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From the Editors

WE ARE IN INTERESTING TIMES. Across the globe a new wave of social protests has erupted. They stretch from Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon to Hong Kong; from Algeria and Sudan to France and Catalunya. They have taken place in Puerto Rico and Haiti, and they have shaken Latin America with upheavals in Chile, Colombia, and Ecuador. Sparked by various issues, they have in common their opposition to the effects of neoliberalism and climate chaos, authoritarianism, and governmental corruption. Most demand solutions to increasing economic inequality, an end to political and patriarchal repression, and full democratic rights. Some have called for constituent assemblies and new constitutions. While many lean to the left, their political character is diverse and complex.

These uprisings have often been driven by the poor and self-employed, precarious workers, women, and the indigenous. Almost everywhere governments have responded with violent repression: rubber bullets that contain metal, water cannons loaded with toxic chemicals, tear gas canisters used like bazookas and aimed by police at protestors' eyes. Still, the movements regroup and continue their struggles.

We are witnessing, in this global battle against the neoliberal capitalist and sexist order, the continuing steps in the process of the reconstitution of a radical working class within broader movements for democracy and social justice. While each situation must be carefully evaluated, we at *New Politics* support these new movements.

Two articles in this issue highlight some of the international uprisings of 2019. Rafael

Bernabe analyzes the political crisis in Puerto Rico this past summer and Kevin Anderson discusses the Sudan revolution. Other internationally centered articles include Donald C. Wood on "Civil Resistance to Japanese Militarism" and John Trumbour's "Questions for the International Left."

We feature several articles that examine socialist history and theory. Ndindi Kitonga explores colonial racism and emancipatory alternatives from the perspective of Frantz Fanon's writings. Matthew Quest offers a critical review of the recent book on Walter Rodney's writings on the Russian Revolution. Brian Ward takes up the important issue of settler-colonialism and capitalism from a Marxist viewpoint in the context of Turtle Island. Two contributors, our editorial board member Stephen Shalom and Nicholas Cocomma, discuss the issue of sortition—election by lottery—as a means toward radically democratic politics.

Turning to the United States, Kit Wainer and Mel Bienenfeld, in "Problems with the Electoral Road to Socialism," discuss some key issues for socialists participating in the presidential electoral process, continuing a discussion begun at *Jacobin* magazine. *Jacobin* decided not to publish this article, but we invite the authors critiqued within it to reply in a future issue. In a major intervention on the issue of a single-payer health care system, Mark Dudzic discusses the problem of employment-based health care plans.

We also have two essays on U.S. labor and politics: Avery Wear on the contemporary relevance of syndicalism for the rank and file strategy that is currently being discussed by

new labor militants in the wave of strikes that have swept across the country, and Martin Oppenheimer remembering and celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. In addition, Brian Jones replies to an earlier article by Cedric Johnson on Black socialist organizing in America.

This issue's book reviews include Alexandra Holmstrom-Smith on Sophie Lewis's *Full Surrogacy Now: Feminism Against Family*, Matthew Strauss on August Nimtz's *Marxism Versus Liberalism: Comparative Real-Time Political Analysis*, our co-editor Jason Schulman on Paul Adler's *The 99 Percent Economy: How Democratic Socialism Can Overcome the Crises of Capitalism*, and Dan Gallin, the former general secretary of the IUF, a "union

of unions" comprising 388 trade unions in 124 countries, discusses "The AFL-CIO's Cold War."

Interspersed throughout the issue are three poems by Sam Friedman, and we include a feminist anthem that began in Chile and has spread around the world.

We hope you enjoy this issue. If you do, please consider supporting this magazine so that we can continue to cover and analyze such crucial attempts to overcome the catastrophes produced by the capitalist system.

SAULO M. COLÓN ZAVALA
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The Puerto Rican Summer

RAFAEL BERNABE

THE SUMMER OF 2019 WILL GO down as a major moment in Puerto Rico's history. Between July 10 and 25, street protests—unprecedented in their intensity, persistence, diversity, and size—led to an unprecedented result: The Island's highest government official was forced to resign. Never, under Spanish or U.S. rule, had a governor been forced to leave office through mass mobilizations from below. An indignant population was not willing to wait for the 2020 elections, not even for an impeachment process to be initiated and completed, to remove Governor Ricardo Rosselló from office: Bypassing institutional forms and calendars, unflagging protests demanded and obtained the departure of Rosselló, who until the end claimed that he had not broken any laws.

The July Days

Two events triggered the first picket lines in front of La Fortaleza, the governor's residence in Old San Juan, and the initial calls for Rosselló's resignation. On July 9 the press leaked several pages of a conversation on the messaging app Telegram between Rosselló and some of his closest collaborators. The chat was full of sexist and homophobic comments and of attacks formulated in vile and vulgar language

on the press, political opponents, and even some members of the governor's own party. The following day, several members and former members of the Rosselló administration (among them Julia Keleher, former secretary of education) were arrested by the FBI and indicted for corruption.

Beginning on July 9 with a few dozen activists, pickets grew in size with each passing day, reaching several hundred by Friday July 12. Early on Saturday, the Centro de Periodismo Investigativo, a noncommercial independent press center, released an 889-page transcript of Rosselló's Telegram chat with his aides and collaborators. The level of chicanery, contempt for others, dishonesty, sexism, and homophobia was sickening. That day, close to a thousand gathered in front of La Fortaleza in a protest that ran continuously from noon until past midnight. At one point the protestors moved to the back gate of La Fortaleza (the access actually used by vehicles entering or leaving the governor's mansion), where the first serious skirmishes with the police took place.

On Sunday July 14, a march by several public school teachers organizations, planned before these events, became a major protest, with several thousand participants demanding Rosselló's resignation. Protests continued after the march arrived at La Fortaleza in midafternoon. By nightfall, the first significant violent confrontation ensued, as the police tried to clear the streets around La Fortaleza. This became a fixture of these demonstrations: At some point around midnight the police moved to clear the streets of Old San Juan, pepper-spraying the crowd,

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inundating the city with tear gas, and sometimes firing rubber bullets. As the saying went at the time, “In Puerto Rico the Constitution goes to bed at midnight.”

On Monday July 15, the mobilizations took a huge step forward, as two protests, a march from the Capitol building to La Fortaleza called by the Movimiento Victoria Ciudadana (Citizens Victory Movement) and several labor organizations, and a rally in front of La Fortaleza called by the *Colectiva Feminista en Construcción* (Feminist Collective in Construction), the well-known singer iLe, and other individuals and groups, converged and flooded the narrow streets of Old San Juan with close to 20,000 protestors. That night, while the latter battled with the police in the streets of the Old City, several labor unions, political organizations, and collectives, in collaboration with a set of artists (including iLe and representatives of Residente, who was in contact with Bad Bunny and soon joined by Ricky Martin) agreed to

Puerto Rico’s economy,
measured by real GDP, has
shrunk by about 1 percent
annually since 2006.² Close to
250,000, or 20 percent, of the
jobs that existed in 2006 have
disappeared.

call a new march for Wednesday July 17, from the Capitol to the Plaza Quinto Centenario.

The gathering also agreed on a set of basic demands besides the resignation of Rosselló, including the audit of Puerto Rico’s debt and a moratorium on debt payments until it was completed, an end to austerity measures against working people, and the declaration of a state of emergency to address violence

against women.

On July 17 around 200,000 marched demanding the governor’s resignation. This was already the second-largest march ever held in Puerto Rico, only surpassed at that moment by the February 2000 march against the occupation of Vieques by the U.S. Navy. The daily rallies continued in front of La Fortaleza, while protests erupted in towns around the Island. On Friday July 19, a march called by the union movement again filled the streets of San Juan with several thousand protestors.

By then a call for a *paro* (one-day strike) on Monday July 22 had begun to circulate on Facebook and other social media. On Saturday July 20, a meeting of the major unions decided to pick up this call and to provide the logistics to make the mass protest action possible.

On July 22 between 800,000 and a million people filled San Juan’s broadest highway, the Expreso Las Américas. This is close to a third of Puerto Rico’s total population. The equivalent would be a march of 80 or 100 million in the United States. The following day another major march, from the financial district in Hato Rey to the centrally located Hiram Bithorn Stadium, was called for July 25. By then the pressure from the street could not be resisted: Just before midnight on July 24, Governor Rosselló announced he would resign effective August 2.

The Road to 2019

What caused this tremendous social explosion? The indictment of Keleher and other government officials and the indignation provoked by the Telegram chat played a role. But government officials had faced similar accusations in the past without provoking such a response. Nor is it likely that the text of the chat alone, offensive as it is, could provoke marches of 20 thousand, then 200 thousand, then 800 thousand or a million persons. The arrests and the chat were the drops that made the proverbial cup overflow. The causes of the

summer of 2019 run deeper.

Three processes were particularly significant: first, Puerto Rico's economic depression since 2006; second, the harsh austerity policies imposed on Puerto Rico's working people since 2006 by the insular government and, after 2016, by the Federal Fiscal Oversight Board; and third, the criminal mismanagement by both insular and federal agencies of the emergency provoked by the catastrophic impact of Hurricane María in September 2017.¹

Puerto Rico's economy, measured by real GDP, has shrunk by about 1 percent annually since 2006.² Close to 250,000, or 20 percent, of the jobs that existed in 2006 have disappeared.³ The number of manufacturing jobs, which was close to 180,000 in the late 1990s, now hovers around 70,000. The labor participation rate fluctuates around 40 percent. Migration to the United States has accelerated, as thousands seek employment they cannot secure in Puerto Rico. Population has fallen from around 3.8 million in 2010 to an estimated 3 million today (some estimates go as low as 2.9 million). Many in the younger generation feel that they have no future in Puerto Rico. Over this period of worsening material conditions, a feeling combining anger and hopelessness simmered in many minds. People were torn between resignation and the desire for change.

Since 2006, the government of Puerto Rico responded to the worsening economic situation and its decreased income with increased borrowing.⁴ Total public debt grew 64 percent between 2006 and 2014, from \$43 to \$73 billion. Inevitably, servicing the growing debt demanded an increasing portion of the public budget. By 2014 more was spent servicing the debt than financing the public school system. Default on debt payments was a matter of time. On June 29, 2015, the governor of Puerto Rico admitted that Puerto Rico's debt was, as he put it, "un-payable."⁵

Congress responded with the adoption in June 2016 of the Puerto Rico Oversight

Management and Stability Act, or PROMESA (*promesa* means promise in Spanish). PROMESA created a nonelected, federally appointed oversight board, with broad pow-



★ "I march for Rosaura Roque who died in darkness for lack of basic necessities"

Lisa Lyons

ers over Puerto Rico's state finances. Since its installation, the board's proposals and plans have followed the neoliberal script. The debt crisis is attributed to "big government"; economic stagnation to excessive regulation plus labor benefits and protections. The desired cures follow from this diagnosis: cutbacks in government spending, privatization, and attacks on labor rights and benefits.

Thus, since 2017 Puerto Rico's working people were faced with intensified austerity measures that worsened their material prospects, already shaken by the economic crisis. But such measures did not begin with the oversight board, or the Junta, as it is called in Puerto Rico: They go back to 2006, when the government of Puerto Rico encountered its first budget crisis, which forced it to close many agencies during a two-week period.⁶ Such austerity measures have included a new sales tax (originally 4 percent in 2006, later raised to 11 percent); mass firing of government employees (around 20,000, through

Law 7 of 2009); attacks on public employee benefits and rights (Law 66 of 2014, for example); reform of the public sector pension systems, reducing benefits and making them

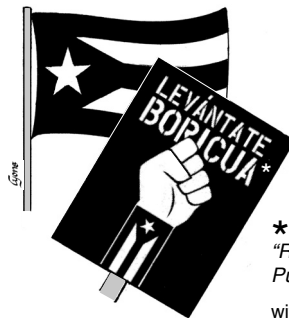
The explosion of 2019 was prepared over the years by a long series of large and small protests by student, women's, environmental, and working-class organizations.

market dependent and thus uncertain; and the gradual elimination of around 90,000 public sector jobs through attrition. In 2017, the Rosselló administration began its tenure with a labor law reform reducing private sector workers' rights to paid vacations, sick leave, and end-of-year bonuses. To this the Junta has now added further cuts in government spending (halving the budget of the University of Puerto Rico, for example), increases in the cost of government services (such as tuition at the university), proposals for further attacks on labor rights (for example, repeal of protection against arbitrary firings), and the closing of more than three hundred schools (a policy pursued by Secretary of Education Julia Keleher, now under indictment for corruption).⁷

Hard hit by economic crisis and austerity policies, Puerto Rico was overrun by Hurricane María in September 2017. The Island's deteriorated infrastructure and public services collapsed. The storm itself killed around thirty persons, but more than 4,000 died in the following weeks due to breakdown of electricity, water, transportation, and medical services and the criminal incapacity of the insular and federal governments to adequately

and rapidly address the emergency. Besides this, the storm caused an estimated \$80 billion in material damage. While protests were hard to call during the worst moments of the emergency, by 2018 memorials for the dead of María had been organized by different groups, which denounced the role of the government's negligence in this tragedy.⁸

It is not a coincidence that the summer of 2019 was sparked by the arrest of Keleher, who is associated with the closing of schools, and that some of the comments in the infamous chat that caused most indignation were the callous jokes about the bodies of the dead still stored in trucks used as makeshift morgues. Rosselló thus became the focus and target of the resentment, anger, and frustration generated by a decade of economic crisis, austerity policies, and government insensitivity and inefficiency. Needless to say, the mass rejection of sexist and homophobic comments was also magnificent and an indication of the significant, if still not sufficient, shift in Puerto Rican culture provoked by years of struggles around women's and gay rights: Comments that in the past would have been ignored or excused were massively considered sufficient grounds to demand Rosselló's resignation.



*
"Rise up
Puerto Rican"

with the black flag
of Puerto Rico,
symbol of mourning
and resistance

Lisa Lyons

The Myth of Spontaneity

Perhaps the greatest gift of the summer of 2019 was a revived feeling that things can change, that people can change them if they mobilize massively and persistently enough—in other words, that protest and struggle do work, contrary to what the commercial media and political commentators constantly assert. Fatalism and a sense of impotence were suddenly replaced by a feeling of hope and of possibility, best exemplified by the slogan “We are more and we are not afraid” (“Somos más y no tenemos miedo”).

These events demonstrate that success depends not on the increasingly radical actions of a small but militant minority but rather on the incorporation of ever-growing sectors into the movement. But this lesson should not be turned into a denial of the importance of activist organization. The summer of 2019 had no individual or collective leader or spokesperson. This has given rise to the

The movement needs to elaborate a political orientation:

It must determine how to transform its demands into state policy, something that cannot be done through the two ruling capitalist parties.

notion that the movement was an event not prepared by previous initiatives, that it was a spontaneous mobilization, promoted by “the people,” without the need for “traditional” organizations or structures.



This is wrong on two accounts. The explosion of 2019 was prepared over the years by a long series of large and small protests (pickets, rallies, *paros*, other strikes, marches, acts of civil disobedience) by student, women’s, environmental, and working-class organizations. The amazing speed with which the movement “spontaneously” embraced the idea of the *paro* cannot be explained without the many similar actions against privatization and austerity measures in the past. Those who had participated in those mobilizations easily recognized many of the “old” slogans that were now picked up by an unprecedented number of people.

Second, the largest marches, above all the July 15, 17, 22, and 25 mobilizations, did not and could have not unfolded as they did without the planning, coordination, staffing, and financing of many organizations, and, above all, labor unions, whose role in this process has not been duly recognized. Sound systems, water stations, route coordinators, speakers’ platforms do not spontaneously materialize: They are the result of conscious initiatives by organizations that complemented the desire to protest and mobilize that went far beyond their ranks. If anything, the summer of 2019 exemplified the fruitful interaction of massive, spontaneous initiatives and of organized support for them: It is that interaction that we

must seek to maintain in the future.

Moving Forward

On many occasions the protests against Rosselló expressed rejection of the Junta and vowed to continue the struggle against

Puerto Rico's problem is not "party politics" but neoliberalism, the crisis of its dependent capitalism and colonialism.

its policies once the governor was forced to resign. In order for this to happen the movement needs to acquire several aspects it still lacks.

The many groups that participated in the summer of 2019 need to create a coordinating organism, a democratic, flexible structure, but a coordinating structure nonetheless. They need to formulate and agree on a minimum program to inform and guide their actions (including such issues as the debt, privatization, pensions, austerity measures, women's needs and rights, economic reconstruction, renewable energy, food sovereignty, and decolonization, among others). And the movement needs to elaborate a political orientation: It must determine how to transform its demands into state policy, something that cannot be done through the two ruling capitalist parties, the Partido Nuevo Progresista and the Partido Popular Democrático (the New Progressive Party and the Popular Democratic Party).

Put otherwise, the movement must make sure that its merits do not become the source of one-sided conclusions. The movement was characterized by the healthy absence of self-proclaimed "vanguards," the lack of bu-

reaucratic control by union or other leaders, and by a widespread mistrust and rejection of traditional politicians and of the two corrupt dominant electoral machines. But these strong points must not become the source of self-defeating practices. Rejection of "vanguards" and of bureaucratic control should not lead to a cult of spontaneous action or an underestimation of the need for organization and coordination. Rejection of corrupt politics and electoral machines should not collapse into rejection of politics, dismissal of the need for political organization, or a blanket opposition to electoral participation. Recognition and celebration of the wonderful commitment of Puerto Rican artists and stars must not lead to reliance on celebrities (which the press is always happy to promote) nor obscure the need for a well-defined program.

An unfortunate discourse present in the mobilizations and in some of the assemblies organized in the following weeks called on participants not to bring the banners or insignias of political parties to the mobilizations. This idea was rooted in the justified rejection and mistrust of the two corrupt electoral machines, but it was also linked to the notion that parties and political "colors" divide the people and that unity requires or benefits from their suppression. In some cases, the argument



* "Ricky resign and take the PROMESA board with you!"

Lisa Lyons

seems to be that parties and party politics are Puerto Rico's fundamental problem.

This, which we have called the "politics of anti-politics," is wrong on several accounts.⁹ It confuses unity with uniformity. It censors political expression. Unity does not require either. All groups and organizations, even political organizations and parties, should be free to bring their banners, flags, or literature. Furthermore, it is wrong to think that parties divide the people: Class and other divisions exist, with or without the presence of political parties. Puerto Rico's problem is not "party politics" but neoliberalism, the crisis of its dependent capitalism and colonialism. The movement cannot ignore politics or the need for a political program. Such a program can only emerge through open debate and the critical examination of different proposals and political projects, whose advocates should be welcomed to present and circulate them.

To orient our present struggle, we have suggested a minimum program, which is, of course, subject to discussion and amendment:

1. Revoke PROMESA.
2. Maintain the stay on claims by creditors on Puerto Rico's public debts.
3. Audit the debt, annul the illegitimate portion of it, and renegotiate the remainder with three priorities: protecting pensions, protecting essential public services, and retaining resources required for economic renewal.¹⁰
4. Declare a moratorium on debt payments until the audit has been completed.
5. Adopt an economic reconstruction plan, centered on reinvesting profits generated in the Island, that must include a reconsideration of the existing tax-exemption policies.
6. Stop austerity and privatization measures and revoke recent labor law reforms.
7. Democratically reform the public sector with active labor and citizen participation.
8. Self-initiate a process of decolonization and self-determination through a constitutional status convention.
9. Seek and obtain sizable funding from Congress for Puerto Rico's economic reconstruction as well as action for Puerto Rico's decolonization.

We are sure that this program is quite compatible with the needs and orientation of progressive forces in the United States.¹¹ Joint work against our common enemies must be an essential part of our shared agenda.

NOTES

1. For a more detailed discussion of this background, see Rafael Bernabe, "Puerto Rico: Economic reconstruction, debt cancellation, and self-determination," isreview.org/issue/111/puerto-rico-economic-reconstruction-debt-cancellation-and-self-determination. For wider background see César J. Ayala and Rafael Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century: A History Since 1898* (University of North Carolina Press, 2006).
2. Lara Merling, Kevin Cashman, Jake Johnston, and Mark Weisbrot, "Life After Debt in Puerto Rico: How Many More Lost Decades?" (Center for Economic and Policy Research, 2017), 6. cepr.net/publications/reports/life-after-debt-in-puerto-rico-how-many-more-lost-decades.
3. Merling et al., 6.
4. Tax revenue fell in real terms since 2005. See José Caraballo Cueto and Juan Lara, "From deindustrialization to unsustainable debt: The case of Puerto Rico" (2016), 12. homes.chass.utoronto.ca/~bobonis/CaraballoLara_PR_debt_16.pdf.
5. For further analysis on the debt crisis, see Rafael Bernabe, "Detrás de la crisis de la deuda de Puerto Rico," *CADTM*, July 30, 2015, www.cadtm.org/Detras-de-las-crisis-de-la-deuda, and "El régimen de los acreedores y la crisis de la deuda: aspectos del contexto general y el caso de Puerto Rico (2014-16)," *Revista Jurídica de la UPR*, 85:3 (2016), revistajuridica.uprp.edu/volumenes/revista-juridica-upr/volumen-85-num-3/.
6. For our analysis at the time see Rafael Bernabe, "Puerto Rico's New Era: A Crisis in Crisis Management," *NACLA Report on the Americas*, 40:6 (Dec-Nov. 2007), 15-20. nacla.org/article/puerto-rico-percentE2percent80percent99s-new-era-crisis-crisis-management.
7. For further on the austerity policies and their ideology, see Rafael Bernabe, "Punitive Neoliberal-

ism in Puerto Rico,” *Against the Current*, 191 (Nov.-Dec. 2017), solidarity-us.org/atc/191/p5117/.

8. For an analysis and proposal written soon after Hurricane María see Rafael Bernabe, “Some lessons of the hurricane,” *International Viewpoint* (7 October 2017), www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article5180.

9. See, on this, Rafael Bernabe and Manuel Rodríguez Banchs, “La política de la anti-política,” July 26, 2019, www.80grados.net/la-politica-de-la-anti-politica, and Rafael Bernabe and Manuel Rodríguez Banchs, “Verano 2019: balances y perspectivas,” August 2, 2019, www.80grados.net/verano-2019-balances-y-perspectivas.

10. In 2015 the government of Puerto Rico created a Commission for the Comprehensive Audit of the Public Credit. It was ignored by Governor Alejandro García Padilla’s administration and dissolved by the present administration. It managed to prepare two preliminary reports on central government bond issues since 2014 and Electric Power Authority bonds issued in 2013. Both found irregularities that make more than \$30 billion in debt illegal. The initial report, *Commission for the Comprehensive*

Audit of the Public Credit: Pre-audit Survey Report is found here: big.assets.huffingtonpost.com/Puerto_Rico_Commission_Interim_Report.pdf. The second pre-audit report is here: sptpr.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Second-Interim-Pre-Audit-Report-on-2013-PREPA-debt-emission-con-anejos.pdf. For well-documented arguments for radically reducing or canceling Puerto Rico’s debt see Merling et al., cited above; Pablo Gluzmann, Martín Guzmán, and Joseph E. Stiglitz, “An Analysis of Puerto Rico’s debt: Relief needs to restore debt sustainability,” *Espacios Abiertos*, 2018, 2, 3, 5. espaciosabiertos.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/DSA-English.pdf; and Joani-sabel González, “Paying bondholders not viable,” *Nuevo Día*, English web version, December 12, 2017. www.elnuevodia.com/english/english/nota/payingbondholdersisnotviable-2381610.

11. See Rafael Bernabe and Manuel Rodríguez Banchs, “Open Letter to the People of the United States from Puerto Rico, a Month After Hurricane María,” *International Viewpoint*, October 19, 2017. www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article5205.

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Sudan's Revolution of 2019

At the Crossroads of Africa and the Arab World

KEVIN B. ANDERSON

Sudan's revolution is not only Arab but also African in a way not seen in the 2011 Arab uprisings. The old regime combined Islamism and a racist form of Arabism with military rule, touching off in response a youthful, democratic, multiethnic, and pro-feminist revolutionary movement that has achieved something akin to dual power. —EDITORS

THE SUDANESE UPRISING HAS unfolded in a slow, determined manner, beginning last December. By April it drove out Omar al-Bashir, who seized power three decades ago. Since April, the uprising has dug in in the face of armed repression and has forestalled repeated attempts to keep the Bashir regime in power under another name.

At the same time, the compromises the revolutionary leadership has made with the old regime risk the slow death of the movement through disillusionment of the base. So far, however, that mass base has remained patient and determined and it is the regime that has again and again been forced to concede ground. So deep and wide is the opposition to

three decades of the Bashir regime that even the army and regime militias have shown for months some dissension within the ranks and parts of the officer corps as well, putting limits on the actions of their top commanders and threatening regime collapse. The result has been a stalemate, redolent of dual power. How long this situation can maintain itself remains to be seen.

But no matter the eventual result, we should not skip over the fact that the vast sit-in involving hundreds of thousands of people over seven weeks this spring showed a creative form of grass-roots democracy that offered an alternative to both nationalist authoritarianism and Islamism, currents that continue to hold great sway in the region. The Sudanese case is particularly interesting to study because the ideology of the Bashir regime comprised both Islamism and militarist nationalism. This meant that, in comparison to Egypt, Tunisia, Syria, or Libya in 2011, the Sudanese opposition developed in a manner independent of both of these forces of oppression. In contrast, the Egyptian movement overthrew Mubarak with the support of the Muslim Brotherhood, and then overthrew the Brotherhood's Mohamed Morsi by calling on the nationalist military to do so, something that doomed the revolution and paved the way for the iron rule of General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. (This relative sophistication of the Sudanese opposition is analyzed in Gilbert Achcar's acerbic "The Fall of Sudan's 'Morsisi'," *Jacobin*, April 14, 2019.)

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Sudan, Africa, and Arab World: A Distinctive Culture and History

By the time Sudan exploded, the Arab uprisings of 2011 seemed to have been extinguished. In Syria, the murderous Bashar al-Assad regime was inching toward victory over the insurgency, while Egypt seemed to be silent as a tomb under Sisi. But Sudan suggested that the people's aspirations for freedom and liberation have only been driven underground.

As Karl Marx proclaimed in the wake of the defeat of the 1848 revolutions, a regional series of democratic revolutions often compared to the 2011 Arab revolutions, "The revolution is dead! Long live the revolution!"

The ferment in Sudan of December 2018 was followed in February by an equally massive people's uprising in Algeria. These two uprisings, both coming seemingly out of the blue, surely troubled the sleep of all rulers in the region. As of this writing, a major uprising has broken out in Lebanon, and Egypt also saw unrest in the streets. This ferment continues even as global and regional powers aim to carve up the region for their own exploitative and imperialist/subimperialist projects, as seen most tragically in how both the United States and Russia gave the green light to Turkish President Erdogan's invasion, repression, and attempts to ethnically "cleanse" the Kurdish-dominated autonomous regions of northern Syria.

But it would be wrong to place Sudan entirely in the context of the Arab world and its contradictions while failing to take account of the sub-Saharan African dimension as well.

Let us look for a moment at this factor and several others that give Sudanese politics and society a distinctive character, sometimes in contrast to other countries of the Middle East/North Africa region. First, Sudan is an Arab country with a much stronger African identity—despite denials from its military rulers—than its North African counterparts like Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, or

Algeria. This means that events in Sudan have impacted—and been impacted by—not only the Arab world, but also sub-Saharan Africa in ways not experienced by the other Arab revolutions of 2011. The most visible indicator of this is seen in how Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali was able to mediate between the opposition and Bashir's successors among the top military leadership. Abiy Ahmed, the recipient of this year's Nobel Peace Prize, has roots in the predominantly Muslim Oromo community, Ethiopia's largest and long-oppressed ethnic group. Under his administration, which came to power in a shift at the top after years of unrest from below, the authoritarian political system has opened up and peace has been negotiated with neighboring Eritrea after decades of war and tension.

Waves emanating from these major changes across the border in Ethiopia surely impacted Sudan, which has been opening up economically to its neighbor to the southeast. In recent years, trade ties between Sudan and Ethiopia have increased markedly. Sudan is beginning to import electricity generated by dams in the Ethiopian highlands, on rivers that feed into the Nile. This has drawn Sudan closer to Ethiopia and also gotten the attention of Egypt, which is wary of any tampering with the flow of the Nile or its tributaries. At the same time, Sudan has in recent years become the largest investor in Ethiopia, besides China.

As the acclaimed Sudanese writer Jamal Moujib noted recently:

At the edge of the Arab world, the country has always sought recognition. Its character is unique. Historical links tie us, ethnically and culturally, to our African neighbors to the south and the west. During the 1960s and 1970s, there were several attempts to define, via poetry, this singular cultural heritage, by drawing together these African and Arab elements. But this was generally forgotten in later times. Islam was always

part of the culture, but only partially. The symbolism that emerged from the revolution has shown this clearly, making explicit reference to the country's pre-Islamic history and the matriarchal Nubian culture, personified by the figure of "Kandaka," the queen mother. All of this was incarnated in the image that went viral of a young woman, Alaa Salah, perched on a car and leading the chants at a protest

("Pour éviter le désastre, le Soudan doit repartir de zéro," *Le Monde*, October 20–21, 2019).

The chant went as follows, with each line ending with the word "*Thawra* [Revolution]."

Their nonsense (Revolution)

They burned us in the name of religion (Revolution)

They killed us in the name of religion (Revolution)

They jailed us in the name of religion (Revolution)

Second, the Bashir regime committed outright genocide against some of its minority populations that had strong ties to Africa, in an effort to "Arabize" the country. The genocidal wars carried out by Bashir and most of his predecessors in the 1970s–1990s targeted the largely non-Muslim African population of what is today South Sudan, which broke away to form an independent country in 2011. (That oil-rich new nation has been stillborn, amid horrific warlordist fighting among its political leadership.) During the long years of Sudan's war against the South, some two million died as a result of murder and famine, amid mass enslavement and rape of the southern population. Later, in the first decade of this century, the Bashir regime also committed genocide against the predominantly Muslim but non-Arab population of the Darfur region, which had dared to mount resistance against its racialized second-class status. Bashir subcontracted the repression to the brutal Janjaweed militias, which financed themselves from pillage while committing

mass rape and murder, with the death toll estimated at up to 400,000 people. During those same years, the regime also attacked the Nuba peoples of Kordofan provinces, again a mainly Muslim but African-identified ethnic group, killing tens of thousands. These three genocides—in South Sudan, Darfur, and the Nubian mountains—exposed, among other things, the fact that anti-Black racism is not confined to European and North American societies. At the same time, this eventually forced the democratic opposition to come to terms more with the country's multiethnic character, in order to combat a regime whose ideological basis lay to a great extent in racist appeals to the Arab-identified majority.

Third, the Bashir regime used a form of Islamism linked to the Muslim Brotherhood as an ideology of legitimization ever since coming to power in 1989. This led to brutal repression of women's self-expression, as seen in the public floggings of hundreds of women and girls for violating its notion of "proper" dress codes by wearing trousers and the like. Initially, Bashir even flirted with Al Qaeda, but in the wake of the September 11, 2001, attacks, he offered full cooperation with the United States against that terroristic form of international Islamism, all the while maintaining a harsh, religion-tinged dictatorship internally. Three decades of Islamist ideology as a cloak for dictatorship alienated the population from Islamism of any kind, giving the 2019 revolution a more explicitly secular and feminist character than its 2011 Arab counterparts.

Fourth, in addition to this history of Islamism, Sudan once had a large Marxist left, dominated by a pro-Russian Communist Party, and socialist ideas seem to persist to this day among some parts of the intellectuals and the working class.

Winter 2018–2019: The Uprising Builds

In late December 2018, crowds began to gath-

er in a number of cities, first in the hundreds and then in the thousands, sparked by Bashir's ending of subsidies for wheat and fuel under pressure from international financial institutions. This gave the movement economic as well as democratic demands, something that solidified its working-class support. By December 26, a nationwide unlimited general strike was declared by the underground Sudanese Professional Association (SPA), a large network involving unions of lawyers, engineers, teachers, journalists, and medical doctors, with many of the last in leadership positions. Formed a few years ago, the SPA from the start highlighted low wages and continues to call for a minimum wage amid mass pauperization, in addition to democratic political demands.

Bashir's outside supporters in the region—Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates, among others—sought to prop him up as best they could. In one bizarre move, Bashir, who could accept few international invitations due to an indictment for genocide by the International Criminal Court, visited Damascus, where he was embraced by Assad. The photo of the two murderous leaders together on the eve of Bashir's fall is priceless.

By mid-January of this year, daily protests were rocking the country. Twenty-seven-year-old Dr. Babiker Salama became an early martyr of the revolution on January 17, gunned down in cold blood while asking security officers to allow him to evacuate a wounded man. The regime tried to blame his death on "Communists," to no avail. In February, Bashir reshuffled all his government ministers, declared a state of emergency, and promised not to run in the 2020 elections, again to no avail.

April: Generals Push Out Bashir

On April 11, Bashir was ousted by his own military and placed under house arrest. During the week before, hundreds of thousands

kept demonstrating, many of them encamped outside the national military headquarters in Khartoum, where Bashir lived in a closely guarded compound. As the situation reached crisis dimensions, some soldiers went over to the people, clashing with others who wanted to attack the demonstrators. At this point, the notorious Janjaweed militia, redubbed the Rapid Response Force in recent years, was called in to patrol the capital, once again to no avail. Sara Abdelgalil, spokesperson for the SPA, greeted the ouster of Bashir with scorn, however: "What has been just staged is for us a coup, and it is not acceptable" (*New York Times*, April 12, 2019). They demanded a fully civilian government as the streets erupted with the chant, "It fell once, it can fall again." Many rank-and-file soldiers solidarized with the demonstrators.

During the next few weeks, protesters remained in large numbers outside the military headquarters, as the SPA issued a series of specific demands that included a purge of wide sectors of the state, military, and legal apparatus. The SPA also demanded no rush to elections before a completely civilian provisional government was in place and civil society could begin to reconstitute itself after three decades of repression. The post-Bashir regime was centered on some older generals but with Janjaweed commander Mohamed "Hemeti" Hamdan Dagolo exercising a very important influence, if not constituting the real power within the armed forces.

Reactionary regional powers like Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt immediately announced support for the refurbished military regime, with the oil kingdoms also pledging new financing.

May: Flowering of Democracy and Liberation Amid Stalemate

From mid-April until June 3, real grass-roots democracy flourished on the streets of Khartoum and other cities, as the demonstrators refused to budge and the military could not

yet decide on how to respond. In Khartoum, crowds as large as 500,000 filled the streets twenty-four hours a day, with many camping outside on the plaza facing military headquarters.

"Bread and dignity" was the chant of the hour, while "All power to civilians, that the military depart, or a general strike will take place," was its more political version. Women were everywhere in the forefront, beyond the level experienced in the 2011 Arab revolutions, with youth overall also in the lead. Even the open consumption of alcohol was a statement of liberation. In what was above all a revolution of youth, young couples held hands as they walked around, an act that would have courted arrest under Bashir's Islamist military dictatorship. During this period, the Sudanese LGBTQ community also expressed itself online, although it was not yet able to appear openly.

Oppressed ethnic groups, including Darfuris, rode into Khartoum on trains to join and celebrate the revolutionary ferment. The representatives of Darfur assumed a prominent place at the gates of the military headquarters, holding up banners depicting the genocidal destruction Bashir and Hemeti had visited upon their region and giving the lie to the racist epithet of "slave" that Bashir's forces had bestowed upon this self-identified African people.

African scholar-activist Magdi el Gouzouli offers a vivid description of what amounted to a new society gestating inside the old:

As an organizational form for protest the qiada sit-in was wildly successful, probably far beyond the expectation of the parties involved. While it lasted, it was a place where mostly young women and men could live out their claim to identity as real citizens. Cash transactions were the exception in the qiada sit-in as the protestors fashioned an economy of their own devised around the socialist instinct of "from each according

to her ability and to each according to her need." Food, medical care, public health services, security, and transport were organized on a voluntary basis and proved remarkably resilient. A minor flu epidemic, known as the "qiada cold" troubled the protesters but otherwise the massive sit-in registered no other public health crisis thanks to robust and efficient public health measures. From afar, expatriate Sudanese contributed funds and information technology hardware as well as an explosion of sympathetic protests in Western capitals.

Gouzouli reported that the ferment was not confined to the square, but was equally grounded in neighborhood committees in what amounted to dual power:

The course of the Sudanese revolution is for the now in the hands of the "resistance committees." Some have claimed local authority in their neighborhoods, toppling the petty autocrats of the Bashir-era "popular committees" and are refashioning micro-authority to fit an emancipatory zeal. The question remains, will they be able to translate this zeal into mass political action that can take on the brutal machinations of the Sudanese state?

("Sudan's Season of Revolution," *Review of African Political Economy*, July 5, 2019).

At a few junctures, Hemeti and other military leaders tried to play the old Bashir card of calling for the implementation of "Sharia law" to create a supposed order and stability in the face of revolutionary "chaos" on the streets. Attempts on the streets to voice such sentiments met with a firm response, however. As Africa scholar Gérard Prunier reported, on April 28, some remnants of Bashir's party, by now disbanded, held a meeting calling for Sharia law as the foundation for any new government. Before their meeting got very far, they were set upon and their leaders almost lynched by revolutionary crowds. A week later, on Friday, May 3, an imam came into the crowd and began to

preach against “forbidden [haram]” mixing of the sexes during the vast sit-in. In a response that showed how deep the opposition to three decades of Islamist social controls ran, crowds of men grabbed and silenced him, pushed him out of the crowd, and escorted him back to his mosque. Many also pointed to how the “pious” Bashir’s residence was found to hold \$350 million in cash at a time when the price of bread had tripled for the general population. (“Au Soudan, le rejet des ‘marchands de religion’ au pouvoir,” *Le Monde*, May 9, 2019).

Achcar gives political context:

In Sudan, popular opposition to both reactionary camps is all the more radical because they have shared power since Omar al-Bashir’s 1989 coup. As head of a military dictatorship allied with the Muslim Brotherhood (the relationship did not always go smoothly), Bashir was like a mixture of Morsi and Sisi. A key feature of the Sudanese uprising, more politically radical than any in the Arabic-speaking world since 2011, is its open opposition to the rule of either the military or their fundamentalist allies, and its declared wish for a civilian, secular, democratic and even feminist government

(“The Seasons After the Arab Spring,” *Le Monde Diplomatique*, English version, June 2019).

The nonviolent sit-in in Khartoum was carefully organized, with weapons searches for all those entering the area carried out by volunteers. Basic survival needs like drinking water and toilets were self-organized by participants, on a vast scale. Various military units stood nearby, with women demonstrators speaking with the young soldiers in an effort to bring them over to the revolution, telling them, among other things, that it stood for more educational opportunities and a better world for all. At night, large parts of the crowd danced to music from DJs.

During May, small-scale armed attacks on the barricades protestors had set up were

still taking place occasionally. By now, the SPA had become part of a large coalition, the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC), which included a wide range of groups, from the moderate Islamic Umma Party to the Communist Party and Arab nationalists, also comprising unions and professional associations. Some of these factions favored more compromises with the military than the SPA, but the general demand for a completely civilian government continued to be expressed. By the end of May, a two-day general strike took place, but on a somewhat limited basis that did not shut down transportation across Khartoum. The tentativeness of the strike was in part due to pressure within the FFC from old political parties like Sadiq Al-Mahdi’s Umma National Party, which wanted quick elections as well. This quick-election gambit, also proposed by the military and which would have advantaged old established organizations, was successfully opposed by the SPA within the FFC.

June: The Uprising Continues in the Face of Massacre

By early June, some small counter-revolutionary demonstrations were mounted at the edge of the giant sit-in, with chants of “Power to Islam [Islamiya]” and “Power to the Military [Askariya].” They also claimed to be out on the streets “to oppose the communists,” an allusion to the fact that the Communist Party was part of the FFC. The revolutionary crowd responded with the chant, “Power to Civilians [Madaniya].” One of Hemeti’s generals also told the media that the sit-in was a gathering of “prostitutes and hashish dealers” (Jean-Philippe Rémy, “Askariya!, ‘Islamiya’: menace sur le mouvement démocratique au Soudan,” *Le Monde*, June 2, 2019).

The well-orchestrated massacres of June 3 were carried out by the Rapid Support Force, the former Janjaweed under the command of Hemeti. Khartoum and other major cities experienced dispersal of their

sit-ins with gunfire, beatings, rapes, and, at least in Khartoum, throwing bodies into the Nile. The death toll stood at at least 35. That same night, the RSF raided the homes of opposition leaders, but most escaped and went underground, protected by the vast support the revolution enjoyed among the masses.

As Fergal Keane reported for BBC News on July 2, a few weeks later, "Since the protests erupted late last year, the state intelligence networks struggled to penetrate the close-knit communities of activists. No matter how many arrests took place there always seemed to be somebody waiting to take up the work."

RSF forces also broke into the University of Khartoum, which abutted the sit-in, destroying precious archives and stealing anything of monetary value. This university had for decades been a center of Marxism, with the Marxist students often battling with those loyal to the Muslim Brotherhood. After Bashir's 1989 coup, the Marxists were driven underground. The university has been closed due to strikes since January, but students and professors had been conducting free classes for the public from tents within the sit-in. According to French journalist Jean-Philippe Rémy, one of the last of these public classes before the massacre addressed "the efficacy of a general strike and of a civil disobedience campaign" (*"L'opposition soudanaise entre en clandestinité," Le Monde*, June 12, 2019).

The RSF created further outrage by attacking hospitals in Khartoum, forcing them to close at the very time that 35 people were reported dead and 650 wounded.

The type of brutality the genocidal Janjaweed had carried out in Darfur was now coming home to Khartoum.

Mass Mobilization and Compromise

Reactionary regimes in the region initially supported the generals, with the Saudis and the Emiratis pledging \$3 billion to the military regime, also flying in military equipment. The people could tell who was

supporting the regime by the markings on the armored vehicles in which the RSF was riding around while killing and brutalizing the population. While Egypt's General Sisi also openly supported the military, Africa as a whole reacted differently. Future Nobel Laureate Abiy Ahmed Ali of Ethiopia arrived to offer mediation, effectively pressuring the regime to cede ground. In addition, the African Union suspended Sudan's membership on July 6.

As events would show, the revolution was far from dead at this point, as the massacre seemed to enrage and galvanize rather than intimidate the population. On June 30, the largest crowds since the beginning of the revolution filled the streets of major cities in giant demonstrations, with as many as a million people participating despite the military's attempts to stop the flow by blocking roads and bridges and by arresting movement leaders where they could find them. Tellingly, June 30 was the thirtieth anniversary of Bashir's 1989 military coup. "All power to civilians" was the chant that dominated on June 30, 2019, however.

The June 30 demonstration was organized in near secrecy from below. According to French journalist Rémy,

For days, neighborhood committees took charge as the Internet was shut down and phone calls monitored. Plans for the feeder marches were organized secretly. These groups, instead of assembling in one location, which would have exposed them to immediate dispersal, organized themselves as feeder marches moving off from the homes of those killed on June 3 in order to honor them. ... By afternoon, the watchword from the organizers called for the demonstrators to converge on the presidential palace,

where the sit-in had occurred in spring, but they were blocked from crossing the bridges into the center of Khartoum (*"Trente ans après le coup d'Etat, les Soudanais exigent 'tout le pouvoir aux civils'," Le Monde*, July

2, 2019).

Reports also emerged by this time of deep dissension inside the regular army, among junior officers opposed to the brutality of the RSF.

A few days later, on July 5, military and FFC leaders suddenly announced the outlines of a political compromise. During a 39-month transition period, military and civilian leaders would share power. It was the revolutionaries who had demanded such a long transition period, in order to allow a real transition time to occur, with sufficient time for a new constitution to be drafted and to give new political parties enough time to organize. Evidently, they had the example of Egypt in mind, where too quick a transition gave power first to the authoritarian but well-organized Muslim Brotherhood, and then to the still more authoritarian military. Apparently worried by the size and persistence of the mass mobilizations, the regime's external supporters like Saudi Arabi and the United Arab Emirates now started to pressure it to compromise. The compromise was far from what the revolutionaries had been demanding. Even the murderous Hemeti would remain in power, although an investigation—but not an international one—of the June 3 massacre was promised.

Left-wing groups including the Communist Party denounced the agreement for ceding too much to the regime. The Darfur Displaced General Coordination (DDGC) stated, "The aim of this agreement is also to block the realization of the goals of the revolution: to bring down the regime, prosecute its criminals, achieve freedom, peace and justice, establish a civilian-led government, resolve the civil wars in the country and restore the rights of displaced people and refugees" (cited in Emma Wilde Botha, "The Revolution has Emerged: Sudan's Acute Contradictions," *Review of African Political Economy*, September 5, 2019). Mass demonstrations continued, with thousands turning out on July 13, which marked forty days since June 3, a traditional

time to commemorate the dead. Calling for the punishment of the June 3 perpetrators, crowds filled all the major cities on July 13. Large demonstrations also broke out on July 30, after four students were killed by the RSF.

By August 3, a constitutional declaration was agreed by the military and the FFC, which was then signed on August 17. It provided for a transitional government composed of both military and civilian leaders, including a legislative body composed of representatives of the pro-democracy movements, rebel groups based among the country's ethnic minorities in Darfur and the Nuba Mountains, and existing political parties with the exception of Bashir's banned National Congress Party. A new prime minister was to be chosen by the FFC. The constitutional declaration calls for a civil state with equality for all citizens. Tellingly, in an advance over even the Tunisian Constitution, it contains no reference at all to Islam or any other religion. But the RSF will remain, albeit supposedly under the control of the regular army.

Some leftist tendencies rejected the compromise. Some also noted that few women were among the leaders who appeared in public at the signing ceremony, in contrast to the large proportion of women who had participated in the revolution up to this point.

However, the new cabinet did eventually include four women, with one of them, Asma Mohamed Abdallah, appointed foreign minister. Writer Jamal Mahjoub noted how the new government's inclusiveness contrasts with Bashir's manipulation of regional and ethnic differences to maintain himself in power: "Unity is the key to the success of the revolution. Prejudices and social barriers based upon class, race, and gender need to be overturned and replaced by a principle of citizenship. The issue of [economic] inequality, the actual motor of the revolution, needs to be confronted at its roots from now on at the institutional level, and dealt with by deep changes and genuine inclusion" ("Pour éviter le désastre," *Le Monde*, October 20-21, 2019).

Where Next for Sudan?

In a recent interview, post-revolutionary Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok listed making peace with ethnic rebel groups as a top priority, in contrast to Bashir's strategy of racist demagoguery and repression. Hamdok also noted bitterly that the United States has yet to lift its sanctions against Sudan as a sponsor of "terrorism," this despite the fall of Bashir and the democratic transition underway.

In addition, however, Hamdok also illustrated the limited vision of his basically liberal agenda by speaking of shrinking the public sector by cutting the budget of the military-security apparatus and shutting down corrupt and inefficient state enterprises, of which there are certainly many. But there was not even a whiff of social democracy, let alone socialism, in his words concerning capitalism: "We need to establish an environment favorable to the development of the private sector, which is essential for job creation" ("Les sanctions américains asphyxiant le Soudan," interview with Abdallah Hamdok, *Le Monde*, October 2, 2019).

This kind of thing, as Emma Wilde Bortha notes, points to a division among the millions who rose up in 2019 between a largely middle-class leadership and the full class, ethnic, and gender dimensions of the country:

The mobilization rhetoric of SPA derived from Sudan's *effendya*, a nationalist ideology of the small class of Sudanese who were educated to fill the ranks of the civil service during colonialism and who were prepared for post-colonial rule. This framework was too narrow to speak to the diversity of the Sudanese people and reimagine a Sudan that embraces all, across ethnic, racial, religious lines. The dominant slogans of "peace, freedom,

and justice" and "madaniya" (civilian) fail to wed political demands with class demands in a moment ripe for a revolutionary message. Rather than drawing from alternative frameworks of the working class or the feminist movement, the SPA appealed to the universal rights and freedoms of citizens, using language that is not incompatible with the neoliberal state. The failure to center class demands and implicitly or explicitly raise revolutionary slogans may partially explain why Khartoum's peripheral neighborhoods of poor and displaced people did not join in the protests as enthusiastically as the middle-class neighborhoods

("The Revolution Has Emerged: Sudan's Acute Contradictions," *Review of African Political Economy*, September 5, 2019).

But just as we note the deep contradictions within the movement that overthrew Bashir and reached a compromise with the military, we also need to view Sudan in the historic mirror once again. The year 2019 has shown us a new type of revolution in a country that lies at the crossroads of two regions with long histories in the struggle for human emancipation, sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab world. Led by the youth, a people has awakened and fought for its liberation, facing down a regime that has carried out outright genocide. In deep dialectical contradiction to the Islamist-militarist Bashir regime, the revolutionaries have espoused, in their millions, democracy, economic justice, justice for ethnic minorities, and women's rights. It is a solid beginning and a beacon for the region and the future. At the same time, the risks are enormous, as the forces of the old, both domestic and international, are waiting for their chance to swoop down and crush the revolution.

Civic Resistance to Japanese Militarism

DONALD C. WOOD

JAPAN'S 5.26 TRILLION-YEN FISCAL 2019 defense budget set a new record for the fifth straight year, as the country continued to beef up its armed forces while keeping a wary eye fixed on North Korea and China.¹ The trend continues: The Defense Ministry has requested 5.32 trillion yen for 2020, part of which is to go toward the purchase of two land-based Aegis Ashore missile systems from the United States.² Although the ministry won its Aegis Ashore budget for 2019, and is certain to do so again, there are signs that Prime Minister Abe's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) may be losing support over the issue in one of the areas where the ministry wants to place a missile system: a region where the party has historically enjoyed strong backing. As the situation slowly unfolds, the Abe administration's arrogance, untrustworthiness, and indifference to the plight of local people come to light, reminding one that the dominant LDP, which is liberal only regarding its economic philosophy, is a party of the state and not of the public.

In December of 2017, residents of the capital city of Akita Prefecture, situated about 280 miles north of Tokyo, were shocked by the sudden unveiling of the Abe administration's plan to convert the Ground Self Defense Forces (GSDF) coastal practice range located in the Araya area of the municipality into a permanent Aegis Ashore strategic

missile base.³ It was—and still is—Tokyo's intention to pay at least 240 billion yen to the Lockheed Martin Corporation for two land-based Aegis-controlled guided missile installations and place one in Akita and one in far-southwestern Yamaguchi Prefecture.⁴

The main justification has been the perceived danger of North Korean missile attacks, a fear that spread across Japan during a wave of test launches earlier in 2017 and was reinforced by government and media fearmongering. A number of municipalities held missile evacuation drills at Tokyo's urging during 2017 and 2018, which also encouraged public angst over North Korea. Unease was especially strong in mostly agrarian and fishing-oriented Akita, as a barrage of tests in March of 2017 had triggered warning sirens and sent several large rockets into the Sea of Japan, off the Akita coast (albeit many miles from the shore).⁵ Although an eventual cessation of launches gave the Abe administration no choice but to suspend the drills in June of 2018,⁶ it has continued to point to a North Korean threat. At an international summit meeting in Singapore on June 1, 2019, then-Defense Minister Takeshi Iwaya repeated the tired message "[t]here has been no essential change in North Korea's nuclear and missile capacities."⁷ This platitude has become the administration's mantra on the matter.

The hermit state's 2019 resumption of limited small-scale missile tests supports the government's position to a degree. Nevertheless, opposition to the government's Aegis Ashore plan is high in Akita. Some 16 Araya neighborhood associations, representing roughly 13,000 residents, had already taken

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anti-missile base stances by the end of 2018.⁸ Resident associations in other parts of the capital city, and even in other municipalities of the prefecture, have followed suit, while others have collected signatures or hit the streets with signs in hand. In the part of the Araya area that lies closest to the GSDF practice range, anti-base sentiments—and anxieties—are especially high. Said an 80-year-old Araya grandmother one day, “We have to stand up and fight while we can. If we don’t, what can we say later?”⁹

Her words echo a concern raised by a spring 2018 TV program that examined the situation in Slupsk, Poland, a city of about 90,000 situated nearly three miles from an old airfield that is to become the site of a U.S. land-based Aegis missile complex by 2020. This is to protect Poland and its NATO allies from Russian attack. In the program, Slupsk residents showed documents explaining building height and commercial flight restrictions that had been revealed to them only after the finalization of the base construction agreement. “We should have fought this when we had the chance,” lamented one woman.

Several miles between an Aegis missile battery and a residential area may seem close, but the house of the Araya grandmother mentioned above is located only slightly over half a mile from the center of the GSDF practice area. Within a one-mile radius of that point also stand several hundred other houses, the local middle school, two elementary schools, one nursery school, one kindergarten, the prefectural disability services and support center, and the city’s public swimming pool. Over 30,000 people live within a two-mile radius of the proposed missile base site.

The Akita situation is far more vexing than that in Deveselu, Romania—a commune of several thousand that hosts a land-based U.S. Navy Aegis missile base—where at least two miles of farmland lie between the commune and the missile battery. The nearest city is located over four miles away. This base was installed under a NATO agreement, to

counter Russia. Although memories of Russian occupation are still fresh among many in Romania (as they are in Poland), local fears of collateral damage from a Russian airstrike on the missile base have been reported.¹⁰

Likewise, Araya residents worry about a permanent missile base attracting unwanted attention: “It could become a target,” many have said. It is a concern grounded in the collective memory of World War II, during which hundreds of thousands of civilians were targeted by Allied bombers. Memories of the deadly August 14, 1945, attack on Akita City’s port now feed the fires of resistance to the Aegis Ashore plan.¹¹ To counter such concerns, a government representative said in a spring 2018 Akita City briefing—one of

The Abe administration’s
arrogance, untrustworthiness,
and indifference to the plight of
local people come to light.

many local “explanation sessions” held by the Defense Ministry—that the proposed missile base was not expected to ever be targeted by any foreign power. However, a contradictory report that “the Japanese government plans to use existing Aegis destroyers and surface-to-air missiles to deal with attacks on Aegis Ashore units and nearby targets” appeared about one year later, highlighting the Abe administration’s dishonesty and lending credence to Araya residents’ worries.¹²

As might be expected, the Aegis Ashore plan has become a major political issue in Akita. On April 7, 2019, the voters of the prefecture’s capital city went to the polls to elect a new council. Among the 46 candidates, 33 had expressed opposition to the Defense Ministry’s plan, and seven, support (but only

one strongly).¹³ Twenty-five anti-base candidates won seats, and five supporters were victorious. The former, which included at least one LDP member, generally received more votes.

The election results reflected local sentiments and flew in the face of the ruling LDP; over the winter of 2018-2019, a private contractor conducted tests (including radar simulations) in the Araya area. Instead of making the results public in March as expected, Tokyo announced that their release would be delayed for two months. This led to accusations of government stalling in order to allow Akita LDP candidates to avoid having to take clear positions on the matter.¹⁴ Finally, and predictably, the Defense Ministry announced that the site had been deemed appropriate for an Aegis Ashore base, on May 17.

Following the announcement, the Defense Ministry promptly resumed its attempts to convince the people of Akita City to accept the conversion of the Araya GSDF practice range into an Aegis Ashore missile base by holding another series of “explanation sessions.” However, this effort backfired spectacularly when one of its officials fell asleep during a session and when it was discovered that the ministry had used inaccurate geological data in calculations regarding other potential Aegis Ashore base sites in the region. In the wake of this double scandal, the defense minister visited Akita to apologize to the governor in person in early June, but the damage had been done.¹⁵ Despite this very public discrediting of the Defense Ministry, Akita Prefecture’s governor was subsequently denounced as “unpatriotic” by many anonymous netizens for not siding firmly with the Abe administration on the issue.¹⁶

Unsurprisingly, the Aegis Ashore plan played a prominent role in the next election—the battle to represent Akita Prefecture in the upper house of the national Diet. Under normal circumstances, one ruling party candidate goes up against an assortment of opponents, each backed by a separate opposition party,

a situation that favors the ruling party. But this time, the opposition parties—including the communist and socialist parties—chose to unite in backing a single, unaffiliated independent candidate in the hope of scoring a win for all on election day—July 21.

In a race that kicked off on July 4, 44-year-old Shizuka Terata—the wife of an opposition-party Diet member—ran against Matsuji Nakaizumi, the 40-year-old male

Said an 80-year-old Araya grandmother one day, “We have to stand up and fight while we can. If we don’t, what can we say later?”

incumbent ruling party (LDP) candidate. Not only did the latter have the public support of the Akita Prefecture governor and the Akita City mayor, but also that of the party and some of its biggest heavyweights, who paid visits to Akita to stump for him—two unprecedented stopovers were made by the prime minister, who apologized for the Defense Ministry scandal¹⁷ but at the same time insisted on a national need for land-based Aegis missile batteries.¹⁸ The candidates differed in many ways, but one of the most prominent disparities was the fact that Terata was openly opposed to the conversion of the Araya GSDF site into an Aegis Ashore base—and also, for that matter, to the purchase of such missile systems—while Nakaizumi avoided taking a clear stance regarding the Akita City location. However, his previous argument for a national need for Aegis Ashore batteries remained unchanged.¹⁹ Terata also voiced discontent with Abenomics—the prime minister’s eponymous economic stimulus plan—openly questioning its beneficence to Akita.

Nakazumi, on the other hand, embraced ambiguity. Whereas Terata campaigned for change, greater popular control over the government, and putting Akita's needs and concerns first, Nakaizumi represented the LDP and the political status quo.

Due in no small part to these differences, Terata emerged victorious on election day evening, winning by a comfortable margin of more than 20,000 votes. The outcome sent a strong message to Tokyo, but this does not mean that the Defense Ministry will give up on Aegis Ashore. Judging from post-election comments made by the minister—an office that changed hands in September 2019—the ministry is likely to double its efforts, with even stronger support from the ruling party. But the election result does serve to boost the confidence of the locals who are standing up in opposition to the ministry, the administration, and the party.

Some days after the election, a large anti-Aegis Ashore flyer, featuring the names of over 300 supporters, appeared in the generally left-leaning *Asahi Newspaper*. Funded mainly by local, individual contributions, the movement indicates that Akita people who do not want to have such a missile base in their city have begun to do what one Araya resident said they should do during one of my first forays into that area in the summer of 2018: “All of the people of Akita City should fight against it, because it’s not (just an) Araya issue.”²⁰ Moreover, the flyer compared the Akita City neighborhood-proximity situation with that in Romania, presented details on possible radar requirement—and actual radar wave—interference with local marine and air transportation and fishing, and brought up the fact that the proposed missile base site is at risk of being inundated by a tsunami at some point. The flyer’s content reminded me of what the head of the neighborhood association that lies closest to the GSDF site said on one of my 2019 visits to the area: “It’s not enough for us to simply shout ‘No!’, we have to educate ourselves about the issue,

learn all we can, and then act based on our new knowledge—not just on our feelings.”

The flyer also called attention to a matter that had previously been reported in some newspapers—the fact that the proposed Aegis Ashore site in Akita lies directly under the path that a North Korean long-range missile would take to Hawaii, and that the Yamaguchi candidate site lies directly under the path that such a missile would take to the U.S. bases at Guam. The flyer minces no words in suggesting that the Abe administration is motivated to place missile systems in the proposed locations to help protect not the people of Japan but U.S. territory and military assets from a North Korean attack, as well as to help feed the U.S. military industrial complex and the U.S. economy, and of course to politically assist President Trump. Prime Minister Abe’s warm relationship with Trump helps support this theory, as does the fact that the initial Aegis Ashore purchase announcement closely followed a declaration made at a November 2017 joint Trump-Abe press conference in Tokyo that Japan would soon buy a great quantity of American military hardware.

One point that the flyer did not, but probably should, bring up is the political and economic power of the corporation that produces the Aegis Ashore missile systems—Lockheed Martin. According to the Center for Responsive Politics, the company was the 12th biggest spender on lobbying in the United States from 1998–2018, shelling out over \$255 million during the period, coming in just behind Northrop Grumman and Boeing.²¹ And Lockheed Martin covers its bases very well. The Center for Responsive Politics reports that it donated \$148,699 to Democratic Party candidate Hillary Clinton, \$101,950 to Democratic Party senator Charles Schumer, \$76,791 to Republican Party Senator Ted Cruz, \$45,114 to independent Senator Bernie Sanders, and \$44,781 to Republican Party candidate Donald Trump in the 2016 campaign cycle.²² The eight members of the twelve-member Lockheed Martin Board of

Directors for whom Wallmine.com had net worth data as of March 28, 2019, collectively possess over \$214 million, with the company's CEO—Marillyn Hewson—holding over \$77.3 million and enjoying an annual salary of at least \$22.8 million. It is no wonder that Hewson was declared the most power-

“It’s not enough for us to simply shout ‘No!’, we have to educate ourselves about the issue, learn all we can, and then act based on our new knowledge—not just on our feelings.”

ful woman in the United States by *Fortune Magazine* in 2018.²³

The results of the July election not only emboldened the people of Akita who do not want a permanent missile base in their city, it also appears to have inspired the *Asahi Newspaper* to run a series of articles on the Aegis Ashore plan, towards which it has continuously taken a critical stance. One of these focused on the proximity of the proposed site to homes and schools, highlighting the psychological effects of the situation on the local people, including the children.²⁴ Another brought up the 2017–2018 missile evacuation drills held on Akita's Oga Peninsula, just north of the prefecture's capital city. One leading participant quoted in the piece expressed regret for having allowed himself—in his opinion—to be used by the government to justify placing an Aegis Ashore base in Akita City.²⁵ Finally, another installment told the story behind the extraordinary appearance of a strongly anti-Aegis Ashore article in Akita's leading local newspaper—penned by the newspaper's president—the previous July.²⁶ This series of articles has no doubt also

helped to encourage the dark horses of Akita to fight back.

Yet the anti-Aegis Ashore Akita underdogs are up against a powerful foe backed by great wealth and power, in a fight that transcends President Trump and the Republican Party and perhaps even the LDP. They have enjoyed several small wins, but the total victory they seek—the Defense Ministry giving up on purchasing even a single Aegis Ashore system—will be hard to achieve. However, given the strong anti-Aegis Ashore sentiment in Akita, the strategies now being pursued by the recalcitrant residents, and also new national interest and support, the Abe administration might in the end have to give up on placing one in Akita City, or even in the entire prefecture.

Recent election results indicate that the political cost of forcing an Aegis Ashore base on the people of Akita—or on any community in the crowded country—might be very high indeed. Losing the voters of Akita—a long-time bastion of LDP power²⁷ that has supported the party in 14 of the last 16 elections²⁸—could cost the party more Diet seats and foment dissention in the ranks; one senior Akita LDP lawmaker recently broke with his party on the matter.²⁹ Abe might leave behind a weakened party at the end of his tenure, as his powerful mentor, Junichiro Koizumi, did when he stepped down in 2006.

Should these things happen, all the better. It is high time that the autocratic LDP either pay for its hubris, callousness, and untrustworthiness by being voted out of power, as it did in 2009, or change its colors and become a truly democratic, power-sharing, party of the people. Sadly, the latter scenario is highly unlikely, considering the party's current ultra-conservative bent and chauvinistic attitude, which stem directly from its close historical connections to U.S. postwar imperialism and anti-communism. The LDP's dominance today owes largely to the heavy CIA financial support and intelligence connections it enjoyed from its rightist founding

in 1955 through the 1960s³⁰—connections that eventually led to the dissemination of \$12 million in Lockheed Aircraft Corporation bribe money among LDP heavyweights in the early 1970s.³¹

Therefore, the best hope Japan has of one day tasting the fruits of a truly functional and balanced democracy would be for the LDP to once again lose heavily in national elections, which would probably be the best way for the people of Akita to escape from the Aegis Ashore specter looming over them. Yet, also sadly, there is no sign that this might happen in the near future, as effective unions between the opposition parties are much more difficult to build at the national level than they are locally. In the meantime, the underdogs of Akita must, and will, resist and nurture their movement—one that is sure to grow in response to any increase in forcefulness on the part of the Defense Ministry.

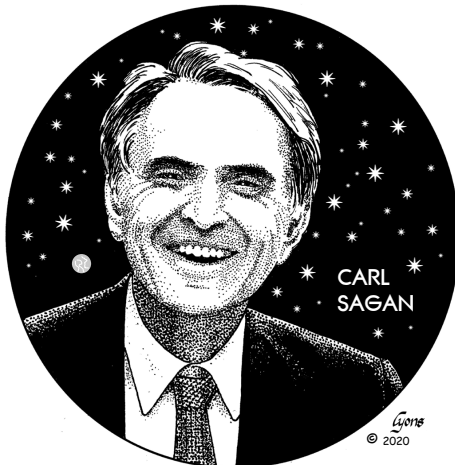
A final note of irony: Ten miles south of the Araya GSDF practice range stands a lonely seaside monolith, marking the site of Japan's first experimental rocket launching operation, founded there in 1955—the year of the LDP's birth. It is easy to miss, but at least it is something the people of Akita can be proud of. Only very small rockets were tested at the site, which was chosen largely for its distance from fishing, shipping ... and residential areas.

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CHAMPIONS OF JUSTICE



Carl Sagan, astronomer, astrophysicist, author, skeptic, science communicator, defender of the earth

"If we are not able to ask skeptical questions, to interrogate those who tell us that something is true, to be skeptical of those in authority, then we're up for grabs for the next charlatan, political or religious, who comes ambling along."

"This planet is run by crazy people. Remember what they have to do to get where they are. Their perspective is so narrow, so...brief. A few years. In the best of them a few decades. They care only about the time they are in power."

"If we are to survive, our loyalties must be broadened further, to include the whole human community, the entire planet Earth. Many of those who run the nations will find this idea unpleasant. They will fear the loss of power. We will hear much about treason and disloyalty. Rich nation-states will have to share their wealth with poor ones. But the choice, as H. G. Wells once said in a different context, is clearly the universe or nothing."

Lisa Lyons

“El violador en tu camino” (“The rapist in your path”), a song written by LASTESIS, a feminist theatre group based in the city of Valparaíso, has been sung and danced by women around the world since the Chilean uprising of October 2019.

THE RAPIST IN YOUR PATH

The patriarchy is a judge
that judges us for being born
and our punishment
is the violence you don't see.
The patriarchy is a judge
that judges us for being born
and our punishment
is the violence that you've seen.
It's femicide.
Impunity for my killer.
It's disappearance.
It's rape.
And I'm not guilty, not because of where I
was or how I dressed.
And I'm not guilty, not because of where I
was or how I dressed.
And I'm not guilty, not because of where I
was or how I dressed.
And I 'm not guilty, not because of where I
was or how I dressed.
The rapist is you.
The rapist is you.
It's the cops,
the judges,
the state,
the president.
The oppressive state is a rapist.
The oppressive state is a rapist.
The rapist is you.
The rapist is you.
“Sleep well, innocent girl,
Do not worry about the bandit,
Your sweet and smiling sleep
Is watched over by your loving *policeman*.”
The rapist is you.
The rapist is you.
The rapist is you.
The rapist is you.

UN VIOLADOR EN TU CAMINO

El patriarcado es un juez
que nos juzga por nacer,
y nuestro castigo
es la violencia que no ves.
El patriarcado es un juez
que nos juzga por nacer,
y nuestro castigo
es la violencia que ya ves.
Es feminicidio.
Impunidad para mi asesino.
Es la desaparición.
Es la violación.
Y la culpa no era mía, ni dónde estaba ni
cómo vestía.
Y la culpa no era mía, ni dónde estaba ni
cómo vestía.
Y la culpa no era mía, ni dónde estaba ni
cómo vestía.
Y la culpa no era mía, ni dónde estaba ni
cómo vestía.
El violador eras tú.
El violador eres tú.
Son los pacos,
los jueces,
el Estado,
el presidente.
El Estado opresor es un macho violador.
El Estado opresor es un macho violador.
El violador eras tú.
El violador eres tú.
“Duerme tranquila, niña inocente,
sin preocuparte del bandolero,
que por tu sueño dulce y sonriente
vela tu amante carabinero.”
El violador eres tú.
El violador eres tú.
El violador eres tú.
El violador eres tú.

The Historical Retrieval and Controversy of Walter Rodney's Russian Revolution

MATTHEW QUEST

THE POSTHUMOUS PUBLICATION of Walter Rodney's book on the historiography of the Russian Revolution is a remarkable accomplishment of historical retrieval, and it provides us with an opportunity to look more deeply into Rodney's relationship to Marxism, Soviet Communism, and Maoism and post-colonial politics.¹

The editors have collected surviving texts from lectures given at the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania in 1970-1971 that restore the voice of the Pan African historian best known as the author of *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, who was martyred in the struggle for people's power and an end to dictatorship in Forbes Burnham's Guyana. This volume clarifies the legacies of Rodney (1942-1980), whose legend is based on a few books perennially in print that are imbued with the personality of a charismatic teacher.

This book deserves a wide readership precisely because it will stir intellectual and political controversy. Does Rodney articulate an African or Third World view that relates revolutionary theory and history to people in motion? Does he transcend the ideological fault lines of the Cold War? Does the author clarify the postcolonial legacy of the Bol-

sheviks? Is the historiography of the Russian Revolution, a world-shattering event, best read through the framework of the "long Russian Revolution"? However much the editors wish to present Rodney as a "non-sectarian," this is obviously an ideological and highly polemical project. While this can make for an exciting read and can engender debate, it cannot satisfy everyone who engages such a partisan topic. And revolution is never a neutral or superficial subject.

Bourgeois and Marxist World Views

Though it is good to be aware of Cold War anti-communist prejudice regarding this history, there are by no means, as Rodney begins his discussion by stating, only "two world views" of the Russian Revolution, "the bourgeois" and "the Marxist." There are many schools of socialist thought, not a few of which, while offering criticism, defend the accumulation of capital and justify hierarchy and domination as progressive on certain terms. Rodney appears to argue that every imperial every imperial government-sponsored scholar, or every scholar sympathetic to Western capitalism during the Cold War, was incapable of producing research that illuminated revolutionary events. While this may be a good first principle for critical thinking, and reminds us validly that scholars who claim an objectivity beyond politics are dubious, this proposition is not entirely true where the historian's craft is concerned. Rodney does add nuance to and complicates these initial premises, but

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his comparative method is deficient where he divides the historiography largely between Western imperialists (and a few dissenters) and “Soviet” scholarship, by which he means those Russian thinkers who view this history through either the lens of state planning or that of one or another version of nationalism.

Rodney’s standard of a legitimate Western imperial-sponsored scholar is E.H. Carr. Carr was both a diplomat for the British empire and a prolific historian of Russia. He was skeptical of Marx’s legacy, but scholars argue whether Carr was informally a socialist. Largely sympathetic to the Bolsheviks in the name of pragmatic foreign relations, Carr disagreed with viewpoints that insisted the Soviet economy had failed. However, it is difficult to say how Rodney may have received Carr’s own posthumously published works.²

Carr, in his analyses of the Third International’s relations with insurgent movements abroad and the regimes that repressed them, challenged the Soviet Union’s official self-image. As I will subsequently illustrate, despite historians being on the other side of the Cold War from Russia, this did not preclude occasional genuine documenting of some inconvenient truths that should inform ethical engagement, especially where these claims mirrored the experience and conclusions of dissident and grassroots radicals.

Rodney’s presentation overwhelmingly assumes that Bolshevism is a coherent body of revolutionary thought and that the Bolshevik seizure of state power was the primary epic event of, and is synonymous with, the Russian Revolution. While the manuscript suggests an “African” or “Third World” viewpoint, little of Rodney’s survey clarifies what this means. In the conclusion of the manuscript, there is a suggestion that peoples of African and peripheral nations need to decide how they view these seminal historical events and that Russia may be a model of peripheral national development.

Rodney’s treatment of “Marx, Marxism, and the Russian Left” surveys debates about

how Marx saw Russia as a peripheral peasant society, whether Marx showed the peasantry contempt, and whether he believed revolution was possible in Russia. Rodney ambivalently engages with Engels’ view that the formation of a Russian bourgeoisie was necessary before socialism was possible. He also engages with different intellectual currents in the national history of Russia, as represented by Nicolas Berdyaev’s scholarship, from opposition to the state to whether Westernization of Russia was progressive.

A concise survey of the ideas of Marx, Bakunin and Nechaev, the Narodniks, Kautsky, Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, and Luxemburg are subordinated to Rodney’s focus: his admiration for the building of a socialist state and his sympathy for the government that navigated a nation-state and national economic development through an imperialist world system.

Rodney, given the antipathy for the Trotskyist heritage he expresses elsewhere, is surprisingly delighted with Trotsky’s *A History of the Russian Revolution*. He affirms Trotsky as a historical actor, his articulation of the class struggle and the refined manner in which he wielded historical materialism as a tool. Strikingly, Rodney underscores the fact that Trotsky writes not about modes of production, a topic that sometimes weighs down Rodney’s own writings, but the social motion of ordinary people. This “Third World viewpoint” particularly makes note of Trotsky’s theory of combined and uneven development, how the proletariat and the peasantry struggle under specific historical conditions, and that a new society can nevertheless emerge from the burden of minimal industrialization or incomplete modernity.

Where Are the Soviets?

Rodney’s discussion of democracy, Bolshevism, and the early years of the Russian Revolution before Lenin’s death is hampered by his uncritical reception of

dogma that defends the Bolsheviks' retention of state power as the revolution itself. The idea that the Bolshevik state under Lenin was an extremely repressive force, or even a counter-revolutionary force, is neither unscientific nor Western propaganda. Whatever the motivations of Cold War-era historians R.V. Daniels and Leonard Schapiro, who underscored the rise of an autocracy before 1923 and the rejection or reversal of any commitment to direct democracy and workers' self-management under the early Bolsheviks, this same perspective was held consistently in different variants by anarchist, left libertarian, left communist, and autonomous Marxist historians and by committed radicals.³ Rodney appears to know nothing about such perspectives other than they must be myths invented by imperialists. A severe omission in Rodney's survey is the absence of the soviets "with a small s"—that is, the workers, peasants, and soldiers councils—which represented forms of popular self-mobilization and self-government. Nowhere are they discussed as independent political forms of freedom. Instead, predictable glosses are offered on the Constituent Assembly, the Bolsheviks' rise to power, and the intrigues of the subsequent "civil war," an account which doesn't credibly distinguish external threats of empire from domestic counter-revolutionaries, real and imagined.

Civil war in the midst of a social revolution is a real thing—what does class struggle ultimately mean without one? It certainly doesn't mean only free or low-cost health care, public housing, and public schools plus a new trend toward industry and infrastructure. As the Spanish Civil War made clear, there can be many left and right factions in conflict, *both before and after* some force takes and holds state power above society.

Rodney, it is worth underscoring, notes that most of the Bolsheviks, except Trotsky, were in exile during the actual insurgent events, though Trotsky participated in the Petrograd Soviet and thought in some indirect way that the soviet was the basis of the

new state and that Lenin was less impressed with the nature of this institution of popular self-government.

Rodney suggests that our understanding of anti-imperialism is crucial, and that Lenin's *Imperialism* is essential, for understanding the political economy of empire. Is it crucial for understanding how to oppose the empire of capital or how peripheral rulers can maneuver to accumulate national or state capital? These are not the same but are often confused. In his *Imperialism* essay, Lenin notably said that the financiers once had a progressive purpose (on certain terms it can be imagined that finance capital can be reformed and disciplined to do so again). Lenin's *Imperialism* underscores the importance of industrialization without advocacy of workers' control or rejection of wage labor. These matters tend to be forgotten when considering Lenin's views on the aristocracy of labor and global division of capital. Rodney does not seem aware of the Lenin of the Zimmerwald Left, who said socialists should "turn imperialist war into civil war." While Lenin famously said, "All power to the soviets" (inspiration for the Black Panthers' "All Power to the People"), once he took and held state power, he said that believing that workers could govern themselves was like believing in fairy tales.

The alert reader can see, and the editors note, that Rodney in his reading of the Russian Revolution teaches that at a certain point independent labor action is a threat to "the long revolution," or national economic development. Consequently, workers' self-activity and protest can be validly termed sedition and can be met with violence. Critical thinkers should be placing that view in conversation with the experience of the insurgent activist Rodney, who met repression in Jamaica in 1968 and Guyana in 1980.

The Long Revolution

"The long revolution" is a framework that argues the Global South has gone through

successive awakenings. According to this theory, peripheral and underdeveloped societies are trying to catch up to the imperial powers in economic equality and development. The Western bourgeoisie accumulated capital over hundreds of years to have their nation-states become centers of power. Aspiring ethical bourgeois elements of the Global South are trying to compete with the Western imperialists and are seen as the allies of the proletariat and peasantry. It is argued that the long road to socialism has hardly begun because class formation in the periphery has hardly begun. There is a belief that states want independence, nations want liberation, and peoples want revolution. But this conflates modernization and development with class struggle, and subordinates the latter to the former. It also argues that capital accumulators can be liberators.

The long revolution is a Stalinist and Maoist interpretation of the meaning of the Russian Revolution and has had its African advocates, such as A.M. Babu and Samir Amin. Amin, not long before his recent death, argued that contemporary Russia and China—where there is no longer any pretense of being a worker-centered or socialist society—are part of this long development. But Trotsky himself created a historical problem by his theory of the “degenerated workers’ state,” where the police state was a defender of “proletarian gains”—nationalized and public property.

Trotsky first used the term “degenerated workers’ state” to describe Soviet Russia in the mid-1930s. By it he meant a state that had nationalized property but where, under Stalin, the Communist Party bureaucracy had displaced the workers, who no longer held power directly. Trotsky believed that Stalin’s party had become a bureaucratic caste that defended state property but inhibited workers’ power, and that it might capitulate to capitalist tendencies from within and from without. Though both had a role in suppressing the soviets, Trotsky of course believed that

the Bolsheviks holding state power, under Lenin’s, and earlier his, leadership, had meant that workers held power. For him, Bolshevik power and workers’ power were synonymous.

So then is Rodney correct that a certain type of capitalist development, in the Marxist-Leninist view, can contribute to the socialist transition?

The editors have located much of the logic of this Rodney manuscript in the framework of the long revolution. I believe they are correct; this is overwhelmingly how Rodney saw Russia in 1970-1971. Further, the meaning of a Third World viewpoint on Russia here is consistent with the loyal-opposition criticism of Julius Nyerere’s Ujamaa socialist Tanzania that was present in university life there in the 1970s.

Much has been made of the golden age of the Dar es Salaam campus in this period, where Walter Rodney, John Saul, Dan Nabudere, Yoweri Museveni, Karim Hirji, Mahmood Mamdani, and Issa Shivji were all present and where Robert F. Williams, Stokely Carmichael, and C.L.R. James visited. The “Dar es Salaam school” analyses really had two souls: endless debates about modes of production and class formation that assumed materially social revolution from below was impossible *and* a growing awareness of what were in fact independent labor actions of workers and farmers against the Ujamaa socialist state.

Rodney’s Russia Revolution lectures were prepared for this intellectual environment. Perhaps dual power and insurgent situations were discussed more informally. By 1975, Rodney’s essay “Class Contradictions in Tanzania” revealed that there were in fact independent labor revolts against the state planners in that country. Issa Shivji’s *Class Struggles in Tanzania* (1976) records these. Yet in 1970-1971, according to this volume, Rodney sees the comparative discussion of Russia and Tanzania in terms of the way that peasants are being drawn into the money economy, and the manner in which motor

boats and refrigeration are being introduced, as “a quiet revolution.”

Rodney’s chapter on how Russia transformed its empire reveals something present in *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*: a lack of proper respect for African and peasant cosmologies. A recent, insightful essay by Guyana’s Kimani Nehusi, while sustaining Rodney as still a paramount scholar of Africa, notes this limitation.⁴ Rodney sustains uncritically a historian, Georges Jorre, who speaks of tribes who worship bears and trees in the Siberian forest and hunter-gatherers, pastoralists, and nomads who only know a thousand and one ways of starving to death. There is an implication of backwardness that needs to be overcome. Rodney, who had the capacity for an insightful ecological perspective before this was fashionable, did not reveal such here.

Rodney argues the study of nationalism in Russia is primarily a field of bourgeois scholarship and is hostile to the Bolsheviks. It is Rodney’s general view that Russian scholars try to emphasize national unity. Yet, he soon reveals nuance beyond this initial bifurcation.

National Liberation Struggles Within the Soviet Union

From the tsar’s time to Stalin’s rule, Rodney understands that there was a persistent Great Russian nationalism that was racist, that non-Russian peoples of the Soviet Union had a critique of Great Russia for its plunder and exploitation. After the Russian Revolution, Lenin did not fulfill his promise of self-determination. National liberation within the Soviet Union was defined in restricted terms. The Bolshevik state was nationalist, in fact, while projecting internationalism abroad. Just because Richard Pipes is a conservative Western historian doesn’t mean his early study of oppressed peoples’ search for autonomy is made up out of thin air. Rodney shows awareness that no matter the level of struggles between social classes among peas-

ants, radical peasants were far more attracted to the Socialist-Revolutionaries, the party that was heir to the Narodnik tradition, than they were to the Bolsheviks. As Rodney suggests, anti-colonial nationalism in its search for autonomy can be bent to class struggle or to race-first capitalist perspectives, so one must be alert to opportunism on all sides.

Rodney’s discussion of the building of the socialist state in Russia is undeniably a discourse on the search for, accumulation of, and defense of national capital, with no suggestion that relations between capital and wage labor are inherently oppressive. Rodney’s is undoubtedly a certain type of Marxism—I say this without the need to defend the integrity of something holistic called “Marxism.” However, there is no human action in this discourse except what elite state planners are thinking.

Where Rodney surveys Soviet Russian authors, he never inquires about how the socialist project was transformed into a nationalist and capitalist one, nor does he ask when this happened. There is no sense that Russian authors might be writing history and discussing political economy on behalf of the state that suppresses workers’ self-emancipation. Rodney fails to recognize that just as one criticizes Western Cold War historians of Russia, so too must one be critical of Soviet historians or political economists (Rodney cites both) where they increasingly substitute details of the nation’s gross national product for the meaning of socialism.

While an ambiguous process of transformation is going on, Rodney does find it dubious that at any point in the long revolution has a socialist or communist society been established once and for all, not in 1917, 1937, or even by 1971. Yet Rodney sees state planning, as he indicates in *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, as the political economy of Russia, Eastern Europe, China, and North Korea, leading to the conclusion that these are progressive societies. This is where the failure to take seriously socialism as a toilers’

democracy (direct majority rule) can lead.

Rodney viewed the Soviet Union as an affirmative-action empire. He was working with a definition of socialism and communism as the equal distribution of goods and perhaps diversity in the hierarchy of the public service. This is what he was observing and measuring in the long revolution, not the self-mobilization of working people.

The long-revolution framework assumes the popular will died or became irrelevant somewhere between 1917 and 1921 and that there were no valid expressions of the popular will outside the Bolsheviks once they seized state power. Rodney notes that Stalin abolished Lenin's workers' and peasants' inspection without regard for the fact that Lenin's state smashed all workers councils not loyal to the state and Lenin bragged that he brought civil war to the peasantry, calling many enemies of the people. Rodney also criticizes the Mensheviks, consistent with Lenin's opinion, for advocating a long view of state capitalist development as the meaning of socialism, even though Rodney, like most Marxist-Leninists, proposes ultimately the same thing.

While condemning the Moscow trials and Stalin's violent repression, Rodney was rightly concerned by scholarship that discredited the socialist experiment by emphasizing psychopathic personality theories comparing Stalin to Hitler and by writers who were less than rigorous in suggesting that communism and fascism might be similar projects. Communism, at its best, is premised on social equality *and* workers' democracy; fascism is marked by racism, patriarchy, imperial ambition, and the reorganization of capital for national purpose. Still, they can be similar projects where they seek to discipline capital (not abolish it) and repress independent labor action.

Walter Rodney and C.L.R. James

The editors take note of the curious silence of

Rodney's Russia manuscript on the historical ideas and political economy of C.L.R. James's writings on the Russian Revolution, Eastern Europe, and workers' self-emancipation, though the editors maintain the historical legend that Rodney was among the few Caribbean students who stood up to and chal-

A severe omission in Rodney's survey is the absence of the soviets "with a small s"—that is, the workers, peasants, and soldiers councils—which represented forms of popular self-mobilization and self-government. Nowhere are they discussed as independent political forms of freedom.

lenged James in their famous London study group of 1964-1965. The fact that this has not been the subject of a symposium makes us wonder what is known and what some fear will be discovered. These types of silences make a mockery out of the framework of the Black radical tradition. We should not be creating "Mount Rushmores" to decorate the university, but allowing representative thinkers to reveal radical debate and disagreement, facilitating deeper political thinking.

Both the editorial introduction and the foreword, when read carefully, suggest contradictory ideas about James and Rodney. The two share a Black radical tradition with ambiguous content. James informed (and did not inform) Rodney; James may have influenced and may have been profoundly dissatisfied with Rodney's historiographical survey. While this is not a review of James's ideas, these conflicting tendencies and si-

lences compel a concise response.

Rodney did not identify with James's views on direct democracy and workers' self-management as articulated in historical case studies of Classical Athens, the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, and in James's discussion of the soviets (popular councils) in *Modern Politics*. Rodney viewed Stalinist Russia and Eastern Europe as progressive for their modern political economies or aspirations to such—this meant supporting, as did Mao Zedong, the suppression of the Hungarian workers by Stalinist Russia. Uncritical affinity for Maoism was a major staple of the East African left in this era, and Rodney's Russia manuscript is peppered with references to Mao that do not enhance its scholarly presentation or political insight.

Rodney believed state capitalism (or if you wish state socialism) broke up the former political economy of the colonizer. James thought FDR's New Deal, Mussolini's and Hitler's fascism, Stalinist Russia, Fabian Britain, early Maoist China, and Tito's Yugoslavia were all state capitalist. Though he recognized these as variations on the one-party state and welfare state (which are not the same), James felt they were similar in being militantly hostile to independent labor action and seeking economic development, with their welfare state of mind, at the expense of labor's hides. He believed that supposed colonial independence cannot be guaranteed, and statesmen who posture that they have secured it, and brag about the capital they are accumulating and defending in the world system, only have power as administrators over their country's toilers' lives.

James's *World Revolution*, which Rodney does not discuss, argues Stalinism is not merely what happens in Russia under Stalin. It is the practice of collaborating with the left bloc of capital by Communist parties all over the world. Rodney, having observed and perhaps been influenced by the intellectual legacies of the Moscow-oriented Cheddi Jagan in Guyana, a major leader of his native

land's movement for colonial freedom and a shaper of its intellectual history, should have taken this more seriously. Yet Rodney argues there are times, following Stalin and Mao, when it is valid for radicals to collaborate with the left bloc of national capital and this can be termed "a democratic front."

Rodney (like Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin) agreed that nationalized property was a gain for ordinary people that could be maintained by a police state. James came to believe, while preserving the memory of Lenin as a peculiar left libertarian thinker who repressed the soviets, that nationalized property was not a step to a future socialist society that would be distinguished by freedom unless toilers invaded, occupied, and controlled it. Nevertheless, the editors may have the right inclination, though the wrong historical assessment, when they suggest that James would have seen the Bolsheviks from a more radical democratic critical lens than Rodney.

If James passed on to Rodney anything that he included in this manuscript, it may have been the former's appreciation for Trotsky as historian and historical actor in the Russian Revolution. James also agreed with Rodney that the crimes of Stalin, or of any authoritarian ruler in another global location, cannot permit the delegitimation of historical experiments that search for working-class self-government. Still, James investigated the similarity of diverse capitalist forms across the globe for their authoritarian ways. Rodney decided the United States was the greatest purveyor of violence in the world and peripheral capitalist nation-states or blocs of capital were socialist projects (even where labor was suppressed and democracy was not present) if their rulers were trying to delink from empire.

In Rodney's chapter "On the Inevitability of Socialism," where he explores this Marxist theory, he sees it as an argument about modes of production that must change for social change to happen. Take for example, the transition from feudalism to capitalism,

then from capitalism to socialism. James saw what was inevitable quite differently. It was inevitable that working people would confront institutionalized oppression and obstacles they placed in their own path and that if they did not succeed in establishing the process of a self-directed socialist future they would be subjected to barbarism. This principle was true no matter how capital was organized at any one time.

James did think capital had an inevitable tendency to organize working people to build a successor society within the shell of the old. The emergence of a free or new society was not inevitable, though being subjected to oppression was perennial and looking for a new society in embryo was a plausible manner to analyze society. Rodney stopped looking for this in Russia after 1921, as did many sympathetic to Bolshevism and Leninism. This has implications for how aspiring radicals analyze all global spheres.

While Rodney, by 1970–1971, had more precise knowledge of precolonial African cultures than James, James too could speak of the African peasantry in the 1970s as very self-reliant but starving, and at a disadvantage for their insufficient access to capital. Both of them had to rethink the forced collectivization of peasant farmers in Africa (Tanzania), the Caribbean (in the Haitian Revolution), and Russia. Rodney seems aware that the enclosure of the commons in feudal Europe was abusive, but he thinks that under Stalinist Russia it was not so harsh.

Anti-imperialism and Peaceful Coexistence?

The Russian Revolution, despite all its issues and complexities, continues to be a world historical event because it is an archive of questions about how social revolutions emerge and set the terms of the future socialist society. It is not nonsectarian, but dogmatic, to suggest there is one “African” or “Third World” view of these events, nor does such a point of

view represent a rupture with the Cold War mentality. The differences between Rodney and James make it clear there is no singular “Back radical” perspective or ethic, and such an assertion can be a cheap marketing ploy when intellectual and political history make it clear that socialism and anti-imperialism can be understood in various ways.

The Cold War wasn’t imposed solely by the United States. The Stalinist notion of “peaceful coexistence” with the United States during the Cold War, under the premise that they would compete successfully to see who could manage national growth better, obscured the fact that there was no long revolution. Where contemporaries talk about peace and anti-imperialism together, this is worthy of a few raised eyebrows.

At this historical moment, when it is becoming clear that most critiques of neoliberalism are pro-capitalist, one can see that public and nationalized property may return by some means once again into vogue. It is up to radical thinkers to clarify that such property forms are not necessarily “progressive” but can be used to sustain the profit system and to thwart labor’s self-emancipation. Despite the way in which empire creates unequal divisions of labor and capital, the issue is the same all over the world. We should be observing not redistribution of capital among elites or by hierarchical government, but the power for ordinary people to directly govern. Redistribution of wealth is one function of toilers governing; they can also carry out judicial affairs and foreign relations and preside over ecology, health, housing, education, and all cultural matters.

The heritage of the Russian Revolution compels us to ask, will we identify with a police state as the defender of the poor and powerless, or will we reframe revolution as a process of ordinary people arriving on their own authority, even where so-called progressives come to power above society?

A Third World point of view is not best understood as underscoring solely that the

United States is the greatest purveyor of violence across the globe. It can mistakenly give an identity politics valuation to peripheral political economies and their elite planners. It can offer to misleaders of color who aspire to capital accumulation a false banner of fighting for social equality. It can erase the search for direct democracy and workers' self-management by terming authoritarian nation-states "peoples," as was common in the era of the Bandung and Tricontinental conferences and which stems from the heritage of Stalinist Russia. A Third World viewpoint can obscure a commitment to an underdevelopment discourse that argues ordinary people can't govern without being exposed to the proper amounts of technology, industry, and modernization.

Despite the shadow of the historical context and ideological disposition that Walter Rodney was writing under in the early 1970s, his *The Russian Revolution* will be valuable to thinkers who have been observing that the critique of neoliberalism is not necessarily a rejection of capitalism and may itself represent a certain type of capitalist alternative, even though "socialist" chatter is heard. Discourses pushing toward a next system, or beyond capitalism as we know it, have something in common with the Cold War political economies of the past. They may diagnose what ruling classes are debating or aspire to but may not tell us where to look for the new society and how to bring it closer.

Rodney's *The Russian Revolution*, in my view, is not the best book for an introduction to the events or the issues that surround them, though it tells us a lot about the Third World national liberation epoch and its blind spots in the 1970s. Still, Rodney's historiography of the Russian Revolution can be fruitfully placed in conversation with C.L.R. James's lectures on the historiography of the French and Haitian revolutions and

Murray Bookchin's *Third Revolution*, which includes historiographies of both the French and Russian revolutions. As evidence that clarifies how Rodney actually saw socialist history and theory, it will have staying power and will contribute to creative conflict in how historical revolutions are understood.

NOTES

1. Walter Rodney, *The Russian Revolution: A View from the Third World* (Verso, 2018). Edited and introduced by R.D.G. Kelley and J. Benjamin. Foreword by V. Prashad.

2. E.H. Carr (1892-1982) died two years after Rodney was assassinated. His posthumous works included *Twilight of the Comintern*, 1930-1935 and *The Comintern and the Spanish Civil War*. These show thorough documented research the Soviet Union's conscious promotion of alliances with bourgeois, nationalist, and capitalist forces against insurgent international socialists and anarchists. Between 1930 and 1939 the Soviet Union went from propagating the idea that liberals and social democrats were "social fascists" to reversing this view circa 1935, redefining radicalism and democracy toward collaboration with these same forces to repress genuine revolutionaries. This is where the contemporary idea of "progressive" surfaced. The former "social fascists," for example Franklin Roosevelt, were now "progressive." And progressives and Stalinists created a "democratic front," later to be called a "popular front." This led to a silencing of the racist and imperialist implications of World War II as embodied by both the Allies and Axis powers. Before the United States entered World War II in 1941, in between the democratic front and the popular front, there was the Hitler-Stalin pact (1939-1941) that further distorted how Moscow-oriented Communist Internationalism was received.

3. Authors include Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, G.P. Maximoff, Voline, Peter Arshinov, Victor Serge, Boris Souvarine, Karl Korsch, Paul Mattick, Herman Gorter, Anton Pannekoek, Maurice Brinton, Paul Avrich, Oskar Anweiler, and Murray Bookchin.

4. Kimani Nehusi, "Forty-seven Years After: Understanding and Updating Walter Rodney," *Africa Update* (26.3, Summer 2019), www2.ccsu.edu/africaupdate/?article=414.

Are You a Settler?

Settler-colonialism, Capitalism and Marxism on Turtle Island

BRIAN WARD

Everything in U.S. history is about the land. Who oversaw and cultivated it, fished its waters, maintained its wildlife; who invaded and stole it; how it became a commodity ("real estate") broken into pieces, to be bought and sold on the market.

ROXANNE DUNBAR-ORTIZ

An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States

THE POLITICS OF SOLIDARITY ON display during the fight against the Dakota Access Pipeline have raised the issue of Indigenous liberation more and more sharply to people on the left. Activists have started to recognize that their struggles against ecological destruction, imperialism, and colonization are linked to the fight for Native self-determination that has gone on now for decades, even centuries. The recent struggles Standing Rock and Keystone XL stand in the tradition of organizations like Black Hills Alliance in the 1980s that brought together Natives and non-natives in the Black Hills in South Dakota to try to stop uranium mining.

A whole new generation of activists has learned the long history of the United States continually breaking treaties with the Indigenous Nations—stomping upon their self-determination any time the government and corporations demand access to Native lands to

extract energy and raw materials. The climate justice movement is coming to an understanding that treaties must be upheld and extended, as demanded by Indigenous Nations, based on their traditional territories. We have an urgent need to bring the fight against Native oppression into all the economic and social struggles of today. And that means grasping, as clearly and firmly as possible, that the struggle for Native liberation means keeping the question of land rights central.

In this essay I will demonstrate how settler-colonialism was and is vital to the development and maintenance of capitalism by using historical examples. Understanding the history and ongoing process of Settler-colonialism adds to our understanding of capitalism, while ignoring it perpetuates the erasure from history of Native peoples and their resistance to that process. I will do my best to use actual Indigenous Nation names such as the Lakota/Dakota/Nakota (Oceti Sakowin) or Ojibwe (Anishinaabe) or the Dine (Navajo) but will also use the words "Indigenous," "Native," "Native American," "American Indian," and "Indian" when appropriate, such as in quotations. I will often lump the United States and Canada together

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because their experience with Indigenous people are very similar.

Among Indigenous people, the common name for the continent of North America—and the one I will use accordingly—is Turtle Island.

HUNDREDS OF DIFFERENT social organizations existed on Turtle Island prior to the arrival of capitalist markets, but one common feature was that most Indigenous Nations treated the land as something held in common. The idea of nonhuman life being someone's "private property" was almost literally unthinkable. Many Indigenous theorists now consider "modes of relationship" a more useful concept than "modes of production" when talking about what Winona LaDuke, a citizen of the White Earth Ojibwe Nation, has called the co-evolution of Indigenous peoples and their environment and surroundings. Material conditions required Nations to develop relationships with human and nonhuman life in order to thrive. Indigenous people didn't pursue a sustainable existence out of some mystical nobility but because reality demanded it.

Writing in the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848, Karl Marx said, "The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the entire surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere." From an Indigenous perspective, that expanding market transformed abundance into scarcity.

Exploitation, expropriation, and extraction of the land's riches created wealth for those colonizing land and enforcing their claim to it by violence. Marx's term for this process as it had occurred in Europe is usually called "primitive accumulation," although it might be better translated as "primary" or "original" accumulation.

As Glen Coulthard, a citizen of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation, argues in his book *Red Skins, White Masks: Rejecting the*

Colonial Politics of Recognition:

Marx most thoroughly links the totalizing power of capital with that of colonialism by way of this theory of "primitive accumulation." ... It was this horrific process that established the two necessary preconditions underwriting the capital relation itself: It forcefully opened up what were once collectively held territories and resources to privatization (dispossession and enclosure), which, over time, came to produce a "class" of workers compelled to enter the exploitative realm of the labor market for their survival (proletarianization). The historical process of primitive accumulation thus refers to the violent transformation of noncapitalist forms of life into capitalist ones.

The process was underway on Turtle Island well before the U.S. Constitution was written, extension of the British colonies into Indigenous land being one of the "rights" fought for in the Revolutionary War. By 1787, the Congress of the Confederation of the United States—as the young republic was then called—passed the Northwest Ordinance, laying the foundation for the eventual incorporation of places known today as Wisconsin, Illinois, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, and parts of Minnesota. The ordinance (reconfirmed when the Constitution was ratified two years later) promoted the settlement of these areas by people of European decent, involving

a three-stage method for admitting a new state to the Union—with a congressionally appointed governor, secretary, and three judges to rule in the first phase; an elected assembly and one nonvoting delegate to Congress to be elected in the second phase, when the population of the territory reached "five thousand free male inhabitants of full age" (i.e., white men); and a state constitution to be drafted and membership to the Union to be requested in the third phase when the population reached 60,000.¹

Often, we hear of this push across the continent as “expansion,” as if nothing was there beforehand. For Indigenous people, their displacement can only be described as invasion, occupation, and genocide. It was a prolonged process, met with organized resistance all along the way, from the Pueblo Revolt in 1680 through the Dakota Uprising in 1862, the Metis Uprising in 1885, and many more.

With a wider perspective, we see that what the textbooks recall as Manifest Destiny was really capitalist accumulation through colonial expansion—taking the particular form of the settler republic. (Other examples include Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Israel.) The process was militarized from the start. In the United States, the army and its forts pushed deep into Indian Country to protect settlers and were paired with important pieces of legislation, such as the Homestead Act of 1862 and the Pacific Railroad Act of the same year.

The Army post was “created in order to serve and protect colonizers from Indigenous people,” writes Manu Karuka in *Empire’s Tracks: Indigenous Nations, Chinese Workers, and the Transcontinental Railroad* (University of California Press, 2019), adding, “The infrastructure of war and occupation actually establishes preconditions for settlement.”

Let’s take a closer look at the Homestead Act of 1862:

[E]nacted during the Civil War, [it] provided that any adult citizen, or intended citizen, who had never borne arms against the U.S. government could claim 160 acres of surveyed government land. Claimants were required to “improve” the plot by building a dwelling and cultivating the land. After 5 years on the land, the original filer was entitled to the property, free and clear, except for a small registration fee. Title could also be acquired after only a 6-month residency and trivial improvements, provided the claimant paid the government \$1.25 per acre. After the Civil War, Union soldiers

could deduct the time they had served from the residency requirements.²

This is the very definition of settler-colonialism. It formed a major plank of the Republican Party platform during the Civil War. And it passed in the same year that Lincoln oversaw the largest mass execution in U.S. history: the hanging of 38 men from

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the Dakota Nation following the Dakota uprising in Minnesota.

The 1873 stock market crash ignited more and more interest in land out west, leading to more railroads, mining, and homesteading. One response to this “progress” came at the Battle at Greasy Grass (Little Big Horn) in 1876, where the United States faced the largest military defeat at that time by the Lakota, Northern Cheyenne, and Arapaho. But then settler-republican cunning unleashed one of the most devastating pieces of legislation against Indigenous Nations. The Dawes Act of 1887 brought Indigenous Nations into the capitalist economy by breaking up communal ownership and “giving” individual plots of land to heads of households on the reservation. Any surplus land was then opened up to settlers. Not until 1934 was this policy overturned with the passage of the Indian Reorganization Act, which is the reason why so many Indian reservations are checkerboards with individual plots.

Karuka’s book *Empire’s Tracks*, cited earlier, analyzes capital’s role as the driving force for settlement:

Land grants, and the willful misreading of treaties as real estate transactions, to paraphrase Vine Deloria, were central to the growth of the United States as a continental and then global imperial power, central to waging war at ever-greater scales. Lenin noted, “The capital exporting countries have divided the world among themselves in the figurative sense of the term. But finance capital has also led to the actual division of the world.” Before this could happen, in North America, finance capital led to the division of the continent itself, and the transcontinental railroad was a key instrument of the division.

Settlers are a tool, but capital is the system that drives this process and ultimately benefits. This is an important point to clarify, for capitalism is always ready to abandon a tool when it has served its purpose and create a new one, as need be.

NICK ESTES, A CITIZEN OF THE Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, is a co-founder of the Red Nation. The Red Nation is an Indigenous-lead, revolutionary-socialist organization that fights for Indigenous liberation and an end to capitalism and settler-colonialism.

For Indigenous people,
their displacement can only
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occupation, and genocide.

In his recent book *Our History Is the Future: Standing Rock Versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance*, Estes defines settler-colonialism as

the specific form of colonialism whereby an imperial power seizes Native territory, eliminates the original people by force, and resettles the land with a foreign,

invading population. Unlike other forms of colonialism in which the colonizers rule from afar and sometimes leave, settler colonialism attempts to permanently and completely replace Natives with a settler population. The process is never complete, and the colonial state’s methods for gaining access to new territories change over time, evolving from a program of outright extermination to one of making Indigenous peoples “racial minorities” and “domestic dependent nations” within their own lands, and of sacrificing Indigenous lands for resource extraction.

Let’s break this down a little bit. In the United States, treaty-making was unilaterally ended by the government in 1871. Indigenous people would be henceforth treated as a racial minority. Only in 1924 did Native Americans become U.S. citizens, and it took until 1961 for them to gain full voting rights. When Estes says “domestic dependent nations” he is referring to the “trust” relationship between Indigenous Nations and the federal government, which still technically owns the land entrusted to these nations with limited sovereignty. As treaties are broken and resources are extracted on Indigenous land, it’s important to know that two-thirds of uranium, one-third of low-sulfur coal, as well as major hydroelectric, oil, and natural gas reserves are located in Indigenous communities.

These facts are important to the debate on the left about whether the United States is still a settler-colony or not. Some theorists put forward the idea that a settler-colony is a system where the non-Native population has an interest in displacing Indigenous people and therefore have no interest in standing up for Indigenous rights. This is without a doubt true for the United States throughout its existence up until the mid to late 1800s and early 1900s, as exemplified by the Homestead and Dawes acts.

Estes looks at settler-colonialism in what I consider a more nuanced way, recognizing that the system’s beneficiaries have changed

in the course of history. In the nineteenth century, the individual settler benefited from the displacement of Indigenous people, while in the twenty-first century that role is mainly played by a corporation like Energy Transfer LP that pushed through Dakota Access Pipeline. However, individual settlers still own land from the systematic process of land theft. Estes says, "According to a 2002 report by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), white settlers own 96 percent of private agricultural lands in the United States, and 98 percent of all U.S. private lands overall." This process of settler-colonialism is alive and well, and descendants of settlers have an ideological choice to reject this system in favor of their material interest and liberation.

Estes examines what settler-colonialism looks like in the modern era by considering the Pick-Sloan Act, which built six dams on the Missouri River between 1946 and 1966. The project flooded Indigenous Nations' land without their consent and displaced many Indigenous people. Estes specifically points to the Oahe Dam, which created Lake Oahe where the battle at Standing Rock took place. Estes says, "The Oahe Dam, the most destructive, destroyed 160,889 acres of Standing Rock and Cheyenne River." Post-World War II growth gave a demand for more extraction and energy policies such as these dams.

These infrastructure projects were connected to the newly established Termination policy, which aimed at forcing Indigenous people off reservations into cities and "the total liquidation of Indigenous political authority." The Bureau of Indian Affairs argued how the flooding of Indigenous land would speed up termination and force Indigenous people into the capitalist economy. They said that this would "force [Indians] into seeking cash income to make up for a substantial portion of income now represented in their use of natural resources of their present environment." The Missouri River Basin Investigation, a two-year fact-finding mission begun in 1946, stated that most Indigenous

communities in the area relied on the "free goods of Nature," such as hunting, trapping, and gathering. Forcing them to rely on a cash income is what Marxists, if not the Bureau of Indian Affairs, would call proletarianization.

THIS PROCESS IS NEVER COMPLETE, as Estes says, and the struggle continues today: The project of stealing indigenous

This process of settler-colonialism is alive and well and descendants of settlers have an ideological choice to reject this system in favor of their material interest and liberation.

land remains fundamental to the United States and its success. Settler-colonialism and its ideological companion of Manifest Destiny are baked into the development of the United States much like slavery and racism and cannot be extracted without completely overhauling the entire system. But the capitalist settler-state has met resistance every step of the way, and still does. Many Indigenous communities have gained back some of their land. For example, the Menominee Nation in northern Wisconsin, which lost its land and status as a nation in the 1950s during the Termination era, regained them in the 1970s during the Red Power era.

At the same time, more and more descendants of settlers are having their land taken. We have seen the development of multiracial groups that are fighting the fossil fuel industry, most recently in the organization called the Cowboy-Indian Alliance, which brought together Indigenous people and settlers to fight the Keystone XL pipeline.

Chief Phil Lane, citizen of the Ihanktonwan

Dakota and Chickasaw nations, reflected on some of the recent outrage of settlers' land being taken. Dina Gilio-Whitaker, a citizen of the Colville Confederated Tribes, in her book *As Long as Grass Grows: The Indigenous Fight for Environmental Justice from Colonization to Standing Rock*, quotes Lane reflecting on a meeting between Natives and nonnative farmers.

Those ranchers came in and spoke to that council, and they shared their heart.... So finally we came back after the treaty signing ... We had about ten or fifteen ranchers there, they all got up to speak...and one after another they got up and said they're infuriated. They said, ... "How could this happen? How can people take our land? How can they do this to us?" And of course ... we didn't see a smile but everybody knew what we was thinking about from our side. ... So finally this last sister got up to speak and she just said, "I just am so infuriated, they're coming and taking our land. ... They just can't do it without our consent.... This is our land that our families have lived in since ... you know, how long they have been there." And said, "They're treating us just like ... just like." and then one of the relatives said, "Just like the Indians." And all of the [sic] sudden there was this beautiful pause and everybody's like, "Yes!" And one of my relatives walked over to her and says, "Welcome to the tribe, *welcome* to the tribe."

SETTLERS OFTEN SAY, "If we give land back, they will do what we did to them." This is a colonized mindset. Indigenous liberation is about changing our relationship to land and labor to changing the profit system. I would argue that a future decolonized Turtle Island is looking toward a socialist society that

puts forward Indigenous self-determination and liberation and counters racism, white supremacy, settler-colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism. As Clayton Thomas Mueller, a citizen of the Mathias Colomb Cree Nation and an Idle No More activist in Canada said, "imagine if the workers and First Nations actually joined forces in a meaningful coalition—the rightful owners of the land, side by side with the people working the mines and pipelines, coming together to demand another economic model."³

Howard Adams, who is Metis from Canada, writes in his book *Prison of Grass: Canada from a Native Point of View* says,

The Indian and Metis movement must focus primarily on the destruction of imperialism and on the process of decolonization. There is no longer any question of where the native struggle should pursue a capitalist or socialist path of development. Liberation can take place only within a true socialist society .

We will not succeed in slowing, let alone stopping, climate change and devastation, and in having clean air, water, and land unless we stand for Indigenous rights, sovereignty, and the enforcement of treaties. If we do not have a left that understands this and puts the question of land, imperialism, and conquest at its center we will perpetuate the same old song of class reductionism. Indigenous liberation is about liberation for all.

NOTES

1. www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=8
2. www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=31
3. www.juancole.com/2013/09/alliance-workers-climate.html

Anti-colonialism and Humanism

NDINDI KITONGA

This article on the differences between colonial-racist and emancipatory humanism, with a particular focus on Africa and on the writings of Frantz Fanon, is based on a presentation at a Los Angeles meeting of the International Marxist-Humanist Organization, June 2019. —EDITORS

ANTI-COLONIALISM IS UNDERSTOOD to be both a group of historical events and a critical analysis of past and ongoing imperialisms. Post-colonial studies (a field where much anti-colonial thought has found its home) and humanism have had an uneasy relationship for several decades. Most notably, post-colonial scholars Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (discussed in Spencer 2017), who produce the most widely accepted post-colonial studies, are leery of humanism, asserting that “the assumption that there are irreducible features of human life and experience that exist beyond the constitutive effects of local cultural conditions ... is a crucial feature of imperial hegemony.” Because of some of these prevailing attitudes, most of the work in this field focuses on the description of the colonial subject, its intrinsic worth, its expansive knowledge systems, hybrid structures produced by colonization, liminality, and an analysis of the sub-imperialisms that are emerging in the non-Western world. While these scholars are rightfully reacting to an imposed humanism from the enlightenment era that had narrow conceptions of humans,

they often struggle to project what society can aspire to be both materially and ideally after colonial structures are dismantled.

This unease with humanism also extends to revolutionaries outside of post-modern post-colonial thought, with important thinkers condemning humanism of the western European variety. We see this in Césaire’s *Discourse on Colonialism* (1972), where he offers a sharp repudiation of the “pseudo-humanism” he observed in the West, that is, the hypocrisy of Europeans who would exploit and kill indigenous populations in their colonies and appear to be shocked by the rise of Nazism on their own lands. Even with their laws, reason, security, and prosperity, he argues that such civilizations are unable to uphold the rights of humans. Famed existentialist Sartre (1961) also criticizes humanism, stating that Europeans “must confront an unexpected sight, the strip-tease of our humanism. Not a pretty sight in its nakedness: nothing but a dishonest ideology of lies, an exquisite justification for plundering ... since the only way the European could make himself man was by fabricating slaves and monsters.”

This essay engages in a historical excavation and a philosophical exploration of anti-colonialism and humanism. I focus on the anti-colonial struggles of Africa. What I am suggesting is that we need anti-colonialisms that not only describe the “what” and the “how,” but also the structural “why” of colonialism and the “what comes next after colonization.” Ultimately, I am asking, “How can anti-colonial philosophical frameworks become not only a history and an analysis of colonial structures, but a potentially liberatory

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framework?”

Negritude, Black Consciousness, Pan-Africanism, and National Consciousness

“We believe the conscious, organized struggle undertaken by a colonized people in order to restore national sovereignty constitutes the greatest cultural manifestation that exists. ... After the struggle is over, there is not only the demise of colonialism, but also the demise of the colonized.” —FRANTZ FANON

In the work first titled “An Essay on the Disalienation of Man,” which was released as *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon methodically describes the psychological-economic structure of colonization. His primary objective here is to philosophically work out the possibility for disalienation for colonized subjects and the potential for what he describes as a “new humanism.”

Fanon begins from the philosophical presupposition that humanness is not a fixed essence but that it is instead determined by our interactions with each other. He then moves on to explain how human relations become perverted in a colonizer-colonized relationship, particularly one that is racialized. Colonizers associate blackness with many negative qualities to justify the colonial structure and not because of any innate qualities the colonized possess. Blackness is a social construct so there is no pre-existing black essence for black people to fall back on, in this arrangement, to affirm their humanity. Of course, there is no such thing as a white essence, but the colonial structure obscures this truth. This obfuscation makes it appear as though Westernness or whiteness equals humanness. Blackness, then, can only exist in negative relation to whiteness. The colonizer sees the black person as black because of the distorted human relations produced by colonization and racialized oppression, and in the world of unrequited recognition,

the black colonized subject sees themselves as black because of the gaze of the colonizer. The lack of reciprocal recognition plunges the colonized black subject into an inferiority complex that Fanon calls “epidermalization.”

For Fanon, the colonial subject cannot escape the colonizer’s gaze. This situation goes beyond a self-other paradigm because the colonized is “overdetermined from the outside,” and because of this, the colonial black subject is not an other or even a no one but a “nothing.” From “inhabiting this zone of non-being,” the colonized subject initially wants the recognition of the colonizer desperately, to the point of taking on their attributes and values and desiring to be “white.” The recognition never comes from the colonizer, and the psychic disorder prevails. This construct has serious psychic consequences as the colonized will often accept their subjugated position as being the natural order of things and will aspire to be like the colonizer.

These insights would not have developed if Fanon had merely applied philosophy to his understanding of colonial relations. Instead, to make his assertions, he looked at the situated lived experiences of human subjects and their struggles at that time. He reminds us that racism and colonial subjection must be fought both materially and psychically since epidermalization is experienced doubly, writing, “Genuine disalienation will have been achieved when things in the materialist sense have resumed their rightful place.” It is indeed possible to break the cycle of irreconcilable recognitions because society makes the inferiority complex possible and because humanity creates society. Therefore, we have the capacity to “restructure the world and reach for a new humanism.” For these reasons, Fanon was supportive of negritude and other related expressions.

Negritude, the black consciousness movement, Pan-Africanism, and other related movements have always placed an emphasis on self-determination, self-reflective praxis, addressing material conditions, and

dismantling oppressive systems for black people everywhere. Colonization not only disrupts indigenous cultures and ways of life, it makes it difficult for the people of those colonized lands to access and value their own knowledge.

Steve Biko points us to the particulars of racial oppression that necessitated the South African black consciousness movement of his day. Like Fanon, he too understood that racism produces race and not the other way around. He describes the (un)logic of racism in his native South Africa. The black person in South Africa is considered inferior for all of the reasons associated with colonization and racial domination. The lack of access and opportunity and the systematic denial of humanity block the colonized from participating in civil society to acquire the skills and confidence needed to fight their colonizers. The white liberals, both in and outside of South Africa in Biko's time, acknowledged the diminishing potential of black human life within apartheid and were only willing to fight (from their armchairs, mind you) for an integrated, raceless society. Biko asserts that only by working through the first negation, that is, by creating a strong black solidarity network in direct opposition to this racism, can the second negation, the struggle for a universal humanism—or what Biko calls a “true humanism”—be made possible. For this dialectic to be worked out, it is even more important for the colonized to understand these truths since the white colonizer will not recognize the humanity of the black person anyway. Understood in this way, black consciousness is not only a struggle against internalized racism, or a form of collective consciousness building, but also a principled philosophical stance.

The first concern for a black consciousness movement then becomes the project of reclaiming the histories of colonized people. During the height of negritude, black consciousness, and Pan-Africanism, we see a proliferation of history books written by

black folks and an explosion of black-created, African-centered art, music, crafts, and works of fiction almost everywhere that black people live. This was and still remains an important consciousness-building tool.

Not all aspects of these movements were or are progressive. Indeed, while it is of great importance, restoring the colonial subject as

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an agent of history still maintains the logic of the colonizer-colonized construct. Fanon warns negritude followers of the potential for race essentialism or even elitism, especially when it is expressed outside of material questions. This can be evidenced by the case of Senegal's post-independence leader Leopold Senghor, who asks Africans to reclaim oneness with nature, animism, sensuality, rhythm, and irrationality as though these are values that describe those of all black civilizations, or by Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah insisting on an “African Personality,” which was supposed to be a characteristic possessed of all black people desiring freedom, regardless of their context or material needs. Furthermore, a negritude that does not consider the lived experiences of its supporters results in fragmentation in the movement. Fanon is quite aware of this, advocating for strong national consciousness over blind negritude and stating that “every culture is first and foremost national, and that the problems which kept Richard Wright or Langston Hughes on the alert were fundamentally different from those which might confront Leopold Senghor or [Kenya's] Jomo Kenyatta.”

National Consciousness and Nation Building

“National culture is the collective thought process of a people to describe, justify, and extol the actions whereby they have joined forces and remained strong. National culture in the under-developed countries, therefore, must lie at the very heart of the liberation struggle.” —FRANTZ FANON

The African anti-colonial movements of the 1940s and 1950s were highly influenced by the black radical thought emanating from the United States and the Caribbean at that time. During this period, the intellectual and grass-roots organizing work of figures like Marcus Garvey, W.E.B Du Bois, the abolitionists, and early black labor activists were revived. The articulations of artists from the Harlem Renaissance and the liberation music emerging from it were embraced. We also cannot forget about the inspirational activities of the U.S. black masses and their refusal to accept dehumanization in both the domestic and public sphere, their ongoing struggle with Jim Crow, or their anti-imperialist resistances in both World War I and II. Nor the resistance of the Ethiopians to Italian rule in the late 1930s. Nor the activities of black folks asserting their sovereign rights in places like Canada and Brazil during that same period. These life-affirming histories were pored over by African blacks eager to seize their freedoms and abolish colonial rule.

The prevailing liberal thought of the time suggested that anti-colonial nationalists would co-opt the existing concept of self-determination from the liberal internationalist tradition, which was understood to be a straight-line movement from being part of an empire, to constructing a self-governing nation-state, to participating in an international global capitalist society. Getachew (2019) rejects this premise, suggesting that most anti-colonial leaders were not participating in mere nation building

but in “worldmaking,” a process informed by national consciousness rather than opportunistic nationalism. Indeed, most of the African anti-colonial intellectuals of this time were fighting to uproot the colonial structure and to create new economic systems and ways of life because they knew that a straight-line progression would result in

We live in worlds where the
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unfinished.

an international racial hierarchy that would hardly shift Africans or humans into new socio-political relations. Ideas proposed for a post-colonial Africa by leaders like Ghana’s Kwame Nkrumah, Kenya’s Jomo Kenyatta, and Tanzania’s Julius Nyerere included state welfare initiatives, land revitalization plans, resource redistribution, recovering of land, and human rights. Black radical thought influenced not only the African intellectuals and leaders but also the masses, who became very interested in a socialist future for themselves. In this way, the African anti-colonial struggle was partly anti-capitalist and had a very strong class character. Many would eventually waiver on their commitment to anti-capitalism after independence.

Nation building after colonialism was not without its stumbling blocks. Even after many African nations won their independence, there was much work to be done before a new society could be realized. To begin with, those Africans who had acquired some intellectual and technological capital during colonization were not willing to give up their class interests for the collective whole. Many became administrators of new African nations and, in real middle-class bourgeois fashion,

continued to enrich themselves. Some of our most hailed freedom fighters became leaders who instituted one-party states with authoritarian tendencies. Freedom struggles that were fought under the banner of “socialism” were abandoned once there emerged the sober challenge of building nations that had suffered decades of resource depletion and underdevelopment. And in most new nations, the ties with former colonizers would not and could not be easily severed, as that might result in economic collapse. Fanon anticipates this phenomenon, noting that bourgeois leadership in newly independent nations does not in fact have the capital required to overcome the new nations’ difficulties, resulting in some of the aforementioned problems. Unfortunately, his words are practically prophetic:

But if nationalism is not made explicit, if it is not enriched and deepened by a very rapid transformation into a consciousness of social and political needs, in other words into humanism, it leads up a blind alley. The bourgeois leaders of underdeveloped countries imprison national consciousness in sterile formalism. It is only when men and women are included on a vast scale in enlightened and fruitful work that form and body are given to that consciousness. Then the flag and the palace where sits the government cease to be the symbols of the nation. The nation deserts these brightly lit, empty shells and takes shelter in the country, where it is given life and dynamic power. The living expression of the nation is the moving consciousness of the whole of the people; it is the coherent, enlightened action of men and women. The collective building up of a destiny is the assumption of responsibility on the historical scale.

Raya Dunayevskaya also understood the pitfalls that newly independent African nations needed to avoid, wondering in 1959 if the new socialisms proposed by freedom fighters now turned heads of state could “hide the old smell of exploitative capitalism.” She acknowledges the challenges of new nation

building, noting that “of course, industrialization of Africa is a necessity. Of course, this cannot be done outside of a relationship to technologically advanced industrial powers. But must the method be capitalistic?” If national consciousness leads to incomplete freedom from colonial structures, it can, if left unchecked, breed new forms of nationalism that only serve capital and its sergeants, and this is what happened.

There are many contradictions and questions to work out concerning the new independent African states of the 1950s–1970s that cannot be explored here. It is worth noting that not all of the revolutionary left supported the Africans’ quest for independence on national terms and instead asked for the colonial subject to abandon aspirations for national identity for the sake of international solidarity and a commitment to the workers of the world. Here, Leninism (as less an ideology and more a strategic program) found a foothold in places in Africa because of the USSR and Eastern bloc support for Africans’ struggles for independence. The question of eschewing one’s national or local struggle for a collective international solidarity continues to plague the left. Demands for international solidarity must be required. It cannot simply be a request that the West makes of the colonial subject without a making a reciprocal commitment. These difficult conversations did not end after African independence but can be observed in some parts of the left’s response to apartheid, the Rwandan genocide, the Arab Spring, and the most recent Sudan uprising. One question worth working out in the U.S. left for our time remains “What does critical international solidarity actually mean when human subjects are seeking liberation based on national terms?”

God, the African, and Humanism

God might be a strange discussion item for revolutionaries, but the topic cannot be discarded when discussing the lives of the

colonized in Africa. Western leftists, even those espousing humanistic values, have historically had difficulties with their African counterparts because of leftists' dismissal of, or even open antagonism toward, religion and spirituality.

Africans were introduced to a white Christian God by early missionaries, who were acting on the basis of their *mission civilisatrice* (civilizing mission) or white man's burden. From the outset, the colonized masses in Africa could not fully accept a masculine, cruel, sanitized God who did not seem connected to daily life. Many African communities rejected the Christian God because the religion did not meet their needs. Also, contrary to what many think, indigenous African religions are varied and are not always animistic. For example, the Kamba of Kenya worshipped a benevolent God on a mountain. They believed that God controlled all events both in the afterlife and on earth and so all activities were in some sense for the purpose of worship, thanksgiving, or atonement (Mbiti, 1973). Christians considered Kamba spiritual practices and traditional medicine evil, so when the group converted to Christianity, everyone was commanded to denounce their Kamba religious practices. Because the British favored an indirect-rule approach, punishments were administered by appointed African authorities. This did not deter many Kamba people from combining aspects of their religious practices with Christianity (Mbiti, 1973). Many communities across Africa practice Christianity but still hold on to aspects of their traditional religions to minimize the alienation produced by colonization.

Anti-colonial theorist wa Thiong'o (1986) makes a compelling argument for how Christianity continues to oppress, divide, and exploit Africans today as much as it did during formalized colonialism. Wa Thiong'o and others like him encourage Africans to locate authentic forms of their traditional religions, but they fail to articulate what it would really

mean to reclaim and practice an indigenous African religion that so few currently practice or how that practice can usher in material liberation. Others (most of whom make up the clergy and upper classes) urge the masses to embrace a Christian God as a means to material prosperity. Here God is sold as a way to mentally overcome everyday suffering, not to challenge the conditions that produce it, and as necessary for societal progress. This messaging has been particularly persuasive. While Christianity is on the decline on other continents, Africa maintains the largest popu-

There are and have always been revolutionaries and academics on the African continent seeking alternatives that move espoused human values beyond the personal and the cultural

lation of nominal and practicing Christians in the world, and this population will double by 2060 based on projected growth models. God is a business that thrives in Africa. With this understanding, no one should be surprised at the explosion of megachurches in Africa, complete with grocery stores, private schools, and banks. These projects line the pockets of a few and at best offer humanitarian assistance to their neighboring communities. But as we all know, humanitarianism in itself does not liberate the human.

If we are short-sighted, issues of God and spirituality for colonized folks are easily reduced to aspects of culture that need to be either reclaimed or completely discarded if we are to realize a human universal. Indeed, the culture wars surrounding African religiosity play out in this way. The African traditionalist is accused of being backward but is also romanticized for his honest attempt to reclaim

his true African past. The Christian is vilified for his uncritical religious assimilation and is both admired and reviled for his desire to be in close proximity to whiteness, Westernness, and the material rewards that that can bring.

This is not to say that there are no progressive or even liberatory expressions of Christianity in Africa. There is indeed a rich tradition of African liberation theology that emerged in the 1960s and that was heavily influenced by important African Americans like Martin Luther King Jr. and James H. Cone. The black liberation theology of South Africa emerged with the black consciousness movement and was very influential in driving resistance against apartheid. Although less influential now, there remain vibrant liberation-minded Christian organizations across the continent.

There are and have always been revolutionaries and academics on the continent seeking alternatives that move espoused human values beyond the personal and the cultural. Es'kia Mphahlele, known as the father of African humanism, found it necessary to try and develop such a framework for our times. For him, an African humanism must not only be concerned with reason, centering the human and her ability to create her world, but must also be an active philosophical stance against the world as it is. This African humanism seeks to counteract Western hegemony and white supremacy and to rouse the colonial subject from his inferiority complex. For Mphahlele, humanism and Pan-African thought are closely related.

Others, like Michael Onyebuchi Eze, have proposed that Ubuntu, based on an eponym found in many Bantu languages, is the closest thing to an indigenous African humanism, with great potential to liberate not only the African but the human. Ubuntu is a philosophy emerging from South and East Africa that can be summarized as "I am because we are, we are because I am," or "the belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity." Quite simply, Ubuntu is a

philosophy focused on the mutual recognition of the other. Applied as a political philosophy, it has been used to mean collective responsibility, community equality, equitable distribution of resources, restorative over retributive justice practices, and upholding the rights of individuals while rejecting individualism.

Both of these humanisms wholeheartedly accommodate religion while they syncretically link private values and practices to collective political life. It should also be pointed out that these humanisms rejected the standard Marxist-Leninist two-stage theory, which asserts that nations must go through a Westernized capitalist stage before achieving a socialist, humanist future; instead these humanisms place value not on predetermined political programs but on human subjects and their ability to theoretically and practically work out their problems.

If we are to move together and take anti-colonialism seriously, and to have international solidarity, we must reckon with the spirituality of colonial subjects and those commitments have to shine through in the philosophies we are projecting.

Conclusion

Because we live in a North American context, where anti-colonial praxis revolves around issues of settler colonialism, I want to highlight some contributions from Glen Sean Coulthard, author of *Red Skins, White Masks* (2014). Like Fanon and others, Coulthard understands that colonized subjects engage in self-affirming artistic, cultural, and political activities to overcome their inferiority complex and to empower themselves. He is also aware that the politics of recognition can in fact be essentialist or bourgeois resulting in no real potential for true humanisms. Coulthard puts forth very important questions: "What role might these (cultural) forms and practices play in the construction of alternatives to the oppressive social relations that produce the colonial subject in the first place?" and

"Can revitalized traditions play a role in the reconstruction of decolonized nations ... one that builds on the values and insights of the past to create a present and future non-colonialism?" This is an important area of consideration since we are finding more and more useful innovations from indigenous communal-based, land-based societies, who through their decolonization work have much to offer when it comes to theorizing our way to a new world, particularly in this current climate crisis.

I also raise this issue because there is a tendency among the standard Marxist left to treat the issue of decolonization or expressions like those found in black consciousness movements in the same way that class is treated, that is, that present-day class society is a determined transitional stage to move through before attaining the absolute, a classless society. We do not move from the particular to the universal in a linear march. Thinkers like Fanon and Coulthard encourage us to embrace the particular and assert it without reservations and as an absolute, or in Peter Hudis's words, "Get in touch with your negativity. ... Posit your subjectivity not as a minor term but as an absolute," because the absolute or universal is already imbued with it.

We live in worlds where the project of anti-colonialism lays unfinished. The particularities of coloniality, race, and indigeneity can still permeate and be meaningful even after we overcome perverted human relations. We need to work slowly through these particulars and to struggle with the negative in totality whilst we "reach out for the universal" and the creation of a new human world of "reciprocal recognitions."

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SORTITION: TWO VIEWS

WE PRESENT TWO ARTICLES on the idea of sortition, democracy by lottery: one by Nicholas Coccooma and one by Stephen R. Shalom.

The Return of Democracy by Lottery

NICHOLAS COCCOMA

IMAGINE IF INSTEAD OF HAVING politicians and political parties make our most important decisions, we empowered everyday people from all walks of life to dive into the issues, work through their differences, and seek common ground. No campaigns, no donors, no slick-talking politicians. Just real people having real conversations about issues that really matter. This is the promise of Citizens' Assemblies, an exciting political practice that's gaining momentum around the world. Rather than the ballot, people in these assemblies win their seats via a civic lottery. And instead of posturing for the media, scoring cheap shots against their opponents, or cozying up to lobbyists, they function as a true deliberative body. The idea may sound preposterous, but it's as old as Western civilization itself. And its implementation would inaugurate one of the most democratic epochs in history.

Democracy by lottery traces its roots to ancient Athens. In their system, any eligible citizen could serve in government via a civic lottery that chose them. While the power to pass legislation resided in the Assembly (open to all citizens) a Council of 500—selected by lot—developed the proposals. Lotteries also chose magistrates and even judges. Only a

few positions, like generals, relied on voting. Why? Because the Greeks understood a truth we've bitterly come to learn—wealthy elites control elections and the politicians they produce. This domination isn't a perversion of the system, but inherent to it. "The appointment of magistrates by lot is democratical," Aristotle observes in *Politics*, "and the election is oligarchical."

After the classical era, city states in Italy, Germany, and Spain kept democracy by lottery alive. Enlightenment thinkers knew of it well, such that, like Aristotle before them, Montaigne and Montesquieu considered it the true form of democracy. "The suffrage-by-lot is natural to democracy; as that by choice is to aristocracy," the latter explains in *The Spirit of the Laws*. "The suffrage-by-lot is a method of electing that offends no one, but animates each citizen with the pleasing hope of serving his country." It did offend some people, though, namely the leaders of the American War of Independence. The patriot gentry threw off a monarch only to institute the political lever that would insulate themselves from the very revolutionary forces they unleashed: elections. While the suffrage has expanded, the aristocracy—first landed, then capitalist—has never looked back. The dysfunction, corruption, and unaccountability of today's political establishment stems from

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that fateful choice. Voters exert little influence on campaigns (so thoroughly have elites co-opted them) and next to zero on policy. Legislatures answer not to the common citizen, but to hoarders of political resources—namely, wealthy donors. Elections have bred and fed a homegrown oligarchy.

The right-wing backlash against this inequality, and the autocrats it has fueled, has caused many to fear for democracy's future. That anxiety may prove valid for electoral representative democracy. But in spite or perhaps because of this crisis, democracy by lottery has seen a rebirth. Debacles like Trump's election and the ongoing Brexit nightmare have unmasked the problems with voting, not democracy writ large. Though wedded together in our minds, the two are not synonymous. Democracy means merely rule by the people; it stipulates nothing about the process. My purposes here are threefold: to make a case for why the left should endorse democracy by lottery; to highlight visions of how it could work; and, finally, to explore how it could be implemented in the United States.

The Case for Democracy by Lot

Today's brief for democracy by lottery rests on at least three principles: legitimacy, effectiveness, and credibility. First, legitimacy. In a pure democracy, every citizen would have direct, equal input on decisions. The size of our politics precludes this ideal on practical grounds, necessitating delegates. Therein lies the rub—how to ensure these stand-ins reflect the public's wishes accurately. While we don't have Hogwarts's sorting hat, we do have civic lotteries. This process creates a Citizens' Assembly, a statistically representative cross-section of the populace.

Replicating society in microcosm, a Citizens' Assembly mirrors its demographic makeup. Overnight, legislatures would change from mostly wealthy, white, septuagenarian men to an accurate reflection of the population. Removing re-election anxieties

protects members from special interests, allowing them to speak their conscience and represent the will of the people. And because each Citizens' Assembly rotates-in fresh individuals, the system avoids the dangers of incumbency. Moreover, since all citizens have the same chance of being selected to serve, democracy by lottery better realizes the democratic ideal of equality. There is an integral fairness to the process that elections don't even begin to approach. The latter tilt the playing field toward the few with the privilege to stand for office, the connections to advance their cause, and the war chest to wage a campaign. Democracy by lottery creates parity and openness—kiss gerrymandering, voter suppression, and ballot stuffing goodbye.

Secondly, effectiveness. Citizens' Assemblies increase the diversity of voices in the decision-making process, allowing different people to come together by focusing on wider community needs. This heterogeneity includes an all-important cognitive diversity. As Daniel Kahneman and other social psychologists have shown, each of us suffers inescapable biases in our thinking. Peopling a committee with individuals of varied viewpoints can avoid group-think, ensure that the wisdom of each viewpoint is heard, and promote truth-finding. Diverse groups of people make smarter decisions than homogenous ones, as political scientist Hélène Landemore has written. In fact, heterogeneous committees of informed lay people render better judgments than even specialists—the former bring perspectives and values that the latter overlook. Citizens' Assemblies develop an informed, critical understanding of issues, questioning a slew of experts, stakeholders, and theorists. They work together to identify the pros, cons, and trade-offs of policy options. The process emphasizes empathy and learning over hyper-partisanship. Farewell filibuster, shutdowns, and constitutional hardball. Unlike antic-prone legislatures, members of Citizens' Assemblies actually

deliberate. The hours they spend poring over policies dwarf that of politicians, who devote a third of their time to fundraising alone. The results are high-quality public judgements backed by considered, easily understood reasons. They are polls incarnated—except they are informed.

Finally, credibility. Experience illustrates that the public trusts the outcomes of Citizens' Assemblies more than those of legislatures. They take ordinary people along

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on the decision-making process. As a result, they close the perceived gap between elites and the commons. Citizens see decisions being made by “people like me,” rather than careerist pols. As for accountability, members of Citizens' Assemblies report a strong sense of responsibility—to the public authority that initiates the process, to each other, and to the wider public. In fact, they exhibit a greater sense of accountability to future generations for their decisions, a feeling in short supply among elected legislators.

In sum, democracy by lottery solicits scores of ordinary men and women in building their future. This active participation engenders feelings of empowerment, engagement, and control. As David Von Reybrouck, author of *Against Elections* (2017), notes, today's citizens desire not just a vote, but a voice. Ticking a box every four years fails to satisfy. Recent use of Citizens' Assemblies has begun to slake that thirst. In Ireland, the government established a Citizen's Assembly in 2016 to address climate change, an aging population, parliamentary reforms, and the constitutional ban on abortion. More

than one hundred citizens participated, and the body issued recommendations to the national legislature that garnered praise for their breadth and intelligence. Meanwhile, in Belgium, the parliament of the country's German-speaking province instituted a permanent sortition chamber last spring. This standing mini-public will act as an agenda council, determining three policy areas that need attention each session. Separate Citizens' Assemblies will then convene to develop legislation, with their proposals moving to the German-speaking parliament for approval.

Local governments have increasingly turned to mini-publics in the United Kingdom, and there have been calls to hold a national Citizen's Assembly to resolve the Brexit impasse. Closer to home, the organization MASS LBP has produced dozens of reference panels in Canada over the last 15 years. Ontario and British Columbia have even experimented with Citizens' Assemblies on a provincial level to address constitutional issues. The United States currently lags behind this trend, but that may soon change. Several states have adopted Citizens' Initiative Reviews to develop voter guides for ballot referenda. In Georgia, the Jefferson Center has pioneered the use of independent policy juries on a small scale. And just this year, the municipality of Milwaukie, Oregon, convened the first Citizens' Assembly in the country, under the direction of the organization Healthy Democracy.

Democracy by Lottery and Socialism

Despite the use of civic lotteries by radical parties abroad, the American left has yet to adopt the practice. This is a shame. Socialists correctly identify the political establishment's many ills. They envision the expansion of democracy not just in the political sphere, but the economic as well. Yet their tools for this transformation remain that of oligarchy—elections, parties, and politicians. In his new book *The Socialist Manifesto* (2019), Bhaskar

Sunkara calls for a thoroughgoing democratic renewal, only to land on the most tepid of mechanisms: A unicameral legislature elected on the basis of proportional representation. Democratic Socialists of America make the same appeal in their 2016 strategy document. Granted, they also promise “new referenda and recall mechanisms” to hold politicians accountable. But no one can look at Brexit and honestly believe we need *more* ballot initiatives. Propaganda, media sensationalism, and voter ignorance—not to mention foreign hacking—render referenda anemic. To their credit, DSA does call for “municipal and state-level citizen assemblies that would be open to all and would be tasked with making budget decisions.” But it offers no definition of these bodies. And if such assemblies are good for economics, why not for politics?

This is reform, not radicalism; adjustments of structures designed to benefit the privileged and perpetuate their power. Socialists are supposed to offer a visionary politics. But how can we expect an anti-democratic process to produce anything but an undemocratic result? If the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result, then we are certifiable. Yes, ranked-choice voting, multi-member districts, and expanding the House of Representatives would improve matters. But they amount to tweaks and fixes of an ossified infrastructure. Countries that have proportional representation and coalition-building suffer from the same electoral pathologies as the United States. Going that route would just poke around the edges of the problem.

If the left seriously intends to end plutocracy, give voice to the multitude, and bring about a radically egalitarian political economy, it should sound the trumpet for democracy by lottery. Such a crusade would inject a novel hope into a beleaguered public. It would restore the United States to its position as the cradle of liberty. It would make self-government exciting again, because it would make it real. People believe in democ-

racy in the abstract. They just want more of it in practice. Given that hunger, movements that stand for a truly inclusive, participatory politics will win hearts and minds.

To what can we attribute the slowness of the left in catching on to democracy by lottery? We might chalk it up to the general parochialism of U.S. politics; Americans remain aloof to the innovations of the rest of the world’s democracies. Leftist organizations may also suffer from the same electoral dysfunction and path-dependency as the establishment. Any institution can succumb to clericalism and capture by its managerial level. Finally, the desire for control can tempt leftist leaders as it does any other.

Another possibility: Socialists may doubt that democracy by lottery would prove amenable to realizing their overall project. How, after all, can a movement attain influence without party politics? More specifically, would Citizens’ Assemblies amount to a clever, elaborate way for capitalists to continue holding the system hostage? Cody Hipkind ventures these suspicions in a June 2019 post on the blog *Equality by lot*. Offering a Marxist critique, he worries that democracy by lottery would take mass mobilization out of politics, leaving elites with even greater sway over the populace through their control of media and business. He also fears that Citizens’ Assemblies, with their emphasis on seeking common ground, would end up sustaining an unjust status quo. Brokering compromises is “nice and all,” he explains, “but as a Marxist my goal is not to create a politics without division.”

It’s a fair point. In order to get the necessary buy-in, Citizens’ Assemblies grant stakeholders the opportunity to address them. Does such access give oligarchs undue influence on the outcomes? Likewise, the group relies on the testimony of experts and policy wonks to inform their deliberations. Might those presenters bias the body toward small-bore technocratic changes, away from sweeping transformation? Would the citizens have access to radical theories and the freedom to

implement them, against the wishes of the establishment? And what would become of mass political movements and activist organizations? These are legitimate questions, and we must never underestimate the ability and desire of the establishment to co-opt reforms. But Hipskind should rest easy. To begin with, Citizens' Assemblies seek common ground among their own members, not necessarily with outside interests. As Yoram Gat notes in response, "The objective of sortition-based government is certainly not to create consensus-based politics. Consensus can only be based on suppression of the diversity of opinions (as is often the case in electoralism)." The goal, he continues, "is to find common ground where there is one—politics is far from being a zero sum game—and to decide by considered and informed majority opinion on issues that are in contention." As for testimony, Citizens' Assemblies have the ability to call their own experts during deliberation, in addition to ones provided for them (who must represent a spectrum of viewpoints anyway). Moreover, the process forces special interests out into the open. Stakeholders must answer to real members of the community, who can research and interrogate them. Lobbyists could no longer write bills and hand them to lawmakers behind closed doors.

Likewise, the absence of elections could actually benefit political organizations and empower the masses. Parties waste untold quantities of time, money, and energy on the campaign industry. The obsession with the horse race fixates on a cast of candidates, impoverishing the political discourse. Untethered, ideological movements could instead focus on raising consciousness and evangelizing their message. The more people who ascribe to a given philosophy, the greater the odds they'll be selected to govern and bring those beliefs into deliberations. Community agorae could arise, public forums for conversation and debate. People could focus on deep ideas, not shallow celebrities. Open, citizen-controlled media could also emerge

to cultivate a broad democratic mindset. "Theoretical political education," Gat argues, "as well as dissemination of politically relevant information through a multitude of media channels is a much more thorough and democratic method of political organization than the emotional whirlwind of campaign mobilization."

Socialists should recognize democracy by lottery as its handmaid, not a threat. The very establishment of Citizens' Assemblies and the end of the electoral system would mark a revolution. For once, all classes and groups would be represented fairly. Immune from dark money, they would offer the left its greatest opportunity to see its ideas adopted. Moreover, those decisions would come via persuasion, rather than imposition. Such a process would increase their legitimacy and salience over the long term. In the newly released *Legislature by Lot* (2019), the late Erik Olin Wright sums up the anti-capitalist argument for democracy by lottery. "Ordinary citizens wielding legislative power," he submits, "will be more open to reform and more skeptical about self-serving arguments for inequality preferred by rich and powerful elites." In fact, socialists need democracy by lottery more than they realize. Given the history of the twentieth century, today's radicals have rightly committed themselves to breaking with capitalism through democratic means alone. It's a tall order. No modern state has created a full socialized economy and maintained an open political system at the same time, as Robert Dahl, don of democratic theory, observed. Granted, most leftists seek some version of market socialism, not just central planning. But the danger of guardianship—at first temporary, eventually permanent—remains. Membership and trust in parties and elected officials stand at record lows, and for good reason: They have done the bidding of corporations for decades. Most leaders fail the standards of accountability, ethics, and the common good once in office. This suspicion creates an unforgiving

climate. Jaded Americans will not suddenly trust politicians, however sincere—especially if the latter try to push systemic change. Most will cue the Who’s “Won’t Get Fooled Again”: meet the new boss, same as the old boss.

If the left wants to buck these trends, it must ensure that its policies arise from the multitude, not some board of bigwigs. Democracy by lottery offers that assurance. As an inclusive, egalitarian process, it provides the structure for a participatory economics. It joins the wisdom of crowdsourcing with the coordination of the state, solving the localist-vs.-federalist conundrum. Calling for its institution would set socialists apart from the crowd, showing that they get it: Folks don’t want politics as usual. Offering the populace a brazen alternative would spawn a flood of enthusiasm and goodwill—finally, a movement that gives power to the people. It would remove any fear of a hidden agenda; socialists could honestly say that they would benefit from democracy by lottery no more than anyone else. To a populace fed up with political devils getting their pants off, this absence of flimflam would come as a relief. Democracy by lottery is socialism’s missing ingredient.

A Place for Politicians?

In a May 29, 2018, *Jacobin* article, Tom Malleson proposes transforming the Senate into a permanent sortition chamber. This mini-public would operate alongside of the House of Representatives, resulting in a bicameral sortition-election system. Other proponents of democracy by lot have called for such a hybrid arrangement. Wright joins John Gastil to make this argument, in fact; in their plan, each chamber would have equal power to initiate legislation and approve or deny bills arising from the other. They justify retaining elected politicians on three grounds: Firstly, they (like Hipskind) fear that the loss of party politics would deny popular classes the chance to mobilize, rendering them even

more powerless than before. Relatedly, they assert the existence of conflicts of interests that require committed partisans to take up their mantle. A sortition chamber, they believe, is designed for disinterested deliberation, not productive conflict; they point to successful legislation that’s arisen out of the current adversarial approach. Finally, they argue that the electoral system discovers and cultivates valuable political leadership, which would vanish under democracy by lot.

These virtues rest on a fantasy. As Brett Hennig, founder of the advocacy group Sortition Foundation, points out in *Legislature by Lot*, collective bargaining works only in certain arrangements (like Sweden’s between capitalists, unions, and the state). In reality, the adversarial approach of party politics all too often produces stupid, unscrupulous results. Maintaining an elected chamber “preserves horse-trading, pork-barrel politics, and illusory zero-sum battles,” he reminds us. Parties would keep hashing out “compromises” in which each side gets amendments that benefit their group, but hurt society as a whole. Meanwhile, corporations and big money could still to buy off officeholders. And the permanent campaign mode would continue to poison legislators with perverse incentives.

In the same volume, Terrill Bouricius rebuts the purported benefit of political leaders with what we all know to be true: Elections are popularity contests by and large, infantilizing citizens by encouraging them to suspend judgment in favor of emotional attachments. Most candidates win through a combination of ambition, charisma, and narcissism—precisely the opposite qualities that make for effective leadership. “Elections tend to advance ego-driven men (meaning males) who are ill suited for the give-and-take of deliberation,” he relates. They feed the myth of meritocracy, purporting to elevate those individuals best fit for office. Most of the time, they just reward elites already positioned to win: party hacks, media sensations, and the

occasional demagogue. Meanwhile, the lion's share of policy expertise resides in staff and bureaucrats, not the politicians themselves. The latter spend inordinate time consulting fundraisers and public relations advisers—not experts.

Moreover, the elected chamber would pose an ongoing threat to the sortition one. Politicians would continue to hog the media spotlight and front load only those issues that would help them win re-election. They would have every incentive to delegitimize the sortition chamber and kill its legislative proposals. “Portraying themselves as champions for their constituents, the elected leaders would likely play the ‘natural aristocracy’ card,” Bouricius predicts. “The sortition chamber could be dismissed as, say, a random gaggle of dishwashers and hairdressers unaccountable because they never have to face the public in an election.”

Meanwhile, a unicameral legislature would be impracticable under sortition. Work would fall to committees and subcommittees, breaking down the representativeness of the mini-public. The lack of checks and balances would increase systemic error, too—allowing the same people to propose, draft, and approve legislation breeds unaccountability and cognitive bias.

Bouricius advocates using what he terms “multi-body democracy by lottery.” He breaks up the journey of a law into stages, assigning each stage to a separate Citizens’ Assembly charged with a unique function. As for the executive branch, he calls for replacing elections with a search process led by a unique Citizens’ Assembly. This reform would clip the imperial wings of the presidency, revisioning the office as purely administrative (akin to the city manager role that the Progressive movement promoted). Plato knew that philosophers make for the best rulers but will never seek power, out of fear of corruption. With that in mind, the Citizens’ Assembly would conduct a vetting process to select the heads of various executive departments and agencies, people at once highly qualified, yet

who do not proactively seek the job.

A standing Citizens’ Assembly could also exercise oversight of the executive, evaluating her performance and removing incompetent or abusive office holders. To avoid conflicts of interest, the members of the assembly who remove an executive or agency head would subsequently dissolve, and a fresh one would convene to find a replacement. In an August 2016 article for *Dissident Voice*, Simon Threlkeld proposes a similar system for appointing judges (although jurists could also be chosen by lottery). We can imagine applying it to other public servant positions, too, such as commissioners, regulatory chairs, and district attorneys. The beauty of this approach is that it preserves and enhances the benefits of civil servants and bureaucrats. Diplomats, policy wonks, and professional staff could serve the government free of partisanship, while also being placed under close democratic scrutiny to prevent technocratic capture.

However democracy by lottery gets implemented, it is bound to improve on the gridlock and dysfunction that plagues our current constitutional order. In considering it, we shouldn’t ask “Would this be perfect?” We must ask instead, “Would this be better?” And the answer, resoundingly, is yes.

From Here to There

Picture a day in the not-too-distant future when a letter arrives in the mail: “Congratulations,” it reads. “You have been selected to serve our community in government.” How would you feel? Fortunately, we don’t have to guess. Participants in Citizens’ Assemblies come away from the experience with an overwhelmingly positive response. As with jury duty, the vast majority recognize the gravity of the issues at stake, take their responsibilities seriously, and modulate the occasional loon in the group. The arguments leveled against letting “commoners” make decisions—“they’re ignorant, they’re irrational, they’re easily manipulated!”—are precisely those once made

against giving the vote to African Americans, women, and even propertyless white men. They were wrong then, and they are wrong now. Treat people like adults and they will behave like ones.

But how do we get there? Here, socialists face their perennial, bedeviling choice: reform or rupture? The latter seems unavoidable. The architecture sketched out would involve structural changes, obviously. The Constitution's most significant alterations—like its original framing—came about only because of what Lincoln called a “remorseless, revolutionary struggle.” And the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments didn't even touch the system's fundamental mechanism; they merely expanded its application. Can we hope for any other context or avenue for the return of democracy by lot? Or is waiting (even working) for upheaval our only option?

On the one hand, we might adopt an approach akin to Michael Harrington's “visionary gradualism.” This avenue begins with introducing Citizens' Assemblies in an incremental but steady fashion on the local level. Here, proponents stand a chance of getting government officials to produce one-off Citizens' Assemblies. Zoning, development, or traffic problems make for prime issues to address. These topics don't involve contentious moral questions but often founder on an impasse, with no popular options presenting themselves. In this situation, activists can pitch a Citizens' Assembly as a boon to legislators, framing it as a complementary process that relieves them of a thankless task. As these assemblies rack up successes, an advocacy campaign could build on the public's enthusiasm for more. Eventually, allotted bodies could replace city councils and become permanent institutions. They might function in an advisory capacity at first. But over time, the populace could push legislatures to give them more authority, achieving an eventual transformation.

Incremental reforms will only go so far,

though. The establishment will inevitably seek to minimize the power of deliberative Citizens' Assemblies. In light of this resistance, proponents will have to force the issue at some point. To borrow from Lincoln, a crisis must be reached and passed. If not, the poisonous situation will continue to rack up disasters and disaffection. Advocates should therefore forge a parallel approach, one that targets states in which to replace the elected legislature with a permanent allotted assembly. This effort could demand a citizens' initiative that, if passed, would institute the new Citizens' Assembly and remove the politicians. It would employ the tactics of direct action and mass mobilization, compelling the underlying conflict to come to a head.

Today's left can and should build a future in which Citizens' Assemblies operate at every level and branch of government, across multiple bodies, and even internationally. Tens of thousands of people would receive the call to serve in some capacity, at some point in their lives. And everyone could participate in the dynamics of civil discourse. We may never see the complete abolition of elected chambers. Monarchs endure in several liberal democracies to this day. But like them, politicians could become figureheads—vestigial organs of a more primitive stage. As an essentially neutral process, democracy by lottery does not give preference to any political viewpoint. But as Wright concludes, an allotted legislature “should prove more capable than an elected one at reforming capitalism, as well as potentially pursuing a trajectory beyond capitalism.” Leftists (like all political groups) believe that if they can just get a fair hearing before the masses, and those masses exercise sovereignty, the people will naturally follow them.

Democracy by lottery gives socialists that chance; they ought to be first in line to make it a reality. If they can't see its beneficial potential, who will?

Some Reflections on Sortition

STEPHEN R. SHALOM

That capitalism needs to be replaced is obvious. We need a system that values human needs, rather than profits, that lets people control their own lives, rather than being dominated by tyrants or by capital. But what should our good society look like?

For many on the left, this question is dismissed as premature at best and arrogant and elitist at worst. But how can we convince others to join us in the struggle for a new world if we can't, even in broad strokes, tell them what the goal of our struggle is. One of the most powerful arguments in favor of the status quo is that "there is no alternative." Unless we can demonstrate that society *can* be organized to realize our values, it will be impossible to convince people to make the commitment and sacrifices necessary to challenge that status quo.

Certainly, it would be elitist and downright dictatorial for a few to impose a vision of the future on others. But reflecting about our vision isn't the same as imposing a vision. It is simply an insistence that along with thinking about questions of political strategy, the left has to give thought to clarifying its goals. While it would be presumptuous to offer a detailed blueprint of a new society, if we can't describe our vision in enough detail to show its desirability then it would be presumptuous to expect people to fight for it.

Thus, the fact that there has been a renewal of conversation about the socialist vision in recent years is most welcome. There

has been valuable discussion of the economic, political, and other aspects of a good society. One suggestion for the political system we need that has been getting increased attention lately is the idea of democracy by lottery, or, to use the technical term, *sortition*. Sortition, it is said, offers a way to build a better society, avoiding some of the objectionable features of representative democracy.

We should note that sortition has long been part of the history of democratic thought. The ancient Greeks used it. Political theorists James Harrington, Montesquieu, and Rousseau wrote about it. The Trinidadian socialist C.L.R. James praised it in his 1956 essay "Every Cook Can Govern."¹

It is possible to use elements of sortition in a political system that is largely organized around other principles. In the United States today we have the institution of the jury, which draws a randomly selected cross-section of the population to decide criminal and civil cases. There are problems with how U.S. juries work—racial discrimination in jury selection being one of the most significant²—but the basic principle that it is appropriate to have a random cross-section of the people making these sorts of decisions is well established. Various theorists have proposed using sortition to choose one house of a bicameral legislature,³ or to provide various supplementary advisory bodies, or to democratize unions.⁴ Various experiments have been done with sortition for planning and budgeting and addressing tough issues around the world. In an essay I wrote some years ago proposing a participatory political system, I made use of sortition as a means of choosing the members

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of judicial bodies so as to avoid “the counter-majoritarian dilemma.”⁵ Xtinction Rebellion, the environmental direct action organization that began in the UK, has as one of its key demands that the government create and be led by the decisions of a randomly selected Citizens’ Assembly on climate and ecological justice.⁶

There are a multitude of ways in which sortition might be used and incorporated into the workings of a good political system. But what I would like to consider here is the wisdom of using sortition as *the main structure* of a new society. Some contemporary writers have urged sortition as an alternative to elections.⁷ So, should sortition be the basis for our future socialism?

Let us consider some of the values we hope to realize through a better political system.

A. Participation

One value is participation. Obviously, we want a political system that produces results that benefit us—policies that enhance our lives—but that’s not enough. If good results were sufficient, then we would be happy to be led by a benign and omniscient dictator or a computer algorithm that used artificial intelligence to maximize well-being. (Imagine that algorithm from Amazon that delivers book suggestions to you or the one from Google that tailors ads to your preferences.) But even if such benign dictators or algorithms were possible, they have an inherent limitation. Politics is not just a means of attaining our ends but is also a means of defining who we are and hence what our ends are. No political system is likely to produce results that benefit us unless there is some means of knowing what it is that benefits us, and this is not given, but emerges only after we interact with and deliberate with other people. Our participation helps to define and create our preferences, which is what the political system is seeking to address.

To be sure, political participation can be overdone. Today’s political activists cannot assume that everyone has the same predilection for politics—for meetings, for debates, for reading about politics—as they do. Just as people vary in their preferences and capacities for music or crafts or mathematics, so too will they vary in their attitude toward and talent for politics. So, we don’t want a political system that requires everyone to value political participation as much as current-day full-time political activists do, or that penalizes those without a flair for or an interest in politics by somehow denying their interests equal consideration. But some degree of participation—less than that of political fanatics, but far, far more than that of most citizens of capitalist democracies—is essential.

Standard capitalist democracies with representative systems are seriously deficient in terms of providing opportunities for participation. Voting once every two or four years is an incredibly minimal level of participation. The percentage of the population that goes to a rally, writes a letter to the editor or to Congress, or contributes money to a campaign is tiny. Representative systems tend to discourage participation. Why spend a lot of time learning about some issue—indeed, why even bother to vote—if the politician who ran on a platform promising to take one position, does the opposite when in office? Lyndon Johnson’s “No Wider War” pledge or George H.W. Bush’s “Read my lips: No new taxes” are famous examples, but more telling have been the ubiquitous pledges to “help the little guy” over the past four decades, while presiding over the largest transfer of wealth in history to the super rich. And any voters who bothered to follow politics closely and decided to punish their representatives for failing to represent his or her constituents find that they can’t get rid of the scoundrels because incumbents are nearly invulnerable. Thus, representative systems produce extremely strong pressures discouraging participation.

Referenda and initiatives were welcomed

in many U.S. jurisdictions as a way to make representative democracy more participatory, but these have by no means solved the problem. Voter turnout in the United States is low in all elections, but it is even lower on referenda. And money is just as important in these contests as in other elections. And where gathering signatures to get a question on the ballot might have been an opportunity for people to talk to each other, signature-gathering is increasingly being done by private companies, paid for by big money.

So how does sortition fare on the metric of participation? If the people who are going to be deliberating on the issue are a small group of people chosen by lot from the population, then only that small group will be participating. In a representative system while the representatives do the bulk of the deliberating, there is some small incentive for the voters for those representatives to do some thinking about the issues. But under sortition, for the bulk of the population there is not even this limited incentive to involve oneself in the issue. Thus, to the extent that we want a political system that incentivizes participation, sortition doesn't do very well.

The sortition legislators will come into contact and deliberate with a cross-section of their fellow citizens. Through this process they will come to better understand people in different circumstances and appreciate the ways in which all their interests are intertwined, a crucial component of building feelings of empathy and solidarity. But this crucial process only takes place among the small group of people who have been randomly selected from among the population to be legislators. The benefits of deliberation, of building empathy and solidarity, accrue to the randomly selected few rather than to the many.

On the other hand, a system built on participatory structures, with councils in which all citizens are involved, would allow these benefits to be shared by everyone.

B. Accountability

A second value that we care about in a political system is accountability. That is, we want a political system where the people maintain their control over the system and can assure that the system continually reflects their interests. Ideally, if the people change their minds about what policy best meets their needs, then policy should change as well. Likewise, if people discover that those who are making decisions on their behalf no longer have their confidence, then those decision makers ought to be replaced. Thus, the principle of *recall* has long been a fundamental one for leftists. As Engels wrote in his postscript to *The Civil War in France*, the Paris Commune—"a new and really democratic state"—filled all posts "by election on the basis of universal suffrage of all concerned, with the right of the same electors to recall their delegate at any time."⁸

In a representative system like that of the United States, there are various mechanisms that are supposed to achieve the accountability of representatives. The chief mechanism is reelection. Representatives who diverge substantially from the wishes of their constituents—whether because the voters have changed their minds or the representative has shifted position—face the possibility of not being reelected at the next election. This mechanism doesn't work for presidents or most governors in their final term, or state legislators in their final term in the 15 states with term limits.⁹ For other officeholders, though, the prospect of losing the next election is a potential check on representatives' views differing too much from those of their constituents. But there are several reasons why this mechanism for assuring accountability doesn't always work. First, as already noted, it is hard to dislodge incumbents. Second, the elite domination of the media that skews elections in the first place also makes it hard to really know what one's representatives are doing. Third, voters' memories are short and what a representative did two, four, or even

six years ago may well not be remembered on election day. And, finally, even if the representative does lose the next election, he or she still has had a long time to conduct mischief. (Several years of war-mongering or climate-destruction may well be irreversible.)

Recall is a much stronger mechanism for ensuring accountability, since there is no need to wait until the end of the term to replace the unrepresentative representative. In the United States, there is no provision for the recall of federal officials. (Impeachment is a different process, for this allows removal only in the case of corruption—high crimes and misdemeanors—not whenever the official's views diverge from those of his or her constituents.) Twenty states have laws allowing the recall of some state and local officials, and another 19 allow recall of just some state officials.¹⁰ Typically a certain number of signatures triggers a special recall election. Gray Davis, for example, was recalled as governor of California in 2003, a few months into his second term.

How would this work in a legislative body chosen by sortition? Consider three cases.

1. Imagine that 55 percent of the population supported position X on a particular issue, but in the sortition legislature—because it was chosen at random—only 48 percent supported position X.¹¹ The legislature is thus not an accurate reflection of the political views of the population.
2. Imagine that a majority of the population takes position Y on an issue as does a majority of the legislature. Say that because of new developments, the population or the legislature—but not both—changes its view so that the two are no longer in alignment. Again, the legislature is not an accurate reflection of the political views of the population.
3. Imagine a legislator whose voting behavior seems to be motivated by selfish considerations rather than the common good (perhaps voting on the

siting of community amenities near the legislator's own home). After a number of such votes, some members of the population lose confidence in the disinterested judgment of the legislator.¹²

In case #1, it is unclear how recall could help bring the legislature into alignment with the popular will. Who would be recalled? In case #2, a new legislature could be selected—though that means that the learning curve of the new legislators would have to start over. And who would be authorized to call for the new selection? And in case #3, who would make the judgment that the legislator was compromised? It would seem odd to say that the population will vote on it (after a certain number of signatures are obtained), given that the population didn't vote for the legislator in the first place.

In general, the problem seems to be that while we understand what it means to say that legislators should be accountable to the constituents who elected them, what does it mean to say that legislators should be accountable to the group from which they were selected at random? A group of voters becomes a community of sorts when they engage in the common activity of participating in an election campaign. But does a group of people become a community by the mere fact that legislators were chosen randomly from among them?

Note that most sortition proposals suggest that there not simply be one big random sample chosen from among the population, but a stratified sample where separate random samples are drawn from relevant demographic groups, and maybe also geographic and attitudinal groups. This assures that subgroups are adequately represented, but it does raise the question of whether a black, female, cis-gender, southwestern, pro-capital punishment legislator, for example, "represents" the society or only the black, female, cis, southwestern, pro-capital-punishment members of the population.

C. Legitimacy

Another problem for sortition is the question of legitimacy. Any political system has to not only make political decisions, but have those decisions be broadly seen as legitimate by the population, including by those who supported the losing side. If the losers take up arms whenever they lose a vote, the political system has failed in a fundamental respect.

In standard representative governments, the votes for the representatives and the votes by the representatives are conducted using majority rule. Many have been critical of the majority rule principle—why is 51 percent more morally acceptable than 49 percent?¹³

Some have urged that we use consensus decision making instead of majority rule. Indeed, working toward consensus is a good idea wherever possible. However, insisting on consensus in every case gives any individual the power to block the overwhelming majority. Such an approach is ill-advised. It is sometimes said that even a large group should be forced to respect and acknowledge the sentiments of a single dissenter who feels strongly on an issue. Respect and acknowledgment are fine; but the question is whether the strong feelings of the lone dissenter should invariably be able to block the equally strong feelings of everyone else? People should talk, they should debate, they should respect the moral seriousness of each other, they should try to find some areas of common agreement. But if, at the end of the day, they cannot reach consensus, a vote, decided by majority rule, is the only just option. To allow the lone dissenter to block action is to deny the overwhelming majority ultimate authority to decide their own fates. Even to allow a much larger minority to block the majority would mean that we are assigning more moral weight to that minority than to the majority. But the fundamental principle of equality means that everyone is entitled to the same moral weight. There is nothing magical about 50 percent plus one, but it does

deserve more moral weight than 50 percent minus one.¹⁴

In a standard representative government, decisions are said to be viewed as legitimate—even by those who were outvoted—because of the principle of majority rule. Socialists, of course, understand that capitalism undermines democratic legitimacy in multiple ways: There is the impact of money on elections, the power of the corporate media, and the threat of the capital strike. But in a society that had eliminated inequality in wealth and economic power, majority rule truly provides legitimacy. In a socialist society with participatory structures rather than representative ones, it would still be the case that majority rule—this time in the councils—would provide legitimacy.

But what about in a sortition system? Will there be legitimacy for the decisions made by a randomly chosen legislature?

In particular, random processes always have sampling errors. On a close vote in the legislature, it is possible that the margin of the vote is less than the sampling error. This means that we can't be certain—or even 95 percent sure—that a majority of the population (with appropriate deliberation) would reach the same decision as the majority of the legislature. This will make the decisions of a sortition legislature potentially much less legitimate than that of a body that more accurately matched the views of the population.

D. Representativeness

That modern representative legislatures are far from representative is well known. Women, minorities, the working class, the poor—all these folks are seriously under-represented in the legislatures of the United States and other capitalist democracies.

With participatory structures, the complexion of decision-making bodies would be far more “representative” because everyone would be involved. But note: This would not be the case if we simply used workers' councils. A society that depended on such councils

alone would leave retirees, homemakers, and those whose health precluded participation in the workforce disenfranchised. Thus, there have to be neighborhood councils or consumer councils as well as workers' councils to ensure that all are represented.

With sortition, where legislators were chosen randomly from the population, the make-up of the legislative bodies would mirror that of the population. But there is a problem here. Would everyone chosen in the random procedure be required to serve? With juries, participation is compulsory, but for many the potential loss of income is considerable and they do what they can to avoid it. Presumably, adequate compensation would not be an issue for sortition legislators in a socialist society, but many people will still not be eager to take on the role, a responsibility that lasts far longer than jury service. As noted previously, not everyone shares the enthusiasms of political activists, not everyone wants to leave the careers they've chosen, not everyone wants to be in the spotlight of societal decision making. (We can remove the spotlight by making sortition legislators anonymous, but then accountability is reduced even further.) How well would a legislature function if it were filled with people who didn't want to be there?

The alternative to mandatory service is to have the selection process only choose from among those who volunteer. But then we have the problem of selection bias: Our legislative body will over-represent those with self-confidence, speaking ability, and education.

One can try to avoid this problem by using stratified sampling as a way of guaranteeing that those selected match the population demographically. But on which variables would one stratify? Race and gender and sexuality? Occupation? Political views? One thing we probably couldn't eliminate from our self-selecting volunteers would be the over-representation of those who see themselves as leaders.

E. Issues Versus Agendas

Many advocates of sortition draw on the studies of James Fishkin, who has shown that a randomly selected nonexpert group of citizens, given access to expert testimony and an opportunity to deliberate, can come up with decisions that are thoughtful and more in tune with progressive values than one would expect from public opinion polls that capture people's off-the-cuff views.¹⁵ Just as jurors, who receive explanations of the relevant points of law by the judge and perhaps hear from expert witnesses, can deliberate and then come to a verdict in a case, so too nonexperts can make sound political decisions on other issues as well. But there is little evidence showing that a randomly selected group of people is well-suited to agenda setting. As two scholars note, "there appears to be no precedent for a sortition body that has such an expansive mandate ranging from agenda setting to scrutiny. Specifically, we cannot find any examples of the effective use of sortition bodies to undertake agenda-setting functions."¹⁶

We can imagine that citizens randomly selected to deliberate on an issue—like climate change—could be provided with expert advice, including from contending sources, without giving the experts control over the decision making. But it is much harder to imagine how expert advice could be provided on agenda setting. The necessary information for setting an agenda is aggregated by political parties, something missing from a sortition legislative body.

F. Executives and Administrators

Diverse groups are often more effective decision makers than smart people. That's the logic of juries and it is the logic of democracy in general. But what works for legislatures does not necessarily work for executive and administrative functions.

Ancient Athens filled many positions by lot, but it didn't do so for the commanders

of the army and the fleet; they were chosen based on their military skills and knowledge. But other positions within the military (for example, archers and cavalry) were not assigned randomly either. In any case, it's hard to believe that one could use random assignment to place the millions of people who today work for governments: Those who work for the public health service or the army corps of engineers or the IRS do not have interchangeable skill sets or training.

It is true that the division of labor in advanced capitalist societies is highly problematic. It concentrates the decision making in the hands of the few, provides opportunities that enhance advanced skills for a limited number of people, and consigns most people to jobs that make them mindless. As Adam Smith noted two and a half centuries ago,

The man whose whole life is spent in performing a few simple operations, of which the effects too are, perhaps, always the same, or very nearly the same, has no occasion to exert his understanding, or to exercise his invention in finding out expedients for removing difficulties which never occur. He naturally loses, therefore, the habit of such exertion, and generally becomes as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become.¹⁷

But the answer to this problem is not to assume that jobs do not require skills and training, but to make sure that everyone has a mix of empowering jobs and unempowering jobs.¹⁸

G. Political Organizations Today

Does it make sense for left political organizations today to use sortition as a way of choosing their leaders and/or their decision-making bodies?

There is no doubt that many left organizations (like many other organizations) have an encrusted leadership that, even if elected, becomes separate from the membership, developing different interests, and

over time comes to see challenges to its continuing control as subversive. There are various mechanisms available to address this problem: term limits, prohibitions on using organizational funds in elections, rotation, making more positions elective, implementing quotas for leadership positions, having multiple-person teams fill leadership slots, among others. Would sortition add something to these measures?

Part of the logic of sortition is that the laws of probability assure that a random sample of an adequate size drawn from a large-enough population will tend to mirror the characteristics of the population. Alas, for most left organizations the population size is too small to guarantee a very representative sample. After all, we don't want to just change the leadership, we want to do so in a way that accurately reflects the views of the membership.

Another problem is that, except for organizations to which all members have decided to devote their whole lives, political groups tend to have people willing and able to commit different levels of time and energy. Whatever other problems plague standard methods of leadership selection, one problem they do not have is that they can be sure that those who choose to be leaders and run for those positions have the time for and interest in serving. A leadership team chosen at random from avid members and marginal members would not be very effective.

Assessing Sortition

I have reviewed a number of reasons to question whether sortition would be a good structure for the political system with which we hope to replace capitalism. I have suggested that in terms of participation, accountability, legitimacy, representativeness, and agenda setting there are serious questions about sortition. I was also skeptical of its use as the means of choosing people for executive and administrative tasks and of its use in left

political organizations today. But this is not an argument against incorporating some aspects of sortition into a larger participatory vision.

NOTES

1. www.marxists.org/archive/james-clr/works/1956/06/every-cook.htm.
2. See, for example, Equal Justice Initiative, *Illegal Racial Discrimination in Jury Selection: A Continuing Legacy* (Montgomery: August 2010), eji.org/sites/default/files/illegal-racial-discrimination-in-jury-selection.pdf.
3. See, for example, John Gastil and Erik Olin Wright, eds., *Legislature by Lot: Transformative Designs for Deliberative Governance* (Verso, 2019).
4. Simon Pek, "Rekindling Union Democracy Through the Use of Sortition," *Journal of Business Ethics* (vol 155, 2019), 1033–1051.
5. "ParPolity: Political Vision for a Good Society," *ZNet*, Nov. 22, 2005, zcomm.org/znetarticle/parpolity-political-vision-for-a-good-society-by-stephen1-shalom/. See also Noah Briggs, "It's Time For a People's Court," *New Politics*, June 7, 2019, newpol.org/its-time-for-a-peoples-court/.
6. rebellion.earth/the-truth/demands/.
7. For example, Oliver Dowlen, *The Political Potential of Sortition* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2008); Brett Hennig, *The End of Politicians* (London: Unbound, 2017); David van Reybrouck, *Against Elections* (London: Bodley Head, 2016).
8. www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1871/civil-war-france/postscript.htm.
9. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Term_limits_in_the_United_States#State_legislatures_with_term_limits.
10. ballotpedia.org/Laws_governing_recall.
11. Say you had a legislature with about 1,200 legislators randomly selected from the population. As is well known from the mathematics of polling, the legislators' views on a particular issue will

diverge from the views of the general population by more than 3 percentage points only about one time out of twenty. But if we have fifty issues, then the likelihood that the legislators' views diverge by more than 3 points from the population's views on at least one question is greater than nine out of ten [$1 - (.9550)^{50} = .92$]. And with smaller legislatures, the divergence would be greater.

12. I omit here the possibility of more blatant corruption. To be sure, capitalism's professional political class is deeply corrupt. But the potential for corruption would also be strong in a system where a randomly selected citizen can make a decision that affects lots of people. As Tom Malleson notes, corruption is a danger because "sortition members would not have the standard restraints of accountability to constituents or to a political party, which can discipline individual members who threaten its collective reputation." ("Should Democracy Work Through Elections or Sortition?" *Politics & Society* (vol. 46, no. 3, 2018), 401–417, 405.)

13. Note that if a supermajority is required instead—say a two-thirds vote—then the question remains: Why is 67% so much more morally acceptable than 66%?

14. For more discussion of majority rule and consensus, see my "ParPolity..." cited in note 5 above.

15. *The Voice of the People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

16. David Owen and Graham Smith, "Sortition, Rotation, and Mandate: Conditions for Political Equality and Deliberative Reasoning," *Politics & Society* (vol. 46, no. 3, 2018), 419–434, 425.

17. *The Wealth of Nations* (Modern Library, 1965 [1776]), 734.

18. See the Parecon model developed by Michael Albert and Robin Hahnel. Michael Albert, *Parecon: Life After Capitalism* (Verso, 2003), chap. 6; and Robin Hahnel, *Of the People, By the People: the case for a participatory economy* (Soapbox Press, 2012), chap. 11.

Problems with an Electoral Road to Socialism in the United States

KIT WAINER AND MEL BIENENFELD

IN A WELCOME SIGN, THE RECENT revitalization of the socialist left, particularly the spectacular growth of Democratic Socialists of America, has revived debate about the road to socialism. Also, fortunately, the discussion, which has partially played out in the pages of *Jacobin*, has gone beyond a simple revisiting of the old “reform versus revolution” argument of early twentieth-century social democracy. Vivek Chibber (“Our Road to Power,” *Jacobin*, Dec. 5, 2017) and Eric Blanc (most recently in his debate with Charlie Post, “Which Way to Socialism,” *Jacobin*, July 21, 2019) have raised important problems with applying a revolutionary model from the Russian Revolution of 1917 to modern industrial countries with parliamentary systems. Blanc’s observation that “a government elected by universal suffrage has vastly more popular legitimacy than the tsarist autocracy” is particularly valid and important.

Unfortunately, neither Chibber nor Blanc base their arguments for a road to socialism—a road based on a combination of electoral victories and mass action—on an assessment

of the specifics of the capitalist state in the United States.

Indeed, the “popular legitimacy” of the U.S. state is grounded in a constitutional order that seems to allow for democratic transitions, protects civil rights and liberties, and purports to stand above class interests. The constitutional framework appears to many to provide a mechanism to speak out, win office, and effect change. The suggestion that such an order should be overthrown in what Chibber terms a “rupture” seems undemocratic and even irrational to most workers today.

However, the same constitutional system that gives the state legitimacy also contains the seeds of capitalist resistance to socialist transformation or even far-reaching reforms. It creates numerous fallback positions from which capital can continue to exercise authority and constitutionally wield instruments of repression against working-class movements, even if it has lost control of the highest elected offices.

What Do We Mean by a “Workers’ Government”? The Problem of the Separation of Powers

Although the constitutional system of “checks and balances” may appear to many on the left as fraudulent and as a method of mystifying class rule, it actually serves an important role in the implementation of capitalist state policies and preserving capitalist rule. Originally a product of the constitutional settlement of 1787, the separation of powers facilitated

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the balancing of the two main ruling classes: northern merchants and southern slave owners. The creation of the Senate provided southern planters with veto power over federal policies, and the disempowerment of local government disorganized the lower classes of small farmers and laborers. By the twentieth century the division of the state into three branches had begun to allow modern capitalists to use the state to mediate conflicts among themselves and to ensure their power when it is threatened. A government committed to an increasingly socialist program will inevitably need to confront these constitutional institutions.

It is true that if socialists or a workers party were to win majorities in both the House and Senate and the presidency at the same time they would be able to pass bills. But single-party control of both the legislative and executive branches arises only after wave election years and is generally short-lived. Typically, the party in power fails to deliver meaningful change to day-to-day living conditions and the voters who put it there grow demoralized and are less likely to show up for the next election. Yet the creation of a workers' government would require not just a single victory in federal elections but a series of consecutive victories in both branches.

Complicating any socialist transition, however, would be the judicial branch. Under the Constitution, federal judges serve for life. This means that a left government would be met by a federal judiciary appointed entirely by the old regime. This would render much potential socialist legislation difficult to implement. Laws that violate the rights of private property, for example, would fly in the face of the Fifth Amendment and would be struck down. A more activist court might strike down government efforts to create publicly owned banks or industries as violating the essence of the Fifth Amendment by crowding out private investors. We don't need to stretch our imagination too far to envision this scenario; the U.S. Supreme Court

interfered with the New Deal, and even the Affordable Care Act was saved by only one vote on the Supreme Court. Of course, a so-

A workers' government that insists on operating within the U.S. constitutional framework will soon face the cruel choice of yielding to the limits the Constitution imposes or taking revolutionary measures by acting unconstitutionally.

cialist president could simply refuse to abide by court rulings, but that would challenge the legitimacy through which the "democratic road" runs. And although the Constitution only specifies the creation of the Supreme Court, leaving the creation (and presumably dissolution) of other federal courts to Congress' discretion, a move to abolish a recalcitrant judiciary would be widely perceived within the federal bureaucracy and much of public opinion as a violation of centuries of constitutional practice and precedent. Practically speaking, it could lead to civil war as substantial sectors of the state would rally against such a federal government.

The uneven development of political consciousness would further complicate any socialist victory. Along with a powerful socialist party, there would continue to exist parties hostile to socialism. The workers party will therefore have to contend with an ongoing opposition at all levels of government. Capitalists, facing the existential threat posed by the socialists' program, will wage a powerful struggle on the electoral front. They will still control the news media and the means of communication and will use all those means to attack and demean the socialist program,

sow confusion, and promote alternate parties ranging from the liberal to the fascist right. And those with money are in a better position to engage in electoral fraud.

When radical socialists win office within the existing state, they will always be subject to an opposition with plenty of power to block or reverse socialist measures. Pro-capitalist politicians will continue to control some parts of the federal government, which they can use to obstruct. A workers' government that insists on operating within the U.S. constitutional framework will never be able to transcend this impasse. It will soon face the cruel choice of yielding to the limits the Constitution imposes or taking revolutionary measures by acting unconstitutionally.

What Do We Mean by a "Workers' Government"? The Problem of Federalism

The Tenth Amendment of the Constitution reserves important powers for the states. These include control over most of the criminal justice system, trade and economic regulation within state boundaries, and most infrastructure and education policies within state boundaries. The Supreme Court has already limited the power of federal authorities to prosecute criminal cases reserved to state authorities (for instance, *Bond v. United States*, 2011).

It seems highly unlikely that even in a wave election, a workers party could triumph in all fifty states, or even in a substantial majority of them, because all states also are governed by a separation of powers doctrine, which means that such a party would have to win control of both the executive and legislative branches simultaneously. Furthermore, many states do not elect all their officials in presidential election years. New Jersey and Virginia, for example, elect their governors and legislature one year after the federal elections. New York and Wisconsin are among several states that elect their governors in

the same year as federal midterm elections, not presidential elections. This guarantees a degree of institutional conservatism and continuity of the old order that would require several consecutive wave elections to overcome. And until workers parties win office at multiple levels, it is difficult to see how they could institute meaningful social reform. Yet, given the constitutional and bureaucratic difficulties of implementing socialist legislation in a short period of time, it seems difficult to imagine that socialists—or even a radical, reformist workers party—could continue to triumph at the ballot box.

Governors control the National Guard and state police. Local governments control local police forces, although the Constitution allows states full discretion to limit the autonomy of localities. While the president may federalize the guard for a period of time, it is easy to imagine guard generals refusing to obey presidential authority when asked to enforce decisions the courts have ruled unconstitutional. Of course a president can send the army into states, thus violating the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878, but it is similarly easy to envision generals refusing to execute orders on solid constitutional grounds, or the officer corps dividing amongst itself, in that scenario. In short there would be no way of overcoming state recalcitrance to implement socialist legislation without destroying the legitimacy of the constitutional order.

In fact, not only can state authorities resist, they can also repress. Partial socialist victories in the electoral arena would inevitably yield a fractured state, with critical parts still in the hands of pro-capitalist officials. The latter would be constitutionally authorized to arrest and terrorize mass movement activists who threaten their rule. They have, after all, done so numerous times in U.S. history. Even today, federal and state authorities are far more likely to arrest someone for the crime of being an immigrant or person of color than for marching with an armed fascist gang threatening the annihilation of the Jews. Mass

movements that are not prepared to physically confront and defeat armed authorities would stand little chance.

Bureaucracy, the Regulatory Process, and Unelected Authority

While the legislative and executive branches make law and the judicial branch reviews laws, unelected regulatory bodies determine how they are actually interpreted and implemented. Currently, these bodies are staffed by skilled bureaucrats through a combination of patronage, political favoritism, and civil service promotion. Regulatory agencies are typically staffed by and managed by the industries they are designed to regulate. Even lower-level bureaucratic posts often enable employees to audition for far more lucrative private-sector employment. This creates enormous incentives to defer to corporate prerogative, even if the elected authorities have a different agenda. And these regulatory agencies decide what the law means in day-to-day situations that lawmakers can never predict when writing bills.

Bureaucratic and regulatory agencies govern at the local, state, and federal levels. They set zoning policies that largely determine whether housing is affordable and safe for working-class habitation. Their rules indirectly affect how much of their lives working people spend commuting to and from work because where tall buildings are built often determines which neighborhoods are clogged with traffic. As with regulatory agencies, building departments are typically instruments of real estate developers, even if they do protect occupants' safety to some extent. Unelected bodies, such as public authorities in New York and New Jersey, typically control public transportation and critical infrastructure, and an army of bureaucrats runs the education systems all over the United States. All of these bureaucratic agencies are susceptible to intense pressure from highly paid lobbyists. Conditions of housing, transporta-

tion, public health, and education are some of the most powerful forces shaping workers' daily lives, and it is difficult to imagine how working people would maintain confidence in and enthusiasm for a workers' government that could not demonstrably improve those aspects of their lives. It is also difficult to see how a government could make significant headway in those areas without breaking apart the relevant bureaucracies and busting up the private-sector lobbying firms that influence them. In short, the very precondition for sustained radical electoral success would require the demolition of most regulatory organizations and their replacement with democratic and accountable bodies.

Unelected bureaucracy also reigns in the area of foreign policy. While major decisions such as going to or avoiding war, or negotiating trade agreements, are in the hands of elected officials, many of the day-to-day details of foreign relations are decided and implemented by career officials who are similarly subjected to substantial corporate lobbying and use foreign service careers as springboards into highly paid private-sector employment. The State Department routinely approves international trade licenses, contacts foreign bureaucrats on behalf of U.S. firms, and utilizes personal relationships with international counterparts to smooth those processes. In a world in which several major capitalist states still rule and the U.S. state is fractured, these bureaucrats could become key links between global and domestic counter-revolution.

While bureaucracy takes different forms in different countries, career civil servants staff the state apparatus in most capitalist states today. They tend to be ideologically committed to the survival of the state. Their career ambitions also depend on the patronage of higher ups in each department and alliances with private capitalists who hold the key to their promotion both inside and outside the public sector.

Can bureaucracy be subordinated to a

workers' government? Yes. In fact the soviet state had no choice but to rely on sectors of the tsarist bureaucracy both to win the civil war and for government administration in the 1920s. In a scenario in which the capitalist class has been fully defeated, disempowered bureaucrats might well decide, one by one, that cooperation with the new workers' regime represents the only hope for maintaining their careers. However, the "democratic," or, more accurately, the electoral, road to socialism leads inevitably along a different path. It does not deliver a sudden, decisive defeat to the state or to the ruling class. Quite the contrary, it leads to what might be termed "dual power," in which socialists rule over substantial sectors of the government but capitalist politicians dominate others and much of the capitalist state bureaucracy remains intact. The police, fearing that their careers are in jeopardy, would likely continue to repress mass movements and fight at all costs to preserve their positions. These institutions of the capitalist state would also have powerful allies in the judiciary, not to mention support from capitalists around the world. Under that scenario it is highly unlikely that the administrative bureaucracies would place themselves at the service of workers' regimes who have far less to offer them and from whom they have far less to fear.

Repression

Throughout U.S. history the labor movement and other radical reform movements have had to contend with ferocious and violent counterattacks. After World War I, socialists, anarchists, and labor activists of various stripes faced intense state repression. The survival of U.S. capitalism was not in question at this time. Yet, the federal government responded with mass arrests, deportations, frame-ups, and violence. After World War II, federal and state governments effectively repressed the radical wings of the labor movement with witch hunts and blacklists, while tolerating

rampant racist violence. It is important to note that the Communist Party not only, at this point, could not have threatened revolution, its orientation was heavily electoral. But

Mass movements that are not prepared to physically confront and defeat armed authorities would stand little chance.

the mere prospect of a more militant labor movement and a radical electoral alternative was something both Democrats and Republicans were determined to repress. In the 1960s the FBI's Cointelpro program targeted movement activists and even murdered Black Panther leader Fred Hampton.

A workers movement in the United States must prepare for severe state repression or it will succumb to it. At times this may involve operating clandestinely. It may also require active self-defense against legal authorities or fascist paramilitaries. Most importantly, preparation means educating a generation of socialist and labor activists about how and why the state protects capitalist profitability both through its own constitutional mechanisms and often with repressive measures that violate its own legality.

Could an Electoral Transition Succeed?

Hypothetically, yes. But to imagine a successful socialist transition that does not entail a decisive defeat of the capitalist state and repression of capitalist political institutions assumes implausible preconditions. First, because it is impossible to win all levers of governmental power in one election, we would have to imagine several wave elections over a multiyear period. Second, this would

require mass working-class mobilizations involving large demonstrations and strikes that don't ebb over multiple years. These would be necessary to maintain intense pressure on nonsocialist politicians and career bureaucrats and sustain electoral armies to reelect socialist (or at least working-class) majorities at the federal and state levels. Activists in these movements would have to be willing to continue to mobilize, despite the enormous sacrifices of time, energy, and attention to

Can bureaucracy be subordinated to a workers' government? Yes...

their personal lives, for a socialist cause that would yield few tangible benefits for the first several years.

The problem with these suppositions is that historically, working-class struggle is episodic but capitalist reaction is continuous. Ultimately, the electoral road—even one that combines electoral victories with mass strikes and protests—depends on a type of working-class mobilization that is wildly out of sync with the actual patterns of workers movements since the nineteenth century. Workers have been able to organize to win substantial gains from employers and the state in most of the world at one point or another. However, these struggles have always been episodic. They sometimes win tangible victories at the high point of mass struggle or in the aftermath. They often change cultural values as well. But then they inevitably recede. There are good reasons for this. First, under capitalism workers do not own the means of production. Rather they depend upon their ability to work for employers in order to pay their bills. Consequently, they cannot strike continuously. Second, although for socialists

mass movements are exciting, for most participants that excitement is combined with enormous sacrifice. Workers who organize surrender precious hours after stressful work days. They have to forgo time with their children and often need to choose between attending meetings or rallies and working the second jobs they need to pay for their housing, health care, or children's education. Understandably, when meaningful victory appears remote it is difficult to get people to become activists even at a minimal level. When a movement grows, the passion and possibility of success attract larger numbers. But eventually, commitment levels are difficult to maintain and the lure of normal lives chips away at the movement's base.

Capitalist counter-reaction, by contrast, is persistent. Even if ruling classes suffer partial defeats and have to make temporary concessions, their struggle to maintain their dominance and expand their advantages proceeds. U.S. workers, for example, mobilized in multiple waves between the Civil War and the late twentieth century. Strikes and militant organizing crested in the late nineteenth century, again after World War I, again in the mid-1930s, and again after World War II. These waves yielded partial victories: legalization of unions, limits on the work day, and workplace safety legislation, to name a few. Yet employers' counterattacks, particularly since the 1970s, have been persistent, frequently violent, and have whittled away most of those gains. The vast majority of workers today are not unionized. Consequently, they enjoy no real workplace protections. Bureaucratic regulatory agencies rarely protect workers, even if the laws say they should. And most workers need to work more than forty hours just to survive. Employers' struggles are not episodic for very practical reasons. While workers' struggle requires independent organization, demands personal sacrifice, and often runs counter to dominant ideological and cultural assumptions, capitalist and bureaucratic counter-

reaction is relatively cost-free. Capitalists do not need to surrender family time in order to squeeze employees. They do it at work when they shape the pace of production and negotiate contracts. Government bureaucrats similarly give up no free time to assist employers. They are on the clock when they interpret and enforce regulatory regimes in line with a pro-business agenda. For business owners and state officials, anti-worker reaction is their day job. And they can keep doing it, day after day, year after year, regardless of their levels of enthusiasm.

Anti-racist and feminist movements have experienced similar ebbs and flows for similar reasons, and the reactions against them have been similarly consistent. The movements have won equal-rights legislation, outlawing formerly legal regimes of discrimination in education, housing, and employment. In part, mass civil rights and women's movements have succeeded by fracturing governmental authority through pressure from below. In some cases, such as the 1965 Civil Rights Act, they pressed the federal government to impose restrictions within the various states, often against the resistance of state authorities. In others, they created an atmosphere that pushed the judicial branch to reinterpret the Constitution to outlaw educational discrimination by race or to declare that a woman's right to choose was a protected "privacy right." Here too, however, the racist and anti-feminist countermeasures have been incessant and have benefited from the systems of separation of powers and federalism. Local and state authorities have fought both racial and gender equality for decades. They have limited the right to vote, expanded school segregation since 1954, and virtually eliminated the right to abortion in much of the United States. The Supreme Court has ruled voter suppression and partisan gerrymandering—even with clear racial overtones—constitutional. And the court now appears poised to overturn *Roe v. Wade*.

Examples from other countries pose

the questions of revolution and counter-revolution more starkly. They illustrate the global and historic nature of the conflict between episodic mobilizations from below encountering persistent reaction from above.

In 1936 the French Popular Front of Communists, Socialists, and republicans was swept to power following massive strikes. Workers won meaningful reforms that limited their work day and guaranteed vacation time. While the French ruling class was temporarily on its heels, it quickly recovered and began to roll back workers' gains after 1938. After 1940 the Vichy regime seized the opportunity the German invasion offered and wiped out workers' rights even more substantially.

In Chile from 1970 to 1973 and in Poland from 1980 to 1981 workers mobilized en masse. They formed new organizations such as popular-power councils in Chile and Solidarity, a mass national union, in Poland. Whether either had the capacity to break apart the existing state and replace it with a government based on workers councils is impossible to determine in retrospect. But in both cases the old regimes depended on their control over the officer corps to declare martial law and destroy working-class organizations. In both cases the rulers were persistent: They relied on important sections of the state and waited for the critical moment to strike.

Any theory of socialist transition requires coming to terms with the practicalities of the U.S. capitalist state. It must be able to anticipate both governmental and bureaucratic resistance and state repression. Finally, it must address itself to the difficulties of maintaining militant working-class mobilization over long periods of time.

Both Chibber and Blanc raise valid cautions about what Blanc terms the "Leninist" model. The problem with their arguments, however, is that they vastly underestimate the complexities of the capitalist state in this country, the power of the constitutional order to preserve capitalist property relations, and the numerous modalities of class rule and

repression. By not offering a realistic strategy for destroying that order or those modalities, they have created a vision of socialist transition that is somewhat ethereal and not at all practical.

Historical Context for a Socialist Victory and Its Strategic Implications

Eric Blanc characterizes the perspective he disputes as the “insurrectionary approach”: “According to this conception, there will at some point be a deep crisis and the emergence of institutions of dual power (like workers councils). For the revolution to succeed, these dual power institutions will have to, through an insurrection, overthrow the entire existing state and place all power into the hands of workers councils or some equivalent form of organization.”

He goes on to argue that “unlike democratic socialism, the insurrectionary approach has never even come close to being taken up by a majority of workers under a parliamentary regime.” We can agree that organs of dual power have not seriously threatened—objectively or subjectively—any established, stable capitalist democracy. Blanc continues that we

In a world in which several major capitalist states still rule and the U.S. state is fractured, these bureaucrats could become key links between global and domestic counterrevolution.

should not “hinge our strategy ... on such an unlikely possibility.”

But a “democratic socialist” movement for such a revolutionary change—and Blanc

agrees that we are talking about change on the order of a social revolution—is just as historically unprecedented. Further, no effort to create a workers’ government through parliamentary means has ever led to a successful socialist transition. In fact all such efforts have failed to overcome capitalist resistance and been turned back.

Before uniting behind an anti-capitalist program, the working class is likely to have gone through a period of deepening class struggle. Before becoming subjectively revolutionary, workers would have to have arrived at the conclusion that the satisfaction of their most basic needs is no longer possible under capitalism. This would be most likely during a period of profound political and economic crisis.

Moments of the potential collapse of a large social system are very rare, and the ultimate collapse itself can only happen once. (In this sense, a movement of workers councils aiming to take state power is of course an “unlikely possibility.”) Such crises undermine the legitimacy of the system and make revolutionary alternatives seem more attractive. It is in this context that we have to contemplate the behavior of the state apparatus and the legitimacy of the existing state institutions in the eyes of the working class.

Capitalist Democracy in the Face of Class Struggle

One does not need to look very deeply into United States history to observe how willing are ruling elites to resort to severe limitations on democracy to maintain their dominance. Even such a moderate change as the 2018 election of a Democratic, more labor-friendly, governor in Wisconsin led the Republican legislature to pass a measure during Governor Scott Walker’s lame-duck session limiting the powers of the incoming governor in order to safeguard Walker’s “right-to-work” legislation. The North Carolina legislature’s September 11, 2019, “stealth override” of a

Democratic governor's budget veto provides another illustration of the limitations on electoral democracy. Political movements for reforms much more threatening than those involved in these two states are likely to be met with even more blatant anti-democratic measures.

In times of crisis the repressive functions of the state apparatus come to the fore. These can be supplemented by the "soft" power of the FBI, National Security Agency, Department of Homeland Security, and (internationally) the CIA. In a period when the rule of the dominant class is explicitly threatened, all of these will be used against the movements advocating socialism, not excluding their electoral arms.

Any program of democratizing the existing state would of necessity involve purging its bureaucracies. Such a move would not be perceived as—and in actuality would not be—a mere replacement of one group of officials by another. It would entail a fierce battle on all fronts—in the courts and in the streets. Its success would not be achievable via the actions of the workers' legislature or executive alone.

Further, the historical conditions we are discussing will involve the need for immediate solutions to critical problems. Workers will expect their government to encroach widely on capitalist property rights in order to produce meaningful reforms. They will need to check the power of the repressive apparatus mobilized against them and begin taking the measures necessary to pull society out of the depths of its crisis. Then they will have to impose their own repressive force against the capitalists and other counter-revolutionaries fighting to prevent the success of the revolution and overturn its gains.

It is likely that institutions like workers councils will arise in a period of intense struggle. Among the roles they will play will be to defend workers' social movements against the force of the state and to defend democratic rights. Blanc suggests, reason-

ably, that workers may need to defend an elected government against a coup. Yet, this alone would be a revolutionary step and

A workers movement in the United States must prepare for severe state repression or it will succumb to it.

likely provoke violent reaction. A parliamentary regime presiding over the current constitutional order would not be in a position to continue the revolution. For better or worse, only if and when workers councils are able to cohere a force with both the physical power and firm intent to break through legal and constitutional limits in order to complete the revolution can the transition to socialism be carried out.

Legitimacy, Elections, Insurrection, and Workers' Power

Although the U.S. government enjoys a substantially higher level of legitimacy than did the collapsing Romanov, Hohenzollern, and Hapsburg monarchies, we should not overstate that legitimacy. Both major political parties and the U.S. Congress consistently earn higher disapproval than approval numbers in polls, and voter turnout in all U.S. elections is notoriously low, illustrating that people generally have low expectations for the institutions of the state to improve their lives.

However, the positive aspect of viewing the state as legitimate means that when people do demand reforms they will look to elect leaders likely to carry out those reforms. Not only do we agree with Eric Blanc that "working people will try to use the existing institutions of political democracy under

capitalism to further their interests and to transform society,” we also believe that any electoral success of an independent workers

the attempts of left parties to win control of the current branches of the U.S. government will not.

It is likely that institutions like workers councils will arise in a period of intense struggle.

party would represent a *positive step* toward an eventual socialist revolution. Some reforms will be achievable by this means, others not. It will be the full experience of an increasingly widespread, conscious social movement, inside the electoral arena and out, that enables working people to learn the specific limits of the existing system, including its state.

Because we believe that these limits will ultimately prove that the U.S. state cannot be used to implement a socialist transition, we believe the state must be transcended and replaced by workers organizations dedicated to carrying out the tasks of a social transformation. It is impossible to predict the form that the deployment of the revolution's force will need to take. But what distinguishes our position from Blanc's is not that we call for an insurrection and he does not. Rather we argue that revolutionary workers' institutions will be able to lead a socialist transition, while

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Take My Benefits—Please!

Employment-based Health Care Has Become an Anchor Around the Neck of the U.S. Working Class

MARK DUDZIC

AT THE JUNE 2019 HOUSE WAYS and Means Committee Hearing on Medicare for All, Texas Republican Kevin Murphy lamented, “That great health care plan that your union negotiated for you? It’s gone. Banned under Medicare for All.”¹

A right-wing congressman with a 7 percent lifetime voting score from the AFL-CIO crying crocodile tears for great union health care plans can be easily dismissed as just another absurdity of the increasingly dysfunctional American political system. But when Joe “the workingman’s friend” Biden repeats the charge almost word for word and when AFL-CIO President Rich Trumka insists—on *Fox News* no less!—that “if there isn’t some way to have our plans integrated into the system, then we would not support [Medicare for All],”² something is certainly happening out there. Talking points, after all, don’t just come out of thin air. They are carefully crafted and disseminated by a coterie of lobbyists and publicists often working on behalf of shadowy corporate and political interests.

Trumka was shortly joined by American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten, who just six months earlier had delivered a full-throated endorsement of the

Medicare for All Act at a rally celebrating its introduction.³ In her September 23, 2019, *Politico* article, Weingarten walked back that support in favor of a fictitious system in which “employer-based insurance would be allowed to exist *to the extent* that plans met or exceeded the standards set by the Medicare plan.” Such a system “would allow people who like their current employer-based plan—which seven in ten Americans claim to (although it’s likely they like their doctor, not the plan itself)—to keep it, allow for a gradual transition from one plan to another when necessary, and effectively improve on the model originally created by the Affordable Care Act.”⁴

The spectacle of national labor leaders defending a system that is the biggest cause of strikes, lockouts, and concession bargaining is mind-boggling. For an entire generation now, unions in the United States have traded wages and other benefits for shrinking coverage by employer-provided health insurance (or for the ever-increasing employer contributions required to maintain similarly shrinking benefits from union-sponsored health and welfare funds).

An Accident of History

The U.S. health care system’s linkage to employment is unique among industrialized countries. It emerged as an accident of history in the years just following World War II when Roosevelt’s promise to enact a “Second Bill of Rights” in the postwar period was stopped dead in its tracks by resurgent capital.

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In 1946, the American Medical Association led the fight to defeat the Wagner-Murray-Dingell Bill that would have created a publicly funded national health insurance program.

The spectacle of national labor leaders defending a system that is the biggest cause of strikes, lockouts, and concession bargaining is mind-boggling.

The following year saw the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act, which, combined with an orgy of anti-communism and race baiting, set the powerful postwar labor movement into a long retreat.

Unable to expand the social wage by treating public goods such as health care as a basic right available to all, labor helped craft a “second-best solution” of making access to health care a benefit linked to employment. Corporate America piled on and offered elaborate benefits to recruit and retain employees and to keep unions out. This system was flawed from the beginning. It created tiers of coverage that reinforced employment-based racial and gender disparities and massive amounts of “churn” that disrupted continuity of care for even the best insured. Particularly after the expansion of for-profit health insurance and health care providers beginning in the 1970s, more and more administrative inefficiency was built into the system to facilitate profit taking, until, by the early twenty-first century, the U.S. health care system was twice as expensive as the OECD average.⁵

Nonetheless, in the post-World War II period of high union density and employment stability, many unions were able to negotiate a robust “private welfare state” that provided health care security for tens of millions of

working-class Americans. These benefits were almost never handed to workers. Unions had to wage long and unremitting fights to expand and defend employer-based health care. By the 1980s, almost every contract negotiation was faced with employer demands for reductions in coverage and transfer of costs from the employer to the worker. Nonunion workers fared even worse as they were forced to accept whatever the employer offered. And, unlike attempts to cut social insurance benefits like Social Security or Medicare that almost always fail due to massive popular opposition, cuts to employment-based health care benefits take place company by company under cover of night and arouse little or no popular opposition. Today, even those few union members who have been able to preserve good benefits find themselves as islands in a sea of inadequate and precarious health care coverage.

A System in Crisis

Like it or not, employment-based health care is simply unsustainable. The Milliman Medical Index⁶ reports that the 2018 total health care costs for a family of four with decent employment-based coverage exceed \$28,000 per year. That is \$14 per hour worked for a full-time employee—almost twice the federal minimum wage. The employer pays \$15,000 of that, and \$13,000 is paid by the worker through co-insurance, out-of-pocket charges, co-pays, deductibles, and all of the other myriad ways that the medical industrial complex extracts money from our pockets. These amounts already exceed the average hourly wage in food services and retail occupations and are increasing two times faster than the rate of wage increases for all workers, putting them on track to exceed average wages in manufacturing and other core industries within the next decade. The percentage of total health care costs paid by the worker has gone up nearly every year since it was first tracked in the 1990s. Employment-based

health care is coming up upon the limits of Stein's Law, formulated by economist Herbert Stein in 1985: "If something can't go on forever, it will stop."

Employment-based health care is also a major driver of wage stagnation. Every worker trades wages for health care. A recent Gallup poll found that 61 percent of Americans would be willing to trade 10 percent of future wage increases for a guarantee that their health care costs would not go up for five years.⁷ This puts workers and their unions at a huge bargaining disadvantage and goes a long way toward explaining why wages continue to stagnate at a time of low unemployment and growing corporate profits.

And even the best employment-based health care is not there when we need it the most: when we lose our jobs, change jobs, go on strike, or struggle with long-term illness.

What was once a source of pride in the "union advantage" has become an anchor around the necks of the U.S. working class. No union leader in their right mind can conjure a scenario where the system of employment-based health care could be stabilized in ways that could provide sustainable health care security for workers and their families. That is why unions representing a majority of organized workers now support HR 1384 - The Medicare for All Act of 2019⁸ and why the AFL-CIO at its 2017 convention unanimously voted to support policies to "move expeditiously to a single-payer Medicare for All system."⁹

The Medicare for All Solution

Medicare for All would take health care off the bargaining table and increase union bargaining leverage in nearly every negotiation. It would allow union-sponsored health and welfare funds the opportunity to reallocate revenues currently sunk into the world's most expensive and inefficient health care system. Savings could be applied to new "union advantage" programs such as enhanced dis-

ability benefits, supplemental unemployment benefits, tuition and training programs, legal services, child- and eldercare, and others. Some revenues could also potentially be reallocated to shore up endangered pension plans.¹⁰

Medicare for All would also provide better coverage than any employment-based plan in existence today. Opponents of Medicare for All often conflate the constricted benefits offered under today's Medicare program after more than 50 years of underfunding and privatization attempts with the greatly expanded and improved benefits proposed

Like it or not, employment-based health care is simply unsustainable.

under Medicare for All. HR 1384—Rep. Pramila Jayapal's Medicare for All Bill with 119 cosponsors—proposes to cover the following benefits without a single co-pay, deductible, or other out-of-pocket cost:

Hospital services, including inpatient and outpatient hospital care, including 24-hour-a-day emergency services and inpatient prescription drugs. (2) Ambulatory patient services. (3) Primary and preventive services, including chronic disease management. (4) Prescription drugs and medical devices, including outpatient prescription drugs, medical devices, and biological products. (5) Mental health and substance abuse treatment services, including inpatient care. (6) Laboratory and diagnostic services. (7) Comprehensive reproductive, maternity, and newborn care. (8) Pediatrics. (9) Oral health, audiology, and vision services. (10) Rehabilitative and habilitative services and devices. (11) Emergency services and transportation. (12) Early

and periodic screening, diagnostic, and treatment services, as described in sections 1902(a)(10)(A), 1902(a)(43), 1905(a)(4)(B), and 1905(r) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396a(a)(10)(A); 1396a(a)(43); 1396d(a)(4)(B); 1396d(r)). (13) Necessary transportation to receive health care services for persons with disabilities or low-income individuals (as determined by the Secretary). (14) Long-term care services and support (as described in section 204).¹¹

By comparison, the highly touted federal employees' health benefit plan merely offers the choice of a number of fairly comprehen-

And even the best employment-based health care is not there when we need it the most: when we lose our jobs, change jobs, go on strike, or struggle with long-term illness.

sive private insurance products with the typical array of co-pays, deductibles, and narrow networks. For all of this, federal employees must kick in 28 percent of the weighted average premium for all plans.

Arguably, union employees working for the City of New York might have some of the best coverage of any working-class American. They can get fully employer-paid coverage in the default Emblem Health/HIP plan¹² which has almost no co-pays or deductibles (workers may also choose other private insurance plans that do require employee contributions). They also receive generous dental, optical, and prescription coverage. But even here, workers must use a narrow provider network or face substantial co-pays, and the plan falls far short of HR 1384 in its cover-

age of long-term care, disability services, and community and home-based care. Moreover, every contract negotiation is held hostage to the imperative to hold on to these extraordinary benefits at almost any cost. *I challenge any advocate of employment-based coverage to show me a plan that matches the level of comprehensive services, freedom of choice, and absence of out-of-pocket costs proposed by HR 1384.*

Like global warming, the case for replacing our dysfunctional, multipayer, for-profit health care system with a publicly funded, universal system with a single standard of care for all is so compelling that it has reached the level of scientific fact. Nonetheless, too many national labor leaders continue to sing the praises of employment-based health care benefits, while too many others give merely rhetorical support for Medicare for All—passing resolutions at conferences and conventions to please union activists while continuing to devote the bulk of their union's mobilizing and legislative efforts to support for incremental and defensive policy fixes. Only a few national unions have begun to commit the kind of resources and organizing capacity that will be needed to defeat the concentrated political and economic power of the medical-industrial complex.

Union Backpedaling

As momentum for Medicare for All builds, we are witnessing more backpedaling within the labor movement. And not all of it is confined to national labor leaders (though it certainly is more pronounced at that level). In New York, a single-payer-style state bill—NY Health—has twice passed the State Assembly and is edging toward passage in the State Senate backed by a growing popular movement. While the bill does have considerable labor support, including from the state's powerful hospital workers and nurses unions, a significant section of the labor movement has gone into open opposition. In June of 2018, James Cahill, the president of the New York State

Building and Construction Trades Council, joined the CEO of the Business Council of New York State in co-authoring an op-ed in *Crain's New York Business* opposing the bill and "government-run health care."¹³

Taken by itself, this expression might be dismissed as another sign of the class collaborationism and conservatism that infects significant sections of the building trades. But they were joined by a number of other unions, including the 380,000-member Municipal Labor Council—whose affiliates include a number of "progressive unions"—which told *Politico* that they "dread the impact of the single-payer proposal in Albany."¹⁴ It is true that, unlike national proposals, state-level single-payer-style plans are notoriously complex to design and difficult to fund. But this hostility goes beyond having legitimate questions about implementation. The fact that major sectors of the labor movement refuse to engage in an effort to make health care a birthright in a state with near-Canadian levels of union density is profoundly unsettling for those of us who believe that, in order to succeed, labor must be in the forefront of the fight to win Medicare for All.

So what is driving this opposition? Conversely, in New York some of it derives from precisely these high levels of union density. Unions still think they have a seat at the table and may sincerely believe that they can bargain better and more secure benefits that would not be subject to the precariousness of annual state budget debates. This parochial perspective ignores the reality that New York unions are only one election or economic downturn away from catastrophe. They only need to look across the Hudson to see what anti-union Governor Chris Christie did to New Jersey public sector workers' ability to bargain for health care during his administration (aided and abetted, I would add, by Democratic political elements associated with some of the most politically influential building trades locals).

Putting aside the idiosyncrasies of New

York labor politics, many union leaders may also believe that "the members aren't ready" to support Medicare for All. Loss aversion plays a central part in shaping that belief. Behavioral scientists have observed that people are much more likely to be motivated by the fear of losing something they have than by the prospect of gaining something they want. Fear of loss of health insurance is a major driver of working-class insecurity in the United States. It is no surprise, then, that the lobbyists and publicists working on behalf of the medical-industrial complex would focus on this theme in their effort to scare the American people away from a just health care system. Some of that fear has infected union members. The failure to confront such fears, of course, is a classic mistake that anyone who's ever been through an organizing campaign would know to avoid. The real problem here is union leaders who fail to articulate a vision of working-class politics that will inspire and unify union members.

These concerns are compounded in the wake of the *Janus* decision, which has made public sector union membership completely voluntary. Many public sector union leaders are convinced that the best way to persuade

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workers to maintain their union membership is to show how the union adds value in their workplace. Negotiating health insurance benefits that are much better than those enjoyed by most other working-class Americans is one way to do that without necessarily having to engage in risky internal organizing and mobi-

lizing activities that may end up undermining existing union leadership.

Some unions have raised the specter of job loss as a reason to oppose Medicare for All. This is a legitimate concern. Studies have shown that close to two million workers will be displaced due to the administrative efficiencies of Medicare for All.¹⁵ While both the House and Senate bills provide funding for transition benefits for these workers, decades of working-class experience with bearing the cost of environmental-, trade-, and automation-related job losses have made

However, the biggest factor by far that drives union opposition to Medicare for All is many union leaders' fear of disrupting their political relationships.

workers rightly skeptical of any promises of economic security. The Labor Campaign for Single Payer has called for centering these worker concerns in the political and legislative battles to come and has warned that a failure to do so will give our opponents the opportunity to divide workers against each other.

Unions have also expressed concern that employers would reap the benefit of all of the sunken wages that unions have agreed to divert to maintain decent private insurance coverage. This would assume that, in the transition to Medicare for All, unions would be so weak and/or incompetent that they would be unable to recapture those already bargained monies. Even assuming a worst-case scenario, this objection is tantamount to someone opposing student loan forgiveness because they've already paid off a chunk of their loan.

There are also a number of institutional factors that can work to discourage union

support for Medicare for All. Union health and welfare funds often have substantial brick-and-mortar investments in union facilities and provide a range of member services that often strengthen members' union identification. A vast web of relationships also exists between union officials and health care vendors, brokers, intermediaries, attorneys, and various hangers on. Some are outright corrupt. Others are more benign, such as the insurance company that subsidizes their stewards training or the broker that they can call to get a member rapid placement in a substance abuse treatment program. Nonetheless, all of these relationships are ultimately corrupting because of the entailments of obligation that they engender with players who have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo.

However, the biggest factor by far that drives union opposition to Medicare for All is many union leaders' fear of disrupting their political relationships. Unions are multi-issue organizations, and many of their bargaining and organizing goals are impacted by local and national political concerns. The ascendancy of a right-wing, anti-labor political regime is an existential threat to the institutional labor movement as well as to a wide range of working-class concerns. Unions routinely pull their punches in the interest of maintaining these relationships. For example, with a few notable exceptions, unions were nowhere to be seen in the 2016 Democratic Party platform fight around Medicare for All and other issues of central concern to the working class led by Bernie Sanders supporters. Enmeshed in the two-party system and with diminishing leverage, unions often see no alternative. Every election cycle is the most important one in the history of the nation, and, whatever the outcome, unions nearly always emerge weaker from each round.

This political practice engenders cynicism and apathy among union members and provides the space for right-wing populism to take root within some sections of the working class. The past decade has seen the reemer-

gence of a refreshing political independence in some of the most dynamic sections of the labor movement. By challenging the status quo, they have inspired their members to take risks and have forced important concessions from the political establishment. Medicare for All, because it seeks to reclaim a public good on behalf of the entire working class, can be an important wedge issue in building out an independent working-class politics.

The Path Forward

Our experience in the Labor Campaign for Single Payer has shown that support for our cause is greatest at the front lines of the labor movement, where leaders and staffers have to deal on a daily basis with the consequences of private, for-profit health care. Our goal has been to work with those activists as they find ways to constructively engage with national labor leadership. After AFL-CIO President Trumka's Labor Day appearance on *Fox News*, for example, we asked unionists to write him to remind him that support for Medicare for All is the official policy of America's largest labor federation. Over 2,500 people answered the call. These are the leaders who will drive change in our movement and ultimately bring the formidable political and mobilization resources of institutional labor into the battle to make health care a right for everyone in America. When that happens, we will win.

As Washington State Labor Council President Larry Brown stated, "Unions do not serve their members well by trying to circle the wagons around an unsustainable model of employment-based health care."¹⁶ Our labor movement will thrive when we express the aspirations of all workers and speak on behalf of the entire working class.

Union members should be justly proud of the long battle that unions have waged to protect their right to access affordable, quality health care, and the Labor Campaign for Single Payer stands in solidarity with all workers everywhere who fight to protect

these hard-won gains. But our movement is at an historic juncture. Now is not the time to muddy the waters or bargain against ourselves. We need labor to lead as we work to make this a key issue in the 2020 elections and to hold politicians accountable in 2021 and beyond. And we have the right to expect that the union leaders who represent us and the politicians that we support will do more than just parrot the talking points crafted by health care industry lobbyists.

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SILENCE

SAM FRIEDMAN

In a land infected with virtuous disbelief,
where the words of presidents, senators,
jurists and generals
spark only questions
of what scam they are pulling this time,

where employers’ promises of plentiful times
resonate in workers’ minds as omens of pink
slips
or unpaid weekend work;

where siren-songs intoning “duty” evoke
mutters, gloom
and a despairing silence,

where will the spark come?

Who will be the first to refuse?
the first to strike, disrupt,
seize the offices or shop floors?
which cops, soldiers or militia
will first see themselves in the strikers?
first turn their guns to point at the enemy
above?

Who will sing the first anthem of freedom?
Where will we burst through the reigning
silence,
shatter their power,
and sing in our billions
new pathways to joy?

Heated Words on a Heating World: Poems for a Future. Central Jersey Coalition against Endless War. 2019.

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Syndicalism's Legacy and Left Labor Strategy Today

AVERY WEAR

In Western Europe, revolutionary syndicalism ... was the direct and inevitable result of opportunism, reformism, and parliamentary cretinism (in the socialist movement).

LENIN

BETWEEN THE 1848 PUBLICATION of the *Communist Manifesto* and the beginning of the twentieth century, socialists achieved mass working-class influence in the rich countries by building allied unions and political parties. But in the first two decades of the twentieth century, dissident revolutionaries built a rival tradition—the syndicalist movement. “Syndicalism,” an alternative term for “unionism,” reacted against the growing bureaucratic conservatism (and sometimes betrayals) of the socialist organizations. It stood for class struggle, direct action, workers’ control, rank and file democracy, internationalism, and revolution. Believing that working-class gains up to and including revolution required unionization as their weapon and striking (up to the general strike) as their tactic, syndicalists rejected political parties as worse than useless. This fit nicely for anarchists, whose influence resurged as “anarcho-syndicalism.” For others, syndicalism aligned with a return to the core Marxist concepts of working-class self-activity and self-emancipation. Syndicalist union federations prospered in Mexico, Ireland, Italy, Spain, and France. Though the movement

was devastated by repression, fascism, and co-optation after World War I, much of its cadre joined the Communist International after grassroots workers’ democracy rose to insurrectionary success in Russia. As Communists, these ex-syndicalists accepted a reformulated role for working-class politics. But from their syndicalist experience they also forged for the International a theory of revolutionary union strategy—prioritizing independent rank and file organization—that was more sophisticated than anything previously developed by Marxists. The strategic effectiveness of this theory helped it survive the speedy corruption of the International to remain a vital influence within left union strategy to the present.

In North America, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), founded in 1905, shared much with international syndicalism. Yet the Wobblies themselves rejected the label, preferring the term “industrial unionists.” The self-conscious syndicalists, organized by ex-Socialist and ex-Wobbly William Z. Foster, never embraced anything approaching mass membership. Yet they played a disproportionately influential role in the workers movement and provide unique answers to key questions facing today’s assembling labor left.

Like Mother Jones, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, and Mike Quill, William Z. Fos-

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ter came from a radical Irish nationalist background. Leaving his impoverished Philadelphia family in 1900, he became a boxcar-hopping itinerant laborer. Constantly involved in unions and organizing, he taught himself revolutionary politics through the writings of Daniel DeLeon. After stints in the local left factions of the Socialist Party in Portland and Seattle, he joined the IWW during Spokane's Free Speech campaign in 1909. "The paralyzing reformism of the Socialist Party (convinced me) that political action in general was fruitless," he later wrote (Foner 1965, 416). He now believed in "the possibilities of direct action, ... especially the marvelous effectiveness of the passive resistance strike" as witnessed in Spokane (Barrett 1999, 41).

In 1910 Foster traveled to France to learn from the world's leading syndicalist federation, the Confederacion General du Travail (CGT). International Socialist Bureau leader Emil Vandervelde lamented that the CGT, with only 400,000 members, had accomplished more for its members by syndicalist methods than the much larger Socialist-aligned unions in Germany. Contact with the anarchist wing of the CGT had Foster partially advocating sabotage as "marking an epoch in the development of working class tactics" (Foster 1910; 1,4). He "accepted on principle the anarchist position on ... marriage, individualism, religion, art, the drama, literature" (Foster and Ford 1913, 31). Significantly for the future, Foster took from CGT history the lesson that unions must maintain autonomy from political parties. He saw the CGT's recent rise as stemming from the autonomy it practiced, in contrast to its earlier history, when rival internal socialist factions sought to rule or ruin it. Believing the IWW's "socialist politician" founding members—not just the notoriously sectarian Daniel DeLeon, but Eugene Debs of the Socialist Party as well—had had a similar potential influence before their departure (Foster and Ford 1913, 32), Foster argued Wobblies should adopt

"strict official neutrality towards all political parties, and as individuals ... vigorously combat the political action theory" (Foster 1911, 1,4). Later, as a Communist, Foster abandoned the principle of anti-politics. But against party pressure he fruitfully maintained, through the seminal years of the 1920s Trade Union Educational League (TUEL), his old strategic commitment to a non-partisan organizational orientation in union work. This orientation also set apart those relatively successful revolutionaries organizing the 1970s rank and file union caucuses, which they launched after study groups on the TUEL, from those who died on the sword of party supremacy in union work.

Most dramatically, CGT history convinced Foster that revolutionaries belonged inside established unions. Following CGT leader Leon Jouhaux' advice to "tell the IWW, when you return to America, to get into the labor movement" (Barrett 1999, 48), he wrote upon returning to the United States that the IWW's "failure to grow" stemmed from the "dogma of dual unionism" (Foner 1965, 419). After proposing dissolution to join the American Federation of Labor (AFL) at the 1911 IWW Convention (5 out of 31 delegates supported the proposal), Foster wrote a series of letters to the IWW newspapers *Solidarity* and *The Industrial Worker*. The ensuing debate makes fascinating reading. Letters opposed to Foster called the AFL a "job trust" and a "corpse." Some argued that Wobblies couldn't join the AFL, either because they had already been kicked out or because the AFL focused exclusively on skilled craft workers (something that was already changing at the time). Others pointed out that some Wobblies were already in the AFL as "dual card holders," members of AFL unions who also paid IWW dues. There was also the claim that organizing the unorganized was more promising than joining the AFL, which, though orders of magnitude larger than the IWW, still only included about 5 percent of U.S. workers.

Foster responded that organizing the un-

organized could best succeed on a large scale if revolutionaries diverted AFL resources to the task, something his later packinghouse and steel campaigns proved spectacularly. He said that dual card holders left themselves vulnerable to charges of disloyalty, handing conservative “labor fakers” an effective pretext for attacking radicals. Above all he hammered the theme that abandoning the AFL left the masses of workers there under the exclusive sway of the bureaucratic leaders. The United States, he argued, had led the world in labor radicalism in the 1880s, but since then the dual-unionist self-isolation of the “militant minority” had put its labor movement far behind the other industrialized nations. Instead, he called on this militant minority to “get into the organized labor movement, and by building up better fighting machines inside the old unions than those possessed by our reactionary enemies, revolutionize these unions just as our French Syndicalist fellow workers have so effectively done with theirs” (Foner 1965, 420).

In 1912 Foster hopped boxcars for a North American speaking tour of IWW and AFL locals. Then he and his converts launched the Syndicalist League of North America (SLNA), “the first definite organization in the U.S. for boring within the existing trade unions by revolutionaries” (Foner 1965, 428-9). The idea actually came from England’s Industrial Syndicalist Education League, which Foster learned of in France. But it was indeed a new departure for North American worker revolutionaries, who for the first time self-consciously organized themselves to maximize contact with, and minimize separation from, their class fellows. The SLNA stressed that it was “a propaganda society” and not a union. It collected no dues, and President Foster received no salary from the organization. He kept his day job as a railroad car inspector.

The SLNA, in Foster’s words, “made quite a stir” (Foster 1922) during its brief life. Never numbering more than two thousand

members (but including both Lucy Parsons and Tom Mooney), it had branches in 12 cities. In Kansas City the league launched an organizing drive that brought ten thousand new members under the local labor council. They uncovered corruption and replaced the council’s leadership there. In St. Louis they led a series of strikes. They gained “practical control” of the labor council in Nelson, British

Syndicalism stood for class
struggle, direct action,
workers’ control, rank-and-file
democracy, internationalism,
and revolution.

Columbia. But “the rebel elements generally were still too infatuated with dual unionism” (Foster 1922), especially because the IWW entered its golden years with the 1912 Lawrence strike. So the league died in 1915. Foster blamed his belief in decentralization for organizational weakness, also criticizing the ultra-radicalism in the form of “leftist direct attacks on the workers’ nationalistic feelings and their religion” (Johanningsmeier, p. 71) that he had encouraged.

Dozens of former SLNA members in Chicago continued to work loosely together inside the progressive-leaning Chicago Federation of Labor. They eschewed unnecessarily radical rhetoric but kept most of their syndicalist approach. They no longer had their own organization and were thus hampered in shaping rank and file consciousness independently. But the combination of the open-mindedness of federation President John Fitzpatrick and the labor shortages of World War I meant they were able to lead two unprecedented campaigns that paved the way for U.S. labor’s greatest victories in the 1930s unionization of basic industry.

Foster, still a member of the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen, in 1917 proposed to the Chicago Federation of Labor an organizing drive in the packinghouse industry. To do this, he suggested that the 12 craft unions with jurisdictions over different sections

Most dramatically, CGT history convinced Foster that revolutionaries belonged inside established unions.

of the workers form a united Stockyards Labor Council to run the campaign. Foster and former SLNA alum Jack Johnstone headed the council. The organizing drive took off, soon bringing in sixty thousand workers. With apparent success in Chicago's packinghouses, Foster next proposed to the national AFL a similar organizing drive in the most important and strategic sector of basic industry, steel. This time he grouped 24 national unions together in the National Committee for Organizing Iron and Steel Workers. If successful, Foster believed, the AFL would be transformed by the massive influx of unskilled immigrant workers. Radicals could sweep aside conservatives with this new popular base, similar organizing drives could be launched in all the main industries, and the relative weakness of the U.S. labor movement would be overcome.

The packinghouse campaign required an aggressive anti-racist approach that broke with past AFL practice. Foster actively reached out to Chicago's Great Migration-era Black community through Black churches, promoted Black workers to shop steward positions (including in mixed-race shops), and actively fought racial discrimination by the packing companies. (Yet he failed in his push to get Blacks admitted as equal

members in all of the union locals.) In the steel campaign, local company towns banned union rallies, so Foster pulled a page from the IWW playbook and organized successful free speech campaigns challenging the bans. In both instances, syndicalist tactics were being utilized inside the AFL.

The packinghouse drive peaked in 1918. The 1919 Great Steel Strike—the country's largest stoppage to that time—brought out 250,000 workers from Colorado to Pennsylvania, idling half the industry. Both campaigns went down to defeat amidst race riots, the Red Scare, bureaucratic treachery, repression, and postwar unemployment. Replacement workers destroyed the unions' bargaining power, especially in steel, where the corporations imported them from the Southern Black Belt and Mexico. But these campaigns raised the bar for U.S. labor—the unskilled and semi-skilled core of the U.S. manufacturing economy could be organized after all. "Even with a mediocre organizer, instead of a 'labor statesman' (heading the AFL) ... great armies of toilers could have been drawn into the labor organizations," Foster wrote. Instead, "the big men of labor could not be sufficiently awakened," and "Mr. Gompers sabotaged the steel strike from beginning to end" (Foster 1922). At the next major opportunity—the Great Depression—some of the bureaucrats would finally get on the right side of history.

The TUEL of the 1920s refined the old SLNA model. Foster no longer floated free as an individual revolutionary hired by progressive union tops. He once again built a militant minority formation capable of directly reaching large masses at the grassroots. Communist Party backing gave the TUEL more than forty branches. It coordinated national cross-union campaigns to form a Labor Party and to merge craft unions into industrial ones. And in line with syndicalist-influenced Comintern strategy, it advanced beyond the old SLNA method of taking over union leadership posts for a more patient approach

that sought primarily to win the rank and file to a self-reliant use of strikes and direct action. Bureaucratic leaders were pressed to lead the struggles demanded by the ranks or face direct challenge. The 1920s saw politics move hard right and unions shrink by half. In this context the TUEL gained remarkable sway in the mining, ladies garment, and fur industries, among others. But in 1928, its fortunes flagging, the TUEL and Foster meekly followed the orders of the Stalinizing Comintern and (grotesquely) switched to anti-AFL dual unionism under a new name: the Trade Union Unity (sic) League (TUUL). The TUUL led some important struggles but squandered the proven potential of "boring from within." Nevertheless, independent socialist workers kept the TUEL approach alive and kicking in the giant Teamster-led battles in the 1930s, rank and file caucuses in the 1940s, and through the 1970s caucuses to today.

How did Foster go from libertarian to Stalinist? And how could he abandon his central teaching, boring from within, to go along with Moscow's dual-unionist *diktat*? His general approach, as authoritarian and sectarian tendencies grew inside the International, was to resist by maintaining his autonomy as the party's most prized labor leader. He was not among those who eagerly embraced undemocratic trends. But a certain lingering anarchist contempt for theory helped him rationalize pragmatic accommodations over principled opposition. A similar evolution occurred earlier with Robert Minor, the famous anarchist cartoonist who became a notorious party hatchet man. And Foster had early absorbed elitist strains of anarchist thought that actually facilitated his embrace of Soviet dictatorship. For example, among writings he recommended to SLNA members were those of Friedrich Nietzsche, popular in some anarchist circles at the time.

And he crudely interpreted the syndicalist "militant minority" concept to mean those who are "the directing forces ... (with) the sluggish mass simply following ... (the lead of their) superior intellect, energy, and courage" (Foster and Ford 1913, 43-44).

Today the teachers strike wave illustrates the importance of rank and file independence. West Virginia teachers wildcatted, Arizona teachers organized a broad bottom-up council of school-site reps, and the Los Angeles teachers walked out under a leftist rank and file caucus that had won elections in 2015. Elements of a new labor left, from the Labor Notes network to local DSA Labor Working Groups, are spreading. Today's new socialist left should dedicate itself to building on all these developments. In doing so, the history of North American syndicalism offers the guidance of a method that successfully combined immersion among organized workers with the open and independent pursuit of class struggle by revolutionary methods.

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From the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee to Black Lives Matter

On SNCC's 60th Anniversary

MARTIN OPPENHEIMER

THE STUDENT NONVIOLENT Coordinating Committee began as an organization of students from black colleges in the South to integrate lunch counters that refused service to blacks. The tactic they used was the nonviolent direct action sit-in. What began with a handful of students in Greensboro, North Carolina, on February 1, sixty years ago, became a mass movement. This is the story of how SNCC changed from a mass reform movement to a revolutionary Black Power cadre organization. It was destroyed by a combination of strategic errors and miscalculations, internal discord, external repression, and, indirectly, by its own successes.

In a period of 60 days the sit-ins spread to nearly 80 communities from Ohio to Florida. By March 1961 some 138 municipalities and businesses had desegregated at least some facilities, often despite intense hostility and brutal attacks by local whites. Nearly 1,000 blacks and white sympathizers were arrested in February and March 1960 alone. Hundreds of students suffered tear gas, police dogs, and beatings. Dozens were expelled or suspended from their schools. But very significant progress in changing segregationist patterns in restaurants, public

libraries, swimming pools, and even churches were made in just a few years.

In spring 1961 an allied organization, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), organized "Freedom Rides" to challenge segregation in interstate busing. Two SNCC members, including future SNCC chair John Lewis, were part of the integrated group that rode the buses (which were attacked by mobs, with one bus burned). This would eventually lead to an Interstate Commerce Commission ruling barring segregated facilities in bus and train terminals, although enforcement was sporadic.

SNCC's activities in voter registration campaigns, especially as the leading edge of "Freedom Summer" in 1964 and in the formation of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) and the Lowndes County (Alabama) Freedom Organization, led to increasingly effective black political participation and the gaining of political offices in parts of the South where there had been no black officials since the Reconstruction Period (1867-1877). Julian Bond's campaign for the Georgia House of Representatives, for example, promoted social issues such as increasing the minimum wage and even abolishing the death penalty that were far in advance of the national Democratic Party. SNCC helped to organize the Mississippi Freedom Labor Union, with several thousand members, mainly among day laborers in cotton fields. The MFLU advocated a number of progressive reforms including equality in

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wages and job opportunities for black and white workers. SNCC was involved in the campaign for “home rule” in Washington DC, which was then directly under the rule of the U.S. Congress and had no independent political power. (A SNCC veteran, Marion Barry, later became mayor.) SNCC supported and worked for numerous black candidates for public office including the U.S. Congress, in Georgia, Alabama, Virginia, and North Carolina. The Voting Rights Act of 1965, promoted by President Johnson, would not have been possible without SNCC, although of course other civil rights organizations such as CORE and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) were also involved.

However, as Cleveland Sellers of SNCC puts it, “When the federal government passed bills that supposedly supported Black voting and outlawed segregation, SNCC lost the initiative in those areas.”¹ A number of SNCC workers had trouble adjusting to roles in various anti-poverty programs. “They sneered at professional reformers who worked regular hours and submitted to organizational restraints.”² In November 1965, some of the more pragmatically oriented SNCC workers left to work with the MFDP, which others saw as in danger of taking on the very values of the political system it was designed to change. But SNCC’s own organizing efforts were lagging and failing to produce clear benefits to blacks in both the North and South. Supporters, including financial ones, were drifting away. Differences between SNCC and the SCLC, a more church-based group closely associated with Martin Luther King Jr., grew after the Selma, Alabama, demonstrations for voting rights. One activist wrote, “By the close of 1965, the compounded conflicts ... had reached the point of no return: Communication between various elements of the movement had become virtually nonexistent, diminishing contributions, and widening schisms between North and South, black and white, poor and not poor, took their final

toll.”³

SNCC faced some strategic decisions at the height of its strength, following the Freedom Summer voter registration campaign in Mississippi. It had at that time a large cadre of organizers, many followers, and a reputation for courage and determination. SNCC might have chosen to continue to work through political avenues such as electoral politics and disciplined nonviolent demonstrations. No one forced SNCC to move in a direction that would inevitably lead to clashes with the state that it was bound to lose. No one forced SNCC to replace the “Freedom Now” slogan with “Black Power” in June 1966, during the march supporting James Meredith’s solo march for voting rights (he was wounded by a sniper on his first day out). It was at this point that John Lewis and other advocates of non-violence began to distance themselves from SNCC, and when liberal and mainstream civil rights organizational financial support began to dry up.

But could SNCC really have gone a more conventional route, thus avoiding repression and perhaps again becoming a major factor in civil rights and American

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politics more generally? Many of its staff and its followers, after abandoning SNCC, did continue the fight for equal rights through participation in the Democratic Party and in mainstream civil rights organizations. Julian Bond was later elected to three terms as president of the NAACP. On the other hand, SNCC’s experience of conventional politics,

of step-by-step reform, of attempts to work within the Democratic Party (as when it tried to have the MFDP seated at the Democratic Party National Convention in Atlantic City in 1964), led many SNCC workers to conclude that traditional ways (including the nonviolent and religious-based strategy of King and the SCLC) led nowhere, or at best to gains so

One activist wrote, “By the close of 1965, the compounded conflicts had reached the point of no return.”

minimal that they could be considered little more than trickery. The conditions of everyday life, especially for the many black poor, were still too desperate for many in SNCC to accept “crumbs.” Voting did little to change this. Nor can it be argued, given the evidence, that the government would have left SNCC alone even if it had gone a more “respectable” route; all the mainstream civil rights organizations were not only under surveillance, but, as in Martin Luther King’s case, the victims of government-planted rumors intended to disrupt completely legal activities. The FBI under J. Edgar Hoover made little distinction between respectable and revolutionary black activists.

After 1964, SNCC, rather than following any sort of thought-out political strategy to cope with new conditions, seemed to lurch forward step by step, with each step of its apparent choosing closing off alliances and financial support, leading to further isolation. If it had a strategy it was to mistake state repression for a sign of weakness on the part of the power structure. It failed to see that repression together with its partner, cooptation, indicated strength even as the American war in Vietnam intensified and peace forces

against the war grew more militant. In this SNCC was not alone. The Black Panther Party, as well as segments of Students for a Democratic Society and other New Left groups, also made this mistake. For a few older observers on the left this did not come as a surprise. It would have been difficult for the relatively theoretically naive members of SNCC (some of whom rejected most theory, especially Marxism, as “white”) to have clearly understood that state repression was at that moment a sign of state strength and not weakness, that the revolution was not around the corner. But SNCC only slowly came to understand that repression as carried out by the state via local police and the FBI was undergirded by a “well-organized white conservative backlash against black activism,” in particular against advocates of Black Power.⁴ SNCC workers “refused to soften the tone of their rhetoric even while recognizing that outspoken militancy often unified whites in support of police repression while dividing blacks.”⁵

Bob Zellner, a white Southern former SNCC activist, summarizes the dilemma.⁶ SNCC began by working with three important and effective tools. One was nonviolent direct action, religiously motivated, superbly suited for public relations (outside the South and throughout the entire observant world), and effective in changing “race relations” in upper southern states in significant ways, if not completely. The second, also important in public relations and fundraising, was its interracial composition. The third was its commitment to long-term community organizing and the training of local leaders. The first was displaced with an acceptance, initially only informally, but finally with full commitment, of armed defense. The second was finally abandoned in December 1966 with the expulsion of white SNCC staffers. The third, grass-roots organizing, was gradually whittled away by the “defection” of SNCC workers to anti-poverty programs and Democratic Party political activity. As more and more SNCC

workers abandoned the organization to take the route of working in reform campaigns, the remaining militants felt increasingly isolated, yet were left more convinced than ever that the revolutionary road was correct. But that rhetoric led even further to the abandonment of SNCC by liberal and mainstream civil rights organizations.

Contributing to this abandonment, Zellner argues, were two radical decisions that many, perhaps most, liberals could not countenance at that time: SNCC was the first civil rights organization actively to oppose the American war in Vietnam, even to the point of advocating draft resistance. Martin Luther King came out against the war later and also suffered the loss of support of many liberal and labor allies as a result. And many Jewish supporters turned away because of SNCC's publishing an article supporting Palestinians' right to self-determination even though this was not an official position. Three issues, the expulsion of whites, Vietnam, and Palestine, Zellner argues, "together spelled the eventual doom of the organization."

Yet SNCC's sympathies with the Palestinian people should not have come as a surprise since by 1967 SNCC had become, in its own view, part of the worldwide anti-imperialist cause. As James Forman, one of SNCC's most perceptive leaders, saw it later, "[f]or SNCC to see the struggle against racism, capitalism, and imperialism as being indivisible made it inevitable for SNCC to take a position against the greatest imperialist power in the Middle East, and in favor of liberation and dignity for the Arab people."⁷ Compromise on this is-

sue would have been considered a betrayal of the anti-imperialist cause.

The effects of repression, in the view not only of movement participants but also of almost all observers, cannot be underestimated when considering SNCC's gradual demise. As Lewis Killian—a white sociologist of Southern background long involved with civil rights activities—observed in 1975, insurgency "has subsided not because the racial crisis has passed but because white power has demonstrated that open black defiance is extremely dangerous and often suicidal. The ranks of the most dramatically defiant black leaders were decimated by imprisonment, emigration, and assassination."⁸ Surely this contributed to "battle fatigue" and to the exhaustion of older members (and the lack of a cohort of younger militants to replace them). One student of SNCC found that the time of participation in SNCC by the average worker was "no more than one year."⁹ Although this is hard to believe, it is true that membership declined dramatically after 1966.

The Black Panther Party suffered the most extreme example of this repression. By



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the time the party was founded in late 1966 SNCC was already on its downward trajectory. In 1970, the very year it suffered the most repression, the BPP had offices in 68 cities, but it too had begun to decline. Unlike SNCC, the party, with its roots in California and in northern urban locations, was not the victim of mobs or vigilante organizations such as the KKK. Instead the agent of repression was the state, from local police to the FBI's Cointelpro project (which also targeted SNCC).¹⁰ Advocacy for armed defense was the party's original reason for existence, which undoubtedly created more angst within the "law-and-order community," but SNCC had also come to share that strategy. Both organizations suffered from infighting but the Panthers' internal battles were more severe and more violent.

It is fair to say that SNCC's legacy is a proud one. Many of SNCC's veterans have gone on to important public-service careers, including an ambassadorship to the UN and seats in Congress. Their survivors compose a significant sector of a civil rights veterans website, reunions are frequent, and deaths are publicized and mourned. The Panthers, meanwhile, have become mythologized as heroic martyrs, but those stories have been increasingly contested over the years. Farber details the party's "promising beginnings," but cites autobiographies of some of their former leaders and members, describing "an organization that mixed its political actions with a great deal of victimizing criminal activity ... with a high quotient of bullying and outright gangster behavior."¹¹ By 1971 the BPP leadership was split between those advocating community-based reforms such as breakfast programs and an armed self-defense faction that accused the former of opportunism. Many Panthers still "wanted to stand up to the police. ... But the boundaries between revolutionary action, adventurism, and criminal activity were not always clear."¹² Meanwhile, government-sponsored breakfast programs grew rapidly as part of President

Johnson's "War on Poverty," undercutting the Panthers' appeal.

Did the class composition of the Panthers contribute to its dismaying demise? Farber makes a convincing case that the Panthers' base, disproportionately drawn from an urban "lumpenproletariat" of (mostly) men outside the labor force and including ex-cons led almost inevitably to an "authoritarian internal structure" and later to a "relationship to the criminal underworld."¹³ The class base of SNCC's workers was distinctly different. Most of the activists came from stable working-class and middle-class, often religious, backgrounds.

How much did the slogan of Black Power and more generally the rhetoric of black nationalism (not only by SNCC) contribute to the defection of liberal organizations and to the "white backlash" that led to the victory of the Republican Party in 1968 and subsequent years? (It should be noted that the Panthers did not use anti-white black nationalist rhetoric and did have financial support from

"The ranks of the most
dramatically defiant black
leaders were decimated by
imprisonment, emigration, and
assassination."

liberals until the Panthers' thuggish behavior finally turned off the faucets.) Countryman argues that Black Power as it was carried out in practice (and in Carmichael's original meaning) succeeded in constructing "a vital and effective social movement that remade the political and cultural landscape of American cities during the late 1960s and 1970s in ways that postwar liberalism could not and did not accomplish," by mobilizing the black

vote and electing black politicians. But this strategy failed to accomplish major changes in the living and working conditions of many if not most black families because of “urban deindustrialization and of suburban anti-tax politics.”¹⁴ That anti-tax sentiment was itself a component of white backlash against the rather minimal welfare state of the Johnson era, which many whites saw as benefiting the “undeserving” welfare-receiving (and mostly black, in the white public’s incorrect perception) poor.

In fact the skin color of mayors and other public officials did not matter. They were (and are) constrained in their ability to create change, just as their liberal reformist white predecessors had been. In this context neither the conventional civil rights organizations nor the more militant groups such as SNCC and CORE could be effective. Black urban politics had little relevance to the fight for significant social change, and this surely affected low voter turnouts at least until the Obama era.

Did SNCC fail? In the 1970s, with black nationalism still on the rise, many black university students dismissed the nonviolent integrationist movement, including SNCC (by then gone from the scene) and Martin Luther King (also gone), as having been irrelevant to the long-term goal of full equality, not to mention liberation as a people or nation. The Panthers’ revolutionary rhetoric seemed an attractive alternative to some. But this view is surely simplistic. On a day-to-day level, by 1970 the South was a vastly different place compared to just ten and certainly twenty years before. “In the South,” as Piven and Cloward said in 1977, “the deepest meaning of the winning of democratic rights is that the historical primacy of terror as a means of social control has been substantially diminished. The reduction of terror in the everyday life of a people is always in itself an



Daniel Del Toro

important gain.”¹⁵ This diminishment of terror went hand in hand with the undermining of segregation in many dimensions of public life. “The South,” noted Aldon Morris, a black sociologist, “is a different place today. ... Southern blacks now live in a world ... that does not automatically strip them of human dignity.”¹⁶ SNCC was central to this progressive development.

With the election of Barack Obama it was hoped by many that he would take action to ameliorate the continuing economic stagnation in many black communities and challenge the “prison-industrial complex” and the way police target young black men. But he proved to be a disappointment. Very little changed in the conditions facing African Americans. Obama failed to intervene in the execution of Troy Davis in Georgia in 2011, who many believed innocent of murder. He failed to protest the acquittal of the man who killed Trayvon Martin in Florida in 2013. Soon #BlackLivesMatter joined with several other new groups such as Chicago’s Black Youth Project 100 to help fill a void in black political organizing left by the demise of SNCC, the Panthers, and other militant groups some 40 years earlier. The movement grew rapidly following the shooting of Mi-

chael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, on August 8, 2014, and the horrified response when his body was left in the street for four and a half hours while the police kept his parents away at gunpoint and with dogs. This tragedy among several others that made headlines “tipped the scales.”¹⁷ Ferguson Action soon joined what was now a broad movement that spread throughout the country. Its component groups avoided entanglement with the traditional civil rights organizations seen by the black youth at the center of the movement as

The civil rights movement overall was never intended to be more than a reform struggle, except in the eyes of the radicals in SNCC, CORE, the Black Panther Party, the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, and Malcolm X.

“too little too late.” Its demands range from demanding police accountability (civilian review boards, body cameras, better recruitment and training of police) to the beginning of moves to focus on the structural problems (segregated housing, chronic unemployment, collapse of educational infrastructure, high crime rates, and so on) that create the context in which police feel free to exercise lethal force to protect themselves and “society.”

The movement’s multiple organizations and its decentralized and proudly leaderless structure (similar to Occupy Wall Street and its offshoots), using the tools of social media and large-scale demonstrations, have brought attention to every new police atrocity. But as Keeanga-Yamahatta Taylor rightly points out, “The long-term strength of the movement will depend on its ability to reach large numbers of people by connecting the issue of

police violence to the other ways that Black people are oppressed.”¹⁸ This is the only path to turning small-scale reforms into a long-term strategy that strikes at the heart of the social system. If and as this occurs, there will need to be coordinating bodies, which will be a challenge to the informality that is so valued by young activists today.

At this point police violence has been considered a black and Latinx issue almost exclusively. I think the reality is that the movement will not be able to go beyond small-scale (and necessary) reforms in this area until whites also protest police shootings. Although black men are about two and a half times as likely to be shot by police as whites, it is nevertheless true that about twice as many whites are killed every year. Official data, which are surely an undercount, say that a total of about 1,000 people are killed and 2,000 more wounded every year. This figure has changed very little in recent years. In 2018 the fairly accurate Washington Post data base reported 452 whites, 229 blacks, and about 147 others including Latinx killed.¹⁹

Whether the new movement will translate into the kind of social change agent we saw in the civil rights movement of the 1960s remains to be seen. Whether it will move beyond reform to a deeper challenge to the social system is an even more open question. The civil rights movement overall was never intended to be more than a reform struggle, except in the eyes of the radicals in SNCC, CORE, the Black Panther Party, the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, and Malcolm X. Martin Luther King and the handful of his adherents who saw the philosophy of nonviolence as a way of life more than merely a tactic intended the movement to go far beyond integration as a goal. All of these understood in some way that if real equality in all spheres of life, including the economic dimension, was to be achieved for the whole of the black population, nothing short of a revolutionary change in the social system would be required. The political state cor-

rectly understood and feared these elements of the civil rights struggle and destroyed them piece by piece.

The political reforms envisioned by civil rights activists decades before the 1960s have been substantially won. The movement to alter, much less abolish, the “prison-industrial complex” and its associated police systems has as yet made little progress. Beyond that, the revolutionary changes required for full equality and liberation from racism and oppression will require far larger movements than we see at this moment.

NOTES

1. Julian Bond, “SNCC: What We Did,” *Monthly Review* v. 52 no. 5 (Oct. 2000).
2. Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Harvard University Press, 1981), 172, 173.
3. Debbie Louis, *And We Are Not Saved* (Doubleday, 1970), 219.
4. Mathew J. Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (University of PA Press, 2006), 9.
5. Carson, 290.
6. Bob Zellner, *The Wrong Side of Murder Creek* (New South Books, 2008), 294.
7. James Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries* (University of Washington Press, 1977), 496-497.
8. Quoted by Doug McAdam, “The Decline of the Civil Rights Movement,” in Jo Freeman and Victoria Johnson, (eds.), *Waves of Protest: Social Movements Since the Sixties* (Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), 343. For more, see Oppenheimer, “Mobs, Vigilantes, Cops, and Feds: The Repression of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee” in *New Politics* v. XIV No. 1 (Summer 2012).
9. Emily Stoper, “The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee: Rise and Fall of a Redemptive Organization,” in Freeman and Johnson, 360.
10. Counterintelligence Program: “This program has as its objective the neutralization of black extremist groups, the prevention of violence by these groups and the prevention of coalition of black extremist organizations.” Neutralization meant, according to FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, efforts to “expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralize” groups including CORE, SNCC, even the SCLC plus others including the Nation of Islam and of course the Black Panther Party. For more details see Carson, 260-264.
11. Samuel Farber, *Social Decay and Transformation* (Lexington, 2000), 75.
12. Joshua Bloom and Waldo Martin Jr., *Black Against Empire* (University of California Press, 2013), 365.
13. Farber, 75.
14. Countryman, 9. Deindustrialization refers mainly to the decline of manufacturing in urban areas.
15. Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Poor People's Movements* (Vintage, 1977), ch. 4.
16. Aldon D. Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement* (Free Press, 1985), 287.
17. Keeanga-Yamahatta Taylor, *From #BlackLives-Matter to Black Liberation* (Haymarket, 2016), 154.
18. Taylor, 182-183.
19. For a more detailed look, see Oppenheimer, “Racist Terror, Then and Now,” *Against the Current* #178 (Sept.-Oct. 2015).

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Continuing the Discussion on Black Politics

BRIAN JONES

Responding to Cedric Johnson's "Who's Afraid of Left Populism," New Politics, Issue 66, Winter 2019.

IN A MOMENT OF PROFOUND political and economic and planetary crisis, the socialist movement in the United States faces opportunities and dangers of enormous proportions. Owing more to the depth of the failures of capitalism than to the demonstrated strength of the socialist movement (thus far), millions of people (particularly, young people) have come to the conclusion that capitalism is the root of the problem and that some kind of "socialism"—broadly defined—would be better.

The idea of solidarity, the need for organization, questioning the priorities of elites, and opposition to racism, sexism, and all forms of discrimination and oppression are parts of a growing common sense among this broad left consciousness. Thus far, this sentiment is most clearly articulated, in this country, in the form of its largest socialist organization, the Democratic Socialists of America.

At the same time there is a resurgence of black radical organizing, most visible in the form of anti-police brutality and murder protests, and organizing efforts related in various ways to the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter coined by three black women after the acquittal of the murderer of Trayvon Martin in 2013. A large number of black millennials

were radicalized by the persistence of institutional racism and brutality, particularly under the administration of the nation's first black President and first black attorney general.

But can these two developments be fused? These two trends both have a rich history in the United States, and have had important moments of generative interplay and fusion—most famously in the 1930s and 1940s when the Communist Party USA recruited thousands of black radicals and provided important resources to anti-racist organizing nationwide.

In a recent contribution to this journal ("Who's Afraid of Left Populism?"), socialist scholar Cedric Johnson surveys the present landscape of left black discourse and concludes that the current trends among black radicals point away from the ideas of solidarity, point away from tackling the issues most pertinent to working-class black people, miss an opportunity to build a constituency among non-black people, and are motivated by the imperatives of social media point-scoring on the one hand and the making of academic careers on the other.

Rather than helping people understand the relationship between racism and exploitation, Johnson contends that the "political defeatism" of black left commentary is actually making it harder for people to connect the dots. "My argument," he writes, "is that Black Lives Matter, and cognate notions such as the New Jim Crow, have been useful in galvanizing popular outrage over policing and mass incarceration, but these same banners have simultaneously enshrouded the very social

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relations they claim to describe and led away from the kind of politics, one predicated on building broad, popular power, that is necessary to roll back the carceral state.”

I support Johnson’s goal of building broad, popular power. I also think that Johnson is correct that that requires being willing to engage with a class analysis, a willingness to be critical of black figures in positions of power, and having an analysis of the fault lines of the Trump era that reveals opportunities for recruiting non-black people. But I think Johnson over-diagnoses the problem. Where he sees danger, I see opportunity and where I see opportunity, he sees danger.

Where I see an opportunity to educate a broader public about the history and nature of racism in the United States and thereby strengthen the left, Johnson sees a danger of over-emphasizing the centrality of racism in U.S. political life and thereby obscuring the class relations at the root of inequality. Where he sees an opportunity to build a broad left populism, I see a danger in failing to win non-black people to understanding the importance of challenging racism.

I disagree that one can accurately sum up “Black Lives Matter” and “New Jim Crow” as discourses that emphasize racism in a way that obscures class relations. Several of the most widely cited books in this domain, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* by Michelle Alexander, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* by Keeanga-Yamahatta Taylor, and *Stamped From the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* by Ibram X. Kendi, are all good examples of popular black left writing that, contrary to Johnson’s assessment, actually attempt to educate a broad public about the way racism works in U.S. history and society, and to do so in a way that points readers’ attention quite explicitly to the exploitative relationships that make racism so necessary and useful.

The popularity of the *New York Times*’ 1619 Project is another indicator of the ten-

dency of contemporary race-centric analyses (for lack of a better phrase) to point in radical directions. Among the series are essays that argue that the vicious, less-regulated American version of capitalism owes its character to the slave economy, that racism (linked to anti-communism) played an important role in thwarting the implementation of universal health care in this country, and so on. In sum, the growing ecosystem of U.S. “race commentary” at the very least is inclusive of authors whose work can hardly be reduced to “racial identity politics” and can more accurately be described as “radical” and even “anti-capitalist.”

But Johnson has another argument—all of this “racial identity” talk has nothing to do with real life and real struggles. Johnson uses Asad Haider as a foil, claiming that the left’s orientation towards foregrounding anti-racism “may score points in the seminar room or basement study group, but this rhetoric, however well-intentioned, has little to do with the internal workings of political life, how people perceive their immediate interests and priorities in real time and space, and the ways that union drives, city council campaigns, class-action lawsuits against polluters, parent-teacher meetings about pending state tests, and the like...”

Johnson argues that the rise of a black middle class—including the ascendance of black politicians—removes the need for “racial identity politics.” But we have witnessed in recent years black parents calling out black school officials for implementing standardized testing systems that are racist, black families and neighbors protesting against murderous—and yes, racist—black police and black mayors who protect them (Baltimore), and more. Racism often is central to the ways these attacks play out, regardless of the complexions of the perpetrators. In my experience organizing with parents, teachers, and students against the privatization of public schools, I have frequently found myself in multiracial rooms of people trying

to understand how people of color in positions of power seemed to be carrying out policies that hurt other people of color, and how and why some white people were being hurt by those policies, too. Racism continues to be a tool in the hands of elites, and in the field of education, a brand of faux anti-racism has become a weapon of choice, too (for instance

I disagree that one can accurately sum up “Black Lives Matter” and “New Jim Crow” as discourses that emphasize racism in away that obscures class relations.

charter schools branded as a “new Civil Rights Movement”).

“In large and complex urban areas,” Johnson later argues, “where black power has long been institutionalized and entrenched, analyses that ignore the actually existing class relations and interests shaping incarceration and the political arena will do little to advance the kind of substantive reforms touted by the most progressive elements of anti-policing protests.” Yes, we have to grapple with these complications—as several authors and activists have done (James Forman, Jr., whom Johnson cites, among them). But in doing so, we still have to win white people to vigilant anti-racism, which cannot be accomplished only through broad populist demands. The Chicago Teachers Union (whose membership is mostly white) is, as I write this, on strike calling out both the black female mayor and the way in which inequalities in the Chicago Public Schools fall disproportionately on black and brown youth. Being specific and honest about patterns of racism in the funding and support for schools has strengthened the

CTU’s hand, not weakened it.

Also, it is well-documented that black people (and black women in particular) struggled with and against previous socialist and communist movements, finding both unique opportunities in those circles and exclusions/blind spots. The point of re-reading the Combahee River Collective and taking its notions seriously is that it opens up the possibility of thinking about a path not taken—a more inclusive socialist movement in the present. The point is not to pander to black people and people of color, but to build a bigger movement. In the end, the emphasis on anti-racism might be more important for the impact it can have on white people. The Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), which Johnson counterposes to the CRC, was so effective precisely because it had a radical anti-racist core of communist and socialist organizers. They built the unions from the bottom up. They helped working-class people from many different backgrounds to see where their common interests lay, but they also asked their non-black coworkers to sign petitions and raise funds for the Scottsboro Boys.

Lastly, Johnson addresses the “Blue Lives Matter” presidency of Donald J. Trump. Trump, he argues, pits the middle class against a “relative surplus population.”

“Blame-labeling the black urban poor and immigrants further distracts an already anxious middle class and secures their interests as consumer-citizens to the reproduction of the capitalist order,” as he puts it. “Trumpism appeals to the real economic anxieties of those Americans who can recall the last days of a vibrant manufacturing-based economy.”

“His protectionist ideas as well as his xenophobia beckon many Americans, not just whites, back to a nostalgic ideal of unending compound growth and middle-class consumption. This is where the legitimacy of the current carceral order resides, and it is unlikely that progressive left forces can create a more just alternative without engaging broad

swaths of the population, wrestling with real and imagined anxieties, fears, and felt needs. Indeed, that is the only way to turn the tide against Trump's authoritarian populism and produce a more just, egalitarian society."

The real stakes of Johnson's argument, it seems, is that he fears that the "Black Lives Matter" line of thinking fails to appeal to broad swaths of the population who are not having their needs met. This is true, of course, and a new radical movement is attempting to speak to those unmet needs. But just talking about class or neoliberalism is not necessarily the only way to do that. In my view, a movement that speaks only the language of the lowest common denominator is insufficient. The United States has long desperately needed a widespread anti-racist movement that is not confined to the people on the receiving end of racism. The disruptive BLM campaigns have helped to shift popular conceptions of police and racism, particularly among young people of all backgrounds. The way to solidarity is not always a straight line between demands and constituents. If we just shout "all lives matter" instead of "black lives matter," we will not automatically get a bigger movement and have built solidarity. Sometimes people have to shout about their own pain because it hurts, and if they create enough momentum, they present a new side to political discourse and other people, who don't feel that exact same pain, decide to join them.

That's why the current crop of critiques of the New Deal are useful. Understanding the limitations of the New Deal doesn't only lead to cynicism, but can help us understand how previous anti-poverty programs helped to undergird new forms of inequality. Johnson

thinks these critiques lead to cynicism about the potential of left populism. But I think he has it backwards. It's the persistence of inequality, apparently in the face of historic large-scale efforts to defeat it, that breeds cynicism ... unless we can explain it!

Are there identitarians on social media who don't see the importance of building coalition and a broad working-class movement, who use their platform to promote their own brand of thought, to advance their career, score points in academic circles, and so on? Sure. But is that an accurate or useful analysis of the way large numbers of people are thinking about the meaning of "the New Jim Crow" or "Black Lives Matter"? I don't think so. I think quite a few writers (and yes, even some academics) are trying to link the concepts of racism and capitalism, and are finding an audience for that work. Yes, there is a way to emphasize the importance of racism that, at bottom, is about foreclosing the possibility of solidarity. But that is not the only way, and there are plenty of people working overtime to emphasize the importance of racism in U.S. society precisely so that we can have genuine solidarity.

If millions of working-class white people learn to see racism as a pervasive evil—if they learn to see it in their kids' curriculum, if they see it in the little jokes at work, if they see it in the president's policies, in the unfairness of hiring and firing happening right in front of them, in the zoning of their neighborhood, of their school, in the country's history, if they see a black athlete kneeling during the national anthem and think, "right on!", then we will have a chance at building a movement that takes seriously the idea that an injury to one really is an injury to all.



A Radical New Politics of Surrogacy?

ALEXANDRA HOLMSTROM-SMITH¹

SOPHIE LEWIS' NEW BOOK *Full Surrogacy Now*, published by Verso, has gotten a lot of attention in left media circles. Lewis was interviewed on Jacobin Radio's *The Dig* podcast, on *This Is Hell* radio show, and in *The Nation* magazine and was featured on a panel at the Philadelphia Socialist Feminist Convergence. The book purports to outline a radical new politics around surrogacy, which she links to a call for "family abolition." In her second chapter, Lewis describes how white liberal feminists rallied around the 1988 case of Mary-Beth Whitehead, a working-class white woman in New Jersey who sought to keep "Baby M," her own biological (genetic) child whose conception was arranged through a surrogacy contract with a straight couple, the wife of whom had multiple sclerosis. Far fewer people mobilized around the 1993 California case of Anna Johnson, a working-class Black single mother who sought custody of

the baby she gestated pursuant to a surrogacy contract with a married couple consisting of a white man and a Filipina woman, whose genetic material formed the embryo for the baby.

Full Surrogacy Now: Feminism Against Family

SOPHIE LEWIS
Verso, 2019. 224 pp. Index. \$26.95

For Lewis, the unequal response by the nascent anti-surrogacy movement was indicative of its future, as today opposing commercial surrogacy galvaniz-

es "neoimperialist humanitarian feminis[ts]," along with homophobes, transphobes, conservative Catholics, and other tendencies that Lewis identifies as "bioconservative." Asserting that "surrogacy bans uproot, isolate, and criminalize gestational workers," Lewis instead proposes that the left accept that surrogacy is simply *work*. Like all labor under capitalism, commercial surrogacy is exploited labor, but Lewis argues that it does not warrant singling out and should not occasion comparisons to slavery, which Lewis presents as a species of concern belonging to the type of white liberal feminists who believe that the Trump era means we are literally "living in *The Handmaid's Tale*." Where anti-surrogacy campaigners seek to preserve the cis-heteronormative nuclear family, the left

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should embrace “open-source, fully collaborative gestation” in the utopian “gestational commune.”

At a packed panel at the Socialism in Our Time conference in New York City this past May, Lewis read from the book and four speakers provided favorable commentary on the text. During the discussion, I asked Lewis how she proposed to expand surrogates’ right to parent the babies they gestate, if they so desire. Lewis responded to the effect that her book is a theoretical exploration and does not purport to offer policy solutions to a deeply complex issue. Panelist Mackenzie Wark urged that we should empower the workers, not the police. Lewis and panelist Jules Joanne Gleeson also insisted that their call for “family abolition” did not in *any way* implicate state policies, such as Trump’s family separation policy, that take children away from working-class parents of color.

In this essay, I show that these are all at least partially untrue statements, although I am not sure the speakers realized this. First, while Lewis’ book may not lay out a policy “solution” to the ills of the commercial surrogacy industry, she clearly has a policy *preference*, which is to legalize commercial surrogacy and repeal so-called “surrogacy bans.” Second, legalizing commercial surrogacy empowers the state rather than workers because surrogacy contracts are enforced through the court system. They may even be enforced at the hands of police, as they were in the *Baby M* case. Third, court enforcement of surrogacy contracts against surrogates who seek to renege cannot be fully understood without invoking the manner in which courts *generally* treat working-class parents, especially mothers of color. This was the context in which the state of California decided that Anna Johnson was a temporary caretaker rather than a mother of the baby she carried to term,² and cases like hers continue to arise wherever surrogacy contracts are enforced.

The source of these distortions appears to be Lewis’ misunderstanding of the law re-

garding surrogacy. In the book, Lewis entirely fails to mention the outcome of the *Baby M* case, in which the New Jersey Supreme Court declared surrogacy contracts void and unenforceable because they were against public policy and contrary to extant laws prohibiting adoption for pay. The court reinstated Mary-Beth Whitehead as the legal mother of Baby M, thus entitling her to visitation rights, although the court ultimately awarded custody to the father for reasons unrelated to the contract.³ Without this critically important piece of history, Lewis mistakenly equates a pro-worker desire for the decriminalization of labor with a pro-business demand for legalization of a for-profit industry.

Legalization entails active government participation in setting up a market, and as a business, commercial surrogacy is particularly reliant upon this government activity because the question of *who is a parent* is fundamentally a legal one in the modern bureaucratic state. Without the state’s backing, commissioning parties would not be the legal parents of the children produced through surrogacy agreements. This is even more important given the costs involved, as commissioning parties in the United States can spend between \$20,000 and \$200,000 on the process. The state’s backing—or lack thereof—is precisely why California and not New Jersey became a global destination for people seeking to produce children through commercial surrogacy.

In this way, Lewis manages to avoid a neoliberal feminist “empowerment” spin on the industry while still embracing the capitalist faith in the market’s inevitable growth, which becomes a dark fatalism when filtered through her anti-capitalist lens. Lewis writes, “I am sympathetic to the impulse, in that the advancing frontier of commodification elicits, in so many of us, a form of recoil that feels almost beyond words. I think I get it. We refuse the concept that the most precious things should be for sale, as though that will change the reality that—exploitatively,

yet consensually—they are.” Because Lewis’ particular brand of leftism rejects the use of the law for reforming capitalism, the duty of solidarity requires accommodating our minds to this horror while supporting (from afar) the only real recourse she believes is available to workers: the strike, in this case, via abortions. The logistics of such a strike would surely confound most labor organizers, so Lewis conveniently does not investigate this.

More insidiously, Lewis’ ill-informed representation of the law forecloses tools that are actually protective of workers, renders all struggle against commodification impossible, and conceals the role of the state in creating markets that would not otherwise arise “naturally.” From land to intellectual property to mortgage-backed securities, the state plays an essential role in constituting many things as commodities for sale and regulating the terms of their exchange. The fact that no state in the world today will officially recognize or enforce the sale of human beings as commodities is the result of centuries of struggle against the Atlantic slave trade and other abuses. This is precisely why states that have legalized commercial surrogacy are careful to insist that what is being sold are “services” rather than the babies themselves. In full contrarian mode, Lewis asserts that she *agrees* with critics that commercial surrogacy entails the buying and selling of children, but she does not find this a compelling reason to outlaw the trade.

This brings us to another serious problem, which is the way that Lewis misrepresents Black feminists’ position on surrogacy, failing to engage with the serious concerns they raised, while presenting their work as if it supports hers. Lewis cites Angela Davis and the legal philosopher Anita Allen to draw parallels between surrogacy and earlier forms of gendered and racialized care work such as wet nursing. For Lewis, surrogacy’s lack of novelty makes it unworthy of heightened concern. She neglects to mention, however, that Davis and Allen drew the *exact opposite* conclusion: They thought commercial surrogacy should

be opposed.⁴ While Lewis often seems to struggle to understand why people find the commodification of reproductive labor and children so disturbing, Davis and Allen point directly to American chattel slavery (history providing far more horrific parallels than *The Handmaid’s Tale*).

Some Black feminist scholars also took Anna Johnson’s case as an indication that Black surrogates would be particularly disadvantaged in any disputes that arose between them and the commissioning parties, who are wealthy and usually white.⁵ In this way, the state’s backing of commercial surrogacy could be seen as an extension of other government policies, from the excessive adoptions-out of indigenous children that motivated the Indian Child Welfare Act to the modern child-welfare system, all of which have treated working-class families as not having full parental rights and in some cases have furthered the reproductive interests of upper-class white families at the expense of working-class mothers of color.

Lewis’ choice to ignore this entire context is indicative of a weakness throughout the book, in which she fails to see any tension between her call for “family abolition” and Black, indigenous, and other working-class feminisms (which Lewis claims to be inspired by), which have sought to establish and protect the *rights to family* that are constantly under attack in their communities. A more fruitful approach would be to seek a balance between these concerns and the also-important impulse to question the heteronormative family form and dream of new and different ways of raising children. Instead, Lewis’ discussion is simultaneously cavalier toward these issues and hopelessly vague with regards to what she proposes, so that even those who are interested in radical possibilities for childrearing will also likely be disappointed with what is presented.

Some of the most interesting parts of Lewis’ book are her investigations of the biology of pregnancy and the bloody and difficult

business it has always been. She also discusses how pregnancy (in all contexts, not just surrogacy) does not always involve bonding with the fetus or the resulting child, and she invokes social reproduction theory to posit that all pregnancy can be theorized as labor. From these points, Lewis asserts that “all hitherto existing societies have probably only known alienated gestating.” The difficulty of generalizing about literally everyone’s pregnancy aside, it’s not clear what actually follows from this. Without disputing Lewis’ assertion that all pregnancy can be seen as labor, it would still be a mistake to miss the distinctiveness of labor that is alienated in the strictly Marxist sense. As applied to pregnancy, this only fits commercial surrogates, since they are the only gestators who produce babies *that do not belong to them* for a wage. Furthermore, any attempt to link the view of pregnancy-as-labor to labor militancy is immediately undercut by Lewis’ own research, which shows that the anti-abortion movement also promotes the idea of pregnancy-as-labor, one to be embraced as a form of submission to God.

Perhaps commercial gestational surrogates could be the most advanced sector of the reproductive labor force, destined to overthrow all systems of social reproduction and the family, but Lewis presents little to indicate that their own consciousness and organizing has generated new models of childrearing to be realized through labor militancy. Instead, Lewis documents the prevalence of heteronormative middle-class views of family among surrogate workers, from the Indian surrogates who hope that this labor will enable them to buy a house for their own genetic children to the American surrogates who insist that the baby belongs exclusively to the commissioning parties, rather than a “polymaternal” grouping. All of this suggests that today’s proletarian gestators may not be the revolutionary subjects that Lewis might envision and also that theorizing something as labor is not the only, or necessarily the most radical, way to fight for it. The frameworks

that people use to articulate rights also depend on their goals: Perhaps Anna Johnson chose to frame her situation in terms of parental rights rather than labor rights because she wanted custody of a child, not a labor union. And finally, the left doesn’t advocate for cities to invite Uber to town just because we believe that Uber drivers are workers rather than independent contractors. This is the bizarre logic that Lewis applies to surrogacy.

To be sure, there are interesting interventions that queer Marxist-feminists have made and will continue to make with regards to the family and labor today. Unfortunately, Lewis’ blithe and poorly researched book is an unhelpful contribution to this literature, and the consideration it has garnered reveals the intellectual-academic left’s destructive obsession with hot takes. To put it simply, there is absolutely no Marxist-feminist, anti-racist argument for government enforcement of these contracts against surrogates who want to back out of them. While I do not know if Lewis actually thinks that governments should do this, she has not said otherwise and has meanwhile gone on every left-wing media outlet that she can talking about how *all* surrogacy “bans” hurt workers and how the left needs to “unlearn its gestation-exceptionalism.” These statements may have consequences, since they are not being made in a vacuum. New York’s legislature nearly passed a bill legalizing commercial surrogacy this year, and powerful Democratic forces are still mobilizing around it. If it passes, any future surrogates who, like Anna Johnson, feel a bond with the children they gestate will have no right to parent them, and Lewis and the rest of the libertarian left who support her will bear some of the blame for failing to uphold a decommodified vision of pregnancy. Readers who actually care about trying to make things better would do well to look elsewhere.

NOTES

1. The author would like to extend her deep thanks to Nancy Holmstrom, Johanna Brenner, Elizabeth

Rapaport, and other friends for their feedback on this piece. Any errors are her own.

2. *Johnson v. Calvert* (1993) 5 Cal. 4th 84. Available at law.justia.com/cases/california/supreme-court/4th/5/84.html.

3. *Matter of Baby M*, 109 N.J. 396, 412, 537 A.2d 1227, 1235 (1988). Available at law.justia.com/cases/new-jersey/supreme-court/1988/109-nj-396-1.html.

4. See Angela Y. Davis, "Surrogates and Outcast Mothers: Racism and Reproductive Politics in the Nineties," in Joy James, ed., *The Angela Y. Davis Reader* (Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 1998); Beverly Beyette, "Angela Davis Now: On a Quiet Street

in Oakland, the Former Radical Activist Has Settled In but Not Settled Down," *Los Angeles Times*, March 8, 1989, www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1989-03-08-vw-316-story.html; Anita L. Allen, *The Black Surrogate Mother*, 8 Harv. Black-Letter J. 17 (1991), available at scholarship.law.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2423&context=faculty_scholarship.

5. See Allen above; also Deborah R. Grayson, "Mediating Intimacy: Black Surrogate Mothers and the Law," *Critical Inquiry* (Vol. 24, No. 2, Intimacy, Winter 1998), 525-546, available at www.jstor.org/stable/1344177.

Enough!

SAM FRIEDMAN

Somewhere,
somewhere perhaps
in the desert of Iraq,
or perhaps in Palestine
or the Afghan hills,
amidst the cacophony of shells,
the reek of boiled-off flesh,
somewhere,
a voice awakens,
a voice in Arabic, in English,
a voice that speaks
in every tongue,
that utters
"Enough!"

No more!"
a voice of utter empathy
that fills the world
as billions join its cry
"Enough! No more!"
as armies refuse to flay
their fellow flesh,
as workers turn war plants
to temples of revolt,
as rulers tremble
when none obey,
as the Earth
begins to heal.

Critical Sociology 36/5 (Sept 2010), p. 690. *Grief and Rage: An American Jew's Poems on Palestine*. Central Jersey Coalition against Endless War. 2015.

The AFL-CIO's Cold War

DAN GALLIN

THE COLD WAR WAS THE PERIOD in the twentieth century, approximately between 1946 and 1991, where world politics were dominated by the confrontation between two blocs of states, led respectively by the United States and the Soviet Union. Even more so than during World War II, which had just ended, both blocs deployed vast efforts to enlist civil-society organizations in their camp: organizations of youth, women, artists, writers, academics, and others. Trade unions were a most sought-after strategic prize because they were disciplined mass organizations capable of exercising considerable political power.

Not much has been written about the subordination of the labor movement in the Soviet camp,¹ mostly because there was little to write about. The situation was clear: In the countries ruled under a system of bureaucratic collectivism ("Stalinism" in political terms) the trade union movement had been abolished as an independent social and political actor. In the USSR, the dramatic suicide on August 22, 1936, of Mikhail Tomski marked

the end of an epoch. Tomski had been general secretary of the Soviet trade unions and an advocate of trade union autonomy. For that reason, he was removed from his position in 1927. Having witnessed the first Moscow Trial (August 19–24, 1936), Tomski expected to be among the accused in the next one, and decided to die on his own terms.

At the start of the Cold War, what passed for trade unions in the Stalinist world were organs of the state, tightly controlled by the NKVD and serving some mi-

nor foreign-policy purposes, such as hosting delegations of foreign trade unionists ready to be dazzled by the often-lavish hospitality. The actual Cold War was conducted in the capitalist world, on the Soviet side through the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU)², the then Communist-controlled trade union confederations in France and Italy, and over contested territory in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Far more has been written about the involvement in the Cold War of trade unions in the coalition led by the United States which, for the sake of convenience, we shall call the "Western" camp, the reason being that here we are dealing with a real trade union movement, capable of independently debating political issues, with all its complexity arising from different histories and political traditions.

At first, the collaboration of trade unions

American Labour's Cold War Abroad: From Deep Freeze to Détente 1945–1970

ANTHONY CAREW
Athabasca University Press, 2018, 510 pp.

DAN GALLIN is the former general secretary of the Geneva, Switzerland-based International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF), a "union of unions" comprising 388 trade unions in 124 countries, including its eight major U.S. affiliates.

with Allied intelligence services did not attract much controversy. During World War II trade union organizations, national and international, had been working as a matter of course with the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the forerunner of the CIA, and with the British government. Some of these relationships continued seam-

The membership of the AFL-CIO, for the most part, were no way involved in the activities of the International Department, and indeed had no idea what it was doing.

lessly against the new enemy power when the Cold War started. They became controversial when it became apparent that such relationships could undermine the fundamental purposes of the trade union movement itself. The AFL-CIO was a key trade union actor in the Western camp and as such became a center of controversy, both internally, as the Reuther brothers—who led the dominant faction in the United Auto Workers (UAW) from 1948—challenged its president George Meany and his policies, and on the outside, from social activists, trade unionists, and academics, mostly in the 1960s and 1970s. Such polemical writings, however, were for the most part case studies about specific situations.³ What has been lacking is a thorough, comprehensive and scholarly history of the AFL-CIO's role.

This very large void has now been filled beyond the best expectations. The British labor historian Anthony Carew⁴ has written a thoroughly researched history that is likely to remain the definitive account of a now largely forgotten but crucial episode in American

labor history. A massive volume, the book is the product of forty years of research, professionally carried out, scrupulously factual, devoid of political or academic jargon. At most, Carew allows himself the occasional dry, understated touch of humor.

Much of the research appearing in the book is entirely new: Importantly, Carew has accessed for the first time the papers and correspondence of Jay Lovestone, at the time the director of the International Department of the AFL-CIO, and of Irving Brown, his closest associate and international enforcer.

Jay Lovestone had been one of the founders of the Communist Party USA (CPUSA), and one of its most influential leaders, until he miscalculated the outcome of the faction fight in the Soviet CP, believing that Nikolai Bukharin would prevail. When Josef Stalin prevailed, he forced Lovestone, suddenly deprived of the majority he thought he had, out of the American party. Lovestone then started the "Communist Party (Opposition)," together with co-thinkers in other countries who started similar groups, most notably the Brandler-Thalheimer former leadership of the German CP, of which remnants still exist today (a small organization called Arbeiterpolitik, which had no connection to Lovestone). Most of this current, however, became the international network known as the "Right Opposition,"⁵ which remained a potent vehicle for Lovestone's intrigues for another forty years.

In the 1930s Lovestone changed the name of his organization several times, removing the "Communist" reference. After failing to secure an influential position in the UAW, where he only succeeded in creating an insignificant split, Lovestone associated himself with David Dubinsky, president of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), one of the leading AFL affiliates. Dubinsky, a supporter of George Meany, eventually recommended Lovelace to Meany, who appointed him, in 1963, director of the AFL-CIO International Affairs

Department.

A basic fact needs to be understood about Lovestone and Brown: Neither were trade unionists. They were professional cadres of a Communist tendency operating in the trade union arena, as others could, and did, operate in other arenas of social life. Neither of them had risen from trade union ranks, ever organized a union, conducted a strike or a union campaign, ever been elected to a union office, or been accountable to a union governing body, before being appointed by Meany—in the case of Lovestone—as director of the International Department of the AFL-CIO, where he became accountable to Meany himself. Brown, in turn, was accountable to Lovestone, and Lovestone alone. In due course, Lovestone changed his politics, breaking with Stalin but not with Stalinist methods: secretive, manipulative and disruptive, which remained his distinctive *modus operandi* to the end of his life and, with the assistance of his international network of ex-Communists, intervening throughout the Cold War as an independent subcontractor of the CIA, rather than a mere agent.

Carew's book leads into many directions, nationally—in the United States—and internationally, into the politics of the wider international trade union movement. It would lend itself to becoming the reference and the starting point of further explorations, by Carew himself and by others.

One of its many strengths is that it corrects in passing some partisan lies that have been circulating on the internet. One example: The Wikipedia chapter on Irving Brown states that during the Algerian war of independence, in which he played a significant role, he “subsidized the Algerian National Movement (MNA), founded by Messali Hadj to oppose the National Liberation Front (FLN).” In fact, the opposite was the case: Brown was backing the FLN union and never supported the MNA either politically or financially.

Both the MNA and the FLN had

founded trade union confederations in 1956: The MNA's USTA, largely representative of the Algerian workers in France, with an initial membership of 15,000, on February 14; the FLN's UGTA, without a significant membership in either France or Algeria, two weeks later, on March 2. By September 1957 the USTA membership in France had reached 100,000 out of an estimated total of 400,000 Algerian workers employed in France at the time. The USTA had applied for affiliation to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) the same day it was founded; the UGTA, which had strong links with the French Communist Party, finally also decided to apply for ICFTU membership.

On July 8, the ICFTU Executive decided, at one o'clock in the morning, after several hours of debate, to accept the application of the UGTA, by a majority of one single vote. The intervention of Brown, representing the AFL-CIO on the executive, was decisive: He strongly advocated the acceptance of the UGTA application, opposing even the acceptance of both organizations. The UGTA, supported by the Tunisian and Moroccan confederations, which, like their governments, also supported the FLN, had threatened that in the event that its application alone would not be accepted, it might join the WFTU or the Arab Confederation of Trade Unions. The USTA would, of course, never resort to this kind of blackmail and was punished for its principled honesty.

Carew's research has unearthed a letter from Brown to Lovestone from April 15, 1956, “urging the need for UGTA to affiliate to the ICFTU speedily before it was upstaged by the rival Union des syndicats des travailleurs algériens” (163). In a note (411, Note 43), Carew adds, “Brown's support for UGTA over the more broadly based [USTA], with its stronger commitment to basic trade union aims, is interesting and was evidently based on the *hope* that the former would prove more nationalist than communist in the long run.”

For an understanding of the significance

of the AFL-CIO's involvement in Cold War politics it is crucial to realize that the members of the AFL-CIO, for the most part, were no way involved in the activities of the International Department, and indeed had no idea what it was doing. Most of the rank and file, if they reflected on international activities at all, even of their own unions, would often

A key characteristic of the international operations conducted by the AFL-CIO in alliance with the CIA was its close partnership with employers, leading transnational corporations.

view such activities as pretexts for international tourism by the officers concerned, but would not perceive that as a serious problem. Even the leaders of many AFL-CIO member unions were unaware and unconcerned about the activities of Lovestone and Brown and of their CIA connections. Broadly speaking, this was the largest group, with a smaller group allied with Meany and supporting his policies and an even smaller group also knowing what was going on and opposing it, but lacking the strength to prevail against Meany. Walter Reuther, president of the UAW and a social democrat, and his brother Victor, who had been in charge of international activities in the UAW and CIO, repeatedly challenged Meany, seeking to get control of the International Department, but failed and eventually were isolated. Carew documents this struggle in detail.

The Reuther camp also failed to involve its own rank and file sufficiently in international issues. When it finally tried to do so, it was too little and too late, so that the struggle remained one between top leaders assisted

by experts, a situation always more favorable to the right wing of labor. In retrospect, the question arises whether the merger in 1955 between the AFL and the CIO did in fact strengthen the American labor movement or simply enabled the conservative element in the AFL to assert its predominance over the merged organization.

A key characteristic of the international operations conducted by the AFL-CIO in alliance with the CIA was the confederation's close partnership with employers, and not just any employers but leading transnational corporations. In that respect they were fundamentally different from the cooperation of trade unions with intelligence services in the United States—the OSS—and in other Allied countries during World War II. This earlier form of cooperation never compromised basic trade union interests and principles. The operations conducted within the framework of Cold War politics, on the other hand, set the stage for some particularly crass instances of class collaboration.

The American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD) is the most telling example, although not the only one. As Carew notes, AIFLD was founded in 1962 by the AFL-CIO as a joint tripartite venture with financial contributions principally from U.S. government agencies (including foundations that were CIA fronts) and contributions from 95 transnational corporations, a number of which were represented on its board. In addition to preventing “communist infiltration,” its stated purpose was more generally to promote a form of trade unionism in Latin America that would support the agenda of U.S. business and the U.S. government.

George Meany boasted that the largest corporations in the United States (Rockefeller, ITT, Kennecott, Standard Oil, Shell Petroleum, Anaconda) were supporting AIFLD, “although some of these companies have no connection whatsoever to U.S. trade unions,” and J. Peter Grace, chair of the AIFLD Board in addition to being chair of the

W.R. Grace Corporation, said that AIFLD urges “cooperation between labor and management and an end to class struggle.” In a letter distributed to businesspeople seeking their support, Grace asserted “This is the first time that management and labor have voluntarily joined forces to launch and support an operation which recognizes the capitalistic and private enterprise system.”

The companies involved in AIFLD were of course companies that were known to Latin American unions of most political tendencies as bitter enemies. The active participation of AIFLD staff and graduates from its training courses in the overthrow of the Goulart government in Brazil, and of the Allende government in Chile, finally discredited AIFLD even among most AFL-CIO member unions. After the 1995 Convention of the AFL-CIO, where John Sweeney succeeded Lane Kirkland as president, AIFLD and three other regional institutes were abolished and replaced, in 1997, by the Solidarity Center.

In a sense, placing AIFLD in the context of the Cold War is misleading. The deeper agenda of U.S. policy, supported by the AFL-CIO under the presidency of Meany and Lane Kirkland, ostensibly to confront the Soviet Union and “Communism,” was in fact a general war on the left, any left. Neither the government of Arbenz in Guatemala, nor of Goulart in Brazil, nor of Allende in Chile, was “Communist”—they were merely not repressive of the trade unions, including unions with a Communist leadership. And, of course, they threatened the interests of U.S. business by nationalizing some of their assets. All of them were succeeded by brutal military dictatorships, which suppressed the trade union movement irrespective of political affiliations. What the AFL-CIO was supporting was, in effect, a class war by the leading world power of the time against the international working class, a most outrageous betrayal of basic trade union principles.

If anyone had any doubts about this, the U.S. intervention in the civil war in the

Dominican Republic in 1965 should have been an eye opener—and it did open some eyes. One of the longest dictatorships of the interwar period ended in May 1961 with the assassination of Rafael Trujillo, dictator of the Dominican Republic since 1930, by a group of military officers. After a short period of political turmoil, democratic elections were held in December 1962, which brought Juan Bosch to the presidency. Bosch, a democratic socialist and leader of the Dominican Revolutionary Party, the leading left party, proceeded to decree a new constitution. This was met with the immediate hostility of the right, which in September 1963 staged a military *coup d'état* overthrowing the left government and forcing Bosch into exile. This in turn was met by a massive popular uprising demanding the restoration of constitutional democracy and the return of Juan Bosch. A civil war developed and, when it became clear that the left would win, U.S. President Lyndon Johnson ordered the intervention of the U.S. military (Marines and Army units) in April 1965. Eventually 42,000 American troops occupied the country. New elections were held under the U.S. occupation, and the right-wing candidate, Joaquín Balaguer, won. The rationale for the U.S. military intervention and occupation was totally unsubstantiated fears of “foreign influences,” meaning Cuba.

The deeper agenda of U.S. policy, supported by the AFL-CIO, ostensibly to confront the Soviet Union and “Communism” was in fact a general war on the left, any left.

Bosch was a *democratic* socialist and as such an opponent of Stalinism in its Cuban or any other form.

Was there no opposition to any of the AFL-CIO policies from other members of the ICFTU, which did not necessarily share all of its positions? There was indeed, and Carew documents at length the tensions that developed, which led to the replacement of three ICFTU general secretaries (Jacobus Oldenbroek, Omer Bécu, and Harm Buiter) and to the temporary disaffiliation of the AFL-CIO. The issue was always the degree of hostility toward Communist organizations, which Meany kept suspecting was insufficient on the part of other ICFTU affiliates.

Another source of opposition, little known and never until now thoroughly researched, developed in some of the International Trade Secretariats (ITS), currently known as Global Union Federations. This will be an important theme in the second volume that Carew is planning, covering the 1970s and 1980s. Contrary to the ICFTU, which had largely abandoned its traditional ideological basis in social democracy and had in practice adopted anti-Communism as a substitute—thus sharing political ground with the AFL-CIO—some ITSs adopted a different approach: the defense of trade union independence against all threats, regardless of the political camps where they originated. The Communist control of labor organizations in the Soviet Union, its satellites and allies and the CIA control of unions in the West were thus seen as equal threats, and one could not be credibly fought without also fighting the other. Another aspect of their position was an affirmation of political independence from the ICFTU.

Three ITSs in particular, the International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF), the International Chemical Workers (ICF), and the International Union of Food and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF), defended this approach in the 1960s. This was mainly due to the influence of three persons, Dan Benedict, IMF assistant general secretary; Charles Levinson, ICF general secretary; and Dan Gallin, assistant to IUF General Secre-

tary Juul Poulsen. Benedict and Gallin were members of the Independent Socialist League (ISL), a radical socialist organization in the United States, which Gallin had joined as a student in the United States originating a split in the American Trotskyist movement led by

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Max Shachtman (hence "Shachtmanites").

The ISL held that the USSR was in no sense a "workers' state" but a new form of class society, which Shachtman called "bureaucratic collectivism." Therefore the labor movement and left had to fight on two fronts: capitalism and this new society, both based on the exploitation and oppression of labor. This position became known as Third Camp Socialism and became the political basis of how the IMF and IUF positioned themselves. Levinson, with a different political background, had arrived at the same conclusions.

However, Benedict lost his bid to become elected IMF general secretary at the IMF Congress of 1974, against Herman Rebhan, also a former Shachtmanite but who had joined the AFL-CIO camp, despite broad support. Rebhan was elected with seven million votes from just three countries: Germany, Japan and all U.S. unions but one, even including Victor Reuther, for personal reasons. The whole rest of the world supported Benedict but only reached four million votes.

Levinson became vulnerable because of

administrative mistakes that were seized upon by the right-wing unions in the ICF and had to resign as ICF general secretary at the following ICF Congress. Gallin alone survived because the two principal U.S. affiliates of the IUF, the Amalgamated Meat Cutters led by Pat Gorman and the United Packinghouse Workers led by Ralph Helstein, representing together a very large majority of the U.S. membership, were both opponents of Meany and of his international policies. Gallin was elected IUF general secretary 1970 and re-elected at each following congress without opposition until his retirement in 1997.

It should be noted that the exposure in the late 1960s of CIA activities in the American labor movement, by publications such as *Ramparts* (New Left radicals) and *New Politics* (Third Campists), discussed at length by Carew, at no point involved any participation or influence of Communist organizations, in the United States or internationally. The Communists were entirely absent from the controversy before it became public and covered in the mainstream daily press, to the point where some were wondering whether they had even been aware of the issue. In that sense, this story is not really a part of the Cold War, as it remained internal to one of its camps. After it entered the public domain, the CPUSA of course weighed in with its own comments. However, what the story really illustrates is the capacity of a free trade union movement, where critical investigation and controversy is accepted as a natural function of democracy, to clean its own house. As for the AFL-CIO, decades of depoliticization and uncritical association with various U.S. government services undoubtedly contributed to the decline of its influence in national and international affairs.

For years American trade unionists have been calling for AFL-CIO files covering the murky dealings of the Cold War years to be opened and for a full accounting of what really

was taking place. Carew's book, which covers the years 1945 to 1970, has gone a long way to facilitate the latter, and for that the labor movement generally should be grateful. A promised second volume covering the final two decades of the Cold War should complete the task and will be widely anticipated.

NOTES

1. The USSR and the countries under its occupation and control in Eastern Europe and (before 1964) also China, later Vietnam, North Korea. and Cuba.
2. The World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) was founded in Paris in 1945 to replace the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU). dissolved the same year. Its membership included the former members of the IFTU and the trade union organizations of the Soviet bloc, reflecting the World War II alliance between the USSR and the Western Allies. By 1949 it had become clear that the USSR sought to control the organization, and the former IFTU affiliates left to form the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). The trade union centers of Yugoslavia and China also eventually disaffiliated, leaving the USSR in unchallenged control of the organization. After the collapse of the USSR much of WFTU activity was conducted from Havana. Its headquarters were moved in 2006 from Prague to Athens, where its secretariat is held by PAME, the Communist fraction in the Greek Confederation of Labour (GSEE).
3. For example, *Where Were You Brother? - an account of trade union imperialism*, by Don Thomson and Rodney Larson (War on Want: London, 1978).
4. Also by Anthony Carew: *The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions*, Marcel van der Linden, Anthony Carew, Michel Dreyfus, Geert and van Goethem, eds. (Peter Lang AG, Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2000); *Walter Reuther* (Manchester University Press, 1993); *Labour Under the Marshall Plan: The Politics of Productivity and the Marketing of Management Science* (Manchester University Press, 1989); *The Lower Deck of the Royal Navy 1900-1939: The Invergordon Mutiny in Perspective* (Manchester University Press, 1983).
5. The "Left Opposition" was constituted by the followers of Leon Trotsky, first in the Soviet Union in 1929, then internationally, when Trotsky founded the Fourth International in 1938.

Questions for the International Left

JOHN TRUMPBOUR

IN ANXIOUS ANTICIPATION OF the Brexit referendum, then U.K. Prime Minister David Cameron summed up the philosophy of politics that drives him and so many who occupy the command posts of power: “I divide the world into team players and wankers.” He recounts lashing out at former Education Secretary Michael Gove, who caught Brexit fever: “You’ve always been a team player. Don’t become a wanker.”

Cameron’s very inability to articulate a higher calling for politics is perhaps one of the reasons the political mainstream is witnessing an upsurge of far-right discontent and left dissident challenge. In his book of interviews, *Dissidents of the International Left*, freelance writer Andrew Heintz has started a dialogue with 77 left-leaning thinkers, organizers, and activists from around the globe. Most seek to offer far more possibilities for politics than Cameron’s consummate team player who will scuttle human rights and high principles if such actions can avert the wretched plunge into the Sargasso Sea of wankerdom. In contrast to these Tory longings for team unity above all other values, Heintz sees nonconformity and thriving debate as an asset to the international left against a sclerotic political order that for

too long has preached the Thatcherite dictum of “There Is No Alternative.”

The interviews in Heintz’s book are typically short and fast-paced. His relatively brief queries are quite different from the style

of other left editorial teams such as *New Left Review*, renowned for erudite questions but once accused of giving a multi-course tutorial to literary critic Raymond Williams in an extraordinary book of interviews with one writer.

There are some themes that recur more than others in Heintz’s work: 1) the fate of the Kurds and their governance models, 2) the failure of Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch to tackle human rights violations by non-state actors, 3) the storm over left ideas of foreign policy and whether there can ever be grounds for supporting U.S. military and “humanitarian” interventions given the neo-imperialist logic of Washington, and 4) the possibilities for connecting with those North Koreans dissatisfied with lives of ideological quarantine in the so-called Hermit Kingdom.

The fate of the Kurds allows for exploration of the ways Murray Bookchin’s idea of libertarian municipalism inspired the governing of Rojava. Bookchin’s companion Janet Biehl gives an interview in which she elaborates how Kurdistan Workers Party leader Abdullah Öcalan took up social ecology and the governing ideals in later works of this Vermont theoretician. Öcalan repackaged these concepts under the label of democratic confederalism.

Dissidents of the International Left

ANDY HEINTZ
New Internationalist
Publications, 2019.

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The Kurds are presented as delivering resources of hope in a world where governments of the left too often have taken an authoritarian and anti-democratic turn. Even here, there are a few discordant notes, as when Syrian intellectual Yassin Al-Haj Saleh in his interview with Heintz denounces the “rigid, dictatorial one-party system with their personality cult of Öcalan.” Journalist Robin Yassin-Kassab worries that “to most people in Syria, the PYD [Kurdish Democratic Union Party] looks more like a Kurdish nationalist force than a revolutionary force.”

While the Kurds have faced much savagery and historical injustice, a few of Heintz’s cohort of dissidents are not fully on board with the new Kurdish models for an emancipatory politics. Often called the largest ethnic group in the world without a state to call their own, Kurdish peoples have undoubtedly been scarred by the anti-democratic practices of so many of the rulers who determine their fate. Turkey’s leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan declares that democracy is “a tram you get on and you get off when you arrive at your destination.”

Western politicians are less bold than Erdoğan, but in certain respects many share his very truncated and transactional view of democracy. It is clear that Kurds have inspired some dissidents of the international left, but there are others with apprehensions that the high-minded Bookchinite experiments might give way to authoritarian shortcuts or the oppressions delivered by other formerly stateless peoples such as the Israelis, whose long-touted socialist kibbutzim quickly became overwhelmed by cruel occupations, ethnic cleansing, erasure of Arab heritage, and the pathologies of settler-colonial supremacism. Kurds are frequently at pains to stress that they oppose an ethnic nationalist state for their people, though the ultimate failure of many national liberation struggles to rein in nationalism remains a central challenge for the twenty-first century left.

Heintz comments favorably upon Mi-

chael Kazin’s view that the left has to find a path to patriotism and love of one’s own people if they wish to connect with the broad public in democracies. Kazin often delivers this message with vitriolic condemnation of Noam Chomsky and Howard Zinn, but in Heintz’s interview he holds his otherwise frequent fire against these left titans and instead commends the Kent State Golden Flasher and Michigan Wolverine SDSer Carl Oglesby for evoking the anti-colonial struggles of revolutionary Americans as a basis for solidarity with the anti-imperialist fight of the Vietnamese people.

In his well-known essay “A Patriotic Left,” for *Dissent* (Fall 2002), Kazin argued that in former times, “for American leftists, patriotism was indispensable. It made their dissent and rebellion intelligible to their fellow citizens—and located them within the national narrative.”

Executing this melding of left dissent with American patriotism may not be so easy today. Shortly after this *Dissent* clarion call for the liberal left to summon the powers of patriotism, U.S. Senator John Forbes

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Kerry kicked off his presidential campaign in 2004 by channeling his inner Kazin and running as a rejuvenated patriot, or what has been described as a Brahmin Rambo. “I’m John Kerry, and I’m reporting for duty,” he confidently proclaimed while saluting the flag-waving throngs at the Democratic convention in the Fleet Center of Boston with a speech preceded by blaring Springsteen anthems. “We are here tonight because we love

our country. We are proud of what America is and what America can become,” declared Kerry in his opening remarks.

Alas, his message did not carry the day. The aspiration of restoring the patriotic élan of the New Deal liberal left (its apotheosis found in the Yankee Doodle Dandy medley of James Cagney as Broadway legend George M. Cohan) failed to revive U.S. liberalism from its recent torpor. The nadir had already been reached in the abject genuflections of senators Kerry, Clinton, Biden, Schumer, and Rockefeller to the war movement, specifically the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002. The Republican right relished out-flag-waving the Kerry campaign with nonstop displays of super-patriotism and star-spangled spectacles venerating American greatness.

In “Why the Left Needs Liberals” (*Dissent*, Fall 2019), Kazin is now promoting a Popular Front type of message, imploring the left to maintain a united front with liberals. Too often in recent times, the Kazin formula of a patriotic left allied to liberalism has become transformed into pallid centrism dressed up in the aforementioned Yankee Doodle Dandy regalia. In the election cycle of 2020, Kazin holds out hope this time will

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be different. In retrospect, he might well repudiate the Brahmin Ramboism of Kerry as the proper manifestation of left patriotism.

Of course, Heintz’s book ranges far and wide with interviews of luminaries of the left (Chomsky, Nobel laureate Amartya Sen, Pakistani physicist Pervez Hoodbhoy, political commentator Glenn Greenwald, and Mexican investigative journalist Anabel Hernandez). Heintz incorrectly calls Chomsky’s co-authored classic “Manufacturing Dissent” (25), rather than *Manufacturing Consent*, though one can appreciate the wishful thinking behind the error. For many readers, the value of Heintz’s book will be to introduce a whole battalion of new voices addressing countries that are usually neglected in the media (Lino Veljak on Croatia, Thea Riofrancos on Ecuador, Tesfagabir Ghebre-Egziabihier on Eritrea, Juslene Tyresias on Haiti, Moon Nay Li on Myanmar, Hassan Abdullahi and Lekan Latubosun on Nigeria, Sokeel Park and Lee Sang Yong on North Korea, Alex de Waal on Somalia, Sonja Licht and Stasa Zajovic on Serbia, Chulani Kodikara on Sri Lanka, and many others). The names of Hassan Abdullahi and Lee Sang Yong are misspelled, which is odd because Heintz gets the latter correct in the web version of the interview.

Sociologically, the book is skewed toward older voices, with the exception of Africa, where four out of the eleven people interviewed are under 35 years of age. In total, only 7 out of 77 people in this book are under 35 years of age. Out of the 17 people from North America, the youngest is 44 years old, the oldest will soon turn 91, and the median age is 65. In fairness to Heintz, he does not provide the dates of these interviews and it is quite possible that some interrogations were conducted early in the decade, when several more were under 35 years of age. The median age of the global population is 28, and young people are behind many revolts around the globe. At age 28, Wordsworth began *The Prelude*, and his words on his teen years at the start of the French Revolution live on: “Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive/ But to be young was very heaven!” Life under late

capitalism may not be so heavenly for the young, but few would deny that the likes of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (age 30) and Greta Thunberg (age 16) are having an international impact. Feminists will appreciate that 10 of the 11 people interviewed on Latin America are female, and many of these bring a powerful consciousness about women's issues to the dialogues.

The book's biggest lacuna is China, the most populous country, frequently the epicenter of industrial unrest as the globe's wildcat strike capital, and the manufacturing workshop of the world. China does not appear in the book's index, but it occasionally gets brief mention during the interviews covering North Korea.

There are pleasant surprises galore, as when social democrat and round-the-clock defender of Zionism Michael Walzer confesses to Heintz that an officer he met at a military academy proudly cancelled his subscription to the Martin Peretz-era *New Republic* when sickened by the putative liberal magazine's endorsement of the Iraq war. With military brass taking more progressive stands than the guiding lights of American liberalism, something had long smelled rotten in the supposedly capacious Walzer-Wieseltier-Peretz axis of opinion. While Leon Wieseltier and Peretz were gung-ho for what *New Republic* contributing editor Walzer called "the big war" in Iraq, Walzer in the *New York Times* (March 7, 2003) instead supported a strategy of "intensifying the little war" against Saddam Hussein and Iraq. Walzer at least expresses some retrospective appreciation for the subscription-cancelling military officer taking a stand against the militaristic neocons and jackboot liberals who set the United States on its latest path of creative destruction in the Middle East.

Heintz's book identifies long-festered fissures in the international left. While there can be virtue in providing enough views to offend everyone, the book will particularly

Feminists will appreciate that 10 of the 11 people interviewed on Latin America are female, and many of these bring a powerful consciousness about women's issues to the dialogues.

irritate those among the international left who face condemnation in the interviews and did not have a chance to engage with Heintz at all. Diana Johnstone, Paris-based author of *Fools' Crusade: Yugoslavia, NATO, and Western Delusions*, comes under fierce fire for her reportage and commentary on the Balkans, though Chomsky briefly mounts a defense of her. Even Chomsky, who is interviewed with a generosity of spirit, will find himself lambasted by some of those interviewed in later parts of the book, though the format does not allow opportunities for rebuttal among those taking a shellacking from ideological adversaries. So readers will get the most from this book who regard the interviews as just the start of a global debate and conversation. Then they should investigate further with passion and tenacity the questions raised in Heintz's search, his journey to discover which principles could ground and re-energize a fractious and sometimes shattered international left.

The Case for Socialism

From a Management Scholar

JASON SCHULMAN

VARIOUS BOOKS HAVE BEEN published in the last few years that make a case for a transition to socialism. This one has a special “edge”: it’s written by the Harold Quinton chair of business policy, and professor of management and organization, environmental studies, and sociology, at the University of Southern California. Such people are rarely reds. But Paul S. Adler isn’t merely a traitor to

his profession—he’s written a book that has a real chance at winning over college students and graduates who’ve absorbed the dogma usually dished out in Econ 101 classes, not to mention working-class people generally who, even now, believe themselves to be millionaires-in-waiting. And he isn’t presenting socialism as a regulative ideal or good idea; this management scholar makes clear that strategic management of global resources “is far too important to be left to managers” and democratic control of “society’s overall economic activity” is a *necessity* (5).

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The 99 Percent Economy: How Democratic Socialism Can Overcome the Crises of Capitalism

PAUL S. ADLER

New York: Oxford University Press, 2019.
240 pp., \$24.95.

Those who hope *The 99 Percent Economy* is a work steeped in Marxian value theory will be disappointed; no value theory is here. But this doesn’t diminish the usefulness, or implicit Marxism, of Adler’s book. He’s explicit

that the “six crises” of the twenty-first century—economic irrationality, workplace disempowerment, unresponsive government, environmental unsustainability, social disintegration, and

international conflict—will not be positively resolved under capitalism. The “root cause” of these crises is capitalism itself, defined as “private enterprise and production for profit” (22), with its inevitable corollary being that government’s role under capitalism is “basically limited to buttressing the private sector’s activity” (34). Here, more could have been said about why the state within capitalism is a *capitalist state*. It isn’t only that government is subject to “the veto power of business”; each state is “organically” tied to financial markets and part of an *international* state system subject to global capitalist markets, with standing armies that act, as historian Arthur Rosenberg once wrote, as “a state within a state.”²¹ However, Adler does effectively endorse Marx’s theory of the main cause of capitalist crisis as outlined in *Capital Vol. III*: the tendency of the rate of profit to fall as capital investment grows more quickly than labor. Echoing Michael Roberts, who has written about how the profitability of capital remains “too

low” and the debt built up before the Lesser Depression “too high,”² Adler writes that a “full recovery”—a restoration of capital’s profitability—will require a “massive wave of liquidation,” with all the accompanying misery that this implies. He points out that without World War II, the Great Depression “would have continued even longer than it did” (27). And he understands that Green Capitalism is a pipe dream:

Unlike economic cycles, where recessions eventually create conditions that encourage an upturn, ... environmental degradation does not necessarily produce any counteracting, attractive investment opportunities. ... [P]lunder boosts the corporate bottom line and the value of the wealthy elite’s stock holdings. ... [G]iven how slow we have been to act since we became aware of the threat of global warming, it is not clear that capitalism as a system can even survive. (38-9)

In addition, when writing of how the growing interdependence of economic activity progressively “socializes” (in a capitalist way) “society’s productive capabilities” (50), Adler echoes Engels’ statement that “[t]he contradiction between socialized production and capitalistic appropriation now presents itself as an antagonism between the organization of production in the individual workshop and the anarchy of production in society generally.”³ Today, 140 years after Engels’ *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* was published, such capitalist socialization breeds “network economies” that “appear where the value of an asset grows as more people use it”—with the result that such concentrated technology giants as Facebook and Google “wield enormous, and largely unchecked, monopoly power” (54-5).

Adler also does an excellent job of making clear the limits of reform under capitalism. “Ethical capitalism”—corporate social responsibility and such—is a nonstarter, as “on average, becoming more ethical does nothing for a firm’s profitability” (61). Even

cooperatives, within the context of capitalist markets, may have fewer layoffs than traditional capitalist firms, but “they typically pay lower wages and their wage levels are more volatile” (63). Greater government regulation of capitalism would be welcome, of course, but it too is incapable of dealing with Adler’s “six crises,” as capitalist opposition to higher tax rates and “encroachments on the prerogatives of the private sector” (66) would likely ensure the permanence of the crisis of unresponsive government, especially in the international arena.

As for social democracy, looking abroad to the Nordic countries may provide us with a sort of list of reforms that we must fight for while living under capitalism, but even social-democratic capitalism is incapable of overcoming the “six crises” as the social-democratic “model” never seriously interferes with the business sector’s profitability. Adler should especially be given credit for pointing out that the Nordic countries all have rates of youth unemployment that exceed that of the United States; that their wealth remains concentrated in very few hands; that they are no more ecologically sound than some considerably less social-democratic European countries, with Norway being especially dependent on oil and gas exports; and that Sweden, once seen as a sort of reformist Valhalla, has a huge private weapons-export sector that even now sells arms to Saudi Arabia.

The basis upon which Adler makes his case for democratic socialism (as opposed to social democracy) is partly familiar. It draws upon the writings of socialist economists like Pat Devine and David Laibman, who have made strong cases for comprehensive social ownership and democratic planning, with all major enterprises managed day-to-day by their workers but ultimately governed by representatives of all groups affected by their activities, and with market exchange used as a means of implementing societywide “strategic management.” Prices, which will be necessary for most consumer goods for a long time,

would “incorporate the costs of various externalities—such as pollution—and our concern for the more-distant future—by taxing carbon emissions, for example” (127).⁴ Differences in income would be quite small and “bonuses will be designed to support a socialist ethic of interdependence and contribution to the general good by rewarding both groups and individuals for that contribution,” especially when people are working in “jobs that offer limited intrinsic interest” (133). Firms will be rewarded for “superior performance on social and environmental dimensions” (190).⁵ Perhaps Adler could have said more about overcoming the divide between mental and manual labor, but he does make clear that no one in socialist society would be stuck doing meaningless work out of the fear of unemployment. Thankfully, Adler has no illusions about “socialism in one country”:

[T]he socialization of production is now thoroughly global in scope, and the tension between socialized production and private property plays out ... also in the international arena. The socialist resolution ... lies in the creation of correspondingly globalized forums for the democratic management of the global economy. ... [C]onservatives are appalled by the idea of a world government; socialists embrace it. (142)

Where Adler's book genuinely diverges from others that argue for socialism is in its invocation of the strategic management methods of large corporations such as Kaiser Permanente, IBM, New United Motor Manufacturing, Inc. (NUMMI, operating under Toyota's day-to-day control until the plant was closed in 2010), and the Government Services division of the Computer Science Corporation. He labels his examples “high-road firms” that embrace one or more of the organizational principles he calls collaborative strategizing, collaborative innovating, collaborative learning, and collaborative working.

On the surface level it seems that Adler is praising “high-road capitalism” because

his “high-road” examples emphasize “working together to define both our goals and what we need to meet these goals” (79). But Adler's point is barely distant from those who cite the “central planning” of every transnational corporation to prove the feasibility of socialist planning. He's well aware of the constraints of attempting to implement this list of organizational principles within the context of capitalism, pointing out that the great size of high-road firms “gave each control over a vast array of activities that were thereby shielded from the centrifugal effects of market competition. ... [I]nternally, these firms' commitment to a high-road approach moderated the centrifugal effects of the capitalist employment relation” (109), with “outside” factors such as unionization also playing a role.

Adler also admits that “in every case the implementation of the four principles was limited,” but “the success, albeit limited, of these principles on such a large scale as in these firms should give us confidence that under socialist conditions they can be deployed even more widely and more systematically to ensure that our management of the economy will be both democratic and effective” (110–1). In other words, principles that can only partially, under optimal conditions, be realized within capitalism can only be fully realized within socialism, with the end of “the power of capital over labor and competition over co-operation” (111). Stressing this point doesn't make Adler an advocate of class collaboration; if anything, it shows us how even “high-road capitalism” suffers from unrepairable defects.

Where *The 99 Percent Economy* does stumble somewhat is where other books on the transition from capitalism to socialism have stumbled: getting from here to there. Adler mentions economic and environmental crises—to his credit, he presents them as intertwined—and claims that “effective leadership” could steer “irresistible public pressure to transform radically our economy in a more sustainable direction” (149) or a

mass movement that succeeds in achieving ever-more-radical reform could lead to a *political* crisis, which he doesn't spell out in any detail. He stresses the inevitability of resistance from the capitalist class, which is true, but he has nothing to say about resistance from *the state*. The two aren't synonymous. It can never be stressed enough: The most important prerequisite for a transition out of capitalism is recruitment and education within the armed forces. The end of conscription in the United States may make this especially difficult. It must be done anyway. Otherwise the opportunities presented by any sort of crisis (and a crisis, if it's really worth the name, is always political) will quickly turn to tragedy. To paraphrase Rosa Luxemburg, either the taking of political power by the working class through the dissolution of the coherence of the armed forces of capitalist states, or capitalist barbarism. There is no other road to socialism.

Adler sees the need for a socialist party. He's specific about what that means: not a mere electoral machine but "one that is rooted in neighborhoods and workplaces where people can discuss both local and national issues, act on them together, formulate proposals for wider discussion, elect leaders to represent them, express their views on proposals coming from that leadership, and thus form a coherent political organization with a shared purpose" (151). But he also argues, in essence, for realigning the Democratic Party. At this late date, one hardly knows how to respond. How is it possible to realign what isn't even a real party—an independent organization with a clearly defined structure and dues-paying "ordinary" members—in the first place? How does one change a nonparty into a party? The task is virtually harder than overturning capitalism itself. At the very least Adler ought to be advocating the "dirty break" with the Democrats that is now an official Democratic Socialists of America position. But for all of his discussion of business resistance to reform, he says nothing of how to

overcome the resistance of the Democratic representatives of the ruling class to having their "party" turned into a "consistent voice for progressive change" (151). The possibility of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez taking over Nancy Pelosi's position "within" the Democratic Party is virtually nil.

Nevertheless, despite its shortcomings when discussing political strategy, *The 99 Percent Economy* is an essential read, especially for those new to the very concept of socialism or doubtful of its feasibility. I can think of few books that so convincingly prove, in such clear prose, that capitalism is incapable of meeting the needs of most of humanity, that it must be replaced with a system that does meet humanity's needs, and that such a system is not only desirable but practicable. Buy this book—and then lend it to your "socialism-skeptical" family and friends.

NOTES

1. Which is to say that the capitalist state "has its own processes and integrity; in short, whatever the ways in which external conditions affect it, the state retains what the Austrian socialist theorist Max Adler called an 'internal dynamic.' This dynamic stems from the prerequisites for instituting and maintaining the given process of production and accumulation. ... [T]he state rises above the 'selfish' interests of particular capitalists precisely in order to realize the political hegemony of the capitalist class as a whole." Stephen Eric Bronner, *Imagining the Possible: Radical Politics for Conservative Times* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 152-3.
2. Michael Roberts, *The Long Depression* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016), 270.
3. Frederick Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (1880), *Marxists Internet Archive*, www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1880/soc-utop/ch03.htm.
4. As Adler rightly points out, a national economic council is needed to set goals and benchmark ("full") prices for society's main products. This diverges sharply from capitalist pricing, as "the cost of lost biodiversity, or of the loss of neighborhood ethnic diversity, cannot be reduced to measurement in dollars" (189).
5. For a similar perspective, see Jason Schulman, "Conceptualizing the future: Marx's value theory and the debate on markets and planning," *Studies in Political Economy* (Vol. 10, No. 1, 2019), 1-17.

The Democratic Quest: Marxism Versus Liberalism

MATTHEW E. STRAUSS

IN A RECENT INTERVIEW FOR THE Minneapolis Interview Project, August Nimtz asserted that “to exercise political power, we must impose our will through collective action.”* In his new work, Nimtz says much the same when he writes, “If there is one historical constant, it is that the democratic quest can only be advanced—for those who truly want to do so—outside the electoral/parliamentary arenas.” (287) This conclusion may be fairly standard in most Marxist works of history and analysis, but what stands out in this case is the method the author uses to arrive at this well-worn conclusion.

Broadly, August Nimtz proposes an intervention into the question of socialism, which the Trump administration has negatively placed back on the agenda with its 2018 Council of Economic Advisers report. Among the charges against socialism is the idea that, as Nimtz puts it, the “Marxist socialist project lack[s] the assumed democratic groundings of the alternative liberal project.” (3) But how

accurate is this? Nimtz proposes an answer with his new work on Marxism and liberalism.

If in Nimtz’s previous two volumes he focused on the electoral strategies of Marx, Engels, and Lenin, with this new and highly readable account, Nimtz returns to a familiar theme: the quest for democracy. The theme is not explicitly defined in this work, but he ties it strongly with a protagonistic vision of democratic participation as well as mass intervention in politics from the streets. What Nimtz proposes is to sharpen a new tool for illuminating his theme, what he terms a “comparative real-time political analysis.”

Marxism versus Liberalism: Comparative Real-Time Political Analysis

AUGUST NIMTZ
New York: Palgrave Macmillan,
2019. 310pp.

Nimtz’s Chosen Method

Comparative real-time political analysis, in Nimtz’s account, consists of examining “how a materialist conception of history, a Marxist perspective, compares to alternative varieties of liberal perspectives when subjected to real-time analysis.” (3) By “real-time analysis” Nimtz alludes to the need not only for a textual reading of those involved, but also to show what effects their actions had during events, how well the events were represented in their statements and writings, and “how [well] did either perform for advancing the democratic quest?” (3) In comparing Marx, Engels, and Lenin’s democratic commitment to those of their contemporary liberal coun-

*turtleroad.org/2019/10/11/august-nimtz-geography-of-a-black-communist/

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terparts, Nimitz is able to lay bare not only the theoretical positions on democracy that both sides hold, but what their actions during events demonstrated. One note for readers of this method at the outset: It is best exemplified not in the Introduction or Conclusion segments of the book, but in the comparison chapters themselves.

Nimitz spends the opening and ending chapters posing questions to be explored; this sets him up to draw broad conclusions about his subjects, as well as what lessons their performance holds for reading events in our own age. The reader will profit from Nimitz's advice in the introduction to read these and the broad conclusions first, which are worth reproducing at length:

What are the broad and key conclusions to be drawn from the four real-time politics comparisons? How do the claims that Marx, Engels and Lenin made about the historical moments under examination—the French edition of the European Spring, the American Civil War, the Russian Revolution of 1905, the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and the end to World War I—compare and contrast to those of Tocqueville, Mill, Weber and Wilson? To what extent are their readings of the events in agreement and disagreement? Which of them had a more accurate reading of the events and made better forecasts? How did their theoretical/political views influence their responses? How do the four comparisons reveal key differences between Marxist and different varieties of liberal real-time politics? Most important, to what extent, if any, did their actions advance the democratic quest that was posed in all four moments? Can, lastly, a case be made for a superior theoretical purchase of either perspective for doing real-time politics? (11)

Marxism versus Liberalism

The comparisons in the four chapters are progressively developed from Nimitz's original

goals in the earlier 2000 book into a more focused argument, one which ultimately extends the argument to Lenin himself. In the closing sections of his work, he speculates on future projects involving possible comparisons to include Leon Trotsky/John Maynard Keynes, and Fidel Castro/John F. Kennedy. In connecting his past work to this foray, as well as speculating on future projects, one can clearly see that this project has been long in development and is still being written.

In refining his new technique, Nimitz is able to bring a rich analysis to the comparisons between Lenin, Weber, and Wilson. As he progresses, Nimitz honestly documents some of the drawbacks he encounters, such as that of Weber versus Lenin. The main chapter in this case consists of a mostly textual comparison, examining Weber and Lenin's writings on the 1905 Russian Revolution, whereas the appendix to the chapter contains real-time analysis of the pair concerning World War I and the 1917 revolution. This addendum, thankfully, not only lives up to what Nimitz envisioned with his analysis, but also helps to underwrite and confirm the findings of the earlier textual reading: In both cases, the differing class allegiances of Weber and Lenin are laid bare.

Nimitz's effort to expand his examination of Marx, Engels, and Lenin and their commitment to the quest for democracy succeeds in large part due to his method's ability to contextualize their struggles alongside the struggles of their purportedly democracy-friendly liberal contemporaries.

Setting up the comparisons requires some background; Nimitz proves himself a consummate teacher here. The background given on the French European Spring, Tocqueville, J.S. Mill, Weber, and Wilson are enough to send any new reader well prepared into their writings. The background is neither cursory nor superficial, but calculated to draw the reader's attention to the attributes under review in the comparison portions. Readers looking to their writings outside of this book

will surely find their eyes drawn to the material he illuminates.

A brief sample from the comparisons suffices to give readers a taste of the rich material unearthed here. In the second comparison, between Karl Marx and J.S. Mill, Nimtz recounts the engagement of both figures, finding that during the events of the American Civil War,

How to impact politics and how to advance the cause of the Union are what most differentiated Marx and Engels from Mill. For Mill it was about how to convince the enlightened English elite to support the Union. For Marx and Engels it was about winning and organizing the working class for the Union cause. And the most significant point about that difference was that Marx, especially, was willing to put in the requisite time and effort toward his goal. (114)

As can be seen here, Nimtz focuses on class allegiance and method of intervention to highlight how Marx and Mill acted during the events in question.

During the introduction, Nimtz gives a short literature review justifying the need for his work. The paucity of similar forays is evident. One of the items mentioned is Domenico Losurdo's 2005 work, *Liberalism: a counter-history*. Losurdo seeks to illuminate the actual character of liberalism in all its facets, as opposed to its ideological account of itself. While it may be true that Losurdo's work is not able to illuminate liberalism with more than textual readings, as Nimtz argues, I maintain that Losurdo's main objective in that work was to demonstrate how liberalism as practiced by its leading lights included aspects usually held by the modern world as external to that tradition, aspects such as slavery. Further, Losurdo's overarching goal in that work, the illumination of the more general struggle for recognition by the emerging working class, could easily stand in for Nimtz's democratic quest. I argue that this is complementary to Nimtz's demonstration of some of liberalism's

most recognized figures' democratic shortfalls.

As mentioned earlier, the democratic quest is a theme Nimtz harkens to again and again in his exposition. He narrows the question to determine precisely in whom, in the discussed eras, democracy finds its real and best advocates. This not only reveals the class character and allegiance of the bourgeois men he analyses, as Losurdo does, but also places them in relief against real advocates for democracy: the communists. The contrast reveals many interesting and even unexpected results.

In perhaps the most revealing portion of the analysis of Woodrow Wilson and Lenin, Nimtz highlights point six of Wilson's Fourteen Points, which reads:

The evacuation of all Russian territory and such a settlement of all questions affecting Russia as will secure the best and freest cooperation of the other nations of the world in obtaining for her an unhampered and unembarrassed opportunity for the independent determination of her own political development and national policy and assure her of a sincere welcome into the society of free nations under institutions of her own choosing; and, more than a welcome, assistance also of every kind that she may need and may herself desire. The treatment accorded Russia by her sister nations in the months to come will be the acid test of their good will, of their comprehension of her needs as distinguished from their own interests, and of their intelligent and unselfish sympathy. (214)

Nimtz's commentary following this section distills the importance of this overlooked chapter of U.S.-Soviet diplomacy: "Wilson, in essence, was taking, in a most public way, the side of the Soviet government in its negotiations with Berlin at Brest-Litovsk." He stresses the loss of this insight to later developments: "With the onset of the Cold War it's no wonder that the sixth point in Wilson's Fourteen Point speech was virtually forgotten." (214)