

Remembering Joanne Landy
Tom Harrison, Aaron Amaral

64 NewPolitics

Vol XVI No 4 \$7.00 (\$9.00 Canada)

Winter 2018

SOCIALISTS, DEMOCRATS, THE WORKING CLASS, and OUR FUTURE *A Symposium*

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- *Fighting for the Soul of Socialism: Reply to Moody*
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*Trump and the Labor
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*Stalinism: The Complete
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Words & Pictures, Book Reviews
and more...

18 year-old girl living in the world,
where no one cares about the safety
of the girl. Money, money, money.
That seems to be the anthem
destroying the world and always
taking it for granted. No more greed.
All I can see is landfills. I'm disgusted.
I can't believe we trusted the world.
But it's not too late to be adjusted.
We have our rights according to the
amendments. But why do we feel like
we have been so resented? Shoved to
the side where opinions don't matter,
where opinions only die. It's time
to stand up and let our voices be
heard. Incinerator move because
you are not preferred.

—Audrey Rozier

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a journal of socialist thought

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NEW POLITICS is published by New Politics Associates, 294 New York Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11216, USA

e-mail: newpoliticsjournal@gmail.com

on the web at: www.newpol.org

NEW POLITICS is indexed in The Left Index and in Alternative Press Index, as well as Political Science Abstracts, the International Bibliography of the Social Sciences, and International Political Science Abstracts. Cover design and illustrations by Lisa Lyons.

Subscriptions: A one-year, two-issue digital subscription is \$20 (a PDF will be emailed to you while we update our website). If you also want the print issue mailed to you, the cost of digital plus print is \$30 for U.S. subscribers, \$40 for Canadian subscribers, and \$55 for other foreign subscribers. Institution rate (print and digital): \$50, in Canada \$60, other foreign \$70. All payments from foreign countries must be made by U.S. money orders or checks payable in U.S. currency drawn on U.S. banks. Or subscribe on line at newpol.org.

©2018 New Politics Associates ISSN (0028-6494)

VOLUME XVI • NUMBER 4 • Winter 2018

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From the Editors

WE WISH OUR READERS A Happy New Year, though we know that you take little joy in it, politically speaking. If we take no joy, we do sometimes find humor in President Donald J. Trump's proclamations by Twitter, such as his claim that he is a "stable genius." The current debate revolves around which of those two words is more ridiculous.

Under President Trump we are closer to nuclear war than at any time since the 1960s. We stand on the brink of planetary environmental catastrophe. And Trump and the Republican Congress have passed a tax plan that will further enrich the wealthy while having a devastating impact in the long run on working people and the poor. Trump's populist, white-nationalist rhetoric will be little comfort to millions in the middle and working classes who voted for him. At the same time, the Trump administration continues its racist policies aimed at disenfranchising Black voters and other likely opponents of the Republicans, and criminalizing and deporting millions of immigrants who have made homes and lives in America. The neglect of Puerto Rico is not only consistent with a government that despises and is ignorant of people of color, workers, and the poor, but also reflects the more than 100 years of colonial control over the island and its people.

The resistance, which began so dramatically with the millions who marched in Washington DC, throughout the United States, and around the world to protest Trump's election, has continued throughout the year with a "day without immigrants," a women's strike, and town hall meetings challenging Republican legislators. While the Republicans dominate most of the country, New York and California, two of the largest and most powerful states, have stood firmly against Trump on questions ranging from

the environment to immigration. In elections in 2017, several progressives and a few open socialists gained office. All good. Keep it up.

A few movements have been particularly inspiring in the last year. The "Taking a Knee" protest by Black athletes and their teammates of all colors have shown us that sometimes we stand up for justice by kneeling down. And the "Me Too" movement of women who courageously spoke up against the men who accosted and abused them has driven those men from the chambers of the Senate, from the most powerful and wealthy news bureaus, from Hollywood movie corporations, and from many other positions of power. If not protests against Trump, these are protests against Trumpish values of racism and misogyny, and they too form part of the resistance. Then too there are the grassroots solidarity and survival efforts by the Puerto Rican people and those in solidarity with them. We are proud of them all.

Lamentably, the labor movement, divided in its loyalties, indecisive in its actions, fearful for its future, and unwilling to take risks, has remained with few exceptions absent from the resistance. Some 10 percent of working people still pay their dues to the unions, and some much smaller percentage remain fiercely loyal to just about the only organization that occasionally speaks up for them, but the labor officials have by and large failed to build the power of their organizations and turn it into a movement. That, it seems, will have to come from the rank and file.

Many polls suggest that in the midterm elections in November the Democrats could take control of the House and possibly of the Senate as well. While that would be an important step, perhaps putting a brake on some of the Republicans' plans, it would not stop Trump from ruling by decree through executive

orders. The Democrats, still dominated by the neoliberal wing and its leaders Nancy Pelosi and Charles Schumer, have not been and cannot be expected to be champions of America's working people. The followers of Bernie Sanders in organizations such as Our Revolution and MoveOn.org have placed their hopes in a reform of the Democratic Party, with uncertain prospects.

We focus in this issue on American politics. Kim Moody, Amelia Dornbush, Luke Elliott-Negri, Sam Lewis, and Michael Hirsch debate the challenges of engaging with the Democratic Party. Dan La Botz discusses Trump and labor. Nicole Fabricant examines the environmental justice movement in Baltimore. We also look abroad. Armando Chaguaceda and Lennier López look at the prospects for Cuban civil society. And Daniel Randall of the United Kingdom contributes to our on-going series on socialism from below. Nancy Holmstrom discusses Karl

Marx's *Das Kapital* on its 150th anniversary. We reprint here as well an article from the 1970s by former editor Julius Jacobson on neo-Stalinism in the anti-Vietnam war movement with an introduction by Aaron Amaral. And as always we have our Words & Pictures feature and some book reviews. Finally, Tom Harrison and Aaron Amaral remember our colleague Joanne Landy and her work.

We continue to believe that America needs the resistance, but also that the resistance must be turned into something much bigger and more powerful. We need something resembling a national civic rebellion. We need something like what happened in France in 1968 or in Poland in 1980 or in Iran in 2009. In France, remember, the movement forced de Gaulle from the presidency into retirement. That's the kind of movement we want. So there's a New Year's resolution for us. Let's get on it.

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SYMPOSIUM

Socialists, Democrats, the Working Class, and Our Future

The question of the socialist left's relationship to the Democratic Party has been a controversial issue for decades, in truth, for as long as we have had the modern two-party system. At various times the issue has been whether or not to break with the Democratic Party and construct a socialist party or a labor party instead. Today, the controversy tends to revolve around whether or not we can further the socialist movement by running candidates in the Democratic Party, either by running open socialists or supporting progressive Democrats, and perhaps also supporting Green Party or other independent candidates as well. We present here Kim Moody's argument against working within the Democratic Party together with responses by Amelia Dornbush, Luke Elliott-Negri, and Sam Lewis, as well as our board member Michael Hirsch.

The Two Souls of Democratic Socialism

KIM MOODY

SOME *NEW POLITICS* READERS will recognize the title of this article as a paraphrase of Hal Draper's "Two Souls of Socialism," which appeared in *New Politics* in 1966. The first version, however, appeared in the socialist student magazine *Anvil* in 1960, just as a new generation of youthful activists was emerging, inspired to a large extent by the civil rights movement. Draper's two souls were the various forms of elite socialism, from British middle-class Fabianism to Stalinism, versus the revolutionary socialism from below that Draper championed—the socialism of Marx. Draper's hope was to move the radicals of what became the New Left to

revolutionary democratic socialism.

The recent explosive growth of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), from about 7,000 members before the 2016 elections to 25,000 or more today, illustrates that a new generation of activists has not only emerged from mostly under-the-radar social-movement organizing, but also has moved rapidly toward socialism. This development is also evident in the large circulation of *Jacobin* magazine, and in various polls that show the surprising popularity of the idea of socialism, particularly among younger people. This is a trend that no socialist can ignore or fail to take heart in. In size and speed of development, DSA's growth outstrips the growth of the Young Peoples Socialist League, Students for a Democratic Society, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and other radical groups in the early 1960s. The recent DSA convention made it clear that this is a growing milieu that is both rooted in

KIM MOODY was a founder of *Labor Notes*; has written several books on U.S. labor, including most recently *On New Terrain: How Capital Is Reshaping the Battleground of Class War*; and is currently a visiting scholar at the University of Westminster in London. He is a longtime socialist and a member of the National Union of Journalists.

local organizing and moving to the left. There is also no doubt that Bernie Sanders' campaign for the Democratic Party nomination drew in thousands of these activists and further legitimized the "S" word.

Annoying as it is, however, all new left and social movements inevitably confront the heritage of that which came before. For the movement that began to emerge in the early 1960s it was the lingering heritage of the "Old Left." Much of that was embodied in Stalinism, the world's largest (illegitimate) claimant to the traditions of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Luxemburg, and so on, as well as in its newer, more attractive form in the Cuban revolution. Another side of Old Left inertia was the obsessive anti-Communism and efforts to influence high-ranking liberal and labor leaders that was practiced by some in the Socialist Party. It was both these sides of Old Left heritage that Draper addressed.

For the activists of DSA it is a different set of left luggage in a very different era. The 700 or so delegates to the DSA convention did a good deal of jettisoning old baggage: disaffiliating from the very un-socialist Socialist International, a sign that many reject a direction of failed social democracy for DSA, and adopting the Boycott-Divestment-Sanctions campaign in support of Palestinian rights, which would have been anathema to much of the DSA old guard.

A Specter of Politics Past Haunts DSA

The specter of the past that haunts DSA, however, remains the Democratic Party. It isn't the ghost of Michael Harrington and realignment. Realignment happened. The Dixiecrats became Republicans, the urban machines withered away, African Americans in the South joined the Democratic electoral coalition, and the "liberals" were left in charge—for a while. But the outcome was not what was expected. Not too long after the economic crises of 1974–1975, and after the early 1980s hit and the old Keynesian basis of liberalism was discredited,

the Third Way triangulators and neoliberal marketers gained hegemony. The party shot-up on addictive corporate and rich people's money, distanced itself from organized labor, relied increasingly on *purchased* forms of voter turnout and campaigning, and reorganized its national, state, and legislative committees to be even more remote from voters. The progressives eventually circled the wagons into caucuses that wrote up alternative budgets, drafted passably liberal platforms, and clung to a withered Keynesianism, nevertheless submitting to the party's legislative discipline more often than not.

By the time Sanders decided to challenge the party establishment, the party's twin pillars of money and incumbency had been joined by super PACs, dark money, and a proliferating constellation of unaccountable, staff-based 501(c)4 outfits like ActBlue, MoveOn.org, and after the election, the Bernie Sanders-inspired Our Revolution. Staff-run digital mobilization, as opposed to permanent grass-roots organization of any kind, became the norm. Crowdfunding, initially seen as a counterweight to corporate money, soon became a tool for neoliberals, mainstreamers, and progressives alike, adding to the growing mass of money that continued to corrupt an already dirty political process, as the cash nexus became even more entrenched at the heart of American politics. Liberal, neoliberal, Blue Dog, plain-old mainstream, or "progressive": It's all top-down, staff-run, and unaccountable. That is the Democratic Party that socialists confront today.

The August 2017 DSA convention didn't lay this specter to rest, much less provide an alternative. Motions critical of corporate Democrats and "progressives," and looking to a more limited engagement with the Democratic Party, were defeated. As Dan La Botz points out in his *New Politics* blog report on the convention, the two motions that attempted to do this got an encouraging 40 percent of the delegate vote. The other side of the coin, of course, is that a considerable majority voted against these and by

implication to continue to see the Democratic Party as the main vehicle for socialist electoral politics and opposition to Trump.

That doesn't mean that a majority of newer DSA members want to proceed in the old ways. Many reject the corporate money, expensive "air wars," and presumably the more recent forms of top-down digital voter targeting conducted by private outfits like DSPolitical that characterize Democratic campaigns, as well as the neoliberals, Corporate Democrats, and weak-kneed practice of much of the party's "progressive" wing. Nevertheless, some still say supporting progressive Democrats is OK. The "pick and mix" position that says support some progressive Dems, socialists running as Dems, and maybe even a Green now and then, however, does not provide an alternative. The fact is that DSA, as the largest socialist organization in the United States, has not embraced an alternative to the old practice of relying on the Democratic Party for electoral action. The thousands of new activist members represent one soul of this organization, its presence in many movements, its energy, its growth, and aggressiveness. Yet, clinging to the age-old orientation to the Democratic Party, even if in new ways, represents another, older, contradictory soul.

As La Botz pointed out in his article criticizing a proposal by DSA leaders Joseph Schwartz and Bhaskar Sunkara to re-create the Communist Party's New Deal-popular front strategy of the 1930s, "the Democratic Party has been a problem of the left forever" and by no means simply for DSA and its predecessors. This party/complex/milieu has absorbed the leaders and activists of social and political movements from the Populist Party of the 1890s, to the industrial unions of the 1930s, to the civil rights, Latino, women's, and LGBT movements of the last century and today. This has prevented these movements from developing independent political organizations or ideologies, which, in turn, has undermined their power. The political co-optation of the industrial union leadership in the 1930s and 1940s

played a significant part in the development of bureaucratic business unionism, which then undermined the power of organized labor in the United States. As we used to say in the political (socialism-from-below) tendency that La Botz and I share, the Democratic Party has been the graveyard of social movements.

This co-optation has been accomplished precisely by drawing movement leaders and activists into the party's periphery, into local and county organizations, primaries, internal cau-

Party bigwigs have direct contact with the sections of the capitalist class and their hangers-on that support the party apparatus and fund its candidates.

cuses, and even into its formal inner sanctums. Look at the Democratic National Committee (DNC) of recent years, and alongside the state chairs you will see unions and all of the social movements of the last half-century or more represented in accordance with the liberal norms of "diversity." Yet, these representatives have little or no power over how the party actually conducts its business at various levels; who its candidates are; what its actual local, state, or national legislative agendas contain; where it gets its money or how it spends it; or what social forces and classes it bows to. The DNC is not meant to be a democratic leadership organization. For the most part, the DNC is simply a conduit for corporate and wealthy donors' money. Despite the fact that the DNC raised nearly \$400 million in the 2016 election cycle, new DNC Chair Tom Perez can complain of the committee's meager operating budget. The fact is, most corporate-raised money passes through to state parties and favored candidates. It is one

of several living links between capital, lower party structures, and candidates.

The Democrats can ignore the members of its supposedly leading body because the actual powers-that-be in the party—such as political office holders, party “notables,” corporate funders, industry lobbyists, wealthy individuals, legislative committee members, party apparatchiks, and high-level government officials—have a multitude of well-greased informal and social channels through which to make the real decisions and raise money. The “smoke-filled rooms” may be gone, but for the privileged, the back channels are open for business. To put it another way, the party bigwigs have direct contact with the sections of the capitalist class and their hangers-on that support the party apparatus and fund its candidates, both directly and through the various campaign committees, all of which are awash in corporate money. These same capitalist elements supply the “experts” and lobbyists who write much of Democrats’ legislation and press for multiple compromises. Remember the “public option” in the Affordable Care Act?

On the other hand, the party maintains the loyalty of many labor- and social-movement leaders and opinion-makers as well as millions of liberal-minded or progressive voters, in part by convincing them that there is no other alternative to the Republicans, the growing right in general, and now the even more dangerous Trump administration. And, for now, there is no mass electoral alternative because three or four generations of labor- and social-movement leaders and, yes, socialists of various tendencies and organizations over the years, chose not to take the difficult path of constructing one. That is the specter that still haunts DSA (and the socialist left generally)—its other “from above” soul.

Socialism From Below or Permeation?

In “The Two Souls of Socialism,” Draper counterposed socialism from below to permeation from above. He used “permeationism” to

describe the “socialist-from-above” strategy of entering “the Establishment,” or its organizations and the Democratic Party in particular, to gain political influence. The Fabians’ efforts to influence the British Liberal Party before the rise of the Labour Party was a well-known example. The Communist Party’s Popular Front tactic of the 1930s was another. Sometimes this is accompanied, Draper pointed out, by using “movements-from-below” as a pressure tactic for gaining access to the existing centers of political power. The U.S. labor leadership’s relationship with the Democrats is to this day an example of this. Whatever opportunist gains permeation brought these organizations, none of them have been very successful in influencing the direction of the Democratic Party, the majority of its office holders, or its administrations. The CP implemented its Popular Front tactic just as the legislative goals and gains of the New Deal began their decline. The Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee’s Democratic Agenda version reached its apex just as liberalism went into full retreat. In the United States, when he wrote the *New Politics* version of his article, Draper identified “the policy of supporting the Democratic Party and the lib-lab coalition around the “Johnson Consensus, its predecessors and successors,” as the permeationist tactic of that period. We know where that tactic led.

Whatever its rationale, permeationism is always a top-down tactic or strategy, not because of the desires of those pursuing it or the point of entry they choose, but because it promotes one of “many alternatives to the self-mobilization of masses from below.” For socialism from below, it is precisely “the self-mobilization of the masses,” or to put it another way, the independent organization and self-activity of the working class and its diverse sections and allies, that is the key strategic task of socialists. And that remains the essential point: Without posing the alternative of independent political organization and action outside and opposed to the top-down milieu and reality of the Democratic Party and the

bourgeois politics de jure in general, the path of permeation will always appear as the “left wing of the possible.”

Permeation From Below?

There is a lot of motion among political activists in and out of DSA to permeate this milieu in a grass-roots way. Ironically the very dependence on top-down forms of funding and campaigning that are at the center of Democratic Party organization and practice has left much of the old neighborhood, precinct, and county organizations “hollow” or poorly organized. So activists, some encouraged by Bernie Sanders, are becoming precinct captains. Indeed, Our Revolution’s Transform the Party website (www.transformtheparty.com) will tell you how to become a precinct captain in your local Democratic Party. While it does specify that one duty of a precinct captain is “encouraging your neighbors to vote during elections,” it doesn’t mention that they will be expected to turn out the vote for the entire party slate, neoliberals and all, not just favored progressives. That’s what precinct captains and county and state committees do. Some activists have even taken over state party committees, as in Washington State. Many are running or preparing to run in Democratic primaries against incumbent mainstreamers, others for positions in the party structure. The “political revolution” is on. Or is it?

Attempting to take over the Democratic Party at its lowest level is *politically* no different than other forms of permeationism because it both reinforces the idea for many that this party is the progressive alternative (or conduit to that alternative) *and* in doing so precludes building a real alternative. While even in its new semi-mass shape DSA cannot itself be that alternative, what its leaders and activists say, and more importantly what they do individually and as an organization, will, by virtue of DSA’s size and dynamism, set the tone and direction for the much broader layer of movement activists. By leaving the door open to old and new forms

of permeation, once more, a genuine alternative will be postponed.

At the same time, since the party establishment will not sit still for a grass-roots invasion from the left, it means the democratic socialists and those they influence or help organize will be thrown into an internal fight that will deflect from the very goals sought by entering this milieu. Nor will such internal fights inspire or organize the much broader working class or social movement base on which any successful strategy depends. On the other hand, the very “success” in winning positions may, once again, be the undoing of some. In addition to the well-known barriers to such an invasion, such as organization, money, and incumbency, the Democratic Party, like any institution, is a social milieu in which group pressure to conform is strong and constant. Thus, this path is likely to eventually burn out some of those activists who throw themselves into the effort to permeate “from below.” Others will simply be absorbed into the norms and culture of this milieu (perhaps protesting all the way), as a loyal opposition following the well-trod path of so many labor- and social-movement leaders, would-be party reformers, and self-proclaimed socialists. More importantly, for all the energy and hopes, no actual alternative mass independent political organizations will have been built or even initiated.

But won’t the party’s progressive wing come to the aid of the new forces trying to “transform the party”? Perhaps some will, but if their support for Bernie Sanders’ run for the nomination is any indication, such support is likely to be marginal and weak. Here’s the score card of progressive Democratic support for Sanders in 2016:

- Of 232 Democrats in both houses of Congress, 10 supported Sanders.
- Five of his 75 fellow members of the Congressional Progressive Caucus endorsed him.
- Of the 447 voting members of the DNC, 39 endorsed Sanders.
- Of 3,170 Democratic state legislators, 91 did so.

- Three of the 48 Democrats in New York's City Council backed Sanders, two of them members of the council's 19-person Progressive Caucus, one them the day before the primary.

Not much in the way of support or political fortitude there.

What Is the Alternative?

It is hard to imagine a time when the independent organization of the working class and its diverse sections has been weaker. Union membership and strength are at an all-time low. Many of the social-movement organizations of yesteryear are little more than bureaucratic shells, clinging desperately to the Democratic Party or seeking salvation through the internet and social media. So, the “from below” alternative can look discouraging. Yet, there are millions of people in the streets to protest and resist Trump and Trumpism, police brutality and murders of African Americans, anti-immigrant attacks by the right and the government (including Obama's administration), the persistence of gender inequality, and attacks on the recently won rights of LGBT people, while backing the fights for a \$15 minimum wage, Black Lives Matter, single-payer health care, and Boycott-Divestment-Sanctions (BDS) campaigns. Beneath the surface are spreading “workers centers,” other immigrant worker organizations, rank and file rebellions in many unions, and efforts to organize unions in hospitals, warehouses, hotels, and other workplaces. It is significant that some of these movements, notably among immigrant workers, women, and the low-paid, have turned to the strike as a *political* weapon, as I pointed out in the Summer 2017 issue of *New Politics*. The alternative, in other words, begins in the streets, the workplaces, the embattled urban ghettos and barrios, and the bombed-out Rust Belt mining and mill towns. I suppose most of us agree on that.

Historically, change in the United States has been far less a matter of who's in office than of who and how many are in the streets

or mobilized in workplaces. Mass upheaval and social disruption have forced change. No one ever won their rights, economic or social gains, or a place at the table by voting for a Democrat. Rather, the force of the mass movements from below that characterize U.S. history, from the abolitionists, to the unions, to the civil rights, women's, LGBT, or immigrant rights movements, forced change on those in office. That is our starting point. The political direction that socialists advocate while building these movements and actions, however, will be key to the future.

I believe that right now the mass movements in the streets and fights for power on the job and in the unions are by far the most important ways to build the current resistance to both Trump and the broader capitalist offensive against all sections of the working class, as well as to win single-payer, better housing, \$15 minimum wage, unionization in the giant logistics industry that is now the heart of American capitalism, and more. In addition, groups such as Black Lives Matter, BDS and Palestine solidarity groups, and campus-based feminist and queer organizations are providing a new generation of activists. Some of the issues these groups are fighting for are difficult for many progressive Democratic office holders to deal with. For example, the New York City Council's Progressive Caucus voted to oppose BDS, while their platform on “Policing and the Criminal Justice System” doesn't even mention police shootings.

The potential for independent political organization and action is there, and socialists have a key role. Without the grass-roots self-activity and organization of the emerging movements, electoral action will not shift the extreme imbalance of power relations in the United States that underlies both the move to the right and the persistence of neoliberalism in mainstream politics. Unless this political action is independent of and opposed to the whole Democratic milieu and structure, it will

not attract independent activists, discontented Democratic voters, and the millions who have simply stopped voting. It will need to become a genuine alternative.

The opportunity is there in U.S. cities large and small. For the most part, the movements, campaigns, political strikes, union strikes, and actions of the next few years will be urban-based and, thus, located at the heart of the Democratic Party's shrinking voter base. In most cities, a Republican presence is marginal and Democrats routinely win city council, state legislative, and even congressional elections with margins of 80 percent or more. This means there is no "spoiler" problem in most of urban America. At the same time, the party's voter base has been shrinking as people increasingly see "politics" as having no positive impact on their declining living and working standards. In New York City, for example, where Democrats get 80 percent or more of the vote, turnout in the 2009 mayoral election that put Bill de Blasio in office, and in the 2014 mid-term congressional and state elections, was 28 percent or less. Los Angeles, Buffalo, and Detroit, all overwhelmingly Democratic cities, had similarly low turnout rates in local, state, and off-year congressional elections.

Furthermore, the Democrats are vulnerable because they have presided over the decay of the cities they govern, the impoverishment of a growing number of their residents, the crisis in housing, the stagnation or reduction of city employees' wages, the gutting of federal funds for cities, and the big local-tax giveaways that severely limit funding for adequate housing and health care while enriching businesses and developers (like Trump). Mayor de Blasio has granted more giveaway "tax expenditures" to developers and condo owners than Bloomberg before him. And for years Democratic officials have tolerated police violence against African Americans and Latinos. As David Roediger writes in his latest book, *Class, Race and Marxism* (Verso, 2017), "Cities so firmly in the hands of liberal Democrats that they scarcely have

an opposition party sign contracts with police 'unions'" that allow the destruction of records related to complaints of excessive force. Again, the New York City Council Progressive Caucus platform doesn't even mention police shootings.

Democrats can get away with this in part because there is no independent electoral opposition from below other than the rare candidate of the closely allied Working Families Party in a few states or the occasional Green. Democratic office holders and apparatchiks can squabble among themselves in the primaries or in office, and deal with their progressive minority or inside reformers, but they need not fear a real challenge. That needs to change. There are a few local initiatives that move toward this goal, such as the Richmond Progressive Alliance in California or Sanders' own Vermont Progressive Party. These are worth looking at to begin the process of creating a real alternative at the electoral level.

The Reality and Vulnerability of the Democratic Party

Just as we must have an analysis of capitalism as a system, so we need an analysis of this alleged "party of the people" and its place in the system as a product of the history and development of that system. Some things seem clear. While the Democratic Party is not a membership organization like most parties in other countries, neither is it simply a ballot line waiting to be captured, a set of hollowed-out precinct organizations, nor a collection of individual candidates and operatives. It has a formal structure, a less visible power structure, a constellation of allied service- and policy-providing groups, and the backing and participation of major sections of U.S. capital. The Democratic Party is part and parcel of U.S. class structure, market relations, empire, and defense of the capitalist system. It did not, like the labor and social democratic parties of Europe and elsewhere, come out of the workers movement as an opponent of bourgeois politics, but from the Southern slavocracy

and sections of Northern capital committed to a contradictory compromise between slave society in the South, capitalism in the North, and white supremacy everywhere, this last even after the Civil War.

Its eventual and gradual turn to modern liberalism during the first half of the twentieth century was engineered from above, partly in response to various mass social and labor movements, by sections of capital, their agents, and ideological fellow travelers attuned to the need to limit the impact of the system's recurring crises through government intervention. Even then, the African American population was largely excluded from New Deal and immediate postwar reforms. The Democratic Party's relation to the rise of working-class movements was to co-opt, limit, and institutionalize them as much as possible through a regulated form of collective bargaining. Check out the opening paragraph of the famous Wagner (National Labor Relations) Act concerning "industrial strife which interferes with the normal flow of commerce" and the provision of "orderly and peaceful procedures" to prevent this. Along with this came the *de facto* illegalization of political strikes, on the one hand, and a political alliance with sections of capital, on the other. Fortunately, due to the persistence of class conflict above and below the surface, these efforts have never been totally successful.

Forced to make concessions to movements from below in the second half of the twentieth century, Democratic administrations and congressional office holders did their best to co-opt the civil rights, women's, and gay rights movements of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s by providing limited legislation. They opposed Black Power altogether. In the mid-1970s, the party once again followed the lead of major sections of capital to neoliberalism. This party has long been and remains the major political driver of American imperialism and war. From Wilson, to Roosevelt, to Truman, to Kennedy and Johnson, to Clinton and Obama, all have

led the United States into wars aimed at the expansion of U.S. capital's economic, political, and military power. As a result, the United States now has a military presence in 130 countries, is engaged in several wars, and has economic interests almost everywhere. It would be hard to find a Democratic office holder, party official, or funder who contemplates undoing this vast empire even if they sometimes oppose one or another piece of it.

Furthermore, all this has created a highly militarized state. Indeed, today some 47 percent of the employees of the national state that the Democrats, more than their Republican rivals, have helped to shape, work in one or another "defense" agency or function—not including the FBI, CIA, NSA, DEA, or Department of Homeland Security. The militarization of local and state police by Defense Department grants of equipment was initiated by Clinton. The turn to neoliberalism that began in the late 1970s was promoted by capitalist institutions such as the Business Roundtable, funded by business, and implemented by the party's office holders, first under Carter, with little protest within the party. To be sure, the history of each of these changes can be complex—involving class, social, or internal party conflict and requiring a change in political personnel—but the process has always been rooted in and limited by the needs of capital and its system. The Democratic elites and their business masters are the major initiators and enablers.

The belief that this party of capital can be used in one way or another as a means of building a mass socialist movement in the United States has always been an illusion. Far from a path to a sustainable radical left, this permeationist orientation in all its forms has been a barrier, in a society posing many barriers to be sure, to the emergence of mass independent socialist movement. With new movements from below arising once again, it is time to abandon this piece of a failed past—this other, compromised soul of American socialism.

Fighting for the Soul of Socialism

A Response to Kim Moody

AMELIA DORNBUSH, LUKE ELLIOTT-NEGRI, AND SAM LEWIS

AFTER A HUGE BUMP IN MEMBERSHIP thanks to Bernie Sanders, and an even bigger one thanks to Donald Trump, the DSA continues to grow. Since its national convention in August, membership has increased from 25,000 to 30,000. We have known since 2011 that millennials have a more positive association with the word “socialism” than the word “capitalism”;¹ Sanders gave this demographic shift from the cold war era a political expression, and DSA has given it an organizational expression. Now thousands on the left are scrambling to answer the question, “What do we do with this newfound energy?”

There is relatively little disagreement that the Movement for Black Lives, the labor movement, feminist movements, and other popular struggles are key to building power. And other than a handful on the very far left, most of us agree that elections matter a great deal. But for some, there is a line in the sand when it comes to *how* the left should approach electoral work. In a recent piece [see “The Two Souls of Democratic Socialism” in this issue], Kim Moody applauds DSA’s efforts to “jettison [the left’s] old baggage,” but proceeds to trot out one of the biggest suitcases: “The specter of the past that haunts DSA ... remains the Democratic Party.”

Moody represents a tradition on the left that says any engagement with the Democratic Party—and, importantly for our argument, any attempt to use its ballot line—represents a treach-

ery so great that it must be vigorously condemned. We argue that this tradition is deeply flawed and anti-materialist in essence. Instead we put forward a concrete plan for building left

power that actually jettisons the U.S. left’s longstanding baggage with respect to electoral politics. There are two souls of socialism: one that studies the actual, material terrain unwaveringly and makes a plan to build power, the other that leans on ideologies constructed in past eras to make plans in this one. We see ourselves firmly in the former camp.

What Makes the United States Different?

Under some electoral systems, social movements simply form a party and snag seats in parliament just a few years after their founding, like the Indignados building Podemos in Spain.² The United States does not have one of those systems. *The United States is the only industrialized country on the planet to combine single-round presidential voting and down-ballot plurality voting.*³ Any serious, materialist analysis of what is electorally possible in the United States simply must take this system and its implications into account.



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The effects of plurality (or first-past-the-post) voting are well known. If it is possible to win a race with less than a majority, and there is not a “runoff,” then challenger parties are likely to “spoil” races since they typically draw votes from their ideologically closest opponent. As almost anyone who is serious would admit, Sanders running in the general election as an independent or third-party candidate would have, at best, made Trump’s victory far more decisive.

The high salience and high stakes of presidential elections magnify the problem, drawing many more voters to the polls every four years than in off-cycle elections and impacting all down-ballot federal races and many state and local races as well. The stakes of the presidential election intensely cement party identity and voting behavior.

These two features combined put nearly all third-party challenges at the federal level somewhere between pointless and disastrous. The left has faced the Democratic Party dilemma since the nineteenth century, but the question became especially acute in the 1930s, as Franklin Delano Roosevelt pivoted left and the labor movement became the anchor for national-level Democratic Party politics. Forty years later, with deunionization and deregulation beginning to grip the labor movement and the Democratic Party, a third-party approach gained renewed appeal for some. But these efforts have largely failed, reducing many of our good ideas and capacities to the margins. Clearly, we need a flexible new approach that moves beyond past practice and ideological dogma.

The Democratic “Party”

An analysis of the unique electoral system in the United States also requires a careful consideration of the unique structure of the parties themselves. As Moody notes, the Democratic Party is not a membership organization in the sense that European political parties are. Power and influence are wielded through a set of formal and informal mechanisms, increasingly the

control of fundraising networks. With party registration rules set by state laws, the Democrats do not control their membership rolls. With party primaries and caucuses managed by state boards of elections, Democrats have surprisingly little power over who runs on their ballot line. Most importantly, whether one looks at the federal, state, or local level, Democrats don’t have a binding platform and could not enforce one if they did.

It is incumbent upon us to delineate the Democratic Party’s ballot line from its structural apparatus, which we should typically oppose and which has minimal accountability. In fact, running on the ballot line as a left-wing challenger puts a candidate more directly in conflict with the apparatus of the party machine than do most third-party candidacies and poses a more serious threat; this we can clearly see in the mobilization against the Sanders campaign as juxtaposed with the Jill Stein campaign. The ballot line is a tool at our disposal, and we would be foolish to ignore it.

As materialists, we should strive to build power for socialism in the most effective way possible given the circumstances we find ourselves in. This means having a sober assessment of the different tactics we have tried with varying degrees of success in the United States.

Finding Ways In

There are a host of local and state projects that suggest how the left generally and DSA specifically might build independent political power. Moody affirmatively cites the work of the Vermont Progressive Party as an example of how to proceed, and we agree that this is a case worth studying! But he fails to note that outside of Burlington, where Bernie Sanders himself cleared the way for independent politics with his 1981 mayoral victory, nearly all elected Vermont Progressives have used a fusion strategy,⁴ beating Democrats in their own primary while maintaining an independent caucus in the state Legislature.

Moody also mentions the Richmond Progressive Alliance, but, as with the VPP, he doesn't go into much detail. If he did, he might mention that the RPA operates in nonpartisan races,⁵ much like Socialist Alternative in Seattle. Obviously, there is nothing wrong with this, but as we look at actually existing left-electoral projects, it becomes clear that successful third-party challenges in partisan races are exceedingly rare and that we need a more nuanced account of the Democratic ballot line than Moody offers.

There are of course many other examples that Moody ignores or dismisses because they work against his approach: New Haven Rising, based in the labor movement, elected a City Council majority of rank and file union activists and is taking on the financial behemoth that is Yale University.⁶ In Jackson, Mississippi, Cooperation Jackson and the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement have revived radical politics in the Deep South with a platform centered on local investment in worker cooperatives.⁷ The Working Families Party continues its national expansion, backed by labor and community coalitions, and has been winning elections in primaries and in some instances on its independent ballot line.⁸ DSA member and Black Lives Matter activist khalid kamau was one of the first socialists to win an election in post-Trump-victory America,⁹ followed by a stream of local democratic-socialist election victories this past November.¹⁰ All of these organizations and candidates *used* the Democratic ballot line—imperfectly, no doubt, but with some notable success—to build independent politics.

A Path Forward

Given these past successes, we propose the following as a strategically grounded approach to building electoral power in the United States:

No corporate funding. The DSA or any left formation should make rejection of corporate funding fundamental to their campaigns. Moody fails to explain how a candidate who doesn't take the Democratic Party's money can

be disciplined by them and also fails to acknowledge that his proposed strategy of running in general elections against Democrats is vastly more resource intensive.

A tactical approach to ballot lines. It can be energizing and inspiring to work for a candidate capable of waging a serious race without using the Democratic Party line. Sanders' career and the VPP effort in Burlington is testament to this. Variations in U.S. electoral law also offer many opportunities in non-partisan, fusion, and even some multimember districts. But in many cases, grabbing the Democratic Party line is the difference between winning and losing, the difference between building working-class power and a doomed campaign that must justify its existence in terms of its educational potential. In these cases, we must take the line and do what we please with it.

Independent, accountable organizing. When running socialist candidates, whether with a "D" next to their name or not, it is important that they are accountable to an independent, democratic organization. In Brooklyn this year, DSA endorsed two candidates for City Council, one in a Democratic Primary¹¹ and one as a Green/Socialist candidate in the general election.¹² In both cases, DSA members ran our own canvasses, trained hundreds of our own volunteers, maintained control of our own data about conversations, and developed our own messaging. In both cases, we made demands on our candidates to include DSA members in strategic planning and decision-making, to be public about their socialist politics, and to refuse all donations from the real estate industry. Maintaining our independence in practice can help us build our base, strengthen our organization, and win electoral victories without being junior partners to any candidate, campaign, or party organization.

Get 50 percent plus one. All serious politics, electoral or otherwise, are fundamentally majoritarian affairs. In proportional representation systems, the far left can feel good about

themselves because they can snag a few seats and maintain “independence.” But of course most parliaments require a majority even to form a government, let alone to legislate, and so the majoritarian effort unfolds among elected officials. If the left generally and DSA specifically are interested in really vying for power, we need a *majority*—a majority in each battle we fight, but also a *majority of the whole society*. We are dead set on this goal—winning majorities to socialist politics—and have no interest in letting baggage, however big, get in the way. If we can build a socialist majority without the Democratic ballot line, great. With the Democratic ballot line, great too. Hell, we’ll use the Republican ballot line if we can get ahold of it.

Arguments that claim on principle that we should never run as Democrats fail to recognize the fundamental difference between being a Democratic apparatchik and using a ballot line. The rigidity of the two-party system has long been a thorn in the side of efforts to build real power for the socialist left. But the structure of the American party system also provides moments of opportunity. Exploiting the ability to run candidates on a line when the party elite have little recourse to oppose them is one such opportunity. Rather than opposing it on

anti-materialist theoretical grounds, we should see this as another potential tool to build the movement we so desperately need.

NOTES

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Independent Politics Doesn't Start With Walling Off the Democrats

MICHAEL HIRSCH

I FIRST MET KIM MOODY SOME 50 YEARS ago. He was then organizing chapters of the California-based Peace and Freedom Party as an alternative to the Democratic war machine. If memory serves, he came to Park Slope, Brooklyn, then a predominantly Irish and Italian working-class neighborhood—not the gentrified picture from *House Beautiful* it has since morphed into—but also inhabited by a smattering of *déclassé* radicals. Moody wanted to interest a few of us in taking up the electoral mantle. We young activists didn't bite, preferring to organize a collective that would be involved in community and workplace organizing irrespective of parties and election cycles. We even then called it “base building”—without regard to electoral politics. Nothing came of our efforts. Not much came of his, either.

I don't fault Moody for sticking to roughly the same independent politics game plan over the years; Emerson's injunction in *Self-Reliance* that “a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines” is not an advert for inconsistency or political schizophrenia dependent on the season. And when you consider that most of Moody's subsequent writing—what I regard as his main contribution to working-class

discourse—has been his exhaustive examinations of labor in modern industrial societies and the drive for a socialism from below, his views on political action are within a rich and informed context that I share.

Neither do I challenge his view that the Democratic Party is irredeemably controlled from the top; it is indeed bought and paid for. Systemic political reform, based as it must be on a mass revolutionary opposition to capital, is unlikely to be accomplished by the left as presently constituted even if the left plays precinct captain. Permanent and accountable grass-roots organization within the Democratic Party is likely to be eclipsed, just as Moody says.

What I do want to challenge is a certain ahistoricism lurking in his political analysis, as though an electoral false consciousness pervades the left and confuses the American working class. (Just as an aside, that lack of historical sense is overt and unabashed in other treatments, most recently by the Green Party's Howie Hawkins in the *International Socialist Review* (Winter 2018), whose paean to third-party efforts is overshadowed by the dour results of his own recent run for mayor of Syracuse, New York. His effort was projected as a model by the state's Green Party—he was a battle-hardened insurgent with roots in the area who was no lone and unknown parachutist. But Hawkins garnered just 4.1 percent of the vote, an outcome that barely registered as a protest vote, let alone an endorsement for independent politics.)

Moody also resists the pornographic effort to label Bernie Sanders a “sheepherder,” or the

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idea that Sanders, an alleged Judas goat if you will, purposefully or not rerouted the left train onto the dead-end tracks of the Democrats. Any objective look at the Sanders campaign suggests that it emboldened activists and broadened the left, doing for revolutionary possibilities what Donald Trump did in legitimizing the white nationalists and proto-Nazis who make up the core of the alt-right—the latter phenomenon ably demonstrated by David Neiwert in his *Alt-America* (Verso, 2017). Moody at least recognizes that “Bernie Sanders’ campaign for the Democratic Party drew in thousands of these activists and further legitimized the ‘S’ word.” No small praise.

Where Moody errs is in writing that the Democrats have been THE problem, that “this party/complex/milieu has absorbed the leaders and activists of social and political movements from the Populist Party of the 1890s, to the industrial unions of the 1930s, to the civil rights, Latino, women’s, and LGBT movements of the last century and today.” Wrong! The Democrats have not been the problem, only a convenient watering hole for the parched and exhausted, a retirement village sans amenities for the dying. It’s the movements and their internal contradictions that have been the problem. The Populists did not go into the Democratic Party to die; they were on death’s door as an independent force at a time that the Democrats offered some form of respite, if only *de minimus*. Labor’s embrace of Franklin Delano Roosevelt was in retrospect unfortunate. But did the unions really have a choice? Was John L. Lewis a traitor or something sadly unimaginative but far less insidious. Were even the sit-downs, in form a challenge to management’s right to manage, capable of transitioning into a challenge to the entire capitalist class and its political enablers? Was the civil rights movement ever an undisputed force for systemic change? Was the women’s movement, even at its core, proletarian enough to demand that workplace issues be a concern for all women workers, be their income high or

low? Today’s LGBT activists are riven over the role of transgender females. Think these movements can develop a common, radical view of political action in the short term? And historically, even 50 years is short-term.

Involvement with the Democrats has not “prevented these movements from developing independent organizations or ideologies which, in turn, has undermined their power,” as Moody writes. The Democrats are the repositories of these movements’ failures to constitute themselves as class movements. You don’t go to a graveyard to die, to borrow Moody’s metaphor for these movements’ expirations within the Democratic Party. Only the dead are interred.

I make no claims that a face toward the Democrats is a way forward for the left. I do argue that defining independent political action as anything independent of the two dominant parties raises too many questions. First, what role do insurgents play in everyday reforms? Clearly building a local base, either workplace- or community-oriented, is key. But what then? Are elected officials who are not self-identified as socialists to be treated as three-headed alien invaders? Many local elected officials play an ombudsman’s role—some might call it at its worst a *padrone* system; they’re at best the political equivalent of a compliant complaint department. Careerists the officials may be, but they aspire to be re-elected, if not advanced. They need to be lobbied hard. How many leftists know how to do that? How many *New Politics* readers even know how to get a politician to take up a popular grievance under fear of a primary race if they don’t accede? Yes, lobbying a politician is far from storming the Winter Palace, but it needs doing, especially by parents of school-age children, the physically impaired, retirees, and other constituent groups who of necessity require government oversight of services. The payoff needn’t be absorption into an officeholders’ machine, only the reality that citizen lobbyists can take retribution against an incumbent who blows them off.

Union activists have to get their unions at a minimum to stop the routine endorsement of incumbents. My own experience in three decades of union work, whether as a rank and filer or staff member, is that unions endorse all incumbents with the exception of those who actively and publicly screwed them. In many cases, the endorsement is pro forma. Better unions endorse a handful of exemplary candidates, mobilizing on-the-ground support for them, and keeping their election effort organized postelection.

Lastly (and this list is hardly exhaustive), form a tight connect between election activities and year-round base organizing. A fault of the old Socialist Party of America—unlike its successors among the Communists and Trotskyists—was that it barely existed as an organization between election cycles. Political action ought to be an expression of year-round agitation and not dependent on the election clock. Hal Draper's appropriate fear that "the self-organization of the masses" would be thwarted by reliance on permeating the highest councils of the Democratic Party would be obviated—certainly challenged—by an engaged and politically cognizant base of activists whose mandate far exceeds electoral activity.*

Ideologically, Moody is convinced that the Democratic Party demands fealty from even the most militant activists. Probably true. But then, how sacrosanct is an independent party? Short of its being a mass party at its forma-

tion, one that can generate the kind of internal dues-paying funding that can keep it independent of capital's wiles, it will succumb to the same malaise infecting the Democrats and the many staff-run progressive organizations such as MoveOn.org that Moody rightly upbraids. There is ample evidence from the decline of European social democratic parties that despite a nominal independence from bourgeois parties, their deal-cutting happens after the election, in the form of vote-sharing in the formation of thoroughly pro-capitalist governments. At this writing, the wonder in Germany is that the SPD is not supporting a coalition regime with the Christian Democrats and the center-right, a first in decades.

Further, there's little of any practical help in Moody's commentary. It's as if its subtext begins and ends with the warning, "There be dragons here." The young DSAers who are committed to electoral politics ought not to avoid the Democrats on principle, but rather that the difficulty with electoral work only begins with the election of insurgents. How to keep candidates true to their base—more to the point, how to keep electorally oriented socialists true to their base, which operates in a range of areas often untouched by elections—ought to be the question of the moment. Sadly, for Moody it's not.

The logic of Moody's point of view isn't independent politics. Frozen as it is in a ritualized propaganda stance, its outcome is more likely no politics. To me, the question is less what route to take electorally and more whether the political apparatus that the left fashions owes its fealty and its *raison d'être* to its base among the movements and the voters.

*I elaborate this point in *Democratic Left*, June 28, 2017: www.dsausa.org/electoral_politics_is_a_socialist_priority_but_it_s_no_common_denominator_a_response_to_joe_schwartz

Kim Moody Replies

Reply to Dornbush, Elliot-Negri, and Lewis

DORNBUSH, ELLIOT-NEGRI, AND LEWIS are right that ideology is not enough and an analysis of “the actual, material terrain” is necessary. Simply repeating the well-known realities of the first-past-the-post U.S. electoral system that favors the two-party duality is not such an analysis. It’s old news. Not altogether wrong, but still yesterday’s political science. So is the argument that the official electoral set-up can’t stop you from running in the primary and possibly even winning, and that the party structures can’t control the voters. The other side of this coin, however, is that the party “members”; that is, the atomized registered Democrats and party voters, have no power over the hierarchical structures of the party or its elected officials since it is not a democratic organization in any sense.

This not only means that a Corbyn-style revolt is impossible, but is one reason why the vast majority of Democratic officeholders follow the commands (and compromises) of their legislative leaders and, further up the party hierarchy, their corporate paymasters rather than the sentiments of most Democratic voters. It is also one reason why, in turn, the self-styled progressives among these Democratic officeholders invariably compromise with the mainstream and why only a handful of them supported Bernie Sanders in the 2016 presidential primaries.

In national and most state-wide elections, the “spoiler” effect is a deterrent to third-party campaigns. But this is not the best place to seek a mass base and start building a new political force in any case. In city council, state legislative, and even congressional districts in almost all U.S. cities, the spoiler effect isn’t a factor because the Republicans are so marginal. Given that the Democrats have presided over the decay of the

cities for over half a century, they are vulnerable from the left. Independents can become the second party from which to build a majority base over time. This is the strategy I would advocate.

The ballot line isn’t just a label, as some argue. For those seeking office and those supporting them, it’s the entry point into the maze of dead ends, false starts, and compromised hopes that is the Democratic Party even at the local level. Once “past-the-post” as a Democratic officeholder, there are, in fact, many ways that the organizations of the party at various levels, including the official legislative party caucuses, can and do discipline or isolate would-be rebels and “progressives,” quite apart from withholding campaign funds.

Historically, although it appears “open” at its base, it is also the case that the Democratic Party in its various interconnected structures and social milieus is far better organized, funded, and structurally tied to big business and the wealthy today, at almost every level, than at any time in the past—and that is saying a lot. This is not just a matter of corporate contributions to campaigns, but of the overwhelming presence of corporate and other capitalist money, agents, and ideological bedfellows of capital throughout its structures. Hillary Clinton comes to mind, but there are many more. At the campaign level, virtually all Democrats, by the time they get to Congress, take at least some corporate money, including Elizabeth Warren and the new head of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, Mark Pocan.

Alongside the official party organizations, operatives, and officeholders are the related think tanks, PACs, dark funds, lobbying institutions, and the revolving doors among these and

political office. This entire constellation of party and ancillary organizations is made possible by direct links and contacts with the capitalist owners of the billions of dollars that flow into and through the complex of institutions that is the Democratic Party.

In material class terms, what underlies all of this is the balance of class forces *within* the Democratic Party's interlocking structures, which still reflects that in society. If anything, this imbalance has grown much worse in the last forty years or so as labor has lost what little influence it once had, the African American vote has continued to be taken for granted, and big-business bucks have grown exponentially. It should be noted as well that the recurring crises of capitalism since the 1970s have subdued any serious redistributive instincts Democratic liberals might still have. I have addressed these questions and those above, along with a deeper analysis of the structural, social, economic, institutional, and ideological realities of the Democratic Party, in considerable detail in my new book, *On New Terrain* (Haymarket, 2017), so I won't try to summarize what is a somewhat complex analysis here.

Sorry, but the past also matters. Materialist analysis without attention to history isn't materialist. Some socialists have used the Democratic ballot line or party structures for many decades, using the same arguments as Dornbush, Elliot-Negri, and Lewis, in part due to the discouraging record of third parties. Nothing new about that. Furthermore, this turn toward liberalism and the Democratic Party was the result of the historic *defeat* of socialist politics in the United States following World War II. While it has long been possible to win elections as "progressives" or even a handful of socialists, as some did this November, there has *never* been a successful attempt by socialists of any variety running on the ballot line or working within the structures of this "party" to influence it significantly, push it to the left, block its nearly half-century-old movement to the right, or much less move the

national political context to the left—quite the contrary. Equally important, it has *never* proved possible to use the Democratic ballot line, structures, or political offices to build a viable mass socialist movement in the United States. Permeation isn't just bad politics; it's poor strategy.

To be sure, Sanders had an impact on Democratic voters and stirred things up, but the party elite has simply returned to its old ways. The Democrats, of course, did well in November due to an anti-Trump backlash and may well take Congress in 2018. But the huge role of the suburban vote in Virginia, New Jersey, and on Long Island has been seen as a confirmation of the Dems' middle-class electoral strategy and the moderate politics that go with it, despite marginal gains made by DSAers and Our Revolution-backed candidates in some local and state elections. In any case, once again no independent political alternative will have emerged around which labor and social movement activists can coalesce.

From the time of Marx, the major position and task of the socialist movement has been to enhance the power of the working class and oppressed through their independent economic and political organizations. For all its growth, DSA is not that and cannot be that by itself, although it could play an important role in developing such an alternative. Much less can it, by itself, create a political majority. And so, old questions remain.

Is the independent organization of the working class and oppressed still a goal? If so, how does running in the Democratic Party further this goal? Alternatively, in the face of the barriers to third parties, how do we build a new independent mass political organization broad enough to include working-class people, activists from the social movements, and socialists? Or are we just concerned with building our own socialist organization? These are questions that will continue to be debated among socialists.

P.S. By the way, because of its unique nature,

I agreed with those in the political tendency I identify with who supported Bernie Sanders'

primary run, particularly via Labor for Bernie. So much for my ideological purity.

Reply to Michael Hirsch

MY BIGGEST OBJECTION TO HIRSCH'S criticism is what seems to me his world-weary determinism concerning labor and social movements in relation to the Democratic Party. Did the CIO leaders and activists who pushed beyond "lobbying" (using massive pressure from below) to incorporation into the Roosevelt administration really have no choice? Well, many in the movement were unhappy with Roosevelt's first-term performance and thought they did. The first United Auto Workers convention voted against endorsing Roosevelt in 1936 and for a labor party—until Lewis read the riot act. Others even far beyond the socialist left felt the same. They lost, but things in 1936 didn't look the same as they do in 2017. The *political* question, then as always, was, "Which side are you on?" Which side would Hirsch have been on in 1936? The CIO, it should be noted, didn't enter the Democratic Party in its old age, but in its infancy—one factor in its increasingly conservative direction. Not even liberal historians of the CIO deny that.

The civil rights movement won its gains by disruption and pressure from below. Did they negotiate with the powers that be? Sure. But

there was debate among socialists and other activists about what was to follow. Would Hirsch have sided with Bayard Rustin and those who pressed hard for permeation of the Democratic Party, or with Draper and the many others on the left who disagreed?

Concerning history, I question Hirsch's simple dismissal of the role of the Democrats in the political retreat of the Populists, who were defeating Democrats across the South in the lead-up to 1896. Much the same goes for the various social movements of the twentieth century. He seems to see the Democrats as passive receptors rather than political actors with their own agenda for those movements. Bernie Sanders might have something to say about just how passive they were toward him. Unfortunately, what I see in Hirsch's arguments is a willingness (most certainly unintentional) to turn the defeats of yesterday into a political perspective for today. Independent politics always lose, the Democrats always win, end of story. I hope not, because there are many in DSA who, I am told, want an independent direction for electoral action. So, once again, the question is in this debate, "Which side are you on?"

Trump and the Labor Movement

A Look Beyond the Immediate Damage

DAN LA BOTZ

WE WORKING PEOPLE LIVE IN darkening times. When the Trump presidency ends in four years—if it does—we may no longer have an organized labor movement. As one of my colleagues, Ed Ott of the Murphy Institute, the City University of New York's labor school, said to me, "We are at the beginning of the end of the U.S. labor movement based on a partnership with capital." We are at the twilight of an era. Labor unions and collective bargaining stand to be swept away, and with them the institutions that have sheltered us in the workplace and provided us with a modicum of job security, living wages, health insurance, and pension benefits.

President Donald Trump and the Republican Congress, as well as Republicans in state legislatures and in the courts, are planning an assault meant to annihilate the American labor movement. This attack on the unions, however, is only part of a broader attack on working people in general. The Trump administration is not only threatening unions, but is also destroying the social safety net, restricting voting rights, and criminalizing large parts of the immigrant population. At the same time, Trump's racist rhetoric encourages and exacerbates racial and religious tensions in society, encouraging right-wing violence, while his misogynist language degrades women and makes them, too, more vulnerable to discrimination and mistreatment.

The U.S. labor union officialdom has proven

incapable over the last four decades of resisting a relentless assault, both economic and political, on the unions, nor has it provided leadership to the working class a whole. Nothing better illustrates organized labor's pathetic state than its inability to embrace, and to mobilize in support of, what are clearly movements of workers and oppressed people such as Occupy Wall Street and Black Lives Matter. As the day darkens, only a handful of unions have stood up to confront the bosses, the Republicans, and Trump. And fewer have challenged the leadership of the neoliberal Democratic Party or had the courage to attempt to create some new political alternative.

The sun is setting on the unions. The labor movement as we have known it is being exterminated, while a new workers movement has yet to emerge. We will have to develop new forms of struggle, and we will only know what they are as we are forced to create them. We will have to make the sun rise again, and it won't be done through prayer, at least not through prayer alone. We will have to organize and fight, learning from the social movements and setting our own independent political direction.

Where Do We Stand at Present?

To build a new future, we must understand our recent past and the present. Let's begin with the objective situation of the unions today. American labor union membership is at its lowest point since the 1920s, and a number of bills before Congress and state legislatures, as well as cases in the courts, suggest that in the next few years labor unions will face the possibility

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of virtual extinction. In 2016 the United States had 14.6 million union members, representing only 10.7 percent of all U.S. workers, while in 1983 there were 17.7 million unionized workers, or 20.1 percent of the labor force. Back in the mid-1950s, 35 percent of workers belonged to labor unions. Among public-sector workers, today 34.4 percent are unionized, compared to only 6.4 percent in the private sector.¹ Most workers have never been involved in a strike, never attended a union meeting, and in the recent Teamster election for top officers, only 19 percent of members voted in a mail-ballot election. To many workers, unions have ceased to seem relevant.

Despite some highly publicized organizing efforts, for example among autoworkers in the South, labor has been unable to turn the tide. The United Auto Workers campaigns at Volkswagen and Nissan lost; the staff organizers failed to build a real union on the shop floor, and so workers never became confident that they could win without risking their jobs.² In addition to the regular labor unions, there are dozens of workers centers in the United States that bring together immigrant workers, most of them Latinos and many of them undocumented, into organizations to help protect their labor rights and to improve their working conditions.³ While these organizations have thousands of members and do very important work, they do not have anything like the weight and strength of the labor unions.

Not only are there fewer organized workers than at any time in almost a hundred years, but unions also conduct many fewer strikes. In 2016, there were only 15 major work stoppages involving a total 99,000 workers. Over the past four decades major work stoppages declined by approximately 90 percent. The period from 2007 to 2016 was the decade with fewest strikes, averaging approximately 14 major work stoppages per year. The lowest annual number of major strikes was five in 2009.⁴ While a few major strikes have inspired the labor movement and

provided models of organization, strategy, and struggle, such as the Chicago Teachers Union strike of 2012 and the Communications Workers strike of 2016, there has been no major strike wave in the United States since 1970-1971.

In the last decade, U.S. labor unions have adopted some new organizing strategies among groups of low-wage workers. The most salient of these campaigns has been the “Fight for \$15,” backed by unions such as the Service Employees International Union and the United Food and Commercial Workers. The protest demonstrations, local symbolic actions, and occasional small-scale strikes combined with lobbying and legislation have won workers an estimated \$62 billion in raises over the last decade, according to a report by the National Employment Law Project.⁵ This is all well and good, though wages remain too low. And, most important, the campaign has failed to organize the hundreds of thousands of low-wage workers in the fast-food, hospitality, and retail sectors.

Legal, Legislative, and Administrative Attacks

Workers’ right to organize labor unions is now under attack in the courts, in Congress, and in state legislatures.⁶ The anti-union National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation asked the Supreme Court to hear *Janus v. AFSCME*, which could take away unions’ ability to collect “agency fees,” sometimes called “fare share fees.” The conservatives argue that the union forces workers to financially support political causes with which they may disagree, and so violates their free-speech rights. At present, workers may decline to join the union in their public sector workplace, but must still pay an agency fee to the union. It is the members’ dues and the non-members’ fees that provide the union with the resources to buy or rent a union hall, to hire staff, and to carry out its activities. If the Supreme Court upholds the *Janus* case, many public employee unions may find themselves facing not only a loss of non-members’ fees, but

also possibly an exit of union members.⁷

Labor union rights in both the public and private sectors are also under attack in Congress. Conservatives in Congress have introduced a national “right-to-work” bill that would “prohibit, on a national scale, any union contract requirement that employees pay union dues as a condition of employment.”⁸ As *The National Law Review* writes,

The National Right-to-Work Act would likely be devastating to organized labor, drastically diminishing union revenues and unionization rates, particularly in states that already have low union membership and less historical support for unions. Studies show there is a direct correlation between the passage of right-to-work laws and diminished union membership. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, of the 27 states with union membership below the national average in 2016, almost all are right-to-work states, dropping as low as 1.6 percent in South Carolina.⁹

A federal right-to-work law could virtually eliminate unions in many sectors of the economy.

Meanwhile, state legislatures continue to pass new right-to-work laws. For many years, right-to-work laws existed only in the states of the Deep South and a couple of the Great Plains states. But in 2012, Michigan and Indiana passed right-to-work bills, followed by Wisconsin in 2015 and West Virginia in 2016. Then in January 2017, Kentucky adopted right-to-work, and in February 2017, Missouri became the 28th state to pass right-to-work.¹⁰ Where right-to-work laws are passed, unions lose members and their dues base, face staff reductions, and have less economic power and political clout.

Even without court decisions or new legislation, Trump has moved to reduce the power of unions by nominating two longtime union opponents to the National Labor Relations Board, which oversees union representation and collective bargaining in the private sector. Trump’s two appointees, William Emanuel and Marvin Kaplan, now confirmed by the

Senate, will give Republicans a majority on the five-member board and tremendous power to block union organization and representation.¹¹ Peter Robb, who will become NLRB General Counsel, is known for his anti-union positions and will have the power to influence thousands of labor cases.¹² The board has the power to decide who in the workplace gets to vote for a union, how unions and management conduct themselves during an election, and how and when union elections will take place.

While the worst was to be expected, unions were shocked to learn on December 14 that the NLRB, on a party-line 3-2 vote, had overturned the Obama-era joint-employer decision of 2015, which made it easier for contractors and workers at franchised businesses, such as hotels and restaurants, to form unions and collectively bargain with such chains. The very next day, in a case involving Raytheon Network Centric Systems and on the same 3-2 vote, the board overturned a 2016 ruling on changes employers can implement in union workplaces. The board, in this case, restored a 50-year-old precedent allowing businesses to change policies without a union’s permission if they have taken similar actions before.

Trump appointees at the U.S. Department of Labor, which oversees occupational health and safety, wage-and-hour standards, unemployment insurance benefits, and reemployment services, will also be working against the interests of workers. The appointees can be expected to weaken worker protections on the job, to reduce eligibility for overtime pay, and to impose forced arbitration on unions while forbidding class action lawsuits.¹³

All of these laws and court cases, rule changes, and appointments mean that labor unions’ size and economic resources will decline and, consequently, so will labor’s political power. Fewer union members means fewer people working in the Democratic Party’s phone banks, fewer door knockers, and fewer people to get out the vote on election day. Workers will find it

more difficult to defend themselves at work and to advance their interests in society and politics. All of this means that rebuilding the workers movement, or, better put, building a new labor movement, becomes the urgent task.

Trump's Promises, and the Reality

Donald Trump ran for president on a nativist, nationalist economic platform, promising to “Make America Great Again” by both encouraging job production and defending those jobs against both foreign capital and foreign workers. Trump promised to rebuild the national infrastructure and to pressure companies to keep industrial jobs in the United States or return them. He pledged to protect those jobs from Mexicans and other “illegal immigrants” as well as to protect the United States from economic competition from China. Trump vowed that while doing those things he would save Social Security and Medicare. Finally, Trump swore to end America’s foreign wars and the U.S. policy of regime change in foreign countries, concentrating on putting “America First.” Trump went so far as to claim that he would make the Republican Party “a workers party.”¹⁴ It was this nationalist economic platform that in a few key states won Trump just enough white working-class voters to carry the Electoral College vote and win the election.

Trump promised to drain the swamp of Wall Street and Washington insiders. Yet, when he became president, Trump appointed cabinet members who were Wall Street bankers, and several, like Rex Tillerson and Wilbur Ross, were billionaires. The cabinet’s total worth was estimated at \$14 billion. Trump’s pro-business agenda is seen not only in his political appointments, but also in his policies, particularly the budget and the tax plan. Taken together, they not only represent an enormous reallocation of wealth to the already wealthy, but they also will result in reductions in the labor force of various federal departments.

Trump’s initial budget proposal for the fiscal

year, which would total over \$4 trillion, called for large increases for Defense (up 10 percent), for Homeland Security (up 7 percent), and for Veterans Affairs (up 6 percent), while at the same time proposing reductions for the Environmental Protection Agency (down 31 percent), for states’ development programs (down 29 percent), and for Agriculture and Labor (each down 21 percent), as well as for Justice (down 20 percent—through cuts to crime victims, for example, though the FBI will see an increase), Health and Human Services (down 16 percent), and Education (down 14 percent).¹⁵ The proposed budget also eliminates a list of nineteen small programs whose total cost is only \$500 million but which includes many that are particularly disliked by conservatives, among them the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the Legal Services Corporation, AmeriCorps, and the National Endowments for the Arts and the Humanities.¹⁶ As the *Washington Post* observed,

If you’re a poor person in America, President Trump’s budget proposal is not for you. Trump has unveiled a budget that would slash or abolish programs that have provided low-income Americans with help on virtually all fronts, including affordable housing, banking, weatherizing homes, job training, paying home heating oil bills, and obtaining legal counsel in civil matters.¹⁷

Trump’s budget will cut regulator agencies and social programs and lead to layoffs for federal workers. And Trump’s tax plan, which passed Congress at the end of 2017, will cut taxes for the very wealthy, reducing federal revenue and leading to deeper cuts in the budget.

Trump’s Strategy Toward Labor

Trump has a shrewd strategy toward labor. He has put forward a program to win over some highly skilled, largely white workers while simultaneously attacking the unions that represent many more black, Latino, and women workers. It is a strategy intended to solidify his base while dividing and weakening the labor movement. Trump’s initial meeting with labor

representatives on his first day in office was a coup. Meeting with building trades leaders, he told the union officials of his plans for vast infrastructure projects: highways, bridges, and, of course, the border wall.

The union leaders praised Trump. Sean McGarvey, president of North America's Building Trades Unions, sounded like Trump himself as he called it "an incredible meeting," the best he "had ever had in Washington." "We have a common bond with the president," said Garvey. "We come from the same industry. He understands the value of driving development, moving people to the middle class." Teamsters President James P. Hoffa, whose union endorsed Hillary Clinton, has also lauded Trump. Many Teamsters work in the building trades, driving dump trucks, cement trucks, and delivering the steel beams to work sites. The Teamsters have praised Trump for what they call his "common-sense goal" of infrastructure projects.

Hoffa also praised Trump for withdrawing the United States from the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal. He said, "With this decision, the president has taken the first step toward fixing thirty years of bad trade policies that have cost working Americans millions of good-paying jobs." Hoffa told Fox News, "We've been talking about changing NAFTA forever, and no one would ever do it. It can be done, and I applaud the president for being so bold as to say we'll just rip it up and negotiate a new one. That's unheard of. But it really is what needs to be done." The Teamsters also want Trump to alter the NAFTA clause that permits Mexican truck drivers to cross the border into the United States.

Interestingly, though Hoffa and the Teamsters have praised Trump, they remain active in the Democratic Party, where they have endorsed Keith Ellison of Minnesota, candidate of the "Bernie Sanders wing" of the Democratic Party, for chairperson of the Democratic National Committee. The Teamsters' contradictory stances on these issues are shared by many

other unions.

While Trump promised the building trades leaders what they wanted to hear, he may be scamming them. The Republican Party Platform of 2016 calls for the repeal of the Davis-Bacon Act of 1931, which requires public works projects to pay the prevailing local wages (usually union scale), a law that has been key

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to maintaining construction workers' incomes. When McGarvey asked Trump about Davis-Bacon, the president refused to commit himself. Should Davis-Bacon be overturned, the impact on building trades workers would be disastrous. Only a few days after Trump's meeting, Senator Jeff Flake of Arizona introduced a bill to suspend Davis-Bacon on federal highway projects.

Trump also claimed to be a friend of the coal industry and of coal miners. Once elected he made good on promises to eliminate any restrictions on coal production. Speaking on October 9 in eastern Kentucky, in coal country, Scott Pruitt, head of the Environmental Protection Agency, announced to the cheers of coal company executives that "the war on coal is over" and that his agency was doing away with Obama's Clean Power Plan, which had been adopted to protect both the environment and human health.¹⁸ But Trump and Pruitt may not be able to deliver on the promises of more coal jobs: Many companies have already switched to wind, solar, or natural gas. Still, fuel-burning plants—whether coal or gas—continue to contribute to climate change, to harm children, and to worsen health problems such as asthma. And the coal production they support is dangerous

to the planet and all of its inhabitants, not only producing global warming, but also causing more extreme weather. Pruitt's announcement came just after hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Maria, and Nate struck Texas, Louisiana, Florida, and Puerto Rico in an unprecedented storm season that some scientists believe was caused by climate change. But, though not many coal jobs may be created, in the very short run Trump's promise to bring back jobs in coal is a problem for AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka in his own home base, the United Mine Workers.

Trumka, who supported Hillary Clinton and opposed Trump as bigoted, racist, sexist, and anti-union, changed his tune immediately after Trump's election. In a statement emailed to reporters, Trumka said the AFL-CIO accepted the outcome of the election and offered Trump "our congratulations." Trump's strategy of wooing the building trades seems to have effectively neutralized the AFL-CIO, the largest and most important labor body in the country. Trumka seems hesitant to challenge Trump directly for fear of losing the support of the trades and some other affiliated unions and their members, a good many of whom voted for Trump.

Trumka told the media that the election was a referendum "on trade, on restoring manufacturing, on reviving our communities." He added, "We will work to make many of those promises a reality. If he is willing to work with us, consistent with our values, we are ready to work with him." Not surprisingly, Trumka visited the president a few days after the election and said he had a "productive conversation." The failure of the head of the country's largest and broadest labor organization to speak out against Trump from the beginning was extremely disappointing to many in the labor movement, though he would come to resist some of Trump's appointments.

Trumka, for instance, worked against Trump's nomination of Andrew Puzder, the former fast-food CEO, to be Secretary of Labor, saying, "He has spoken out against increasing the minimum wage. ... He opposes President

Obama's updated overtime rule. He is dismissive of workplace discrimination issues. [Puzder] appears comfortable reinforcing harmful stereotypes about women, and I could go on."

Trump cleverly appointed Trumka to his Business Council, otherwise populated by multimillionaire and billionaire corporate CEOs. The AFL-CIO leader accepted the job and stayed in the position for months. Trumka only stepped down from the council after a number of corporate leaders had resigned following Trump's failure to condemn the march by alt-right, Klan, and Nazi groups in Charlottesville. Trumka wrote in an op-ed in the *New York Times*,

Unfortunately, with each passing day, it has become clear that President Trump has no intention of following through on his commitments to working people. More worrisome, his actions and rhetoric threaten to leave America worse off and more divided. It is for these reasons that I resigned yesterday from the president's manufacturing council, which the president disbanded today after a string of resignations.¹⁹

Trumka, now "woke," as we say, did not, however, outline in that piece a plan to fight Trump. Trumka's vacillations raise the question of whether the AFL-CIO as it is currently constituted is still viable.

While embracing the mostly white and male workers of the building trades, Trump has simultaneously attacked public employees. He issued an executive order freezing hiring for the executive branch, which has 1.2 million employees. The freeze does not affect the military, which Trump has announced he will be strengthening. A hiring freeze, if it lasts any time, reduces the workforce through attrition, leading to demoralization because of inadequate staff, and then to more people quitting because of higher workloads. Government agencies become less productive, creating an excuse to contract out or privatize.

Federal workers unions were quick to criticize the freeze, framing their objections in terms

of service to society. While the freeze will be bad for those who use the federal agencies' services, it will also reduce a major source of permanent, full-time—though often low-paid—employment, with holidays and health benefits, for many workers, especially for blacks and females.

Trump's choice of Federal Judge Neil M. Gorsuch put another arch-conservative on the Supreme Court. Gorsuch's addition will create a conservative majority that will take up *Janus v. AFSCME* and very likely end public employee unions' ability to collect agency fees from non-union members whom they are obligated to represent. As we have already mentioned, the result is likely to be the financial starvation of many public employee unions, forcing them to reduce staff and making them less effective.

While the Trump administration will be bad for all public employees, teachers will face even greater challenges. Donald Trump's choice for secretary of education, Betsy DeVos, another billionaire, has been a leader in corporate education reform. As the *New York Times* wrote of her activities:

Like the Kochs, the DeVoses are generous supporters of think tanks that evangelize for unrestrained capitalism, like Michigan's Acton Institute, and that rail against unions and back privatizing public services, like the Mackinac Center.

They have also funded national groups dedicated to cutting back the role of government, including the National Center for Policy Analysis (which has pushed for Social Security privatization and against environmental regulation) and the Institute for Justice (which challenges regulations in court and defends school vouchers). Both organizations have also received money from the reactionary, anti-union Koch family. So teachers can expect an attack on public education combined with an attack on their labor union rights.

President J. David Cox Sr. of the American Federation of Government Employees, challenging Trump in his own nationalist terms,

criticized the president's budget arguing, "These budget cuts will make a difficult job even harder for the women and men who protect our skies, patrol our waters, and help us prepare for and respond to emergencies." He was referring to double-digit cuts to the Transportation Security Administration, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and Coast Guard. "President Trump promised to 'make American safe again,' but the drastic budget cuts he's proposing will do just the opposite," Cox said. "You don't improve security by slashing budgets for programs that prevent terrorists from hijacking airplanes, keep illegal narcotics off our streets, and counter violent extremists in our neighborhoods." Such nationalist rhetoric and fear-mongering from union leaders, especially those who represent many workers of color, undercuts the potential for a common stand by unions against Trump's white nationalism.

Trumka vacillated while the building trades and Teamsters embraced Trump's project, but many national and local unions have gone into opposition mode, though to varying degrees. Teachers have been in the forefront of the resistance. The American Federation of Teachers mobilized 250 locals and members in more than 200 cities the day before the inauguration as part of the Reclaim Our Schools National Day of Action against Trump's agenda. The National Education Association, the largest union in the nation with 2.7 million members, called on its members to walk out of schools on inauguration day to protest Trump. Both the AFT and the NEA endorsed Hillary Clinton.

Members of Local 10 of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union in Oakland, California, a union with a long radical history and a membership that is half black, stopped working on Inauguration Day. The wildcat strike stopped the loading and unloading of cargo ships in one of the busiest West Coast ports. Though largely symbolic, it was an important statement.

Surprisingly, Service Employees Inter-

national Union President Mary Kay Henry, who was not invited to Trump's love fest with some union leaders, has said that she doesn't believe that Donald Trump represents an existential threat to her union, the country's second largest with 1.5 million members. She said her union was "battening down the hatches" and would continue to build the Fight for \$15 movement.

Even where an international union has come out for Trump, one can find locals that have taken a different position. For example, Teamsters Joint Council 16, which represents 90,000 laborers in New York City, came out strongly against Trump's immigration policies.

Outside of unions, there have been significant protests by workers in the service sector and tech industry as well as by consumers. The New York Taxi Workers Alliance, a workers center with a large number of Muslim immigrant members, went on strike at Kennedy International Airport. At the same time, tech workers at Google in California and at Comcast in Philadelphia demonstrated against Trump's immigration policy. The unorganized and "unofficial" sections of the workers movement, then, at times have been more active opposing Trump than unions.

A New Labor Movement

There will be two principal sources of ideas for building the new labor movement: One will be workers' own experiences, their tactics and strategies developed through trial and error in the struggle with the bosses and the state. The other will be the socialist left, which can provide a revolutionary theory, that is, a vision of a democratic socialist society, as well as more inclusive strategies for bringing together workplace, community, and social movement struggles into a broader battle for political power. This synergy between workers organizations, social movements, and socialist ideas has been the source of radical change in society for

over 150 years, and it remains the font of our potential power.

The left's program for labor for many years has been the building of a rank and file movement to transform business unions into democratic and militant organizations. Many leftists entered the unions in the 1970s with a variety of strategies, everything from working with "progressive" union officials to trying to create a revolutionary alternative to existing leadership. The rank and file strategy aimed at organizing workers to challenge the existing union leadership and transform the union into a class-struggle organization. One group, the International Socialists, had a goal of uniting rank and file groups in different unions, as well as in the social movements, into a small, mass revolutionary socialist party. This strategy—though subsequently disconnected from building a revolutionary organization—was carried by the IS when it merged with other socialist groups to form Solidarity. Not only Solidarity, but also the International Socialist Organization and more recently the Democratic Socialists of America have also sometimes adopted this strategy.

The IS, which developed this strategy in the 1970s, argued that the labor union bureaucracy, even in progressive unions, tended to control workers rather than take up their interests and fight for them. The IS argued that the labor bureaucracy, especially its higher levels, constituted a social caste with its own material interests—salaries, expenses, pensions, and union assets. And perhaps even more important, the union bureaucracy also had its own ideology, namely that because of its privileged relationships to government officials, the bosses, and the workers, it knew best what was in the workers' interest, better than did the workers themselves. The rank and file strategy existed precisely to overcome the union bureaucracy and to make it possible for workers to come together to fight the employer. That meant taking up shop-floor grievances, organizing contract campaigns, and running for local and national office, always

with the goal of a more democratic and militant union. Building up such a labor movement was at the center of a conception of building a socialist labor party. As Kim Moody, who most articulately explained the theory, writes, “The notion of a bridge between rudimentary class consciousness or trade-union militancy and socialist consciousness is the cornerstone of transitional politics and the rank and file strategy.”²⁰

The idea of the rank and file strategy had its origins in the Communist Party’s Trade Union Education League of the early 1920s and in the best practices of the Trotskyists in the Teamsters union in the 1930s. It was also inspired by the many rank and file rebellions in U.S. labor unions beginning in the mid-1960s and continuing until 1981, when a combination of economic recessions and political repression broke the movements. In that period, miners, autoworkers, truck drivers, postal workers, farm workers, and others rebelled against their union leaderships, their employers, and sometimes the government.²¹ Leftists played a role in many of these movements. The International Socialists’ work in the Teamsters union, where it helped to bring together younger radicals and longtime dissidents to found Teamsters for a Democratic Union in 1976, represented the most successful of the rank and file rebellions of that era.²² With TDU’s support, in 1991 Ron Carey was elected president of the Teamsters union, and under his leadership the union conducted a national strike against United Parcel Service in 1997 that was an inspiration for the union movement.²³ The rank and file strategy remains valid and necessary if not sufficient to build a new workers movement. *Labor Notes*, which publishes a monthly newspaper, distributes books such as the *Troublemaker’s Handbook*, holds Troublemaker’s Schools around the country, and hosts a biannual conference attended by as many as 2,000 activists, remains an active center for rank-and-file activism.

Today union activists have adopted the

rank and file strategy in unions representing public transit workers, teachers, and hospital workers. While public employee unions present unique challenges because their members often so directly serve the public—consider nurses and school teachers—the principle of organizing rank and file workers to challenge the union bureaucracy so that the workers can fight the boss remains the same. With public employee unions coming under concerted attack in the courts and legislatures, workers will need rank and file movements to pressure their reluctant leaders to mobilize the members to defend themselves. And socialists must position themselves to help provide leadership to those movements.

Most workers, however—some 90 percent of them—are not in unions, so we need new strategies for union organizing. Some workplaces, for example in the logistics industry, that is warehousing and shipping, still have the character of traditional industrial workplaces. That is, there are large numbers of semi-skilled workers organized around facilities and machines—in this case shelving, order pickers, forklifts, docks, and trucks—and gathered together in large numbers in one plant or a constellation of facilities. For example, Amazon, a corporation worth \$386 billion, has 350,000 workers. The Fall River facility outside of Boston employs 1,000 warehouse workers. While up to now, efforts to unionize Amazon have failed,²⁴ workers like these can be organized in the same way industrial workers have always been organized, by building a core of clandestine organizers in the workplaces and tying them together across the country with a labor union. Large retailers like Wal-Mart, which has 2.1 million employees, many of them warehouse workers, could be organized in the same manner.

In most American cities today, however, the biggest employers are usually one or more major universities and a hospital or hospital complex. While in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the great industrial manufacturing

plants stood at the center of the economy, today it is health and education workers who come together in enormous workplaces with significant economic, social, and political power. Take the small city of Cincinnati, for example. The University of Cincinnati has 15,000 employees, more than half of them located on its main campus. In the medical center nearby, Children's Hospital has 15,000 employees, while the nearby University of Cincinnati Hospital employs 12,000.

Similar complexes exist in cities across the nation. Many university and hospital employees are unionized, both professional groups like professors and nurses and non-professional staff. There is still basic unionization to be done at some universities and hospitals, and there are rank and file union movements to be organized at others. Some of these unions have become quite political. Organizations such as the California Nurses Association, which created National Nurses United, played a central role in building support for the Bernie Sanders presidential effort and other progressive campaigns.

An important sector that remains largely unorganized is high tech. According to the U.S. government, there were 17 million high tech workers in 2014, responsible for 23 percent of the country's output. High tech companies employ tens of thousands: Google has 75,000, Facebook has 17,000, and Yahoo has 8,500. There have been some tentative efforts among these workers, but so far no serious organizing campaign resulting in the formation of a labor union and the winning of a union contract.²⁵

A great deal of attention has been dedicated to discussions of the difficulty of organizing the "precariat," that is, contingent workers without regular full-time jobs.²⁶ Over the last several decades, the workplace became "fissured," as one authority puts it.²⁷ Many employers in a variety of industries contracted out all but the essential productive and moneymaking elements of their businesses to other companies, often non-union. These companies in turn

often hired seasonal, temporary, or part-time workers. Other employers in the hospitality and restaurant industries also hired contingent workers. Even where workers hold some sort of supposedly full-time or permanent status, they perceive their positions as being insecure.²⁸ Today millions of young people, many of them with college debts amounting to tens of thousands of dollars, cannot find jobs in the fields for which they prepared themselves and have only the most precarious employment. Organizing these workers, many of whom work two or three jobs, will require new strategies and tactics, but the organizing must be done one way or another. The organization of the unorganized must be high on the agenda of a new labor movement and of socialists.

Building a New Workers Movement

What's going to happen to the unions? Right now the public employee unions that stand to be dismantled by the regulatory, legislative, and court actions discussed here—above all the *Janus* case—are engaging in what some have called maintenance of membership or recommitment campaigns. Union leaders are carrying out education work about the union among the members and are asking members to sign pledges to continue paying their dues. While this is well and good, it hardly seems likely to reinvigorate the unions, much less to transform them into fighting organizations.

As the attack proceeds and the unions are dismantled, some unions and some workers will find themselves involved in minority unions, that is, unions that only represent some of those eligible in the workplace and perhaps not a majority. While workers have the legal right to organize such minority unions, they may not have the right to bargain contracts. The strength of the minority unions lies in their ability to organize workers on the shop floor or in the office to resist, and such resistance usually takes the form of traditional work-to-rule, slowdowns, and perhaps sabotage of one form

or another and may involve wildcat or illegal strikes. Workers' ability to use such economic action, and particularly the strike, stands at the center of rebuilding the workers movement.

Minority unionism resembles what was historically called "the militant minority," that is, that key group of workers that is central to the mobilization of larger groups and even masses of workers. The term first referred to small groups of workers who organized important strikes in factories and shipyards in Britain during World War I, but workers in Germany, France, and Italy were doing the same thing in the late 1910s and 1920s. The militant minority was often made up of skilled workers, whose knowledge and experience not only provided them some protection, but also gave them economic leverage in the workplace. At the center of the militant minority there was almost inevitably a handful of socialists with a radical vision of social change, a strategic idea about challenging the bosses and the government, and a commitment to the struggle over the long term. While the term originated in World War I, militant minorities could also be found at the center of the strikes in the 1930s that led to the formation of the Congress of Industrial Organizations, the CIO. And similar groups led the strike movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s in France, Italy, and the United States. The building of militant minority organizations in the workforce will be essential to rebuilding the labor movement, and it will be the job of socialists to build them.

A new American workers movement will have to be rebuilt both in the workplace and in the communities, as well as in alliance with the progressive social movements. While the labor movement has its greatest presence and strength in the workplace, workers also engage in struggles in their communities for housing, for better education, and for health care. They engage in struggles against racist and violent police and for a fair share of public resources. We need to find ways to create better connections

between the workplace and the neighborhood. We also need to take the labor movement to the streets. A healthy labor movement would naturally rally to Occupy Wall Street and put itself unhesitatingly on the side of Black Lives Matter and would join the movement against climate change and for a system change as well.

Our next workers movement, whatever form it takes, must not be built upon a partnership with capitalism, but upon the principle that we fight to abolish it. The notion of a struggle for a society based on democracy, equality, and solidarity can, should, and will inspire a new movement just as much as the fight against greed, white supremacy, militarism, and environmental destruction. Our goal of creating a new workers movement becomes more possible if we can project a vision of a struggle from below for a democratic socialist society, a vision that for now will attract only a minority of workers but can help to inspire them to become a militant minority that galvanizes the working class majority.

This article is based on a talk titled "The Election of Donald Trump and Its Impact on Labour" that the author presented as part of a panel on "North America as a Space for Labour Solidarity" at the Confronting Global Capital: Strengthening Labour Internationalism and Transnationalism in Canada Today at McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, October 12-14, 2017.

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The Environmental Justice Movement in South Baltimore

United Workers Take on the Multiple Crises of Capitalism

NICOLE FABRICANT

IN AN ERA WHEN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT is increasingly dominated by fossil-fuel interests that limit regulation of oil rigs and pipelines, the environmental justice movement seems to have diminished significantly. Recently, this apparent fact was belied by audience reactions to Lois Gibbs, Love Canal organizer, winner of the first Goldman Environmental Prize, and now with the Center for Health, Environment, and Justice, which she founded. Listening to a panel about the future of the environmental justice movement under Trump, the audience appeared to gain a renewed energy for local initiatives. Lois, in her mid-to-late 60s, sat next to 22-year-old Destiny Watford (2016 Goldman Environmental Prize winner) who proposed an end to the trash-to-energy incinerator industry in her South Baltimore community. Watford shook her head affirmatively as Gibbs passionately declared, “Nothing is coming from Washington today! Organizing and change must occur at the local level and the state level. We must think locally and act in terms of states!” Her passion and words resonated deeply, and she spoke directly to the work I have done in Baltimore for the last seven years, which has produced victories despite the horrors of privatization, deregulation, and cronyism that dominate at the national level.

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In early 2010, developers announced the Fairfield Renewable Energy Project. It was a plan to build the largest trash incinerator in the nation in South Baltimore, burning 4,000 tons of waste per day to generate “clean,” “green,” and “renewable” energy. Then-Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake said, “I’m very proud to have this project in Baltimore city” and added that she deemed the announcement event a truly great day in Baltimore. She claimed the incinerator would provide “jobs for skilled union workers” and serve as “a model for green, renewable energy.”¹

The idea of converting waste into energy became increasingly popular in United States after the global energy crisis of the 1970s. In the last twenty-five years, waste conversion has quietly become significant within energy investment circles in the United States. This occurred in part because of federal and state legislation that incentivized the market to revalue waste materials and to produce technological innovation. In November 2011, Maryland’s Governor Martin O’Malley (a Democrat) signed a bill making trash incineration a tier-one renewable energy like wind, solar, and geothermal. Energy Answers International, the corporation invested in building the incinerator in Baltimore, cut a check for \$100,000 to the O’Malley-led Democratic Governors Association on the very same day that he indicated support for state legislation promising trash-to-energy incineration. The new plant was expected to import needed jobs

to deindustrialized Baltimore. The fact that it promised to provide schools with “green energy” was also compelling. Energy Answers maneuvered to avoid federal and state regulation. They argued that the facility was an energy plant, not an incinerator, and therefore could be sited less than a mile from Curtis Bay Elementary School.

Not discussed was the fact that the trash-to-energy incinerator would release thousands of pounds of lead, mercury, fine particulate matter, and carbon dioxide into Curtis Bay, a deeply impoverished South Baltimore community with the highest rates of asthma and respiratory disease in the United States as a result of its long history of industrial pollution. This specific zip code was ranked in 2009 as the second worst area in the nation for toxic air emissions, and today it has the dubious honor of having the worst air quality in the state of Maryland.² Curtis Bay represents a kind of palimpsest containing layers of historic pollution of the land, air, water, and people. Local bodies are a primary repository for this toxicity.

While East and West Baltimore have been defined by a history of residential and racial housing segregation and white flight from the city, South Baltimore is a distinct space of hyper-industrialization. Public-health scholar Lawrence Brown defines the central city’s racialized geography as one of economic development forming an L shape on a city map, versus the butterfly shape of Black community neglect.³ Curtis Bay—located farther south—has been characterized by land-use and development decisions that led to people being displaced by heavy industries. Today, these industries contribute over 87 percent of all toxic stationary-source emissions in Baltimore city and pose health risks to the community.⁴ The history of Curtis Bay exemplifies the environmental health inequities laid out in the landmark 1987 report, entitled *Toxic Waste and Race in the United States*, that propelled a national environmental justice movement.⁵

This peninsula of South Baltimore his-

torically has been a hub of resource movement, transport, and waste disposal in the U.S. Northeast. The area was a central site for shipbuilding during and after World War II. As a result, the area became an amalgamation of polluting industries including but not limited to shipbreaking, chemical production, and manufacture of agricultural pesticides and fertilizers. In addition, Curtis Bay is a portal through which nonrenewable fossil fuels like coal coming from Appalachia are shipped to other parts of the United States. Baltimore has the second largest coal-export pier in United States. Critically, the open-air coal pit there sits near a playground in the heart of Curtis Bay. Most of the coal (18 million tons) is being exported to Europe, Asia, and Ukraine. Since Trump took office, Baltimore has seen an increase of 25 percent in its coal exports. Further, Curtis Bay is a place for storing crude, volatile, and explosive oil. CSX trains travel unmarked railways in this community, carrying Bakken crude oil fracked in North Dakota in outdated DOT-111 cars. A year ago, there was a train derailment and explosion close to downtown Baltimore and less than 10 miles from Curtis Bay. Finally, coal pier and petroleum storage tanks encircle residents’ homes, schools, and churches in the area.

These industries pose great danger to the health and well-being of Curtis Bay, but no recent incident exposed the “expendability” and “disposability” of the community more than the most recent chemical lockdown in this area. During September 2017, state emergency officials were called in after a chemical leak on nearby Fairfield Road. Emergency steps were taken to make certain that residents remained inside with the windows tightly sealed. The leak was of chlorosulfonic acid, a powerful chemical used to make soap and detergents, which can turn into a lethal gas when it is exposed to the air. Acid was released through a valve while being unloaded from a tanker at the Solvay Industries plant. While no one was injured, and

the CDC quickly declared the community safe, thus ending the emergency lockdown, the larger issue of toxicity that Brown and Black bodies are exposed to on a daily basis remains.

For the past several years, students at Benjamin Franklin High School, in Curtis Bay, have been organizing to elevate these issues to the larger Baltimore community. For example, Destiny Watford, a Benjamin Franklin graduate, is now an undergraduate at Towson University and organizer for United Workers,⁶ a human rights organization in Baltimore. She and her friends declared a citywide campaign to bring an end to trash-to-energy incineration, saying, “We are tired of our community being a dumping ground!” She described the health and security of her community “as being sacrificed for profit.” For four years, Watford has organized (as a high-school student and beyond) to reduce the exposure of Curtis Bay residents to the hazardous pollutants the proposed incinerators will emit. While a high-school senior, she and her friends at Benjamin Franklin began to question the health impact of an incineration plant. She states, “So we spent a lot of time researching incineration and its consequences to our health. We found out that it would be creating a lot of pollution and that Curtis Bay already had some of the worst pollution in the nation. To put an incinerator in a place that already had so much pollution was a violation to our basic human rights.” As Destiny has said many times, “That is what triggered our politics. We organized based upon the fact that we didn’t know anything about the incinerator and felt outraged by the fact that our Maryland governor supported the project.”

From this early organizing, Free Your Voice was created to build a grass-roots campaign to educate and mobilize residents about the consequences of trash-to-energy incineration. Early in the campaign, advocates learned that Energy Answers received funding through advance sales of promised, cheap incineration-generated electricity to public entities such as

school systems and libraries. At that point, the campaign took a new turn. It directly targeted the Baltimore City Public School System and Baltimore County School System with a massive divestment campaign. In 2013-2014 the

Community land trusts would incubate new housing and jobs insulated from market forces.

campaign gained momentum. Free Your Voice members attended a school board meeting and demanded that the Baltimore Public School System terminate its contract to buy energy from the incinerator. Two youth leaders of Free Your Voice wrote and performed a rap song about contaminated air and the future role of the incinerator in enlarging health risks. Audrey Rozier, a young artist, rapped the following lyrics to the School Board:

18-year-old girl living in the world, where no one cares about the safety of the girl. Money, money, money. That seems to be the anthem destroying the world and always taking it for granted. No more greed. All I can see is landfills. I’m disgusted. I can’t believe we trusted the world. But it’s not too late to be adjusted. We have our rights according to the amendments. But why do we feel like we have been so resented? Shoved to the side where opinions don’t matter, where opinions only die. It’s time to stand up and let our voices be heard. Incinerator move because you are not preferred.

United Workers-Free Your Voice also organized a “sunflower parade” through the streets of Curtis Bay in April 2015, featuring the Christian Warriors Marching Band and hundreds of hand-painted sunflowers. Their vision, conveyed through the sunflowers, is a city that embraces fair development and sustainable futures. Local performers and artists, such as Valeska Populoh

and Ellen Cherry, have written and produced plays like *The Holy Land*. The cultural arm of the local movement brought performances to community events like the Fairfield Reunion, a neighborhood gathering at the Curtis Bay Recreation Center, and the Human Rights Dinner. These events provide social respite, solidarity exchanges between parts of the movement, and an honoring of leadership. Performance and art are used to tell stories about forms of community displacement in South Baltimore and as a vehicle to project and amplify community voices into places of affluence across the city. For example, in March 2015, Baltimore City Schools agreed to end their agreement with the Energy Answers Incinerator Project because of the growing and visible pressure applied by Free Your Voice. This remarkable victory removed an important source of revenue for the incinerator project and narrowed its margin of profitability.

The campaign produced larger citywide alliances focused on the role of the state of Maryland in validating the incinerator project. For example, nearly 200 people from across the city marched in December 2015 in solidarity with United Workers-Free Your Voice and rallied outside the Maryland Department of Environment (MDE). They urged officials to “pull the permits” for the Fairfield Renewable Energy Project. Importantly, the expiration date for the proposed project had passed.

Locked outside the building, the protestors chanted, “We’re holding our breath,” referencing the long history of toxic and polluting industries in their community as well as the hazard of over-policing: The march occurred around the time that city jurors reached a deadlock in the first Freddy Gray trial, on April 19, 2015. Freddy Gray’s death was, at the time, the most recent attack upon Brown and Black bodies. Protestors at MDE switched from “we’re holding our breath” to “we cannot breathe,” explicitly painting the connection between pollutant and police toxicity. (Gray had told Baltimore police officers, “I can’t breathe.”) The fast violence of police

brutality in communities like Curtis Bay and the slow violence of environmental toxicity and high levels of lead poisoning are in dynamic interplay with issues of class and race. The cumulative effects are highly destructive and therefore might have resulted in demobilization and paralysis. Instead, United Workers-Free Your Voice and other citywide and local groups were unwilling to surrender. In March 2016, MDE pulled the permit and the Energy Answers project was defeated, at least for now. However, the fight has not ended with the state’s rejection of the incinerator.

Reclaiming the Land

Energy Answers had planned to build its incinerator on land that formerly housed an agricultural-chemicals plant owned by FMC Corporation. Presently, there is an effort to reclaim the land from FMC to build a community land trust. The intention is to move from protest against present policies to building an alternative to the current neoliberal development model. In some respects, United Workers-Free Your Voice sees “fast (police) violence” and “slow (environmental toxics) violence” against communities of color as embedded in the long history of racist housing development, deindustrialization, and disinvestment in Baltimore. Since the 1970s, the city of Baltimore has pursued a trickle-down development model, with millions of public subsidies funneled through private investors and expected to reach residents of very poor Black and Brown communities. Predictably, benefits of this neoliberal development model have not trickled down to lower-income residents, but rather led to the expansion of low-wage service sector jobs that in turn produce sporadic work schedules, few benefits, and stagnant wage growth. As these local economies have stagnated and public services have been diminished, the state has in turn criminalized the most acute victims of this decline, particularly Black males. In doing so, they saddle them with criminal histories pushing them ever more deeply into

dead-end or criminal employment. These trends are especially troubling in the city of Baltimore, where a third of households are at risk of homelessness or are presently without housing. Further, tens of thousands of houses decay while remaining vacant, a visible reminder of the failure of the current development model.

It is within this context of failed policy that United Workers-Free Your Voice is advancing community land trusts as at least a partial solution to the sediments of environmental, housing, and economic decay that have come to shape the past, present, and future of poor communities across Baltimore. They are proposing to build a community land trust in Curtis Bay that would energize the neighborhood, retain public subsidies, and provide housing resistant to speculative pressure. As a community organizer from the Baltimore neighborhood of Wesport describes it, “Over decades, speculative housing has produced high rents. Despite being surrounded by several large developments such as the M&T stadium ... none has been a source of significant income or livable wages for Wesport’s residents at large.” The idea for the land trust—initiated by United Workers and developed by a coalition of housing advocates—is that a community organization will hold in trust land that can be used for things like affordable housing, parks, playgrounds, or any other development purpose. The land trust will build houses on the land to be sold to low-income workers through traditional mortgages. The homeowner owns the house, but the land underneath remains the possession of the community organization.⁷

Community land trusts would incubate new housing and jobs insulated from market forces. The initiative is intended to increase collective community wealth through the development of clean-energy jobs and affordable housing to meet human needs in the most marginalized areas of Baltimore. The coalition member groups are to seed this project with a \$20 million grant (city funds committed to community-based jobs in deconstruction and building green houses

and to permanently affordable housing). This initiative involves public financing, public assistance, and property acquisition. It also requires public support for community infrastructure and planning.

As Curtis Bay resident and United Workers organizer Amanda Maminski has said, “We believe there are other alternatives to the proposed incinerator, non-market alternatives that will not involve poisoning the already-toxic environment within and around Curtis Bay.” Free Your Voice—working alongside United Workers—has mobilized residents to turn some of the community narratives of injustice embedded in market-based fossil fuel production into sustainable socio-economic alternatives. Maminski has begun to map a collectively owned, collectively run solar plan for the community land trust. She argues, “Stopping the incinerator isn’t enough. We understand that Baltimore needs electricity and that the incinerator was to create jobs and stimulate the local economy. However, we believe there are other alternatives, which will not involve poisoning the already-toxic environment within and around Curtis Bay. Another option is a solar facility on the tract of land currently owned by FMC Corporation.” Maminski has presented this solar plan at several community association meetings in South Baltimore. She has also taken her proposal to city government officials like Baltimore’s past-Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake. Currently, city officials are in conversation with Maminski about the implementation of the solar plan. Simultaneously, Rodette Jones, who manages a community garden in Curtis Bay, is evolving a local network to promote urban agriculture. Her vision and plan is to develop curbside composting and recycling programs within food deserts. She and others argue this is a more sustainable solution to waste disposal.

Neither the Baltimore campaigns nor alternative development modes offer an immediate solution to the ongoing problems of late-industrial capitalism across urban landscapes.

That said, the Free Your Voice campaign's successes and vision underscore the importance of local organizing in building a larger political moment. We cannot look toward the federal government to provide the kinds of supports necessary to create alternative economic and environmental development models. To the contrary, the federal government will bend to the power of the market. It is our work to build both a countervailing power of resistance and an alternative development model. That is precisely what the Curtis Bay incinerator campaign has struggled to accomplish. Residents of cities like Baltimore can help lead campaigns that pressure elected officials to shut down industries that endanger community members' lives, while also investing in alternative land use and collective ownership projects that redistribute control of the means of production. In this dark moment, the Baltimore campaigns are a ray of light illuminating significant struggle and a way forward. The story in Baltimore continues to unfold. Citizens will debate and decide what a community land trust should look like, how it can obtain and control the means of production, and what alternative and green energy concretely means in this moment. The story does not end here but rather will continue to evolve as surely as we have a will that bends toward justice and survival, as we build collectively toward a more sustainable future.

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4. For more on air quality, see www.epa.gov/national-air-toxics-assessment.
5. www.nrc.gov/docs/ML1310/ML13109A339.pdf.
6. While United Workers has supported other important Black organizations across the city, such as Leaders of a Beautiful Struggle (a Black policy think tank), Tubman House (an organization formed to address issues experienced by the residents of Freddy Gray's Sandtown Winchester, and the Algebra Project (predominantly Black-led movement that uses math as an organizing tool to ensure quality education), their struggle is multiethnic and multiracial. In part, this has to do with the demographics of the community, which is 50 percent Black, 25 percent Caucasian, 23 percent Latino, and 1 percent Asian. Racial justice, to United Workers, is also about social, economic, and environmental-health justice. They argue that race equity must be one of the many frameworks we use to begin to redevelop and rebuild communities that have been systematically gutted and drained of critical resources.
7. www.baltimorebrew.com/2016/01/29/a-blueprint-for-development-without-displacement-in-baltimore/.

Cuban Civil Society

Its Present Panorama

ARMANDO CHAGUACEDA AND LENNIER LÓPEZ

A CIVIL SOCIETY EMERGES, MAINLY, due to citizens' need to actively involve themselves in the public sphere in order to address processes that impact their daily lives and affect their interests. At the heart of civil society, various social actors, with sometimes remarkable differences, group themselves around common issues that affect or interest all of them. Therefore, civil society is plural, characterized by the spontaneous organization of citizens and based on logics of autonomy, solidarity, and representation of specific identities; it is aimed at addressing collective demands, exploring solutions to issues that affect a given community, and having an impact in the public sphere.

A strong civil society is representative of a healthy and solid democracy since it propitiates participatory processes and dynamics of exchange and feedback between the people and the government. In a speech in 2012, Min Ko Naing, an activist for democracy in still-authoritarian Burma, said, "Without the cooperation of the people, the government cannot build a democratic society. The government did not introduce reforms out of concern for the well-being of the people. They changed because the people demanded it." (Naing, 2012)

From this perspective, a civil society is an element of the correlation between the government, which manages state institutions, and

that civil society, which scrutinizes a particular administration. However, we do not want to establish a reductionist and binary vision that would describe two struggling parties, the government and civil society. We rather understand this correlation as a diffuse and diverse scenario. The functioning of the government within the state, no matter how centralized or vertical it might be, will never be monolithic and homogenous, and its relationship with different groups from the civil society will also vary; these relationships might be in some cases closer and more cooperative and in other cases more hostile and confrontational.

The works of Marie Laure Geoffrey (2012), Marlene Azor (2016), and Velia Cecilia Bobes (2007; 2015) are among the most recent and complete analyses regarding Cuban civil society. The first two authors have developed rigorous studies—with empirical bases, grounded in fieldwork—of emerging social actors that oppose the government, remarking their resistance to the government's attempts to control and coopt them. At the same time, Geoffrey and Azor recognize the difficulty that these social actors find in expanding and connecting their agendas with the expectations of a population that sometimes seems tired, demobilized, and more focused on daily survival. Bobes, on the other hand, has done an exhaustive evaluation of Cuban civil society, linking it to the characteristics of the current participatory model, which we think is important to review here.

Bobes identifies a permanent model of militant citizenship in Cuba—loyal to the official project and dependent on the state—which

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is articulated around social rights and which subordinates and links civil and political rights to the construction of a socialist society. This model of citizenship relies on a homogenous and equalitarian society that is changing today due to an increase of economic inequality, poverty, territorial differentiation, identity diversification, and different ways of living. Moreover, both massive corruption at all levels and migration have altered over time the type of society on which this citizenship model is based. While this model remains hegemonic in Cuba, during the last 50 years there has also been a process of discursive assimilation by the official sector (which has implied that the traditional mass organizations and some nongovernmental organizations are recognized as part of the civil society) and an emergence of social actors that openly present themselves as opponents of the government or alternatives to both the officialdom and the traditional dissidents.

The development and growth of Cuban civil society remains obstructed by existing law. Since 1997 the Ministry of Justice has blocked the establishment of new civil organizations with very few exceptions and regulates some already existing ones. Moreover, for each already existing organization, the government establishes a “linking organism,” a state entity that monitors its operations to protect “state interests.” At the same time, the traditional mass organizations, which are the basis of Leninist civil society, monopolize the way entire societal segments are represented. This pattern makes it difficult for new organizations to emerge that could represent social groups such as women, lawyers, peasants, or others in a different way. In topics such as human rights and government accountability, the activity of officially recognized civil society is poor, mainly reduced to local experiences, and closely supervised by the state.

The Official Civil Society

The official discourse in Cuba has presented, since the 1990s, a socialist civil society¹ com-

posed of mass organizations such as the Cuban Women Federation (FMC)², the Center of the Cuban Workers (CTC), and the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR). In all cases, these organizations represent the Leninist model of participation, which is vertical and limits tremendously these groups’ autonomy. This model frames and labels entire segments of the population and promotes both morally questionable political agendas—mobilization and control of citizens—and positive communitarian activities such as blood donations, collection of materials for recycling, the cleaning of common areas in neighborhoods, and so on. However, participation in these organizations has decreased. Attendance at activities managed by these organizations has become routinized, and thus people’s motivation has diminished. Nevertheless, this has not inspired action for change due to the lack of a legal frame (to allow alternative groups to work without fear of persecution), very effective mechanisms of control, and a well-established “survival mindset” within Cuban society today.

In the CDRs, the broadest mass organization, the leaders, for example, have held their posts for 10 to 20 years; young people do not accept responsibilities. This weakens the ability of the CDRs to exercise the kind of social control that previously allowed authorities to prevent or solve common crimes and to reduce political criticism in public spaces (Salas, 1979). CDRs rarely meet these days. The main function of the CDRs was to schedule and execute rounds of night vigilance to defend the “revolutionary process”; thus, these night-watches are not implemented as they were in previous decades (Salas, 1979). Even the anniversary of the organization, on September 28, is not celebrated in many neighborhoods today.

The government uses the CTC as a channel to transmit the official line of action and as an instrument of control in order to keep workers politically neutralized. However, the function of the CTC as a socializer of revolutionary values

(Rosendahl, 1997) no longer exists. From the CTC Twentieth Congress³ documents, the emphasis on efficiency and productivity, the distribution of workers' participation into local assemblies (fragmenting what should be a national movement), and the manipulation of the organization's own history are points worth mentioning. There is no autonomous labor movement in Cuba, and thus there is no organization that genuinely represents the interests of the Cuban working class. The inscription, however, to the CTC is almost obligatory at each state-ruled enterprise and institution; employees are forced to affiliate with the mass organization, which is supposed to represent them at large as a homogenous group with shared interests and problems. Very low wages have come to diminish members' interest in the functioning of the CTC, and this was reflected in the changes regarding the date of the Twentieth Congress and the directors of the event.

More Diverse and Autonomous Spaces of Cuban Civil Society

Since the late 1980s, some organizations opposed to the government have emerged. Some of them are associations to defend human rights (the Cuban Committee for Human Rights is an example), others arise from "proto-political parties" with different political orientations (from conservative to left-wing), and finally, another segment of these organizations focuses on generating alternative channels of information that critique the Cuban reality (Dilia, 2014).

The opposition remained small and socially marginalized for a long period, in part due to government repression and fragmentation among the groups that composed it. After 2001, the Varela Project (an initiative for a referendum to rewrite the Constitution), led by Oswaldo Paya from the Liberal-Christian Movement, made the opposition movements more visible, inside and outside the island. The initiative was strongly repressed and criminalized, and as a result 75 dissidents were incarcerated in 2003.

This, first, informed many inside Cuba about the movement since official television had no other choice but to cover the events, albeit with its own version of the story. Second, it triggered a negative reaction in Western foreign diplo-

There is no autonomous labor union movement in Cuba, no organization that genuinely represents the interests of the Cuban working class.

matic bodies, and third, led the mothers and wives of the imprisoned—"Ladies in White"—to mobilize and organize themselves to ask for the liberation of their relatives. The courage of these women, who resisted physical and verbal aggression in the streets and on national television, gained them the support of international organizations including the Catholic Church, many NGOs, and militant groups from Europe, the United States, and Latin America. Even in Cuba, despite the aggressive official propaganda, they gained some respect and were supported by emerging bloggers, artists, and intellectuals.

In 2010 and 2011 the political prisoners were liberated thanks to the lobby of the Catholic Church in Cuba. This seemed to mark a new political era of openness and tolerance, but the repression just changed its form. Since prosecuting political activists is costly for the Cuban government (it generates international reaction), they prefer instead to threaten, in different ways, those who attempt to exercise any sort of activism to transform their realities. In 2013, while dissident activism increased—with communication campaigns, public demonstrations, meetings in private homes—the repression also rocketed: concentrated efforts to repudiate the political opposition, arbitrary detentions, house

searches, and forced evictions carried out by public authorities in the case of eastern Cuba. The Ladies in White and the members of the Patriotic Union of Cuba (UNPACU) were victims of these actions and thus gained a protagonist role in the international media. Amnesty International, referencing data from the Cuban Commission for Human Rights and National Reconciliation (CCDHRN), documented an average of 862 arbitrary detentions each month⁴ between January and November of 2016. On the other hand, the Cuban Observatory of Human Rights identified, during the first half of 2017, 2,539 arbitrary detentions; to this we may add dozens of activists who have been targeted, persecuted, incarcerated, or temporarily banned from traveling⁵ to prevent, in most cases, their attendance at international events where they could export an alternative and well-structured picture of the Cuban reality.

New social actors, alternative to the establishment, emerged in the 1990s and initially did not have to deal with state control. This may suggest the appearance of an alternative civil society. New NGOs and communitarian movements, religious associations (Catholic, Protestant, Hebrew, Orthodox, and Afro-Cuban currents), and independent cultural projects—all these expressed a major diversification (new actors and agendas) of Cuban civil society even though this does not always translate into more popular empowerment. This is true because the development of these new social actors is shaped by their relationships (negotiated autonomy) with the state.

In this segment of civil society there are groups that continue supporting a socialist model and propose significant, and many times also deep, reforms to the current structure. Hence, they try to work *within* the present social frame⁶ but aim to restructure it. The groups (ecology projects, LGBT groups, and others) integrated in *Cuba Posible* (Possible Cuba) or *Red Observatorio Crittico* (Critical Observatory Network) are part of this sector, which is critical

of the current order of things but which does not necessarily break up with it. Within this same spectrum we may also find open spaces in the Catholic Church in the form of centers for secular groups and the population in general, as well as websites, digital bulletins, and magazines that embrace diverse ideas and debates—commonly held among socialist intellectuals, Catholics, and social activists—regarding the future of the country. According to Farber (2012), this relative freedom of the Catholic Church is connected to its determination to place itself between the government and the dissidents, without wanting to decisively move toward one of the edges of the Cuban political scenario. This allows the Catholic Church, even though it does not have strong popular support (contrary to what happened in communist Poland, for example), to gain legitimacy and achieve public relevance in today's and, most likely, future Cuba.

Final Reflections

Although increasing diversity is present in Cuban civil society, domestic politics continue to be overwhelmingly dominated by the party/state elite that rules the country. Hence, the political participation propitiated by new spaces within civil society remains strongly shaped by the official framework.

In Cuba, as it has been pointed out by Bobes (2016), there is deep social erosion, in terms of citizenship, due to many factors: the obstruction of collective action, lack of interest in politics, corrosion of public policies and social rights, and the inexistence of any substantial progress in political rights. Moreover, without autonomous spaces that may articulate challenges to the state, the population is increasingly vulnerable at both the individual and social levels. Within this frame, as long as the relationship between the government and the governed remains unstable and insecure, the opportunities for people to join public demands tend to be infrequent or nonexistent (Tilly and Wood, 2010: 267).

Elucidating the Cuban case particularly, Tilly and Wood admit that in one-party regimes the tendency to restrict civil society—NGOs and social movements—is stronger than in other forms of authoritarianism.

Today, there is not yet a political atmosphere in which the state and civil society create multidirectional flows of ideas and fertile spaces for dialog. It actually seems that the government of the Cuban Communist Party is intensifying, as it has done before, the “ideological battle” and the control of all public spaces—including cyberspace—in order to hegemonize its discourse and dispute any narrative that may contradict the official project of the country’s future. We will see whether the still weak capacity of organization and mobilization of the emerging actors of civil society make it possible, in the short run, to unlock and transform the current political scenario and its impacts on the daily lives of Cubans.

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NOTES

1. This position became stronger as a response to the Helms-Burton law, which tried to strengthen non-governmental organizations in order to widen the public sphere that was not subordinated to the state.
2. All abbreviations stand for the original names in Spanish.
3. During the Twentieth Congress, on February 22, Raul Castro stated, “The CTC and its labor unions shall focus on what is important, which is to execute its activity to successfully implement the party political and economic program [“*lineamientos*”] and to develop a diverse and broad political and ideological work for the defense of the union of Cubans.”
4. See www.amnesty.org/es/countries/americas/cuba/report-cuba/
5. See observacuba.org/2-559-detenciones-arbitrarias-en-el-primer-semester-de-2017/
6. To see a profound analysis of the groups that oppose the government, see Geoffray (2012).

CHAMPIONS OF JUSTICE



“Every war already carries within it the war that will answer it. Every war is answered by a new war, until everything is smashed. That is why I am so wholeheartedly for a radical end to this madness and why my only hope is in world socialism.” —*Diary, 1944*

“Old ideas die hard. We’ve had thousands of years of women having almost no rights. Parts of the world are in a struggle toward very basic human rights for women, and most of the world isn’t even there yet. And it’s going to take a long time to change these attitudes.”

“While I drew, and wept along with the terrified children I was drawing, I really felt the burden I am bearing. I felt that I have no right to withdraw from the responsibility of being an advocate. It is my duty to voice the suffering of men, the never-ending sufferings heaped mountain-high.”

— Käthe Kollwitz, *German socialist, anti-war graphic artist*

Stalinism: The Complete Negation of Socialism

THOMAS HARRISON

This is the last of three articles commemorating the Russian Revolution of 1917 and analyzing its fate under Stalin. The first part, "Glorious Harbinger of a New Society: The Bolshevik Revolution," was published in New Politics, number 62, winter 2017, and the second part, "The Tragic Fate of Workers' Russia," in New Politics, number 63, summer 2017. Both are available online at www.newpol.org.

BY THE END OF 1927, Joseph Stalin had eliminated the Left Opposition from the Soviet Communist Party and was on the verge of achieving total domination of the USSR. At this moment, however, the country was plunged into a deep crisis. In January 1928, much of the Soviet peasantry launched a "grain strike," refusing to sell grain to the government unless they were paid much higher prices. Soviet cities now faced a real threat of starvation.

Stalin was at first paralyzed by indecision. Just as in the days of War Communism, armed detachments were sent out to force the peasants to surrender their grain. But it wasn't until fall that Stalin finally decided to abandon the New Economic Policy (NEP),¹ which had been in place since 1921, and change course entirely. In October a Five-Year Plan for the Soviet economy was announced. Investment in industry was to be tripled, and within five years, it was proclaimed, 20 percent of Russian agriculture would be collectivized. By the spring

of 1929, however, Stalin had begun to urge more extensive collectivization, and by the end of the year it was clear that he intended a full-scale assault on the Russian peasantry.

The Collectivization of Agriculture

In the summer of 1929, Stalin announced that the Five-Year Plan had been revised: Now the government's goal was to abolish private farming completely—to collectivize all of Russian agriculture. The kulaks—the more prosperous peasants, who owned enough land to keep several livestock and to hire other peasants to work for them—were now portrayed as the mortal enemies of socialism and the Soviet state. They were to be "liquidated as a class." Thousands of armed "dekulakization" brigades were sent out to the countryside. Their orders were to "expropriate" the kulaks—that is, to seize all their property and turn it over to the new collective farms. Everything was taken: houses, barns, livestock, tools, even clothing, bedding, and the food on the stove. Kulak families were driven out of their villages and deported to Siberia and other remote and inhospitable parts of the Soviet Union. A brigade member later recalled, "It was terrible to watch them. They marched along in a column and looked back at their huts. ... What pain they must have suffered! After all, they had been born in those houses. ... The women were sobbing—they were afraid to scream. The party activists didn't give a damn about them. We drove them off like geese."²

The operation was chaotic as well as brutal. "Kulaks" was arbitrarily defined as any peasants who resisted collectivization. Much of their

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property was not transferred to the collective farms, but simply stolen.

But the vast majority of Russia's peasants—not just the kulaks—resisted collectivization. Most had to be forced, often at gunpoint, to give up their private property and join collective farms. Collectivization, they were convinced, was a new form of serfdom. Almost mad with desperation and fear, millions of peasants went on a rampage of destruction. They slaughtered

Collectivization, then, was
achieved at a terrible cost in
human suffering.

their own horses and cattle, burned their crops, and smashed their tools rather than turn them over to the state. As a result, hundreds of thousands of ordinary peasants were branded as kulaks or agents of the kulaks, arrested, and deported. Weeping and cursing, those who remained were compelled to become members of the collective farms.

Already impoverished by the peasants' sabotage, the new collective farms—*kolkhozes* in Russian—did not receive the supplies and equipment they needed. If farming was to be modernized, the kolkhozes would need tractors. But by the end of 1929, there were only 30,000 in the whole country. Not only that, there were only a handful of people who could teach the peasants how to operate the tractors and even fewer who knew how to repair the machines when they broke down. Plus Russia's oil wells could not yet produce enough gasoline. So thousands of tractors just sat in the fields untended, rusting, and inoperable.

Alarmed by the chaos and waste, and fearing disaster, Stalin issued a statement in March 1930 entitled "Dizzy with Success." Blaming "abuses" and "excesses" on over-eager officials, he ordered a slowdown of the collectivization

drive. But when peasants took advantage of the lull to resume their resistance, Stalin ordered the secret police, the GPU, to strike hard with more mass arrests. Collectivization continued until there was not a private farm left in the Soviet Union: All of agriculture was brought under the government's control. Before collectivization, there were 25 million individual farms; after, there were 250,000 kolkhozes. Eventually, peasants were permitted to own small private plots of land on which they could grow a few fruits and vegetables, and they could keep poultry and pigs. But everything produced by the kolkhozes belonged to the state; the collective farms were allowed to keep only enough for their members' own consumption.

In the countryside, the peasants were not the only targets of government repression. Stalin took advantage of the warlike atmosphere to attack a whole range of what were classified as "socially dangerous elements." These included priests, rabbis, monks and nuns, Nepmen (entrepreneurs who had been permitted to engage in trading and small-scale manufacturing under the NEP), and small-business owners. Some were jailed or sent to labor camps, others were simply stripped of their citizenship—which meant they could not receive housing, medical care, or food rations. The Russian Orthodox Church was particularly hard hit. Most of its higher clergy were arrested. Some of its churches were turned into museums or clubhouses, but most were simply demolished. The same fate struck the Soviet Union's other major religions—Islam, Roman Catholicism, and Judaism³—though to a lesser degree.

Collectivization, then, was achieved at a terrible cost in human suffering. About two million peasants, classified as kulaks, were deported, most of them to places thousands of miles from their homes, where they had to work at forced labor under horrendous conditions. Others managed to escape amid the chaos and confusion, and since they could not return to their villages, they drifted into the new industrial

centers and found jobs in factories and construction projects. Back on the collective farms, the peasants had no incentive to work hard, apart from fear of punishment. The destruction of livestock meant that there was a shortage of horses to pull the plows when the tractors didn't work, and of manure to fertilize the fields. As a result, agricultural production actually fell during the first Five-Year Plan.

The fall in Russia's farm output posed a serious threat to the other part of the Five-Year Plan: rapid industrialization. Stalin needed to export grain—and other raw materials—to the West in order to acquire foreign currency with which to purchase industrial machinery. The problem was compounded by the fact that the start of the Five-Year Plan coincided with the onset of the Great Depression in Europe and the United States. The prices of Soviet export goods dropped 50 percent and more. Stalin was not to be dissuaded, however, and his determination to pursue industrialization at all costs led him to commit one of the worst atrocities in history.

The harvest of 1932 was a good one. There was enough grain to feed the Soviet population and provide an exportable surplus as well. But it was not enough for Stalin. So in the fall the brigades that went out every year to collect the surplus were instructed to take *all* the grain, including the peasants' own share. Quite simply, millions were thus condemned to die of starvation. From the fall of 1932 through the winter, spring, and summer of 1933, peasants died in their homes, in the fields, on the roads. There were cases of cannibalism. Many tried to go to the cities, hoping to find food there, but Stalin ordered the army to stop them. When peasants somehow managed to elude the patrols and slip into urban areas, they found that food was scarce there too. Soon the streets, squares, and especially the train stations of cities in the Soviet Union's agricultural heartland—Kiev, Kharkov, Odessa, and others—were littered with the emaciated bodies of peasant refugees. Those in the last stages of starvation were rounded up by

the army, carted several miles outside the city limits, and dumped on the ground to die, out of sight, so as not to demoralize city dwellers.⁴

There is no accounting of how many died in the famine of 1932–1933, but the best estimate is around six million people. While the main reason Stalin brought it about was his relentless obsession with industrialization and his indifference—in this as in everything else—to the human costs, the famine also had the effect of finally breaking the resistance of the peasantry to collectivization. And there was another dimension. Ukraine was one of the country's most fertile and productive grain-growing regions, and it was there that the death toll was highest. Perhaps four million out of the six million dead were Ukrainians. Since Ukrainians were strongly nationalistic, and many longed for independence from the Soviet Union, the famine had the added benefit, from Stalin's point of view, of terrorizing and weakening a troublesome region.

Finally, the cruel saga of forced collectivization and famine has a terrible irony. Agricultural exports—the principal purpose of all this suffering—actually generated, in the end, only a small part of Soviet industrial investment. Most of it came, instead, from intensifying the exploitation of the urban working class and from the use of forced labor in the prison camps.

Rapid Industrialization

The main goal of the Five-Year Plan was to develop heavy industry. This meant, first of all, iron and steel, coal, and oil. But Stalin also aimed to establish industries in the Soviet Union that had scarcely existed there before: manufacture of automobiles and trucks, airplanes, chemicals, tractors and other farm machinery, electrical equipment, and machine tools.

Military needs were given top priority. Since the Civil War, Soviet leaders had expected another invasion by capitalist countries. In addition, Stalin's doctrine of "socialism in one country" implied that the Soviet Union should

concentrate on becoming a great power rather than on spreading socialist revolution to other countries. And to be a great power, the USSR had to produce modern weapons—bombs, artillery, tanks, military aircraft, and battleships—in a hurry. This was one reason for the frenzied stress on speed: Production quotas were set,

Stalin was demanding that the Soviet economy accomplish in ten years what it had taken a capitalist economy such as Britain's a century to complete—a full-scale industrial revolution.

and then the Communist Party and the government would decree that these quotas must be exceeded. Factory managers and workers were exhorted to work harder and harder, to produce more and still more. When the economists and statisticians who worked on the plan objected that the government's demands were unrealistic, they were accused of sabotage and treason. Stalin declared, "To slacken the pace of industrialization would mean to lag behind, and those who lag behind are beaten. . . . We are 50 to 100 years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this lag in ten years or they will crush us."⁵

In other words, Stalin was demanding that the Soviet economy accomplish in ten years what it had taken a capitalist economy such as Britain's a century to complete—a full-scale industrial revolution. The British Industrial Revolution had been accompanied by terrible suffering for the lower classes: enclosures and dispossession of the peasantry; workhouses, starvation wages, and endless toil for the workers. But the British working class was at least able to organize and fight the capitalists and the government, even if illegally, and their protests

could be printed in a relatively free press. In Stalin's Russia, the suffering and exploitation were much more concentrated and intense, and the peasants and workers had no way to defend themselves.

For the party, the job of the industrial working class was simple: to work harder for less pay. The result would be lower labor costs and a bigger surplus, which would be reinvested in industry. Getting workers to produce more for less was accomplished mainly by raising quotas and cutting wages. One way of cutting wages was the use of the piecework system—something that socialists and trade unionists had always opposed in capitalist countries. Workers were paid by the piece instead of by the hour; then the piece rates were steadily reduced, forcing workers to exert themselves to the very limits of human endurance in order to make enough to survive. Workers' wages were reduced even further by frequent fines, imposed for lateness, absenteeism, complaining, disobedience—some of these offenses could even bring a jail sentence. Between 1928 and 1933, the average wage of a Soviet worker fell by *half*.

To raise quotas, factory managers identified the strongest and most productive workers and organized them into special "shock" brigades. The output of these brigades was held up as an example to the other workers and eventually became the basis for higher quotas. Then there was Stakhanovism. In 1935 a coal miner named Alexei Stakhanov mined 100 tons of coal in one day—the quota was seven tons. The party made him an instant national hero. All workers were called on to emulate him, and, of course, the quota for coal miners was significantly raised. The Stakhanovites and shock workers formed a small working-class elite, whose members were rewarded with fame, large bonuses (amounting to as much as ten times an ordinary worker's pay), and free vacation trips. The government used them to drive the rest of the workers on to greater and greater efforts. Trade unions were active, but since they were controlled by the

party, their job was to promote higher productivity too, not to fight for higher wages.

In the cities, workers lived miserably. Rents were very low, but there was an acute housing shortage. Apartments were occupied by several families, each with no more than one room to live in—sometimes families were forced to sleep in hallways and basements. There were constant quarrels, and there was little privacy. In the new industrial outposts, things were far worse. Under the Five-Year Plan, whole cities were built in the wilderness, almost overnight.

The most famous was Magnitogorsk, an iron- and steel-producing center with a population of 250,000. Here workers had to endure the most wretched conditions, sleeping in crowded

barracks, using outdoor toilets, living with almost no diversions except drinking. Vodka, at least, was cheap and plentiful.

Organized resistance seemed hopeless; strikes and protests were treated as counter-revolutionary treason. Even complaining in private was risky; in a crowded apartment one's neighbor in the next room might well be an informant for the GPU. Some workers retaliated by damaging factory equipment; now and then, a Stakhanovite or shock worker would be jumped in a dark alley and beaten or killed. For most, however, the only relief was in alcohol. On paydays and holidays, drunken workers—young and old, male and female—were everywhere to be seen, reeling and passing out in the snow,

I achieved **total domination** of my country. My public appearances were **carefully staged**. I was applauded tumultuously at every pause. I used the media to **publicize and glorify me**. Multiple **places bore my name**. I was **paranoid**. Even people who claimed absolute loyalty to me were accused of plotting against me and the party. I knew that my rule might be threatened, that in their hearts they **detested me**, no matter how many times they had capitulated. I gave the **military** and weapons production top priority. I was determined **the country would be great again**. My family life was grim. I was cruel to my wife, I showed **affection only to my one daughter**. I **reversed advances in women's rights**. Abortions were outlawed. I benefitted from natural disasters by terrorizing and **weakening a troublesome region**. I **liquidated an entire class** in my country. I stripped people of citizenships and **deported millions**. I **attacked “socially dangerous elements”**—writers, teachers, professors, scientists. I made the poor **work harder for less pay**. I used prisoners as forced labor. I greatly expanded the **secret police**. People were so wretched, their only escape was in **chemical oblivion**. High officials and their children enjoyed **privileges unimaginable for ordinary people**. I concocted **fantastic lies** about my predecessors. I rewrote history, **suppressing the truth about my lies and crimes**. I described all this as “dizzy with success,” **indifferent to all human costs**. Millions died.



“He goes in, he takes over, and he’s the boss. It’s incredible. He wiped out this one, that one. I mean, this guy doesn’t play games.” *

* Trump statement about Kim Jong-un

on the streets.

Under Stalin, the advances in women's rights that had been made since the Revolution were reversed. Because workers were so desperately needed in the industrialization drive, masses of women were encouraged to take jobs that had always been reserved for men—operating heavy machinery, stoking blast furnaces, doing construction, and the like. But the idea of equal pay for equal work was abandoned. Women were paid far less than men and generally kept in the lowest positions. In 1935 abortion was

There is no accounting of how many died in the famine of 1932–1933, but the best estimate is around six million people.

outlawed. Now women were offered financial bonuses and awards for having more babies. Women with five or six children received the “Motherhood Medal”; seven or eight children earned the “Motherhood Glory Medal” and nine or more, the “Heroine Mother.” Divorce was discouraged. To “strengthen the family,” divorcees had to pay stiff taxes, which increased with every subsequent divorce. In line with this new emphasis on traditional “family values,” homosexuality was also made illegal and punishable by a three-year prison term.

The Gulag

Under Stalin, the GPU was greatly expanded: By the end of the 1930s it was nearly as big as the Red Army. Its head, Genrikh Yagoda, was the most feared man in the Soviet Union. The death penalty, which had been abolished prior to the end of the Civil War, was reintroduced, and the GPU was authorized to execute people on its own authority, without even a trial. One of the GPU's jobs was to build and administer

a vast network of concentration camps. Euphemistically called “corrective labor camps,” they comprised a system known by its Russian acronym as the Gulag. There were thousands of these sinister places, most of them in Siberia and the Arctic regions of Russia.

Beginning in 1928–1929, millions of Russians were condemned to work in the camps: Oppositionists who had refused to capitulate, kulaks and other peasants who had resisted collectivization, priests, factory managers and engineers who had failed to meet their quotas, workers accused of “sabotage,” as well as ordinary criminals—thieves, murderers, swindlers, rapists, and so on. People were given ten- or fifteen-year sentences to the Gulag because they were overheard making jokes about Stalin. In 1932, internal passports were introduced; Soviet citizens were required to carry them at all times when outside their homes. People were arrested and sent to the camps because they went out to buy a newspaper without their passport and had the misfortune to be stopped by the police.

This massive population of prisoners was forced to work on projects that were either inhumanly difficult or were located in the coldest and most forbidding parts of the Soviet Union. One of the first was the 150-mile-long White Sea Canal, connecting the Baltic to the Arctic Ocean. Rather than use excavating machines, which were scarce and expensive, the GPU put 150,000 prisoners to work with pickaxes, buckets, and wheelbarrows, digging through solid granite. The death rate was enormous, but there was a steady stream of fresh prisoners to replace those worked to death. Prison labor was essentially slavery. And it was cheap since the GPU provided less than the minimum amount of food and clothing. Whether prisoners survived simply was not important; so many Soviet citizens were being arrested every day that there was an endless supply.

Camps were built in the vast Siberian forests, where prisoners cut timber. Others were located in coal- and iron-mining regions. Some

of the worst were in the Kolyma area of north-eastern Siberia, where prisoners felled trees, split logs, and mined gold in some the coldest temperatures on earth. The guards beat them, threw them into unheated punishment cells in the dead of winter, raped the women. The most notorious camp was Vorkuta, which was where most of the Trotskyists and other Oppositionists were held. In Vorkuta, Kolyma, and the other camps in the far north most prisoners did not survive their first winter.

By the end of the 1930s, the Gulag contained nearly three million inmates. With so little invested in their upkeep, the prisoners constituted an almost free source of labor and thus an immense investment in the Soviet Union's industrialization. And so it was that out of the flesh and bones and spirit of his own people, without help from the West, Stalin built "socialism in one country"—in reality the very opposite of socialism.

The Great Purge

In 1934 Stalin ordered a slowing down of the terror. Arrests declined, and conditions in the camps showed a slight improvement. The GPU was renamed the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs—NKVD in Russian—and its power was supposedly curtailed. But then on December 1, 1934, Sergei Kirov, a close associate of Stalin and a chief party official in Leningrad, was assassinated.⁶ The assassin was a young Communist named Leonid Nikolayev. The NKVD immediately declared that Nikolayev was part of a conspiracy *within* the party to murder its leaders and overthrow the Communist system. Of course, by 1934 there were no longer any open critics or opponents of Stalin in the party—they had all either capitulated or been sent off to the Gulag. So the NKVD pointed the accusing finger at the capitulators, claiming that despite all their fervent declarations of absolute loyalty to Stalin, they were actually plotting against him and against the party.

Within weeks of Kirov's assassination, the

NKVD arrested Grigory Zinoviev and Lev Kamenev and began rounding up all the other former leaders of the Opposition who were still at large. In January 1935 they were sentenced to prison for five to ten years, convicted not (yet) of treason and conspiracy, but of the lesser crime of forming a secret faction within the party. Soon, however, the number of arrests began to mount. During 1935 virtually every party member who had ever opposed or even questioned Stalin and his clique was expelled from the party, arrested, and sent into the Gulag. By 1936 perhaps 150,000 party members had been "purged"—expelled and arrested. All were accused of being involved in a huge terrorist conspiracy, masterminded from abroad by the exiled Leon Trotsky. "Trotskyism" was now the worst crime of which one could be suspected.

But Stalin was not satisfied with the purges. The NKVD complained that party officials and ordinary members had not been sufficiently eager to unmask and root out the conspirators. Now all those who had been friendly to or even merely worked in the same office with the purged "Trotskyists," or who had expressed doubts about their guilt, came under suspicion. To have failed to notice earlier that one's colleague, professor, fellow worker, or spouse was a traitor, and not to have turned in him or her, was seen as evidence of one's guilt.

In August 1936 Zinoviev, Kamenev, and 14 of their former associates were dragged from prison to face new and astounding charges. Put on public trial, before an audience full of foreign journalists, "the Sixteen" were accused of being among the top leaders of the conspiracy. All made complete confessions of their guilt. All avowed that Trotsky, the arch-fiend, had given them orders, had arranged the murder of Kirov, and was planning the murder of Stalin and his closest lieutenants. The Sixteen described an extensive conspiracy—thousands were involved—and it included terrifying acts of sabotage: blowing up hydroelectric dams, wrecking farm machinery, poisoning drinking water,

and so on. Trotsky himself, they alleged, was working with Hitler (who had come to power in Germany in 1933) and the rulers of Japan.

As the chief prosecutor Andrei Vyshinsky (a former Menshevik) screamed that they were “mad dogs” who deserved to be shot, the accused hung their heads and meekly agreed. One of them said, “We were bandits, assassins, fascists, agents of the Gestapo. I thank the prosecutor for having demanded for us the only penalty we deserve.” Soviet newspapers carried banner headlines, “Shoot the mad dogs!” They reported that workers in factories voted “with enthusiasm” for resolutions calling for the death penalty for the “Trotskyist-Zinovievist monsters” who “sought to darken our happy lives.” School children—doubtless with their teachers’ encouragement—wrote poems and letters to Stalin demanding death to the conspirators. On

Under Stalin, the advances in women’s rights that had been made since the Revolution were reversed.

August 24, the death sentences were announced. At dawn the next day, the Sixteen were taken out of their cells. One by one they were escorted down to the basement of the prison and led along a cement corridor. Silently, as each one walked, an executioner came up behind him and put a bullet through the back of his head.⁷

That day the executions were announced on loudspeakers throughout the country. According to reports in the Soviet papers, workers applauded in the factories, and everywhere citizens expressed their satisfaction. One story told of an orphanage where “little ones, boys and girls eight and ten years old, exclaimed with joy, ‘let these dogs perish. ... Oh how we would have liked to shoot them ourselves!’”

The trial of the Sixteen was a show trial, designed to justify the purges to the world. No evidence was brought forward except for the defendants’ confessions. Before the trial began, the accused were tortured and threatened—usually with retaliation against their families—until they broke down and confessed to every preposterous crime with which they were charged. Then they were rehearsed by the NKVD. The trial went according to a script, but this was not known by the Western journalists who reported from Moscow. Trotsky, in exile, figured out the truth, but few—apart from some independent leftists and liberals such as John Dewey—listened to or believed him. Instead, news media and government circles in the West generally accepted the official Soviet version.

The trial of the Sixteen was followed by several other widely publicized trials in Moscow. In 1937, Georgy Pyatakov, Karl Radek, and fifteen others who had been close associates of Lenin and leaders of the October Revolution were convicted, naturally after full confessions; most were condemned to death. Later that year, Stalin struck at the leadership of the Red Army. Marshal Mikhail Tukhachevsky was brutally tortured until he confessed to treason (years later, his signed confession was found, stained with his blood). He and thousands of other high-ranking officers—including three of the Soviet Union’s five marshals, 13 of 15 generals, and eight of nine admirals—were executed after secret trials. In 1938, Nikolai Bukharin, Alexei Rykov, Mikhail Tomsky, and 18 more were featured in yet another show trial, also charged with participation in the Trotskyist-fascist conspiracy. Stalin evidently had a soft spot for Bukharin; he was not tortured but merely told that if he confessed his wife and son would be spared.

The slaughter of leading Soviet figures, from the past and present, was brought about by Stalin’s paranoia. The collectivization of agriculture, rapid industrialization, building up of Soviet military power—all threw the country into turmoil. The triumph of the Nazis in

Germany, along with the continuing hostility of the other Great Powers, seemed to increase the danger of invasion. At any moment, Stalin feared, his rule might be threatened from inside or outside the USSR. It became essential for him, therefore, to eliminate all potential rivals, including ex-leaders who might take advantage of a crisis. Stalin knew that the former Oppositionists, in their hearts, detested him, no matter how many times they had capitulated. And even those who had never been Oppositionists, like the military leaders, could not be fully trusted, he believed.

The trials of prominent figures were only the tip of the iceberg, however. The years 1936 to 1938 were a time of massive and systematic terror affecting every level of Soviet society. Stalin's mania for killing was insatiable. Yagoda was not considered ruthless enough, and in 1937 he was replaced as head of the NKVD by Nikolai Yezhov, a sadistic drug addict who was loathed even by Stalin's closest supporters in the Politburo. A year later, Yagoda found himself on trial along with Bukharin and the others. Under Yezhov's direction, the NKVD seized millions of victims. The educated and cultured were especially hard hit—teachers, professors, engineers, scientists, writers, actors, artists, and dancers. Anyone who showed a strong interest in foreign countries—stamp collectors, for instance, or people who listened to foreign broadcasts on their radios or corresponded with foreign friends, or who had ever traveled abroad—was likely to get arrested. And above all, anyone who had been politically active before the 1930s was in grave danger.

The NKVD worked 24 hours a day but was busiest at night. It was then that the questioning and torture took place in the prisons. NKVD headquarters in Moscow, the 15-story Lubyanka prison, was a beehive of activity, with unmarked vans full of prisoners coming and going constantly and lights burning in every window all night long (the cells were deep within the building, far from sight of the street). Just

before dawn, in the basement corridors, came the shootings. NKVD agents usually made their arrests at night too, or if in daylight very surreptitiously; the goal was to avoid attention. Relatives of the arrested could never visit them and were rarely even told what had happened to them. They had simply been taken, and, while

Beginning in 1928-1929, millions of Russians were condemned to work in the camps.

execution was likely, one could never be sure if they were alive or dead.

As the scale of arrests mounted, the old methods proved inadequate. In the cities, the condemned were driven by truckloads out to nearby forests, shot by the thousands and thrown into mass graves, which were dug by other prisoners.⁸ Large-scale executions were also ordered in the labor camps. It is estimated that about eight million were arrested in 1936-1938. Of these, perhaps 700,000 were executed; the rest were swallowed up by the Gulag.

No one was safe—not even the members of Stalin's own Politburo. Yezhov himself eventually shared the fate of his predecessor, Yagoda. But the main victim of the Great Purge was the Communist Party itself—or, more exactly, that part of it which dated back to the days of the pre-revolutionary Bolshevik party, the 1917 Revolution, the Civil War, and the NEP. One statistic tells almost the whole story: In 1934, after Stalin had already become the unchallenged dictator of the Soviet Union but before the purges, about 40 percent of the party's members had joined before 1917. In 1938, after the purges, only five percent had been members since the Revolution. Stalin had wiped out virtually the entire generation of 1917.

A New Society

Stalin wrote of the Five-Year Plan that it was a “profound revolution ... equivalent in its consequences to the revolution of October 1917.” This was in some ways an odd statement—odd because Stalin always portrayed himself as the heir of Lenin, as one who had simply continued the work of the 1917 Revolution by building socialism. Now, by calling the Five-Year Plan a second revolution, he seemed to suggest that what had been established in 1917 was *overthrown*. This was not what Stalin *meant*, of course, but, unintentionally, he was right.

The Stalin revolution encompassed not only the Five-Year Plan but the Great Purge as well. Together, these events brought a new ruling elite to power in the Soviet Union. During the first Five-Year Plan (there were new ones every five years), more than 100,000 young factory and office workers were selected by the

The years 1936 to 1938 were a
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party to receive higher education at technical and military schools. When the Great Purge exterminated a large portion of the Soviet Union’s factory managers, engineers, and army and navy officers, this special group was quickly promoted to take their places. Soon its members achieved high positions in the party, the military, and the management of the economy. All were of working-class or peasant origin, and they were too young to have experienced any of the political events prior to Stalin’s victory over the Opposition. They owed everything to Stalin, and they were unconditionally loyal to him as a result.

The new elite earned salaries that were much higher than the incomes of workers and peasants, but they were not wealthy; since virtually all property in the Soviet system was state-owned, there was no opportunity for individuals to accumulate personal fortunes from profits, investments, rent, or the like. High officials enjoyed privileges that were unimaginable for ordinary Russians: large apartments, servants, chauffeur-driven cars, country houses, foreign travel, and so on. But these were *political* privileges, provided to them by the state for free or at very low cost—not the rewards of personal wealth. They lived in special apartment houses with guards, shopped at special stores that carried imported merchandise, and vacationed at resorts reserved for them. And as the first generation of the elite matured, they sought to protect their children’s privileges by closing off access to newcomers. From 1940 to 1950, for example, the percentage of university students from working-class families fell from 40 to 25 percent. Entry into elite jobs was thus increasingly reserved for the elite’s own offspring.

Everything in the Soviet Union was tightly controlled by the Communist Party. There were party cells in every workplace. With millions of members throughout Soviet society, the party’s job was to “lead” the “non-party” masses—to disseminate the party’s instructions, to see that production targets were met, to whip up enthusiasm, and to report any signs of dissent. In other words, party members were supposed to make sure the leadership’s policies were carried out. To be asked to join the party (one did not apply for membership) was considered an honor—and a privilege since all the best jobs were reserved for party members. One entered the party after spending one’s early years in its youth groups: the Little Octobrists for children, the Pioneers for ages 9–14, and the Komsomol for ages 15–26.

Over all this, Stalin presided, a remote and all-powerful figure. In private, his life was relatively simple, even dull. He nearly always

wore a plain military tunic. He worked at his desk until late every night, smoked heavily, and never exercised. His only distractions were movies—he loved American Westerns—and plays—he attended the theater several times a week. Family life in the Stalin household was grim. The dictator was estranged from his two sons, and he was so cruel to his wife that she committed suicide in 1932. He never remarried. Stalin showed affection only to his one daughter, Svetlana.

Stalin's public appearances were rare and always carefully staged. But he was the center of a leadership cult so extreme that there are few parallels in modern times. In Soviet newsreels, he usually appeared as a mild-mannered, fatherly figure, puffing thoughtfully on his pipe, smilingly receiving bouquets from adorable children, modestly accepting the frenzied adoration of the people. Whenever he gave a speech, he was applauded tumultuously at every pause; at the end, ovations usually lasted for a quarter of an hour (of course, everyone in the audience was afraid to be the first one to stop clapping). Scarcely an article in a Soviet newspaper or magazine did not begin and end with a quotation from his ponderous writings. Whenever he was referred to in print, the personal pronouns were in capital letters. Every medium was used to publicize and glorify him: newspapers, magazines, books, film, radio, poetry, painting, sculpture. Cities, factories, kolkhozes, hydroelectric dams, and schools were named after him.

Because Stalin had wiped out his predecessors after having the GPU concoct fantastic lies about them, he needed to rewrite history. Older Soviet citizens had to be made to forget the truth about the past; younger ones must never learn the truth. All the history books were altered. Stalin was made into the greatest Bolshevik next to Lenin, the co-leader of the October Revolution. Trotsky, Zinoviev, and the rest became villains who had plotted against Lenin and the Soviet Union ever since 1917. The GPU and NKVD were especially thorough

about doctoring and eliminating photographic evidence. In books, museums, people's own photo albums, there were thousands of pictures of Stalin's victims from earlier years, all of which had to be destroyed or retouched. For example, in pictures of Lenin standing next to Trotsky,

These events brought a new ruling elite to power in the Soviet Union.

Trotsky was airbrushed out. Frightened friends and relatives of the victims went through their personal albums with a scissors. Memory itself was purged.

Despite the terrible oppression under which the Soviet people lived, the cult of Stalin and all the rest of the party's propaganda could not fail to have an impact. Members of the new elite, of course, were acutely aware of the contrast between their privileged lives and the poverty and obscurity of their childhood, and they idolized Stalin for making their success possible. But even many workers and peasants, especially among the younger generation—those who came to young adulthood during the first Five-Year Plan—were genuinely proud of what the Soviet Union achieved under Stalin. Russia had emerged from backwardness; by the end of the 1930s, it was a formidable industrial and military power. And all this was accomplished at a time—during the Great Depression—when throughout the capitalist world, factories were shutting down and workers by the millions were losing their jobs.

The contrast between a stagnating capitalist world and a dynamic Soviet Union that was on the move, building and producing, drew international admiration for Stalin's version of "socialism." The famous American muckraking journalist, Lincoln Steffens, commented after visiting the Soviet Union, "I have seen the

future, and it works.”

For Stalin and the new Soviet elite, the social system they created “worked.” But for the workers and peasants of the USSR, and for the historic cause of socialism worldwide, it was an unmitigated disaster, the effects of which still linger. Eventually this new social system—bureaucratic collectivist, to give it a label—was exported far and wide—to Eastern Europe, China, North Korea, Southeast Asia, Cuba. For millions of people throughout the world, on the left and the right and in between, the very definition of socialism came to be simply state control of the economy—without workers’ control of the *state*, that is, without democracy. With the extermination of the older generation of Bolsheviks, only a tiny remnant of revolutionary socialists survived here and there to challenge this conception—to remind the world that this was not what socialism meant to Marx and Engels and not why the October Revolution of 1917 had been fought.

NOTES

1. The New Economic Policy was an attempt to mollify peasant opposition to Bolshevik rule by allowing, among other things, free trade in agricultural produce. In addition, a limited amount of private ownership was permitted in retail trade and manufacturing. The NEP was initially seen as a temporary program that would enable the Soviet regime to hold on until socialist revolution spread to other countries, especially Germany.
2. Vasily Grossman, *Forever Flowing* (Northwestern Univ., 2000), 145.
3. Persecution was directed at Judaism mainly as a religion at this point. Despite the whiff of anti-Semitism around the Stalinists’ campaign against the Opposition,

and Stalin’s personal prejudice against Jews, there was no attempt to discriminate against the Jewish people as such. In fact, the Communist Party, including the GPU and the party leaders around Stalin, included a rather large proportion of people of Jewish origins. It was only in the late 1940s that a more generalized anti-Jewish policy was instituted by the Soviet state.

4. Another reason why the government was concerned to keep starving peasants out of the cities was to conceal the very existence of the famine—especially from foreigners. Stalin encouraged Western politicians and journalists to visit the Soviet Union. The GPU took them on carefully choreographed guided tours, complete with model kolkhozes filled with happy, well-fed peasants. And journalists, including Walter Duranty, the correspondent for the *New York Times*, obligingly wrote glowing reports of the great achievements of Stalin’s Five-Year Plan. So effectively was the famine covered up that the truth did not come out fully until more than 50 years later. Of course, news had leaked out at the time—a catastrophe of such dimensions cannot be totally hidden. But Westerners who heard about it for the most part simply refused to believe.

5. “Speech to Industrial Managers,” February 1931.

6. Kirov was a popular figure within the party, and Stalin may have regarded him as a rival. There has long been speculation that Stalin himself arranged the assassination, but this has never been proven.

7 This was the method of execution preferred by the NKVD for party officials. Unlike the Sixteen, however, most prisoners were condemned to death in secret, without trials; so when they were led out into the corridors, they did not know what to expect. The NKVD thought it was “less messy” if the executed were caught unaware—no tears and scenes, no pleading for mercy.

8. In the late 1980s, when Communism began to loosen up in the Soviet Union, people were finally allowed to investigate the Great Terror. Mass graves were uncovered throughout the country, in fields, woods, and riverbanks, but of course by then the corpses were unidentifiable. An organization, Memorial, was founded to record and commemorate the victims of Stalin’s purges.

The Third Camp, Socialism From Below, and the First Principle of Revolutionary Socialism

DANIEL RANDALL

The socialists consider it their principal, perhaps even their only, duty to promote the growth of this consciousness among the proletariat, which for short they call its class consciousness. The whole success of the socialist movement is measured for them in terms of the growth in class consciousness of the proletariat. Everything that helps this growth they see as useful to their cause; everything that slows it down as harmful.

GEORGE PLEKHANOV

AN OLD JEWISH STORY TELLS of a student who visited the great rabbis of the day and asked each to tell him the entire Torah while standing on one leg. All dismissed him, insisting the task was impossible, except for Rabbi Hillel, who said, “Do not do unto others that which is hateful to you.” That is the whole Torah. All the rest is commentary. Now, go and study.”

With all the necessary qualifications about the differences between a religious text and a necessarily materialist and critical politics, might it be possible to distill revolutionary socialism down in a similar way? Of course, it is not; but then “do not do unto others that which is hateful to you” isn’t really “the whole Torah”; it’s a literary exercise for Hillel to communicate the golden rule, or first principle, that he considers to be the essence of Jewish faith. One can argue,

convincingly, that revolutionary socialism has two such principles: first, that value in capitalist society, and wealth in all societies, derives from labor. From this we get the foundational and irreplaceable focus on class. Second, and more significant for this article, the emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself. This idea, that liberation from the exploitation and oppression that are necessarily integral to capitalism cannot be carried out for us by any external force, handed down from above, or done on our behalf, but rather must be our own act, consciously and independently organized by our class—this is our first principle, our golden rule, if we have one.

It is this golden rule that underpins the two related but distinct concepts this article explores: the third camp and socialism from below.

The Third Camp

Even those of us who consider ourselves partisans of the tradition that bears its name must admit that the concept of the third camp is not well known beyond some small corners of the revolutionary left. Even there, it is often con-

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Carlo cartoon, "For the Third Camp," *New International*, April 1940

sidered a relic of the world that bore it.

Although its conceptual roots lie further back, "third campism" as a discrete political tradition cohered in the 1939-1940 schism in the American Trotskyist movement. Grasping for an adequate response to the Hitler-Stalin Pact and the Russian invasions of Poland and Finland, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) split, effectively down the middle, in a debate about whether they could still maintain their position of unconditional defense of the Soviet Union.

Leon Trotsky's supporters on the "majority" side of that debate compiled a collection of his essays, *In Defense of Marxism*, that covers it. The debate was also surveyed, with explicit editorial sympathy for the "minority," in two volumes entitled *Fate of the Russian Revolution*, published by Workers' Liberty. The "minority" perspective came to be summarized by the slogan, "Neither Washington nor Moscow, but the Third Camp of international socialism." The SWP split apart, and in 1940 the "minority" founded the Workers Party, which would become the Independent Socialist League in 1949.

The roots of the concept of the third camp go deeper. It was not merely an attempt to

create a theoretical framework to understand developments in Russia, although it emerged through that, but a reassertion of something integral, even foundational, in socialist politics: the idea that the working class cannot rule except by and for itself. In his reply to Trotsky in the debate that split the SWP, Max Shachtman, the leader of the "minority," put it like this:

I repeat, I do not believe in the bureaucratic proletarian (socialist) revolution [that is, the ability of the Stalinist bureaucracy to advance the cause of socialism]. ... I reject the concept not out of "sentimental" reasons or a Tolstoyan "faith in the people" but because I believe it to be scientifically correct to repeat with Marx that the emancipation of the

working class is the task of the working class itself. The bourgeois revolution ... could be made and was made by other classes and social strata; the bourgeoisie could be liberated from feudal rule and establish its social dictatorship under the aegis of other social groups. But the proletarian revolution cannot be made by others than the proletariat acting. ... No one else can free it—not even for a day.¹

Shachtman's conclusion represented a form of return to first principles. In 1853 Marx and Engels, both of whom emphasized that democratic forms are necessary to working-class rule, had referred to the revolutionary potential of burgeoning working-class movements as a "sixth power in Europe," which could "assert its supremacy over the whole of the five so-called 'great' powers."² Trotsky himself had coined the term when, in 1918, he described the revolutionary working class as an independent "third camp" in the 1917 February Revolution, opposed to both the first camp of "all the property-owning and ruling classes," and the second camp of "the compromising groups."³

At the end of his life, Trotsky was wrong to argue, against Shachtman and others, that

the gains of the 1917 revolution were still expressed, in however degenerated a form, in the Stalinist state. But his vital roles in making that revolution and then in defending it from Stalinist sabotage showed that for Trotsky, the golden rule of revolutionary socialist politics was precisely that all efforts must be directed toward building up working-class consciousness and political independence. This was the thread of his politics, which those who would found the third-camp tradition saw themselves as picking up and extending.

That tradition today is scattered and semi-submerged.⁴ But it contains much that could help reinvigorate and renew socialist politics, and reorient a left in disarray.

Socialism From Below

In 1960 Hal Draper, who emerged as one of the foremost theorists, writers, and organizers of the third-camp tradition, and who co-founded the journal in which this article appears, wrote the pamphlet *The Two Souls of Socialism*. Draper argues that socialist thought throughout history can be divided between “socialism from above” and “socialism from below”—the former advocating utopian-elitist conspiracies, or statist dictatorship, to deliver socialism to the masses, and the latter advocating the masses’ self-activity and self-organization. He describes working-class self-emancipation as the “First Principle” of revolutionary socialism.⁵

As a literary device, the concept of socialism from below is useful. But to extrapolate from these three words a “way of doing politics,” as Dan Swain called socialism from below in a June 2015 article for *rs21*, republished by *New Politics*,⁶ obscures more than it clarifies.

The diffuse, loosely networked social movements of the past decade—the Tahrir Square uprising in Egypt, the Spanish “*Indignados*,” the global Occupy movements—caught many leftist imaginations, seeming to express a potential new grass-roots politics from below that was brushing aside the old orthodoxies and

staid structures of parties and unions.⁷ But it was in large part precisely because these movements had no adequate, permanently organized structures, able to impose above—at the level of politics, government, and society—the demands and aspirations generated below, that the movements dissipated—or, as in the case of the Arab Spring, were effectively confiscated by reactionary movements that *were* organized above.

We require, in other words, a comprehensive perspective for working-class power, from below and above. To achieve that, our class needs its own political organizations: democratic revolutionary parties. An overemphasis on socialism from below as the summarizing concept of revolutionary politics can lead, and, in Draper’s case, perhaps did lead, to de-emphasizing the vital necessity of permanent political organization. The idea of socialism from below can serve us as a literary device, but only if it is part of a more thoroughgoing *independent working-class politics*.

The Left in Disarray: The Long Retreat from the First Principle⁸

These are odd times to be a partisan of class politics and moreover of the idea that authentic socialist politics are the politics of working-class self-liberation. The economic crisis of 2008 shook the immense mystique that neoliberal, free-market capitalism had built up in the minds of millions, and the consequences and sequels of that crisis are still working themselves through. Looked at from one angle, that crisis provided, and continues to provide, an epochal opportunity to spread the idea that the working class, the global social majority, which produces society’s vast wealth, should also control that wealth.

But 2008 found much of the revolutionary left in the midst of a long-term “retreat from class.” That was the phrase used by the Marxist writer and historian Ellen Meiksins Wood in her 1986 book, *The Retreat from Class: A New True Socialism*. The book was a polemic against

those socialists, mainly but not exclusively from Stalinist or Stalinist-influenced backgrounds, who were galloping away from class-struggle politics in the direction of a hodgepodge of post-modernism and barely reformist liberal identity politics. Some of those criticized remained in the tent of broad leftist or even labor movements, but largely on their right wings. Yet much of post-Trotsky Trotskyism, without ever really going over to the right or explicitly abandoning principles, had also undertaken its own version of the same retreat, a systematic backing away from the idea of independent working-class politics as the foundational core of socialism, a retreat from the first principle of working-class self-emancipation. Utterly disoriented by their Biblicist adherence to the claim that the Stalinist states somehow represented historical progress, post-Trotsky “orthodox” Trotskyists were able to substitute a whole variety of locums for the independently organized working class—other forces and movements that they argued could be unconscious bearers of the socialist project, or at least potential allies, and whose victories against imperialism would be beneficial for socialist interests no matter how murderously hostile they were in practice to actual working-class organization.

The retreat from class has taken a variety of forms, not always in the direction of passive support for anti-imperialist locums. Elsewhere on the left, other tendencies recoiling from a low ebb of class struggle and disoriented by changes in capitalism have argued that automation, atomization, and precarity have rendered the workplace no longer privileged as a site of anti-capitalist organization, and organized labor no longer privileged as an agency for socialist change.⁹ Some eco-socialists, responding to climate crisis, have also argued that there is no longer any privileged agent of socialist transformation nor or any privileged role to be played by the international proletariat.¹⁰

These arguments deserve a hearing. The

socialist movement is not a religion, and no idea should be sacred in left thought. If the two golden rules for revolutionary socialism proposed at the beginning of this article no longer stand up to reality, they should be amended and reshaped or ditched entirely, and our politics should be reassessed. If it is no longer the case that labor creates wealth, giving the working class a privileged position as an agent of revolutionary social change, we should indeed move to some kind of post-class politics. But the evidence does not suggest this.

Far from disappearing from the historical stage, the wage-working proletariat is expanding. It has become the biggest single class only recently. Capitalist globalization has led to the creation of vast new working classes, and with them, new labor movements, throughout the world: in South Korea, in Brazil, in India, in Mexico, in Nigeria, and elsewhere. It is a profound historic tragedy that, at moments when the international left should have been seizing the potential for labor-movement growth and renewal by building movements of internationalist class solidarity, much of it was instead focusing on cheer-leading the enemies of labor. When an independent labor movement, an embryonic third camp, began to emerge in Iraq following the U.S.-British overthrow of the Ba’ath regime, the global far-left largely ignored it, preferring instead to idealize the so-called resistance to U.S.-British occupation, led by competing factions of Sunni-supremacist sectarians and Shi’a clerical-fascists.

There are certainly challenges inherent in attempting to reverse the retreat from class: Independent labor organization is still weak throughout much of the world. Neoliberal ideology has sunk deep and increasingly global roots that organized socialists must struggle to confront. Debates about tactics, strategies, and forms of organization are all vital. But is there anything objective, material, in today’s world which suggests that socialist politics must reassess its foundational principles that class

is central and that our politics must be one of working-class self-emancipation? The evidence suggests not.

In returning to class, we can learn much by rediscovering the theorizing and practice of those socialist traditions that have, at times of upheaval and crisis on the left, cleaved to the idea that the only consistent socialism is socialism as working-class self-liberation.

Renewing the Third Camp, Reasserting the First Principle

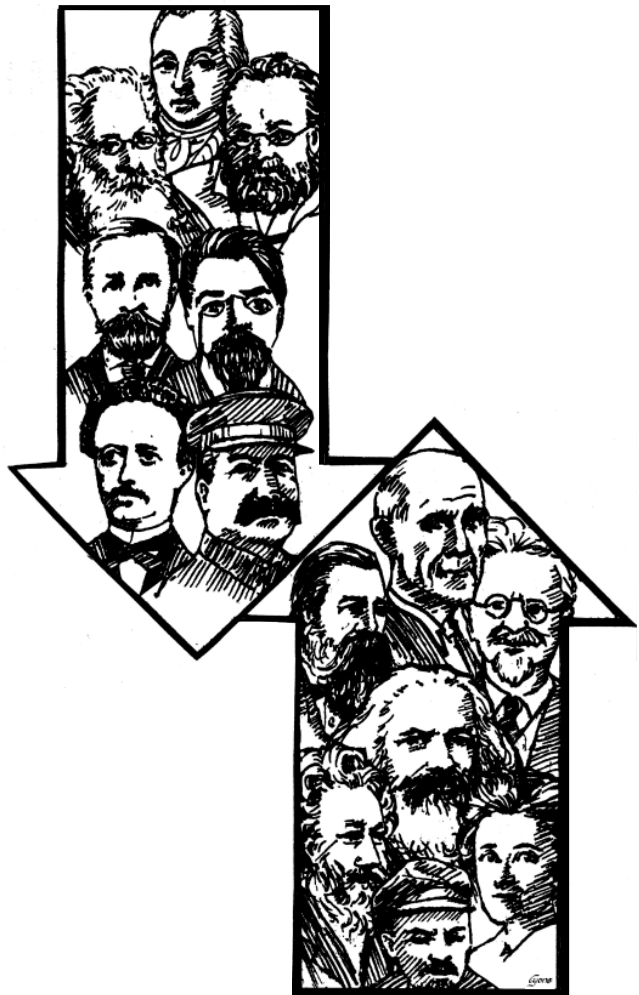
It might seem odd to look to a semi-submerged historical tradition, shaped in and by a different world, as a source for contemporary socialist renewal. But the third-camp tradition as it developed was not the product of some obscure quibble over the theoretical characterization of a particular state. Rather, it was an effort to reorient the revolutionary socialist movement, undertaken by activists who could see clearly how Stalinism was deracinating, distorting, and destroying socialist politics.

In attempting to renew socialism as a politics of working-class self-emancipation, the third campists emphasized both aspects: independent working-class self-activity and organization, and emancipation and freedom. Kicking back against the bureaucratic statism, top-down command structures, and enforced, monolithic ideological homogeneity that Stalinism had made hegemonic in left politics, both as models for the “socialist” society and the cultures of organizations aspiring to build it, the third campists sought to reconnect socialism with its libertarian core.

What does it mean, then, to aspire to the renewal of the third-camp tradition today? It certainly does not

mean adopting a religious attitude to tradition, claiming some unbroken chain of political doctrine from Marx and Engels through Lenin and Trotsky to Shachtman and Draper. Neither does it mean excluding all that is valuable in working-class socialist traditions outside this genealogy.

The renewal of the third camp, in a world of left disarray and insurgent populism (occasionally on the left but largely on the right) fundamentally means reasserting independent working-class politics. It means reconnecting to the first principle of revolutionary socialism, that working-class emancipation cannot be



*Lyons cover cartoon, Hal Draper's *The Two Souls of Socialism*, 1966*

won by hitching our wagon to the parties or politics of other classes, but only on the basis of our class organizing by and for itself. To renew the third camp today means a return to class as the key axis for political organization; a return to understanding struggle between classes, within every country, as the motor of social change; and a re-forging of socialism as a project of working-class self-liberation. The literary emphasis that the concept of socialism from below places on mass, grass-roots upheaval, with all that this implies in terms of a vibrant, fructifying democracy rather than systems of command and control, whether in our own organizations or the society we aspire to build, can aid that renewal. But ultimately it is the concept of the third camp, of *independent working-class politics*, that is key.

This first principle of revolutionary socialism goes right back to its conception as a discrete politics. The work of Marx and Engels was dedicated to helping the working class understand itself, organize itself, become a class for itself. Class remains the fundamental social conflict, the relationship that holds the key to unlocking revolutionary social change. Renewing the third camp, helping our class become a class for itself, remains the key task of socialists today.

Everything that helps this is useful to our cause; everything that slows it down is harmful. That is the essence of revolutionary socialism; that is our golden rule. Everything else is commentary, strategy, and tactics.

Now, go and organize.

NOTES

1. Max Shachtman, "Crisis in the American Party," *New International* (Vol. 6, No. 2, March 1940) 43-51. Online at the Marxists Internet Archive: www.marxists.org/archive/shachtman/1940/03/crisis.htm (accessed 05/04/2017).
2. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Extracts from the *New-York Tribune* on the Crimean War," in Blackstock

and Hoselitz, eds., *The Russian Menace to Europe* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1953), 121-202. Online at the Marxists Internet Archive: www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/subject/russia/crimean-war.htm (accessed 05/04/2017).

3. Leon Trotsky, "Work, Discipline, Order" (Report to the Moscow City Conference of the Russian Communist Party, March 28, 1918), from *The Military Writings of Leon Trotsky* (1918), online at the Marxists Internet Archive: www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1918/military/ch05.htm (accessed 05/04/2017).

4. Those interested in how the tradition developed, and dissipated, might read Peter Drucker's *Max Shachtman and His Left* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1994); Julius Jacobson, "The Two Deaths of Max Shachtman," *New Politics* (Vol. 10, No. 2, January 1973), reproduced online by the Marxists Internet Archive: www.marxists.org/history/etol/writers/jacobson/1973/shachtman.htm (accessed 05/04/2017); and the interviews, articles, and recollections collated in Workers' Liberty's symposium on the third-camp left, available online at www.workersliberty.org/thirdcampsymposium (accessed 05/04/2017). As for its semi-submersion, until the Marxists Internet Archive digitized and uploaded archives of the Workers Party/ISL newspaper *Labor Action* in the mid-2010s, the only widely available source of writing from the 1940s first generation of the third-camp tradition was the first volume of *Fate of the Russian Revolution*, published by Workers' Liberty in 1998.

5. Hal Draper, "The Two Souls of Socialism," *New Politics* (Vol. 5, No. 1, Winter 1966), 57-84.

6. Dan Swain, "Socialism From Below," online at new-pol.org/content/socialism-below (accessed 05/04/2017).

7. See, for example, Wheeler and Lunghi, eds., *Occupy Everything! Reflections on why it's kicking off everywhere* (London: Minor Compositions, 2012).

8. Sean Matgamna's *The Left in Disarray* (London: Phoenix Press/Workers' Liberty Books, 2017) explores the historical trends described in this section in more detail.

9. See, for example, the essay "Six Theses on Anxiety and Why It Is Effectively Preventing Militancy, and One Possible Strategy for Overcoming It," written by the Institute for Precarious Consciousness and especially promoted by the UK-based group Plan C: www.weareplanc.org/blog/we-are-all-very-anxious/ (accessed 05/04/2017).

10. Joel Kovel, *The Enemy of Nature* (London: Zed Books, 2007) 241, 257.

Neo-Stalinism

The Achilles Heel of the Peace Movement and the American Left

JULIUS JACOBSON

— Reprinted from *New Politics*, Winter 1976 —

INTRODUCTION

By Aaron Amaral

THE LARGEST SINGLE DAY OF ANTI-WAR protest in human history took place on February 15, 2003, almost fifteen years ago. Millions of people rallied and demonstrated internationally, in more than 600 cities, with the goal of preventing the then-pending U.S. invasion of Iraq. These protests failed to stop the coming imperial misadventure, and more than a half million people were killed as a direct result, with millions more displaced, killed, or maimed in the geopolitical ructions that since followed. Explaining the specific failure of the anti-war movement to stop the invasion in 2003 requires an analysis that is beyond the scope of the following article. What Julius Jacobson's piece does offer is insight into the left's failures to build a sustainable anti-war and anti-imperialist movement since.

To this end, much can and should be made of the contradictions and constraints of U.S. liberalism in its fundamental commitment to the post-9/11 imperial project. The full-blown disappearance of liberal anti-war sentiment in the eight years of the Obama administration is evident. Yet, the failure of the more explicitly self-defined anti-imperialist forces to nurture and sustain an anti-war and anti-imperialist *movement* has deeper roots, to which Jacobson's piece powerfully speaks. The politics of "campism"—supporting whichever "camp" op-

poses the U.S., even where this means lining up behind the most brutal, dictatorial, anti-democratic forces, with or without any pretension to socialism—has deep roots in the U.S. left.

One of the results of George W. Bush's failure to lock down southwest Asia in perpetuity for the U.S. empire has been the rise of a multi-polar world and the return of competing imperialisms—and with this, the return with a vengeance of campism in the U.S. left. The struggle to oppose the imperialist world-system almost by definition requires a democratic and internationalist movement, based on solidarity against the band of hostile brothers. Thus, Jacobson's analysis illuminates the critical importance of rebuilding a movement that can effectively take on "our own" largest, most dangerous imperialist power; that means rejecting both liberalism and campism's perspective of "peace from above." Neither a "humanitarian" empire nor alliances with dictatorships, be they secular or theocratic, can be the alternative for which we fight.

There are weaknesses to Jacobson's piece, written as a post-mortem for the Vietnam anti-war movement. First, he writes of that movement as "always a middle-class movement" and therefore lacking "the social cohesiveness and economic motivation that could facilitate its transformation into a broader, deeper, and more permanent movement of social protest." Jacobson's premise about the class character of the movement, and specifically the lack of working-class support, has been successfully challenged in recent scholarship. Penny

JULIUS JACOBSON, 1917-2003, was a founder of *New Politics*. AARON AMARAL is on the Editorial Board of *New Politics*.

Lewis' book *Hard Hats, Hippies, and Hawks* speaks to the degree of working-class support for the anti-war movement.¹ Furthermore, given the dynamics of the political and social conjuncture of the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s, there is something mechanical in relying on the ostensible middle-class character of the movement to explain its inability to grow into a broader, sustainable, social resistance. Second, the call for a military victory of the North Vietnamese National Liberation Front, and the defense of this position based on the rights of national self-determination, was a debate *within* the "socialism from below" tradition. Thus, Jacobson's imputation that these positions are inherently tainted by Stalinist/Stalinoid politics was part of that debate and was itself contested. But whatever the weaknesses of the piece, there is a historical lesson that should carry some weight for this generation of the left.

This new left, whose recent roots are in the 2008 economic crisis but whose most notable growth has taken place under the aspirant orange caudillo, unfortunately bears the scars of the twin legacies of liberalism and campism: on the one hand, the scar of a social democratic softness to "our own" imperialism, as found in Bernie Sanders' platform and politics²; this softness is also flagged by Jacobson in his criticism of Michael Harrington, Irving Howe, Bayard Rustin, and

Max Shachtman. On the other hand, a resurgence of vitriolic campism is seeking inroads within this new left, particularly concerning the Syria war. There Russia and Hezbollah have allied with Bashar al-Assad in destroying *all* opposition to Assad's ostensibly anti-imperialist state³, and yet conspiracy theories make their way through the left, claiming that both Barack Obama and Donald Trump have actively attempted Syrian regime change via support of al-Qaeda.

The limitations of Jacobson's piece should not be allowed to overshadow its thesis: "The lesson here is that any movement aspiring to reach workers in this country must be committed to democracy, must be anti-Stalinist. Because a radical, militant, principled anti-Stalinist stand represents a convergence of truth and political effectiveness."

NOTES

1. See Michael Hirsch's *New Politics* review at newpol.org/content/working-people-peace-real-story-popular-opposition-us-adventure-vietnam, and the *Jacobin* interview with Lewis at www.jacobinmag.com/2013/06/hardhats-hippies-and-hawks-an-interview-with-penny-lewis/.
2. See Joanne Landy's "The Foreign Policies of Sanders, Trump, and Clinton: America and the World in 2016 and Beyond," newpol.org/content/foreign-policies-sanders-trump-and-clinton.
3. See www.dsasusa.org/the_case_for_solidarity_with_the_syrian_revolution_dl.

THE ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT OF THE late sixties and early seventies reflected more mood than cadre organization, an expression of mass revulsion to a seemingly irrational imperialist adventure of untold horrors and atrocities, brutalizing Americans and Vietnamese alike. As the war escalated, so did the disillusionment of the American people; it is probably fair to say that toward the end of the war, a majority of Americans were opposed to the continued military presence of the United States in Indochina.

Out of this huge reservoir of disaffection and opposition, hundreds of thousands re-

sponded to the calls for action by small, traditional pacifist groups, newly coalesced anti-war committees, and radical organizations. Not only large numbers of student youth, whose instinct for self-preservation reinforced their moral opprobrium and fervor, not only ex-radicals whose lost youthful social passions were rekindled, but a response from vast numbers of housewives, academics, lawyers, doctors, assorted professionals, men of the cloth and women in nuns' garb who took to the streets, many of them prepared for confrontation with the authorities and civil disobedience.

Despite its militancy and sacrifices, the energies of this huge protest movement were largely dissipated almost immediately with the end of the war for a number of reasons: First, the movement remained, unfortunately, a single-issue movement. As such, its reason for being simply disappeared with the war's end. Second, it was always a middle-class movement. As such, the movement lacked the social cohesiveness and economic motivation that could facilitate its transformation into a broader, deeper, and more permanent movement of social protest. More succinctly, the anti-war movement failed to attract the working class. Doing so would have been no guarantee that the movement could survive in other forms, but without a working-class base, any effort to channelize the energies of the movement into new mass forms of social protest would be abortive. For the U.S. working class remains an exploited class (as in other industrial countries—there is no “exceptionalism” here), a property-less class, a near-majority class, a socially organized class, and a permanent class.

To emphasize the middle-class nature of the peace movement can in no way be interpreted as an attempt to belittle it. For this writer, at least, the movement was magnificent and inspiring. It took as much courage—perhaps more—for a student or professional to endanger his or her career in the militant pursuit of peace as for a worker to place his or her job in similar jeopardy. And a blow from a cop's club is just as damaging to the middle-class scalp as it is to the proletariat. The inherent weakness of a middle-class movement is an objective limitation. Why did the working class remain outside the anti-war movement, even hostile to it, sometimes violently so? Primarily because the American working class is one of the most politically conservative groups in the country. This does not give comfort to the Marxist view of the working class as the indispensable agent for revolutionary change; neither does it contradict that view. But it is only facing real-



ity, for all of its discomforts, to see that today the so-called average American worker—the typical steelworker, or autoworker, or hardhat, or other—is bigoted, racist, sexist, and chauvinist. Nevertheless, on the question of the war, I believe that barriers might have been penetrated, a responsive chord struck, and, via the issue of the war, a degree of collaboration established between the left and the working class on economic problems, perhaps even a breakthrough on explosive racial issues.

But the leadership of the anti-war movement never really sought to establish that contact. More important, even if the effort had been made, it could not have succeeded given the political character of much of that leadership. Let me put it bluntly: The movement's leadership was by and large Stalinoid and neo-Stalinist.

For those who do not understand what is meant by these terms, permit me to summarize.

A Stalinist (or Communist, if you prefer) country is one in which the means of production

are owned and controlled by the state, and the state in turn is “owned” or governed by a ruling political party that guards its social power through the use or threat of force to suppress other parties, deny all civil liberties (freedom of speech, press, assembly, and so on), and, of course, to crush unions. The ruling party aspires to total political, economic, social, and cultural control. Such countries are Stalinist (or Com-

Stalin was demanding
that the Soviet economy
accomplish in 10 years what it
had taken Britain’s a century
to complete—a full-scale
industrial revolution.

munist) countries, and such parties are Stalinist (or Communist) parties. Examples are Russia, the Eastern European countries, Yugoslavia; and North Korea, Cuba, China, and North Vietnam—all of them ruled by a single party that directs the nationalized economy and oversees the administrative and military apparatuses. Above all, the party oversees the organs of internal security, because the absence of dissidence is the health of the Stalinist state. The first such state to curse civilization was Russia under Stalin. Not all Stalinist countries need utilize the same degree of terror as did Stalin. However, they all have the capacity to do so, as each has shown at various times, including China and North Vietnam.

The term Stalinoid, then, is applied to individuals and tendencies given to rationalizations, apologies, justifications for one or another or all such Stalinist totalitarian societies. With few exceptions, it describes the U.S. anti-war leadership. And many leading cadres were more than apologists for what they euphemistically

called the “socialist countries” (that is, Communist countries where socialists are put in prisons, insane asylums, or cemeteries if they dissent); they were enthusiastic supporters of Communist countries, above all Cuba, China, and North Vietnam.

The truth is that these peace leaders were not opposed to the war in a traditional sense; they were opposed to American intervention and to the operations of its corrupt and dictatorial puppet Saigon regime. While a consistent opponent of war and dictatorship fought for unilateral withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam even if it meant the victory of the Communist armies, the Stalinoid or neo-Stalinist peace leaders wanted the victory of the North Vietnamese and their subordinate forces in the NLF.

Thus in the propaganda and agitation of the peace leaders there were legitimate denunciations of atrocities committed by American and South Vietnamese troops and nothing about massacres by the North Vietnamese armies.

There were horrifying stories about the Saigon jails filled to overflowing with political prisoners, nothing about the political inmates of the prisons in the North.

There were accurate accounts of the authoritarian nature of the Diem, Ky, and Thieu regimes, nothing about the totalitarian regime in the North, which had long outlawed all unreliable parties.

There were accounts of the terrible mistreatment of Buddhist dissidents in the South, nothing about the extermination of tens of thousands of peasants by the regime of the gentle Uncle Ho shortly after his party took power in the North.

There were truthful reports about the mistreatment of striking workers in the South, nothing about the fact that strikes were and are illegal in the North.

There were exposes of how Washington hoped to strengthen its position in Vietnam through military and economic support of ev-

ery reactionary regime in Southeast Asia, but there was nothing about the fact that the North Vietnam regime gloried in Russia's suppression of the Hungarian Revolution and that Ho was rivalled only by Castro in the speed with which he congratulated the Kremlin for sending its armored divisions to crush the revolution in Czechoslovakia in 1968. And so it went: revelations about the crimes of American imperialism; silence, understatement, denial, or support for the crimes of Stalinism in the North.

I am not overlooking the fact that many leaders of the peace movement whom I consider Stalinoid have taken a public stand against the Kremlin's persecution of dissidents at home and suppression of popular movements in Eastern Europe, above all, in Czechoslovakia. That is because they are, fortunately, not consistent; they are Stalinoid, not Stalinist. Just as significant, however, is that their manifestations of anti-totalitarianism are pretty much confined to Russia, which, in their misunderstanding of the nature of Stalinism, they consider to be a conservative society that compromises with the bourgeois West. One would be hard put to find similar support for victims of totalitarianism in those countries—Cuba, Vietnam, China, among others—which, also in their misunderstanding of the nature of Stalinism, they regard more sympathetically as incorruptible and revolutionary.

Now, American workers, for all their prejudices and conservatism, are really not all that backward. They think that the right to vote, the right to travel, the right to organize, the right to read an uncensored newspaper, and so on, are pretty good things. These are rights that, in their naiveté, make America great—"Love it or Leave it." (Should socialists, in their sophistication, deny that these rights are of fundamental importance or claim that, because of their limited nature under capitalism, they are meaningless compared to the denial of freedom in the totalitarian countries?) American workers may be critical of union bosses (generally not

critical enough) but try to take away their right to join a union and you have made an enemy. A steelworker may bitch about a strike of autoworkers (class solidarity is not the earmark of the American working class) but try to deny him or her the right to strike the steel corporations and you have a fierce foe.

If these are characteristic predilections of American workers—and they are—how could a peace leader have communicated with them? By chants about the glories of Ho Chi Minh? By waving the NLF flag (and burning the Stars and Stripes)? With glowing reports of friendship tours to Hanoi and Peking? The questions are rhetorical of course. Workers' patriotism and chauvinism are fed by what they understand about Communist countries, an understanding far closer to the truth than that of the Stalinoid-oriented leaders of the anti-war movement. How would one of them answer an American worker who asks, "If North Vietnam (or China, or Cuba) is so great for working people, tell me, do they have the right to strike like I have in this country?" An honest reply would end the dialogue.

All this is not to argue that had the anti-

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war leadership taken a forthright stand against all dictatorships it would have been sufficient to win significant numbers of workers to the

movement; it would not have been sufficient, merely a precondition for even limited successful contact. The Wall Street hardhats might still have reacted savagely to the youthful anti-war demonstrators, but then they might not have, had they not been seeing waves of NLF flags and hearing chants for the victory of Ho Chi Minh on television news.

The lesson here is that any movement aspiring to reach workers in this country must be committed to democracy, must be anti-Stalinist. Because a radical, militant, principled anti-Stalinist stand represents a convergence of truth and political effectiveness.

The anti-war movement embraced hundreds of thousands, if not millions. It was strong enough to force an incumbent president not to seek re-election. It left its mark on everything from lifestyles to moral concerns, creating a political atmosphere that made it impossible for Nixon and his administration of thugs to survive the Watergate and other scandals.

Perhaps it was too much to expect that even such a volatile force could produce a viable socialist movement in this country. But that nothing developed was not to be expected either. The irony is that socialism has retrogressed, ideologically and organizationally; it is weaker today than it was in the periods before and during the anti-war movement's heyday.

The one organization strengthened by the anti-war movement was the Socialist Workers Party. Today, the SWP together with its youth section, the Young Socialist Alliance, has perhaps 2,000 members. Not a very strong figure in light of the leading role played by the SWP in the peace movement. The SWP bears a good deal of the blame for the failure of a significant socialist movement to arise out of the anti-war struggles. It thinks of itself as the vanguard party of the revolution; all other socialist organizations are therefore either irrelevant or a threat to its turf. It followed that the peace forces had to be maintained as a single-issue movement, an arena in which the vanguard party could recruit

a few members or sell subscriptions, rather than encourage a broadening of concerns to other related social and economic issues. That might only have led to a more broadly based radical or socialist political formation, precisely what the SWP feared.

This narrow, sectarian approach was and remains of a piece with the SWP's bureaucratic internal life and intellectual sterility. Ideologically, it claims to be Trotskyism. The resemblance exists, but it is a superficial one. More than a third of a century has gone by since Trotsky was murdered, yet his self-anointed heirs repeat his phrases as though the world froze on its axis more than 35 years ago.

The vacillating attitude of the SWP toward Stalinism, as compared to Trotsky's revolutionary anti-Stalinist fervor, bears directly on our discussion of the weakness of the peace movement's leadership. The SWP was an important part of that leadership, but it aided in compromising the anti-war movement through its failure to expose the terror and the anti-socialist and totally reactionary nature of the Hanoi regime—a regime, incidentally, headed by a party and led by a man who specialized in the organization of assassination squads to hunt down and execute Indochinese Trotskyists in the 1930s and 1940s. (The SWP would probably consider it bourgeois sentimentality to remind the world that Ho Chi Minh was responsible for the murder of so many Trotskyists. Of what importance is that, after all, compared to the nationalized economy?)

For the SWP and most of the anti-war leadership, Ho, his party, and subordinate allies to the South were leading a "war of national liberation." Now, socialists (but not all of them) have supported real wars of national liberation even when led by non-socialist, bourgeois forces. Such struggles were viewed as part of a dynamic process, where throwing off the foreign yoke meant the mobilization of an oppressed people, a heightened consciousness, the release of new creative energies. National independence

would permit the growth of native industries, the emergence of a working class, of unions, of political parties, and civil liberties, even within the framework of a ruling native bourgeoisie. Right or wrong, that is what socialists expected of wars of national liberation they supported.

But North Vietnam's war against American imperialism? In what comparable sense was that a war of national liberation for either the northern or southern half of Vietnam? In the North there was already a well denned bureaucratic ruling class that had long ago destroyed all non-conforming parties and whose social power is dependent on its ability to suppress any expression of or vehicle for popular dissent. And for South Vietnam, a victory of the Stalinist armies could only mean a society restructured in the totalitarian image of Hanoi. The Communist struggle in Vietnam bore about as much resemblance to national liberation as terror bears to freedom.

It was certainly the responsibility of all American socialists to expose their government's imperialist role in Southeast Asia and to demand unilateral withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam. But it was no less their political and moral obligation to expose, at the same time, the venality of the Vietnamese Communist movement.

While the SWP is marred by its compromise with Stalinism and bears a degree of responsibility for guaranteeing the peace movement's isolation from the working class, it is more critical of Communist societies than most other tendencies and groups proliferating on the so-called left. It supported the Hungarian and Czechoslovakian revolutions, and it does point to the undemocratic nature of Communist regimes. And for all its sectarianism, it is at least among the sane. By contrast, so many of the old tendencies and new sects, appearing like ugly stumps when the waves of anti-war protest receded, seem afflicted with a kind of madness. There is, for example, the National Caucus of Labor Committees, a cult led by a

modern cross between Svengali and Rasputin, which makes known its dedication to cracking the heads of competitors on the "left" and acts accordingly. There is the Revolutionary Union, now organized as a party, which has discovered the glories of Stalin. There are the underground

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Weatherpeople with their bombs and then the October League, and those who rejoice in the "Workers Bomb," that is, nuclear devices that are sanctified if possessed by a "socialist" country. And there are more. Their folk heroes include Ho, Mao, Kim Il Sung, Castro, Stalin, and the entire Central Committee of the Albanian Communist Party. (One of the very few groups that has not developed any kind of enchantment with Stalinism is the International Socialists, a small sect that can hardly be placed in the same category as those mentioned above.)

The affliction is not only of recently founded sects. There are older tendencies, too. Take the current represented by *The Guardian*. It had always been Stalinoid, but in the early days of the peace movement it had a kind of professionalism, a degree of openness, and a wealth of information about movement affairs that made it useful reading. Today, reflective of the heartbreaking collapse of all the movements of the 1960s, *The Guardian* has descended into the sectarian inferno. It has become the clumsy, vindictive voice of Mao.¹

The Stalinoid and neo-Stalinist malaise that has generally overwhelmed most organized left-wing sects is also evident in the broader "progressive" community. It used to be Cuba,

now it is China, that has become the main beneficiary of its admiration. Liberal academics, intellectuals, journalists, movie stars, feminists, liberal (and not so liberal) politicians return from junkets to China full of praise, even eu-

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the Vietnamese Communist
movement.

phoria. They have discovered that the peasants are happy in their work, the people genuinely love Mao, women are of course liberated, the Little Red Book is an inspirational repository of oriental wisdom, and on and on. It all provides this writer with a sense of *deja vu*. I can pick up almost any issue of *Soviet Russia Today*, a 1930s Stalin-worshipping publication, take any article by some elitist fool or other “progressive” person, substitute China for Russia, Mao for Stalin and, voila, an article by a contemporary academic or “progressive” emissary.

How do they know that the people love Mao when no Chinese who loves life would deny it to a stranger? The same way the friendly visitor to Russia knew that people loved Stalin. Their guides told them so, and no Russian was about to say otherwise. If women are free in China, why are they virtually unrepresented in the Chinese power structure? And how free can women be when no one is free to organize in opposition to the state? How free is any society that has liquidated millions and denies its people access to the finest achievements of Western culture? (The fingers of a Chinese musician were

broken for playing Western music.) How free is a society that organized public executions of “enemies of the people”?

But isn't Mao an “egalitarian,” China an “egalitarian society,” both man and country guided by “revolutionary purity”? The terms, used reflexively these days, are as ludicrous as the attempts to describe who or what is right, left, or moderate in the Chinese Communist Party. (One anti-war luminary, a libertarian pacifist no less, once described China as a society operating on SDS principles of “participatory democracy.”) When students are encouraged to lynch their professors, is that “egalitarianism,” a kind of social levelling? Or when hundreds of thousands of young people are forcibly shifted to remote areas to do manual work and be “re-educated,” is that “egalitarianism”? Is the technique of gathering peasants or workers together to review production quotas, encouraging them to denounce shirkers, illustrative of “revolutionary purity”? If so then Russia with its tens of thousands of vigilante Neighborhood Committees and Comrade Courts is the epitome of socialist saintliness.

It is no less painful to read the benign views of Chinese society by some gurus of the American counter culture. Does it challenge the imagination to guess what would happen to one who tried to bring the sexual revolution to China? Or possibly start a branch of the Gay Activists Alliance or introduce a Peking chapter of Radical Lesbian Feminists? How about a new radical style of dress? An avant garde theater? What about promoting sexual explicitness in film or literature? Some grass, hash, and pills in a rural commune, perhaps? Rest assured that souls brave enough to press the counter culture, American style, would be dealt with, with “egalitarian” and “revolutionary purity,” Peking style.

The capacity of so many to adopt contradictory sets of values is appalling. What is good for Americans is not necessarily good for the Chinese (or the Russians, or the Cubans, or the Vietnamese, or others), we are told.

Political liberties are important in this country for protection against the powerful, capitalist state; the Chinese, Russians, and others need no such protection against their regimes. They need other things. Freedom can wait. Besides, political freedom is a “bourgeois value.”²²

If after all that we have learned about the Russian brand of Stalinism, the party-created famines, the mass murders of the 1930s, the pact with Hitler, all the crimes revealed at the Twentieth Congress (and then repeated by those who revealed them), if after Hungary 1956 and Czechoslovakia 1968, it is still necessary to argue with “radicals” and “revolutionaries” about the indivisibility of freedom and socialism, to have to explain why the great socialists of the past talked about taking political power as the first step toward achieving socialism, and why political rule meant democratic rule; why socialist democracy is preferable to the bourgeois variety because it means greater democracy, not its extirpation, why China is not socialist because it is not free, why Che had not a drop of socialist blood in his veins, though he did cut a dashing figure ... if this remains the task of socialists after all that has happened, then what are the realistic possibilities of creating a meaningful socialist movement in this country? The question is a serious one that cannot be ignored despite the pain it causes. Perhaps the inspiration for American socialism will yet derive from the anticipated upheavals in Communist countries where revolutionary movements must be anti-Stalinist as well as socialist.

The destructive force of Stalinism is manifest too in the response from those who call themselves “democratic socialists” (as though socialism could be anything but democratic), who are so disoriented by their hatred for the Stalinist behemoth that they abandon their socialist ideology. Witness the moral and political disintegration of those socialists who were trained in the Marxist movement and who, had they retained their revolutionary politics and perspective, might have had a salutary effect

on the anti-war movement’s leadership, particularly its younger cadres. I am writing about the culpability of those who came out of the Independent Socialist League and its periphery and, to a lesser extent, of those socialists around *Dissent*. While their total number was small, I believe they could have exerted a moral and political influence beyond their number had they proved themselves as resolute in their opposition to American imperialism as they were to Stalinism. They included people of considerable talent and political sophistication: Max Shachtman, Bayard Rustin, Michael Harrington, Irving Howe, and others.

Shachtman, Rustin and their particular followers emerged as hawks on Vietnam and in the

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right-of-center wing of the Democratic Party. Michael Harrington and Irving Howe and their followers (now organized in the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee) did not move as far to the right as their recent colleagues-turned-hawks. But it was far enough to alienate the young anti-war activists, especially when Harrington and Howe made it clear that they were merely critics of the “tragic” (their favorite adjective) war, not real opponents of an imperialist adventure. They fought bitterly against those who advocated the unilateral withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam, which only meant that they favored—“tragically” and shamefacedly—American divisions remaining in Vietnam until Hanoi met Harrington’s and Howe’s conditions for peace. (In Harrington’s book, *Socialism*, written when the Vietnam War was at its bloodiest and the anti-war movement at its peak, there is not even a single paragraph in all 400 pages devoted to the war. There are instead many bizarre pages arguing that George Meany, unbeknownst to him, or to anyone except Harrington and friends, is a closet socialist and that the Meany-led section of the labor movement is really American social democracy in disguise.)

What educational effect could such anti-Communist “socialists” possibly have had on young radicals who knew little of the crimes of Stalinism abroad but knew well the crimes of capitalism here and in foreign lands? It was all predictable. In the minds of young radicals, to be anti-Communist became synonymous with being a cold warrior, a reactionary. Thus, ironically,

the anti-Communism of much of the so-called “democratic left” reinforces the mystique and continuing ideological appeal of Communism.

The lesson here, too, should be clear. If the ideological force of Stalinism in the left-wing world is to be exposed and eliminated, it can only be done by those who continue in a truly radical socialist tradition—never by those who compromise with imperialism. Unhappily, this radical socialist tradition has no organized voice in America, today.

NOTES

1. I must admit, though, that my regular reading of *The Guardian* ended a number of years ago with a series of articles by Carl Davidson exposing the dangers of Trotskyism. To one familiar with the literature of the Communist movement, it was clear that Davidson’s exercise in ignorance was lifted largely from a particularly noxious pamphlet, *Trotskyism: Counter Revolution in Disguise*, written by Communist Party theoretician Moissaye Olgin in the middle 1930s. Olgin’s pamphlet might well have been called “The Protocols of Trotsky,” but at least he could write a coherent English sentence, a feat to which Davidson should aspire.
2. Not long ago, a leading American filmmaker and writer expressed extreme displeasure with the lack of a warm reception for an avant garde film in this bourgeois country. When asked if such a film could be shown at all in China, the immediate response was, no, that it could not be shown, and what is more, no need for such avant garde films there. In China, our filmmaker explained, the masses need posters, not avant garde films. How can one cope with such illogic? It is not merely a double standard that is revealed, but an inverted form of American chauvinism; intellectual pleasures are necessities for the American elite, but the Chinese are condemned to posters spurring them to work harder for the state.

Joanne Landy (1941–2017)

Remembering Joanne

THOMAS HARRISON

IN JUNE 2017, THE *NEW POLITICS* editorial board organized an event to honor Joanne Landy. She had been diagnosed almost a year before with stage 4 lung cancer. We all knew her prognosis was very grim and thought it would be a fine thing to show Joanne, while she was still with us, how much she was loved and admired by so many, many people. The event was splendid, joyous, a great success. About 150 people showed up, and there was a long list of speakers as well as a video sent by a popular Polish rock group, Big Cyc, performing the song “I Disagree!” in Joanne’s honor. We knew, as I said, that Joanne probably did not have too long. Meanwhile, however, she was doing well, even with chemotherapy and immunotherapy. She didn’t really feel “sick,” just tired, and she was able to continue her work with *New Politics* and the Campaign for Peace and Democracy, albeit at a slightly slower pace. So when Joanne was felled by a massive stroke on October 1 and died two



weeks later, her friends and comrades were completely stunned.

Now she is gone. Our loss is immeasurable, literally. Perhaps no one is truly irreplaceable, but in my opinion Joanne came pretty close. At the event in June, I began my remarks by

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paraphrasing something Mary McCarthy wrote in a tribute to Philip Rahv: If no two people are alike, Joanne is less like anybody else than anybody. She was, truly, utterly exceptional. You might find others who are as dedicated, as honest, as empathic, as intellectually gifted, as effective as an organizer; but it would be extremely hard to find anyone who possessed all these qualities in such abundance and so thoroughly integrated.

Joanne's polestar, the guiding light that directed her through the entire course of her life's journey, was something that she, and I, and others in our political tradition, call Third Camp Socialism. The term was invented during World War II and the Cold War by a socialist tendency—the Workers Party, later renamed the Independent Socialist League, led by Max Shachtman—that had developed out of the Trotskyist movement of the 1930s. By the time Joanne came around it in the late 1950s, its leading figures included Hal Draper and Julius and Phyllis Jacobson—the last two being the founders and longtime editors of *New Politics*. Third Camp Socialism meant socialist independence from and revolutionary opposition to the two hostile American and Soviet imperialist camps. It was a way of applying to the contemporary world Marx and Engels's concept of self-emancipation—the insistence that socialism, the emancipation of the working class, the vast majority of society, can only be achieved “from below,” by the working class itself. Profoundly anti-authoritarian, Third Camp Socialism has always rejected any kind of accommodation to all the many undemocratic regimes and movements that have tried to cloak their aims in the rhetoric of socialism.

It was a commitment to this vision that Joanne embraced as a teenager and to which she remained loyal for the next 60 years of her life. Joanne was a revolutionary to the marrow of her bones. Far from the bloody-minded “revolutionary” of caricature, she had an almost extreme, visceral abhorrence of violence. Joanne

was a revolutionary because she was convinced that no matter how much reform is applied to class societies, ruling elites will continue to hold sway over an oppressed and exploited population until those in power are removed; class societies have to be thoroughly upended and ultimately abolished by conscious, empowered masses. Nothing thrilled her more than the sight of popular movements challenging their rulers through direct action—Occupy Wall Street, the massive Iranian street protests in 2009, the Movement of the Squares in the Arab world, the anti-austerity movement in Greece, the great democratic uprising against the Assad regime in Syria, to take some recent examples. In them, she always saw the potential for revolution and real democracy.

But she was never content to admire and support these movements from afar; insofar as she could, Joanne had to be part of them, had to be on the scene and in their midst. In the 1970s, she went to Portugal during the revolution and to Brazil under the military dictatorship to visit the jailed leader of the steelworkers union and later founder of the Workers Party and president of the country, Luis Ignacio da Silva—Lula. She traveled to Poland several times in the 1980s and early 90s, befriending leaders and rank and filers in Solidarity; to Czechoslovakia to stand with Charter 77; to East Germany, Hungary, and the Soviet Union to meet with dissidents; to Greece on several occasions, where she and I attended Syriza's founding convention. While vacationing in Rome at the time of Occupy Wall Street, Joanne spotted an Occupy demonstration. Hopping off her bus, she managed to create a handmade placard and with it marched up to the speakers' platform to deliver greetings and solidarity.

If Joanne couldn't make it to where the main action was, she did everything she could from her base in New York. When a group of young Iranians formed Havaar: Iranian Initiative Against War, Sanctions, and State Repression, Joanne “showed up.” In a tribute written right

after Joanne's death, Havaar members recalled that she "came to play a unique and invaluable role in our organization. She was among the most consistent of our members, rarely missing a meeting or event, despite her age and declining health." They went on,

Even though her age made her a contemporary of many of our parents, she fit in easily with our group, with her combination of political seriousness, lightheartedness, and humor. She celebrated birthdays with us, grieved with us, and danced with us. She somehow knew exactly how much and when to weight in and to step back, utilizing her vast experience to gently guide us and support us in leading and shaping the organization.

Joanne was a true socialist intellectual. At the event in June, we presented her with a bound volume containing most of her writings—articles, statements, op-ed pieces, leaflets, and other items. It came to 375 pages. But she was also a woman of action—of demonstrations and rallies, petitions, conferences. As an activist, an organizer, she had few if any peers. Joanne was indefatigable in publicizing the plight of political prisoners and persecuted dissidents everywhere from Iran to Chile, Communist Poland, Egypt, and other countries all over the map. The big sign-on statements that she organized, many of which appeared as paid ads in *The New York Times*, the *New York Review of Books*, *The Nation*, and other publications, offered solidarity and some measure of hope to the repressed, hope stemming from the realization that hundreds of peace and social justice activists, many quite prominent, stood with them and spoke out against their tormentors. Joanne could be relied on to show up at the tiniest demonstration. And she could pull together an intrepid band of protestors to confront officials in person at the consulates of repressive regimes. There was nobody like her.

After 1980 Joanne's life took a major turn in response to the simultaneous emergence of the mass movements against nuclear weapons in the United States and Western Europe, and

Solidarity in Poland. Suddenly she, like many others from the independent socialist tradition, could see a real embodiment of the Third Camp ideal beginning to appear. It was a heady time. It looked like a common struggle reaching across the Cold War divide was possible, a struggle against the placement of American cruise missiles on European soil and against dictatorship in the Soviet bloc. Joanne saw it as her mission to help make that commonality real, to build links between progressives and peace activists in the West and movements for workers' rights and democracy in the East.

In the summer of 1981, Joanne flew to Poland. "I went to Solidarnosc headquarters," she said,

and it reminded me instantly of our days in Berkeley and the Free Speech Movement [of 1964]. There was a kind of delicious chaos of people having meetings on every floor of this building that they had taken over. On one floor there were intellectuals, in another place would be steelworkers. It was just a beehive of activity of people who were disenfranchised but asserting their power through their self-organization.¹

Joanne's visit had a special poignancy: Back in 1965, as a member of the Independent Socialist Club in Berkeley, she had led protests against the imprisonment of Jacek Kuron and Karol Modzelewski, co-authors of *The Open Letter to the Party*, which condemned the bureaucratic ruling class in Poland and called for workers' democracy; it was first published in English by *New Politics*. Kuron and Modzelewski were two of Solidarity's leading figures.

In 1982 Joanne got together with Gail Daneker, a veteran peace activist and radical Green, to set up the Campaign for Peace and Democracy/East and West.² The Campaign was always small, never a membership organization, but it was able to punch far above its weight. It never defined itself as socialist; as Joanne put it, "we were radical democrats who opposed the elite-driven foreign policy of the United States and supported social justice, democracy,

and freedom from great-power domination everywhere.”³ Arguing that supporting struggles for democratic rights in the Soviet bloc would actually strengthen the anti-war movement in the United States—rather than “play into the hands of U.S. imperialism,” as many on the left had always insisted—Joanne and the Campaign persuaded the major U.S. peace groups to reach out to dissidents in the East. By the same token, prominent Russian, Polish, Czech, Hungarian, and East German oppositionists were enlisted to sign statements condemning U.S. policy in Nicaragua and Chile. During the subsequent decade, Joanne paid frequent visits to Eastern Europe, while working closely with the newly formed German Greens, at that stage an anti-establishment alliance of radical pacifists and environmentalists led by Petra Kelly, and with European Nuclear Disarmament (END) and its outstanding spokesperson, the great historian E. P. Thompson.

Tragically, however, the 1980s was also a deeply conservative decade, in which neoliberalism acquired an almost hegemonic position internationally. Despite the tremendous support with which they began, END and the U.S. Freeze Movement were eventually defeated, and the politics of Thatcherism and Reaganism triumphed. By the latter part of the decade, Joanne was uncomfortably aware that many Soviet bloc dissidents were moving toward embracing the economics of the Chicago School and the politics of NATO. They had begun on the left, and Joanne hoped that Solidarity, Charter 77, and other movements in the East would champion pro-working-class policies, such as democratizing nationalized property rather than privatizing it. So when 1989 came, Joanne’s elation at the collapse of authoritarian Communism in Europe quickly gave way to deep disappointment, as the region was swept by a wave of brutal shock therapy programs. As a result, she began to write and speak prolifically in opposition to the neoliberal frenzy that had overtaken the former Soviet bloc and enriched

the erstwhile *nomenklatura* while immiserating the mass of citizens.

This is not the place to summarize Joanne’s long career, especially because Aaron Amaral provides such an excellent account in his article, reprinted from *Socialist Worker* to accompany my piece. Suffice it to say, at this point, that from the 1990s on, Joanne continued to spearhead the work of the Campaign until her death. With the Cold War over, it was no less vital to oppose nuclear weapons and militarism, to demand the withdrawal of U.S. troops and bases from all foreign countries, to support movements of resistance in all authoritarian states, be they friends or enemies of Washington, and to call for international economic aid and development policies based on popular rather than corporate needs.

In this, Joanne never flagged or faltered, never succumbed to despair, despite the countless bleak moments when carrying on might have seemed quixotic at best. As a Marxist, Joanne not only believed that persevering was a moral obligation—with Eugene V. Debs, she might have said, “While there is a lower class, I am in it, and while there is a criminal element I am of it, and while there is a soul in prison, I am not free”—but also that it never makes sense to give up because the potential for rebellion is always present, even in the most seemingly unlikely places. When for example, the Arab spring burst forth, Joanne was thrilled, and, like almost everyone else, surprised—but on the other hand, not really surprised. Her response to the smug paladins of order, who assure us ad nauseam that “there is no alternative” to the status quo, was always like Rosa Luxemburg’s: “You foolish lackeys! Your ‘order’ is built on sand. Tomorrow the revolution will rise up again, clashing its weapons, and to your horror it will proclaim with trumpets blazing: I was, I am, I shall be!” This insight was Joanne’s touchstone, the fixed point to which she oriented herself analytically and in practice.

For most of her life, Joanne lived modestly,

often on a very limited income in cramped rental apartments. But no one could call her unfortunate—save for her untimely and painful demise, of course. Joanne made for herself the life she wanted, a life without compromise, in which she could cultivate her truly enormous talents and have a real impact on people and events. Her playfulness and sense of humor were legendary. Joanne was a *riot*. Our conversations were nearly always punctuated by raucous outbursts of laughter. How often I got off the phone in tears of mirth after talking to Joanne. She had incredible guts, too. I don't think she ever experienced the slightest hesitation in getting up before an audience of hundreds or thousands and speaking her mind. Few, if any, ever succeeded in bullying her.

Also legendary among Joanne's friends was her kindness and generosity. If you came to Joanne asking for advice about a personal problem, she would often devote days of *research* to finding a possible solution. In fact, she would sometimes do this even if you hadn't asked for advice. This was not about her ego, not about wanting to seem important. Joanne couldn't bear to see people suffer, and especially the people she cared about.

I had the immense good fortune to know Joanne—as a comrade, a co-thinker, and an

extremely close friend—for more than 50 years. We met soon after I had turned 18 and started out at the University of California, Berkeley. I was listening to a rally in Sproul Plaza, the political agora of the campus, when a tall, thin young woman (although she was six years my senior) with a mass of bushy chestnut hair approached me. She was carrying a piece of cardboard on which were affixed a variety of political buttons produced by the Independent Socialist Club, of which she was a leading member. We got into a conversation, and a few hours later I was recruited. Joanne, incidentally, was the ISC's star recruiter. From that day until her death, hardly a week passed when we did not laugh, fume, commiserate, marvel, even conspire (benignly) together. What else can I say? She was a wonder and an inspiration.

NOTES

1. Joanne Landy, "Regretting the Region's Right Turn," interview by John Feffer, *Huffington Post*, April 23, 2013.
2. When the Cold War ended, the "East and West" was dropped.
3. See Kent Worcester, "The Third Camp in Theory and Practice: An Interview with Joanne Landy and Thomas Harrison," forthcoming in *Left History*. This extensive interview is full of information about Joanne's life and political career.

Joanne Landy (1941–2017)

Wholly Dedicated to Socialism from Below

AARON AMARAL

THE DEATH OF JOANNE LANDY last October is a profound loss to the socialist and internationalist movements.

Joanne died less than a day shy of her 76th birthday, and for her entire adult life, she retained a commitment to the fight for a more democratic and more humane world, and to the politics of socialism from below.

In her nearly 60 years as part of the socialist movement, Joanne was the most principled of activists and intellectuals. She had the rare combination of the sharpest intelligence and the highest degree of empathy, both for her fellow socialists and activists, as well as for those struggling around the world.

At the time she announced her cancer diagnosis last year, at a celebration for her life this past June, and in her last days in the hospice, the international outpouring of love and comradeship for Joanne was both remarkable and entirely understandable, given her personal and political impact on so many people and around so many issues.

Joanne was born in Chicago in 1941. Her father was Jewish and had fled Nazi Germany, where he had trained as a lawyer. In the United States, he became a librarian and the director of the library at the then-Chicago Teachers College/Wilson Junior College (now Chicago State University). Her mother was a Unitarian and a liberal activist, including in the fight for integrated schools.

As a teenager, Joanne was a self-described

pacifist, having attended workshops of the American Friends Service Committee. Just before her 16th birthday, she enrolled at the University of Chicago, where she joined the Young Peoples Socialist League (YPSL) in 1958.

She was recruited by Deborah Meier, who was part of the wing of the Trotskyist movement led by Max Shachtman. In 1957, Shachtman's Independent Socialist League had joined the Socialist Party and its youth group, the YPSL.

By the early 1960s, a split had developed in the Shachtman group between a right wing and a left. The right wing, led by Shachtman, had turned to supporting the Democratic Party and its imperialist foreign policy—including the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba.

But it was the principled politics of the Shachtmanite left-wing—which retained its commitment to socialism from below and the “Third Campism” represented by the slogan “Neither Washington nor Moscow but International Socialism”—to which Joanne remained committed for the rest of her life.

After two years at the University of Chicago, Joanne moved to New York City with her first husband, Sy Landy. It was in New York that she first met Julius and Phyllis Jacobson, who had founded the journal *New Politics* in 1961 and who became important political influences in Joanne's life.

New Politics was launched in response to the rightward turn of Shachtman, and Joanne was to become an editor of the relaunched *New Politics*, with the Jacobsons, in 1986. She remained active on the *New Politics* editorial board until the last weeks of her life.

AARON AMARAL is on the editorial board of *New Politics*.

Joanne moved west and enrolled at the University of California at Berkeley in the fall of 1964, just in time to become a founder of the Independent Socialists Club (ISC) and to see the beginning of the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley.

Hal Draper, one of the leaders of the left wing of the Shachtmanite tradition, along with others including Joel Geier and Mike Parker, formed the ISC based on the principles of socialism from below.

Socialist intellectual and Cuba expert Sam Farber, himself one of the founders of the ISC, noted at the June 2017 gathering to honor Joanne that she was *the* star recruiter to the ISC in Berkeley—based not only on her intelligence and perseverance, but also on her ability to listen.

This experience in Berkeley was crucial to Joanne's political development. The organizing skills remained with her the rest of her life, while the experience of the rapid growth of the anti-Stalinist left and the high level of politics and activism of the period led to a sense of optimism and possibility that Joanne always carried with her.

Among other things, Joanne also met her most important lifelong political collaborator, Tom Harrison, in Berkeley when Tom arrived there in 1966.

In September 1969, following the implosion of the Students for a Democratic Society and the national growth of the ISC, it was decided to form a more centralized national organization, the International Socialists (IS).

Joanne was a member of the IS from its founding, but was expelled in January 1972 for breaking discipline over the question of the slogan of victory for the National Liberation Front in Vietnam. The IS position was to support the struggle of the North Vietnamese and to call for a military victory to the NLF on the basis of their democratic struggle for national liberation, without being uncritical of the NLF or providing political support.

Joanne was one of a group that, while opposing U.S. imperialism and calling for the U.S. troops to leave Vietnam, opposed active support for the NLF, believing this would substitute one set of authoritarian rulers for another in Vietnam. It wasn't the disagreement in opinion, but the decision to publicly distribute a flyer advocating the position, that led to Joanne's expulsion.

Nonetheless, Joanne and the group who joined her around this issue did their best to minimize the contention arising from the split, and she succeeded in retaining close political relationships with the leadership and members of the IS that paid off through the coming decades of her political life.

This tactical decision on the handling of her expulsion from the IS was emblematic of a number of qualities that Joanne possessed: a political farsightedness, an ability to understand the various sides of an argument without conceding her position of principle, and her ability to organize and win people to her position.

Initially, following the split with the IS, Joanne was part of an informal grouping called "Socialists for Independent Politics." While short-lived, this grouping did produce a political bulletin, but it was separate and politically distinct from the group around Hal Draper, who had left the IS in 1971. Draper was moving away from an immediate commitment to political organization *per se* and was calling for the creation of a "political center" like those built around left-wing political journals.

Though not hostile to Draper, Socialists for Independent Politics generally believed in the need for pluralistic political organization and independent political activity, and they were critical of what they came to see as Draper's growing softness toward the labor bureaucracy.

Joanne returned to New York City in 1975, where she lived for the rest of her life. In 1980, she became involved with a group of activists who built support for the independent Solidarnosc trade union movement in Poland.

This work proved enormously successful and put Joanne in contact with a broader milieu of political activists, including some who came from, but were critical of, the official Communist parties. Such activists included Ed Asner, Noam Chomsky, Barbara Garson, Michael Harrington, David McReynolds, Pete Seeger, Paul Sweezy, and E.P. Thompson.

Ultimately, Joanne was a central figure in the founding of the Campaign for Peace and Democracy/East and West (later renamed simply the Campaign for Peace and Democracy, or CPD).

Building on E.P. Thompson's ideas of "détente from below," the CPD sought to build contacts with, and to strengthen the capacity of, peace groups on both sides of the Cold War between the U.S. and the former USSR. Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, Joanne traveled to Eastern Europe on behalf of the Campaign and in support of its aims.

Often in her capacity as co-chair of the CPD, Joanne was actively involved in struggles against U.S. imperialism in Latin America in the 1980s, in Bosnia and Iraq in the 1990s, and in the post-9/11 imperialist wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

In recent years, she was involved in campaigns in solidarity with the peoples of Iran and Greece. For example, in her inimitable way, she brought together activists from all sides of the Greek political left, both in the U.S. and in Greece, to build a solidarity movement against the humanitarian crisis of neoliberal austerity.

Neither Joanne nor the CPD wavered in their commitment to the struggle of the peoples of countries victimized by U.S. imperialism.

Nor did Joanne overlook the role of other imperial interests and the brutality of anti-democratic dictatorships throughout the world. She combined a ruthless and committed anti-imperialism with an equal commitment to the struggles from below for democracy and basic

humanity waged across the world.

Sam Farber described her as a "principled and critical internationalist." In this way, and on this basis, she and the CPD were able to play a unique and critical role in the anti-war movement in the United States.

Ashley Smith wrote in a tribute to her on behalf of the editorial board of the *International Socialist Review*: "[Joanne] was an internationalist who fought against all imperialisms and all states that oppressed their peoples, in the hopes of building a new and democratic society throughout the world."

Similarly, activists in Haavar: Iranian Initiative Against War, Sanctions, and State Repression, wrote in a moving tribute to Joanne,

Challenging those in the anti-war movement who in the name of "anti-imperialism" refused to criticize the repression carried out by the Iranian government, she made the most principled arguments in favor of a kind of internationalist anti-imperialism that would never sacrifice the democratic demands and aspirations of ordinary people. We always knew she was with us and would have our backs, no matter what.

Sam Farber, who had known Joanne for over 58 years, noted that despite achieving prestigious academic degrees at Berkeley (in history) and Columbia University (in public health), Joanne had dedicated her life to her political ideals.

In that dedication, Joanne Landy's own humanity was ever present. The love and respect that she earned was always shared back to her friends and comrades. Her death has left those who knew her with an enormous sadness.

The greatest tribute to her legacy will be to honor her political commitments with an intelligence and empathy we can only hope to mirror. Joanne Landy: ¡Presente!

This piece originally ran in *Socialist Worker* online, October 27, 2017.

Cartoon Cavalcade

KENT WORCESTER

IN HER AWARD-WINNING BOOK *Red Rosa* (2015), Kate Evans combined feminist biography, intellectual history, and appealing visuals to tell the remarkable story of Rosa Luxemburg. While much of the narrative focused on friendships, relationships, and personal struggles, Evans also conveyed a sense of Luxemburg as a theorist of capitalism, imperialism, and war. In her latest work, *Threads*, Evans writes and draws about her experiences working alongside refugees in the so-called Calais Jungle, where thousands of people fleeing war, poverty, and political unrest in Africa and the Middle East converged in 2015-2016 in hopes of relocating to the U.K. She has once again crafted a powerful read.

Threads: From the Refugee Crisis is only one of many recently published works of graphic nonfiction, but it offers a persuasive case for comics journalism and comics memoir—categories or genres that barely existed before the present century. It helps that Evans has an eye for the telling detail and a knack for getting people to open up. At the same time, her pages place a greater emphasis on expressing raw emotion rather than on technical precision. As she records her experiences as a volunteer aid worker and part-time journalist, her personable approach to color, line, and page construction pays big dividends. She not only documents the logistical difficulties faced by the refugees,

KENT WORCESTER is a frequent contributor to *New Politics* whose latest book, *Silent Agitators: Cartoon Art from the Pages of New Politics* (2016), can be ordered online from Bolerium Books: www.bolerium.com.

The Amazing “True” Story of a Teenage Single Mom

KATHERINE ARNOLDI

Graymalkin Media, 2015, \$12.99

The Implacable Urge to Defame: Cartoon Jews in the American Press, 1877-1935

MATTHEW BAIGELL

Syracuse University Press, 2017, \$29.95

Johnny Appleseed:

Green Spirit of the Frontier

PAUL BUHLE AND NOAH VAN SCIVER

Fantagraphics, 2017, \$19.95

Threads: From the Refugee Crisis

KATE EVANS

Verso, 2017, \$24.95

Our Lady of Birth Control: A Cartoonist’s Encounter with Margaret Sanger

SABRINA JONES

Soft Skull Press, 2016, \$19.95

Migrant:

Stories of Hope and Resilience

JEFFRY ODELL KORGAN AND KEVIN PYLE

Hope Border Institute, 2017, \$2.99

The Highway Is For Gamblers: A Political Memoir

TOM O’LINCOLN

Interventions, 2017, \$30

Wildcat Anarchist Comics

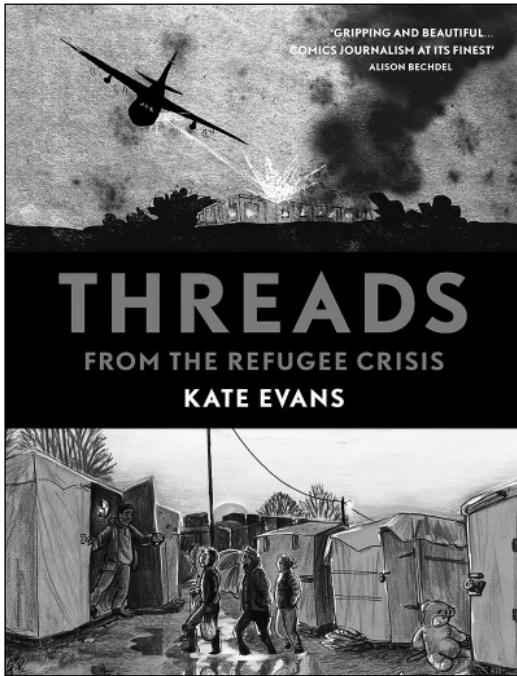
DONALD ROOUM

PM Press, 2016, \$14.95

Dawn of the Unread

JAMES WALKER AND PAUL FILLINGHAM

Spokesman Books, 2016, \$20

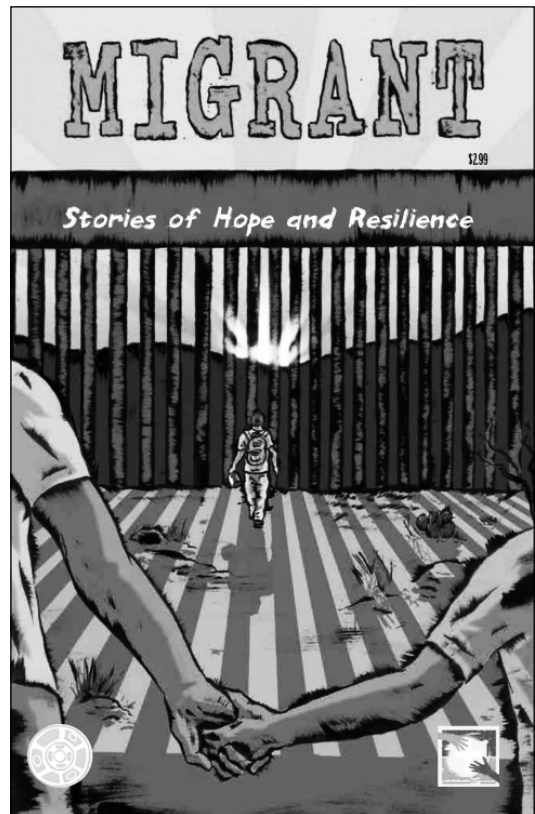


she registers the camp's emotional temperature. I found myself gripped by Evans' first-person encapsulations as well as by her secondhand renditions. By the end of the book, I was cheering her on as she calmly argues against austerity and "all national barriers to migration." I also appreciated how her book offers a de facto rebuke to the anti-immigrant web posts she occasionally quotes in the text—"We need to purge this scum with fire there's no other choice," "these cute refugee babies grow into vile adults who want to destroy our country," and so on.

Like *Threads*, the activist comic book *Migrant: Stories of Hope and Resilience* is grounded in interviews and in-depth reporting as well as secondhand sources. As part of their research, the authors spoke to "migrants, asylum-seekers, recent deportees and detainees, and Dreamers, men and women brought to the U.S. as children." The comic book is bilingual; it was produced in partnership with Catholic groups in South Texas and northern Mexico that advocate for and shelter migrants and their families. While many of its pages are concerned with

individual testimonies, others delve into larger issues of U.S.-Mexico relations and the push-pull of "economic forces at the border." Jeffrey Korgen and Kevin Pyle previously collaborated on *Wage Theft* (2013) and *Worker Justice Illustrated* (2014), and they have once again turned to the eye-catching comic-book format in order to call attention to the struggles—in both the positive and the negative senses of the term—of the most vulnerable sectors of the working class. Kevin Pyle also supplies the artwork, and his soft brushstrokes, indistinct linework, and off-kilter palette expose a world of exploitation that is granular in its specificity and yet familiar in its broad outline.

Another credible example of socially immersive cartooning is offered by Katherine Arnoldi's *The Amazing "True" Story of a Teenage Single Mom*, which was first published at the end of the 1990s and recently reissued by Graymalkin Media. While Arnoldi's book has largely



been overlooked by the comics subculture, it has picked up awards from the New York Foundation for the Arts and the American Library Association. The book comes in the guise of a black-and-white paperback that resembles a comic strip collection rather than a full-color comic book or hardcover graphic memoir. As with *Migrant and Threads*, *The Amazing "True" Story* uses eccentric linework and unconventional layouts to pull readers closer to the extraordinary challenges faced by the main characters—in this case an indigent mom and her pint-sized daughter. Arnoldi's lines are thicker and inkier than Evans' and Pyle's, and she sometimes steers the reader into trippy, underground comix territory in a way that seems out of step with the general drift of contemporary graphic nonfiction. The similarities between the three may be as significant as their differences, however, in that they each eschew the conventions of commercial narrative art, and they share a commitment to making politically charged comics about the freshly dispossessed.

Memoir and journalism are not the only approaches available to cartoonists pursuing nonfiction topics. Historical figures and episodes have also attracted attention from writer-illustrators. In *Our Lady of Birth Control*, Sabrina Jones brings a fluid, expressive, and sometimes minimalistic approach to the task of visually narrating key episodes in the life of pioneering feminist Margaret Sanger (1879-1966). While the book's primary focus is on Sanger's efforts to promote legal access to birth control, and her role in founding Planned Parenthood, Jones makes room for winsome autobiographical asides that highlight the extent to which past



conflicts continue to reverberate in the present. Her “cartoonist’s encounter” with Margaret Sanger does not cover as much biographical territory as Peter Bagge’s *Woman Rebel: The Margaret Sanger Story* (2013), but her assessment of Sanger and the social movements she contributed to is far less guarded. Sabrina Jones’s other books include *Isadora Duncan: A Graphic Biography* (2008) and *FDR and the New Deal for Beginners* (2010), and she is a regular contributor to *World War 3 Illustrated*, a long-running journal of political cartooning.

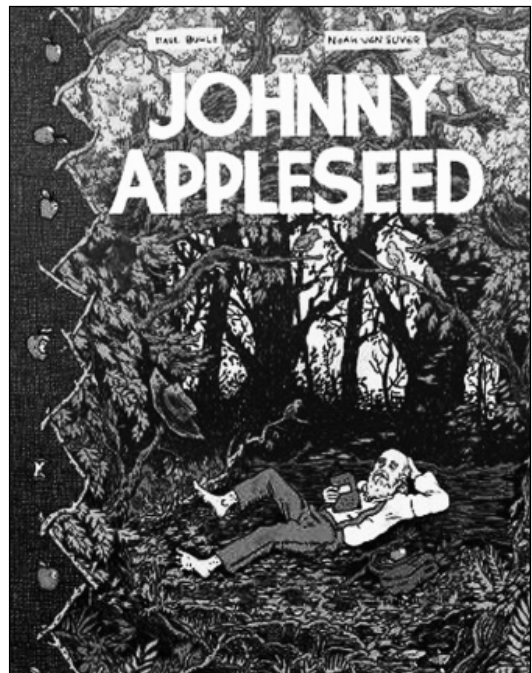
Johnny Appleseed (1774-1845), born John Chapman, was just as real as Margaret Sanger, but he sometimes gets lumped in with frontier legends like Paul Bunyan and John Henry. As Paul Buhle notes in the introduction to his latest project, *Johnny Appleseed: Green Spirit of the Frontier*, Chapman “wandered perpetually, from his native Massachusetts to Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana.” He really did plant apple trees—tens of thousands of them—and referred to their seeds as “the seeds of love.” But the historical Johnny Appleseed was also an abolitionist, a vegetarian, and a women’s rights advocate, as well as a disciple of Emanuel Swedenborg, the eighteenth-century Swedish scientist and theologian. In recovering the life and times of

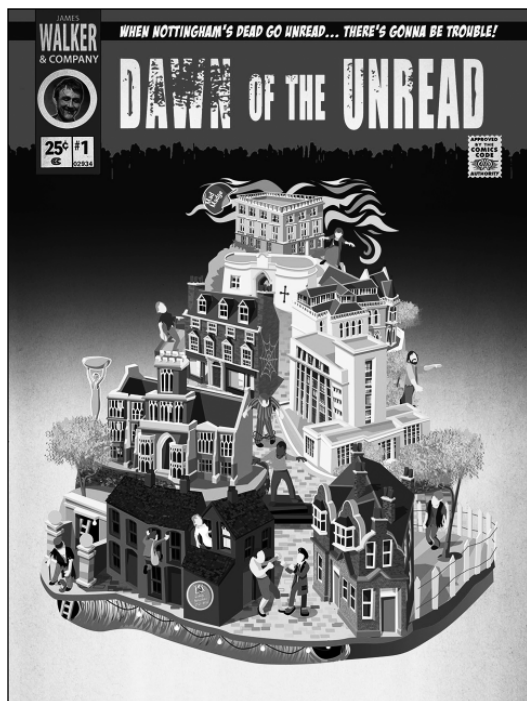


this truly offbeat character, Buhle has joined forces with an up-and-coming artist, Noah Van Sciver. The results are impressive. Sciver has published short stories, mini comics, and comic-book anthologies, as well as a graphic biography, *The Melancholic Young Lincoln* (2012), but until now I had not thought of his work as having a political edge. His drawings have a rough-hewn quality that suits the material, and his craggy lines offer a nice fit with Buhle's nomadic historiography. Sciver is good with street scenes and faces, but he really excels at depicting forests, farms, and animals—and toes and feet, for some reason.

The echoes of half-forgotten battles and movements can also be heard in the pages of *Dawn of the Unread*, a glossy anthology of graphic stories that celebrates the literary inheritance of Nottingham, England. The book “imagines a scenario whereby dead writers from Nottingham’s past are incensed at the closures of libraries and low literacy levels in twenty-first century Britain,” and return from the grave “in a loose twist on the zombie

genre.” The featured writers include D.H. Lawrence, Alan Sillitoe, Geoffrey Trease, and Margaret Cavendish, a prolific seventeenth-century author whose “most famous work is *The Blazing World* (1666), a kind of utopian political thriller that’s credited as one of the first-ever science fiction stories.” Several of the stories in *Dawn of the Unread* are in black-and-white, and the artwork ranges widely in terms of style and tone. The book’s contributors seem to be mostly based in northern England, Wales, and Scotland and with a few exceptions—Eddie Campbell, Hunt Emerson, and Carol Swain—are unknown outside Britain. The book “originally started life as an online serial,” and in the course of developing the project, the editors organized “a very silent protest in the form of a reading flash mob.” Midcentury anti-comics campaigners used to complain that the ready availability of comic books would somehow threaten the survival of “real” books, but in this instance the medium has been mobilized on behalf of public libraries and the preservation of literary culture.





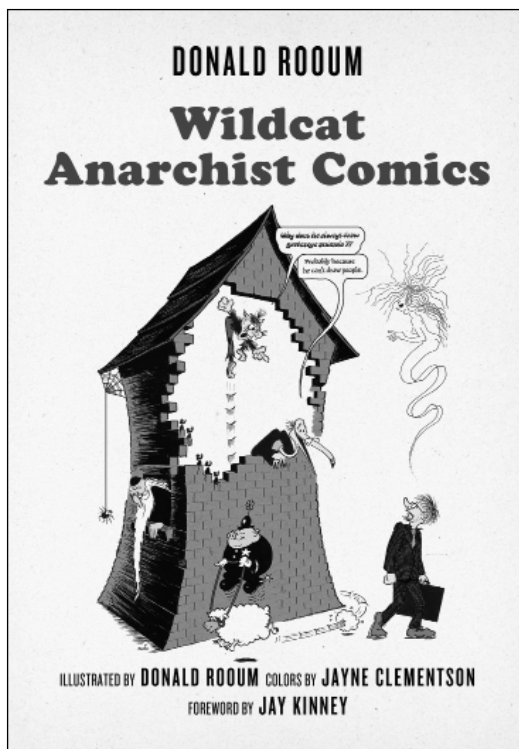
Donald Room has been drawing cartoons and comics for *Peace News*, *Private Eye*, and other U.K. outlets since the 1950s. His most successful comic strip, *Wildcat*, first appeared in the pages of the anarchist newspaper *Freedom* in 1980 and has been anthologized in a series of affordable pocket-sized volumes. *Wildcat Anarchist Comics* is the first collection of his work that is specifically aimed at a North American audience, and it will hopefully serve to introduce Room's puckish cartooning to a new generation of readers. The book not only features numerous *Wildcat* strips, but also quite a few examples of Room's work for *The Skeptic*. As Jay Kinney notes in his introduction, Donald Room's

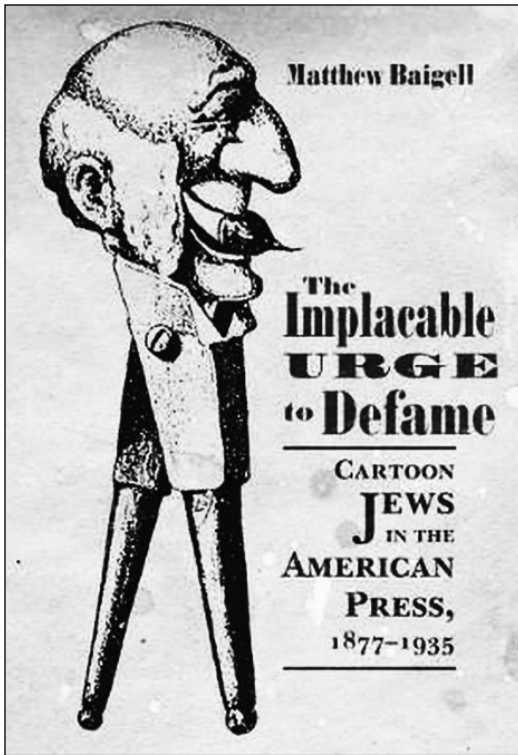
take on the anarchist movement is both didactic (his cartoons usually make a political point) and self-deprecating (he laughs at the foibles of his comrades and himself). These impulses are embodied in his two main characters: the professorial stork, a rather long-suffering anarchist ideologue; and "Wildcat," a punkish anarchista much given to spontaneous

outbursts and direct actions, many of them counter-productive.

Wildcat Anarchist Comics includes an autobiographical essay, and this is the first time that many of Room's strips and cartoons have been published in color.

Political cartoons are not always on the side of the angels, of course. As Matthew Baigell demonstrates in his new scholarly monograph, *The Implacable Urge to Defame*, Jews were routinely and viciously caricatured in cartoons and illustrations in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century mass-circulation periodicals. Baigell reports that after looking through popular magazines like *Puck*, *Life*, *Judge*, and *Judge's Library*, he "stopped counting anti-Jewish cartoons when the number went higher than one hundred." The level of vilification of Jews was so "aggressive, debasing, and varied" that it shocked the author, even though he was already conscious of the extent to which, from the Middle Ages onwards, "images hostile to Jews

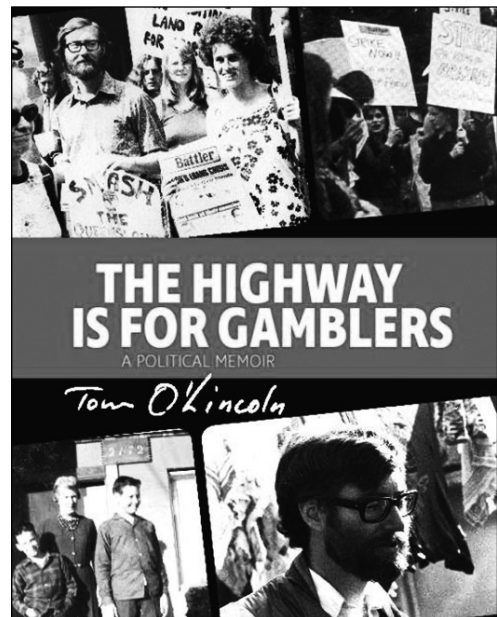




have appeared in paintings, prints, cartoons, and sculpture in Europe and, in more recent times, in the United States and the Middle East.” One of the useful insights Baigell offers is that historians of newspapers, magazines, and print culture more generally have largely overlooked the issue of anti-Semitism. He also makes a solid case that anti-Jewish visual stereotypes were common in the Communist press of the 1920s and 1930s, especially in the years before the Popular Front. “Looking back at the Third Period,” Baigell writes, “it is difficult to parse precisely what was on the mind of many Jewish leftists when it came to Judaism.” Indeed, he suggests that the “Communist-controlled press” helped prolong “the use of stereotypical images of Jews into the 1930s.”

The title *The Highway Is for Gamblers*, by Tom O’Lincoln and edited by Janey Stone, is taken from a Bob Dylan song. O’Lincoln and Stone were active in student politics at Berke-

ley in the 1960s and relocated to Australia in 1971, where they became founding members of the country’s International Socialists. Tom O’Lincoln has always been a lucid and interesting writer, and over the years he has authored numerous articles and reviews for the IS press as well as several books and pamphlets on Australian history, including his critical survey of the Communist Party of Australia, *Into the Mainstream* (1985). Sadly, O’Lincoln was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease a few years ago, which is why Stone “stepped in to help produce this book, which has been drawn from a number of sources.” At the book’s core is an autobiographical essay that O’Lincoln wrote in 2015, but the volume draws extensively on “published articles, internal documents, letters, [and] unpublished draft essays,” as well as “memorabilia Tom kept from his travels, old diaries, letters and postcards to his family.” *The Highway Is for Gamblers* is stuffed with photos and images, including several hand-fashioned cartoons that satirize politicians and labor leaders. *The Highway Is for Gamblers* is not quite a graphic memoir but it contains a far greater range of visual information than almost any memoir of its type.



Comic Art in the Academy

PAUL BUHLE

THE CLOSING OF THE ERA when comic art specialists, not people with PhDs, wrote the outstanding and recognized works on individual artists and genres may have arrived as recently as only a few years ago. Careful biographies of artistic giants, household names (in their own eras, at least) or famed only within the field, Al Capp or Will Elder, have continued to be written by people who could rightly be called “fans”—if the title did not seem insulting. Rather than university presses, Fantagraphics or the comics series at Abrams would be a typical outlet. With each year that passes and with each swelling enrollment in a college course, the scene shifts.

There is much strange in this development for observers middle-aged and older who remember the newspaper strips as universally on-hand at home, comic books before the Code, and, at this point, even those who snapped up

the underground comix that rocked the genre in the 1960s-1970s. We never quite imagined English department lectures—PowerPoints were still in the future—on canonical artists and

genre or the theoretical backing for this or that interpretation.

Hillary Chute’s *Disaster Drawn*, notable for its publisher alone, as well as its contents, signals the gravity of the change. There is no

surprise that she references Goya, as might even some “amateur” studies of a particular artist’s early influences, or that she homes in on the work of Art Spiegelman, Joe Sacco, Justin Green, Keiji Nakazawa (of the famed Barefoot Gen series on the aftereffects of the Hiroshima bombing), with sidebars to Robert Crumb, Winsor McCay, and Golden Age horror comics, among others. Her subject is, after all, war and the effects of war on comic art (with more sidebars on comic art precursors like nineteenth-century wood engravings).

What makes this new, often insightful, and somewhat troubling for older generations of comics observers is certainly the theorizing of a kind of artistic poetics. Chute says in her introduction that nonfiction comics have emerged,

Disaster Drawn: Visual Witness, Comics and Documentary Form

HILLARY L. CHUTE

Cambridge: Harvard University Press/
Belknap, 2016, 349 pp. \$35.00

PAUL BUHLE is the publisher of the anti-war Radical America Komiks (1969), co-author (with Denis Kitchen) of *The Art of Harvey Kurtzman: The Mad Genius of Comics*, and editor of *Jews and American Comics*, among other works.

at least emerged more forcefully and fully, in the aftermath of the horrors of World War II. Second, she argues that the comic art form has become more international in the shadow of human-caused catastrophe. Third, and as a coda, she wants to explore comics as journalism.

These are admirable aims from the perspective of a reviewer whose political life was shaped by the anti-war movement following closely upon the civil rights crusade.

I am most curious at the absence of the EC war comics—in their realism, anti-war comics—that made Harvey Kurtzman and his dogged realism a comic-art legend. I am curious at a study of comics as history with a similar absence of Jack Jaxon, whose comic classics on the wars of the old Texas frontiers set the pace in the 1970s for higher levels of close historical study in comic art. And I suppose I am curious at all manner of other possible avenues not taken up, like the war work of Spain Rodriguez, which ranged from Spain and Russia of the 1930s-1940s to the adventures of Che Guevara in the 1950s-1960s; or the devotions of the annual magazine *World War 3 Illustrated*, which approaches subjects close to Chute's interest again and again, through the work of dozens of artists.

Then again, the field of possible candidates, especially international candidates, is vast. And for American readers who find themselves looking into the windows of comic-book stores in today's France, Germany, or Italy, translations of Joe Sacco and Art Spiegelman stare out, a reminder of these artists' current totemic status.

The real question, for what one can call theoretical exploration, is not the choice of particulars, after all, but the quality of the exploration itself. There is, for my taste, too much referencing of what other academics think, although I know this is the nature of the beastly scholarly writing on most any subject, art subjects in particular. There is a curious transition to personal war experiences, one generation removed for Spiegelman's *Maus*, not at all removed for Nakazawa or for Joe Sacco,

who sought them out. This is curious because "personal" comics as a genre began with the religious perplexities of a young Justin Green, far removed from any conflict but the psychological kind. How the careful monstrosities of Crumb's funny animals murdering each other fits into this (except that it appears side to side with an early *Maus* excerpt, in the comic titled *Funny Animals*), or why painter Philip Guston's break from abstract expressionism makes the arguments about violence work, I do not grasp. Other readers may feel differently.

Never mind. Chute is on the button in quoting Spiegelman saying that comics are the "last bastion of figurative drawing" (105), so far beyond the assorted revolutionary developments in modern painting, literature, and so on that a kind of catch-up effort was inevitable—and interesting, because comics remain vernacular, even when blown-up panels and originals appear on museum walls (as they do, increasingly). Comics are not "like" "art," and not likely to be seen as art, despite the increase in comic artists with formal training in art history and such, and despite the efforts of galleries, not to mention speculators, to make comics art. A great contribution of underground comix, as Chute suggests, was the capacity to be both avant garde and figurative simultaneously. Efforts to escape into non-narrative drawing, even to the limited extent of "wordless" narrative experimentation, have been limited in number (more common, in the latter case, in the woodcut works of the 1920s-1940s) and never very popular.

Not every reader of this book will want to delve deeply into the detailed subjects of every page. Chute's readings of comic art are distinctly her own, and some will inevitably seem more interesting or convincing than others. Nevertheless, the effort, chapter by chapter, is compelling. Chute shows how artists are dealing with the horror of modern war, by no means only those perpetrated by "the terrorists" or "the enemy." This is a worthy effort.

On the 150th Anniversary of Marx's *Das Kapital* Exploitation and Modes of Production

NANCY HOLMSTROM

THE MODE-OF-PRODUCTION CONCEPT that Marx develops in *Capital* (although the idea is present earlier) is the essential methodological tool for understanding history, different societies, and the possibilities for social change.

According to Marx, exploitation was essential to all class societies, indeed defining of class society, both in general and for each particular form. While many people think Marx's concept of exploitation was specific to capitalism, as the extraction of surplus value, he makes clear that this is just the specific form of exploitation in capitalism.

"The essential difference between the various economic forms of society, between for instance a society based on slave labor and one based on wage labor, lies only in the mode in which this surplus labor is in each case *extracted* from the actual producer, the laborer." (*Capital* Vol. I, 217).

Or, from Volume III: "The specific economic form in which unpaid surplus labor is *pumped out of* direct producers determines the relations of rulers and ruled." (791)

From these I infer that a particular kind of coercion and surplus extraction are connected in all class societies; indeed they are constitutive of the relations that define a given mode of production.

Exploitation occurs when producers lack control of their means of subsistence, and hence, in order to survive, they are forced, directly or indirectly, to work for others who appropriate

their labor's product. In slavery and in feudalism both the force and the surplus are clear. In capitalism, less clear. Marx's specific account of how this happens in capitalism rests on the labor theory of value, but his understanding of exploitation in capitalism is broader than that. Workers, Marx says, "agree, i.e. are compelled by social conditions, to work for others who reap the product of their labor." With or without the labor theory of value, this is true.

The mode-of-production analysis helps us to see that exploitation also existed in post-capitalist societies. The fundamental question is always: Who controls the means of production? In Soviet-style bureaucratic systems, it was the bureaucracy that controlled the means of production and subsistence, leaving the producers no choice but to work for them. And it was the bureaucracy that controlled the surplus for their needs and purposes.

So this allows us to see the continuity between capitalism, feudalism, slave systems, and bureaucratic systems—but the specific differences between them are equally important.

Each mode of production, as Marx understood it, has certain kinds of structures and tendencies, a certain nature if you will. In capitalism, being a kind of competitive market system, each capitalist firm must try to maximize its own profit in order to beat the other capitalists and get a larger share of the market. So each firm is compelled to grow, to expand, to revolutionize the forces of production in order to produce more while lowering costs. Other systems, pre- and post-capitalist, do not have this built-in imperative. Indeed slavery and

NANCY HOLMSTROM is a co-editor of *New Politics*.

feudalism were marked by stasis and crises of underproduction, while capitalism sees crises of overproduction.

This concept is important for several debates, starting with what changes are and are not possible within capitalism.

Consider gender relations: In developed capitalist countries, women have become more independent from men and more equal, both legally and economically, than ever before. Nevertheless, they still are subject to sexual predation, as Trump has helped to highlight, and they still do the bulk of caring labor, whether for free or for low pay. Low-paid care work fits the account of exploitation in *Capital*, while the work women do for free does not. Feminists have often criticized Marx on this point, but since *Capital* is intended to elucidate what makes the capitalist system tick, so to speak, unpaid work is irrelevant, so this criticism is not to the point, in my opinion. Marxist/socialist feminists have, however, developed an enriched account of social reproduction, which tries to supplement the account in *Capital* by showing the importance of this work, both in human terms and for capitalism since it produces labor power.

Now the extraordinary improvements in gender relations within capitalism raise the question of whether women and men could ever be totally equal in a capitalist society. Liberals think so, and some Marxists seem to imply it by their contention that, unlike class oppression, sex and race oppression are not essential to capitalism. But while they are not *logically* essential (that is, we can *imagine* a gender- and race-neutral version of capitalism), it does not follow that they are incidental; indeed, as Marxist feminists including myself have argued, they are very likely historically, pragmatically necessary. Consider what women have and haven't

achieved. What they've achieved are their basic democratic rights, which do not threaten profits, indeed may augment them. But care work in the United States is still largely a private responsibility because supporting care work as the public good it is would seriously cut into profits. In other countries with more social supports, the advent of global neoliberalism has meant drastic cutbacks.

The nature of capitalism thus puts constraints on gender and race equality. Today, while individual women and minorities have moved to the top ranks of society, class differences among women and among blacks have actually increased. Any movements that could reduce sex and race oppression must be based on working-class struggles, integrating other forms of oppression. Thus the counterposition of class and "identity politics" is misleading, indeed counterproductive.

Another, and probably the most important, example of capitalist limits to change is the multiple ecological crises facing the planet, which, as Al Gore's charts show, took off with the development of capitalism. Its imperative to grow is simply incompatible with a sustainable environment. I will return to this point in a minute.

The mode of production helps us understand debates about countries transitioning to capitalism. Many post-colonialist thinkers have denied that Marxist analyses are applicable to countries like India because, they argue, India lacks key features of developed capitalism, in particular, liberal political and cultural institutions. But Vivek Chibber, using the mode-of-production analysis, clarifies that Marxism does not contend that capitalist development will be *uniform* all over the world, but rather that *certain* features of capitalism are *universal*. Capital's

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economic needs—the sine qua non being profit maximization—are the defining ones; they are present in India and in fact they might be aided by the very traditional social hierarchies and oppression that post-colonialists deem to be incompatible with capitalism.

The above point regarding capitalism and ecological crisis is underlined by considering the changes in the Soviet Union and China. While each country developed under Stalin and Mao, their push for development and growth was not the same as capitalism, either in scope (nowhere near the same growth) or in cause. Unless the bureaucracy decided to develop something, it did not happen; there was no *automatic* motor that drove growth as a market system does. In fact, the cause of growth was more like feudalism in that it stemmed from political rather than economic needs: As feudal lords competed with each other, so these countries competed with other global powers.

Richard Smith identifies in China today a hybrid mode of production. The capitalist sector of the economy has created *enormous* growth; it has a 20 percent growth rate. But the other sector, the state-owned enterprises, which includes the *commanding heights* of the economy, runs on *very different imperatives*. Many of the state-owned enterprises are justly called *dinosaurs* because they would have gone extinct in a fully capitalist economy. But the government cannot afford to let millions of people be unemployed, so they create things like ghost cities. Though totally irrational from a capitalist point of view, as Western economists never tire of pointing out, they make sense in the bureaucratic mode

of production.

This combination of market-driven growth in the largest economy in the world and the lack of even the minimal political democratic checks typical of capitalism is causing what Smith has called an ecological apocalypse.

Environmentalists who advocate a simpler no-growth economy are 100 percent correct, but unless they also recognize that this is impossible within capitalism they are another variety of climate change deniers.

Finally, the mode-of-production analysis also gives us the key conditions for socialism. As Marx conceived it, this is a society where the means of production are under *collective democratic control*, so the conditions for exploitation do not exist. The producers control the product of their labor and they get it all back collectively. This is expressed in this famous quote from *Capital* Volume III (820): “The *producers rationally* regulate their interchange with Nature, bringing it under *their common control*... with the least expenditure of energy and under conditions most favorable to and *worthy of their human nature*.” Beyond that is the true realm of freedom, he says. “The shortening of the work day is its basic prerequisite.”

Today it is ever more clear that, in Rosa Luxemburg’s words, humanity’s choice is between socialism and barbarism.

This essay was originally written for a talk on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of *Das Kapital*, presented at a forum organized by the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation and the Goethe Institute, New York, September 14, 2017. References are to the New York: International Publishers edition of 1967.

The Misrule of Global Capitalism

MARTIN OPPENHEIMER

SOCIAL INEQUALITY IS NOT FOR THE faint-hearted. It covers the major political-economic issues of our time, from the structural changes in the economics of capitalism, to class structure, the imperialist state, and the distortions of capitalist culture. The author, a veteran scholar-activist of the New Left generation who now lives in Costa Rica,¹ ends with a plea for resistance to our oligarchic “hegemon” and suggests a series of tactics to help us on the road.

After an introductory chapter, Johnson proceeds to an examination of the polarization of wealth and poverty throughout the world. His description, generously salted with indignation, is solidly based on data derived from an array of sources, from the CIA’s *World Factbook* to Piketty, Stiglitz, and many others. His overview: “Prosperity for the 10%, austerity for the 90%, repression for those who protest at home and war against supposed enemies abroad.” (11)

In the United States, making so many people barely able to get by is a strategy deliberately promoted by “plutocrats and their servants in political power—President Trump, Republicans in Congress, and corporate Democrats.” (3) This plutocracy, Johnson tells us, is itself

dominated by “the ... 0.001%, the oligarchs of the financial center.” (17) He views the financial fraction of U.S. capital (banking, investment funds, insurance, real estate, and so on—or in short, Wall Street) plus the financiers and finance ministers of major countries and the heads of European and international banking institutions, as the determining factor “in a hegemonic project to

remake ... world society into a savage capitalism in which their vested interests and class privilege are sacrosanct.” (16) This grouping enacts its policies through interlocks with corporations in all sectors of the economy and uses the power of money to influence state policy everywhere in the world.

The degree to which finance capital has come to supersede “productive” capital and today dominates the economy has been debated for many years. G. William Domhoff has produced a series of works demonstrating the interconnections between the corporate sector, the state, and cultural institutions.² Domhoff demonstrates that leaders of most large corporations, both financial and industrial, typically hold board seats in a number of other corporations of both kinds. Identifying the financial sector as dominant when it is so interlocked with other corporate elements is misleading. It is an exaggeration to say that “the mode of economic recovery ... since the latest crash has nothing to do with the opening of new avenues of economic develop-

Social Inequality, Economic Decline, and Plutocracy: An American Crisis

DALE L. JOHNSON

Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, 240 pp. \$159

MARTIN OPPENHEIMER is professor emeritus of sociology at Rutgers University. He is currently active with Central NJ Democratic Socialists of America.

ment and everything to do with resurgence of speculative activity” by the financial sector. (23) In fact, industrial development continues to play an important role within U.S. capitalism, and perhaps an even more important role in the “emerging” economies, including in the former Soviet satellite countries.

Johnson’s thesis that this fraction so overwhelms that “there is apparently no current serious division within the dominant class as a whole” is also open to question. He admits, in a later section, that the divisions within the Republican Party leading to the present chaos of the Trump regime do reflect some disarray within our ruling circles. It follows that the corporate plutocracy has never been monolithic. It is split into fractions with diverse interests. There are policy differences between a traditional internationalist wing (symbolized by the Clinton candidacy and much of Wall Street, and channeled through such institutions as the Council on Foreign Relations) and a more maverick wing (the Koch brothers; the Heritage, Cato, Pioneer, and American Enterprise foundations; and of course Trump himself). This is the tendency once labeled “cowboy” or “sunbelt” capital.

Johnson is, however, on firm ground when describing the historical background to the current “unrestrained rule of capital.” (25) His many years of expertise has been in exploring the development of capitalism in the colonial and later neocolonial world. He shows how the slave system produced surpluses that enabled merchant capital to become the dominant fraction of the capitalist class, and how very soon those surpluses provided the foundation for industrial development. This form of globalization, in which the colonial world exported raw materials and imported manufactured goods, led to what he and like-minded scholars called dependent development. So-called third-world countries were not, in fact, “underdeveloped.” They developed as exploited dependencies in such a way that they remained poor. Over many

years this has changed as globalization trends led to the gradual industrialization of the “third world” and the incorporation of former peasant and plantation labor into modern factory labor as these economies became integrated into global capitalism. This development is not necessarily accompanied by democratic forms of government. In fact, Johnson insists, real democracy is in scarce supply not only in the “emerging market” economies, but throughout the capitalist world.

In the United States today, as Johnson sees it, we have a stagnant economy in which capital prioritizes unproductive and destructive activity: speculation, the pillage of the natural environment, increased militarization, and intensified exploitation of labor at all levels. This constitutes nothing less than a new phase, which Johnson calls “degenerative development.” This phase is accompanied by changes in the class composition of capitalism. The blue collar industrial working class is in decline, but basic working-class occupations also include clerical and sales workers, teachers, workers in the food and recreational sectors, and the unemployed. “Contingent” (part-time, seasonal, occasional) workers overlap all of these. Johnson reluctantly uses the term “underclass” in designating workers in the informal (off the books) economy, plus welfare recipients and the homeless, as objectively working class. Together these various parts of the working class add up to nearly 70 percent of the employable population. The working class, Johnson makes clear, has not disappeared into the great “middle class,” which is a deliberately mystifying statistical abstraction. If we define “middle” as, say, those earning from two-thirds of median income to twice the median (about \$54,000 to \$162,000), most of them are objectively working class.

The traditional old middle class (the “petty bourgeoisie”) is only one fraction in what Johnson calls the “intermediate class.” (52–55) Another fraction includes administrators and supervisors. However, his putting

semi-autonomous and service professionals (including state employees) into the middle class is questionable. This is the grouping that a number of left sociologists have included as part of the “new working class.”³ The different fractions of this intermediate class have different interests. Small business owners are frequently anti-union and oppose increasing the minimum wage and similar reforms. Supervisors’ jobs are primarily to support corporate and state hierarchies. “Professionals” are becoming more like other workers as they lose decision-making autonomy. The intermediate class is bifurcated, the majority being pushed into the working class and even unemployment, while a minority becomes the “line and staff servants of capital.” (208)⁴ As more workers become employed in the lower echelons of the white-collar sector, Johnson wonders how working in unproductive and socially destructive enterprises affects workers’ consciousness. He thinks those who are becoming deprofessionalized (teachers, social service workers, medical workers) are likely to be open to change, but he has his doubts about those who work in the more directly repressive occupations, like the police.

He is wrong, however, in saying that the petty bourgeoisie is being eliminated, as Marx predicted. Although the bankruptcy rate for small business start-ups is considerable, Bureau of Labor Statistics data show that the sector overall is doing well after a dip following the Great Recession. A major contributing factor is the outsourcing and subcontracting of work by larger corporations and the public sector in order to lower labor costs.

Meanwhile “the social gains of centuries of struggles of colonized people for independence and by oppressed peoples for liberty, equality, and fraternity” are being undermined by plutocracy’s agenda—increased exploitation of people and natural resources in the service of profit. (86-87) As protests increase, the state becomes more repressive and is gradually reduced “to its essence, the security apparatus.” (82) Social

divisions based on race, ethnicity, gender, and other differences within the working class are manipulated throughout the culture to prevent unification and political mobilization. The racist nature of the criminal “justice” system undergirds these social divisions through its exercise of a punishing level of military force in African American neighborhoods.⁵

Johnson devotes Chapter 8 to a fine-grained description of how our current “super rogue” warfare state developed and today carries out its strategy of “official terrorism,” and what the impact of our “imperial ambition” has been on the peoples of the world, from Afghanistan to Iraq to Libya and beyond. He believes that considering the totality of this development, the United States is moving toward a new form of fascism. However, I question his lumping together under that label a variety of authoritarian regimes (from Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy to Franco’s Spain, Imperial Japan, and even South American military dictatorships) that differ in the class composition of their oligarchies, their mass bases (if any), the economic juncture that gave rise to them, and their outcomes.

In the following chapter Johnson, again in microscopic detail, describes the ruling ideology of capital and its program: neoliberalism, closely associated with globalization, financial deregulation, and “the commodification of useful services to bring all cultural, social, and economic activity into the sphere of capital,” otherwise known as privatization. (145) He takes Greece as a sad case study of the results of these policies. In the United States, these consequences take the familiar form of the loss of manufacturing jobs due to NAFTA and other trade deals.

This program has of course generated opposition: Podemos in Spain, the apparently failed Syriza in Greece, the isolated and splintered left in France and Germany, and the right-populist parties throughout Europe. Johnson describes how elected governments of the left, as in Ecuador and Bolivia, have been trying to extricate themselves from the period

of dependent development and poverty for the masses, with mixed results due to a continuing dependence on primary-goods exports to generate capital. Also, every effort to improve the living standards of the working class and the indigenous population, including in Cuba and Venezuela, has met with intense opposition from local bourgeois elements, often backed by the United States. The hostility to reforms on the part of the U.S. oligarchy and its state, extending to coups and attempted coups, is well known.

Johnson has long been an enthusiastic supporter of the Cuban Revolution and of Chavez' "Venezuelan socialism." He claims that Cuba continues to "develop its substantive democracy of mass participation." (174) Meanwhile Venezuelan "socialism" appears to have degenerated into chaos. Johnson attributes all shortcomings to the problem of dependence on exports (sugar, oil) and to hostility and economic sanctions by the United States. There is no doubt that both problems have been severe impediments to progress. But are these sufficient explanations? That question is outside the scope of this review.⁶

What is to be done? Johnson cautions that we should not allow the apparently overwhelming power of the oligarchy to send us into apathy. Persistent struggle, including for incremental reforms, is necessary. Johnson suggests that among first demands must be the dismantling of the CIA and the prosecution of war crimes committed by America's own leaders. But he is clear that we must go far beyond the mild social democracy of a Bernie Sanders. For example, we should demand the nationalization of banks and the public ownership of the corporations that currently control access to water, health, transportation, education, and electric power. Is this naïve in the era of Trump? No, he seems to say, asking us to recall the popular 1968 slogan, "Be Realistic, Imagine the Impossible." (245)

He warns against impatience: "A counter-hegemony project takes time and experience to

bring about." (247) He then describes a range of "post-Sanders" formations, such as Our Revolution, as hopeful signs. Johnson thinks the notion of turning the Democratic Party in a truly progressive direction is "an unlikely scenario," (242) and is similarly skeptical of labor unions being able to force significant changes in the near future. Nevertheless, Johnson is hopeful that the agglomeration of activists and the present broad range of protests are signs that divisions can be overcome and that a "Democratic Socialism for the 21st Century" is possible. (237)

In a lengthy appendix Johnson provides the reader with somewhat scattered lists of movement websites, blogs, relevant publishers, research groups, and other resistance sites. This is followed by an index that is so short as to be practically useless.

Dale Johnson has provided us with what amounts to a textbook on contemporary international capitalism and how to fight it. The book represents a lifetime of engaged scholarship, and given its macro-level approach, makes a unique contribution to our understanding of world events. Its title, *Social Inequality, Economic Decline, and Plutocracy*, is somewhat off-putting (the subtitle, *An American Crisis*, is more to the point), and the book carries an unfortunate price tag that puts it out of reach of any but a decreasing number of wealthy university libraries. I hope a paperback edition is forthcoming.

NOTES

1. Disclosure: Dale Johnson and I were colleagues and political allies at Livingston College, Rutgers University in New Brunswick, N.J., from about 1970 until our retirements.
2. See, for example, Domhoff, "Interlocking Directorates in the Corporate Community," and Domhoff, Clifford Staples, and Adam Schneider, "Interlocks and Interactions Among the Power Elite: The Corporate Community, Think Tanks, Policy-Discussion Groups, and Government," www.whorulesamerica.net.
3. See, for example, Richard Hyman and Robert Price (eds.), *The New Working Class? White-Collar Workers and Their Organizations* (Macmillan, 1983); Martin Oppenheimer, *White Collar Politics* (Monthly Review,

1985); Richard Sobel, *The White Collar Working Class* (Praeger, 1989).

4. This point has a long history. See C. Wright Mills, *White Collar* (Oxford, 1956).

5. It is not true, however, that a majority of people killed by police are Black. While it is true that young Black men are killed at about seven times the rate of whites, the absolute figures show that more whites than Blacks

are killed by police in any given year.

6. However, for a left criticism see Gabriel Hetland, "Why Is Venezuela Spiraling out of Control," NACLA.org/news/2017/05/03; "Why Is Venezuela in Crisis?" *The Nation* (Aug. 17, 2016); Jeffrey Webber, "Venezuela: What's Going On?" *Against the Current* (No. 185, Nov.-Dec. 2016); and Samuel Farber, "Building Socialism in Cuba," *Jacobin*, Oct. 12, 2016.

Keynes, the Rabble, and Revolution

JOHN LEPLEY

IN 1942 BRITISH ECONOMIST John Maynard Keynes got an advance preview of Lord William Beveridge's report, *Social Insurance and Allied Services*. In it, Beveridge proposed a comprehensive system of social security that ran the gamut from full employment to national health care so as to eliminate "Want, Disease, Ignorance, Squalor, and Idleness" from the United Kingdom. Keynes, who had become famous for

The Economic Consequences of the Peace, which he wrote in the aftermath of World War I, and for his 1936 magnum opus, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money*, initially read the report with enthusiasm, but his attention soon lapsed. As Geoff Mann writes in *In the Long Run We're All Dead: Keynesianism, Political Economy and Revolution*, Keynes "seems to have had no interest in the institutional structure of

politics of the welfare state that now bears his name." (281) One might say that Keynes acted in a very non-Keynesian manner, but as *In the Long Run* tells us, "Keynesianism" has been adulterated so much that the real McCoy is hard to find.

Keynes died in 1946, but the 2007–2008 financial crisis practically summoned him to life. As Bear Stearns, Lehman Brothers, and other pillars of finance capitalism

crashed, lawmakers and pundits began hawking Keynesian medicine in every outlet that would publish them. Why, Mann wonders, do progressives and the left (neither of which he explicitly defines) always embrace the patron saint of automatic stabilizers and deficit spending in disastrous moments? Thankfully, however, *In the Long Run* is not another doorstopper about the recent financial crisis; instead, it asks what Keynes meant and examines the origins of "Keynesian reasoning." It is a frustrating but occasionally rewarding book to read.

In the Long Run We're All Dead: Keynesianism, Political Economy and Revolution

GEOFF MANN

Verso Press, 2017, 432 pp., \$23.96

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Mann advances several arguments throughout *In the Long Run*. Significantly, he claims that Keynes was not the first Keynesian (sort of like saying that Christ was not the first Christian). According to this logic, Hegel—yes, the philosopher who inspired young Marx—was “Keynesian.” Mann is excessive with counterfactual reasoning, but this is one of the most solid parts of his thesis. “They [Hegel and Keynes] were both driven by the constant specter of a calamitous past and a present that seemed volatile and about to explode,” he explains. (38) The upheaval wrought by the French Revolution absorbed the former long after the events of 1789 transpired; for the latter, the collapse of laissez-faire liberalism and the destruction caused by World War I had a comparable effect. Thus, contrary to received wisdom, Mann contends that Keynes did not set out to save capitalism in the 1930s with the *General Theory*, but to save civilization, that is, its bourgeois variety.

The second major argument Mann makes is that Keynesianism is an “immanent critique of both revolutionary radicalism and the ‘classical’ liberalism that was emerging at the end of the eighteenth century and held sway in Europe until World War I.” (71) Widespread immiseration cast an ugly shadow on the promises of capitalist abundance, but Hegel and Marx recoiled from the “rabble” and the “lumpenproletariat.” It is here that Mann offers this provocative statement: “I will suggest that one of the most important reasons that Keynes remains so compelling to so many, wittingly or unwittingly, whether or not they understand themselves as on the Left, is that the specter of this rabble haunts the ‘progressive’ political imagination.” (76)

Who is “the rabble” and how do they “haunt” the “progressive” mind? And what did Keynes have to do with this? Just as nobody in *Monty Python* expected the Spanish Inquisition, most readers would not anticipate 100-plus pages on Hegel and the French Revolution in a book about Keynes. But this is no ordinary

academic study (the publisher, Verso Press, specializes in independent radical material). Mann begins this section with Robespierre, one of history’s most wretched figures, who struggled in vain to reconcile the revolution’s emancipatory promises with the demands made by the “rabble.” Enter Hegel. Born in 1770, and dying in 1831, the German philosopher’s life coincided with world-historical events that shaped modern conceptions of freedom and liberty, particularly the American and French revolutions and the Napoleonic Wars. Hegel, according to Mann, helped erect the intellectual scaffolding for political economy, that is, the modern science of government, in *Elements of the Philosophy of the Right* and other writings. Says Mann,

This political economy is postrevolutionary by definition, and, unsurprisingly, constructed more or less consciously as an antirevolutionary science, born of the desire to maintain some stability in the process of change and, in so doing, to rescue modernity in ways that may be “truer” to its concept—concrete freedom. (165)

Those who are familiar with Hegel will enjoy reading these middle chapters (hat tip to my friend R.S. for pointing out that Mann’s sparse references to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* might raise eyebrows). However, the mortals who think he is a tough nut to crack should skip to the concluding chapter of this section, “A Theory of Political Economy.” Here, Mann argues that Hegel and Keynes both believed that “political economy” ought to separate, in a true oxymoronic sense, the economic from the political. In plain English, he means that the modern science of political economy is about the “organization of *legitimation*” (original emphasis) and not the rationalization of distribution and production. (202)

The remaining chapters include Mann’s exegetical readings of Keynes’s *The General Theory* and Thomas Piketty’s *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, and his concluding

thoughts on Keynesianism in the twenty-first century. The best part is a brief discussion of the Polish economist Michael Kalecki, whom Mann considers “a Keynesian economist with some radical political sympathies and thus more willing than most to take Marxist ideas seriously.” (292) Kalecki is best known for his 1943 essay “Political Aspects of Full Employment,” in which he described how capitalism’s failure to maintain full employment created a fertile breeding ground for fascism. Mann cites several of Keynes’s other contemporaries throughout *In the Long Run*; unfortunately, Karl Polanyi, author of *The Great Transformation*, which was published in 1944, is not among them. The Hungarian scholar (Polanyi is described as either an historian, an economist, an anthropologist, or some combination thereof) and the British economist certainly shared similar concerns. James Buchanan, the late economist recently brought into the spotlight by Nancy MacLean’s *Democracy in Chains*, does garner two mentions in *In the Long Run*.

In the Long Run is like a conversation between a philosopher and an economist that, to the chagrin of interested passersby, is awash with inside jargon. In an age of hyperspecialization, Mann is to be recognized for crossing the disciplinary boundaries of economics, history, and philosophy while engaging contemporary issues. His arguments are bold and sure to prompt challenges from specialists and laypeople alike.

In terms of scale, *In the Long Run* is on par with *To the Finland Station*, although Mann does not write with the novelistic grace that made Edmund Wilson’s subjects come alive. Of course, each writer has his or her own style. Mann writes as an activist-professor while Wilson sharpened his pen in combat with writers and critics in the halcyon days of the New York intellectuals. On the other hand, perhaps Keynes the technocrat economist, despite the brilliance of his ideas, simply does not stir the imagination, which is Mann’s point. “The economic problem is not too difficult to solve. If you leave it to me, I will look after it,” Keynes told Britons during the Great Depression. (54) He did not want the masses to rise up; he wanted them to let him manage the economy while they went about their lives.

Keynes first wrote the phrase, “In the long run we are all dead,” in 1924, and he invoked it again in 1937 under different circumstances. On the latter occasion he elaborated, “The best we can do is put off disaster, if only in the hope, which is not necessarily a remote one, that something will turn up.” (13-14) Mann concludes *In the Long Run* on a similar note. In an age of Trump we have no choice but to build on hope wherever it blossoms. The verdict is still out on whether that makes us “Keynesian” and whether we should entrust our futures to distant elites.

Socialism or Ecocide

JASON SCHULMAN

*E*COSOCIALISM: *A Radical Alternative to Capitalist Catastrophe*, while excellent and valuable in its own right, isn't quite the introduction to "green Marxism" that one might have expected. Michael Löwy is a veteran for decades of the democratic revolutionary left in France and a frequent contributor to *New Politics*. He provides, in *Ecosocialism*, five chapters—at least two of which have appeared elsewhere—making the case that, as Marx himself foresaw in *The German Ideology*, "productive forces in capitalism are becoming destructive forces, creating the risk of physical annihilation for millions of human beings" (ix). As Richard Smith has argued in these pages, any attempt at "green capitalism" simply will not work—and Löwy agrees, as capitalism's expand-or-die dynamic, its "short-sighted calculation of profit and loss" (8), will undermine at every turn any market-oriented attempt to defeat climate change. There is no alternative, one might say, but to "challenge the [capitalist] mode of production itself" in order to "suppress useless and/or dangerous production," to "replace fossil fuels with renewable energy sources," and, moreover, to break with the illusion that "individual asceti-

cism and penitence" (x) can provide a solution to the ecological crisis. (In the real world, such asceticism is always expected more of the "average person" than of the ruling class, whose luxury consumerism does far more ecological damage than consumption by any individual in the working class or peasantry.)

Löwy convincingly explains that there is no reason for "red" and "green" ideas to be at odds. After all, "both socialism and ecology appeal to qualitative values—for the socialists, use value,

the satisfaction of needs, social equality; for the ecologists, protecting nature and ecological balance" (2). In the book's opening chapter, originally published in *Capitalism Nature Socialism* in 2005, Löwy puts forth what has increasingly become a sort of "common wisdom" on the radical left: "Ecologists are mistaken if they imagine they can do without the Marxian critique of capitalism. An ecology that does not recognize the relation between 'productivism' and the logic of profit is destined to fail—or, worse, to become absorbed by the system" (5). The history of European Green parties, once heralded as leftist alternatives to Social Democratic parties but now, at best, their junior partners in government, makes this quite clear. The now-marginal "deep ecology" current in "green" thought is of no use either, as its anti-humanism is not only incapable of building a movement that could actualize its goals, but embraces a pure relativ-

Ecosocialism: A Radical Alternative to Capitalist Catastrophe

MICHAEL LÖWY

Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2015.
120 pp. \$15.

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ism that places “all living species on the same plane” (6). Finally, a critique of consumption that lacks a Marxist class analysis fails to realize that what must be called into question is “the prevalent *type* of consumption, based as it is on ostentation, waste, mercantile alienation, and an accumulationist obsession” (9). This doesn’t mean that immediate radical reforms would be of no use, and as Löwy notes, it would be sectarian for socialists to stand aside from the battles for such reforms that are already going on, particularly in the Global South. (Löwy goes into great detail, all of it useful, on the Brazilian fight to save the Amazonian forest and devotes a chapter to the “Ecosocial Struggles of Indigenous Peoples.”) But it does mean that unless the road of what the left often calls “non-reformist reform” ultimately leads to a rupture with capitalism, the fight for such reforms will be in vain; witness the frequent formal acknowledgement of pro-ecology demands that are “empty[d]... of content,” the Kyoto Protocol being the most obvious example (11).

Although Löwy engages in perhaps too much name-dropping in this book—he almost seems to think that the audience for *Ecosocialism* primarily consists of people who have heard of everyone from James O’Connor to Elmar Alvater—his discussion of socialists who historically had too little “ecological consciousness” is insightful. And he doesn’t limit his critique to the “socialists” who constituted the ruling elite of the so-called Communist countries, who ruled over societies that mirrored the productivism of capitalist ones, with disastrous consequences (such as the Chernobyl calamity). For example, Michael Albert, advocate of “participatory economics,” comes in for criticism for advocating a type of “planning” that echoes “the existing technological and productive structure, and is too ‘economistic’ to take into account the global, sociopolitical, and socioecological interests of the population ... which cannot be reduced to their economic interests as producers and consumers” (31). More notably, Löwy criticizes the

late Marxist political economist Ernest Mandel, the foremost representative of the (Trotskyist) Fourth International, to which Löwy belongs. He points out that Mandel, while an eloquent advocate of democratic economic planning, didn’t incorporate an ecological critique of capitalism into his thought until the late 1980s; prior to that, he expressed skepticism of “rapid changes in consumer habits, such as the private car. ... [Mandel] seriously underestimates the impact that a system of extensive and free-of-charge public transports would have, as well as the assent of the majority of the citizens ... for measures restricting automobile circulation” (107-8).

Ecosocialism is not without its flaws. A few too many times—reflecting inadequate editing, perhaps—Löwy tells us that not only were social democracy and Stalinism productivist in both theory and practice, not only did the (anti-Stalinist) Marxist movement take too long to embrace an anti-productivist viewpoint, but that Marx and Engels themselves are somewhat “guilty” of productivism: “Passages in their writings to the effect that socialism will permit the development of productive forces beyond the limits imposed on them by the capitalist system imply that socialist transformation concerns only the capitalist relations of production, which have become an obstacle ... to the free development of the existing productive forces” (21). Löwy goes so far as to suggest that the Soviet Union was an expression of this conception.

This is overstated. The question of Marx’s ostensible quasi-productivism has already been discussed at length in John Bellamy Foster’s *Marx’s Ecology* (2000). Further, the capitalism of the nineteenth century was hardly as destructively productive as the capitalism of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries; if for no other reason than to ensure that everyone could be certain that they would receive an adequate amount of consumer goods, there was good reason for Marx and Engels to posit that socialism itself would involve “developing the

productive forces” beyond what then existed under European and American capitalism. Hence the idea in Marx’s *Critique of the Gotha Program* (1875) that communism (socialism) would have first and second stages: the first characterized by relative scarcity (an inheritance from capitalism), the second involving not a complete transcendence of scarcity but the saturation of demand (as Mandel often wrote). At the time this wasn’t in tension with the Marxist understanding that “production for the sake of production” typifies capitalism; such production, then as now, was plainly not about guaranteeing that all people would have their basic needs met, let alone ensuring that everyone would be able to develop their innate talents and abilities to their greatest extent. Today, with capitalism literally threatening so much life on earth, a reconceptualization of socialist “stages” and the working class “taking over the productive forces” is certainly necessary—Löwy’s superb critique of the unbelievably wasteful advertising industry is particularly pointed—but to critique Marx and Engels for occasional “productivism” is essentially anachronistic.

Again, *Ecosocialism* is probably not the best introduction to “red-green” analysis; Chris Williams’ *Ecology and Socialism* (Haymarket Books, 2010) is overall the better bet. But Löwy’s book still deserves a wide readership—brief, informative, and insightful, it could act as a sort of an eco-Marxist “volume two” after Williams’ work. If, to coin a phrase, we aren’t yet “all ecosocialists now,” we certainly should be; we clearly *must* be.



**Time’s up,
Trump!**



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