political action.

A Fight for Political Power: We want to bring about meaningful reforms immediately to benefit all working-class people, but our ultimate goal is for workers to take political power so that society can be reorganized around our common interests.

It should go without saying that a new socialist movement will incorporate not only what has been learned in the labor movement, but also all of the lessons of the Black and Latino, women's, LGBT, and environmental movements of the last few decades. Our socialism will be democratic, libertarian, and egalitarian or it will not deserve the name "socialism." Constructing a political vision, a new dominant worldview, is the first step to creating a movement, a party, a program, and a strategy to fight for power in the future.

Welfare Reform and the Ghost of the “Welfare Queen”

JUAN M. FLOYD-THOMAS, PHD

LIKE A SPECTRAL APPARITION from a Shakespeare play or an M. Night Shyamalan film, the dreaded ghost of welfare reform is making a ghoulish comeback on Capitol Hill just in time for its twentieth anniversary.

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996 marked the unceremonious end of the welfare rights movement yet did nothing to end the misery and vilification of those people actually in need of welfare. For nearly fifty years, conservative politicians, pundits, and policy wonks developed a steady drumbeat of stump speeches and position papers rife with racially coded rhetoric and imagery intended to invoke the contentiousness surrounding welfare that dominated previous election cycles. Even now, at the start of 2016, congressional Republicans under the leadership of Rep. Tom Price of Georgia, chair of the House’s budget committee, have put federal funding for welfare programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families in grave peril. Utilizing the process of budget reconciliation, the GOP’s machinations would allow them to bypass any opposition put forth by Democrats in Congress while effectively striking a deathblow to this and other public assistance programs. Although these draconian measures and the divisive politics that undergird them might seem archaic, the sheer antipathy towards any semblance of welfare as a bulwark against extreme poverty remains very alive for

countless conservatives. This constellation of issues, images, and ideas coalescing into the most derogatory depiction of welfare continues to dominate the American psyche even now.

In 1976, former California Governor and Republican presidential candidate Ronald Reagan issued a wholesale condemnation of Black female welfare recipients as ruthless con artists robbing the federal government blind and undermining the moral fabric of U.S. society. The so-called “welfare queen,” as Reagan stated in his diatribe, “has eighty names, thirty addresses, twelve Social Security cards and is collecting veterans benefits on four non-existing deceased husbands. And she is collecting Social Security on her cards. She’s got Medicaid, getting food stamps, and she is collecting welfare under each of her names. Her tax-free cash income is over \$150,000.” Although the story itself rode the fine line between fable and farce, Reagan’s yarn about poor Black women as liars, cheats, and manipulators gained huge political traction. Both in popular memory and public policy, the long shadow of Reagan’s “welfare queen” imagery still looms quite large within the national psyche.

Twenty years after Reagan’s infamous “welfare queen” speech, President Bill Clinton—a centrist white Southern Democrat whose presidency was largely made possible by strong electoral support from African American voters—made good on his election pledge to “end welfare as we know it” with the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) in 1996. Keeping this ominous promise meant,

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among other things, reducing the number of women who were eligible to access the welfare system, limiting the number of years one could receive benefits, and making work a compulsory requirement of the program. Without ques-

Despite the Clinton administration's claims to the contrary, the 1996 welfare reform bill has been deemed responsible for causing a dramatic rise in endemic poverty, especially among minorities and single mothers.

tion, welfare reform became a top priority for President Bill Clinton's administration. In effect, the Clinton White House had hijacked a key part of the infamous GOP's Contract with America orchestrated by then-Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich and the congressional Republican majority in 1994.

For those who may have forgotten, it has been nearly two decades since welfare was regularly debated in public policy arenas and the mainstream media—and often used as a political wedge issue by Democrats and Republicans alike. Furthermore, with contemporary right-wing politicians, conservative pundits, and libertarian activists inspiring movements such as the Tea Party, who cloak their project of reasserting white national and global authority beneath a cover of states' rights and fiscal austerity, there is bound to be more sanctimonious posturing and rhetoric about the invalidity of public assistance as well as the necessity to compel Black women into employment, to control sexual behaviors, to determine reproductive options (or lack thereof), and to force familial structures into shapes deemed “responsible” and “acceptable” by mainstream society. Since the mid-1990s,

legislators in the United States across the partisan and ideological spectrum pledged to significantly curb anti-poverty spending. This pronouncement was delivered to the delight of the wealthy as well as many middle-class, mainstream, suburbanite Americans and, conversely, to the detriment of poorest members of the nation's populace.

In a classic Clintonian maneuver of political triangulation, the PRWORA targeted Reagan's myth of the “welfare queens.” By design, the bill was deliberately intended to curtail a presumed “cultural of poverty” among welfare recipients, exemplified by perceived illicit behavior, sexual promiscuity, laziness, personal irresponsibility, and out-of-wedlock births that had been key talking points of the conservative public policy agenda. Among other things, it gave the states almost absolute discretion over administration of benefits as well as creation of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and jobs training programs to replace the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program. All of this was done with the intention of moving the poor “from welfare to work.” The legislation also imposed a lifetime limit of five years on recipient benefits. Consequently, these actions led to en masse purging of otherwise needy and eligible recipients from the welfare rolls nationwide.

Die-hard liberals and progressives have disparaged and bemoaned the PRWORA ever since its passage. While Gwendolyn Mink argued that the PRWORA substantially transformed welfare as a function of U.S. citizenship, it can also be observed that it poisoned the well of any lingering sense of collective goodwill and enlightened self-interest pertaining to American society's attitudes toward welfare recipients, most notably poor single Black mothers and their families.

In hindsight, despite the Clinton administration's claims to the contrary, the 1996 welfare reform bill has been deemed responsible for causing a dramatic rise in endemic poverty, especially among minorities and single moth-

ers. While employment did increase, most of the former recipients who found jobs did not escape poverty. In a *Ms.* magazine article, “A Step Back to the Workhouse?” (1987), cultural critic Barbara Ehrenreich presciently criticized the ideas behind the reform legislation for perpetuating negative stereotypes of poor Blacks; she asserted the concepts reinforced patriarchal views regarding children’s legitimacy based on heteronormative notions of family.

In the rising tide of the centrist politics and neoliberal economic policy of President Bill Clinton’s administration, a majority of both Republicans and Democrats alike distanced themselves from many progressive gains achieved during the 1960s. During the decades since President Lyndon Johnson’s robust domestic social agenda known as the Great Society—viewed by many critics and supporters alike as the high tide of U.S. liberalism—a vast array of conservatives and libertarians have routinely characterized any liberal policy initiatives within the body politic as “wasteful, ineffective, and damaging” and ultimately castigating the state as the “worst enemy” of the nation’s poor. Since the 1990s, U.S. policy experts and lawmakers have consistently blamed poor Black people for creating the nation’s massive deficit without mentioning astronomical defense spending and the soaring costs of corporate welfare during the Reagan-Bush era, effectively singling out the poor as America’s ubiquitous scapegoats. Those with this view have vowed to dismantle any social program that may directly or indirectly aid the poor, as demonstrated in the recent controversy related to President Obama’s signature legislative accomplishment, the Affordable Care Act (most commonly known as Obamacare).

Ironically, the crucial dividing line within the leadership of the economic justice movement (more so than among the rank and file) during the last half century has been the diametric feud between the “politics of respectability” advanced by the Black middle class and “dog-whistle politics” employed by white

conservatives. Although typically not discussed in tandem with one another, the politics of respectability and dog-whistle politics have been meshed in a deeply complex fashion during the past fifty years. While working at cross purposes—the former viewed as a means of racial uplift and the latter as a system of racist subterfuge—these dual forces have converged in catastrophic fashion, with the fates of poor Black families headed by single mothers hanging in the balance.

The politics of respectability refers to efforts by marginalized or disenfranchised groups to police the bodies, behaviors, and beliefs of their own members in order to demonstrate that their social values are not only compatible with but absolutely consistent with mainstream values, rather than challenging the mainstream for its failure to accept diverse cultural perspectives and experiences. In her definition of the concept, Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham states,

While adherence to respectability enabled Black women to counter racist images and structures, their discursive contestation was not directed solely at white Americans; [elite Black women] condemned what they perceived to be negative practices and attitudes among their own people. Their assimilationist leanings led to their insistence upon Blacks’ conformity to the dominant society’s norms of manners and morals. Thus the discourse of respectability disclosed class and status differentiation.

Moreover, Higginbotham asserts, “the politics of respectability emphasized reform of individual behavior and attitudes both as a goal in itself and as a strategy for reform of the entire structural system of American race relations. ... Instead, the politics of respectability assumed a fluid and shifting position along a continuum of African American resistance.” In her analysis of the turn-of-the-century efforts of middle-class Black Baptist churchwomen who established their own voluntary associations in order to advance their own racial uplift agenda, Higginbotham indicates that much of the interracial schism rooted in social hierarchy and

moral standards largely was glossed over in the historiography of the Black freedom struggle. In his recent essay in *Harper's* magazine, legal scholar Randall Kennedy offered a fairly robust defense of respectability politics in the wake of dogged criticism by contemporary protesters such as those affiliated with the Black Lives Matter campaign as well as progressive Black scholar-activists. Kennedy argues, at least in part, that respectability politics is still viable in America as long as Black people retain “an underlying optimism” that the vestiges of hatred and inequality can eventually be brought to heel through a faithful commitment to the proper working of our civil society. However, as Frederick C. Harris notes,

What started as a philosophy promulgated by Black elites to “uplift the race” by correcting the “bad” traits of the Black poor has now evolved into one of the hallmarks of Black politics in the age of Obama, a governing philosophy that centers on managing the behavior of Black people left behind in a society touted as being full of opportunity. In an era marked by rising inequality and declining economic mobility for most Americans—but particularly for Black Americans—the twenty-first-century version of the politics of respectability works to accommodate neoliberalism. The virtues of self-care and self-correction are framed as strategies to lift the Black poor out of their condition by preparing them for the market economy.

Conversely, dog-whistle politics functions as a system of political rhetoric that utilizes racially coded vocabulary and imagery that appear to mean one thing to the general population but have an alternate, more layered resonance for a conservative political constituency. Offering a more specific definition of dog-whistle politics, Ian Haney López suggests,

Over the last half-century conservatives have used racial pandering to win support from white voters for policies that principally favor the extremely wealthy and wreck the middle class. Running on racial appeals, the right has promised to protect supposedly embattled

whites, when in reality it has largely harnessed government to the interests of the very affluent.

Part and parcel of dog-whistle politics since the electoral success of Richard Nixon's Southern Strategy in the early 1970s has been the systematic scapegoating of racial and ethnic minorities to appease the economic anxieties of white working- and middle-class voters. As a result, such racist appeals, both implicit and explicit, became a mainstay of conservative political rhetoric and consequently established the racial politics of the contemporary Republican Party. One of the most fruitful tactics for conservative politicians and pundits was to stigmatize Black people as con artists cheating the welfare system and robbing white taxpayers. In this fashion, dog-whistle politics fomented a mythical binary that assumes that all whites are hardworking, taxpaying, and virtuous while all Blacks are lazy, indigent, and venal. “The middle class no longer saw itself in opposition to concentrated wealth, but now instead it saw itself beset by grasping minorities,” Haney López contends. “Racial attacks on liberalism shifted the enemy of the middle class from big money to lazy minorities, and transmuted economic programs that helped to build the nation into welfare for undeserving groups.”

The efforts toward so-called “welfare reform” might be more accurately labeled as a tug-of-war between the politics of respectability and dog-whistle politics. In her analysis of how mainstream media's negative cultural images of Black women shapes U.S. social policy, K. Sue Jewell argues that several myths dominate popular perceptions of single Black mothers who head poor families. Jewell argues,

Cultural images continue to influence the societal perception of African American women as matriarchs or sexually loose and irresponsible women who substitute welfare for work and marriage and cannot be taken seriously. These stereotypes continue to support reactionary and punitive social policies and practices that exclude African American women from soci-

etal resources and institutions.

Furthermore, Annelise Orleck contends, derogatory and stereotypical depictions of single Black mothers as welfare recipients pervaded scholarly literature and social policy during the height of LBJ's proclaimed "War on Poverty" in the 1960s.

A prime example of this pejorative treatment of Black motherhood can be found in the infamous 1965 governmental study entitled "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action," spearheaded by the late sociologist, U.S. Senator, and Assistant Secretary of Labor Daniel Patrick Moynihan (more commonly known as the Moynihan Report). This controversial intra-administration report largely blamed the pathological crises befalling African American families and the persistence of poverty amongst the nation's Black populace on African American mothers. Moynihan went to great lengths to condemn Black matriarchy for making Black women too assertive and autonomous while conversely impairing and emasculating Black men. In effect, the Moynihan Report was engaging in the worst form of "blaming the victim" by castigating Black mothers—whether they were welfare recipients or not—for their central role in maintaining Black families even in the absence of spouses or domestic partners or of larger societal support systems. Even now, roughly fifty years after the Moynihan Report was published, its main arguments still continue to frame a wide array of national debates about welfare programs and family policies.

For today's progressives and anti-poverty activists, I would contend that what is needed to combat the extreme circumstances of poverty is what I refer to as "train-whistle politics." As the name suggests, train-whistle politics derives its meaning from the historic practice of railroad workers sounding an audible alarm to signal impending danger of oncoming trains potentially on a collision course as well as to provide a necessary means of communication. Whether used to provide fair warning to those nearby

of a potential train wreck or to exchange vital information at varying distances for those who need to know what was going on in an era bereft of instantaneous messaging and social media, the train whistle was an indispensable feature of both the livelihoods and very lives of those most dependent on hearing the message loud

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and clear. Also, since train whistles were relatively simple devices and extremely inexpensive to use compared to other, more sophisticated alarm systems, the use of the train whistles' resonant volume in distinctive yet recognizable patterns literally served as the preferred survival mechanism for railway operators and those dependent upon them. In like fashion, train-whistle politics need to be deployed by those seeking to undo decades of regressive social thinking and public policy regarding welfare reform and anti-poverty programs without the persistent observance of respectability politics. Meanwhile, train-whistle politics needs to stand in stark contrast to the dog-whistle politics that have been the mainstay of conservative politicians from the late 1960s to now (just witness the rise of Donald Trump for the most recent, raucous example of this phenomenon). Those of us on the left need to restore our commitment to loud and resounding resistance to oppressive social policies and those who enact them.

Although the Occupy movement demonstrated the most recent example of this practice, I would draw our attention to an earlier model,

namely the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO). The NWRO emerged in 1966 within an atmosphere of social and political tumult occasioned by the existence of profound economic precariousness amid unprecedented wealth. The NWRO successfully obtained public assistance for the myriad of families in financial distress by capitalizing on that era's Democratic liberalism and ethos of grassroots protest. Three developments in the 1960s directly contributed to the eruption of welfare rights activities: the civil rights movement, the Great Society's "War on Poverty" initiatives, and a stark evolution of social-welfare thought by the American left. The NWRO emulated the waning civil rights movement's nonviolent direct-action style of protest, drawing upon the leadership and support of veteran civil rights activists. Johnson's War on Poverty, particularly the community action component, created a political climate conducive to reform-oriented social movements and provided the necessary stimulus and resources for anti-poverty activists to commit themselves to welfare reform. Finally, the nation's renewed interest in eradicating poverty, inspired by harsh "poverty paradox" criticism by social reformers and liberal social critics such as Michael Harrington and Martin Luther King, Jr., who questioned the persistence of poverty in arguably the world's wealthiest society, spurred many wealthy and middle-class Americans to contribute, either financially or otherwise, to anti-poverty organizations. Moreover, the shift in focus from rural white poverty to urban Black immiseration publicized the plight of welfare recipients. These factors combined to support and legitimate, at least briefly, the grievances of Black people and poor people in full recognition that these constituencies were never mutually exclusive.

As demonstrated by the National Welfare Rights Organization, the welfare rights movement was an excellent example of confronting racial injustice, gender inequality, and endemic poverty. When reflecting upon the NWRO,

Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward wrote, "It was not clear how activists could, as a practical day-to-day matter of organizing, mount an attack on poverty attacking its main cause—underemployment and unemployment." The one resource that poor people had in clear abundance was (and is) civil disobedience, defined as the ability to disrupt the established norms of dominant society by making trouble for the stakeholders of the status quo. By producing political shockwaves so significant that the authorities are forced to respond, the NWRO would be able to surmount its other, more glaring, organizational deficits. Moreover, having learned the lessons of the recent nonviolent civil rights movement, the NWRO's greatest hope for success would be if they could force the state to respond to their demands while also making it rather loathsome to use force against the protesters. Toward this end, advancing the image of Black single mothers as the heart and soul of the welfare rights movement depended upon the state being unwilling to wield force against them in any form. But, by and large, social disruption has proven to be a purely limited option most effective under extraordinary historical circumstances. Although the politics of protest are extremely short-lived and costly, it remains the most effective means to utilize the scarce resources at the disposal of the poor to improve the conditions of their lives and communities. As Deborah Gray White contends, "The rationale behind the National Welfare Rights Organization's call for action was its leaders' belief that the poor had a right to live decently and with dignity."

Ironically, the NWRO demanded a guaranteed annual income as a direct outgrowth of the women's desire for meaningful employment. As Deborah Gray White states, "The right to work at a good job was central to their program, but since they doubted the existence of such jobs for everyone, they demanded the government institute a guaranteed annual income" that was both need-based and adjusted for cost-of-living

increases. This intimate connection between the federal government, NWRO, and labor unions lasted only a few years. For instance, in the early 1970s, the Chicago branch of the NWRO formed a short-lived partnership with the Illinois Union of Social Service Employees while the Hospital and Health Care Employees Union in Philadelphia lent its steadfast support to the Kensington Welfare Rights Union, one of the nation's most outspoken, long-lasting welfare rights organizations. By finding common ground in their respective attempts to eradicate widespread poverty amongst the poorest segment of the nation's populace, these and other affiliations between labor unions and welfare recipient movements emphasized the underdeveloped potential of anti-poverty struggles in the United States.

The NWRO eventually faced internal debates and organizational problems that it was never able to overcome. Buoyed by the conservative ascendancy in U.S. politics circa the 1970s, the Nixon administration aggressively pursued the dismantling of liberal anti-poverty programs. However, while they lasted, local welfare rights organizations were galvanized into a movement by experienced civil rights activists, government-funded volunteers, and welfare recipients working together to expand both the definition and function of the American welfare state. Much deeper critical consideration should be given to how the NWRO as well as the national welfare rights movement—in terms of their successes as well as their failures—can be seen as an important contribution to a more comprehensive understanding and critique of the American welfare state.

Toward this end, the NWRO created a “Welfare Bill of Rights” to inform recipients (and the general public) of poor peoples’ right to live with dignity. Combating the lurid images of “welfare queens” shirking work was

of paramount importance to the movement. NWRO activists reassured welfare mothers that miserable conditions were no fault of their own but rather capitalism and an inadequate welfare state were the real enemies. Women should not be forced to work in order to buttress the wealth of corporations at the expense of their families. NWRO activists contested prototypical “workfare” proposals, arguing that those arrangements only served to ensure a pool of marginal workers and, in that way, subsidized industry by forcing women to work for a non-living wage. The NWRO ardently resisted the elitist notion that poor people should be condemned to “minimum wage slavery.” Insisting that welfare recipients should not be forced to relinquish their human rights, the group argued that whether or not a person received public assistance was irrelevant to their innate right to privacy and dignity. Furthermore, they demanded that welfare mothers be treated as “first-class citizens” with the same rights as others, including the right to choose between their roles as workers and mothers.

From its inception in 1966 to its demise in 1975, the NWRO publicized the availability of welfare, reduced the stigma attached to welfare dependency, and politicized the poverty-stricken members of our population. In its prime, the NWRO was representative of the train-whistle politics I am recommending, endeavoring to improve the quality of life for those suffering from chronic transgenerational poverty by proclaiming loudly and boldly that the poorest members of our body politic have fundamental rights as well as collective power that had to be respected. As rancorous debates about anti-poverty programs and the supposedly “undeserving poor” threaten to resurface in the nation's capital, maybe train-whistle politics as a more thoughtful and truthful ideological framework might finally put the ghost of the “welfare queen” to rest at long last.

Kiddin' on the Square

The Politics and Poetics of Mose Allison's Blues

DAVID COCHRAN

IN OCTOBER 1969, pianist/singer/composer Mose Allison recorded “Monsters of the Id.” At a time when recent history had witnessed a police riot at the 1968 Democratic Party Convention, the police crackdown on protesters at Berkeley’s People’s Park, and popular backlash against anti-war, New Left, counter-culture, and Black Power sentiment, Allison began by warning that the title characters no longer remain hidden, but have come out in full view. To the accompaniment of a slightly discordant horn section, Allison—singing in his characteristic style, with its idiosyncratic pauses and accents—spins a variety of often ghoulish metaphors that remain just as timely in today’s era of Tea Party, torture reports, Stand Your Ground, and Donald Trump: “They’re sprouting through the cracks ... They’re deputizing maniacs / Creatures from the swamp rewrite their own Mein Kampf.”

By the time Allison recorded “Monsters of the Id,” he had been on the music scene for more than ten years, and, though commercial success largely eluded him, he had gained a devoted following on the basis of his jazz persona and his witty, literate, and sardonic lyrics (who else, for instance, would write a love song titled “Your Molecular Structure” with phrases like “Your molecular structure is really something swell / A high-frequency modulated Jezebel”?). Born in 1927 in Tippo, an unincorporated town on the eastern edge of the Mississippi Delta,

Allison had grown up on the white side of the Jim Crow line. After a stint in the military and graduating from Louisiana State University with a degree in English, Allison migrated to New York City in the mid-fifties, where he worked backing up such jazz luminaries as Zoot Sims, Al Cohn, and Stan Getz. Immersing himself in the New York jazz scene while holding tight to his southern roots, Allison ultimately would craft a style reflecting a capacious range of influences, including such jazz musicians as Lester Young, Erroll Garner, and Thelonious Monk; blues singers Percy Mayfield and Muddy Waters; popular performer Nat King Cole; composers Bela Bartok and Charles Ives; and literary figures like Kurt Vonnegut and Louis-Ferdinand Celine.

Allison cut his first album as leader of his own trio, *Back Country Suite*, for Prestige Records in 1957. Inspired by the pastorales of such composers as Duke Ellington, Igor Stravinsky, and Aaron Copland, Allison strung together nine instrumentals and one vocal track portraying southern life, fusing the earthy vernacular of the Delta blues with the brio and sophistication of modern jazz. As Allison’s biographer, Patti Jones, points out in *One Man’s Blues: The Life and Music of Mose Allison* (London: Quartet Books, 1995), it was rare for a white musician to play the country blues in this era when the modern civil rights movement was in its infancy and the folk and blues revival of the sixties would not arrive for several years—two years, even, before Samuel B. Charters’ pioneering study, *The Country Blues*—especially a musician who “was earning impressive credentials in New York

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City as an accomplished pianist in the modern jazz idiom, a more sophisticated musical style harmonically, melodically, and rhythmically.”

The one vocal track on *Back Country Suite* is titled simply “Blues,” though it would later come to be called “Young Man Blues.” In his conversational voice, Allison sings a lament for the lost status of youth, with its strength and virility, and the pre-eminence of age and wealth: “Well a young man ain’t nothing in this world these days”—voice unaccompanied, like nothing so much as a field holler, before the piano comes in. Beginning with this simple line, a generation of younger American writers and musicians would take note first of the music’s energy and vitality and then, often much later, the discovery of the performer’s race. In Richard Farina’s early-countercultural novel *Been Down So Long It Looks Like Up to Me* (1966), set in 1958 in an Ivy League school, protagonist Gnosso Pappadopoulos complains when he comes into his dorm room and finds his friends listening to Dave Brubeck. “Burn that Brubump crap, man, I’ve got new sounds. What are you doing, starting a Mickey Mouse club or what?” Gnosso hands *Back Country Suite* to Heff, his black roommate, who says, “Who’s Mose Allison? ... Never heard of him. ... An’ I don’t dig names like Mose ... It’s Uncle Tomming.” “He’s white, baby,” Gnosso replies. “Don’t lose your cool.”

Similarly, science fiction writer and television critic Harlan Ellison would write in 1969 that the “biggest aural shock of my life ... was finding out, about ten years ago, that Mose Allison was white.” Blues singer John Hammond reflected his similar experience in Los Angeles in 1962, having heard Allison on record: “I imagined him to be a black guy from Chicago or Memphis. An old-time blues-singer guy. Was I ever surprised when I walked ... [into] the Lighthouse and saw Mose Allison, a white guy, playing in this club.” As Allison would remember, even Muddy Waters was surprised on their first meeting, having assumed Allison was black.

If anything, Allison made a bigger impact on British musicians. Pete Townshend, for instance, would describe visiting an American friend living in London in 1963, who pulled *Back Country Suite* from his sizable record collection. “The man’s voice was heaven,” The Who’s guitarist recalls. “So cool, so decisively hip, uncomplicated and spaced away from the mainstream of gravel-voiced Delta bluesmen.” Then, when his friend showed Townshend Allison’s photograph, Townshend continued, “He’s fucking white! I scream. A real, cool, relaxed, genuine, funky, hippped out, WHITE hero.” Former Rolling Stone Mick Taylor would remember, “If you were British playing the blues in the 1960s, you were influenced by Mose Allison.” As testament to his influence, a wide range of musicians have covered Allison’s songs: American performers like Johnny Rivers, Bobbie Gentry, Bonnie Raitt, and Chris Spedding and bands like Paul Butterfield’s Better Days, Hot Tuna, Blue Cheer, and even the Spiders—the band that would evolve into Alice Cooper; British bands and performers like The Who, John Mayall’s Bluesbreakers, The Yardbirds, Elvis Costello, and the punk band The Clash. Former Cream bassist Jack Bruce backed Allison on the live album *Lessons in Living* (1982); Van Morrison, Georgie Fame, and Ben Sidran released a tribute album, *Tell Me Something: The Songs of Mose Allison* (1996); and American singer/songwriter Greg Brown recorded a 1997 homage, “Mose Allison Played Here.”

Allison’s crossing of racial boundaries—in his music, his voice, his name—embodies what jazz critic Albert Murray terms “the incontestably mulatto” nature of American culture. But Allison realizes this whole concept is problematic, based as it is on a large degree of white appropriation of African American culture, a topic Allison would satirize in his 1989 song “Ever Since I Stole the Blues”: “Well the blues police from down in Dixieland, tried to catch me with the goods on hand / They broke down my door but I was all smiles, I had already shipped

them to the British Isles.”

The opposition between black and white represented only one of several boundaries Allison worked to break down throughout his career. His entire oeuvre focuses on merging such opposites as southern/northern, rural/urban, highbrow/popular. As he explained in 1962, “I’ve always figured that you’ve got to be able to assimilate what normally seem to be opposing elements. That’s the way reality is.” He has ignored the boundaries of musical genre (and in the process, given fits to the marketing departments of his various record companies). His music reflects the polyglot diversity of American culture, a fact demonstrated by the wide range of songs he has covered—including jazz by Duke Ellington and Dizzy Gillespie; country by Hank Williams and Lefty Frizzell; blues by Percy Mayfield, Muddy Waters, Sonny Boy Williamson, and Willie Dixon; and such standards from the Great American Songbook as “St. Louis Blues,” “When My Dream Boat Comes Home,” “The Tennessee Waltz,” and “You Are My Sunshine” (the last of which Allison presents in a mournful rendition much more in keeping with the song’s lyrics than more upbeat, popular versions).

As an example of his defiantly pluralistic fusion of various cultural traditions, Allison spent several years in the early seventies listening to classical piano sonatas as well as modernist composers like Elliot Carter and avant-garde jazz pianist Cecil Taylor in an attempt to improve his ability to play—and improvise—with his left hand. “Today,” he commented in 1974, “I’m not so dependent on the one-handed bop style I used for quite a while.” Allison also is a student of world music, arguing that all music can be broken down into a small number of categories. “In fact,” he has said, “there’s only three kinds of music: Bach, the blues, and Schoenberg. Bach is linear, melodic; Schoenberg is new sounds, twelve-tone harmony; and a universal blues is played in every country. Everything else is a mixture of those three elements to a certain

degree.” As for the blues, “All societies have something akin to the blues. There’s a universal lament that’s interchangeable with country blues, and I’m real interested in that. ... I went to a Chinese opera one time in San Francisco and there was an old guy who sounded just like Lightnin’ Hopkins to me. They were essentially singing blues harmonies.”

Drummer and occasional Allison accompanist Billy Cobham has described what he calls Allison’s “American folkloric proletarian connection.” To a large extent, this vision grows out of Allison’s working-class view of his work, based on his relationship with his various record companies. Allison’s first record contract, with Prestige, required him to produce six records in two years, paying him only \$250 per record. The contract was fairly standard for its era, though as Allison’s biographer Patti Jones comments,

From the artist’s perspective, flooding the market with an overabundance of material, especially if musically inconsistent, could only be damaging to the consumer’s perceptions of the artist’s work. More significantly, the notion of a new, developing recording artist being legally obligated to deplete his or her catalog quickly, producing music in assembly-line fashion, is a short-sighted practice militating against long-term success. Unless the artist is naturally prolific, mass production often results in a burn-out that destroys the creative process, taking the artist’s career with it.

His next record company, Atlantic, pushed Allison to record more commercially accessible music. “They kept sending me all this Gene Aultry material,” he said. “They wanted to make a pop singer out of me.” By the seventies, Atlantic was pressuring Allison to add back-up singers and a disco beat.

Making no money off his own records, Allison survived through songwriting royalties and incessant touring. In the eighties, he typically played 220–230 nights a year, a lifestyle he wryly commented on in such songs as “The Getting Paid Waltz” (1989), “Cabaret Card” (1994), and “Nightclub” (1971): “Been working in night-

clubs so long, can hardly stand the break of day / Run-down rooms and bad pianos, but it's still the only way." In his mocking narrative on his own lack of commercial success, "Gettin' There" (1987), he laments, "If I was selling fantasy, I'd be a millionaire / But I'm not disillusioned ... But I'm getting there."

In the late sixties, Allison wrote "Top Forty," a blistering satire of the commercial style of music Atlantic wanted him to produce (though he did not record it until 1987): "When I make my top forty, big beat rock and roll record everything is gonna be just fine ... / No more philosophic melancholia, eight hundred pounds of electric genitalia." Allison rejects accusations of cynicism, though, saying in a 1986 interview, "To me, the most cynical musical experience of this century is when you get four self-indulgent young millionaires together and they tell everybody all they need is love."

The black humor and ambivalence running throughout Allison's work reflects the literary influence of writers like Kurt Vonnegut. Lyrics like "I don't worry about a thing, 'cause I know nothing's going to be all right" grow out of his conviction that "ambivalence is just where we are. The universe is built on the interaction of opposing forces. You've got to learn to live with that. You have to be able to entertain opposing ideas at the same time." The darkly humorous world view is summed up in the title of his 1982 song, "Kiddin' on the Square," which he says is "one of my favorite street sayings; doesn't seem to be in use anymore and probably needs explaining. It could be paraphrased as 'jivin' for real' or joking with serious intent—sounds like someone I know." For instance, Allison presents a droll take on the apocalypse in "Ever Since the World Ended": "Dogmas that we once defended no longer seem worthwhile / Ever since the world ended, I face the future with a smile."

Allison's blues sensibility provides a vehicle for his social and political commentary. As he has said, "So much of the country blues is innuendo and disguised comment. You really have

to know the jargon to be able to get through. In other words, the plantation blues were the oppressed saying it right out in front of their tormentors, and the tormentors didn't even pick it up." In his own work, Allison rarely sings about specific topical issues, giving his commentary more universal relevance. His 1962 song, "Your Mind Is on Vacation," could just as easily describe our current crop of political pundits and talk-radio hosts: "If silence was golden, you couldn't raise a dime / Because your mind is on vacation and your mouth is working overtime."

"Everybody Cryin' Mercy," recorded in the summer of 1968, makes oblique reference to the contemporary situation of war, assassinations, and racial rebellion, but remains timeless in its commentary: "People running 'round in circles, don't know what they're headed for / Everybody cryin' peace on earth, just as soon as we win this war."

Innuendo and indirection do not make Allison's lyrics less pointed. His 1971 song "Western Man," for instance, is a two-minute-and-forty-second history of imperialism. "Western man had a plan, and with his gun in his hand / Free from doubt, went right out on the world." "Big Brother," written in the late sixties, remained just as relevant when he got around to recording it in 1989 (and equally so in today's world of NSA spying and *Citizens United*): "Don't say nothing bad about a CEO ... / I only tell you 'cause it's true, Big Brother is watching you."

Allison takes more direct aim at modern celebrity culture in "Who's In, Who's Out" (1993): "Let's all get excited about the party to which we're uninvited," and the competing priorities of consumer culture in "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" (1989): "Do I show my concern for the needy, for the folks who are living outside / Or am I just plain greedy, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." "The More You Get" (1997) focuses on the fundamental insecurity of acquisitive consumerism—"The chance to make money is hard to refuse / But the more you get, the more you got to lose"—while "Numbers on Paper"

(1997) highlights the dehumanizing nature of capitalism: “Numbers on paper, designate your ration / In or out of fashion, world beyond compassion.”

In a career spanning more than sixty years, Allison has confronted not only his own commercial irrelevance, but also his own aging. And like everything else, he has done so with his typical ironic humor. “Certified Senior Citizen” (1994) warns, “You may ignore me, but doctors adore me. ... You don’t like my drivin’, I don’t like your jivin’”—while “My Brain” (2010) offers the reminder, “My brain is losin’ power / twelve

hundred neurons every hour.” Most poignantly, in 1997 Allison offered a redux of his original vocal performance with “Old Man Blues.” Forty years after bursting on the scene lamenting the lost status of the young man, Allison now portrays the cultural logic of consumer capitalism shifting power to youth, with its sex appeal and purchasing power, while marginalizing the elderly: “Well an old man ain’t nothing in the USA.” And thus Allison brings the story full circle. But is the man serious?

Nah, he’s just kiddin’ on the square.

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The Neo-colonization of Central America

JEFF ABBOTT

THE COLONIZATION OF Latin America never ended, it merely changed forms. Today this conquest continues, with transnational companies driving neo-colonization grounded in the continued exploitation of natural resources. This is nowhere more true than in Central America. The force of neo-colonization is strengthened by free-trade agreements and development plans that guarantee a company's right to investment above the rights of the citizenry. Meanwhile, the indigenous populations face renewed dispossession and eviction to make way for global capital's conquest.

"Latin America is the region of open veins. Everything, from the discovery until our times, has always been transmuted into European—or later United States—capital, and as such has accumulated in distant centers of power," Eduardo Galeano wrote in his seminal book, *Open Veins of Latin America* (Monthly Review Press, 1971). Capital takes "everything: the soil, its fruits, and its mineral-rich depths, the people and their capacity to work and to consume, natural resources and human resources." Forty years later, "The veins are still open," as an anonymous hand wrote on a wall in Guatemala City's historic center following Galeano's death in 2015.

Global capital's demand for primary resources, such as minerals, water, and soil, has driven modern colonization. The neoliberal

project has reignited a period of capitalist development that Karl Marx once referred to as "primitive accumulation." Natural resources are exploited and original peoples are transformed into the ranks of the proletariat. This process of proletarianization strips rural autonomous populations of their means of production and forces them to sell their labor power as wage labor. "Each new colonial expansion is accompanied by a relentless battle of capital against social and economic ties of the natives, who are also forcibly robbed of the means of production and labor power," wrote Rosa Luxemburg in her masterwork, *The Accumulation of Capital*, adding, a page later, that "force is the only solution opened to capital."

The modern colonization has been driven by financial capital, which seeks to find new investments to continue its accumulation. It is this quest that drives the neo-colonization of indigenous territories. According to Raúl Zibechi, a Uruguayan journalist and social movement analyst, this process of neo-colonization is something that is occurring across the globe and manifests differently in different places. "Today we live in a world dominated by financial capital," said Zibechi in an interview. "The politics of (neo-)colonization are not only occurring in Latin America; in Latin America it manifests in a very brutal way, but this is what is occurring across the globe. This is the current hegemonic politics in the world." Today this process must contend with the continuation of the resistance of the indigenous peoples of the Americas, strengthened by new rights and international conventions that protect these rights. There are

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many examples that we can draw from to look at this new cycle of global capitalism, but the cases of Guatemala and Honduras represent the most troubling cases in the region. In these

‘Latin America is the region of open veins. Everything, from the discovery until our times, has always been transmuted into European—or later United States—capital, and as such has accumulated in distant centers of power,’ Eduardo Galeano wrote.

two Central American countries we can see the lengths to which the forces of neo-colonization will go to guarantee the accumulation of capital by companies.

A Brief History of Colonization of the Americas

The indigenous Mayan communities of Guatemala have called this neo-colonization the “fourth invasion.” Community leaders and historians break down the history of colonization of their territory into four different “invasions”: the Spanish (1524), coffee/liberal reforms (1871), and internal armed conflicts (1960-1996) as the first three. The arrival of transnational capital represents the fourth invasion. Neo-colonization thus becomes a means of imposing the capitalist system on the nonwestern forms of social organization and further continues the legacy of five hundred years of attacks on the indigenous identity and the indigenous social structure.

The arrival of the Spanish to the New World in 1492 set in motion the first cycle of

the massive taking of indigenous lands across the hemisphere for the exploitation of natural resources such as gold, silver, and exotic crops that were in high demand in Europe.

Independence paved the way for the second round of colonization. In Guatemala, by 1871, families from Germany and Italy were granted vast stretches of land to produce crops such as coffee and sugar cane. Once again this expansion was based on the massive taking of indigenous lands. This period also saw the expansion of transnational companies, the most famous being the United Fruit Company, into the region. These companies utilized corrupt dictatorships to receive vast tracts of land at the expense of the indigenous communities. Throughout these epochs of colonization, the feudalism that had defined the region continued to reproduce itself through the relationship between large landowners and the coerced labor of the indigenous populations, who continued to exist within a feudal social organization that saw the indigenous populations as nothing more than “beasts of burden.”

Internal armed conflicts marked the third cycle of indigenous peoples’ dispossession of their lands through the state’s counterinsurgencies, whose costs fell heavily upon indigenous communities. This cycle was marked by the systematic extermination of indigenous populations to make way for wealthy families to recuperate lands lost to land reforms in the 1950s.

The end of the third wave ushered in the fourth cycle of colonization. The peace accords gave transnational capital the environment it needed to begin a renewed process of accumulation in the regions where it had been unable to gain access due to insurgencies and indigenous resistance. This process was strengthened through structural reforms such as the privatization of energy production and distribution, which opened up the country to new investments by transnational energy companies. These reforms laid the foundation for free-trade agreements, the most central being

the Central American Free Trade Agreement, which protected corporate rights over the rights of the citizenry.

“After the peace agreements, in Guatemala there began the aggressive dispossession of communal lands,” wrote Gladys Tzul Tzul, a Guatemalan philosopher, in the book *Territories in Dispute*.

The motive: the urgency to construct mining projects, hydroelectric projects, and cement factories, real projects of death that contaminate the water, raze forests, and displace complete families and communities. In the rhetoric of the Guatemalan state, these projects construct the means of development and economic growth. However, for the women and men from the communities who live in the territories where they want to build the projects, they represent the prolongation and re-composition of the model of domination and exploitation of the state, now allied with transnational capital.

What followed was the arrival of transnational capital interested in investing in mining, energy production, and monocultures among other projects, which has re-ignited the dispossession of rural communities. All these industries have received ample promotion by governments across the region. In Guatemala, the Ministry of the Economy launched the website “Invest in Guatemala” in 2011. Here they actively sought foreign direct investment from transnational companies in industries such as agribusiness, mining, energy production, and tourism, among others. This same cycle has been identified by Canadian geographer W. George Lovell in his 1988 study* on Mayan survival in Guatemala. “Viewed in historical perspective, it is disconcerting to see how much the twentieth century resembles the sixteenth,” Lovell wrote, “for the parallels between cycles of conquest hundreds of years apart are striking.”

*W. George Lovell, “Surviving Conquest: The Maya of Guatemala in Historical Perspective,” *Latin American Research Review* (Vol. 23, No. 2, 1988), 25-57.

The Specter of Mining

The history of colonization of Latin America can be summed up in the story of blood and gold. It was the lust for gold that drove the Spanish and Portuguese in their rampage across the hemisphere. It was this that justified the death, the pillage, and the rape that defined the history of the conquest. Five hundred years later it is this lust for gold, silver, nickel, and other geostrategic minerals such as uranium that drives the modern taking of land.

Currently, according to data made available through the Consejo de Pueblos Occidentales, there exist nearly one thousand permits in Guatemala alone for the exploration or exploitation of mineral resources; of these, well over four hundred permits have been issued to transnational companies seeking to exploit metallic resources. In total, these permits cover nearly 44 percent of the national territory. These numbers are reflected across the region, where mining has once again come to the center of the develop-

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ment plans of countries across Latin America.

The countries of Latin America have still received little of the financial benefit of the wealth of their territory. Following the end of the war, Guatemala proceeded to slash mining royalties to 1 percent and cut back on regulations. This has fostered a culture of corruption where companies avoid taxes and fail to respect environmental laws.

The modern conflict over the extractive industries is best exemplified in the expansion

of the Fenix project near the municipality of El Estor, along the shore of Lake Izabal in eastern Guatemala. In the 1950s, the United States Geological Survey performed a study after a campesino found an oxidized rock in his field. The study identified a massive reserve of nickel that stretched from the north shore of the lake

According to Raúl Zibechi, 'The politics of (neo)-colonization are ... the current hegemonic politics in the world.'

to the south, one of the largest nickel reserves found in the hemisphere.

By the 1960s, Guatemala was entrenched in the beginning of a 36-year-long internal armed conflict. But this did not stop the military dictatorship of Enrique Peralta Azurdia from granting licenses for the exploitation of the nickel to the International Nickel Company (INCO). Alongside these licenses, the Guatemalan military deployed soldiers to fight guerrillas that were operating within the Sierra de las Minas mountains. But in actuality, the soldiers were deployed to suppress the indigenous Q'eqchi Mayan communities near the mine. A reign of terror fell upon the communities, killing between 2,500 and 3,000 indigenous campesinos. This campaign of terror would continue into the 1980s, with the Guatemalan military actively targeting community leaders who spoke out against the mine until 1983, when INCO suspended operations due to the global fall in nickel prices. Skye Resources, a Canadian mining firm, purchased the Guatemalan subsidiary of INCO, and the mine, in 2004 but did not advance with material extraction.

The indigenous communities that were heavily impacted during the expansion of the

mine during the 1960s and 1970s began returning to their lands following the end of Guatemala's 36-year-long internal armed conflict. The peace accords provided communities with the means to recuperate their lands and gain titles. But this didn't stop the renewed cycle of dispossession that followed the 2004 purchase by the Canadian mining company. Shortly after the purchase, the company began the extrajudicial eviction of communities from their lands. These evictions took on forms of violence reminiscent of the war when security forces, accompanied by Guatemalan military and police, allegedly raped 11 women during one eviction in the community of Lote Ocho in 2007.

In 2009, Skye Resources was purchased by Hudbay minerals, which also acquired the long violent history of the mine. This came to the forefront when Maynor Padilla, a former military colonel, shot and killed Adolfo Ich Chamán, a highly respected indigenous Q'eqchi teacher and community leader who was part of a protest against the mine. Security forces then mutilated Ich Chamán's body. Hudbay was forced in 2011 to sell the mine to the Russian, Cyprus-based Solway group, and the conflict has continued since the ownership changed.

The New Patrons

From the very beginning of the colonization of the region, the global demand for production of exotic crops such as cotton, coffee, sugar, and indigo drove the eviction of indigenous communities from their lands. The residents of these lands were overnight transformed into forced laborers who received permission to work small plots of land in exchange for their work on the fincas and plantations. Two hundred years later, the production of colonial crops such as coffee and sugar has continued and remains an important part of the national economy. According to the Guatemalan Ministry of the Economy, 88 percent of fertile land is available for investment. This statistic does not take into account the indigenous communities that have

for centuries called these lands home. But new crops that play an important role in the global economy, such as the infamous African oil palm, have joined these crops.

Today national elites and transnational companies, driven by global demand for cheap vegetable oils, have once again pushed communities from their land. In fact, with the expansion of crops like oil palm in the years since the end of Guatemala's internal armed conflict, the country has seen the massive reconcentration of land into the hands of large landowners and companies for the production of export agriculture. This same massive expansion has also occurred across Honduras as well, especially along the country's Caribbean coast, home to Afro-Caribbean Garifuna communities.

The production of oil palm has exploded across the globe because of the possibility of using it for biofuels. The tropical climates of Guatemala and Honduras have attracted investment from transnational companies in the production of this crop. In 2007, the Houston-based biofuel company Green Earth Fuels, a subsidiary of the Carlyle Group, acquired the Guatemalan firm Palmas del Ixcán and quickly expanded the production of biofuels with a \$14 million investment provided by Goldman Sachs. Oil palm expansion has led to the continued taking of land.

Palm companies have utilized a variety of tactics to expand their land holdings for the production of oil. The firms, and the land dealers that they work with, have steadily surrounded and divided communities to encourage landowners to sell their smallholdings to the firms. This process has led to communities being fully surrounded by the palm plantations and the campesinos being transformed into wage labor. When these tactics fail, companies utilize local police and military to forcibly evict communities from their lands. The indigenous Q'eqchi Mayan communities of the Polochic Valley in the department of Alta Verapaz have fought for centuries for the

right to their land. Following the end of the war, many residents hoped that they would be able to gain the legal right to their land. But instead, the eight hundred families in the valley were declared land usurpers by the state and in 2011 were evicted from their land to make way for the production of monocrops, such as sugar cane and African oil palm. The families were left with no land and few options. They have since struggled with extreme poverty. But just as troubling, the eviction of the Q'eqchi communities in the Polochic Valley exposes how the relationship between the oligarchs, global capital, and the state and its forces has continued within the postwar government of Guatemala. These violent evictions have continued within the context of "peace" and democracy that were supposed to define the postwar epoch.

The expansion of oil palm has also led to the destruction of the environment.

The relationship of palm companies to power has provided them the means to avoid being held responsible for large-scale contamination. Residents along the River Passion in the Guatemalan department of Petén awoke on May 30, 2015, to find tens of thousands of fish floating in the river. The palm company, REPSA, initially accepted responsibility for the contamination. Representatives from the company sent a letter to the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources on May 5, 2015, stating that an oxidation pool had overflowed and spilled into the streams that feed into the river. But the company quickly retracted any admission of responsibility as the effects of the contamination reached the national media. They placed blame on the local campesinos, who they claim had poured fertilizer into the river.

The administration declined to investigate the matter, despite public outcry. It wasn't until the president was forced to resign following accusations of massive corruption that the Public Ministry and the courts ordered the company to stop operations pending an investigation. But days after the court order, Rigoberto Lima,

a rural school teacher from Sayaxché who was one of the first to file a complaint against the company, was assassinated outside the local courthouse. There has yet to be an investigation into the assassination, but activists have placed blame on the palm company.

Across the country, palm companies have stepped in to provide public services. Companies have built schools and health centers in communities across the regions impacted by palm. This has become a tool of community outreach and a means of obscuring the deadly impacts of the firms' activities. Palmas del Ixcán has offered the community of San Miguel Limón, Alta Verapaz, near the company's processing plant, much-needed teachers, who they argue, will be paid better than the public school teachers. In August 2015, company representatives held a meeting with community leaders to inform them that the company would be providing teachers. The response from the community was mixed, with many community members arguing that the response to community needs is lackluster, at best.

This type of help becomes a means of reproducing the archaic system of feudalism that has existed in rural regions. Even though campesinos earn wages, they still become dependent on the new masters for important services and for the small tracts of land that aren't consumed by the palm plantations.

Generating Conflicts

Energy production has only become a key sector and point of colonization in the last hundred years. But the generation of energy has become an important geostrategic sector. This has been partially driven by the oil and energy crisis of the 1970s, and it drove Washington to pursue the integration of Central American energy networks. New hydroelectric and geothermal projects were proposed to increase energy production in the region. This expanded production brought about calls for the construction of the Chixoy Dam in Guatemala. The construction of

this infamous 127-megawatt dam led to the loss of fertile land along 12.5 kilometers of the Río Negro, with 3,500 indigenous families being directly displaced, 6,000 families being indirectly displaced, and the massacre of over 600 Achi' Mayan people by the military. The World Bank eventually denounced the massacres. But thirty years later, the region has once again pursued World Bank-sponsored energy integration.

Since 2008, the region has seen a massive expansion in the production of energy, with much of the emphasis being placed on private hydroelectric dams as part of Plan Mesoamérica. In Guatemala, there are permits for more than 230 hydroelectric projects; in Honduras, there are more than 300. The projects come as part of the integration of the energy networks called for by the rebranded Plan Puebla-Panama, which was originally proposed in 2001 by Mexican President Vicente Fox. The expansion of these projects has once again led to the rapid dispossession of indigenous lands and brought back the assassination and imprisonment of the leaders of resistance movements.

This violence has come to the forefront of international consciousness through the assassination of Berta Cáceres, a respected indigenous Lenca leader from La Esperanza, Intibuca, Honduras. On March 3, 2016, armed men broke into her house and shot her, along with Mexican anti-mining activist Gustavo Castro Soto, as they slept. Castro Soto survived.

Cáceres was active in the movement against the expansion of the extractive industries in the years since the coup d'état against Manuel Zelaya in 2009. Specifically she was working with the community of Agua Blanca to challenge the construction of a hydroelectric project along the Gualcarque River. The 21.3-megawatt Agua Zarca is owned by the Honduran company Desarrollos Energeticos SA, with investments coming from the Chinese firm Sinohydro as well as the Central American Bank for Economic Integration. But all banks financing the project reportedly have withheld funding following the

assassination of Cáceres.

Similar stories have come from Guatemala, where the expansion of energy production has increased in the years since the signing of the peace accords. Residents have faced violent evictions and dispossessions for the construction of these hydroelectric projects. Communities have argued that they receive little from these projects. And they are correct, as most of the energy is meant for export. The current expansion will do little to lower the high cost of energy in Guatemala.

The Dispossession of Paradise

Shortly after the United States and Canada sponsored the 2009 coup d'état against democratically elected President Manuel Zelaya, the Honduran government declared, "Honduras is open for business," and began promoting transnational investment in the tourism industry among other key sectors of the economy. In 2011, the government passed the Tourism Incentive Law in order to attract further foreign investment in the industry. The law provides incentives such as tax exceptions for companies that open resorts within the country. Companies have invested more than \$300 million in the Honduran tourism industry alone, but this investment has come at the expense of the Garifuna communities along the coast, who have faced systematic eviction and violence to make way for the tourism projects.

"The tourism industry operates just like the other extractive industries," said Jesus Garza from the Honduran Coalition for People's Action.

The concessions that are given directly disrespect the rights of indigenous peoples, especially Garifuna, and have generated (the) conflicts over land, water, and beaches. This policy of promoting tourism under the concept of concessions and privatization is directly linked to such investments, especially on the islands of Roatan.

The Garifuna communities have called the

Atlantic coast of Honduras home since 1797, following their deportation from British St. Vincent Island. Since then, the descendants of African slaves and indigenous Arawaks have developed their own culture, language, food, and music. Today, their communities span Belize to Nicaragua, with 48 communities in Honduras, in the departments of Cortés, Alántida, and Colón. Since 2011, four Garifuna communities have faced eviction by police and military forces to make way for the construction of hotels. On August 6, 2014, the community of Barra Vieja in the department of Tela faced a violent eviction by police and military. That day, more than four hundred people, including two hundred children, were evicted from their land to make

Shortly after the U.S.- and Canadian-sponsored 2009 coup, the Honduran Government declared, 'Honduras is opened for business,' and began promoting investment in the tourism industry. 'The tourism industry operates just like the other extractive industries,' said Jesus Garza from the Honduran Coalition for People's Action.

way for the Indura Beach Resort, also known as the Bay of Tela, which is associated with the Business Council of Latin America, a group that was one of the promoters of the U.S.- and Canadian-sponsored 2009 coup d'état against President Zelaya.

Interest in tourism in Honduras has come from across the globe, but a large percentage has come from Canadian businessman Randy Jorgensen, who has taken the lead in promoting

investment in the industry. Jorgensen, who is also the president of the Canadian pornography chain Adults Only Videos, is the owner of Life Vision Properties, which is based in Trujillo, Honduras. In 2007, Life Vision Properties, along with other local interests, illegally began purchasing land along the Bay of Trujillo. "There is the systematic eviction of our communities for tourism," said Cesar Lionel, a young Garifuna and member of the Network of Community Radios of Mesoamerica, in an interview in the community of Vallecito. "Investors come and illegally buy our land from the state to build massive hotels."

Continuing Centuries of Resistance

The recolonization of Central America by transnational companies has generated the massive mobilization of communities across the region against the taking of land. Communities have challenged mining, hydroelectric, and monoculture industries through direct democracy, in the streets, and in the courts. Communities have raised concerns that their land, water, and cultures would be heavily affected by the expansion of industries. They have sought alternatives to economic development that is brought about through the neoliberal consensus.

Indigenous communities have received a number of internationally recognized conventions and declarations that are supposed to protect their rights in the five hundred years since the beginning of colonization. Included in these mechanisms is the International Labor Organization's Convention 169 on the rights of indigenous and tribal peoples, which among other things requires consultation with communities prior to the imposition of any project. Communities across Guatemala have organized nearly 80 community-wide consultations in accordance with Convention 169 since 2005. Over 1.5 million people have participated and

have overwhelmingly rejected any megaproject in their territory. Similarly, in Honduras and across Latin America communities have demanded that the state and companies respect their right to prior consultation in accordance with Convention 169. But these conventions have little teeth and are regularly ignored by companies and states.

The projects have continued, despite this overwhelming rejection of megaprojects through direct democracy. This has brought about the massive mobilization of people across the region to demand that the states and companies respect the right to land and water. Indigenous and nonindigenous campesinos across the hemisphere have blocked highways, cut power lines, and demonstrated outside congresses and presidential palaces demanding an end to dispossession for capitalist accumulation.

When these tactics have failed to stop the expansion of these industries, communities have taken the companies and the state to court. The Ixil Mayan indigenous authorities have utilized the country's constitutional court in their struggle against the expansion of extractive industries in their territory. Since 2013, the indigenous authority has filed five cases against the state and companies, leading to the suspension of two hydroelectric projects, Vega I and Vega II, because of the failure of the company, Hidroxil, SA, to consult the indigenous communities prior to the project. This is just one of 15 cases that the court has found in favor of communities.

The continued resistance of communities across the hemisphere has shown that capitalist expansion and colonization can be challenged. This then allows for communities to open autonomous space to begin the construction of new alternatives. But communities still have a long way to go before these dreams of autonomy are achieved.

The Struggle Against Syriza's Austerity Program

AARON AMARAL

THE MONTH OF MAY WITNESSED the second round of massive general strikes to hit Greece in 2016. Mobilizations on May Day were followed by four days of strikes in the lead-up to the Syriza government passing its austerity pension bill. The next day the so-called Euro-group of finance ministers met to discuss the government's further implementation of the Third Memorandum.¹ Despite the praise coming from the finance ministers and sections of European capital over the latest rounds of cuts being managed by Syriza,² even within those circles there are increasing doubts about the logic of austerity as a means to overcome the debt cycle. Reported debates³ within the Troika⁴ are leading to speculation that the International Monetary Fund will withdraw its funding of future bailouts.⁵ Despite this, and the deepening humanitarian crisis caused by the austerity policies,⁶ the Syriza government will be seeking even more cuts, coupled with regressive taxation, by the end of this month.

For the Syriza government, this represents over four billion euros in further cuts beyond those it has implemented since the end of 2015. Pensions, which had been fixed at 486 euros a month in August 2015, and which were already reduced over 19 percent by ministerial fiat, to 392 euros a month, to meet the requirements of the memorandum, will now be slashed by a further 12 percent, to 346 euros, or less than

\$400 per month. Cuts to other forms of benefits to the elderly and disabled are also being sought, along with a newly agreed process for the sale of unpaid mortgage loans that raises the specter of the loss of homes.⁷ In addition, the government will seek major increases to the value-added tax (VAT), a form of regressive flat taxation, on basic services like water and electricity. Prime Minister Tsipras' government is also seeking to lower the tax exemption on low-income families, increasing the tax burden on the poor.⁸

Given the incredible level of tax avoidance by the wealthiest Greeks,⁹ such a move is simultaneously ironic and profoundly shameful. Perhaps most shameful is that the Troika sees this round of cuts as merely a warm-up to further annual cuts of 3.5 - 4 billion euros in 2017 and 2018, all leading to a fourth memorandum. There is hardly even a pretense remaining that the parade of past and future memorandums provides any real road out of indebtedness for the Greek state, let alone a path to economic growth.¹⁰

Syriza's Third Memorandum pension legislation has served to buttress a resurgent and revitalized right, which has watched Tsipras' Syriza steadily lose electoral support as the harsh reality of the pro-austerity turn becomes clear. New Democracy, the main electoral bastion of the right, has a 10-percent lead over Syriza in recent opinion polls, and the social democrats of PASOK¹¹ and liberals of POTAMI¹² are also seeking their rebirth on the back of the ever-diminishing Syriza. On the eve of the pension legislation the New Democracy leadership demanded that Tsipras resign and call snap

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elections, while the idea of a political bailout for the Syriza government, in the form of an expanded “National Unity” coalition, seems unlikely.¹³ And in the aftermath of the vote, New Democracy leader Kyriakos Mitsotakis accused Tsipras’ administration of “totally impoverishing the middle class,” while directly calling out Tsipras: “You’re not a leftist. You’re an opportunist who will do everything to stay in power.”¹⁴ It would appear that Syriza now owns austerity, until the right returns to power.

There are a number of related truths about the class struggle in Greece since the beginning of the decade and the onset of an unprecedented economic cum humanitarian crisis. And it is worth drawing some of these out, as the response of the Anglophone left to the capitulation of the Syriza leadership to further austerity has often been facile and disappointing. On the one hand are sections of the left that argue that the objective conditions faced by the Syriza government have left them no choice but to accept a tactical defeat. The most prominent of those holding this position has been Canadian socialist Leo Panitch.¹⁵ As Paul D’Amato, the editor of the *International Socialist Review*, noted, “[Panitch’s] argument accepts the limitations that Tsipras and the reformists inside Syriza put forth. They operated on the assumption that gaining office was the primary and sufficient condition for resisting austerity. Tsipras and Co. capitulated because they accepted a priori a condition that boxed them into a corner.”¹⁶ On the other hand are those sections of the left who have always stood aside from the Syriza project as inherently reformist,¹⁷ and who with the Tsipras sell-out were able to proclaim its inevitability.¹⁸ D’Amato writes,

On one side is the argument that Tsipras must be defended for acting in the only way he possibly could. With a gun to his head, he had to give in and accept defeat, if only at some future date to be able to resist in some other way the dictates of Europe. The opposite argument is that Tsipras’ capitulation is proof that it was a mistake for the left to enter, participate in,

and build Syriza—it was bound, as a reformist party, to do what it did, and being in it has only lent these failed politics legitimacy they don’t deserve. There are serious problems with both of these positions. The third position is the one laid-out by DEA¹⁹—in which it was necessary to work within Syriza, and through it to build the left on a stronger and more united footing, but also maintain and defend an independent line.²⁰

Ultimately, it is this third position, the strategic imperative to build both a principled left and simultaneously the coherence and capacity of the working class and popular movements in Greece, that offers any prospect of breaking through the dynamic of simply accepting the objective conditions as dictated by European capital or alternatively waiting for the mythic ideal organizational vehicle.

In the two years between May Day 2010²¹ and the signing of the First Memorandum shortly thereafter, and the elections of spring 2012, the degree and character of social mobilization was unprecedented. This included more than twenty separate general strikes and demonstrations of hundreds of thousands in Greece fighting for basic economic demands. Over 2011, Greece was the beating heart of a fightback within Europe against the impact of a brutal recession driven by ineluctable neoliberal logic. With the momentary exhaustion of social struggle and the apparent inability of the social mobilization on its own to overcome austerity and the power of the Troika, there was a predictable turn toward seeking an electoral resolution. As Antonis Davanellos²² explained,

Those who were engaged in various struggles understood that in order to save themselves and save their class from the consequences of austerity, they needed to overthrow the government memoranda—the post-crisis EU-imposed austerity packages. They succeeded against George Papandreou (PASOK’s leader, who resigned November 11, 2011); they were successful against Loukas Papademos (former governor of the Central Bank of Greece, former [European Central Bank] vice president,

technocratic prime minister from November 2011, who called new elections in June 2012); and they found themselves opposed to Antonis Samaras (New Democracy, June 2012 to January 26, 2015) with the [Republican Security Companies] riot police, tear gas, and the requisitioning of striking workers (a military-type mobilization of employees, for example in the subway, to return to work). Successfully overthrowing Samaras using street tactics and direct action presupposed a semi-revolutionary situation, presupposed a working-class strength greater than there was at our disposal. When the popular majority arrived at this conclusion following certain “attempts,” people turned toward a perspective of putting themselves on the road toward using elections as a means to combat austerity. It didn’t signal a massive “shift to the right.”²³

It is in this three-year period—between May 2012 and the initial electoral breakthrough by Syriza, its historic victory in January 2015, and then its capitulation in July and September 2015—that no country within the advanced capitalist world was more at the center of the left’s attention than Greece. Yet the predominant lesson that seems to have been drawn after the July to September 2015 period is that the Syriza experience was entirely wasted. And while the complete submission to the Troika by Tsipras’ Syriza represents a defeat, it does not come entirely out of the blue. In fact, it is consistent with a problematic and longer-term process that faces the entire revolutionary left. And as recent months show, the defeat in no way represents the final quiescence of the Greek working class, nor even the terminal end of a decade-long cycle of Greek working-class resistance to neoliberalism.

Despite representing a high-water mark in European class struggle since the 1970s, Greece in this decade has not represented a revolutionary or pre-revolutionary situation. Ultimately the failure to recognize this, and the relative strategic exhaustion of the movements by 2012 with the turn towards electoralism, has led to errors of the ultra-left variety. The fact that as

of 2010 broad sections of the working class and social movements began to look to Syriza, and not to more programmatically pure anti-capitalist formations, for political leadership in the anti-austerity struggle thus was both a reality and an opportunity, one unfortunately lost on sections of the left.

However, the failure to recognize the more germinal process that had begun after decades of defeat and retreats by the international left, and to understand that the electoral opening was only made possible by the principled struggle of millions against austerity, led to even more devastating errors, culminating in Tsipras’ capitulation. The Syriza leadership had the opportunity to recognize the power of the mass support that they had begun to build in 2012. Despite the exhaustion at the time, it was possible to choose a strategy that was not in the first and last instance driven by electoralism, a strategy that would have required placing the critical choices in front of the Greek people well before July 2015.

There is no doubt that truly preparing the Greek population for being forced out of the Eurozone as a result of their principled opposition to the shackles of debt and austerity was a possibility for Syriza. This is not to say that such preparations would have been easy, though certainly it was more likely to lead to success than the strategy they chose, one premised on convincing European capital to give up on austerity. However, the fundamental prerequisite for the success of any such “Plan B” required a broad understanding on the part of the Greek people that future sacrifices, unlike those currently made to debt and austerity, offered the potential for a brighter future, in which they, and not the Troika, were the agents. Today, DEA (Internationalist Workers Left) and the Red Network²⁴ have raised the slogan: “Not a single sacrifice for the euro, no illusions in the drachma.” Given the very real failure of Syriza to ever prepare the ground for such a reality, the meaning of that propagandistic slogan will have

to be prepared and fought for in the immediate future, something that Syriza once promised, but failed to undertake in practice.

The Syriza left's participation in and commitment to that organization were predicated on recognizing that "the foundation of Syriza was facilitated in a decisive way by a tide of radicalization within Greece and internationally."²⁵ It was precisely the experience of the period of mass radicalization and mobilization that motivated the Syriza left and its thinking. There was more than a decade's worth of struggle within Syriza for creating a principled organization out of the anti-globalization, and then the anti-austerity, movements.²⁶ This process was created by consistent breaks to the left of sections of Synaspismos²⁷/Syriza, in a dialectical relationship with the movements in the streets and homes, squares and farms, schools and workplaces.²⁸

The process did not end with the first electoral breakthrough in 2012, nor certainly did it end in January or September 2015. As I noted in my talk for a February 2015 forum sponsored by the Campaign for Peace and Democracy, AKNY (Greece Solidarity Movement New York), and other groups in the immediate and hopeful aftermath of the January 2015 elections,

There is a struggle starting in 2012 within Syriza about what's going to be the strategic perspective at a time in which what develops post-2012 is an exhaustion within the movements ... that created a struggle internal to Syriza. ... A turn by certain parts of the right wing of Syriza toward electoralism, a move to seek alliances with sections to the right, in this context, it became important to create a Left Platform within Syriza that could stand up and defend the historic roots of Syriza and its relationships to the social movements. And to defend some very basic principles about what the face of the anti-austerity fight was going to look like, and the idea that the electoral breakthrough was not the be-all and end-all, but was just one phase of a battle, which ultimately was going to depend on the capacity to mobilize the base out of which Syriza came.²⁹

The sections of the Syriza left, represented by the Red Network of Popular Unity (LAE, by its Greek acronym), were at the heart of that struggle. They made a decision not to take any positions in the Syriza government, including any ministerial positions, nor any of the approximately ten thousand other more prosaic sinecures. There was a recognition from mid-2012 onwards of a real struggle within Syriza for the meaning of the Syriza project. With the ever more serious battles within it, and the leadership's attempts to silence and discipline the left, to ban organized factions inside Syriza, and to centralize power in Tsipras, it would have been impossible to ignore the stakes in what was taking place.³⁰

The principled Syriza left largely regrouped as LAE for the September 2015 elections. As the Left Platform within Syriza, it had spearheaded opposition to Tsipras' leadership in defense of an anti-austerity politics and for a government of the left. The two main forces working within the Left Platform (and now LAE), were the Left Current, the former left wing of Synaspismos, and the Red Network, which consists of several smaller left groupings led by the revolutionary socialist Internationalist Workers Left (DEA). Two significant factions³¹ of ANTARSYA³² and a number of other far-left organizations and individuals beyond the Syriza membership also subsequently joined the LAE.

Despite having failed to cross the 3 percent threshold for parliamentary representation during the September elections, winning only 2.9 percent of the popular vote, LAE has continued to organize itself for the coming struggle. LAE's poor September election performance was not a surprise. Notably, the abstention rate for those elections was a record 45 percent, and LAE had formed less than a month before the elections, an outcome forced upon it by Tsipras' tactical maneuvering and one leading to strategic disorientation and relative disorganization. Nonetheless, LAE has been preparing both for its own founding congress in June 2016 and also for the

coming general strikes and continued resistance to the Third Memorandum.

In the run-up to the LAE founding congress in June 2016, more than four hundred meetings have been held across all parts of Greece, which have drawn in more than five thousand participants to debate various proposals and to select delegates. This bodes well for the survival and breadth of LAE, as well as for

building a strong organizational base. Different political tendencies have formed, with the Left Current having held their own congress this spring. The expectation is that LAE will have the character of a political front, but one that allows for one member, one vote, while giving rights to independent organizations and independent platforms. However, the exact form is under discussion and will be decided at the



The Troika—capitalism, neoliberalism, and austerity

June congress.

These preparations have not prevented LAE from being active on a day-to-day basis. In the month leading up to the May 2016 legislative proposals, LAE held more than one hundred meetings across Greece to explain the scope of Syriza's Third Memorandum austerity plans and to begin to organize for the May general strike. The level of participation across all of Greece has not been seen since pre-2012 and is another positive sign for the coming struggles.

The attempts to defend "the historic roots of Syriza and its relationships to the social movements" and "the face of the anti-austerity fight" arise out of an understanding of the urgent need for a united-front struggle against neoliberal capitalism, and against austerity, at a moment of historic weakness for the international left.³³ This means taking seriously, and offering critical support for, those remnants of the historic organizations of the working class when they show a commitment to fighting back and are engaged in real fights, while at the same time not giving up an independent voice.

This is what had driven the left within Syriza, and continues to motivate their work within both the LAE and the social movements and trade unions in which they are embedded. And the success or failure of these efforts is the only grounds by which to judge a strategy that does not look abstractly at political program. What is key is the relationship between the class, the social movements, and the organizations to which they belong and to which they look for political leadership. This then is part of a longer-term effort to strengthen the organizational capacity of the class and social movements and to build on the political and strategic clarity of these organizations in the face of the weaknesses and challenges of the left. For the Anglophone left, the need for principled, independent organization while fighting for unity in struggle, and the need for such struggle as an absolute precondition for any broader, sustainable organizational and electoral breakthrough, is a lesson that

should be learned. This is particularly true in a moment of renewed electoral energy for left and progressive forces in some other European countries and the United States, existing in the absence of any movements comparable in relative strength to what exists in Greece.

Meanwhile, in Greece the principled starting point going forward for this renewed left continues to be the overthrow of the politics of austerity and its concomitant social struggles. The next rounds of confrontation with the Troika, and the Syriza government doing its bidding, have arrived. The historic mobilization for the Oxi ("no" vote) in early July 2015 presaged that the moment of mass mobilization had not passed, even if the full weight of this defiant act, and the subsequent vote, was ignored by the Tsipras leadership. And despite the disorientation caused by that leadership's capitulation to the Troika and the subsequent fragmentation and collapse of Syriza as a party defending ordinary Greeks, it did not take long for the fight against austerity, and with increasing clarity the fight *against* Tsipras' Syriza government, to return.

Thus, in early November 2015, less than two months after driving out the left and destroying any semblance of democratic accountability within Syriza, Tsipras and the government were met with the first general strike against pension cuts. In January 2016, lawyers launched an indefinite strike,³⁴ which continues to this day (along with journalists and workers in television and print media³⁵), and doctors, engineers, and mariners followed. This also marked the beginning of ongoing strikes and mobilizations by farmers and rural workers, which saw successful highway blockades³⁶ with high levels of participation.

And then on February 4, 2016, an enormously successful general strike was called by both public- and private-sector unions. The rate of participation in the strike itself for teachers and municipal workers was between 50 and 55 percent, which compares favorably to the 10 to

15 percent that took part in the January 2016 movement. In Athens, between 60,000 and 80,000 people joined in, recalling the heights of the anti-austerity fights of 2010-2012. Yet perhaps more impressive than the size of the participation in Athens was the breadth of support, from all across Greece, in small towns and villages, and the cross-sectoral support manifest when farmers escalated their blockade and converged with municipal workers in Syntagma Square in Athens.³⁷

The government's capitulation on the anti-austerity and anti-debt struggles is not the only ground upon which Syriza faces a revolt. The government's handling of the more than 50,000 refugees being held on Greek soil has been a travesty and a complete abdication of the principles upon which Syriza had been founded. The Tsipras government, consistent with its general policy, has sought to curry favor with Brussels and has accepted its dictates without any real objection. They have invited Frontex³⁸ and NATO into Greece, while allowing the migrant camps to be controlled by the Greek army. This has made solidarity difficult, as the camps carry the character of concentration camps, with the migrants generally kept away from the Greek population; permission must be acquired from the army before entering.³⁹

Despite these obstacles, great efforts to organize solidarity have been made across Greece and across the left, both on the islands and in Athens. Movement activists have made consistent demands for basic human rights for the migrants, many of whom are facing violations of their Geneva Convention rights as war refugees. The movements have regularly called for basic solidarity—and demanded integrated housing and education, health services, and open borders—while attempting to connect the refugees with the Greek workers' and trade union movements. Nonetheless, thus far the government has continued to act at the bidding of Brussels and NATO.

The new round of general strikes and the

broad social movements in defense of human rights for refugees and immigrants represent a renaissance of coordinated resistance to austerity⁴⁰ and a significant response to Syriza's continued commitment to austerity and the dictates of the Troika, the EU, and NATO. If recent—and not so recent—Greek history has taught us anything, it is not to underestimate the capacity of the Greek people to see such a fight through, whatever the temporary setbacks.

NOTES

1. The memorandums refer to contracts between the government of Greece and the Troika (the European Commission, European Central Bank, and International Monetary Fund) that control the conditions of the Greek people's repayments to these lenders. The First Memorandum was signed in May of 2010, the Second Memorandum was signed in February 2012, and the Third Memorandum was signed by the Tsipras government in July 2015.
2. www.ekathimerini.com/208441/article/ekathimerini/news/greek-government-turns-focus-to-eurogroup-after-securing-vote-on-new-measures
3. www.liverostrum.com/berlin-should-be-careful-what-it-wishes-for/1019384.html
4. The "Troika" refers to the tripartite committee led by the European Commission, with the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund, that organized loans to the governments of Greece and has controlled the conditions of their repayment.
5. www.ekathimerini.com/208517/article/ekathimerini/news/govt-turns-focus-to-next-round-of-reforms-as-berlin-shifts-on-imf
6. www.newyorker.com/business/currency/what-austerity-looks-like-inside-greece
7. www.ekathimerini.com/208305/article/ekathimerini/business/greece-concludes-agreement-with-creditors-on-sale-of-npls
8. Statistics cited in alencontre.org/europe/grece-le-moment-de-verite-pour-le-memorandum-3.html
9. www.newsweek.com/greece-target-80000-wealthy-tax-avoiders-316152
10. www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2015/cr15186.pdf. See also s/exclusive-imf-says-greek-debt-highly-unsustainable-debt-171545998--business.html?ref=gs
11. PASOK is the main social democratic political party in Greece. Its history of leading pro-austerity governments saw its support collapse to less than 5 percent in the January 2015 election, which brought Syriza to power.

12. POTAMI is a liberal political party formed in 2014 by prominent journalist Stavros Theodorakis.
13. www.ekathimerini.com/208276/article/ekathimerini/news/opposition-parties-turn-up-the-pressure-on-ruling-coalition
14. www.ekathimerini.com/208441/article/ekathimerini/news/greek-government-turns-focus-to-eurogroup-after-securing-vote-on-new-measures
15. newpol.org/content/lessons-greece-leo-panitch-and-richard-fidler-debate-syriza
16. isreview.org/issue/98/turning-point-greece
17. internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article3359; See also www.jacobinmag.com/2015/08/tsipras-syriza-debt-greece-kke/
18. See, for example, socialistaction.org/2015/07/22/greek-syriza-folds-to-eu-demands/
19. The Internationalist Workers Left, a revolutionary socialist group that had been within Syriza as a part of the Left Platform and is now active in Popular Unity/LAE.
20. isreview.org/issue/98/turning-point-greece
21. May 1, 2010, saw three people killed during one of the earliest protests against austerity, the first deaths during public demonstrations in Greece since 1991.
22. Antonis Davanellos is one of the leaders of DEA and the Red Network and former Central Committee and Political Committee member of Syriza.
23. isreview.org/issue/100/reflections-our-experience-syriza
24. The Red Network is a network of groups and individuals within LAE/Popular Unity, in which DEA plays a leading role. Like the Left Current, it is likely to form an organized tendency/platform within LAE (see below).
25. isreview.org/issue/100/reflections-our-experience-syriza
26. isreview.org/issue/100/reflections-our-experience-syriza
27. Synaspismos, or the Coalition of the Left, of Movements and Ecology, was founded in 1991 out of the Euro-communist wing of the Greek Communist Party (KKE). It was the single largest component of Syriza (the Coalition of the Radical Left) and dissolved when Syriza was launched as a political party in 2013.
28. isreview.org/issue/100/reflections-our-experience-syriza
29. cpdweb.org/events/Amaral-talk.shtml
30. isreview.org/issue/100/reflections-our-experience-syriza
31. ARAN, or Left Recomposition, and ARAS, Left Anti-capitalist Group, both have political roots in the post-1968 European anti-revisionist left.
32. ANTARSYA, or the Front of the Greek Anti-capitalist Left, is a coalition of far-left political formations. The largest two formations that remain within ANTARSYA are the NAR (New Left Current), whose roots are in the Communist Youth movement, and the SEK (Greek Socialist Workers Party), aligned to the International Socialist Tendency.
33. isreview.org/issue/95/fourth-comintern-congress
34. www.ekathimerini.com/207928/article/ekathimerini/news/lawyers-extend-strike-to-april-25
35. www.ekathimerini.com/208130/article/ekathimerini/news/print-electronic-media-in-greece-hold-48-hour-strike-over-pension-reforms
36. www.ekathimerini.com/206062/opinion/ekathimerini/comment/the-cost-of-the-blockades
37. socialistworker.org/2016/02/19/discontent-returns-to-the-streets-in-greece
38. Frontex (Frontières extérieures, or External Borders) is an agency of the European Union established in 2004 to manage cooperation between national border guards securing its external borders.
39. socialistworker.org/2016/04/28/a-mass-grave-in-the-mediterranean
40. www.ekathimerini.com/205691/article/ekathimerini/news/farmers-threaten-to-intensify-blockades-of-borders-roads-airports; see also www.ekathimerini.com/207809/article/ekathimerini/news/private-sector-workers-union-plans-48-hour-action; see also www.ekathimerini.com/208113/article/ekathimerini/news/private-sector-umbrella-union-plans-walkout-on-may-8

“The Hammer Blow of the Revolution”

Rosa Luxemburg’s Critique of Bourgeois Democracy

MICHAEL LÖWY

ROSA LUXEMBURG’S DEFENSE of socialist democracy and her critique of the Bolsheviks in her pamphlet *The Russian Revolution* (1918) are well known. Less well known and often forgotten is her critique of bourgeois democracy, its limits, its contradictions, and its narrow and partial character. We propose to examine this critical line of thought in some of her political writings without any pretensions to completeness.

We begin this discussion with *Reform or Revolution* (1898), one of the foundational texts of modern revolutionary socialism, where this problem is taken up in a particularly intense way. This brilliant essay, the work of a young woman almost unknown at the time, is a unique synthesis of revolutionary passion and discursive rationality, filled with sparks of irony and lightning flashes of intuition. It remains, more than a century later, surprisingly contemporary.

But it is not without its defects, notably in its economic polemic with Eduard Bernstein, where she develops a sort of optimistic fatalism: the belief in the inevitability of the economic collapse (*Zusammenbruch*) of capitalism. It should be said in passing that this is an opinion that one finds even today among a number of Marxists who have announced that the current financial crisis of capitalism is “the last” and that

it will bring about the definitive end of the system. It seems that Walter Benjamin, who knew the Great Crisis of 1929 and its results, formulated the most pertinent conclusion regarding this subject: “The experience of our generation: capitalism will not die a natural death.”

Nevertheless, in her discussion of democracy, Luxemburg dissociates herself from the facile optimism of the religion of democratic Progress (with a capital “P”)—the illusion of increasing democratization of the “civilized” societies—dominant in her era among both liberals and socialists. This is also one of the strong points of her argument. Furthermore, in her analysis of the liberal bourgeoisie, one finds not a trace of economism: One sees here, in all of its force, what Georg Lukács, in “The Marxism of Rosa Luxemburg,” the opening essay of *History and Class Consciousness* (1923), designated as the revolutionary principle in the terrain of method: the dialectical category of the totality. Luxemburg discusses the issue of democracy from the perspective of the historical totality in motion, where economy, society, class struggle, state, politics, and ideology are inseparable moments of a concrete process.

Dialectic of the Bourgeois State

Luxemburg’s eminently dialectical approach to the bourgeois state and its democratic forms permits her to avoid both the social-liberal approach (Bernstein!) that denies its bourgeois character, as well as that of a certain vulgar Marxism that does not take into account the importance of democracy. Faithful to the Marxist theory of the capitalist state, Luxemburg

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insists on its character as a "class state." But she immediately replies, "This, too, like everything referring to capitalist society, should not be understood in a rigorous absolute manner, but dialectically." What does that mean? First, it means that the state "without a doubt assumes functions of general interest in terms of social development," but at the same time it only does so "to the degree that the general interest in terms of social development coincides with the interest of the dominant class." The state's universality is thus severely limited and in a large degree negated by its class character.

Another aspect of this dialectic is the contradiction between the democratic form and the class content: "The formally democratic forms are not democratic with regard to their content where class interests dominate." But she does not limit herself to that finding, which is a classic locus of Marxism; not only does she not disregard the democratic form, but she shows that it can come into conflict with the bourgeois content: "This manifests itself in a tangible fashion in the fact that as soon as democracy shows the tendency to negate its class character and become transformed into an instrument of the real interests of the population, the democratic forms are sacrificed by the bourgeoisie and by its state representatives." The history of the twentieth century is riddled with examples of this sort of "sacrifice," from the Civil War in Spain to the coup d'état in Chile; these are not exceptions, but the rule. Already in 1898 Luxemburg foresaw with impressive acuity what would happen throughout the next century.

Luxemburg opposes to the idyllic vision of history as uninterrupted "Progress," as the necessary evolution of humanity toward democracy, and above all to the myth of an intrinsic link between capitalism and democracy, a sober analysis, without any illusions, of the diversity of political regimes:

The uninterrupted victory of democracy, which to revisionism as well as to bourgeois liberalism appears as a great fundamental law

of human history and especially modern history, is shown upon closer examination to be a phantom. No absolute and general relation can be constructed between capitalist development and democracy. The political form of a given country is always the result of the composite of all the existing political factors, domestic as well as foreign. It admits within its limits all variations of scale from absolute monarchy to the democratic republic.

What she could not foresee, of course, were authoritarian state forms even worse than monarchies: the fascist regimes and military dictatorships that would develop in the capitalist countries—in the center as well as in the periphery—throughout the twentieth century. But she has the merit of being one of the few in the workers' and socialist movements to challenge the ideology of Progress, which was common among bourgeois liberals and among a good part of the left, and demonstrate the complete compatibility of capitalism with radically anti-democratic political forms.

Bernstein, a convinced advocate of the ideology of Progress, believed in an irreversible evolution of modern societies toward more democracy and—why not?—toward socialism. Now, observes Rosa Luxemburg, "the state, that is to say the political organization, and the property relations, that is to say the legal organization of capitalism, become more and more capitalist, and not more and more socialist." We see again the opposition between the left and the right in German Social Democracy corresponding to the antagonism between faith in ineluctable Progress of the "civilized" countries and the insistence on social revolution.

Not only is there no particular affinity between the bourgeoisie and democracy, but often there is a struggle. Yet it is in the struggle against this class that democratic advances take place: "In Belgium the conquest of universal suffrage by the labor movement was due to the weakness of the local militarism, and consequently to the special geographic and political situation and, above all, this 'piece of democracy' was obtained,

not *by* the bourgeoisie, but *against* it."

Is this just the case of Belgium, or is it rather a general historical tendency? Luxemburg seems to opt for the second hypothesis, considering that the only guarantee of democracy is the force of the workers' movement.

The way out of this circle is simple: In view of that fact that bourgeois liberalism has given up the ghost from fear of the growing labor movement and its final aim, we conclude that the socialist labor movement is today the only support for democracy. We must conclude that the socialist movement is not bound to bourgeois democracy but that, on the contrary, the fate of democracy is bound up with the socialist movement. Democracy does not acquire greater chances of survival to the extent that the socialist movement renounces the struggle for its emancipation; on the contrary, democracy acquires greater chances of survival as the socialist movement becomes sufficiently strong to struggle against the reactionary consequences of world politics and the bourgeois desertion of democracy. He who would strengthen democracy must also want to strengthen and not weaken the socialist movement. He who renounces the struggle for socialism renounces both the labor movement and democracy.

In other words, democracy, in the eyes of Rosa Luxemburg, is an essential value that the socialist movement must save from its reactionary adversaries, among which one finds the bourgeoisie always ready to betray its democratic proclamations if its interests so demand. We have already seen several examples of this simple fact. What does the reference to the "reactionary consequences of world politics" mean? It is without a doubt a reference to the imperialist and colonial wars that are sure to reduce or eliminate the democratic progress of countries in conflict. We will return to this issue.

The surprising assertion that democracy is linked to the workers' and socialist movement has also been confirmed by the history of the following decades: the defeat of the socialist left because of its divisions, its mistakes, and

its weakness—in Italy, in Germany, in Austria, in Spain—leading to the triumph of fascism, with the backing of the principal forces of the bourgeoisie and the abolition of all forms of democracy during many long years (in Spain for decades).

The relationship between the workers' movement and democracy is eminently dialectical: Democracy needs the social movement and vice versa—the proletarian struggle needs democracy in order to develop.

If democracy has become superfluous or annoying to the bourgeoisie, it is on the contrary necessary and indispensable to the working class. It is necessary to the working class because it creates the political forms (autonomous administration, electoral rights, and so on) which will serve the proletariat as fulcrums in its task of transforming bourgeois society. Democracy is indispensable to the working class because only through the exercise of its democratic rights, in the struggle for democracy, can the proletariat become aware of its class interests and its historic task.

Rosa Luxemburg's formulation is complex. In a first moment, she seems to say that it is thanks to democracy that the working class can struggle to transform society. Would this mean that in the non-democratic countries such a struggle is not possible? On the contrary, insists the Polish revolutionary, it is *in the struggle* for democracy that class-consciousness develops. She is thinking, no doubt, about a country like czarist Russia—which included Poland—where democracy did not yet exist, and where revolutionary consciousness was awakening precisely in the fight for democracy. This is what one will see a few years later, during the Russian Revolution of 1905. But she may also be thinking, and probably is, about Wilhelmine Germany, where the fight for democracy was far from being won but found in the socialist movement its principal historic subject. In any case, far from neglecting the "democratic forms," which she distinguishes from their bourgeois exploitation and manipulation, she strictly associates their fate with that

of the workers' movement.

What then are the important democratic forms? In 1898, she mentions three above all: universal suffrage, the democratic republic, and self-administration; later—for example on the subject of the Russian Revolution of 1918—she

"The formally democratic forms are not democratic with regard to their content where class interests dominate." —Rosa Luxemburg

will add the democratic freedoms: freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the right to organize. What about parliament? Luxemburg doesn't deny democratic representation as such, but she is wary of parliamentarism in its current form: She considers it "a specific instrument of the bourgeois class state, a way to make capitalist contradictions mature and develop." She will return to this debate a few years later in polemical articles against Jean Jaurès and the French socialists whom she accuses of wanting to arrive at socialism by way of "the peaceful swamp of senile parliamentarism." The degradation of this institution is revealed in its submission to the executive power: "The idea, rational in itself, that the government shouldn't cease being the instrument of the majority of popular representation, is turned into its contrary by the practice of bourgeois parliamentarism: namely the servile dependence of popular representation on the survival of the present government." She gives credit, in this context, to the French revolutionary socialists who have understood that the legislative action of parliament—useful for extracting some laws favorable to the workers—cannot substitute for the organization of the proletariat for the conquest of political power by revolutionary means.

One finds analogous arguments in an essay of 1904 titled "Social Democracy and Parliamentarism." With the mordant irony that makes her polemics so electrifying, she takes up the issue of "parliamentary cretinism," that is, the illusion according to which parliament is the central axis of social life and the motive force of world history. The reality is completely otherwise: The enormous forces of world history, in point of fact, act outside of the bourgeois legislative chambers. Far from being the absolute product of democratic Progress, parliamentarism is a historically determined form of the class rule of the bourgeoisie. At the same time, in a dialectical movement—Luxemburg cites Hegel—with the rise of the socialist movement, parliament must become "one of the most powerful and indispensable instruments of the class struggle" of the workers, serving as a tribune of the popular masses and a locus of agitation for the socialist revolution. But one cannot then effectively defend democracy, and the parliament itself, against reactionary maneuvers except by the *extra-parliamentary* action of the proletariat. The direct action of the proletarian masses "in the streets"—for example, in the form of a general strike—is the best defense in the face of threats against universal suffrage. In short, the challenge for socialists is to convince "the working masses to count more and more on their own forces and on their autonomous action and not to consider parliamentary struggles as the central axis of political life." We will return to this.

The Contradictions of the Democratic Bourgeoisie: Militarism, Colonialism

The "really existing bourgeois democracies" are characterized by two profoundly anti-democratic dimensions that are closely linked: militarism and colonialism. In the first case, it is the question of an institution: the army, hierarchical, authoritarian, and reactionary, which constitutes a sort of absolutist state within the democratic state. In the second, it is a question of the im-

position, by force of arms, of a dictatorship over the colonized peoples by the Western empires. As Luxemburg recalls in *Reform or Revolution?*, its class character always obliges the bourgeois state, even a democratic bourgeois state, to accentuate its coercive activity in the domains that serve the interests of the bourgeoisie, "namely militarism and customs and colonial policy." The denunciation of this "coercive activity," militarist and imperialist, will be one of the principal axes of Luxemburg's critique of the bourgeois state.

From the capitalist point of view,

Militarism has become indispensable. First, as a means of struggle for the defense of "national" interests in competition against other "national" groups. Second, as a means of investment of financial and industrial capital. Third, as an instrument of class domination over the laboring population inside the country. In themselves, these interests have nothing in common with the development of the capitalist mode of production.

What demonstrates best the specific character of present-day militarism is the fact that it develops generally in all countries as an effect, so to speak, of its own internal, mechanical motive power, a phenomenon that was completely unknown several decades ago. We recognize this in the fatal character of the impending explosion, which is inevitable in spite of the complete indecisiveness of the objectives and motives of the conflict. From a motor of capitalist development militarism has changed into a capitalist malady.

Luxemburg predicted, in 1898, a world war sparked by competition between national capitalist powers and the uncontrollable dynamics of militarism. This is one of those dazzling intuitions found throughout *Reform or Revolution?* even if she could not, of course, predict "the circumstances" of the conflict.

Militarism within and colonial expansion without are closely linked and lead to a decline, a degradation, a degeneration of bourgeois democracy:

As a result of the development of the world

economy and the aggravation and generalization of competition on the world market, militarism and the policy of big navies have become, as instruments of world politics, a decisive factor in the interior as well as in the exterior life of the great states. If it is true that world politics and militarism represent a rising tendency in the present phase of capitalism, then bourgeois democracy must logically move in a descending line. In Germany the era of great armaments began in 1893, and the policy of world politics, inaugurated with the seizure of Tsingtao [Quingdao], were paid for immediately with the following sacrificial victim: the decomposition of liberalism, the shift of the Centre Party from opposition to government. The recent elections to the Reichstag of 1907, fought under the sign of German colonial policy, were, at the same time, the historical burial of German liberalism.

In the course of the twentieth century, one will see other such sacrifices of democracy demanded by militarism—in Europe (Spain, Greece) as well as in Latin America—much more serious and dramatic than the examples cited here. Nevertheless, Luxemburg's analysis is broader: She describes the growing weight of the army in the political life of the bourgeois democracies, not only in imperialist competition, but also as an internal factor within bourgeois societies counterpoised to the rising workers' struggles. In an anti-militarist article of 1914, she shows two underlying tendencies that reinforce the political preponderance of military institutions in the bourgeois state:

These two tendencies are, on the one side, imperialism, which leads to a massive increase in the size of the army, the cult of savage military violence, and a dominating and arbitrary militarism with regard to legislation; on the other side, the workers' movement that is also undergoing a massive development, emphasizing class antagonisms, and bringing about military intervention more and more frequently by the army against the proletariat in struggle.

This "savage military violence" is exercised within the framework of imperialist politics, above all against colonial peoples who are sub-

jected to a brutal oppression that has nothing "democratic" about it. Bourgeois democracy produces in its colonial policy autocratic and dictatorial forms of domination. The question of colonialism is touched upon but not very developed in *Reform or Revolution?* But later, in a 1902 article about Martinique, Luxemburg will denounce the French colonial massacres in Madagascar, the American war of conquest in the Philippines, and England's in Africa, and finally the aggression against China committed by the French, English, Russians, Germans, Italians, and Americans working together.

Luxemburg will return to the crimes of colonialism, in particular in *The Accumulation of Capital* (1913). Picking up the thread of her relentless critique of colonial politics, she turns to the chapter on primitive accumulation in Volume I of *Capital*, however observing that it is not a question of an "initial" moment, but of a permanent tendency of capital: "Here it is not a question of primitive accumulation, the process continues to our own time. Each colonial expansion is accompanied by an obstinate war against indigenous economic and social conditions, as well as the violent plundering of their means of production and their labor force." Accumulation leads to the permanent military occupation of the colonies and the brutal repression of their uprising, of which the classic examples are found in English colonialism in India and French colonialism in Algeria. In fact, this permanent primitive accumulation continues today in the twenty-first century, with methods different—but no less ferocious—than those of classical colonialism.

Rosa Luxemburg also mentions in *The Accumulation of Capital* the case of what could be called internal colonialism in the largest modern bourgeois democracy, the United States: In the course of the conquest of the West, with the help of the railroads, the Native Americans were driven out or exterminated with firearms, with whiskey, and with syphilis and the survivors enclosed in "reservations" like savage beasts—

another tragic example of the contradictions of bourgeois democracy.

Democracy and the Conquest of Power: The Hammer Blow of Revolution

Let's return to *Reform or Revolution?* now to examine the issue of the relationship between democracy and the conquest of power. Bernstein and his "revisionist" friends believed in the possibility of changing society through gradual reforms within the framework of bourgeois democratic institutions, notably parliament, where Social Democracy might one day become the majority. For reasons that we have already mentioned above, Rosa Luxemburg could only reject this strategy:

There was no doubt for Marx and Engels about the necessity of having the proletariat conquer political power. It is left to Bernstein to consider the chicken coop of bourgeois parliamentarism as the organ by means of which we are to realize the most formidable social transformation of history—the passage from capitalist society to socialism.

This revolutionary conquest of power will be democratic not because it will be realized within the framework of bourgeois democratic institutions, but because it will be the collective action of the great majority of the population: "This the difference between the Blanquist style coups d'état carried out 'by a militant minority,' initiated without concern for the moment and, in fact, always at the wrong time, and the conquest of political power by the great conscious mass of the people."

Continuing her polemic, she derides Bernstein's reformist approach and puts forward a powerful argument to justify the need for revolutionary action.

Fourier's scheme of changing, by means of a system of phalansteries, the water of all the seas into tasty lemonade was surely a fantastic idea. But Bernstein, proposing to change the sea of capitalist bitterness into a sea of socialist sweetness, by progressively pouring into it bottles of social reformist lemonade, presents

an idea that is merely more insipid but no less fantastic.

The production relations of capitalist society approach more and more the production relations of socialist society. But, on the other hand, its political and juridical relations establish between capitalist society and socialist society a steadily rising wall. This wall is not overthrown, but is on the contrary strengthened and consolidated by the development of social reforms and the course of democracy. Only the hammer blow of revolution, that is, the conquest of political power by the proletariat, can break down this wall.

The image of the "hammer blow" makes one think immediately of Marx's statement in his writings on the Paris Commune (1871) about the necessity, for proletarian revolution, of "smashing" the capitalist state apparatus. The idea is essentially identical, even if Luxemburg doesn't cite the writings of Marx. This "hammer blow" is even more indispensable if one considers the role of the growing militarism and of the army in the political system. What does this consist of concretely? By what means can this conquest of power be carried out? What revolutionary strategy or tactic does Luxemburg propose? This is a not a theme developed in *Reform or Revolution?* but here and there she suggests that the "classic" revolutionary methods—insurrection, barricades—are not excluded. Not only the revisionists, but also the leadership of the German Social Democratic Party referred insistently to the Preface written by Friedrich Engels in 1895 at the time of the new edition of Marx's work *The Class Struggles in France* (1850); in this text the old leader seems to consider that these methods of struggle have been rendered obsolete by progress in the military arts—canons and modern rifles—giving a strategic advantage to the army.

In fact, Engels' original wording was much less categorical, the published version being considerably "watered down" by the party leadership (of which Luxemburg was ignorant). Engels was outraged by this manipulation; in a letter to Karl

Kautsky on April 1, 1895, he wrote, "To my amazement, I see today in *Vorwärts* an extract from my introduction, reproduced without my knowledge, and arranged in such a way that I appear to be a peaceful worshipper of legality at any price. Also, I would like the introduction to appear in *Neue Zeit* without any cuts, so that this shameful impression is cleared up." Friedrich Engels died a few months later; the complete text never appeared in *Neue Zeit*, nor, of course, in the re-edition of Marx's book. It would have to wait for the Russian Revolution of 1917, after which it was finally published in the 1920s. Here is the response of Luxemburg to the "legalistic" argument:

When Engels in the Preface to *The Class Struggles in France* revised the tactics of the modern workers' movement, opposing to the barricades the legal struggle, he did not have in mind—as every line of that preface demonstrates—the problem of the definitive conquest of political power, but rather that of the current everyday struggle. He doesn't analyze the attitude of the proletariat with regard to the capitalist state at the moment of the seizure of power, but its attitude within the framework of the capitalist state. In a word, Engels gives instructions to the *oppressed* proletariat, and not to the victorious proletariat.

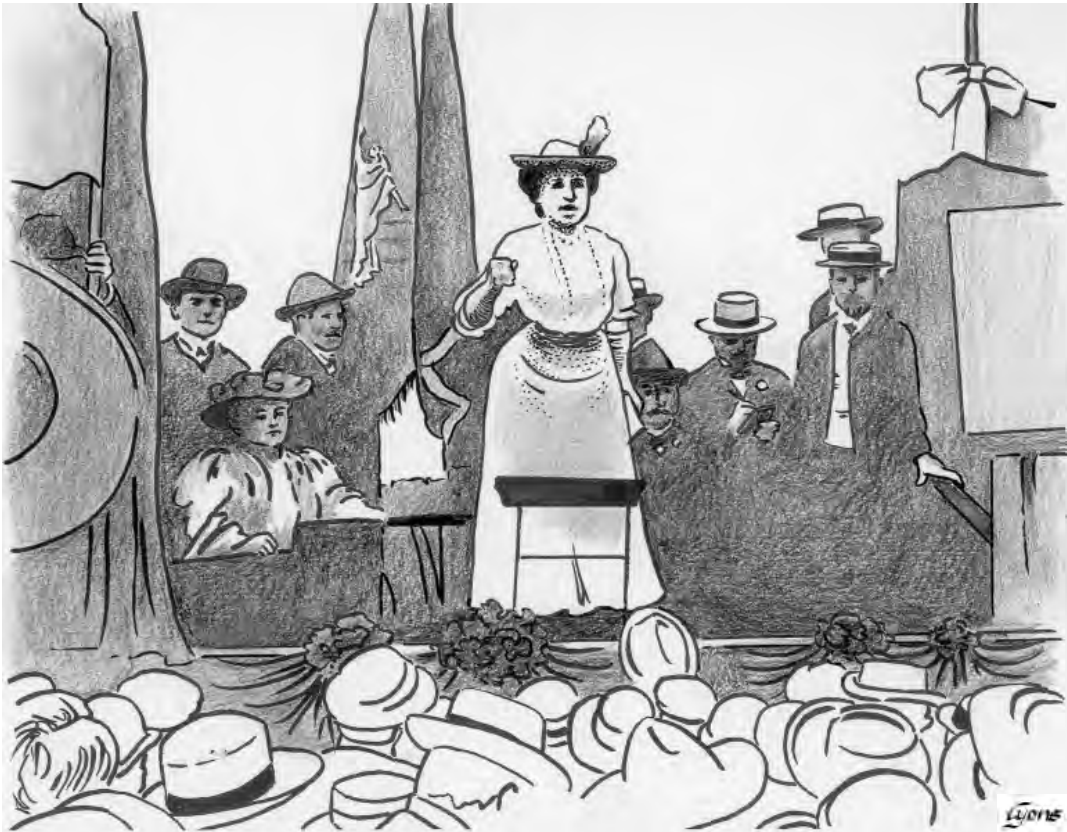
In fact, her interpretation is disputable. It is not a question, with Engels, of the role of barricades in the "current everyday struggle"! What is interesting in this passage is the attitude of the author of *Reform or Revolution?* with regard to the question of "armed," "insurrectional," and "illegal" methods of struggle—traditional methods from the revolutions of 1789 to 1871—which she refused to exclude from the political arsenal of the proletariat. She was not wrong to do so, since all of the great revolutionary fights of the twentieth century, victorious or defeated—the two Russian revolutions (1905, 1917), the Mexican Revolution (1910-1919), the German Revolution (1918-1919), the Spanish Revolution (1936-1937), and the Cuban Revolution (1959-1961), to cite only

some examples—made use of these “illegal” and “extra-parliamentary” methods.

But the revolutionary method that she favored, as we know, is the mass strike, the “natural and spontaneous form of all great revolutionary action of the proletariat.” In fact, this is a method that abounds in a very great variety of initiatives of struggle: economic and political strikes, demonstration or fighting strikes, mass strikes and partial strikes, fights at the barricades, “a sea of phenomena, eternally new and ceaselessly moving and changing.” Of course the mass strike “does not replace or render superfluous direct and brutal confrontations in the street.” The experience of Russia in 1905 shows that “combat at the barricades and the head-on confrontation with the forces of the state constitutes the highpoint in the contemporary revolution, a phase in the process

of struggle of the proletarian mass.” The confrontation is not eliminated but located at the “climax” of the struggle, which obviously gives it an important role.

Luxemburg will return to Engels’ Preface in the watered-down version of the German Social Democratic Party, the only one known in her period—which definitely annoyed her—in her speech to the founding convention of the Communist Party of Germany (KPD – Spartakusbund) in December 1918. This time around it was not a question of pretending, as in 1898, that it referred to the “current everyday struggle”: “With all the knowledge that specialists in the domain of military science have at their disposal, Engels demonstrates here ... that it is completely vain to believe that working people can take their revolution to the streets and come out victorious.” He was wrong, and this docu-



ment served, she observes, to reduce the party's activity exclusively to the parliamentary realm. Without excluding the "revolutionary use of the National Assembly" as a tribune, she sees the seizure of power by workers' and soldiers' councils, as in Russia in October 1917, as the road to follow.

Rosa Luxemburg gives no recipes; she is betting on the creativity of the revolutionary movement. She limits herself to this simple observation: "Democracy is indispensable, not because it makes the conquest of political power by the proletariat unnecessary, on the contrary, it makes it both necessary and possible to take power." But this conquest of power comes by way of an institutional rupture, a radical subversion, capable of breaking the legal and political wall of the capitalist state; it comes by the "hammer of the revolution."

Socialist Democracy and Bourgeois Democracy (1918)

We are not going to discuss here the question of democracy in a socialist society, which goes beyond the scope of this essay. What interests us here is what Luxemburg writes in her little book on the Russian Revolution, on the subject of bourgeois democracy. It is important to emphasize that the manuscript of 1918 fraternally criticizing the Bolsheviks' errors in the area of democracy in no way suggests that Luxemburg subscribed to bourgeois democracy. It says explicitly that the historic task of the proletariat is "to create in place of bourgeois democracy, socialist democracy." Let's look at her argument in her polemic with Trotsky:

"As Marxists," writes Trotsky, "we have never been idol worshippers of formal democracy." Surely, we have never been idol worshippers of socialism or Marxism either. Does it follow from this that we may throw socialism on the scrap-heap, à la Cunow, Lensch, and Parvus

[a faction in the Social Democratic Party], if it becomes uncomfortable for us? Trotsky and Lenin are the living refutation of this answer.

"We have never been idol worshippers of formal democracy." All that that really means is: We have always distinguished the social kernel from the political form of bourgeois democracy; we have always revealed the hard kernel of social inequality and lack of freedom hidden under the sweet shell of formal equality and freedom—not in order to reject the latter but to spur the working class into not being satisfied with the shell, but rather, by conquering political power, to create a socialist democracy to replace bourgeois democracy—not to eliminate democracy altogether.

Rosa Luxemburg returns here to the "classic" distinction, already formulated in *Reform or Revolution?*, between the democratic form, equality, and formal freedom and the bourgeois content, inequality, and the killing of freedom. But this time she affirms the solution clearly: neither bourgeois democracy nor the dictatorship of a revolutionary elite, but a socialist democracy with a new social content.

Rosa Luxemburg had foreseen in 1914 "the intervention of the army in struggle against the proletariat." As we know, in January 1919, Rosa Luxemburg herself, Leo Jogisches, Karl Liebknecht, and other Spartakists would be assassinated, victims of this "military savage violence" that she had denounced and which had taken place within the framework of a respectable, constitutional (bourgeois) democracy. What Luxemburg had not foreseen, even in her worst nightmares, was that this political assassination by the counter-revolutionary military officers would take place under the aegis of a government led by the SPD, the German Social Democratic Party.

Translated by Dan La Botz

Feminisms of the Left

NANCY HOLMSTROM

This essay was originally a talk at the conference held at the New School for Social Research on April 21–22, 2016.

LIKE OUR PANEL'S TITLE: "Feminisms of the Left." There is a long and confusing collection of names for those who are both leftists and feminists: Marxist feminist, socialist feminist, materialist feminist, black feminist, feminist socialist, anarcho-feminist, and so on. And straddling the line between socialist and liberal feminists would be social-welfare feminists. In the 1960s and 1970s, in the heyday of the women's liberation movement, when "feminism" was too tame a word, the mainstream feminists were social-welfare feminists. They supported abortion rights of course, and equal pay for equal work, as do all feminists, but they also supported public child care and welfare. Gloria Steinem and *Ms.* magazine are examples. But the movement declined just as so many activists were moving into careers and families; American politics was moving rightward, into neoliberalism, and this general trend took mainstream feminism with it. So instead of collective social provision, we heard about individual responsibility and self-sufficiency. The Clintons' welfare "reform" exemplifies this change—and Gloria Steinem's support for Hillary Clinton, despite all that Clinton has done against the interests of the majority of women in the world, is a sad example of the rightward evolution of mainstream feminists.

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There are still social-welfare feminists, of course, who should be included on the continuum of "feminists of the left," though they are less explicitly anti-capitalist than the rest. Personally, though I am a Marxist, I usually choose the label "socialist feminist" to describe myself just because it is the most inclusive and is less likely to be misunderstood. As I define the term, all socialist feminists (whether they would identify with the label or not) see class as central to women's lives, yet at the same time none would reduce sex or race oppression to economic exploitation. All socialist-feminist politics have an anti-capitalist edge, not merely anti-neoliberal capitalism. Parenthetically, as with any continuum, it is not always clear how to draw the lines. For example, Iris Young, whom I knew for decades, saw herself as a socialist feminist, as do I, but is included as a liberal feminist in an encyclopedia entry.

Which word we choose to identify ourselves *largely* depends I think on the political context we're in, and the debates in which we're involved, as well as how we understand these categories. So the same label may not mean the same analysis, and different labels may not mean different analyses. For example, Margaret Benston was one of the first Marxists to analyze women's domestic labor, back in 1969. She considered herself a Marxist, used Marxist categories, wrote in *Monthly Review*, and is described as a Marxist feminist, but in fact her analysis was more like that of feminists who were calling themselves "socialist feminist" in order to distinguish themselves from Marxists. Hilary Wainwright calls herself a feminist

socialist rather than a socialist feminist to signal her interest in bringing insights from feminism into the socialist movement and into visions of socialism. She's been arguing this since the 1970s and recently expressed her frustration that she still has to make the same argument.

Sometimes these different labels do signal different theoretical analyses of women's oppression and capitalism—in particular, whether you believe that capitalism and patriarchy are two distinct, though intersecting, systems—or three, to accommodate racism as well. Or, alternatively, if you believe that we live in one system, capitalism, that has various kinds of oppression, including sexism and racism, as constituent aspects of that system. But I have found over the years that these abstract differences don't necessarily entail *political* differences, which are most important for social transformation.

Feminists of the left are involved in all kinds of struggles, not only those that are explicitly gendered. In some contexts one sort of issue may predominate, and rightly so, in others a different one. For example, women involved in Black Lives Matter organized Black Women's Lives Matter because women had been left out of the picture. Given the realities of black women's lives, black feminist theory is less likely to omit class issues than white feminist theory.

What defines socialist feminists is both the politics they articulate and the way they organize themselves and articulate those politics. It goes without saying that we support all struggles for women's legal rights, but that is far from enough. Gender inequalities today are significantly less than class inequalities, as two recent sex-discrimination lawsuits reveal. In one, a woman who sold bonds at Morgan Stanley sued because her salary of over a million dollars a year was much lower than her male colleagues'; women at Walmart sued because their annual salary was \$1,100 lower than the men's, but the average pay for *all* Walmart employees is only \$10 an hour. So the men's salaries are pretty damned low too! And non-union Walmart is

now the largest private employer in the United States—versus unionized General Motors not so long ago. It's the struggles of working class women that socialist feminists focus on, whether the struggles are on the job, in the community, or wherever. Working class women's struggles around the world exemplify certain core principles of socialist feminism, as Johanna Brenner and I discussed in the *Socialist Register* of 2012.

A core principle of socialist feminism is self-organization, the idea that, in Eleanor Marx's words, women's emancipation must come from themselves. But at the same time, they can't do it alone, but only in coalition with others, so socialist feminists work to build inclusive movements, connecting workplace and community, waged and unwaged work, and caring labor recognized as labor. An excellent model of labor-community organizing is the Chicago Teachers Union work uniting the interests of teachers and parents. Public employees combining with those they serve is a huge step forward, something we've never heard from New York teachers. Similarly, I would like to see the transit workers unions reaching out to riders about common interests, like better staffing. Hilary Wainwright has several examples like this in her book *Reclaim the State* (Verso, 2003).

The paradigmatic gendered struggle for legal abortion was won in 1973 with *Roe v. Wade*, but socialist feminists pressed to go beyond an individual right to choose to include the material and social conditions necessary for women to have a genuine choice as to whether or not to have children. The concept of reproductive rights was developed in the late 1970s by socialist feminists with prodding from women of color who wanted protection against sterilization abuse along with the social changes that would support their decision to have children: child care, maternity leave, welfare, decent medical care, housing, and education. Reproductive rights pushes toward an anti-capitalist politics because unlike legal abortion, these challenge capitalist profits. We never won these in the

United States, and where they were won, neo-liberalism has brought continual attacks on these benefits.

In contrast, environmental struggles do not seem gendered. What could be more universal than the need for clean air and water? But this does not mean it is not a women's issue. Just as women's rights are human rights, as feminists have argued, so are human rights women's rights. Feminists should not confine themselves to issues uniquely or primarily affecting women. Moreover, there is often some gender dimension even if it's not explicit. The UN Population Fund says that women in developing countries are particularly impacted by climate change, directly because of the difficulty of meeting their families' needs and indirectly by the wars engendered by scarce resources. Women are often the leaders of grassroots environmental movements, which socialist feminists strongly support, as they stress that the roots of the environmental crisis lie in capitalism's inherent drive to expand production.

Sometimes it's important to work with others who do not share all our left feminist values. *La Via Campesina*—the worldwide peasants movement—took a strong position opposing violence against women, which they defined in both interpersonal and structural terms. So that is very progressive and quite different from the conservative “law and order” approach of much anti-gender-violence work. But *La Via Campesina* at the outset was not comfortable with issues of sexual freedom, abortion, and LGBT rights. Working together, however, with the World March of Women, their position has evolved.

The same conflict can arise in the United States when we are involved in economic struggles with people who are more conservative socially. In Chicago the movement against school closings brought together a diverse

group, including gay socialist feminists and black community activists, not all of whom supported gay rights. Rather than tackle their differences directly, they worked in solidarity, recognizing that the parents should be in the leadership of the struggle. Over time, that kind of solidarity is the best way to overcome distrust and change minds.

Another way one can advance struggles from a feminist point of view is to pay attention to the structure and process of the groups in which one works. Differences of power and privilege along sex or gender lines are particularly intimate and subtle. So transforming this power requires the transformation of ourselves and our relationships—an insight associated with the women's liberation movement. One way to address this problem is to allow—or better yet, to encourage—women's caucuses, whether in unions, social movements, or left groups. In Occupy, despite their focus on horizontal process, the idea of separate spaces for women and people of color met some resistance, which is sad. Leftists should note that more than one hundred years ago, Marx and Luxemburg supported organizing men and women both together and separately. After the Russian Revolution when Alexandra Kollontai was in the government and women were organized independently within the Communist Party, women won all kinds of gains and prevented women's jobs from being given automatically to returning soldiers rather than allocated according to need.

In the United States today, there is a new openness to socialism. From Occupy to Black Lives Matter to the Sanders campaign, to new labor organizing, we begin to see the possibility of a new radical left. A key strategic question for that emerging movement is whether the insights of socialist feminism will be brought into the center of its politics.

My Experience with C.L.R. James and *Correspondence*

REGINALD WILSON

I WAS CONNECTED TO THE *CORRESPONDENCE* Newsletter that was published in Detroit, Michigan, from 1959 to 1967. I participated in all aspects of the publication from writing, editing, and drawing cartoons to traveling the country on behalf of our newsletter. *Correspondence* discussed the labor movement and politics, but it also featured Black artists, and some issues were devoted to the Black visual arts in Detroit as well as to publishing Black poetry.

As a *Correspondence* staff member, I went to New York City and the struggle in Harlem; to Prince Edward County, Virginia, where the public schools had been closed; to the struggle of Blacks with guns in Monroe, North Carolina; and to the civil rights movement of Martin Luther King in Atlanta; as well as to Africa and the Caribbean. I also drew political cartoons for the newsletter. By 1963, I had become the managing editor.

I wrote articles about developments in Detroit, in the auto plants and on the streets, about Drum—the Dodge Revolutionary Union

Movement—and the teachers strike. Detroit was at the center of the urban upheaval of the 1960s and 1970s and *Correspondence* reported on it.

C.L.R. James and Martin Glaberman had established the Correspondence Publishing Company in 1951 after they left the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party. But then C.L.R. had been expelled from the United States in 1953, and I did not meet him until the mid-1960s when he went to Canada for a Black writers conference. I met him again in the 1970s when he was again permitted to enter into the United States. He was offered a position at Federal City College—now the University of the District of Columbia—in Washington, D.C. These meetings gave me some appreciation of the giant intellect and the broad historical knowledge of the man. We talked only briefly about *Correspondence*.

Most of my knowledge of the history of *Correspondence*, except what I learned from C.L.R. himself, came from conversations with Glaberman, with James and Grace Lee Boggs, Philomena Daddario, and later from reading Kent Worcester's *C.L.R. James: A Political Biography*.

C.L.R. James, a West Indian Black who had received a classical education, took a different position on the American struggle from the Johnson-Forest Tendency in the Socialist Workers Party. James also had his own understanding of Marxism. The Johnson-Forest Tendency thought that the underclass as a whole was in the forefront of the movement, and they were looking at workers more globally. C.L.R.

REGINALD WILSON was, in the 1960s, managing editor of the leftist magazine *Correspondence*. Wilson received his PhD in clinical and educational psychology from Wayne State University and is a licensed psychologist in Michigan and Washington DC. He has been honored as a Distinguished Alumnus of Wayne State University and received the Anthony Wayne Award, as well as the Distinguished Service Medal of the City of Detroit. The American Association of Higher Education also has bestowed the Harold Delaney Exemplary Leadership Award upon him. He now lives in Washington DC and is a member of the editorial board of *New Politics*.

and the group that became *Correspondence* were looking more particularly at the workers in the industrial plants as being in the foreground of the movements of fights bringing revolutionary change. Therefore they believed that we should concentrate on those workers in the plant who would provide leadership of the movement.

Having recognized that workers would take the lead, it seemed that there would be a worker coming out of the plant who would be the leader. Therefore it seemed natural that James Boggs, a Detroit autoworker, should be the agreed upon leader of the newly established group *Correspondence*. And despite his segregated high school education and his Southern upbringing, Boggs gave inspired leadership to the group and to the Black community.

Glaberman saw a new generation of militant, leftist Blacks emerging in Detroit and at Wayne State University. That was how Conrad Mallett and I, and our wives Dolores Wilson and Gwendolyn Mallett, all militant leftist graduate students, were recruited as members and writers for *Correspondence*. I was working on my doctorate and Conrad was working on his, and our wives were working on their master's degrees. We were supporting John Watson, a student who had seized control of the Wayne State University student paper and did so from a revolutionary point of view. That was one of the things that was happening on Wayne State campus.

We met autoworkers that were studying at Wayne State, and because of our involvement in the radical activities on campus, we also got involved with the autoworkers movement. Some workers in the auto plants attended *Correspondence* meetings; in fact, the bulk of those attending our meetings were autoworkers. In our group we talked about what was happening in Detroit because Detroit seemed to be in the forefront of much of what was going on in the United States. It was really a hotbed of what seemed to be the revolutionary movement: the struggle in the school with the teachers strike



C.L.R. James

and the struggle in the auto plants, for example, the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement.

There was a struggle in the plants and in the union, with DRUM, which was primarily Black, fighting on two fronts: fighting the bosses in the plant but also fighting the old union leadership for recognition. The old union leadership was white-led and came down on the Blacks struggling—it was that transition from the 1930s of the union movement to the emerging revolutionary union movement of the 1960s. The Reuther-led movement of the 1930s had been progressive in its time, but the Black workers were rising up and challenging that leadership. Jimmy Boggs was in the middle of that, which is why he seemed to be the natural leader of *Correspondence*.

Worcester writes that *Correspondence* went into “decline” in the early 1960s, and after that he makes no further comments about the newsletter. This is incorrect; in fact, this was the moment of *Correspondence*’s rise in influence and importance as a regional paper. James Boggs was

invited to speak at the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions in Santa Barbara by its president Robert Hutchins and its vice president W.H. Ferry. Boggs began a correspondence with Thomas Merton, the Trappist monk and social activist, as well as with the famous British philosopher and pacifist Bertrand Russell.

I had also begun a much-discussed exchange of views with the Rev. Albert Cleage, publisher of the *Illustrated News*, religious leader, and sometime political candidate. Cleage created the Shrine of the Black Madonna and several “Shriners,” as his followers were called, were in positions of power in the city administration well as on the city council. I argued that the Shrine philosophy was a version of Black capitalism and not at all revolutionary. Our exchanges received a lot of attention at the time.

Contrary to the suggestion that *Correspondence* went into decline in the early 1960s, the paper actually flourished for a number of years,

even after C.L.R. James left the organization. The *Correspondence* organization did break up some years later, when Conrad, Philomena, and I disagreed with Grace Lee Boggs’ perspective. She was influenced by Rev. Cleage, by his Black Madonna, and by his call for a combination of Black nationalism and revolution. His followers held positions on the city council and the school board and were influential. We felt their program was Black capitalism.

Worcester writes in his biography, “It seems evident at some point in the 1950s [Grace] Lee and other members of her circle had lost faith in Marxism’s social-scientific explanatory power.” Though “they still maintained a commitment to socialist principles ... their vision of humanity’s future was ... centered on the state of working class consciousness.” In any case, we disagreed with their perspective and so our two groups separated.

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Theses on Saving the Planet

RICHARD SMITH

I DON'T NEED TO TELL YOU WE FACE an existential threat. Scientists tell us we face a "climate emergency." Last year was the hottest year ever recorded, beating 2014, which beat 2012. We break new records every year. The fourteen hottest years ever recorded have been recorded since 2000. January and February temperatures were torrid. Global temperatures hit new all-time highs in February; the northern hemisphere breached the 2 degrees-Celsius-above-normal mark for the first time in recorded history. Svalbard, Norway, averaged 10 degrees Celsius above normal. Parts of the Arctic were more than 16 degrees Celsius warmer—basically no winter. There were record-setting low measures of maximum Arctic sea ice this "winter." In the United States, the winter was record-warm from coast to coast, breaking all-time temperature records for February. The same in Asia. In the tropics, record warmth is massively bleaching the Great Barrier Reef.

Keep in mind that it took from the dawn of the industrial age until last October for temperatures to climb 1.0 degree Celsius, and we've come an extra 0.4 degrees further in just

the last five months. What's driving this? More and more, people are coming to understand that the problem is not the climate. It's our economic system.

In her latest book, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*, Naomi Klein tersely sums up our plight: "Our economic system and our planetary system are now at war." Climate scientists tell us that "our only hope of keeping warming below ... 2 degrees Celsius is for wealthy countries to cut their emissions by somewhere in the neighborhood of 8–10 percent a year." "The 'free' market simply cannot accomplish this task," Klein writes, "What the climate needs to avoid collapse is a contraction in humanity's use of resources; what our economic model demands to avoid collapse is unfettered growth."

So far, unfettered growth is winning. Instead of suppressing fossil fuel production, oil companies are pumping oil and gas from the ends of the earth. President Obama opened the Atlantic seaboard to drilling after he opened the Arctic and after he promoted his "All of the Above," also known as "Drill Baby Drill," plan to pump and drill and frack the country and beyond and bragged that he's laid more pipelines than any president in history.

Instead of minimizing fossil fuel consumption, consumers seem bent on maximizing consumption. The glut of oil production has only encouraged people to drive more and buy gas-hog SUVs and huge trucks that get worse gas mileage than the Cadillac land yachts of the 1950s. We're burning up more fuel flying everywhere and installing air conditioners to

RICHARD SMITH is an economic historian and has written extensively on capitalism and the environment for academic and Left journals. His book *Green Capitalism: the God That Failed* (WEA Books) was published in 2015 and his *China's Engine of Ecological Apocalypse* (Verso) will be published in 2017.

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beat the heat.

Instead of imposing binding limits on emissions, governments have kicked the can down the road for 22 consecutive years. At Paris in December, they didn't even try. Instead they promoted hallucinatory fantasies of huge "negative emissions" to be had by some high-tech "carbon capture and storage"—again, always "someday" in the future, never today; no such technology presently exists in any practicable form nor is ever likely to. The U.S. government has abandoned subsidizing carbon capture. Carbon capture is not a technology. Carbon capture is a propaganda tool to let consumers rationalize obscene, unsustainable overconsumption: Not to worry, we'll fix it tomorrow. But tomorrow never comes. Year after year, decade after decade, climate summits collapse in disarray because no country will sacrifice jobs and growth today to save their children tomorrow.

And not just fossil fuels, we're devouring everything—minerals, lumber, fresh water, fish stolen from the mouths of sharks and whales; we're saving nothing for the future, reserving nothing for other species, which instead we're just driving to the wall.

Instead of inventing ways to minimize resource consumption, our smartest companies like Apple and Google work only to invent "needs" we don't really need: drones, robots, iPhones 5-6-7, 3D printers, hoverboards, the "Internet of Things," self-driving cars, biometric T-shirts, electric planes—the endless quest for "the next big thing," but really just new ways to devour more resources and convert them into "product." Instead of making products to be as durable and long-lasting as possible to conserve resources, our top companies pay their brilliant engineers, designers, and marketers to devise ways to make them wear out faster, to become obsolete, disposable, replaced in ever-faster cycles.

Our capitalist economy is geared completely wrong. All the incentives are wrong. As an American retail analyst famously wrote way

back in 1955:

Our enormously productive economy demands that we make consumption our way of life, that we convert the buying and use of goods into rituals, that we seek our spiritual satisfactions, our ego satisfactions, in consumption. ... We need things consumed, burned up, worn out, replaced, and discarded at an ever increasing pace.¹

And so it is. For three hundred years, the engine of capitalist economic development revolutionized technology, and science improved our lives in countless ways. But now this out-of-control engine is consuming us to death, driving us off the cliff and into the abyss.

What to do? Mainstream economists have had two approaches. Economists such as Herman Daly, Tim Jackson, and Serge Latouche have advocated "degrowth." The idea is that capitalism can be slowed down, made to run at a "steady state" or even to "degrow." I have argued elsewhere that these theorists just don't understand capitalism. Capitalist "degrowth" just means recession, if not depression. Imagine Rex Tillerson, CEO of Exxon Mobil, telling his investors, "Sorry, but to save the planet, we cannot grow profits next year, and in fact, we have to cut production (and thus profits) by 8–10 percent next year and every year thereafter, for the next three-and-a-half decades, by which time we will be basically out of business." How long would it take your retirement fund to dump that stock?

The other approach is "green capitalism." The idea here is that growth can go on forever but be rendered benign for the environment. Economists who advocate green capitalism call for carbon taxes, solar power, LED lightbulbs. We are no doubt better off for some of these policies and technologies. But green capitalism can't save us. Here and there the planet's needs and the corporations' needs do coincide—but they do not align systematically. To save the planet, corporations would have to subordinate growth and profits to saving the humans—but

they can't do this. They're not responsible to us. They're responsible to shareholders. Shareholders can't subordinate growth to saving the planet and still compete in the world market—especially against China. What difference does it make if Germany gets 30 percent of electricity from renewables when what it produces with that electricity, its biggest export industry, is global warmers: gasoline-powered cars and gratuitously filthy diesels to boot? What difference if Apple powers all its servers in California with solar power when what it produces in China (and with coal power) is just completely disposable iPhones and iPads? Americans alone junk 100 million cell phones a year—mostly perfectly workable but “so last year.” The environmental cost of producing millions and billions of cellphones, computers, Gameboys, and all the other “devices” is just staggeringly unsustainable. iPhones are expensive. The cost of that new iPhone 6 is your children.

What about cap-and-trade policies? No capitalist economy, no government, will accept cap-and-trade. Why? Because it would impose a “cap.” A cap is a finite limit on greenhouse gas emissions like CO₂. But every government understands that a cap on emissions means a cap on growth. That's why no industrialized country has been willing to accept a cap. As George Bush senior put it back in 1992, “The American way of life is not up for negotiation.” And if the Americans won't cut emissions, why should the Chinese?

What about carbon taxes? Lots of governments pass carbon taxes, but they're all too feeble to make any real difference. Scientists tell us that to keep global temperatures from rising beyond 2 degrees Celsius and prevent runaway global warming, the industrialized countries would have to suppress emissions by 6–10 percent per year, truly draconian levels, for the next 35 years to get emissions down to where they need to be by 2050. But cutting emissions by anything like that amount would mean industrial shutdowns across the board. So governments pass carbon

taxes to placate environmentalists, but they pass taxes that are too feeble to force any real change. That's why oil company executives at Shell, ExxonMobil, and so on all *support* carbon taxes.

De-growth theorists just don't understand capitalism. Capitalist “de-growth” just means recession, if not depression

Carbon taxes are just an indulgence, just another cost of doing business, which they can also just pass along to their customers. Most importantly, it's not a cap, so it won't stop growth. These market approaches aren't designed to cut fossil fuel consumption. They're designed to delay or to *avoid* cutting fossil fuel consumption, to keep the engines of growth revving, to keep prioritizing growth and jobs over the environment.

It's not difficult to stop global warming. It's completely obvious and simple. If we want to cut fossil fuel consumption we just have to *enforce cuts in consumption, just ration oil and gas*, like governments did during World War II, like when the U.S. government banned DDT, or when it banned ozone-depleting refrigerant chlorofluorocarbons.

The problem is that, given capitalism, cutting fossil fuel consumption would immediately bankrupt the largest companies in the world and plunge us into economic collapse, mass unemployment, and depression.

Our whole economy is based on fossil fuel: mining, manufacturing, heating, transportation, petrochemicals, construction, industrial farming, tourism, you name it. Electricity and heat account for 25 percent of CO₂ emissions; industry, 21 percent; transportation, 14 percent; agriculture, forestry, and deforestation, 24 percent.² If we have to cut emissions by 90 percent,

renewable energy is a start but only part of the picture. We need a completely different kind of economy, an economy *geared to minimizing resource consumption, not maximizing it*, an economy geared to sustainability and equity, not profit.

My argument can be summed up in three points:

1. Rational, sustainable economic planning is the only way to save the humans. “We’re one people on one planet.” Either we start acting like it or we’re doomed.
2. Rational, sustainable planning will only work if it’s done democratically, if all those who are affected have an equal say in decisions that affect them. That, after all, is the essence of democracy.
3. True democracy is impossible without generalized equality.

Why Planning?

The problems we face, the problems of “planet management,” can’t be solved by individual choice in the marketplace. They require conscious, rational planning, international cooperation, and collective democratic control over the economy—not market anarchy. Climate scientists have been telling us for decades that we need a binding, global plan to suppress fossil fuel emissions. Ocean scientists tell us we need a global five-year plan to save the oceans.³ We need rational, comprehensive, legally binding plans and agreements to save the world’s remaining forests; to protect and restore rivers, lakes, and fisheries; to save millions of imperiled species around the globe; and to conserve natural resources of all kinds for future generations.

I don’t think people really grasp how big a change we need to make. Cutting emissions by 8–10 percent per year would require selective but *substantial* deindustrialization in the global North. We would have to contract and converge our levels of production and consumption around a globally sustainable and hopefully happy average that can provide a dignified living

standard for all the world’s peoples. In the global North, the industrialized nations would have to radically suppress fossil fuel consumption across the economy. We would have to phase out use of coal, drastically curtail oil consumption, ration it, and drastically retrench auto production, trucking, shipping, airlines, petrochemicals, construction, and other sectors.

We would have to abolish the consumerist designed-in obsolescence, repetitive-production disposables industries (plastic junk, H&M disposable clothes, IKEA chipboard furniture, throwaway products of every sort) and replace those with durable, rebuildable, recyclable, and shareable products instead of disposable products. We would have to reorganize production of the goods and services we do need to minimize resource consumption, instead of maximizing consumption by producing goods to be “burned up, worn out, replaced, and discarded as fast as possible.” We would have to discontinue harmful and energy-intensive industrial agriculture, industrial fishing, and logging and replace these with organic farming, husbandry, forest conservation, and so on.

We would have to redirect investments into renewable energy, public transportation, public water systems, public health, public schools, and social services—so that we can get more of

The cost of that new iPhone 6 is
your children.

what we need collectively instead of privately. And if we have to shut down harmful, wasteful industries, then we have to provide equivalent jobs for all those displaced workers, not only because this is a moral imperative but because without guaranteed employment elsewhere, those workers can’t support the huge structural changes we need to save the humans. So we would need substantial deindustrialization in

the global North.

In the global South, however, we need to ramp up sustainable development. We in the North have a responsibility to help the South build basic infrastructure, electrification, sanitation systems, public schools, health care, and so on. We would help their citizens achieve a comfortable material standard of living without repeating all the disastrous wastes of capitalist consumerism in the North.

Planning Can't Work?

Of course, capitalist economists never tire of telling us that economic planning “can’t work.” It’s “too complicated” and “the first step on the road to serfdom, to Stalinism. Look at the Soviet Union.” I don’t buy that. Planning for whom by whom? Stalinist planning worked poorly because in the Stalinist states planning was of, by, and for the party bureaucracy. This proves nothing about the potentials of planning per se or democratic planning. Today, China plans most of the second largest economy in the world. They plan it badly, squandering money on massive overproduction of steel, coal, and cement; massive overproduction of housing, roads, rails, dams; and so on. So China is just another bad example.

Capitalist economists tell us that governments can’t pick winners. Hardly a week goes by that the *Wall Street Journal* fails to remind us that the 2011 bankruptcy of solar startup Solyndra Corporation, bankrolled by the Obama administration, is proof that governments can’t pick winners. But since when do capitalists have a crystal ball? CEOs and corporate boards make bad bets on “loser” technologies and products all the time. Look at Fisker Automotive, or Better Place, the Israeli electric vehicle charging stations. Companies fail all the time. Silicon Valley is littered with failures. Corporate CEOs lose money all the time. Remember Lehman Brothers, Washington Mutual, Enron, WorldCom, Pan American Airways. Who knows if Facebook or Zipcar or Tesla Motors will ever

make money? Capitalists just bet on the future. Sometimes they win, sometimes they lose.

Government-backed Solyndra lost \$535 million. But when Jamie Dimon lost two \$2 billion for JP Morgan Chase, I didn’t hear the

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Wall Street Journal howling that capitalists “can’t pick winners.” When Enron collapsed, I didn’t hear any blanket condemnation of the “inevitable incompetence of the private sector.” When Shell abandoned its fool’s-errand Arctic-drilling adventure last year, losing \$8 billion of its shareholders’ money, the *Wall Street Journal* blamed excessive government regulations, not the company.

So the free market is no better at “picking winners” than governments. Actually, private industry is not nearly as good as even capitalist governments. Because when governments plan investments in national rail systems or power plants or ports, and so on, they do so from the standpoint of the needs of the whole society, and for the long-term, not just the needs of corporate shareholders and quarterly returns. Governments not only regularly pick winners, but the U.S. government, through its own agencies and targeted support of innovation funding at universities, has been the leading engine of technological innovation in the United States since World War II (as recent studies have confirmed: Matthew Keller, *State of Innovation: The U.S. Government’s Role in Technology Development* (2011) and Mariana Mazzucato,

The Entrepreneurial State: Debunking Public vs. Private Sector Myths (2013)).

Government-funded and -directed applied research produced nuclear energy, radar, rockets, the jet engine, the transistor, the microchip, the

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internet, satellite broadcasting, satellite GPS, critical breakthroughs in biotechnology, and many more. Government-developed and -produced ballistic missiles terrorized the Soviets and government-designed and -operated bombers bombed the Reds in Korea and Vietnam to contain Communism and to secure dominance of the Free World for corporate America to exploit. The most important innovations of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries were government startups. What's more, most of these were then handed over to capitalist corporations to profit from, even to the same capitalists who badmouth government.

But you don't hear the *Wall Street Journal* applauding the government successes. All you hear is "Solyndra shows government can't pick winners."

Capitalist Planning Works Just Fine

Moreover, within their own enterprises, capitalists are fanatically rational planners. Today, the revenues of the world's largest corporations are bigger than many national economies. Of the world's one hundred largest economic entities, 37 are corporations, the rest countries. Large multinational companies operate in dozens of countries with hundreds of thousands of em-

ployees. Walmart has 2.2 million employees—almost equal to half the population of Denmark. Boeing Aircraft sources its 787 components from 50 companies in more than a dozen countries, among them Japan, Italy, Korea, Germany, China, the U.K., Sweden, and France.

Take the Boeing Corporation as an example of capitalist planning. Boeing's ultra-high-tech and far-flung operations are all "centrally planned," coordinated, and managed from the corporate head office in Chicago. Airplane production is systematically planned, coordinated, tightly sequenced, and choreographed. Every minute and dollar is counted. Waste and inefficiency are fanatically rooted out. Production is rigorously precise, disciplined, and efficient. Besides production, Boeing manages crew training, maintenance, repair, and upgrading of thousands of aircraft around the world. Then there are offices for product development, sales, personnel, and government regulation management, and more.

If companies with revenues greater than the GDPs of most countries can rationally and efficiently plan their economies, why can't nations? Why can't we rationally plan the world industrial economy for the needs of the world's peoples? Of course, planning a national economy and coordinating global economies is more difficult than planning production, sale, and maintenance of airplanes. But I don't see any technological barrier to this. Besides, we don't have a choice. It's plan or die. If we don't rationally plan our major industrial economies for the needs of people and planet, if, instead, we continue to let market anarchy and profit-maximization guide our global economic life, the result will be collective human suicide.

Public Regulation of Utilities

The United States may be the world's leading champion of the free market, but it nonetheless possesses a large and indispensable sector of the economy that is not governed by the free market but instead is regulated democratically by public

oversight—and that is the public utilities: electricity, heating fuel, water and sewerage, local telephone service. These are the most efficient and cheapest utility systems in the world. Greg Palast and co-authors wrote a book about it. They write:

Unique in the world (with the exception of Canada), every aspect of U.S. regulation is wide open to the public. There are no secret meetings, no secret documents. Any and all citizens and groups are invited to take part: individuals, industrial customers, government agencies, consumer groups, trade unions, the utility itself, even its competitors. Everyone affected by the outcome has a right to make their case openly, to ask questions of government and utilities, to read all financial and operating records in detail. In public forums, with all information open to all citizens, the principles of social dialogue and transparency come to life. It is an extraordinary exercise in democracy—and it works.

Another little known fact is that, despite the recent experiments with markets in electricity—the authors published this book in 2003, just three years after the Enron privatization debacle—the U.S. holds to the strictest, most elaborate and detailed system of regulation anywhere: Private utilities' profits are capped and investments directed or vetoed by public agencies. Privately owned utilities are directed to reduce prices for the poor, fund environmentally friendly investments, protect community employment, and open themselves to physical and financial inspection. Americans, while strongly attached to private property and ownership, demand stern and exacting government control over vital utility services.

So, regulation of large-scale utilities is a real-world example of something like a “proto-socialism.” I see no obvious reason something like this model of democracy and transparency could not be scaled up to encompass the entire industrial economy. And of course in Western Europe you have lots of state-owned industries and utilities, they mostly work fine, better than

private services, and you live in democracies, not state-serfdom.

Saving Small Producers

In arguing for large-scale industrial planning, I'm not saying that we should nationalize family farms, farmers' markets, artisans, groceries, bakeries, local restaurants, repair shops, workers' cooperatives, and so on. Small producers aren't destroying the world. But large-scale corporations are. If we want to save the planet, the corporations would have to be nationalized, socialized, and completely reorganized. Many will need to be closed down, others scaled back, others repurposed. But I don't see any reason why small-scale, local, independent producers cannot carry on more or less as they are, within the framework of a larger planned economy.

I contend that the only way to plan the economy for the common good is if we do it ourselves, democratically. I believe that rational planning must be democratic. Solar or coal? Frack the planet or work our way off fossil fuels? Drench the world's farms in toxic pesticides or return to organic agriculture? Public transportation or private cars as the mainstay? We can put the big questions up for a vote. Shouldn't everyone have a say in decisions that affect us all? Isn't that the essential idea of democracy?

We don't have to be experts to make such decisions. Corporate boards aren't composed of experts. They're composed of major investors and prominent, often politically connected, VIPs. Yet corporate boards decide and vote on what they want to do and then hire experts to figure out how to get it done. Why can't society do the same, but in the interest of the common good instead of Wall Street investors?

Well, you may ask, “How do we know people would vote for the common good?” We don't. After all, people vote against their own interests in elections all the time. Look at the U.S. primaries. Yet on closer inspection it's not so surprising, given the limited choices they're offered in capitalist democracy. What we see

is that in the abstract, people would vote their conscience on environmental issues: so 69 percent of Americans favor binding limits on CO2 emissions and 93 percent want GMO labeling. This shows, I believe, that people have pretty

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good instincts about the environment.

But when the issue is framed as a choice between environment versus jobs, people often vote for the economy and against the environment. If we want democracy to work, we would have to have exclusively public funding of elections and referendums, free and open debate on issues, and zero tolerance for Fox News and similar propaganda machines—and we need an economy in which workers in industries that need to be cashiered to save the planet are guaranteed other comparable jobs.

When, in the midst of the Great Depression, that great “People’s Lawyer” Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis said, “We can either have democracy in this country or we can have great wealth concentrated in the hands of a few, but we can’t have both,” he was more right than he knew. We have to recognize that genuine democracy requires a society that approximates socio-economic equality. Today we have by far the greatest concentration of wealth in history. Not just the 1 percent. Worldwide, Oxfam found that just 80 individuals own as much wealth as the bottom half, 3.6 billion, of the world’s population. So it’s hardly surprising that today we have the weakest and most corrupt democracies since the Gilded Age.

I contend that if we want a real democracy,

we will have to abolish the great wealth concentrated in the hands of the few. That means we will have to abolish not just capitalist private property in the means of production, but also extremes of income, exorbitant salaries, accumulated wealth, great property, and inheritance. The only way to prevent the corruption of democracy is to make it impossible to materially gain, by creating a society with neither rich nor poor. If it’s illegal to be rich, then there’s little or no incentive to be corrupt.

Does that mean we would all have to dress in blue Mao suits and dine in communal mess halls? Hardly. Lots of studies, like Wilkinson and Pickett’s *The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better*, argue convincingly that people are happier, life is better, there’s less crime and violence, and fewer mental health problems in societies that are more equal, where income differences are small and concentrated wealth is limited, societies like Denmark.

Gandhi was right in saying “the world has enough for everyone’s needs, but not everyone’s greed.” We don’t have five planets to provide the resources for the whole world to live a consumerist lifestyle. But we have more than enough wealth to provide every human being on the planet with safe water and sanitation, quality food, housing, public transportation, great schools, and health care—all the authentic necessities. These should all be guaranteed as a matter of right. Indeed, most of these were already declared as such in the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948:

Article 22: Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security.

Article 23: The right to work, to free choice of employment, to equal pay for equal work, to just and favorable conditions of work, to protection against unemployment, to just and favorable remuneration, to join trade unions.

Article 24: The right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

Article 25: (1) The right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing, and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age, or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control. (2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

The Promise of Ecosocialism

Freeing ourselves from the toil of producing unnecessary and harmful commodities would free us to shorten the workday, to enjoy the leisure promised but never delivered by capitalism, to redefine the meaning of the standard of living to connote a way of life that is actually richer, while consuming less. We can all build a beautiful world to pass on to our children while leaving space and resources for the wonderful life forms with which we share this amazing blue planet.

Gandhi was right in saying “the world has enough for everyone’s needs, but not everyone’s greed.”

We don’t have five planets to provide the resources for the whole world to live a consumerist lifestyle.

That’s the potential of ecosocialism.

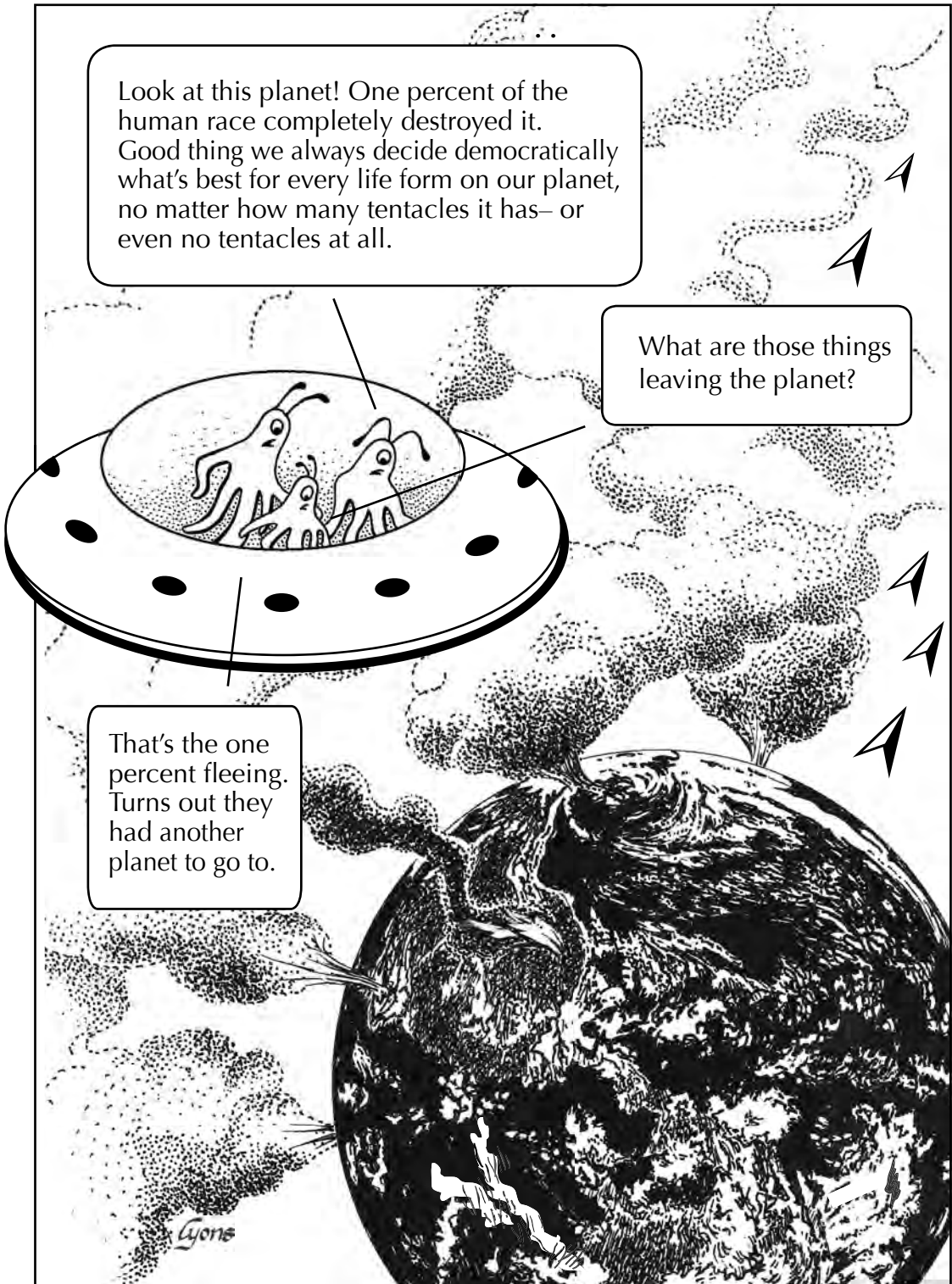
We’re living in one of those pivotal world-changing moments in history; indeed, this is the most critical moment in human history. Capitalism has had a good 300-year run. But economic systems come and go, as do governments. There is no gainsaying the magnitude

of the changes we are going to have to make to save ourselves. There is no doubt that closing the book on capitalism and moving on to a higher stage of civilization—ecosocialism—by replacing the culture of “possessive individualism” with a culture of sharing, community, and love, is the greatest challenge humanity has ever faced. This is the revolution to come. We may very well fail. But what other choice do we have but to try.

All around the world, on every continent, we see vibrant and growing struggles against capital; against layoffs and unemployment; against privatization, ecological destruction, dams, and dumps; against overdevelopment. They have fought and won, beating back water privatization in Bolivia and health care privatization in El Salvador; won against the siting of chemical plants and garbage incinerators in China, against drug company piracy in South Africa and India, against factory schooling. They have won community control over schooling and social services, successfully defended indigenous rights (against Keystone XL and pipelines in Canada), restored teaching of indigenous languages in Hawai’i, successfully defended workers’ cooperatives, won land for the tiller (as by the Via Campesina movement), and more. Diverse as they are, these struggles all share a common demand for bottom-up democracy. They may not yet be organized in a common party, a global organization, but they’re headed in that direction. Unifying those struggles for an alternative, a new world, is our best hope.

NOTES

1. Victor Lebow, “Price Competition in 1955,” *Journal of Retailing* (Spring 1955), quoted in Vance Packard, *The Wastemakers* (David McKay, 1960), 24.
2. U.S. EPA, www3.epa.gov/climatechange/ghgemissions/global.html.
3. Jenna Iacurci, “Report Calls for Five-Year Plan to Save World’s Overfished Oceans,” *Nature World News* (June 24, 2014), www.natureworldnews.com/articles/7735/20140624/report-calls-for-five-year-plan-to-save-worlds-over-fished-oceans.htm.



Food Justice + Food Sovereignty

Can the U.S. Food Justice Movement Join the Global Movement?

NANCY ROMER AND LINDA FARTHING

IN THE UNITED STATES TODAY, there is a fresh opening for progressive alliances. The various movements—Black Lives Matter, the Fight for \$15, climate change, immigrant rights, LGBT rights, Bernie—have different roots, structures, and foci, but they share a recognition that we are being crushed by the newest form of capitalism—as they call it in Latin America, “capitalismo salvaje”¹ (savage capitalism)—and that we must stand up to it with all our might, with all our people.

A movement with enormous potential to contribute to this process is the food justice movement. Often led by low-income people of color and linked to global food sovereignty struggles, it not only offers a radical analysis but it is increasingly influencing the less-politicized food movement that is focused on healthy eating, community gardening, and community supported agriculture (CSAs). The food justice movement is creating alliances; is supporting leadership from people of color, youth, and working people; and can be a critical element in building a truly mass-based movement.

The broadest context of the food movement is global: It is an enormous mass movement of the poor, led by people of color, supportive of women and youth, and anti-capitalist. In

the United States the radical wing of the food movement, calling itself food justice, mirrors the global: It likewise is led by people of color, is anti-capitalist, and is dominated by women and youth. That U.S. radical wing exerts a dynamic pull to the left on the more moderate “do-good” food movement—food pantries, CSAs—as capitalism narrows opportunities, and suffering increases.

Mapping Out the Movements

Since so much of U.S. agriculture has long been corporatized, with family farms going out of existence at a fast clip and only 1-2 percent of the population engaged in commercial cultivation, the United States faces particular challenges in organizing on food issues.

The variegated branches of the food movement in the United States are here divided into two: “food movement” (reformers addressing health, hunger, entrepreneurship, flavor, and food safety issues), and “food justice” (farmers, progressive farmer advocates, and activists seeking equity and sustainability through structural changes). Both strands encompass great diversity of approaches and have a great deal of overlap.

U.S. Food Movement

The U.S. food movement, or what some people call the “good food movement,” does not necessarily see itself as a movement. Many of its participants are attracted by the concrete projects and activities that provide a sense of accomplishment and community. The movement is a set of organizations that coalesce, mostly on local

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levels, around shared interests such as health and ending hunger. While nationally these kinds of organizations often separate when the going gets tough, for instance when federal legislation pits “enough” food against “healthier” food, local representatives and organizations tend to be able to bridge that binary more congenially.² While

The food justice movement can be a critical element in building a truly mass-based movement.

most of the central players are nonprofit or government professionals, hundreds of thousands of people across the United States participate, mostly without much power or influence, as volunteers in food pantries, diet and exercise programs, and often in community gardens.

The problems they confront are enormous: More than 50 million Americans, one in six, are “food insecure,” meaning they are unable to rely on adequate, regular food, and half of these are children. About half the U.S. adult population and 1/3 of children are overweight or obese, many of them low-income and people of color. Programs like First Lady Michelle Obama’s “Let’s Move,” almost completely fueled by volunteers, have had limited traction in the communities that need them the most, particularly as corporations have managed to water them down.³ Beverage companies like Coca-Cola deny the role of sugar and pay for research that “proves” the centrality of exercise for combatting obesity.⁴ The army of well-meaning but often non-politicized volunteers is no match for these transnational corporations, though many well-meaning people are kept very busy on a single issue within a moral and civic framework.⁵

Some dedicated food pantry workers and volunteers see the need for a broader approach to deal with hunger, beyond distributing food.

The Stop, in Toronto, provides a rich model of such a multiservice organization focused on food security.⁶ Many participants at the “Closing the Hunger Gap” Conference in 2015 challenged the traditional single-issue, hunger-only politics, making the event groundbreaking as it shifted to a more holistic, anti-poverty, multiservice, coalition-building stance.⁷ Bed-Stuy Campaign Against Hunger in Brooklyn, New York, is one such organization. Started as a faith-based food pantry, it has expanded into an anti-poverty organization offering a wide range of services including public assistance, development of several sizable gardens, job placement, and housing advice.

Child and school food advocates have a strong national presence, framed around fighting poverty. One of the largest, Food Research and Action Center, works primarily on the U.S. federal budget, child nutrition legislation, and agricultural programs geared toward school lunches, summer nutrition programs, and after-school programs. Parents and community groups committed to improving school food quality have brought an energy and policy focus to the food movement. While grassroots in much of their orientation, policy work is centralized, much of it led by nonprofit organizations such as School Food Focus and Wellness in the Schools. Youth groups dedicated to cooking and growing food add to these grassroots voices.

Successes have been significant. The Los Angeles Unified School District now procures most of its food locally through a program developed by the nonprofit Los Angeles Food Policy Council. Procurement is evaluated on five values: proximity, sustainability, valued workforce, animal rights, and nutrition. Due to extensive pressure by parents and food advocates, the New York City school system now has a universal free-food system in place for all middle schoolers and has committed to dramatically expanding locally sourced foods. Advocates are hoping to expand both programs system-wide.⁸

The “food movement” also is populated by “foodies” and gardeners, sometimes conflated and other times distinguishing themselves from each other. “Foodies” generally want healthy, local, delicious food, focusing on freshness and pleasure and supporting a culture of change around cooking, eating, dining out, and supporting local farmers. As with other groups a huge range exists within this sector; it is varied in race, class, gender, and region. Slow Food is the most emblematic organization, though thousands of other, smaller groups, from supper clubs to home, faith organizations or community gardeners contribute. Collectively they often change the demand side of the food economy equation, thus supporting an increase in small-scale operators on the supply side. This includes small-scale and local farmers, the burgeoning farmers markets, food cooperatives, new small “healthy food” businesses, sustainable restaurants, and student groups improving their school cafeterias. This local, small-scale capitalism can create a deep sense of community.

Community Supported Agriculture groups (CSAs) are great examples of this. They create a direct relationship between a group of urban dwellers (consumers), usually defined by a neighborhood, with a local farmer (producer) and distribute food to the members of the CSA based on what is actually produced by the farmer. The farmer gets cash up front, decreasing the need for loans; the consumer gets fresh, usually organic, produce. CSAs often create cooperative structures for dividing up the work that the food distribution requires.⁹ These sorts of community-building efforts reduce the isolation associated with urban life.

Community gardens operate on the same principle. Land is either totally shared and cooperatively worked or divided into small plots, and community gardeners join together to arrange work schedules and to celebrate the harvest. These efforts can convey to participants that life can function well outside of corporate control. But too often, these groups don’t incorporate

strategies to transform the huge inequities in the food system.

U.S. Food Justice Movement

While their projects frequently look similar, food justice movement activists are more likely than people who focus on food access to frame and organize around specific principles of justice, allowing a closer connection with international movements. The United States Food Sovereignty Alliance (USFSA), made up of 36 groups, and the National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC) are the two main U.S. organizations that are connected globally. They are both coalitions of member organizations. USFSA is a larger, more expansive alliance that includes food justice, anti-hunger, labor, environmental, faith-based, and food producer groups. It works toward sustainable local agricultural systems connecting local and national struggles to the

More than 50 million Americans, one in six, are “food insecure,” meaning they are unable to rely on adequate, regular food, and half of these are children.

international movement for food sovereignty.¹⁰

NFFC has a longer history, alliances with other national and global food-related policy groups, and members that are long-standing professional farmer organizations, including small- and medium-sized cooperatives of farmers. As an active member of USFSA, NFFC works toward a democratic food and agriculture system that ensures health, justice, and dignity and emphasizes policies that support local and smaller scale agriculture.¹¹ Both groups are racially integrated and share deep respect for and commitment to leadership of people of

color, especially indigenous groups. Both are internationalist in their understandings and are grassroots and democratic in their structures and commitments.

A recent campaign offers a glimpse of how these two groups work together. The United Nations announced 2016 as the Year of People of African Descent. Activists from NFFC and USFSA are joining together to use UN hearings scheduled in various parts of the United States to explain food sovereignty to their peers. They

Race, indigeneity, and inequality
are all important issues in food
justice; “capitalism” as a system is
not often directly addressed.

will talk about how land has been taken from Americans of African descent in the past and how today that continues to impoverish African Americans.¹²

“Sovereignty,” a term used broadly in the Global South,¹³ is not a familiar term for most people in the United States; “justice” is a more commonly used framework. Race, indigeneity, and inequality in terms of resources, opportunities, and control, including within organizations and alliances, are all important issues in food justice. While class and corporate control are both central to the analysis, “capitalism” as a system is not often directly addressed.¹⁴

The Food Chain Workers Alliance (FCWA, foodchainworkers.org), with 27 member groups and itself a member of the USFSA, advances the power and conditions of food workers, who are among the lowest paid. Within a democratically controlled member-organizational model, they address the intersection of labor, sustainability, and climate and stress working in coalitions.

Their best-known members include the tomato pickers in the Coalition of Immokalee

Workers (www.ciw-online.org) and the Fight for \$15 fast food workers (fightfor15.org). In 2015 the FCWA created the HEAL Food Alliance—Health, Environment, Agriculture, and Labor—along with their allies: the Real Food Challenge (campus food organizing), Union of Concerned Scientists, and the Movement Strategy Center. They are working to develop a “Real Food Platform” that identifies corporate control of the food system as its primary target.

The Detroit Black Community Food Security Network (detroitblackfoodsecurity.org) is another member of the USFSA. Framing their work in race and class, they represent a broad group of urban farmers growing food for themselves and for sale as well, creating greater access and self-sufficiency in their communities. A specifically grassroots-controlled organization, they have been the prime movers behind establishing the Detroit Food Policy Council that works with government and community to advance legislation to improve food security and access. They are developing a food cooperative to fill the food desert created as Detroit lost population, income, and white residents. Malik Yakini, co-founder and executive director, indicates, “In our organization we try to connect the day-to-day work to challenge capitalism and white supremacy. We see food as an entry point into this larger analysis, the same system that makes food insecurity makes war, structural racism, disinvestment, sexism.”¹⁵

The Global Food Sovereignty Movement

The U.S. food justice movement is also to varying degrees connected to the global food sovereignty movement. Peasant organizations across the Global South and parts of the Global North have long been organizing to save their land from corporate land grabbers;¹⁶ protect their water resources; keep control over the foods they produce and the communities they serve; maintain sustainable growing, processing, and distribution practices; and influence government

policies that affect their lives.

Since its 1993 founding, La Via Campesina (LVC) has become the world's largest social movement, representing 200 million farmers from 73 countries in an autonomous movement independent from any political, economic, or other type of affiliation.¹⁷ It brings together peasants, small- and medium-scale farmers, landless people, women farmers, indigenous peoples, fisher folks, pastoralists, migrants, and agricultural workers from around the world. Its focus is on defending small-scale sustainable agriculture in order to promote social justice and dignity.

Many LVC groups are deeply engaged in working for land redistribution, as conscious stewards of the land and water; others work collectively in small-scale cooperatives and rural land-seizure-based communities. They are frontline defenders of their land and water against extractive industries, mostly owned by transnational conglomerates.¹⁸ Ibrahima Coulibaly, president of the National Coordination of Peasant Organizations of Mali, notes, "Only agroecological peasant production can disconnect the price of food from financial speculation and from market distortions, restore land degraded and polluted by industrial agriculture, and produce local and healthy food for urban consumers and for our people in general."¹⁹

Most peasant movements consist of people of color; many are led by women or have women in second- and third-level leadership positions. Women are most often the actual cultivators. In the Tamil Nadu Women's Collective in India, with more than 100,000 women farmers, leadership roles, strategies, and tactics are fully determined by women. They have a busy annual calendar of grassroots community organizing, demonstrations, direct actions, media appearances, and planning sessions. They organize in groups of ten women, sharing loans, seeds, labor, and stories.

Nonetheless, people's struggles around food sovereignty in the Global South often

remain disconnected. In recent travels in Latin America, one of us met many peasant and urban cultivators who had never heard of the movement for food sovereignty or of LVC. Yet they are solving their shared problems with their counterparts all over the world in similar ways: building communities of cultivators; sharing seeds and labor; resisting land grabs, extractive industries, and gentrification; and serving their communities.

Connecting the Dots: Progressive Shifts in the Food Movement

WhyHunger, a national organization that links to global food sovereignty efforts, has networked food pantries nationally into its Grassroots Action Network. WhyHunger has recently adopted the stance that the right to food is a basic human right, thus connecting it to global groups that use the same terminology.²⁰ Beatriz Beckford, director of WhyHunger's Growing Grassroots Power program, sees a steady shift in the food movement from its early "healthy food access" period to a much more radical set of coalitions, projects, and campaigns that address race, gender, and environmental issues. She notes the shift away from the narrative of "personal choice" to the critiquing of the profit-driven food system. Beckford sees the next stage

The Food Chain Workers Alliance addresses the intersection of labor, sustainability, and climate and stresses working in coalitions.

of the food justice movement as confronting state and corporate entities through movement building and direct action. She "connects the corporate food system, stealing of land from Black people, block busting, redlining, mass

incarceration, and death of Black people by the state as ways in which the state has controlled Black bodies.” She is hopeful that this analysis and the movements that express it will expand over the next few years.²¹

Another example of this shift is found in New York City’s Just Food which started as a network of CSAs providing popular education around food and now “empowers and supports community leaders to advocate for and increase access to healthy, locally grown food, especially in underserved New York City neighborhoods.” Their recent shift to include climate, race, and gender issues shows the effects of this general change among food activists toward a more holistic and systemic approach.

Ceding to pressure from urban agriculture groups, the State of California recently passed the Neighborhood Food Act, AB 2561. The act grants people “the right to grow food for themselves regardless of their housing status,” guaranteeing to tenants and members of home-

owners’ associations the right to grow food for personal consumption by voiding contrary language in existing leases or homeowners’ association agreements.²² While this is a reform, it is based in a “rights” paradigm, not just on ensuring access to healthy foods. This has the potential to make a small but significant structural change that can contribute to changing power dynamics in California.

The food justice movement is increasingly connected with other progressive U.S. movements. Diana Robinson, campaign and education coordinator of FCWA, has seen a shift in the food justice movement over the last ten years. “The movement has created unusual bedfellows: climate, unions, community,” she says. “More organizations are talking about race. There is support in the food justice movement for Black Lives Matter and for the climate justice movements. People of color are leading those efforts because these are the issues they experience in their everyday lives. We now

The international food justice movement

*from corporate,
profit-driven control
of the food system...*



*to a democratic food and agriculture
system, with food for all as a basic human
right, and stewardship of land and water*

have more of a shared vision of how we want to change the food system. People are a lot braver. I'm excited!"²³

Living on grant money often restricts democratic participation and "movement politics."²⁴ The organizations that define and lead much of the mainstream food movement in the United States are rarely democratically structured. Most are organized as nonprofits with projects that are chosen by boards of directors, usually appointed rather than elected by constituents.²⁵ Staff members who have direct relationships with constituents most often have little freedom to veer away from decisions and plans made by their boards. Staff are usually overworked and underpaid due to underfunding of nonprofits, and organizational plans are usually geared toward foundation preferences.

This is a dilemma that most staff-driven organizations face: balancing service-oriented work that pays the bills against growing a political movement. When democratic decision-making holds sway, movement building is more likely but still not necessarily a focus. Many participants in small-scale, grassroots projects shy away from public policy, joining broader coalitions, or participating in direct actions and mobilizations.²⁶

There are exceptions of course. The New York City Community Garden Coalition, representing more than 800 community gardens and thousands of gardeners, is on the streets, at demonstrations, at public hearings, and in broader political coalitions. They struggle constantly with the New York real estate industry, which has received substantial tax breaks to build housing, with some "affordable" units, on publicly owned land, often land that has existing community gardens.

NYCCGC has only one half-time staff member, no office, and a board of directors elected directly by the members. They link the global phenomenon of "land grabs" in the Global South to those in the South Bronx and Brooklyn. They see community gardens as part

of the "commons" that the city is trying to "enclose," as occurred in England in the eighteenth century, creating private wealth at the expense of public use.²⁷ While the community garden coali-

Food is an entry into this broader analysis: The same system that makes food insecurity makes war, structural racism, disinvestment, sexism.

tion began decades ago as a "food movement" group without a critical analysis of capitalism and land, the NYCCGC now falls squarely in the food justice/food sovereignty domain. The coalition's work as part of the People's Climate Movement-NY further connects it to a system-change perspective.

The hope is that projects like these, with strong ties to both the broader food movement and to the food justice movement, will expand and serve as bridges to pull more food movement participants into struggles for social and economic justice. As the crises of capitalism deepen—with increased climate change, inequality, and corporate control—more radical solutions will be sought, both left and right. With the leftward tug of the U.S. food justice movement and the global framework of the food sovereignty movement, the broader food movement is likely to move in a more progressive direction. The potential is certainly there.

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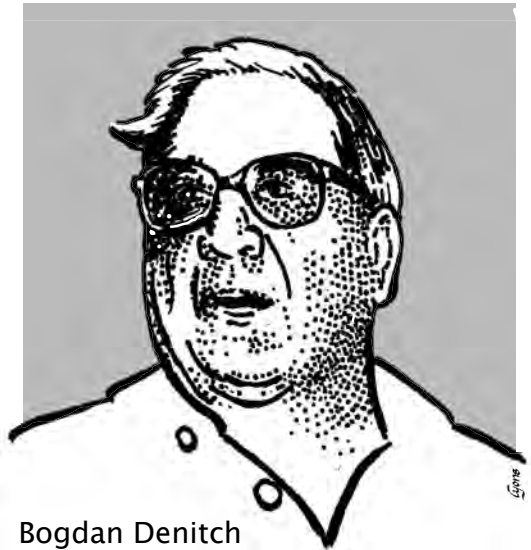
Capitalism feeding (on)
the earth

Bogdan Denitch

JASON SCHULMAN

PERHAPS IRONICALLY, shortly after writing the following memorial for Arthur Lipow, longtime *New Politics* sponsor Bogdan Denitch died on March 28 at the age of 86. Bogdan's association with *NP* reaches back to the first issue of our current series in 1986, for which he penned a piece making the case for the American left to provide critical support for the Nicaraguan Sandinistas, then engaged in a civil war with the U.S.-backed right-wing Contra army. Born a Kosovar Serb, Bogdan became a steelworker and later a professor of sociology at two City University of New York (CUNY) schools, Queens College and the CUNY Graduate Center, and wrote a number of books about Yugoslavia under Marshall Tito and its dissolution, most famously *Ethnic Nationalism: The Tragic Death of Yugoslavia* (University of Minnesota Press, 1994). He was also very active in the civil rights movement in the 1950s and early 1960s.

For most of his adult life Bogdan identified with the third-camp democratic socialist tradition promoted by *NP*, even as he joined the editorial board of Irving Howe's less radical journal *Dissent*. He was a founding member of the Young Socialist League (YSL) in 1954, bringing the not-yet-famous Michael Harrington with him. Both Harrington and Bogdan went along with the merger of the YSL and its "parent organization," the Independent Socialist League, into the more politically moderate Socialist Party (SP) of Norman Thomas and its



Bogdan Denitch

Young People's Socialist League. But while Harrington became an SP leader and remained so until the early 1970s, Bogdan left the SP milieu in the early 1960s, disgusted by the conversion of many of his erstwhile comrades into Cold War social democrats who supported not only the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba but, soon afterward, the escalation of the Vietnam War.

Moving to Yugoslavia in 1965 and staying there for five years, Bogdan never joined the Independent Socialist Clubs of America or its successor, the International Socialists (IS), which upheld the third-camp tradition, but at Harrington's request he became a founding member of a split from the SP, the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee (DSOC), in 1973. Bogdan soon co-founded DSOC's Left Caucus, which argued that DSOC tended to blur the distinction between "mass work" and

JASON SCHULMAN is a co-editor of *New Politics*.

creating an explicitly socialist presence within the left-liberal milieu. The Left Caucus tried and failed to convince IS to join DSOC to help reorient its relationship with organized labor, but it was instrumental in bringing about DSOC's merger with the post-New Left socialist-feminists of the New American Movement to create the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) in 1982, where Bogdan was made an honorary chair and the group's official representative to the Socialist International, a gathering of political parties that he would later denounce for being "not even reformist."

I first met Bogdan in 1999 when I joined the organizing committee of the Socialist Scholars Conference, the predecessor to the Left Forum, an annual convention in New York City. My first impression was that he had a rather stern personality, but if you had the conviction to stand up to him, he respected you. He was aggressive and fearless but by no means humorless (his jokes tended to be vulgar, not always a bad thing). And we often found ourselves virtually finishing each other's sentences during internal DSA discussions. But not always. He initially supported the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999 as a necessary response to the national oppression of Kosovar Albanians by Slobodan Milošević. At the time I thought this was a bad idea and I still haven't changed my mind. That said, I was far more appalled by the Milošević apologias promulgated by certain "Marxists" who claimed that all talk of the oppression of Kosovars was so much bourgeois propaganda. Bogdan, who had friends that were killed by Milošević's soldiers, at least had a first-hand

grasp of the facts, which—as he wrote in the Summer 1999 *Dissent*—were that the Serbian regime was "primarily responsible for three previous wars of aggression in the region, as well as massive ethnic cleansing and mass murder of civilians and thousands of prisoners of war in Bosnia. . . . Even before the NATO attack began, some 25,000 Albanians had been ethnically cleansed—that is, moved with great brutality out of their homes. The massacre of unarmed civilians in the village of Račak took place before the bombing." A great number of articles written by the acolytes of the late Sam Marcy and their fellow travelers frankly denied all of this. Bogdan was at least wrong for the right reasons; his neo-Stalinist critics were not merely wrong but represented something genuinely sick. That they currently act as apologists for Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria is no surprise.

Admirably, Bogdan helped to found an organization in Belgrade, Zagreb, Split, and Sarajevo called Transition to Democracy, which provides legal aid for refugees trying to return, and for victims of state violence, by suing police, judges, and local officials who obstruct refugees' return or the return of minorities to jobs they were removed from. After he was in a motor scooter accident I saw him far less often, and after he retired to the island of Brac in Croatia, I saw him not at all—except via email—for several years. His death feels particularly strange to me, as it means the emails have permanently stopped. For years he was, so to speak, there but not there, and now he's simply not there. I miss him all the same.

Art Lipow

BOGDAN DENITCH

THE DEMOCRATIC LEFT IS POORER today for the loss of a longtime active comrade. Arthur Lipow, a former member of the editorial board of *New Politics*, died this year on January 6, aged 81, his wife Gretchen by his side. Arthur grew up in Southern California and attended high school in Pasadena. He received his BA in sociology from UCLA in 1955. He then studied under Professor Seymour Martin Lipset at UC Berkeley, where he received a PhD in political sociology in 1969.

Arthur had been an active militant since the 1950s when he joined the Young Socialist League (YSL), which was connected to Max Shachtman's Independent Socialist League (ISL). He participated in the third-camp magazine *Anvil* as well as the YSL's publication *Challenge*, which was part of the ISL's newspaper *Labor Action*, edited by Hal Draper and arguably the best socialist newspaper of its time.

When both the YSL and ISL united with the Socialist Party (SP), Arthur entered the leadership of the newly merged organization. Arthur moved to New York City in the early 1960s and was very active in the SP local, working with Michael Harrington and myself among others. We met every Friday evening at an open local forum on 14th Street. The old-time SPers stupidly stopped the meetings in order to lessen the influence of Shachtman and Draper within the party. This helped lead to Shachtman's move further rightwards and a political break between Hal and Max. Arthur followed Draper into the Independent Socialist Clubs of America, a new third-camp organization. Eventually he joined the Democratic Socialists of America, where I remain an honorary chair.



Art Lipow

Arthur taught at a number of institutions of higher education, the last of which was Birkbeck College and the Institute of United States Studies at the University of London. He published four books: *Authoritarian Socialism: Edward Bellamy and the Nationalist Movement*; *Political Parties and Democracy*; *Neither Capitalism nor Socialism: Theories of Bureaucratic Collectivism* (co-edited with Ernest Haberkern); and *The Other City* (co-edited with Susanne MacGregor). In England he was a member of the Labour Party, an active participant in European Nuclear Disarmament, and a founder of "Charter 88," the British constitutional reform movement that proposed a Bill of Rights for Britain.

Upon retiring in 1998 Arthur returned to California. Together with Gretchen he co-founded the Alameda Public Affairs Forum in 2004 and the Center for Global Peace and Democracy in 2007. He was also active in the Green Party.

Arthur was a natural teacher and gifted researcher. He also had a gift for lifelong friendship, as we were friends for half a century. I greatly miss him.

Donald Room

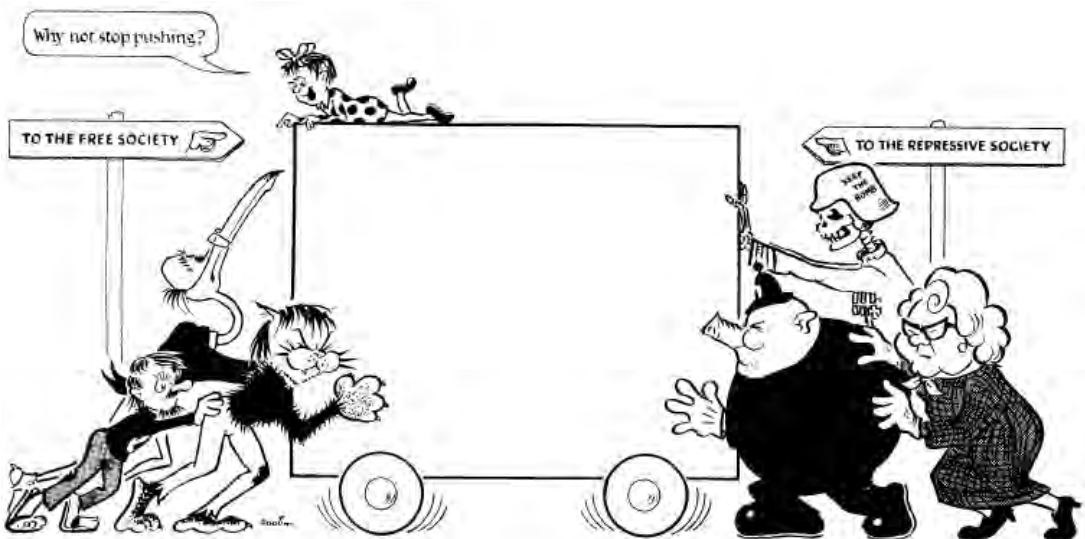
KENT WORCESTER

ENGLISH ANARCHISM HAS PRODUCED a number of fine cartoonists, including Clifford Harper, John Olday, Paul Petard, and, arguably, the artist Hunt Emerson and the writer Alan Moore. Another is Donald Room, who is probably best known for his comic strip *Wildcat* and for the seven *Wildcat* collections that have been issued by the London-based Freedom Press.

KENT WORCESTER *has two books coming out this year: Peter Kuper: Conversations (University Press of Mississippi), and Navigating the Profession: Sage Advice from the Pages of PS (American Political Science Association).*

Donald Room was born in Bradford in 1928, and he became an anarchist at the age of 16. As he told *The Comics Journal* in 2002, “for a period of about four weeks I belonged to the Young Communist League.” But “I didn’t like the earlier stages of the Communist program, which was to seize power and hold on to power for as long as it took for people to become so interdependent that the state would wither away. I didn’t understand why the state wouldn’t hold onto power indefinitely.”

“Progress toward anarchy,” he explained, “should start off in the direction of anarchy, not in precisely the opposite direction.” His father,



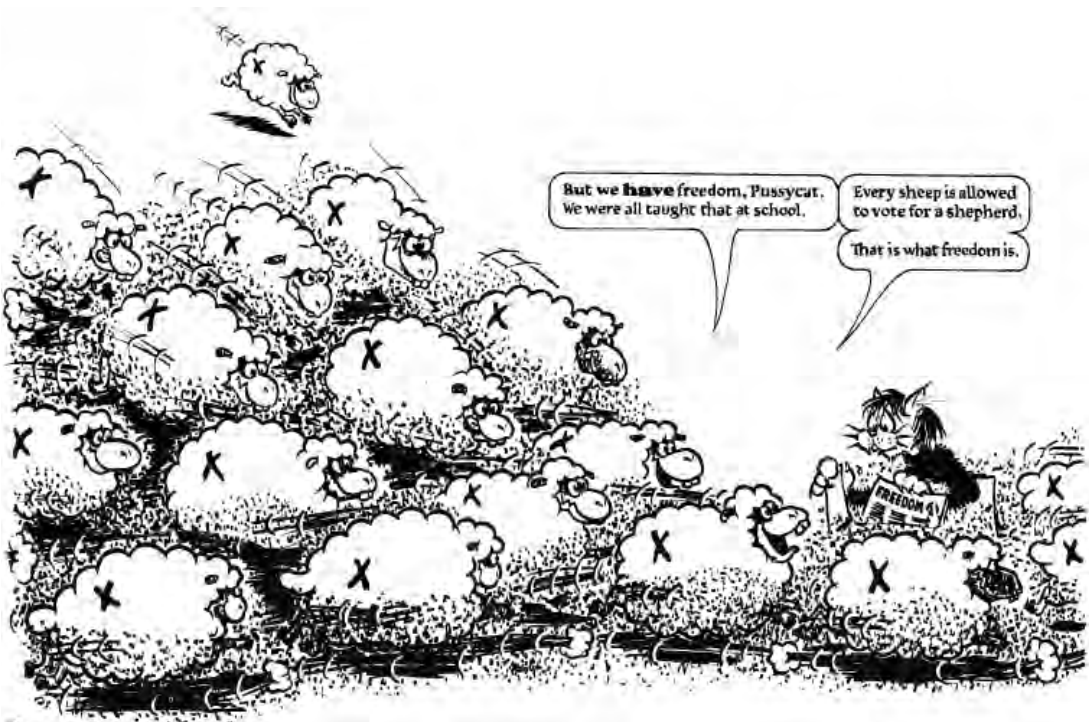
MISQUOTATION. The question of when (or even whether) anarchy will be attained is not important. What is important is that we work towards anarchy. I dare say somebody said that.

who worked as a “machine metal worker in the bus depot,” was active in the Labour Party and soon became worried about his son’s political leanings. When his dad “went to a leading member of the local party,” the man said, “Encourage him, my friend. All the top people in the Labour Party were anarchists of one kind or another when they were younger.”

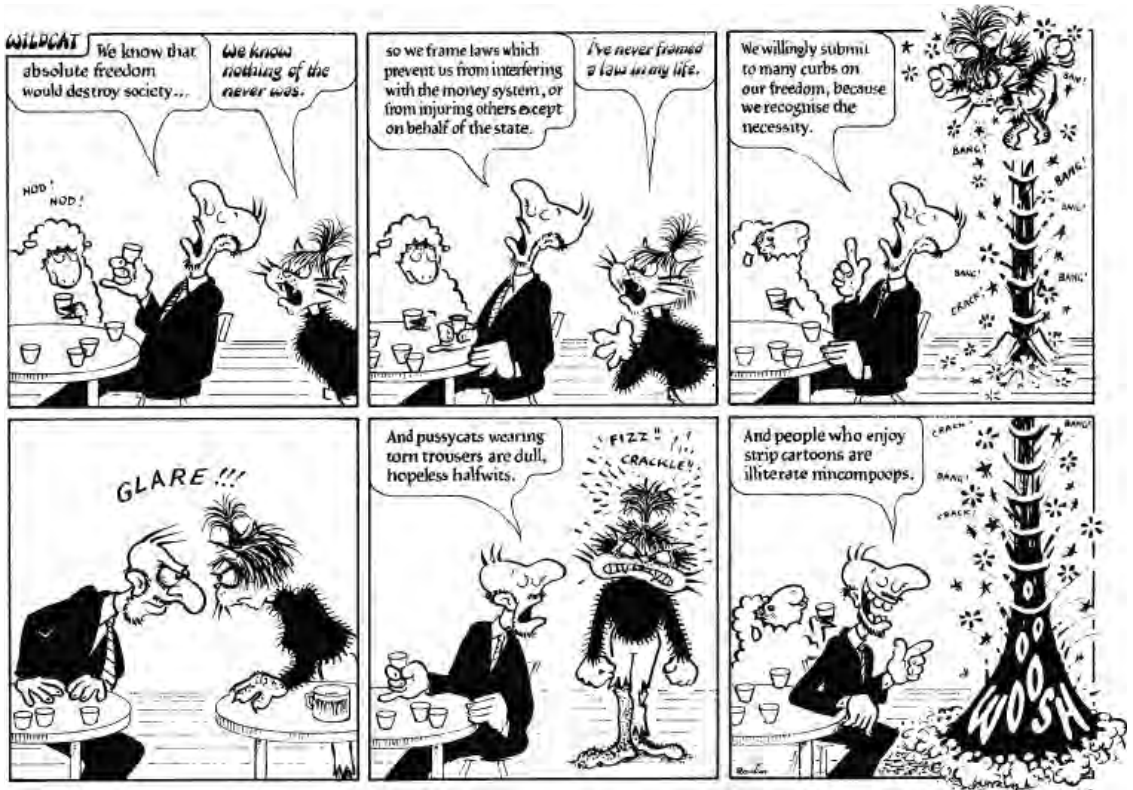
As it happened, Rooom remained committed to his youthful ideals. Conscripted into the military toward the end of World War II, he was given a political rating as a subversive, which meant that he couldn’t be posted overseas. As a result, he spent most of his service working in the kitchen of a “transit camp for married couples.” He did not receive a pension, but the army “did pay for my art school education,” and so he was able to study commercial design at the Regional College of Art, Bradford. In the early fifties he moved to London to find employment in the commercial arts, and to work with the circle around the newspaper *Freedom*. Long based in the East End of London, *Freedom* newspaper and the Freedom Press

were originally launched in the 1880s by Peter Kropotkin, Charlotte Wilson, and a handful of other anti-statists. Rooom ended up working in advertising and then taught typographic design at the London College of Printing until he took early retirement. For many years he also pursued a freelance career as a gag cartoonist, and his cartoons turned up in the *Daily Mirror*, *Peace News*, *Private Eye*, the *Spectator*, and elsewhere. *Wildcat* started appearing in *Freedom* in 1974 and would continue to appear in its pages on a monthly or biweekly basis for the next four decades.

Room was briefly famous for his role in exposing corruption in the London police force. He had taken part in a 1963 demonstration in London against the King and Queen of Greece, who were in Britain for an official state visit only a few months after right-wing military officers had staged a coup in Greece with the tacit support of the monarchy. After the protest was over, a detective sergeant named Harold Challenor arrested Room along with four plainclothes police officers. At the time of the







arrest, Challenor claimed to have recovered part of a brick from Rooom's jacket, which meant that Rooom could be charged with carrying an offensive weapon. Fortunately, as he was waiting in a holding cell, he remembered reading that "if a stone had been in my pocket it would have left traces. ... I knew I had a case, if I could show that the suit I was wearing had not been tampered with after the demonstration." The police made "two big mistakes," Rooom later explained. "The first was that they kept me overnight in the holding cell so that there was no doubt about the suit I was wearing. The other was that the police never put the brick in my pocket. This not only led to my acquittal, but to a public inquiry, which received an enormous amount of press coverage at the time. A string of convictions from other demonstrations were overturned as a result of this case."

Toward the end of oan interview with

Rooom for *Comics Journal* I asked him whether "anarchists have any reason to be optimistic these days." He responded,

Well, I have. Any anarchist of my age must think there has been some progress over the past 60 years. Certain activities that were once considered crimes are no longer prosecuted. Take homosexuality, for example. We now have a homosexual police commander. Fifty years ago he would have been arrested. Also, the general attitude toward the monarchy has changed. When [the satirical magazine] *Private Eye* first started they were very polite toward the Queen. Now, any cartoonist can be as rude as they like about the royal family. The whole culture of deference toward authority has gone down. So that's good news.

My final question was a follow-up: "And would you mention the fall of the Soviet system?" "I don't know," he said, after a long pause. "There were two great powers for 50 years, and

A certain shepherd
oppressed the sheep
with cruel laws

- 1 SHEEP WILL BE SHORN
AND WOOL CONFISCATED
- 2 SHEEP WITH POOR WOOL
YIELDS WILL BE SLAUGHTERED
- 3 SHEEP MAY NOT SPEAK
EXCEPT TO SAY **BAAA!**



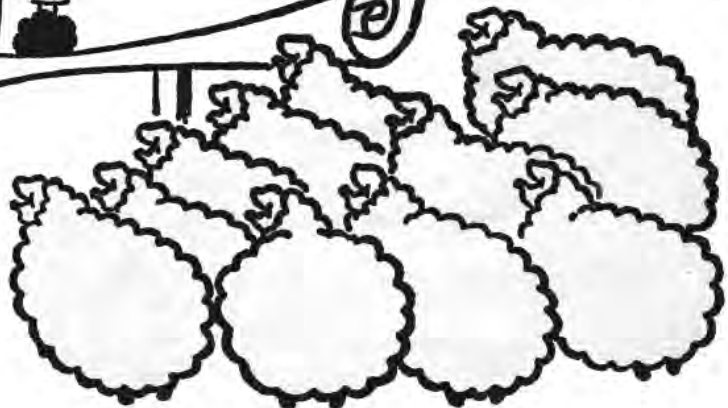
The sheep became unmanageable,
so the shepherd was replaced.

The new shepherd gave his flock
a Charter of Freedom

- 1 Citizens have the right
to be freed of Wool.
- 2 Citizens lacking wool
will be posthumously Honoured.
- 3 Citizens have absolute
Freedom of Speech.

and all the sheep
together voiced a loyal

BAAA!



now there is only one. I'm not sure we're any safer."

THESE SELECTIONS OF ROOUM'S WORK are mostly self-explanatory—the first image, for example, expresses his conception of social progress as a question of pushing the cart forward rather than, say, going to war. On the left hand side you have the left-Labour activist in sandals, the egghead stork, and Wildcat herself, who wears ragged trousers; while on the right, pushing in the opposite direction, you have a policeman, a skeleton, and Mary Whitehouse, the midcentury anti-porn campaigner. In the second image Wildcat tries to sell *Freedom* to sheep who somehow manage to tell themselves that voting matters. The thick motion lines buried beneath the sheep's hooves is a classic Rooum touch that gives the image a heightened sense of charge and energy. For some reason there's a mermaid in the third image, in the lower left of the panel, who looks a lot like Wildcat. There's also a strong sense of class division that is characteristic of a great deal of English cartooning, not just anarchist or, indeed, self-consciously left-wing.

While the first three images are single panel, and could be reasonably described as

editorial cartoons, the fourth and fifth images are squarely in the comic strip tradition. The fourth shows Wildcat and the egg-headed stork conversing about issues of the day. *No to this!* And *no to that!* Wildcat exclaims, in elegantly drawn bursts of dialogue. "How about negativism?" asks the stork. "Thanks," says Wildcat, "No to negativism!" The stork can only shake Wildcat out of her rut by offering her a nice cup of tea. *Yes!*

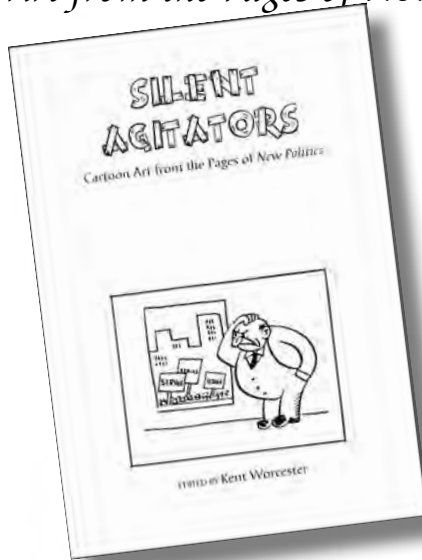
The final image is by far the most complex, at least in formal terms. Wildcat's vertical outburst on the far right of the strip not only provides a striking visual contrast to the misshapen pontificator's lumpy curves, but also defies the laws of space and time. "Part of the cartoonist's job," Rooum told the *Comics Journal*, "is to decorate the page. It's got to add to the visual impact of the page." In the same interview, Rooum described Wildcat as "an angry anarchist, without much of an intellectual basis for her actions. She knows what she wants." I then suggested there's a sense in which, "no matter how patiently the stork explains things to her she will always be on a tear." "Ah yes," replied Rooum, "she's a comic strip character."

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After Bernie—Party Time?

DAVID FINKEL

BERNIE SANDERS' PRESIDENTIAL campaign has rocketed across the political landscape in this most abnormal of election seasons—an independent, self-defined democratic socialist running in the Democratic primary contest. Widely expected to fizzle out early, Sanders' campaign instead gathered momentum as the primaries progressed, revealing the gulf that separates the Democrats' corporate-driven apparatus from much of its angry working-class and youthful voting base.

Despite the mass excitement Sanders generated, and the scare he threw into the party machinery, there was never a chance that he would be allowed to get the nomination. The party elites were 99 percent convinced, after all, that he could not win the November general election—and 1 percent utterly terrified that he just might. (At this writing, in any case, with the last round of primaries ahead in May and early June, it appears that Hillary Clinton's delegate lead is large enough that the nomination won't need to be “stolen” from Sanders by means of

the unelected party superdelegates.)

The significance of the Sanders movement, however, vastly transcends this particular election. For one thing, the working-class anger that he (and Donald Trump, from a reactionary, economic-nationalist direction) tapped may have killed the corporate coup known as the Trans-Pacific Partnership, although the movement must be wary of a treacherous postelection, lame-duck Congress. But

well beyond that important struggle, breaking through the fundamental contradiction between the potential of Sanders' movement and the political structure within which it's currently ensnared could set the course of U.S. politics for a generation.

If capital generally prefers the Republican Party, *it equally needs the Democratic Party* and absolutely will not allow it to become the vehicle for anything resembling “democratic socialism,” let alone the incubator of revived militant labor or social movements.

Bernie Sanders from the outset ruled out the option of an independent candidacy, and he can be expected ultimately to join the “party unity” chorus for defeating the right-wing menace. That menace is real, but the tragic truth is that

Empowering Progressive Third
Parties in the United States:
Defeating Duopoly, Advancing
Democracy

JONATHAN H. MARTIN, EDITOR
New York and London: Routledge, 2016.
268 pages + index.

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the Democrats' "unity" means channeling the "political revolution" into the cynical triangulation that shoves immigrants' rights, the needs of working people, Black Lives Matter—and everything else that matters, too—to the back of the Clinton campaign bus, in exchange for some meaningless convention platform verbiage and empty promises.

That poses the question that thousands of activists for Sanders, and leading organizers of the impressive Labor for Bernie initiative (www.laborforbernie.org), are grappling with: how to keep the movement and its momentum alive, not just through November but beyond, as a sustained, powerful political force?

The Sanders campaign itself, of course, is not reproducible in its 2016 form. Bernie Sanders is a unique individual who's campaigned, governed, and legislated for decades in and from an atypical and largely rural state. He will not make repeated presidential runs, and there isn't some other prominent, long-standing, independent socialist politician to whom that torch can be passed. The question is not whether to replicate this singular fortuitous circumstance, but how to build upon it.

In this regard the collection of essays in *Empowering Third Parties*, compiled by Jonathan H. Martin, could hardly be more timely. The book doesn't pretend to offer "the answer." The chapters from a spectrum of contributors, some complementary and others frankly in conflict with each other, offer a range of perspectives and strategic arguments. This book is not about Sanders' 2016 campaign itself, although there are references to it; rather, the book's importance lies in raising and discussing the very issues that Sanders' supporters will be tackling.

Within the Sanders movement, it's entirely predictable that some forces will argue for a long-term project of taking over the Democratic Party while others will motivate the need for a sharp break and the creation of a new party independent of capital, and many will look for a strategy that combines components of work

both "inside" and "outside" the Democratic machinery. Those views are all represented here, but the discussion is much richer than merely an ideological exchange, getting into the guts of what independent politics actually look like at the grassroots level.

How does electoral action really succeed? What kind of candidates, issues, and organizing tactics can make it work? What's the timeline for creating something that lasts? Does the starting point need to be at the national level of forging a new party, or in local campaigns and working upward? Where and how can the crucial social forces of labor, the African American community, and other communities of color become engines of independent politics rather than bulwarks of the Democratic establishment as they've tended to be (although not exclusively so) in the 2016 primaries?

Here I'll summarize the main arguments that emerge from these diverse contributions. The editor, Jonathan H. Martin, a professor of sociology at Framingham State University, introduces himself as an activist with "an interest in left-leaning politics my whole life, galvanized in large part by my parents' involvement in the progressive social movements of the 1960s and early 1970s." The variety of initiatives that he labels the "progressive third-party movement" is an attempt "to challenge, impact, and defeat a party system in which the Republicans and Democrats are so dominant that together they comprise what is sometimes called a 'duopoly.'" (xi)

In short, this collection makes no pretense of "neutrality" toward the U.S. two-party system. Martin's agenda is not to celebrate the system, but to contribute to breaking it. His own view, laid out in Chapter 5, "Community Connections," emphasizes the central importance of progressive third-party candidates' "community connectedness" to their districts.

This, Martin's research on Green Party and Vermont Progressive Party campaigns reveals, is a better predictor for winning candidacies

than their formal programs, money, campaign organization, and other factors. He concludes that a struggle for government by and for the people “cannot succeed unless it is joined by candidates who are widely perceived to be ‘of the people.’” (109)

The point is borne out, for example, in the chapter “Lessons of the Vermont Progressive Party” by longtime Bernie Sanders ally and organizer Terry Bouricius. Charting the long march of the VPP and Sanders in particular, as he ran for Burlington mayor, U.S. Congress, and Senate before launching the current presidential primary run, Bouricius talks about confronting the “spoiler dynamic” in U.S. politics, where a progressive candidate may be labeled as the cause of a right-wing victory.

Bouricius arrives at some rather sharply worded conclusions that it’s a “fool’s errand” to saturate voters with policy details. “Thinking of voting as an act of group solidarity on behalf of one’s team, class, or political party is more fruitful. ... For example, ordinary Vermonters of seemingly different political stripes often say that the reason they come out to vote for Bernie Sanders is simply because he represents the ‘common person.’” (80)

Much of the interest to be found in particular experiences lies in the richness and nuance of local conditions, which are impossible to properly summarize here (as for example in Patrick Quinlan’s “The Rise of the Portland [Maine] Greens”). The contributions, however, can be broadly identified by where they stand on the necessity of clearly *independent* political action.

Ramy Khalil, of Socialist Alternative and campaign manager for Kshama Sawant, leads off with “How a Socialist Won,” recounting Sawant’s election to Seattle City Council in 2013. The factors that went into the victory included Sawant’s impressive performance as a candidate, the complacency of the longtime Democratic incumbent, the strategic role of Socialist Alternative, the support of a liberal local weekly newspaper, and the presence of

a vibrant Fight for \$15 movement in the city. (Subsequently, Sawant also won a hard-fought re-election in 2015.)

If Socialist Alternative is far from shy

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about promoting its own importance in Seattle, the story of Richmond, California, is one of a successful broad coalition organizing against corporate power. “A Green Becomes Mayor,” by Green Party organizer and former Santa Monica Mayor Mike Feinstein, discusses the 2006 election of Gayle McLaughlin in the face of massively funded resistance from Chevron Oil and its corporate allies. A cofounder of the Richmond Progressive Alliance (which currently holds a majority on city council, including McLaughlin following her two mayoral terms), McLaughlin through her activist record in Richmond since 1998 also illustrates the value of the “community connectedness” stressed by Jonathan Martin.

Theresa Amato, national campaign manager for Ralph Nader’s 2000 and 2004 presidential runs, passionately argues the need to go “Beyond the ‘Spoiler’ Myth.” Amato insists, “The tendency to denigrate and dismiss third-party candidates as spoilers is part of a larger pattern of anti-democratic, institutionalized

discrimination against them and against ordinary voters and disenchanted nonvoters.” In fact, “our flawed electoral process allows for that possible ‘spoiler’ outcome, and it is a price we pay for open competition until we fix the electoral system.” (117)

In fact, Amato points to a number of

Dudzic and Isaac assert, “While this is not the time to dust off the Labor Party, it certainly is the time for working-class activists to begin the discussion of what it would take to build an independent, class-based political party.”

positive after-effects of Nader’s candidacy, suggesting that it helped draw attention to the obscene dominance of corporate campaign cash and partly inspired the Occupy movement and the Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden revelations of U.S. war crimes and the surveillance state.

Readers of *New Politics* may be already familiar with Thomas Harrison’s 2012 online piece “The Left Should Declare Its Independence from the Democrats,” adapted here as “Breaking Through by Breaking Free,” the most detailed presentation in the book calling for something new. Harrison envisions “a movement-type party filled with activists and democratically controlled by its membership,” which “should campaign systematically for its views through demonstrations, literature, speakers’ bureaus, and forums of all kinds—not just campaigns for elective office.” (226)

Such a party’s purpose would be “solely to fight for the interests of working people (includ-

ing women, minorities, and LGBT people,” and it would be controlled by them. (230)

Obviously it’s necessary to critically scrutinize recent efforts to bring such a party into being, with results that have been mixed at best. Sayeed Iftekar Ahmed, in “The U.S. Greens in Presidential Elections,” points to the miniscule Green showings apart from Nader’s 2.74 percent in 2000, along with the chicken-and-egg problem of how to attract more prominent candidates and build more credible organizational infrastructure and funding capacity. He proposes that “If the Greens can build a somewhat more candidate-centered party, they may be better able to recruit more viable candidates, raise more money, and strengthen their grassroots organization.” (159)

The question of how a “more candidate-centered party” keeps its candidates loyal and accountable to the party’s core principles—which Ahmed also suggests might need to be adapted for a broader public—is left somewhat hanging.

There is, of course, the massive problem of where a new party’s institutional support and funding base would come from. The labor movement, even in its weakened condition, would appear to be a prime possibility. Two relevant chapters explore this potential and its contradictions.

In “Labor Party Time? Not Yet,” Mark Dudzic and Katherine Isaac, veterans of the Labor Party (1996–2007) experience, take a close look at the party’s inability to forge “a strategy to extract the labor movement from the tentacles of the two-party electoral process. An organizing dynamic took hold in which enthusiasm for developing an alternative to the Democrats peaked in the off-cycle election years and diminished as unions mobilized for yet another round of elections.” (176)

This conundrum must be only more acute today, with private-sector unionism further shrunk and with public-sector unions, heavily dependent on state funding of services under conditions of crisis-ridden state budgets and

viciously reactionary legislatures, desperately struggling to keep the far right from taking over everything.

Nonetheless, drawing on what was accomplished during the party's life span, Dudzic and Isaac assert, "While this is not the time to dust off the Labor Party, it certainly is the time for working-class activists to begin the discussion of what it would take to build an independent, class-based political party." (179)

By way of counterpoint, music theorist and Green Party member John Halle in "Don't Wait for Labor: The Necessity of Building a Left Third Party at the Grassroots," argues that the Labor Party failed to take local electoral initiatives, some of which could have been in coalition with the Green Party, and thereby rendered itself pretty much irrelevant. Halle draws partly on his experience in New Haven and on the example of a local labor electoral initiative in Lorain, Ohio, which showed promise. At the same time, he cites the rather ultra-left conclusion of historian Eric Chester's *True Mission* that the concept of a national labor party has always been a ploy to keep labor ensnared and subordinate to the Democrats, so it's not quite clear where this argument leads.

In a brief and somewhat perfunctory contribution, Daniel Cantor of the Working Families Party presents that organization's "fusion" strategy, which generally means running Democratic candidates on the WFP party line to "pull Democrats in a progressive direction." (205) This included supporting the distinctly

non-progressive Governor Andrew Cuomo in 2010 and again in the 2014 primary against challenger Zephyr Teachout. (In 2016 the WFP has endorsed Bernie Sanders, triggering a withdrawal of funds from some of its union backers.)

In an acid comment on the WFP, Thomas Harrison points out that in the 2010 election,

a genuine progressive, Howie Hawkins, got 59,906 [votes] as a Green candidate. ... The WFP did not offer him its support, thereby demonstrating its automatic commitment to the Democrats. This commitment was again shamefully apparent in 2013 when the WFP sent in operatives to help defeat Hawkins, this time running a strong Green campaign for the Syracuse city council against a pro-developer Democratic incumbent. (214-215)

We're ultimately left with questions and conversations, not solutions. Interested observers, and above all activists in the Bernie Sanders movement, Black Lives Matter, Fight for \$15, and the immigrant rights struggle, will find plenty of thought-provoking material to ponder here.

Everyone will find parts that resonate with their experience, and also much to disagree with—which in the present state of flux in U.S. politics, and in our movements, can actually be a very good thing. After all, the Occupy movement, the Dreamers, and Black Lives Matter did not arise from a blueprint but from life. Quite possibly these movements will arrive at some creative flashes that aren't anticipated yet.

Death, Politics, and the Anthropocene

JAMIE MUNRO

RATHER THAN START HIS BOOK about climate change with a solitary man contemplating a streambed run dry or taking in the eternal wonders of an old-growth forest, Roy Scranton begins *Learning to Die in the Anthropocene* in occupied Iraq in 2003, where Scranton served as a private in the U.S. Army. As his convoy drove into recently bombarded Baghdad, he entered a world in which “the government had collapsed, walls were going up, tribal lines were being drawn, and brutal hierarchies were being savagely established” (13). Baghdad, with its shattered infrastructure and escalating violence, was a vision of our future.

How do we live together—or live at all—in a world so hostile to civilization? What can pull us through ecological, and possibly civilizational, collapse? After summarizing the science that makes clear that such a future is increasingly likely, Scranton draws his answers to these questions from his life as a soldier. Taking advice from a 300-year-old manual for samurai, he writes that “instead of fearing my end, I practiced owning it. Every morning, after doing maintenance on my Humvee, I would imagine getting blown up, shot, lit on fire, run over by a tank, torn apart by dogs, captured and

beheaded. Then, before we rolled out through the wire, I’d tell myself that I didn’t need to worry anymore because I was already dead” (22).

Those of us living through the Anthropocene—a clumsy term for our current, human-influenced geologic period—must learn to die as well. In order to fully confront and survive an uncertain future, we have to reckon with both our individual and civilizational mortality. Our civilization will not survive, and we might not

Learning to Die in the Anthropocene

ROY SCRANTON
City Light Books, 2015, 142 pages. \$9.27

either. Reminding ourselves of this—a process that Scranton terms “learning to die”—is the only way to exist in the chaotic years to come. But apart from recognizing our mortality, what exactly does “learning to die” entail? Scranton writes, “Learning to die as an individual means letting go of our predispositions and fear. Learning to die as a civilization means letting go of this particular way of life and its ideas of identity, freedom, success, and progress” (24).

For Scranton, the figure most capable of “learning to die” is not a soldier, but a humanist philosopher. This figure is “the one who is willing to stop and ask troublesome questions, the one who is willing to interrupt, the one who resonates on other channels and with slower, deeper rhythms” (24). Scranton fixates on the concept of the philosopher as “interrupter” as opposed to disrupter. The interrupter does not smash a system of social production, but interrupts its flows and might even succeed in reinterpreting the world around us. The value of

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this perspective, Scranton argues, is that it helps us “respond autonomously to social excitation” rather than reacting to it and ultimately passing it on (87–88). If we truly want a more stable and sane world, we must engage in this refusal of excitation. It is our only hope for carrying humanity through the coming chaotic decades and centuries.

As part of a return to humanist philosophy in the face of civilizational collapse, Scranton also makes a plea for the preservation of humanity’s store of knowledge: “As biological and cultural diversity is threatened across the world by capitalist monoculture and mass extinction, we must build arks: not just biological arks, to carry forward endangered genetic data, but also cultural arks, to carry forward endangered wisdom” (109). Instead of fruitlessly scrambling to save the physical remnants of a dying civilization, Scranton urges us to save what we can of humanity’s accumulated wisdom and use it as a beacon during a long, dark future.

This is a different kind of climate change book. Not so much an elegy for things lost as a plea for a different kind of preservation, Scranton’s text is at once deeply realistic and woefully blind to the forces that will shape the coming decades. Apart from the problems with the concept of the Anthropocene—mainly that it imagines a uniform, undifferentiated “humanity,” rather than a social system, at the root of the climate crisis—which have been best elucidated by Andreas Malm¹ and Jason W. Moore², *Learning to Die in the Anthropocene*’s biggest shortcomings are its evasion of questions of power and ultimately, its confused insistence that the politics of our current historical moment are a dead end.

While Scranton’s call for humanist philosophy in the face of civilizational destruction is laudable—particularly amid the chorus of mainstream voices calling climate change a technical problem with a technical solution—it’s missing something big. In a recent piece on the Anthropocene and human meaning-making

published in “The Stone” blog on the *New York Times* website, Scranton wrote, “We need to work together to transform a global order of meaning focused on accumulation into a new order of meaning that knows the value of limits, transience and restraint.”³ Even if this sounds appealing, how might it be accomplished? How does an “order of meaning” replace an order of accumulation? The fuzzy figure of the “interrupter” doesn’t seem capable of building it alone. So how will it be done?

A look at Scranton’s commentary on the climate movement shows us how he believes it will *not* happen. Scranton draws on Timothy Mitchell’s *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil* (Verso, 2011) to make the argument that the climate movement is all but hopeless. Mitchell links the emergence of democracy to the process of extracting and distributing coal. Since many workers were involved in this process, their ability to shut down the flow of energy to the economy gave them leverage to demand greater political power for the masses. Oil, which is extracted and distributed with much less human labor, creates a different political context for resistance. Scranton argues that social movements cannot force change at this point in history because “they cannot put their hands on the real flows of power, because they do not help produce it. They only consume” (60).

Both Mitchell and Scranton argue persuasively that this is a serious problem for the climate movement and all movements that hope to create a more just social order. But Scranton’s critique is not just that it is difficult to wage battles at the point of energy production, it is that the problem runs deeper than ownership and control of energy production. After reporting on the failings of the People’s Climate March and the subsequent Flood Wall Street demonstrations, Scranton wrote, “Across the spectrum ... nobody seems to have the tools, clout, or conceptual framework we need” to deal with climate change “or even to come up with a good plan to protect ourselves

from the greatest dangers” (67). Faced with this dire situation, Scranton writes, “The problem is nobody has real answers. *The problem is that the problem is us*” (68).

In other words, organized efforts to change the way we collectively live are doomed because *we* are the problem. To hell with politics, we have to get busy dying.

The main problem with disavowing politics is that everything is political. Scranton is correct in pointing out that no one with the power to seriously take on or even mitigate our current crises has yet emerged, but does that mean collective action is now futile dithering? Declaring that “the problem is us” necessarily dismisses any effort to collectively imagine a decent, or even livable, future. Scranton instead suggests we “learn to see each day as the death of what came before” (27).

How such a lofty, vague call to detach ourselves from history (while still somehow holding on to the humanities) can be seen as the *true* imperative, while reimagining and fighting for our collective future has become a doomed undertaking in the name of realism, is baffling to me. Whether or not we’ve “lost” on climate change shouldn’t determine whether we imagine a new world or retreat into ourselves. The climate’s “tipping points” cannot be the points beyond which we disregard our political imaginations. And accepting societal “death” cannot be the precondition for imagining and working toward a new society.

But that’s not really the main point to be made about Scranton’s vision for our future. The point is that Scranton’s vision is actually deeply political. Preserving the collected wisdom of the humanities, cultivating compassion and love, “interrupting” flows of ideas and commands—these are all obviously social projects. To hope they can be detached from politics might seem appealing in this dark time, but it’s just as much a dream as the utopian political projects Scranton cavalierly dismisses. While Scranton doesn’t

specify who should pursue these political goals, the tone of the book suggests that the weight falls on individuals. The humanist philosopher as “interrupter” is his true agent of change, or at least of survival. At its worst moments this seems to fall into the worst currents of “fix yourself to fix the world” environmentalism, without the part about fixing the world.

Even if that’s not Scranton’s political vision, the goals don’t really add up. The notion that we can pursue the twin aims of creating a humanity detached from immediate historical conditions and strike out on our own as apolitical “interrupters” while still cultivating “patience, reflection, and love” (27) seems bizarrely discordant. While many have wished that we can pursue these goals apart from any political framework that fosters them, that dream has never manifested itself. “Patience, reflection, and love” are fine things, but they’re only words if they have no social context. “Interrupting” and transforming ideas apart from any political setting is similarly impossible. The reality is that the ambitious, multiple goals of *Learning to Die in the Anthropocene* are not really apolitical, they’re just incompatible and, ultimately, incoherent.

Still, Scranton’s voice is an important one. He reminds us that the left should not be seduced by our own colorful protests or by international agreements that promise to save the world without a real plan. Baghdad is a better place to grapple with our collective future than a nature center. We just shouldn’t make the mistake of thinking it’s the only vision of our future.

NOTES

1. Andreas Malm, “The Anthropocene Myth,” *Jacobin* (March 2015), www.jacobinmag.com/2015/03/anthropocene-capitalism-climate-change/
2. Jason W. Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life* (Verso, 2015), excerpted at www.versobooks.com/blogs/2360-jason-w-moore-anthropocene-or-capitalocene
3. opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/12/21/were-doomed-now-what/

Blueprints for the Future

JASON SCHULMAN

DESIGNING SOCIALISM IS A COMPLETE reprint, as an e-book, of the special April 2012 issue of the American academic Marxist journal *Science & Society*. It continues that publication's tradition of providing, as stated by its usual editor David Laibman, "a major worldwide pulse-taking of the state of play in *theoretical socialism*" every April of the years ending in "2" in every decade (Campbell, ed., 7). Much like the April 2002 issue—to which Campbell contributed an essay—it is primarily concerned with justifying specific visions

of democratic economic planning in a post-capitalist society. (No attention is given to what the details of a socialist *polity* might be, though some of this volume's authors have taken up this question elsewhere.¹) In fact, some of the book's contributors—Paul Cockshott and Allin Cottrell, Pat Devine, Robin Hahnel, and Laibman himself—are largely saying here what they have said before, at length and in other books and articles, albeit with more emphasis on "why" than "how" this time around. On the other hand, *Of the People, By the People* is Hahnel's latest explanation of the "how" of his vision of

a socialist economy ("participatory economics" or "Parecon"), which he provides in a far more clear and succinct way than in previous books on the subject.²

Aside from two relevant book reviews which will not be discussed here,³ *Designing Socialism* consists of the aforementioned authors—as well as Chinese academics Xiaoquin Ding, Peihua Mao, and Xing Yin, and also the popular Chilean socialist writer Marta Harnecker—giving thorough answers to five questions: 1) why socialism? (the ultimate rationale), 2) feasibility

and coordination (how would it work?), 3) incentives and consciousness, 4) stages and productive forces, and 5) social and long-term planning (13).

The authors' answers to the first question are generally not that different from each other; most are clear that the point of the socialist project is, as Devine says, "to enable the full development of human potentialities" (23). Only the contributions of Ding, Mao, Yin, and Hahnel particularly stand out in a negative fashion: The Chinese writers claim that "rules about socialism ... [were] embodied in the practice of the socialist countries" (29)—the "socialist countries" being those under official Communism; they also argue that "the socialist system provides higher labor productivity ... than capitalism" (29),

Designing Socialism: Visions, Projections, Models

AL CAMPBELL, ED.

New York: The Guilford Press, 2012.
164 pp.

Of the People, By the People: The Case for a Participatory Economy

ROBIN HAHNEL

Portland: Soapbox Press (distributed by AK Press), 2012. 160 pp.

JASON SCHULMAN is co-editor of *New Politics* and author of *Neoliberal Labour Governments and the Union Response* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

which would be true (in a genuine socialism) but misses the key point that such productivity has no innately socialist content if labor remains alienated, as it did in the “socialist countries.” Hahnel, for his part, says many unobjectionable things, but also argues that “the dictatorship of the proletariat, the vanguard political party, [and] democratic centralism ... have no place in a socialism worthy of the twenty-first century” (30). He doesn’t consider that perhaps these concepts were greatly *distorted* over the course of the twentieth century and that it might be worthwhile for socialists today to embrace their *original* meanings, even if we choose to use different language.⁴ He also claims that

Too many twentieth-century socialists failed to take racial and gender issues as seriously as class issues and often urged minorities, women, and gays to subordinate their agendas in order to avoid dividing the working class and thereby diverting it from its historic mission. Just as totalitarian tendencies stemmed from failing to take democracy seriously, relegating national liberation, racial, and gender struggles to a secondary status stemmed from anointing the economic sphere of social life with a status above the cultural, kinship, and political spheres of social life, even when this was not warranted (31).

While Hahnel has a point regarding socialists’ general lack of interest in gay liberation until, at the earliest, the late 1960s, there is little reason to offer apologies regarding the other issues. Most American socialists, at any rate, have been overtly committed to Black and Latino liberation in the United States since at least the 1920s, whatever their theoretical differences. While socialist theory and practice concerning the particular burdens that working-class women endure might have been inadequate before the 1970s, socialist history vis-a-vis this subject is still more than honorable in comparison with our bourgeois political counterparts (Maoist verbal attacks on socialist-feminist conferences notwithstanding). Hahnel shouldn’t write as if August Bebel, Clara Zetkin, and Alexandra

Kollontai, to name but three classical Marxists who addressed “the woman question,” had never existed. Additionally, most socialists—not to be confused with opportunistic official Communists with state power—have been unwavering supporters of national liberation struggles at least since Lenin wrote *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*. If anything, many have been too uncritically supportive of the parties leading such struggles and are perennially let down by the anti-worker authoritarianism of those parties once in power, in cases from Algeria to Vietnam; but at no point did we demote such struggles to a secondary status. And are we not well beyond the point where anyone can confidently say that “minorities, women, and gays” each have a monolithic “agenda”?

Hahnel also states that “too many twentieth-century socialists were about exerting human mastery over nature” without explaining why this is necessarily in conflict with “environmental sustainability” (31). David Laibman explains that the two are not in conflict; while “we must progressively extend our mastery over nature (our finite global home),” we must also “take increasing responsibility for sustainable existence on Earth, including that of all other creatures with whom we share that space” (37).

The second and fifth questions listed above allow Devine, Hahnel, Laibman, and Cockshott and Cottrell to efficiently summarize their ideas of how a socialist economy might work. Harnecker limits herself to discussing general principles, though she seems to embrace Devine’s vision of participatory planning “in which market forces are replaced by the *ex ante* coordination of major interdependent investment through negotiation, but market exchange is retained for all other economic transactions.”⁵ Hahnel, himself criticized by Devine for believing it possible to centralize all relevant knowledge about people’s needs and how to use society’s productive resources efficiently to meet those needs, and for modeling “a series of *ex ante* iterations” through the computerized

equivalent of a Walrasian auctioneer (42–43), argues that Devine provides no mechanism for incorporating environmental costs into “socialist prices” (52), despite Devine’s obvious sensitivity to ecological matters and vision of socialism as a “steady state economy” (114). Hahnel seems unaware that Michael Löwy has criticized Hahnel’s own blueprint for participatory economics on much the same grounds.⁶ He also maintains that any form of market exchange is necessarily “an adversarial relationship where taking advantage is rewarded and solidarity is punished” (121), even if the socialized enterprises involved are not supposed to try to put each other out of business. This is in keeping with Hahnel’s primarily *moral* condemnation of markets (and capitalism), that is, his denunciation of their being driven by “fear” and “greed” (47), as opposed to the more Marxist approach taken by other contributors who oppose the dominance of market forces because they necessarily act as an autonomous power independent of the will of the producers.

Unfortunately neither Devine nor Hahnel, nor any of the other writers, directly address Marx’s understanding of the prerequisites for a mode of production in which wealth is calculated in monetary terms, that is, prices. Most of the contributors to *Designing Socialism* are concerned with how to properly calculate “socialist prices.” But Marx was quite clear in both *Capital* and *Critique of the Gotha Program* that in socialist society there are no longer any sort of monetary prices because *value* no longer exists. If most products are priced, then by definition there is value, which, according to Marx, requires workers to be worked at similar rates; that is, *abstract labor*—the homogenization of labor power—is mandatory, which directly cuts across Devine’s and Hahnel’s explicit desires for workers’ self-management and the overcoming of the social division of labor. Only Cockshott and Cottrell’s proposal embraces Marx’s alternative to a price mechanism: computation of the socially necessary labor-time embodied in each

product, with remuneration via labor-tokens such that one hour of actual labor is exchanged for products produced in the same amount of time. Such tokens are canceled once used; they

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can’t be hoarded or used to bribe public officials, as the “socialist money” imagined by other authors might be. Hahnel attacks Cockshott and Cottrell’s “misguided devotion to Marx’s labor theory of value,” as “pricing all goods and services according to the amount of labor embodied in their production both directly and indirectly ... fails to account for the opportunity costs of using scarce natural resources and limited capacities for disposing of wastes” (47). The labor-time proposal—and the planning process connected to it—may indeed have flaws.⁷ But nowhere in *Designing Socialism* does Hahnel prove that his pricing procedure, or for that matter that any type of “democratic” or “participatory” price determination, is *guaranteed* to ensure ecological sanity. It will require *politics*, as Löwy points out, “to take into account global, socio-political, and socio-ecological interests of the population—the interests of individuals, as citizens and as human beings, which cannot be reduced to their economic interests as producers and consumers.”⁸

One particularly disconcerting aspect of *Designing Socialism* is that virtually all of its authors assert that Marx’s proposed distributional principle for the initial stage of communism is “from each according to their ability, to each according to their work”—with “work” usually interpreted as “productivity.” In fact, Marx argues

for remuneration to be based on the individual labor time of the individual producer, with every hour of actual labor to be exchanged for goods or services produced in the same amount of time, though “the output of *energy* in a given unit of time” could be taken into account, in a manner somewhat similar to Hahnel’s formula of “to each according to their effort and sacrifice.”⁹ Laibman appears to believe that, for Marx, in the lower stage of communism “distribution of goods continues to take the classical form of commodity ownership effectuated by means of money and money prices”; he even goes so far as to claim that any attempt to “‘abolish’ the law of value as such” will be as pointless as trying to “‘abolish’ the law of gravity” (89), as if the former law weren’t of human creation! He further argues that “the experience of twentieth-century socialism is filled with examples of *excessive* equalization of incomes, in the given technical and cultural conditions” (75); this, unfortunately, echoes Stalin, who also argued against “calls for equalization” under socialism.¹⁰

This isn’t to say Laibman’s conception of what he calls Multilevel Democratic Iterative Coordination, in which a “core” democratic planning system (without “spontaneous” price competition) is “surrounded” by a subordinate “market sector ... in agriculture, personal services, arts, and crafts” (92) is necessarily wrong; as classes continue to exist after the dismantling of the capitalist state and until all petty proprietors (traditional small capitalists as well as the owners of intellectual property) are absorbed into the working class, a partial retention of money and markets is inevitable. But—without wishing to be pedantic—such a state of affairs is not precisely socialism, that is, communism, as Marx and Engels used those terms. It’s *between* capitalism and socialism: the dictatorship of the proletariat, meaning a significant period of working-class rule with a subsisting petty bourgeoisie. While Laibman, like most of the other authors (Hahnel excepted), is right to insist on a “stadial” conception of progress to-

ward socialism, his vision of the march toward the classless society might not be quite “stadial” enough. Hahnel is right that questions of the level of economic productivity are no longer relevant and therefore the way we conceive of the “stages of socialism” should be rethought, but conceptualizing stages in regard to the degree of genuine *classlessness* in post-capitalist society remains necessary, as all petty proprietors won’t be *immediately* absorbed into the working class. There’s no way to speed up a *gradual* absorption occurring as the skills that the “middle class” monopolizes become devalorized when all workers acquire them.

Despite all of this, Hahnel’s own recent book is an excellent, brisk read. While the details of the Parecon vision are most likely familiar to many leftist readers by now,¹¹ some of its components are better defended and/or expanded upon this time around. Despite his unfortunate use of the mainstream social-science term “human capital” (and, later, “natural and produced capital”—a use of the word “capital” that makes clear his distance from Marxist conceptions), Hahnel makes a fairly convincing defense of the distributive maxim “to each according to her effort or personal sacrifice.” Answering critics of the idea that “people’s efforts [should be] rated by their co-workers, and people [should be] awarded consumption rights according to those effort ratings” (Hahnel, 61), he claims that it is unlikely that “one’s co-workers [will] reward clumsy, bungling, or misdirected effort rather than proficient effort,” as “every effort rating committee is constrained by a fixed average effort rating for all workers in their [workers’] council. Therefore, rewarding inefficient effort on the part of a co-worker is just as detrimental to the interests of other workers in the council as it would be if they deliberately overstated a worker’s effort” (65). Hahnel also makes clear that the traditional “second stage of communism” maxim, “to each according to need,” can immediately apply to more than just education, medical care, and access to recreational goods

when “each neighborhood consumption council decide[s] for itself how to take any differences in the needs of its members into account when approving consumption requests” (73), though he doesn’t seem to share the Marxist belief in the possibility of a communist society marked by a (relative) abundance of goods which would need no prices.

However, as is well known, Hahnel does share the Marxist desire to overcome the division between mental labor and manual labor. Hence his call for “balanced jobs” in which different “tasks are combined in such proportions that the resulting job complexes of all workers are equally desirable or undesirable, equally empowering or routine,” as explained by Devine.¹² He stresses that this would not eliminate specialization, as “jobs do not have to be balanced every hour, or every day, or every week, or even every month. The balancing is also done in the context of what is practical in particular work situations.” Furthermore “the balancing is done by committees composed of workers in each work place, and done as they see fit. Jobs are not balanced by an external bureaucracy and imposed on workers” (56–57). While this makes balanced job complexes sound more credible than they did in previous writings by Hahnel (and Michael Albert), greater clarity on the average time frame of “balancing” would have been appreciated.

In regards to the issue of ecological sustainability, Hahnel stresses that his proposed planning procedure incorporates “current estimates of the damage caused by emissions of different pollutants” (91), which make it “easy to calculate the social cost of consumption requests [from consumer councils and federations]” (93). But even if Hahnel’s version of participatory planning, in theory, accommodates externalities more efficiently than a market economy, it is not entirely convincing to simply say that “major changes in the energy, transportation, and housing sectors, as well as conversions from polluting to ‘green’ technologies and products,

are all determined by the long-run planning process” (130) as this planning process has no intrinsic connections to *political* decisions made by a legislature or through referenda. As in previous books discussing Parecon, *Of the People* lacks any discussion of “political institutions or processes through which citizens discuss the

The way we conceive of the “stages of socialism” should be rethought, but conceptualizing stages regarding the degree of genuine classlessness in post-capitalist society remains necessary.

values on which they want their society to be based, the universal rights and responsibilities of citizens, the choices of social priorities that have to be made.”¹³ Hence, it replicates the classical liberal illusion that the polity and the economy are separate spheres. Indeed, one is left with the impression that Hahnel wants to replace the “self-regulating market” with a sort of “self-regulating planning” that, in Laibman’s words, runs “very much as an automatic mechanism, independent of human will and democracy, which operates only at the microlevel of the [worker and consumer] collectives. It thus bears an uneasy resemblance to the very competitive market equilibrium that it proposes to replace.”¹⁴ Given the need to promote a vision of socialism that overcomes capitalist society’s separation of “politics” and “economics”—to show that socialism is a new type of *society* and not solely a new type of *economy*—this is a serious failing.

Finally, though Hahnel has far more to say about desirable mechanisms for investment and development planning in *Of the People* than in his previous books, his insistence on pre-ordering all consumption remains problematic.

He states that his proposal merely requires “consumers spending a couple of hours of their time going over their consumption from the previous year and making adjustments up and down where they think they will want to. That is less time than it takes the average person to prepare her tax returns every year” (85). But an air of unreality still surrounds this idea. Laibman is right: “There is no way for ‘Hey, let’s order in Thai tonight’ to be brought within a neighborhood consumer council’s consumption proposal! The variation that results from day-to-day consumer choice over privately consumed goods can be accommodated within a system of democratic planning, without a cumbersome system of pre-ordering, especially given the smoothing effect of the law of large numbers and the presence of buffer stocks.”¹⁵

Despite these flaws, Hahnel’s book far outshines the contributions of Ding, Mao, and Yin to *Designing Socialism*. These essays are, frankly, entirely worthless, typical examples of the usage of “Marxist-Leninist” jargon to justify an anti-worker practice. The idea of a “socialist market economy” is repeatedly invoked as if it were wholly unproblematic. The Communist Party of China is said to be “the vanguard of the proletariat” (Campbell, ed., 64), despite the fact that in 2001 former President Jiang Zemin essentially declared that the interests of different classes in China do not clash and that the party can amicably represent all classes simultaneously. The Chinese authors take as given that China is at “the initial stage of socialism” (65), regardless of abundant evidence to the contrary; they write, “We must encourage, guide, and supervise the development of privately owned enterprises in the current economy because Chinese socialism [sic] has not experienced the stage of full capitalist development” (64–65), a contradictory sentence if there ever was one. The Chinese regime’s promotion of private enterprise and market forces (and alienated and abstract labor, though of course the Chinese authors don’t admit this, if they are even familiar with such

notions) is justified by the fanciful claim that China’s “socialist initial stage in this case is an underdeveloped socialist stage—the *lower stage of the lower stage of communism*” (101). Ding, Mao, and Yin, of course, neglect to mention that post-Maoist China’s “glorious achievements” include top party officials amassing billion-dollar fortunes, far in excess of even top United States public officials. That numerous private corporation-based billionaires have emerged in China also goes unmentioned, hence we do not get to know whether or not their existence, in the authors’ view, is compatible with “the lower stage of the lower stage of communism.” Also unmentioned is the fact that even if the Chinese Communist Party was sincere in its pronouncements about building “socialism with Chinese characteristics,” this would still merely prove that the current Chinese Communists, like Mao Zedong before them, are firm believers in the theory of “socialism in one country” with no intention of initiating global working-class revolution, let alone establishing workers’ democracy within China itself. (And unfortunately there’s no discussion inside this book on whether or not a classless society is achievable within one country alone; in previous writings, Albert and Hahnel seem to suggest that it is.) One genuinely wonders why the editors of this volume included Ding, Mao, and Yin, given the utter vacuity of their pieces and considering how their views contradict the editors’ blatant opposition to so-called market socialism with, as Laibman writes, its “signature illusion” that “the market’s functionality can be separated from its alienating and derationalizing qualities” (39).

One has to conclude that despite some interesting inter-author criticism—particularly of Devine, and Cockshott and Cottrell, by Hahnel—*Designing Socialism* is ultimately a disappointment. Only in the discussion of what might constitute “socialist prices” does it offer anything distinctive—and again, even then the implication of Marx’s theory of value for the very possibility of such prices is barely addressed.

It does not live up to the *Science & Society* issue of April 2002 which it thematically follows and which is still far more worthy of a hardcover, softcover, or e-book treatment. Those seeking fairly detailed answers to the question of how a socialist economy might work are advised to seek out that edition. Hahnel's *Of the People* is also worth reading if only because it provides the clearest explanation of "participatory economics" available, which socialists should examine and evaluate for themselves. Book-length treatments of some of the other visions also can be easily found.¹⁶ And none of them, thankfully, make the argument that Xi Jinping is in any way an heir to Karl Marx.

NOTES

1. See, for example, W. Paul Cockshott and Allin Cottrell, *Towards a New Socialism* (Nottingham: Spokesman, 1993).
2. Most famously in Michael Albert, *Parecon: Life After Capitalism* (London: Verso, 2004).
3. Steve Ellner provides a critical but positive review of Michael A. Lebowitz, *The Socialist Alternative: Real Human Development* (Monthly Review Press, 2010), while Mark Jablonowski eviscerates the "Austrian school" assertions of Jesús Huerta de Soto, *Socialism, Economic Calculation and Entrepreneurship* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2011).
4. For Marx, of course, the dictatorship of the proletariat meant little more than the (democratic) rule of the working class through a new form of state. For Lenin, the vanguard party was (initially) merely a Marxist working-class party modeled after the early German Social Democratic Party, as Lars T. Lih has made clear in his numerous articles and books on Lenin. Finally, before 1921 all "democratic centralism" meant was "the authority of democratically elected party congresses *alone* to make decisions binding on all party committees and members." Charles Post, "What Is Left of Leninism? New European Left Parties in Historical Perspective," in Leo Panitch, Greg Albo, and Vivek Chibber, eds., *Socialist Register 2013* (Pontypool: Merlin Press, 2012), 179.
5. Pat Devine, "Review: *Parecon: Life After Capitalism*," *Historical Materialism* (No. 15, 2007), 210.
6. "The main problem with [Parecon] ... is that it seems to reduce 'planning' to a sort of negotiation between producers and consumers on the issue of prices, inputs and outputs, supply and demand. For instance, the branch workers' council of the automobile industry would meet with the council of consumers to discuss prices and to adapt supply to demand. What this leaves out is precisely what constitutes the main issue in ecosocialist planning: a reorganization of the transport system, radically reducing the place of the private car. Since ecosocialism requires entire sectors of industry to disappear—nuclear plants, for instance—and massive investment in small or almost nonexistent sectors (e.g. solar energy), how can this be dealt with by 'cooperative negotiations' between the existing units of production and consumer councils on 'inputs' and 'indicative prices'?" Michael Löwy, "Ecosocialism and Democratic Planning," Leo Panitch and Colin Leys, eds., *Socialist Register 2007* (Pontypool: Merlin Press, 2006), 301.
7. Devine has criticized both Hahnel (and Michael Albert) and Cockshott and Cottrell for failing to "address the impossibility of codifying and transmitting tacit knowledge: knowledge acquired through action and experience, which cannot be transmitted electronically." Devine, 258. Macnair argues that however appropriate it may have been in 1875, Marx's labor-tokens distribution scheme "incentivizes increased individual labor time (problematic, given endemic unemployment, and antithetical to the interest in human self-development) and precisely because it in this sense mimics the capitalist work incentive [it would] drive a tendency to [ecologically harmful] 'growth.'" Mike Macnair, "Debate: Inspiring View of Future Society," *Weekly Worker* (No. 986, 2013), available at weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/986/debate-inspiring-view-of-future-society.
8. Löwy, 302.
9. See Peter Hudis, *Marx's Concept of the Alternative to Capitalism* (Haymarket, 2013), 194, 197.
10. See J. V. Stalin, "Report to the Seventeenth Party Congress on the Work of the Central Committee of the C.S.U. (B.)," January 26, 1934, available at www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1934/01/26.htm.
11. See, for example, the explication by Devine, 210–17.
12. Devine, 211.
13. Devine, 215.
14. David Laibman, *Political Economy After Economics: Scientific Method and Radical Imagination* (London: Routledge, 2013), 214. Laibman echoes Devine's criticism of Hahnel's drawing upon Walsrasian *tâtonnement* for his formalizations. One could also point out that the search for an administrative formula for a "perfect" price seems like a throwback to Catholic theologian notions.
15. David Laibman, "Horizontalism and Idealism in Socialist Imagination: An Appraisal of the Participatory Economy," *Science & Society* (Vol. 78, No. 2, 2014), 221.
16. See Cockshott and Cottrell, 1993; Laibman, 2013; Pat Devine, *Democracy and Economic Planning: The Political Economy of a Self-Governing Society* (Cambridge: Polity, 2010).

Syria Is Burning, But What Fuels the Fire?

MIKE NOONAN

SYRIA IS THE FOCUS OF THE world's attention. However, the closer the lens is focused, the more the picture seems obscured. Is what we are seeing a revolution? Is it a proxy war by international forces? Or, especially now with the emergence of the Islamic State, is this Islamic authoritarianism asserting itself? These questions are vital for anyone trying to piece together a picture of what is happening and especially for activists trying to understand what is at stake in Syria and what attitude to take toward events as they unfold.

Two recent books shed some light on the tragedy and struggle in Syria. Michael Griffin's *Islamic State* is a summary account of the rise of Daesh, the Arabic acronym by which ISIS has come to be known. On the other hand, with *Burning Country: Syrians in Revolution and War*, Robin Yassin-Kassab and Leila al-Shami attempt to tell the story of the Syrian revolution from below. Between the two books a picture emerges of a country torn by revolution and counter-revolution, which is at the same time the focal point of foreign intervention. The liv-

ing reality of the Syrian conflict is contradictory, defying simple characterization.

Michael Griffin's *The Islamic State* charts the rise of Daesh during the last decade and a half. The story he tells is of a cadre of Islamic revolutionaries, hardened and shaped by repression in the jails of Middle East regimes and American occupation. As Griffin states, "One theme that runs through IS like a golden thread is jail-time."

Daesh has its origins in the wreckage of Iraq left by the United States' invasion of 2003. It was U.S. prisons such as Camp Bucca that provided the initial recruiting ground of Islamist militants. Borrowing a page from domestic prison administration, U.S. forces relied on prisoners' own forms of organization to keep order. In this case it was the radical Islamists who divided the prison into compounds ruled by mayors, or emirs. According to Griffin, "With tacit U.S. approval, the emirs transformed Camp Bucca into a vast center of indoctrination and training" (3). The caliph of the Islamic State, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and thousands of other Islamist recruits emerged from this crucible as an organized political force.

In the initial period of American occupation, the Islamist groups were led by Musab al-Zarqawi, the al-Qaeda leader sent by Osama bin Laden to command the operation in Iraq. Their struggle was directed against two oppo-

Islamic State: Rewriting History

MICHAEL GRIFFIN
Pluto Press, 2016. 176 pp.

Burning Country: Syrians in Revolution and War

ROBIN YASSIN-KASSAB
AND LEILA AL-SHAMI
Pluto Press, 2016. 262 pp.

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nents: the American occupation forces and the Shi'a political parties. Al-Qaeda in Iraq posed as the true Sunni resistance and recruited widely in the "Sunni Triangle" of Anbar province. As Griffin points out, this trend was only arrested by the Sahwa, or Awakening, movement of 2007 in which "former tribal members of the Iraqi army and the AQI were paid to guard the very same infrastructure they had once sought to sabotage" (23). While U.S. politicians and media discussed the success of the "surge" in troop deployment by the Bush administration, the real decline in violence was due to this temporary paying off of al-Qaeda's Sunni constituency. The conflict was not permanently arrested, and the breakdown opened up new possibilities for the Islamist forces.

Islamism in Syria traces its roots to the local branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. Like Iraq, Syria was ruled by an Arab-nationalist party, the Ba'ath Party. The Syrian regime waged a relentless war against the Muslim Brotherhood culminating in the massacre of 20,000 in the Brotherhood stronghold of Hama in 1982. Thousands of Islamist militants spent decades in prison for organizing against the regime. According to Griffin, the prisons of Syria were the same sort of Islamist recruiting centers that the U.S. prisons in Iraq had inadvertently established. For example, "Sednaya prison ... was a cruel, brutalizing, and disciplined academy for veterans of Hama and Syrians returning from the Iraqi jihad" (45).

Islamist organizations found an unexpected ally in Bashar al-Assad himself in the first days of the Syrian revolution. The revolution was initially coordinated by ad hoc "Local Coordinating Committees." As Griffin notes, "In a move of Machiavellian ingenuity ... Assad sowed dragon's teeth among the LCCs with a pardon that released 1,500 convicted Islamist extremists from Sednaya and other political prisons into a turbulent society" (45). The Islamists via their foreign contacts began to amass weapons and came to dominate the military

struggle that engulfed the Syrian revolution. The ad hoc militias formed by the LCCs could hardly compete with Islamists who had access, for example, to the nearly three billion dollars sent by Qatar to Islamist militias.

Daesh emerged from a convergence of al-Qaeda in Iraq and the Islamist militias in Syria. Al-Baghdadi, after assuming command of Jabhat al-Nusra, broke with al-Qaeda's strategy of simply waging war against the perceived enemies of Islam. The Islamic State in the Levant, or Daesh, transitioned from terrorism to state formation in the territory between Syria and Iraq. A coherent narrative of Sunni-Shi'a regional warfare is reinforced by the fact that the Shi'a Islamic Republic of Iran supports al-Assad and maintains important links with the Shi'a political parties of Iraq. Daesh recruited its forces from the brutalized Sunni populations of both countries who were seeking a means to resist their respective tormentors.

Griffin shows his limits when he inadvertently touches on historical or political matters beyond the scope of his journalistic account. At times, Griffin presents Syria's sectarian conflict as a matter-of-fact product of its "patchwork of faiths" (43) without mentioning that these divisions were inscribed in the functioning Syrian state by French imperialism. Griffin's characterization of Islamist politics also tends towards caricature, describing it as a virus or cancer rather than a political ideology with human motivations. Regardless, in its short 163 pages, *The Islamic State: Rewriting History* is a wealth of essential facts about the rise of Daesh, written in a fast-paced journalistic style.

Burning Country: Syrians in Revolution and War by Robin Yassin-Kassab and Leila al-Shami is a much more ambitious project. With this book, the authors have made it a goal to translate firsthand accounts of grassroots revolutionaries to the page. In telling the story this way, Yassin-Kassab and al-Shami show us revolution and counter-revolution intertwined in the pragmatic choices of desperate people. Overall, the authors

aim to show one important fact, often obscured by the violence—that there is a revolution from below in Syria, and it still lives and breathes in spite of everything else.

Yassin-Kassab and al-Shami take us into the streets where in February 2011, inspired by the examples of Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, crowds gathered to ask the fateful question “Why not us?” (46). The axis around which the story revolves is the emergence of the local councils, or *tanseeqiyat*. The councils were composed of “just five or seven full-time revolutionaries in each neighborhood, working in total secrecy, but linked up to other networks throughout the city” (57). The committees mobilized people for protests, documented the regime’s abuses, and organized strikes in marketplaces and universities. Organized through voluntary association and selected by the danger of repression, the committees were the backbone of the popular revolution.

While the revolution spread with the spontaneous force of self-activity, the conscious intervention of revolutionary activists was necessary to build the councils. In this capacity, the authors point to the actions of the 63-year-old anarchist activist Omar Aziz, who returned to Syria from overseas following the 2011 protests and sparked the movement to form councils. Aziz was arrested in 2012 and died under conditions of torture in the regime’s prison cells. However, the councils spread across Syria and, according to Yassin-Kassab and al-Shami, remain the means of organizing mutual aid and protest to this day. The problem for the councils, expressed by one activist, is that “we needed money to survive. ... Those with money—the Muslim Brotherhood and other Syrians outside—also had agendas” (61).

In addition to the local councils, Yassin-Kassab and al-Shami also describe the emergence of autonomous communities in the Kurdish regions of Northern Syria, now known collectively as Rojava. The Kurdish cantons have seen the emergence of directly elected com-

munal councils inspired by Democratic Union Party (PYD) linked to the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). However in this respect, the authors cast some doubts on the goals of the PYD. According to Yassin-Kassab and al-Shami, “in the Kurdish regions, the revolutionary process was more top-down and party-led than elsewhere” (74). In spite of the much-romanticized direct democracy of Rojava, the PYD “maintains ultimate control over the canton-level councils” (74). Like everything in the Syrian revolution, Rojava and the Kurdish struggle are shot through with contradictions.

The rise of the Islamist militias is directly linked to the limits imposed by militarization on the grassroots struggle. According to Yassin-Kassab and al-Shami, Islamism flourished in the militias “and there were concrete reasons for this

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to do with arms supply, funding, and discipline” (109). Fighting groups initially formed by outraged Syrians who wanted to retaliate against the regime’s brutality were slowly enrolled in and reshaped by Islamist groups such as Jabhat al-Nusra. The logic of these Syrian fighters is given in a quote from activist Basel al-Junaidi who states, “They were respected as strong, well-trained soldiers, so people—including secularists like us—decided to tolerate them until the regime had gone” (127). As the conflict deepened, this logic took over and fueled the rise of Daesh.

Unlike Griffin, Yassin-Kassab and al-Shami interrogate the social motivations of ISIS militants engaged in state-building. In the brutality of war and revolution, ISIS’s rule can seem like a new year zero for those who want to start over. Under ISIS, “the rich, the notable families, and all the political parties are rendered irrelevant” (138). As the authors state, “ISIS has little popular support in Syria—but it does have some and it may be growing” (138). This Syrian base is magnified and reinforced by the influx of international fighters who are making Syria a battleground for Islamism, as Afghanistan was

in the late 1970s during the Soviet occupation.

In *Burning Country: Syrians in Revolution and War* Yassin-Kassab and al-Shami have produced an excellent work of political journalism from below. The book is a chorus of voices, from those who built the initial grassroots councils of 2011, to the Syrians who did jail time under ISIS’ rule. In just over 200 pages, a wealth of stories and anecdotes illuminates the realities of the Syrian situation and prove the authors’ point that a popular revolution began in 2011, and its consequences are still being felt in spite of the horrors of the war.

Syria is burning and the fires are fueled by the ongoing struggle that has produced an experience of self-organization on the part of the insurgent population. At the same time, all of these events have produced untold suffering, the deaths of hundreds of thousands, and the dislocation of millions of refugees. We can only hope with Yassin-Kassab and al-Shami that “there is reason to hope that when the bombs finally stop falling, when ISIS and regime checkpoints no longer threaten death, these people will return and raise their voices again for a better future” (220).

Secular Stagnation and Rosa Luxemburg's Breakdown Theory

BARRY FINGER

THE EDITORS OF THESE VOLUMES have provided an invaluable service, bringing renewed attention to the highly original and enduringly contentious critique of *Capital* that arose from one of the most universally revered figures of the revolutionary movement. The introductions to the two volumes do great justice not only to the breadth and sweep of Luxemburg's own theories, but also to the inspiration they continue to provide researchers and socialist militants alike, often far afield from the actual problems she directly addressed. In her time, Luxemburg's magnum opus, *The Accumulation of Capital*, met with almost universal opprobrium, not so much because she dared criticize Marx but because she employed her theories to justify a form of class politics diametrically opposed to the reformism that had come to dominate social democracy.

Eight years after the Great Recession, a still sluggish recovery has reawakened a mainstream debate over secular stagnation. This debate has called into question the continued efficacy of traditional monetary and fiscal tools

to bolster a system whose advanced degree of decay and collapse may be, it is feared, beyond repair. Academic economists and the business press have weighed this contention in terms of technological and innovative exhaustion—the

long-anticipated, job-destroying effects of automation or some variant of a dysfunctional labor market.

Marxists, especially of the Baran and Sweezy school, have attributed secular stagnation to the problems of excess capacity arising from the monopolization of the productive structure. Advanced capitalism, they argue,

finds itself unable to absorb the rising surplus originating in production and therefore seeks other avenues for investment—hence the financialization of the surplus, which channels investment away from the expansion of output and redirects it into the expansion of portfolios.

In either case, stagnation is seen as an unavoidable stage in the evolution of technology or of capitalist competition. It is therefore quite understandable that Rosa Luxemburg's economic writings, a pioneering analysis that called into question the long-term economic viability of capitalism, should come back into fashion to be mined for additional insights, for she argued the larger proposition that the deficiency of capitalist expansion is genetically

The Complete Works of Rosa Luxemburg, Volume I, Economic Writings 1

PETER HUDIS, ED.
Verso, 2014

The Complete Works of Rosa Luxemburg, Volume II, Economic Writings 2

PETER HUDIS and PAUL LE BLANC, EDS.
Verso, 2015

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programmed into the accumulation biases of capitalism.

Capitalism, Luxemburg posits, is a historically unique dynamic system, but one that is unable to regenerate itself and expand from within to become a universal form of production. Accumulation is critically dependent on the existence of precapitalist markets, of societies otherwise stagnant insofar as they are capable of, at most, simple expanded reproduction, of growth without development. This imperialist nexus, therefore, brutally draws historical latecomers into the orbit of capitalism as dependent economies, while concomitantly narrowing the terrain of potentially available, remaining precapitalist terrains for these newcomers, in turn, to colonize. They therefore have the historical misfortune of being cut off from the necessary precondition for independent development.

Because these capitalist stragglers could not develop independently, the struggle for independence itself had ceased in the modern era to be progressive, and proletarian revolution, Luxemburg insisted, must be the only aim of all revolutionaries. She drew out the revolutionary interplay of conflicting forces with her usual eloquence:

The more violently capital uses militarism to exterminate noncapitalist strata both at home and abroad, and to worsen living standards for all strata of workers, the more the day-to-day history of capital accumulation on the world stage is transformed into a continuous series of political and social catastrophes and convulsions, which, together with the periodic economic cataclysms in the form of crises, will make it impossible for accumulation to continue, and will turn the rebellion of the international working class against the rule of capital into a necessity, even before the latter has come up against its natural, self-created economic constraints.

Luxemburg, contrary to the assertions of many Marxists, never actually put forward, nor did she ever attempt, a coherent theory of economic crises. Neither, to be fair, was that



ever her focus. She made this clear at the outset:

The attempt to solve the problem of reproduction in terms of the periodicity of crises represents just as vulgar an economic approach as the endeavor to solve the problem of value in terms of fluctuations in supply and demand. Nevertheless, it will be seen that, as soon as it has established the problem of reproduction in a halfway conscious manner or at least has some intimation of it, economic theory consistently reveals an unwitting tendency to transform it into the problem of crises, thus barring the way to its own solution. In what follows, capitalist reproduction is always understood as the average or the mean, given over the course of the alternating phases of expansion and contraction within an economic cycle.

Her concern instead was the trajectory and ultimate limits of capitalism, in which, she posited, the increase of productive capacity and the extension of production are necessarily conjoined to a desperate, ongoing expansion into noncapitalist foreign markets. It was her analysis of this drive to plunder and redivide the world that lent the theory its majestic arch, at

once an explanation for militarism, colonialism, and protectionism, and a rebuke to all forms of reformism that downplayed or denied the central imperative for capitalism of imperialism, immiseration, and war.

This thesis gained great plausibility when, scarcely a decade after the Russian Revolution removed nearly a sixth of the earth's land surface from the grasp of capitalism, the world was plunged into an unprecedented economic crisis and remained mired there until the outbreak of war. It was perhaps the apparent convergence of her breakdown theory with the outbreak of crisis that led to the widespread, subsequent belief that Luxemburg was, to quote Paul Sweezy, the "queen of underconsumptionists" following a long line of Marxists, such as Cunow, Schmidt, and Kautsky (the Kautsky of 1901, but not 1902), who adorned the propositions of Sismondi, Malthus, and Rodbertus with a Marxian twist. Restating, as she did, what was by then the commonplace, universally voiced justification for underconsumptionism, "the immanent contradiction between the unconstrained capacity for expansion of the productive forces and the restricted capacity for expansion of social consumption under capitalist relations of distribution," no doubt reinforced that interpretation.

But, insofar as accumulation is by definition the excess of production over consumption, no theory of crisis—of the cyclical interruption of economic activity—can be properly derived from the precondition of investment itself. If Luxemburg appeared to be an "underconsumptionist" it was only because she remained indifferent to the prevalent views of crises within social democracy at that time. These were less explanations than heuristic expedients and descriptive portraits tailored to contrast market anarchy, disproportionality, and underconsumptionism—basically variants of a single theme—with the desirability and superiority of an economy consciously planned to serve human needs.

What, in any case, separated revolutionary Marxists from reformists did not revolve around the noncontroversial proposition that capitalism was a crisis-ridden system, nor around the superiority of a democratically coordinated economy. Trustification, according to Bernstein, introduced an element of planned coordination arising from capitalism's own inner dynamics, paying inadvertent homage to social democracy's basic contention. But even Bernstein refrained from arguing that such limited stability was sufficiently transformative as to dispense with the need for a socialist movement to assert control from below incrementally.

Rather, the crux of the division between Marxists and revisionists was whether a necessary downfall of capitalism can be posited from laws immanent to the accumulation process, a downfall that drives workers, before that breakdown erupts, into rebellion as both a necessary and an urgent means of self-defense and survival. Are there, in other words, objective social limits to capitalism's self-expansion that hurl workers into a decisive break with the existing order? If not, according to Luxemburg, there is no material basis for revolutionary Marxism.

AN EVER-EXPANDING PLANNED capitalism capable of yielding improved living standards, driven by its own immanent tendencies to concentrate and centralize production, would, perhaps, have to be pushed from below to complete its democratic, piecemeal, evolutionary trudge into socialism. But a socialism seen as ethically and socially desirable but no longer materially necessary is a throwback, according to Luxemburg, to the utopians and an implicit repudiation of Marxism.

Luxemburg, revisiting Marx, divides the gross social product of a given capitalist economy into four parts: the first replaces consumed means of production (constant capital) in value and in kind; the second and third correspond, both in value and in kind, to the personal consumption of wage-earners and capitalists; the

fourth to provide extra means of production and workers' subsistence needed for any expansion of production. If it is assumed that the correct use-value composition of the first three parts is assured, then this "realization" of values can take place on the home market. Nonetheless, Luxemburg argues, the absorption of the residue—even if the use-value composition of that residual also corresponds to the technical demands of accumulation—is completely impossible.

In a closed system, she states, the circular flow of incomes can only realize the sum of values advanced (including that sum of values that the capitalists pay themselves). There is no internally generated source of additional monetized demand—effective demand—for accumulation beyond the incomes initially propelled into circulation. It is a system genetically plagued by a permanent tendency toward overcapacity.

Never mind Marx's schemes of expanded reproduction in the second volume of *Capital*, she argued, which seemed to demonstrate the possibility of limitless accumulation. These schemes only demonstrate the ex post facto condition of equilibrium that could be satisfied were purchase and sale actually able to complete their circuits on an expanded scale and in the proper distributions. Consider a meticulously described series of differently sized beakers into which the contents of a sealed bottle (that portion of surplus value to be capitalized) might be emptied without under- or overflows, while failing to first specify how the seal itself is broken. This, after a mountain of logical detours, endless nitpicking and 200 pages of secondary objections to the construction of the schemes both by Marx and his "epigones," is precisely what Luxemburg ultimately finds so inadequate in Marx's presentation.

In a closed system, to follow Luxemburg's argument, purchase and sale are only possible up to the limit of simple reproduction. But since simple reproduction is an abstraction invented

by Marx for analytical purposes and capitalism is by its very nature inseparable from production on an extended scale, the system cannot work. It is compelled to open itself to foreign, noncapitalist outlets, captive markets that guarantee a stable and ongoing balance of trade surplus for the imperial power.

The crux of the division between Marxists and revisionists was whether a necessary downfall of capitalism can be posited from laws immanent to the accumulation process.

Luxemburg is, nevertheless, parsimonious in the extreme with her explanation as to how the existence of noncapitalist markets grandly settles the overwhelming problem of inadequacy in the circular flow of income for capitalism. But where we can find a key, it consists in this: "The portion of surplus value that has been determined as being for capitalization must be realized 'externally.'" It is a proposition truly astounding in its sheer absurdity, for it clearly makes no sense to picture a dynamic resolution, where the entire net output destined for investment, considered from both its material and value dimensions, is simply sold outright on noncapitalist markets. Aside from the questions of what use preindustrial societies might have for this output or how such societies could finance such massive purchases without recourse to capitalist loans—loans that might incidentally serve the same internal purpose in the absence of trade—it raises the obvious question: How can capitalism expect to accumulate by purging itself of the very material means needed for such expansion? After accounts are settled, capitalists would have simply amassed a pile of IOUs useful only insofar as they could

repurchase the very elements of accumulation they previously dumped on their colonies.

It is only in the *Anti-Critique* that she walks back these extreme assertions. Thereafter, she poses a slightly modified approach, more clearly expressed in the earlier, Ken Tarbuck version: “We do not see any customers for the latter portion of commodities, who could *initiate* [emphasis added] the process of accumulation.” The shift is subtle, but decisive. Capital must find some means of selling before it can accumulate. She begins to consider such sales less a solution than a lubricant for expanded reproduction and makes this modified insight even clearer just a few pages on:

The aggregate amount of commodities will not increase, expansion of production cannot take place, because in capitalist production the essential precondition for this is conversion into

Without foreign markets, to follow Luxemburg’s argument, purchase and sale are only possible up to the limit of simple reproduction.

money, the universal realization of profit. The sale of increasing amounts of commodities, and the realization of profit from A to B, B to C, and from C back again to A and B, can only take place *if at least one of them* [emphasis added] can in the end find a market outside the closed circle. If this does not happen the roundabout will grind to a halt only after a few turns.

Yet even this does not fully resolve the problem, as she lays it out, unless what are exported to noncapitalist markets are luxuries, which are not part of the accumulation process and therefore represent no net offset to capital formation. If in exchange for luxuries there is

a counter-flow not only of money but also of raw materials and other industrial inputs, the accumulation process is that much augmented.

To summarize, Luxemburg’s problem is one of finding an external source of demand for the internal market, one that is not conditioned by a prior sale within the closed system of capitalism. To fulfill this requirement, she surmises, there must be a demand for which there is no corresponding supply to counteract a supply for which there is no demand. This, Luxemburg maintains, is what necessitates the shotgun marriage between capitalism and the noncapitalist colonies. No longer is it a matter of selling the entire output of new capital. Rather it is a desperate search for an external source of stimulus and pillage significantly powerful to propel the accumulation process in the imperialist economies, if need be at the expense of one capitalist empire against the other, and to renew that process on an expanded basis over time.

Luxemburg’s case stands and falls on the proposition that there are no internal sources of demand that can provide this stimulus. She rightly dismisses third parties such as clergy, state officials, soldiers, servants, and other dependents who live directly or indirectly off the tax revenue or income of capitalists (or workers). But that does not exhaust the search. And this is crucial.

Production is a time-consuming process. Workers’ pay is generally distributed in regular intervals that do not coincide with the time needed to produce goods and sell them. It might, for example, take years to build a shopping mall and fully sell the space. Obviously this creates a demand on behalf of workers that exceeds the value of yet-to-be marketed output. Fixed capital depreciates over time and may not be replaced for years. During that time, amortization funds are accumulated in anticipation of future investment. In the meantime these funds must be lent and earn interest if they are to preserve their character as capital. Resulting loans in the form of commercial paper, bills of

exchange, and so on represent an independent source of demand—independent insofar as they are unmatched by a corresponding supply of marketed output. And, of course, there is an entire financial section of capitalism whose sole function is to lend money into existence in order to create a demand that previously did not exist, as well as an entire sector of merchant capital whose sole purpose is to provide a demand for industrial output prior to final sales.

But Marx incorporated this into a more systematic answer. Capital passes through multiple circuits on its way to realizing a profit: as money acquiring and assembling means of production including labor power, as value-augmenting production, and as value-enhanced output successfully sold in the marketplace. The many units of capital in motion that comprise social capital confront and interact with one another as cogs in a cascading series of gears, each confronting the others in a different phase of its metamorphosis—as sellers, later to become buyers, only to meet again at the other end of the sale. If Luxemburg failed to appreciate this, she did so because she insisted on treating social capital as a collective unit that must—in a single stroke—sell before it could buy, ruling out the very perspective needed to solve the problem she found so vexing. Once she began to pare down her analysis to the level of many capitals, embracing as in the passage quoted above how A interacts with B, B with C, and so on, she nevertheless clung to imperialism as a *deus ex machina* for a problem that does not exist and could not, in any event, be solved in the manner that she conceived it.

The fundamental flaw in Luxemburg's system is that she stands Marx's problem on its head. For if there is a breakdown theory in Marx, it rests on the developmental tendencies inherent in capitalism, where the production of surplus value and the difficulties it encounters as accumulation proceeds are expressed in a

tendency for the profit rate to decline. The problem of insufficient market demand remains latent until the divergence between profits produced and the surplus value requirements

If there is a breakdown theory in Marx, it rests on the production of surplus value and the difficulties it encounters as accumulation proceeds.

of extended reproduction paralyzes the accumulation process, leaving idle vast quantities of values, both as capital that can no longer be placed into profitable production and as commodities that cannot be sold. Capital desperately calls forth counter-tendencies to offset and postpone this breakdown tendency, the most dramatic of which are crises themselves, which periodically purge the system of excess capital; financialization that redistributes values upward; and imperialism, which, through a variety of ugly historical expedients, drains value from the peripheries. Capitalism without imperialism, as Luxemburg well understood, is as inconceivable as capitalism without crises.

If Luxemburg's approach was a false start, she, alone among her contemporaries, asserted that capitalism did not tend to greater stability, that the concentration and centralization of production could not overcome the fundamental inadequacies of capitalism. More important, she insisted that no economic system, no matter how hobbled by its own breakdown tendencies, could ever collapse on its own. It requires the active participation of a politically conscious mass working-class movement.

Memory and the Movies

MICHAEL LÖWY

THIS BOOK IS A FASCINATING INCURSION into the multiple oppositional uses of memory in world cinema. It shows, in a lively and insightful way, how movies bring the memory of past struggles forward into the present, to serve as an inspiration for the future.

Inez Hedges distinguishes eight types of cultural cinematographic memory, which correspond to the eight chapters of the book:

Living memory: the memory of survivors of traumatic events, such as the Shoah. This is illustrated by films about the French urban concentration site Drancy—such as *Drancy Avenir* (1996)—a place from whence thousands of French Jews, including many children, were deported to Auschwitz.

Amnesic memory: cultural memory that struggles against collective amnesia, such as the Japanese films about Hiroshima (for instance Kurosawa's *Chronicle of a Survivor* from 1955).

Convulsive memory: films that react by using shock effects and black humor, for example in dealing with the trauma of the Spanish Civil War and the Franco dictatorship. Among those: Luis Buñuel's *Viridiana* (1961), as well as movies by Fernando Arrabal and (in the post-Francoist context) Pedro Almodovar.

World Cinema and Cultural Memory

INEZ HEDGES

Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. 190 pp.

Performative memory: films that contribute to creating a national identity by reflecting on the experience of exile, loss, and oppression.

This chapter discusses Palestinian films and the way they refer to the Nakhba, the collective expulsion of Palestinians in 1948.

Radical memory: anti-colonialist poems, manifestos, and films that celebrate the African philosophy of Negritude (Aimé Césaire, Leopold Cesar-Senghor), the return to African roots (Amilcar Cabral), or the struggle for national liberation, as in Rachid Bouchareb's film *Outside of the Law* (2010), on the Algerian war of independence.

Obstinate memory: films such as *Le Fonds de l'Air Est Rouge* (1977) by Chris Marker, or *The Battle of Chile* (1975–79), and its sequel, *Chile, the Obstinate Memory* (1996) by Patricio Guzman, which try to retrieve the memory of past struggles: the French rebellions of the 1960s, and Salvador Allende's Chile.

Productive memory: films such as those of the Cuban Tomás Gutiérrez Alea that aim at helping a revolutionary society to keep “dreaming forward” (Ernst Bloch).

Reclaimed memory: the active rethinking of the past in oppositional terms to the hegemonic narratives, as in Peter Weiss's *Aesthetics of Resistance*, based on the history of workers' struggles in Germany from 1918 to 1945.

Of course this typology is fluid and many films belong to various categories at the same time. Although movies are the central object of the research, other cultural artifacts, such as

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poems, novels, or manifestos, are also discussed from the viewpoint of their radical and subversive use of memory.

One very interesting topic, which is not treated separately but runs through the whole book, is the role of surrealism, the movement that, according to Walter Benjamin, was able to win “the energies of intoxication for the revolution.” The concept of “convulsive beauty,” for instance, is essential to understand Buñuel’s movies, from the scandalous and subversive *L’Âge d’Or* (1930)—forbidden by the French police for decades—to his later works. André Breton, the founder of surrealism, defined convulsive beauty as being at the same time “explosive/ fixed, veiled/erotic, and magical/circumstantial.” As Inez Hedges emphasizes, in films by Buñuel, Arrabal, and Almodovar convulsive beauty and convulsive memory “function both as explosive counter-memory to the Franco years and as reconnection to the fractured moments of the national past.”

Surrealism is also a key component of anti-colonial radical memory. Since the beginning of the movement, the surrealists denounced the French colonial wars in Morocco (1925) and the French Colonial Exposition (1931). In Michel Leiris and George Bataille’s journal *Documents*, surrealism and ethnography joined hands. As Franklin Rosemont, the Chicago surrealist, later wrote, the surrealists recognized so-called primitive arts as a radically new kind of beauty, which he called “convulsive”: a disturbing and subversive form of art, inseparable from revolt.

A decisive moment in the history of radical black culture occurred in 1941, when André Breton, visiting Martinique on his way

to New York, met Aimé and Suzanne Césaire, the editors of the surrealist journal *Tropiques*. Breton was completely fascinated and wrote about Césaire, “Defying all by himself an era of general abdication of the mind, a black man guides us today into unexplored regions on a path of sparks (étincelles).” Soon after, Suzanne Césaire wrote a beautiful essay commenting on this meeting, “Surrealism, tightrope of our hope” (1943). And Aimé Césaire’s famous and explosive anti-colonial poem and manifesto, *Cahiers d’un retour au pays natal* (1947) is shot through with electric surrealist images.

Inez Hedges doesn’t mention films in this context, but a documentary picture on the so-called primitive arts such as *L’Invention du Monde* (1955) by surrealist movie director Michel Zimbarca, with a text written by the surrealist poet Benjamin Péret, is a striking example of surrealist “radical memory.”

Surrealism is also present, in one way or another, in films by Chris Marker, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, and others, as faith in the immense subversive potential of imagination and dream.

Each reader of this book has of course their own list of films that embody oppositional memory. Among my favorite are two pictures by Italian director Gilles Pontecorvo, *The Battle of Algiers* (1966, briefly mentioned in the book) and *Queimada* (1969, missing from the book), about a black slave rebellion on a tropical island. But Inez Hedges has done beautiful work, bringing together an impressive collection of radical, critical, or “convulsive” masterpieces of world cinema and exploring the ways they were able to produce cultural memory.

Homage to E.P. Thompson

JOE WHITE

E.P. THOMPSON (1924–1993) wore several hats during his life. His magnum opus as a historian was *The Making of the English Working Class*, one of the greatest history books written in the twentieth century in any language. He fought tirelessly for nuclear disarmament in the 1980s, which almost surely took years off his life. He may well be least remembered for being a founder of the British New Left. For this reason, Cal Winslow's selection of Thompson's writings from the late 1950s to the early 1960s is especially welcome and timely—though not surprising, since Winslow was a student of Thompson's at the University of Warwick and is a longtime activist and writer.

To understand what Thompson's overarching arguments are and where they came from, an understanding of the context—political, economic, ideological, cultural—in which they were written is absolutely crucial. Granted that the 1950s is a pretty long time ago even if you are old enough to have been alive during that ambiguous decade. Britain was still a heavily industrialized country, meaning among other things that a large majority of its citizens were manual workers, and that fact was the starting point, but in Thompson's view far from the

whole story, of what determined their life situation and their relation to the rest of British society.

In 1959 Harold Macmillan's election campaign mantra was "You never had it so good."

This was actually true up to a point, if only because the Tories, who had been in control since 1951, didn't dare touch the completed edifice of the 1945–1951 Labour government's welfare state and Keynesian macroeconomic policies. But from a

leftist perspective things did not look good at all, starting with the fact that the Conservatives had defeated the Labour party in the general elections of 1951, 1955, and 1959, each time by a larger margin. The Tories were still trying to hold onto what was left of the British Empire, for instance in their failed attempt along with France and Israel to regain the Suez Canal in 1956. The Labour Party's right wing was (as it has been for most of its history) solidly in control. The same went for the leadership of Britain's biggest trade unions, which despite everything were far stronger than British unions today due to a number of factors of which full employment was the most important. The Cold War appeared to be permanently entrenched with no end in sight in the opinion of just about everyone—left, right, and center. The "military industrial complex" had yet to be so named but was already flourishing. Some Marxists at the time thought that a permanent arms economy was the main cause of western capitalism's

E.P. Thompson and the
Making of the New Left:
Essays and Polemics
CAL WINSLOW, ED.
Monthly Review Press, 2014

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apparent successes and stability since the war. Even Aneurin Bevan—undisputed leader of the left wing of the Parliamentary Labour Party and the architect of Britain's National Health Service, the crown jewel of the 1945–1951 labour government's reforms—vehemently opposed unilateral nuclear disarmament. As he notoriously put it, he would not go “naked into the conference chamber” to negotiate with the Soviets.

But the catalyst that galvanized Edward Thompson was (in addition to all of the above) the events of 1956, which shook the world of Soviet Communism to its core. Up to then Thompson was known outside of the Communist Party of Great Britain Historians Group and adult education students and teachers in West Yorkshire only as the author of a wonderful if very long book, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (1955). But 1956 utterly changed all that, starting with Khrushchev's secret speech to the twentieth party congress in February, followed a few months later by the Hungarian Revolution.

Eric Hobsbawm has vividly called the impact of these events on the CPGB a “collective nervous breakdown.” Hobsbawm himself stayed in the party. But Thompson did not have a political nervous breakdown. On the contrary, when the demands by him and likeminded comrades that were published in the *Reasoner*, soon to become the *New Reasoner*, for honest answers from the CPGB did not receive a response, Thompson and his comrades angrily resigned from the CP. In a story that cannot be adequately told in a short review, they built a movement out of the wreckage—a New Left. The essays in this volume are thus both the expression and analysis of a major political crisis and a stunning political achievement, which for reasons of manageability I propose to divide into discussions of revolution, class, socialism, and the New Left—concluding with an overall assessment of that achievement. What I am not going to do is voice any sustained criticism of

Thompson's thought. Over the past half century he has been subjected to so much criticism from so many angles that I do not believe that many fresh critical insights remain. Moreover, that body of criticism is easily accessible and, incredible as it may sound, hasn't even stopped yet.

Revolution

Edward Thompson was a revolutionary socialist. These days I have not been hearing many leftists calling themselves revolutionaries—at least not in Pittsburgh, where I live. Nor have I been hearing the expression “late capitalism” recently. To be sure, many people see no credible strategy anywhere in Western capitalism for seriously reforming the system by incremental, parliamentary methods. Nor do most of them think that capitalism is going to hang around either for the next several centuries or forever. But, to repeat, they do not see any halfway plausible way forward. Where is an early twenty-first century update of Lenin's *What Is to Be Done?* I leave it to the reader to bring in his or her own answer.

But as these essays make clear, Thompson was deadly serious in his contention that revolution in Britain was thinkable and then some. His starting point was that Britain—and by extension Western capitalism tout court—had become overdeveloped societies, a term I mistakenly thought that Paul Gilroy was the first to use. And yet capitalism in Britain was surprisingly vulnerable. In one of many remarkable turns of phrase, Thompson speaks of Britain as a working-class country that despite what Raymond Williams called the privatized mobility of life under late capitalism, is still “warrenred” (my italics; look up the meaning of this quintessentially Thompsonian term if it is unfamiliar) with democratic processes—committees, voluntary organizations, councils, and the like, of which the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament was the period's towering example. Moreover, Thompson was among the few socialists in the 1950s who argued that direct industrial action by even a few strategically placed workers could

give the bosses fits and throw a monkey wrench into the system, though of course the theory and practice of syndicalism and direct action were first formulated in the early 1900s. By the 1960s and 1970s the spread of shop-stewards unionism and rank-and-file militancy had become defining characteristics of the British industrial relations system, so much so that it requires strenuous exercise of the historical imagination to recall today that in the late 1950s what Thompson was saying was by no means the obvious conventional wisdom within the British left. Industrial militancy taken by itself is regarded by most as an inadequate scenario for revolution. And indeed Thompson was not advancing a syndicalist blueprint. Neither was he proposing a “seizure of the Winter Palace” scenario. I take this to be a continuation of his project to make clear his differences with and opposition to Stalinism, which were deep and implacable. Nor was it clear that the CPGB thought itself to be revolutionary any longer. Many people on the non-Stalinist left had come to the conclusion that the Stalinist commitment to revolution was only skin deep or hopelessly opportunistic at best. The closest I have seen to a carefully considered view of this matter by communists is in *Labouring Men* (1964), where Eric Hobsbawm argued that the British working class had ceased to be revolutionary but, thank goodness, still voted Labour. I don’t know whether he thought he was bucking party orthodoxy.

At any rate, a “seizure of the Winter Palace” model was the only one that the CPGB (and most others) had to offer. And this model Thompson unequivocally rejected.

I’d go so far as to say that this was the first of his two big bones of contention with British Trotskyists, the second of course being their espousal of a Leninist form of organization. In short, I see his reaffirmation of the need for and the possibility of revolution as one part of his final settling of accounts with the CP.

In addition to rejecting the “classic” revo-

lutionary scenarios, Thompson dismissed with equal vigor a parliamentary road to socialism. At this point one may be forgiven for asking whether he had painted himself into a hopelessly tight corner. Was there anything with which to replace the old and increasingly implausible revolutionary scenarios? His answer was that we need no longer think of disaster as the potential revolutionary situation. In one sense, we are now constantly living on the edge of a revolutionary situation, with unrelenting pressure. The number of people who are wholly and unambiguously interested in the defense of the status quo is small. Alongside the industrial workers, we should see the teachers who want better schools, scientists who wish to advance research, welfare workers who want hospitals, and actors who want a national theater. These people do not want these things only and always, any more than all industrial workers are always “class conscious” and loyal to their great community values. But these affirmations coexist.

This was red meat. Winslow has wisely chosen to include Thompson’s reply to his critics who thought that he was more or less out of his mind. But he was more than partially vindicated in May 1968 when in France a series of events fit his revolutionary paradigm snugly and almost brought down the administration of Charles de Gaulle. What we have here then is an account of how revolution in a mature capitalist society might emerge, written at a time when virtually everyone else had either put revolution on the back burner, taken it off the stove altogether, or had never put it on the stove in the first place. In my opinion, Thompson’s account has never been improved upon to this day.

Class

The one idea that Edward Thompson is most famous for comes from the preface to *The Making of the English Working Class*. Many people (in the history trade, anyway) know by heart that “Class is a relationship, not a thing.” And again, “Class happens when some men, as a result of

common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs." But necessary as these formulations are to Thompson's understanding of class, they are a starting point and not the whole story.

In V.G. Kiernan's vivid phrase, Marx and Engels "cast the horoscope of the working class" back in the nineteenth century. If one's view of Thompson on class came only from a reading of *The Making* with its unforgettable "bottom line" of all roads from 1832 leading to Chartism, one could easily conclude that Thompson does exactly the same teleological thing. But Thompson's writings on class in these essays reveal unambiguously a far less monochromatic, linear, and teleological view of the working class's supposed historic mission. He deems it a serious mistake to "assume that the working class is a given entity with a 'fixed' characteristic consciousness which may wax or wane but remains essentially the same thing—a working class which emerged as a social force somewhere around 1780 ... which has thereafter grown in size and organization but has not changed significantly in form or in its relationship to other classes."

On the contrary, Thompson sees several phases or chapters or periods—he even calls them epochs—in the history of the English working class, each sharply different from the other. The Chartist era was a unique and indeed unprecedented moment in the history of the world. By 1850 it was in terminal decline due to political defeat and economic recovery. Not until the 1880s did a new kind of working class consciousness and values emerge centered around the factories, docks, and mines and expressed as the revival of socialism and the New Unionism of unskilled and semi-skilled workers. This led first to the formation of the British Labour Party and ultimately to the landslide Labour victory of 1945 and its completion of the welfare state

and Indian independence.

I cannot stress strongly enough that Thompson does not expound a version—sophisticated or crude—of the "forward march of labor." In the 1950s it indeed looked as if the forward march of labor had been halted—the three consecutive Labour defeats being everybody's starting point. The supposedly "classic" manual working class (which as noted above really dated only from the 1880s) had long ceased to grow as a percentage of the entire society. Moreover, the "classical" working class or what was left of it were simply no longer in the market for radical change if indeed they ever were. Especially influential in spreading this idea was Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* (1957), which is still in print. Hoggart advanced a powerful argument, based on his 1930s childhood in a very poor neighborhood of Leeds, that most people were concerned above all with getting on with their lives and that their class consciousness did not go beyond recognizing and accepting an essentially unbridgeable distinction between Us and Them. The mass media, to which Hoggart attributed great importance, were deeply complicit in encouraging and reinforcing this view of the world.

Thompson acknowledges that Hoggart and others had more than a point: "I think it is foolish to dispute the general weight of this evidence." But they did not have the whole story. He makes the crucially important point that there was always to be found a minority of actively class-conscious people in working-class neighborhoods throughout England—trade unionists, cooperators, socialists, and others. The good old days when men were men and militants were militants—most of them, anyway—never existed. Thompson follows on with a series of interrelated considerations of the important changes that were already visible in the 1950s and why it is wrong to conclude that they put an end to socialism in our time. He points out that there is nothing inherently socialist about coal and machine tools.

Socialists should welcome the growth of the economy's service sector provided that it results in "more and more people being involved in the exchange of valuable human services (welfare, education, entertainment, and the like) and not (as at present) in salesmanship, packaging, and bureaucratic administration." In addition, the supposedly good old days were not all that hot to begin with. He dismisses "false consciousness"—past or present—out of hand. Finally he categorically rejects C. Wright Mills' hint that intellectuals and not the working class are going to be the agents of change in our time.

The considerable amount of ink that has been spent in trying to figure out how Marxist or otherwise is Thompson's approach to class strikes me as mostly a waste of effort. One can plausibly maintain that Thompson accepts Marx's distinction between "Klasse an sich" (class in itself, with its structuralist overtones) and "Klasse fuer sich" (class for itself, with its emphasis on consciousness and self-activity). Alternatively, one can argue that Thompson is a practitioner of the New Working Class theory before that theory's articulation and leave it to others to debate its Marxist pedigree. But what stands out above all is Thompson's reaffirmation of working people as a presence in human affairs and not just bystanders, at a time when so many ideologically motivated writers were proclaiming and continue to claim the exact opposite.

Socialism

Socialism is (literally) back on the front page because of Bernie Sanders' claim that he is a democratic socialist. But he has been all but completely silent about what he means by democratic socialism. Hence I was not surprised to see that the *New York Times* recently asked a learned academic for guidance and clarification. The academic's response (I paraphrase broadly) was that if it makes you happy, you can call Bernie Sanders a socialist. But if you want to be accurate, he's really a left-wing liberal and a Keynesian. That is plainly correct. Which is not

to berate Sanders for claiming to be something that he's not, but to argue that his campaign has done hardly anything to further anyone's political education on the matter of what socialism is and isn't and why you should be a socialist and call yourself one. I wouldn't be surprised if readers are at this moment muttering under their breath "duh," or words to that effect.

Edward Thompson was also a socialist, but not in the pages of this book a self-proclaimed one. He understandably and correctly assumed that readers would take his commitment to socialism as a given. After all, in mid-twentieth-century Britain there were millions of self-defined socialists to say nothing of even more people who were not socialists but whose definition of socialism was probably not all that different from the people who said they were socialists. In yet another utterly remarkable passage, he makes it clear that the goal of socialism

has been for the creation—not of equality of opportunity within an acquisitive society—but of a society of equals, a cooperative community. The prerequisite for this is the replacement of production for profit by production for use. A socialist society might be underdeveloped or overdeveloped, poor or affluent. The distinction between socialist and capitalist society is to be found, not in the level of productivity, but in the characteristic relations of production, in the ordering of social priorities, and in its whole way of life.

These words are a painful reminder of how far we have to go in order both to recover ground lost during the past fifty years and to advance the frontiers of what is politically thinkable and doable.

The New Left

Winslow in his introduction provides a useful introductory overview of the rise and fall of the British New Left. Thompson himself, to my knowledge, never wrote a history of the New Left. But in his 1959 essay he mounted a powerful attack on the shortcomings of the old lefts, East and West, which because it defies

summary needs to be quoted extensively:

It is the bankruptcy of the orthodoxies of the Old Left, and particularly their imprisonment within the framework of Cold War ideology and strategy, that has contributed to the characteristic political consciousness of the postwar generation—the sense of impotence in the face of the Establishment. Because there has been during the past decade no determined and effective grouping ... challenging these orthodoxies, frustration has given way to disillusion, and disillusion to apathy. ... Such groupings are appearing in different forms, in a dozen different countries, East and West.

This of course was extremely negative criticism of institutions and ideologies that Thompson deemed to be incorrigible. He then proposed a long list of positive tasks for the British New Left beginning with winning over the labor and nuclear disarmament movements to what he called an “internationalist outlook of active neutrality.” New channels of communication needed to be found in order to facilitate debate and discussion by like-minded comrades at home and abroad. A “renaissance of socialist theory” was required in order to create a “unified and consistent body of ideas by which the New Left can be identified in any country.”

While these challenges were being met, pitfalls needed to be avoided starting with a complete rejection of sectarian vanguardism. The New Left must under no circumstances become an alternative faction. It should not think of itself as a party or pre-party formation. “But the New Left must not stand aside from the labor movement and from its immediate preoccupations and struggles.” Above all, the New Left must insist that “socialism can only be built from below ..., that working people are not the passive recipients of economic and cultural conditioning, but are intellectual and moral beings. ... It will cease to postpone the satisfactions of socialism to a period ‘after the Revolution.’” Two words that come to mind for thinking on this scale are grandiose and utopian. I prefer utopian and indeed Thompson included

disciplined utopian thinking in his call for newer and better theory. Rather than being a weakness or oddity, it should be seen as one of his most important insights.

Thompson’s Legacy

A magazine called the *New Left Review* was started in 1960 and is still being published. It is far and away the leading English language journal edited and written by an international left intelligentsia. Edward Thompson was one of its original editors. Some of the current erudite—not to say brilliant—contributors to the NLR are major public intellectuals. Perry Anderson is one. Tariq Ali happens to be my favorite. But today’s *New Left Review* is not the kind of journal with the kind of politics that Thompson had in mind. It launches no campaigns. It organizes no strikes, protests, or demonstrations, and writes and signs no petitions (though many of its contributors do). Its influence does not extend much beyond its own narrow constituency.

How Thompson tried his hardest but failed to avoid the NLR turning into the kind of journal I have just described can be found in a letter to the editors, “Where Are We Now?” which has never been previously published. Winslow’s decision to include it is alone worth the price of the book. As he says,

Thompson defends the New Left, or what came to be known as the “first” New Left. ... Much of it is in response to what [he] sees as the adoption of a “Third Worldism,” [a shift which] seems to include, he suggests, abandoning both the revolutionary traditions in the “West” as well as any commitment to present practice.

Who won and who lost in conventional terms has for most people never been in doubt, including Thompson himself. He wrote in a letter to C. Wright Mills shortly before Mills’ death in 1962 that “we failed to implement our original purposes or even to sustain what cultural apparatuses we had.” Not that

Thompson threw in the towel. He continued to write far from ineffective polemical counterattacks that included “The Peculiarities of the English,” directed against Perry Anderson, and “The Poverty of Theory,” directed against Louis Althusser. But the idea that Thompson was defeated and, worse yet, is irrelevant, has continued—literally right up to the present. In the November 19, 2015, issue of the *New York Review of Books*, Michael Ignatieff specifically named Thompson as a participant in debates and polemics of the 1960s and 1970s that once were, in his view, “gripping and vital” but appear today “as distant as the disputations of medieval scholastics.”

I am not going to leave the last word on Edward Thompson to Ignatieff, who can most charitably be described as a twenty-first-century liberal imperialist and less charitably

as an apologist for torture. Even after granting that Thompson is not the only political heavy of half a century ago who is still well worth reading and that in no way could he have predicted and addressed all of the cataclysmic socioeconomic, ecological, and cultural changes of the past half century, which rank with the early decades of the Industrial Revolution in England, what must strike us is the sheer brilliance, courage, and originality of the man and his contributions. He should be, but for some reason never is, bracketed with Antonio Gramsci as one of the boldest and most original socialist thinkers of the twentieth century. It is safe to predict that there will be a Next New Left inspired in large measure by E.P. Thompson, and that the contents of Cal Winslow’s admirable anthology will be among that movement’s most important texts.

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Democracy, from King Hammurabi's Time to Tomorrow

STEPHANIE J. SMITH

TEMMA KAPLAN'S *Democracy: A World History* arrives at a timely moment. With presidential candidates and U.S. officials alike evoking the term "democracy" as a justification for political movements or a pretense for extraterritorial violence, Kaplan's history of democracy offers a sorely needed study at an opportune time. In this thoughtful and smartly written work, Kaplan deftly achieves her objective of analyzing the ways in which popular groups have utilized the language of democracy to forge change over time, often in opposition to society's leaders. Covering ancient Mesopotamia to the early twentieth century, Kaplan significantly adds to our understanding of the development of the democratic ideal usually presented from a Eurocentric perspective and provides a counter to cynicism in some quarters of the left toward the radical value of the concept. Kaplan, as a longtime activist and distinguished scholar, has written a number of path-breaking books, including *Crazy for Democracy: Women in Grassroots Movements* and *Taking Back the Streets: Women, Youth, and Direct Democracy*, that examine the topic of democracy in specific historical contexts. Indeed, one could argue that Kaplan has spent her accomplished

career considering the issues at the heart of *Democracy*. The result is a finely crafted study that enhances our overall understanding of this vital topic.

As part of Oxford University Press' series, "New Oxford World History," *Democracy* primarily serves as a concise textbook, but it also offers an informative but accessible introduction to the subject matter for the general reader. *Democracy* incor-

Democracy: A World History

TEMMA KAPLAN
Oxford University Press, 2015

porates an examination of different regions over time, and it also provides a rethinking of traditional world histories and of those typically left out of the narrative, meaning peoples outside of Europe and the United States. This study moves beyond the focus on the "great" rulers to incorporate the views of everyday women and men of different ethnicities, religions, and cultures. This methodology fits well with Kaplan's overarching approach, a consideration of how different political alliances, including those of repressed and typically underrepresented groups, demand democracy through their use of language and direct action. Importantly, though, *Democracy* further analyzes the connections between the local and the global, as well as the past and the present, to enhance our historical understanding of the complex and shifting notions of democracy.

Kaplan's introduction provides the theoretical foundation for her study. Kaplan first discusses the definition of democracy, which, at its most basic level, is "a process through

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which people confer with each other to secure food, shelter, land, water, and peace for their mutual benefit" (1). But as democracies have brought people together within shared notions of inclusion, they also have excluded others, even to the level of subjugation of those considered outsiders. Thus, according to Kaplan, traditionally democracy has revealed two historical flaws: 1) "a lack of effective routine communication between elected officials and ordinary people;" and 2) much like authoritarian governments, democracies tend to impose their rules of governance on others through colonization or the removal of indigenous groups (3). Even as a flawed system, Kaplan still maintains that democracy offers the opportunity for the "greatest happiness for the greatest number," or given the total number of ideas that people agitating for change can promote, "democracies increase the chances of achieving peace, justice, and social benefits for all" (2). In this vein democracy moves well beyond the concept of "citizens electing governments" based on legal frameworks and constitutions (2). Instead, democracy also entails the participation of women and men united to form social movements and unified in their demands for natural resources and rights as equal citizens. As a result, and despite its inherent vulnerabilities, democracy remains a model for many on how to establish and maintain social, economic, and political equality.

Following the introduction, Kaplan illustrates *Democracy's* major points with smartly conceived chapters that cover a variety of spaces and times. Beginning with the legal code written for King Hammurabi (Babylonia, Mesopotamia) between 1792 and 1750 BCE (Before the Common Era), Kaplan demonstrates how attempts to regulate water distribution shaped various laws in different locations. Besides Babylonia, Kaplan also considers drought in Southern Mexico and Central America, as well as in ancient Egypt and the Nile region. Not surprisingly, Kaplan devotes quite a bit of space to her discussion of democracy in ancient

Greece, particularly in Athens, and in Rome. Even here, though, water also played a crucial role. For example, from the seventh through the fourth century BCE, the creation of Athens' fundamental precedents for representative and participatory democracy emerged at least partly from the water needs of farmers, craftspeople, shopkeepers, and merchants. The Greek Assembly, with its first meeting in the sixth century BCE, consisted of six thousand male citizens, including even those of the lower classes, who met at least forty times a year to discuss and vote on governmental and legal issues. The Roman Republic followed Greece's decline, although Kaplan points out that scholars question the extent to which the Roman practices were democratic. The first Roman legal code, the Twelve Tables, was written between 451 and 450 BCE, and Rome also saw the creation of the Tribunes, which represented the plebeians' interests. After Rome's decline, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Zoroastrianism "generated communitarian impulses, especially in their initial stages," but as Kaplan points out, some democratic gains came at the loss of freedoms for others (14).

Following a discussion of prophetic movements, including the Sikhs, *Democracy* discusses the impact of the mid-seventeenth-century "Levellers," the political movement during the English Civil War that promoted fundamental civil and political rights, including trial by jury, universal male suffrage, freedom of press and religion, and so on. Kaplan then moves to an examination of democracy in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, including the American and French revolutions. Kaplan's analysis of the French Revolution allows for a focus on women's roles, an area in which the author excels. For example, Olympe de Gouges, an early feminist, spoke out against the exclusion of women in her "Declaration of the Rights of Women" in 1791, and she also protested the marginalization of enslaved peoples from Africa. In 1848 Paris witnessed the spread of revolution

as crowds demanded an end to the monarchy. The sustained struggles of women and people of color continued well into the nineteenth century. In the United States, the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation ended slavery only in the states that had “risen in rebellion against the United States,” but in the subsequent years the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments insured “all men rights of citizenship, including due process of the law, and grant[ed] formerly enslaved men the right to vote and be elected to office” (53). Of course, U.S. women were denied the same rights until 1920.

As the fight against oppressive political systems continued, the early twentieth century witnessed several of the world’s historically significant uprisings, including the Mexican and Russian revolutions. Soviets, or the representative councils of St. Petersburg’s workers, first formed in 1905, and in 1917 the Russian empire collapsed after self-governing soviets composed of soldiers and sailors stormed the czar’s Winter Palace. During World War II the allies continued to fight in the name of “democracy,” but Kaplan rightly argues that the wars “brought the ideas of democracy into question in many places,” as many peoples around the world still lacked their civil and political rights (78). For example, South African citizens continued their fight for equal protections under the law with the African National Congress, originally formed in 1912. And in India, Mahatma Gandhi and his son fought against racial and colonial oppression, as well as for independence from Britain. In 1938, just before the war, Gandhi even questioned the concept of democracy when he argued, “Democracy of the West is, in my opinion, only so called. It has germs in it, certainly, of the true type. But it can only come when all violence is eschewed and malpractices disappear” (photo caption, 84).

Kaplan argues that the postwar period brought a renewed sense of optimism. In the United States more young people entered college, and students from all parts of the globe gathered together to agitate for increased rights for workers and for collective freedoms. In addition, the activism of 1968 and the protests against the Vietnam War brought tens of thousands of people into the streets to participate in strikes and demonstrations around the globe. Kaplan argues that “democracy can only flourish when citizens are confident that those responsible for maintaining order will deal with all citizens in a responsible manner,” and students often faced the ire of the police, especially with Mexico’s 1968 Tlatelolco student massacre soon before the Olympics (106). Still, Kaplan argues that world-wide feminist activism developed from the civil rights, student, and labor movements of the previous decades. Chile’s citizens also elected Salvador Allende amidst great excitement in 1970, although a brutal dictatorship took over by 1973.

Kaplan ends her fine examination of democracy with a brief discussion of the democratic movements, including in Spain, Greece, the United States, Chile, and Canada, that followed 2011’s Arab Spring. Here, Kaplan points out that once again students and young people have led many of these political actions. Ending on a note of optimism, Kaplan argues that although some of the recent groups have succeeded to some extent while others have failed, women and men continue the fight for rights (even those previously won but now eroded) in the name of democracy. Kaplan reminds us that for these groups, democracy still represents a hopeful possibility for the future, and socialists will continue to struggle for expansion of the concept in the social and economic realm.

Radical America

PAUL HEIDEMAN

THE AMERICAN LEFT IS TODAY confronted with a situation it has not dealt with in some time—something approaching broader political relevance. From the rise of Occupy to Black Lives Matter to the Bernie Sanders campaign, movements of the left are having a sustained impact on American politics that they have not had for decades. After long years of condescending neglect, the mainstream press is now beginning to pay attention to what the publications of the left have to say. Underlying all of this, as revealed by examinations of public opinion, is a shift to the left among the younger generation that is nigh unprecedented.

For Howard Brick and Christopher Phelps, authors of *Radicals in America: The U.S. Left Since the Second World War*, this is part of a familiar pattern. In their generous and expansive history of the American left, they trace the left's journey from "margins" to "mainstream" and back again. The result is a highly readable narrative covering seven decades of American history, written with a scope and inclusiveness rarely attempted in other treatments of the subject. Participants in the newest left will learn much from this book about the tradition that

they inherit; however, the authors stop short of attempting to analyze what the left got wrong and how it could have done better (aside from

basically consensus judgments, such as that the Weathermen were worthless wreckers). While the kind of ecumenism that results no doubt contributes to the generosity of interpretation that characterizes the book, the

result seems rather less hopeful than the authors likely intended. Without an analysis of how things could possibly have been different, had different choices been made, we are left with a bleak image of inevitable defeats. This lends a kind of tension to the book, between the hopeful and expansive recounting of previous radicalisms and a refusal to try and imagine how they could have avoided their eventual disintegration.

Brick and Phelps' story begins with a brief recounting of the Depression-era left and its dissolution in the cauldron of the early Cold War. They open with the story of Emil Mazey, a socialist autoworker who organized soldier dissidence during the war and would become a key ally of Walter Reuther in the United Auto Workers. This is a device repeated in each chapter, as the authors choose some figure, usually someone relatively unknown, and use their biography as a window on that era of the left. It's a nice touch, one that illustrates how the political dynamics of an era could be concentrated in an individual person.

Radicals in America: The U.S. Left Since the Second World War

HOWARD BRICK AND
CHRISTOPHER PHELPS
Cambridge University Press, 2015, 355 pp.

PAUL HEIDEMAN is a PhD student in sociology at New York University. His work has appeared in *Jacobin*, *Historical Materialism*, and *International Socialist Review*.

The portrait of the left in the midst of the war years establishes many of the themes that will repeat in subsequent chapters. First, and most impressively, is the sheer scope of the authors' coverage. The traditional players—the Communist Party and the Popular Front—are here, but so are the radical pacifists who opposed the war, the breakaway Trotskyists led by Max Shachtman, and prickly intellectuals like Dwight MacDonald. The inclusion of all of these currents necessitates a certain lack of depth in dealing with each of them, but the portrait of the diversity and breadth of the left make up for it.

In this opening section, the authors' capacity for insightful political judgments is also on display. This comes through with particular clarity in their discussion of Depression-era internationalism. The historiographical judgment on leftist internationalism in these years has been largely negative. Even as scholars have lauded the Popular Front defense of the Spanish Revolution, the obeisance shown toward Russia, above all by the Communist Party but emulated by much of the rest of the left, has been judged a disaster, tying American radicalism to an authoritarian regime with its own interests and providing succor to the reactionary charge that radicalism is un-American. New Left scholars, in particular, often seem to have written under the shadow of this accusation, with their various excavations of indigenous American radicalisms mustered to provide an implicit rebuttal to this charge. Brick and Phelps provide a more tempered treatment of the issue, noting that identification with struggles in other countries often invigorated American radicals, liberating them from parochial myths of American exceptionalism.

The succeeding chapters largely track the rise and fall of the New Left, the story that forms the primary narrative and analytic arc of the book. Brick and Phelps are attentive to the rumblings of upheaval that sounded throughout the supposedly placid fifties, noting that every-

thing from Beat nonconformity to left success in institutions like the Highlander school presaged turbulent times ahead.

Bricks and Phelps center their portrait of the New Left on Students for a Democratic Society and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. They argue that while SDS is often accorded prize of place in histories of the New Left, SNCC was no less important and contributed just as many figures and ideas to the radicalization of the late sixties as did SDS. It's a compelling interpretation—many of the most significant lines of New Left political development, from the Black Power socialism of James Foreman to the lunacy of the Weathermen, evolved out of tendencies within one of these two groups. The emphasis on SNCC and SDS together also illuminates how a number of minority white groups, such as the Third World Women's Alliance, which grew out of feminist agitation in SNCC, shared a basic political milieu with SDS and its better-studied offspring.

The emphasis on SNCC and SDS is hardly limiting, however, and *Radicals* is characteristically expansive in tracking the evolution of cultural radicalism in these years, the development of ecological activism, as well as movements like gay liberation and the American Indian Movement. Rarely has the history of American radicalism been written with such thoroughness.

Yet this breadth of narrative comes at a cost, it must be said. Concerned to draw the wide-ranging and chaotic history of the left into a single, medium-length volume inevitably means sacrificing depth of analysis. Reading *Radicals*, it is easy to be convinced that this sacrifice was a wise one, as the range of research and the inclusive spirit ensure that the book will contain new information even for veteran students of left history.

The costs of such an approach, however, are more severe than they at first appear. Brick and Phelps' largely descriptive approach to the history of the left ends up abandoning the necessary task of helping to chart a future course

for the left. The conclusion makes an attempt at this work, providing a framework by which the failings of past lefts may be redeemed for the future. Using a skillful retelling of the struggle for disability rights as scaffolding, the authors argue that the success of past radicalisms can be measured in the present invisibility of their victories. Today, the ubiquity (though, unfortunately, still far from universality) of sidewalk on-ramps, public transit elevators, and similar accommodations masks the fierce insurgency that was necessary on the part of disabled people and their comrades to win such reforms. Brick and Phelps argue that this kind of process has always characterized the history of the American left. Even as it has faded from the mainstream back into the margins, its struggles have left remnants, which have themselves become part of the mainstream.

This is undeniably true, and a valuable antidote to the easy cynicism that writes off previous political generations as abject failures. At the same time, one must admit that these failures have come with real costs, both for the left and for people suffering under the manifold forms of oppression in America. Today, one can witness the legacies of the defeat of the left everywhere, from the suicide and opioid epidemics consuming working class white communities to the municipal vampirism in black suburbs to unrestrained slaughter of the American war machine. All of these phenomena today are, in part, a consequence of previous lefts' defeats in

their confrontations with state and capital.

If these kinds of morbid symptoms were not inevitable developments, it means they could have been stopped at some point. To begin to identify such points, political judgment is needed about what could have been done differently, by whom, and when. This is the kind of judgment that is lacking throughout *Radicals in America*. To be sure, an overabundance of these sorts of judgments has afflicted any number of partisan histories of the left, which overflow with contentions that, had a certain line been followed, all kinds of nastiness could have been averted. At this point, more of that kind of history is hardly needed. But some kind of analysis of what paths were once open, but not taken, is needed to redeem the history Brick and Phelps recount. Put simply, if a future left is to evade the marginality that eventually consumed all previous ones, some sense of how that might be done has to be found in their histories.

This is a harsh judgment on a generous book, and it would be churlish to end on this note. Brick and Phelps have gathered precious histories together to create a resource that will be invaluable in acquainting future radicals with the tradition in which they stand. The American left has long deserved a book like this, and *Radicals* fulfills its promise with tact and nuance. For young activists radicalizing today, curious about how previous generations have tried to make a "political revolution," they could scarcely do better than to dive into this book.

Workers' Stories of their Strikes in China

DAN LA BOTZ

CHINA HAS THE WORLD'S LARGEST population, about 1.4 billion people, with a working age population of about 950 million, hundreds of millions of them wage laborers. Most of us know little about the Chinese workers or the recent workers' movement that has developed so rapidly, especially since the 1990s. Much less do we know anything about workers' lives at work or on strike or what conclusions they have drawn from those experiences. We now have a remarkable book that introduces us to the Chinese worker.

China on Strike: Narratives of Workers' Resistance is the product of an extraordinary collective endeavor by workers, leftists in the Chinese labor movement, and academics at universities in China and abroad—but it is above all a workers' book about their workplaces and their work, about their bosses and government officials, about themselves and their co-workers, and what they think about it all. In 2010-2011, factory workers and Marxist-oriented students who also went to work in factories collected stories from their co-workers about their work lives, their involvement in strikes and protests, and the lessons that might be drawn from those experiences. Students at the International

Center for Joint Labor Research at Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou provided resources for this project. All of those who were interviewed were migrant workers, some of the 270 million migrant workers who toil in the factories of the Pearl River Delta, the heart of Chinese industry and labor.

Qin Ling provides a short (26-page) introduction to Chinese industry and workers from the 1990s to the

present, a remarkably concise and informative year-by-year account of the changing political economy, development of industry, working conditions, legal structure, and working-class action. As Qin Ling describes the development of worker action—from individual fights between a single worker and a boss, to secret violent attacks on supervisors and owners, to group struggles between workers and companies but often aided by criminal gangs, to real collective action by workers—one realizes this is a rapid recapitulation of European and American labor history, though three centuries' experience has been compressed into a few decades.

The book is then divided into three parts: struggles against factory closures, struggles against wage cuts, and struggles for wage increases. These chapters involve descriptions of industrial plants, workers autobiographies, accounts of job actions, strikes, and protests including workers' interactions with foremen, supervisors, owners, labor authorities, lawyers,

China on Strike: Narratives of Workers' Resistance

EDITED BY HAO REN

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Maps. Illustrations.

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the media, and local government authorities. We learn about the different capitalist groups—Japanese, Taiwanese, and Chinese—and their increasing class consciousness expressed in reaction to the workers and to government legislation. We learn that many, perhaps most, of these workers are women, that it is economic conditions, above all wages, that provoke most strikes, that most of the strikes have a spontaneous character, that they are organized by cell-phone and photo apps, and that workers often have difficulty finding appropriate representatives and difficulty in formulating their demands. We see that workers lose many strikes and win some, but because of the government's opposition they can almost never form stable labor organizations and therefore cannot create a labor movement that can exert political power, much less create a political party. And we learn in the postscript (if we had not seen it in the papers) that the very success of their movement leads to a deindustrialization of their region, as industry moves inland to find cheaper labor.

What is most impressive about this book is that it is not only a remarkably informative book about Chinese capital and labor, but it is also a kind of organizing manual that might be profitably read—as it was designed to be—not only by workers in China but by workers almost anywhere in the world, including here in the United States. As we read this book we find

ourselves thinking along with the workers being interviewed, “Well, what can be done then?” In each case, depending on the period and the state of the economy, the production season, the size of the plant, the attitude of management, and the cohesion of the workers, the answer will be different. Nevertheless, the problems that arise taken together suggest that they seem to be heading toward the creation of an organized and stable labor movement—or they will fail. I think worker activists in the United States could read this book in order to think through their problems, which—though everything is different—are often not so different, after all.

I was struck by one detail in the book. A worker reported that at one factory most of the workers skated to work on roller skates wearing little packs on their backs, hanging up their skates and packs before going to their machines. We are reminded by that detail that this is a young, largely female workforce. The young women on their roller skates, cell phones in their bags, have built up one of the world's most active labor movements, with thousands of strikes and protests each year. Will they be able to build independent unions, to win democracy in China, and to create a workers' party? Well, when they go skating into the future they will need our understanding and solidarity, and we will have to put on our skates and build a labor movement than can join them at the rink.