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Dan La Botz

From the Editors

SINCE DONALD TRUMP HAS TAKEN up residence in the White House, the country has faced a series of political controversies, a barrage of right-wing legislative and regulatory initiatives, a growing far-right movement, but also a broadening resistance from various sectors of society. The challenge is, in the midst of the chaos of the Trump presidency and the myriad assaults on the American working class, to build an independent movement committed not only to removing Trump and stopping the Republicans, but to fighting for a radical program of social reforms, from full employment to a national health care system, while opposing racism and Islamophobia and protecting women's rights, including reproductive rights.

As Elizabeth Drew suggested in the *New York Review of Books* (June 22), Trump's presidency may be "in peril" because of the firing on May 9 of James Comey, the head of the FBI, who was investigating the Trump campaign's ties to Russia. Comey is the third person involved in investigating Trump to be fired by the administration. We have not seen any political crisis as serious as this in over forty years. Trump's firing of Comey has been compared to President Richard Nixon's "Saturday Night Massacre" on October 20, 1973, when he ousted special prosecutor Archibald Cox, who was investigating the break-in at the Democratic Party headquarters, which Nixon had covered up. In response, Attorney General Elliot Richardson and Deputy Attorney General William Ruckelshaus resigned. Nixon subsequently resigned to avoid impeachment.

Trump, in office for four months, has appointed a cabinet of billionaire corporate CEOs, a junta of military generals, and a congeries of rich, right-wing Republicans intent on destroying the welfare state, eliminating government regulation, reducing civil liberties, and restricting voting rights. He has three times attempted to pass a Muslim ban, worked to "repeal and replace" Obama's Affordable Care Act, and has proposed a budget that increases military spending and cuts all social programs and the Environmental Protection Agency. Trump's tax plan would, according to the *New York Times,* "amount to a multitrillion-dollar shift from federal coffers to America's richest families and their heirs." The plan would repeal the estate tax and cut corporate taxes from 35 to 15 percent. Dan La Botz takes up all of this and more in his article in this issue.

Many fear that Trump may launch a war against North Korea or some other nation to distract attention from domestic failures and to provide an excuse for repression of his opponents. And we are appalled by Trump's decision to leave the Paris climate accord, however inadequate it was.

The opposition to Trump has been enormous. Half a million people marched in the women's march in Washington DC on January 21, and four million participated in the sister marches across the country, the largest national protest demonstration in the nation's history. Some 200,000 joined the climate march in Washington on April 29, while tens of thousands of others joined similar marches in other cities nationwide. Two "Day Without an Immigrant" protests also had tens of thousands of participants. Tens of thousands of Americans have challenged their representatives at Town Hall meetings.

We fully support the resistance, but we have to recognize that so far it has largely been led by the Democratic Party through groups such as Indivisible, and even when not led by the Democrats, the politics of the movement have been liberal. While tens of thousands of radicals have been among the best organizers and builders of the movement, they have been unable to challenge the Democrats and the dominant liberal tone. So far, organized labor, divided between the Building Trades and coal miners anxious to cooperate with Trump, the public employees opposed to him, and the many unions sitting on the fence, has been unable to play a significant role. We need to drive Trump from the White House, to defeat the Republicans in the 2018 elections, and to build a movement to challenge not only this administration, but to challenge all of the ruling class's political representatives and the capitalist system itself. As one frequently heard slogan has it, "Trump is the symptom, capitalism is the disease."

We continue in this issue our series on the hundredth anniversary of the Russian Revolution with articles by Sam Farber, Tom Harrison, Stefanie Prezioso, and an interview with Suzi Weissman. We also have a section on the Middle East in which Steve Shalom writes on "The 1967 War" while Mike Noonan discusses the Palestinian teachers strike. We also have three articles on Latin America: Nicole Fabricant and Bret Gustafson write about "extractivism" and the struggle for socialism from below in Bolivia; Pedro Cabán discusses the PROMESA bill and the Puerto Rican financial crisis; and Edward Tapia discusses Dependency Theory. In addition Kim Moody provides an article on the state of the American working class and the labor unions, Robin Hahnel differentiates a left critique of U.S. trade policy from that of Trump, Anthony Pahnke looks at the politics of food, and Bennett Muraskin writes on the history of American Jews in the Industrial Workers of the World.

We also have our regular feature "Words & Pictures," this time with Paul Buhle writing about the work of Si Lewen, as presented by Art Spiegelman. And, of course, as always we have several book reviews. Finally, we remember and honor our former editor, Marvin Mandell.

We hope you enjoy the issue. We will see you in the resistance on the streets, walking out of the workplace, and shutting down the system. Let's take the future into our hands.

Saulo Colón
Nancy Holmstrom
Dan La Botz
Jason Schulman
Julia Wrigley

Trump: Political Crisis, Right-wing Policies, and the Resistance

Dan La Botz

Donald Trump's first six months as president of the United States has been bad in so many ways that it is hard to know where to begin. What is worse, more dangerous, more horrifying: his withdrawal of the United States from the Paris climate accord? His rocket-rattling regarding Korea? His bombing of Syria? Or is it his plan to lighten the tax burden on the rich while cutting programs that benefit the poor? Or perhaps his Islamophobia and repressive immigration policies? What worries and angers us more: his promotion of the alt-right news media? His championing of right-wing thugs? Or his rhetoric, which has encouraged the growth of white nativist, racist, and fascist groups? What is more reprehensible, the nepotism that makes close family members (two of his children) principal advisors? Or the cabinet of millionaires and generals? Or is it all the proliferating private interests at every level of government?

Since Trump's election, the American political system has been in a constant crisis, the most serious political crisis in fifty years, with churning investigations of the president, his associates, his campaign, and his administration by several security agencies, including the CIA and the FBI, as well as by five congressional entities. It is known that Trump and his team had multiple, inappropriate, and perhaps illegal contacts with the Russian government, and there is a suspicion that they colluded with Vladimir Putin's dictatorship to undermine Hillary Clinton's campaign and support Trump. As this essay goes to press on June 15, the future of the Trump government appears to be in question, and no doubt by the time you read this there will have been more revelations and the crisis will have grown greater. At the same time, Trump and the Republicans in Congress pursue an archconservative political agenda that would enrich the wealthy, expand the military, and have a devastating impact on blacks and Latinos, on immigrants, on labor unions, on the poor, and on the environment. Finally, the resistance that we heralded during the first few months of the Trump presidency has become largely dominated by the Democratic Party, has no independent political agenda, and has little participation from labor and the working class generally, the force that might give it both power and perhaps independence. We look here, then, at the political crisis, the conservative agenda, and the state of the resistance .

In mid-May, Trump fired FBI Director James Comey, who said that Trump had earlier asked him to drop the investigation into fired National Security Director Mike Flynn. Flynn had been fired for lying to Vice President Mike Pence about his contacts with Russia. Trump first justified his firing of Comey by saying he was following advice from a memo by Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, who criticized Comey's handling of the issue of Hillary Clinton's possible email security violations—though both Trump and Rosenstein said that Trump was planning to fire Comey before he read Rosenstein's memo. Alternately, in other statements, Trump claimed he fired Comey because he was "very unpopular with most

Dan La Botz *is a co-editor of* New Politics.

people," or because he was a "showboat," or, as he told the Russian officials, because he was "a nut job." To the Russians he confessed, "I faced great pressure because of Russia. That's taken off," an explanation that suggests that he fired Comey to derail the FBI investigation. The public outcry following Comey's firing led Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein to appoint former FBI Director Robert Mueller as independent counsel to carry on the FBI investigation. We have since learned that Trump also asked Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats to intervene in the Russia investigation and ask Comey to back off. (*Washington Post*, June 6) At about the same time we learned from a National Security Agency memo apparently leaked by an NSA contractor named Reality Winner that Russia had hacked U.S. voting systems. (*Intercept*, June 5) These developments suggested that Trump had been engaged in the crime of obstruction of justice, which could be grounds for impeachment.

There has been no comparable U.S. political crisis since President Richard Nixon fired independent special prosecutor Archibald Cox, leading to the resignations of Attorney General Elliot Richardson and Deputy Attorney General William Ruckelshaus on October 20, 1973. Nixon resigned to avoid impeachment after it was revealed that he and his advisors had organized the illegal break-in at Democratic Party headquarters in the Watergate Office Building. Though the Democratic Party leadership; Nancy Pelosi, the House minority leader; and Charles Schumer, the Senate minority leader have attempted to hush them, representatives Maxine Waters of California and Al Green of Texas have both explicitly called for Trump's impeachment, and many other Democrats have suggested their sympathy with that view. Two Republican representatives, Justin Amash of Michigan and Carlos Curbelo of Florida, have also suggested Trump should be impeached for firing Comey. Meanwhile, Trump and the Republicans move their agenda forward.

Trump's Strategy and Agenda

Since Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt's first term in 1933, a new president's "first hundred days" have become an important measure of a new administration. During Trump's first hundred days he moved quickly to take action, pursuing a strategy aimed at fulfilling campaign promises to his overwhelmingly white voter base that he would keep out the Mexicans who supposedly threatened their jobs and stop the Muslims who supposedly threatened their lives. So, just five days after his inauguration, Trump issued an order to begin immediately the construction of a wall on the Mexican border and to more aggressively find and deport undocumented immigrants by expanding the definition of criminal immigrants. Just two days later, Trump issued an order that—in the midst of the mass migration of Syrian war refugees—temporarily banned immigration from seven majority Muslim countries and suspended the immigration of refugees for 120 days. His order also imposed a religious test, allowing Christian refugees from Muslim countries to enter the United States. In his first hundred days, Trump deported 40 percent more immigrants than Obama, who had been called "the deporter in chief."

Trump's "Muslim ban," as he had originally called it, led to massive protests at airports across the country. A federal appeals court overturned the ban. As the *New York Times* reported, "The three-judge panel, suggesting that the ban did not advance national security, said the administration had shown 'no evidence' that anyone from the seven nations—Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen—had committed terrorist acts in the United States." (Liptak, *New York Times*, Feb. 9, 2017) Trump's first major initiative, poorly planned and executed, failed completely. Trump went on to issue a second executive order, but the courts overturned that too.

Trump's second major initiative was an attempt to repeal and replace the Affordable

Care Act, popularly known as Obamacare, the government-coordinated and subsidized private insurance and health care program. Republican House Speaker Paul D. Ryan began the push to repeal even before Trump's inauguration and attempted to pass the repeal in March. But he could not get a majority in the House because of desertions by members of the right-wing Freedom Caucus, who wanted a more thoroughgoing destruction of Obamacare, and also because of defections of moderates who had come under pressure from their constituents concerned about losing their health insurance. Town hall protests mobilized large numbers and put a lot of pressure on moderate Republican legislators, several of whom refused to vote for repeal. The failure to repeal Obamacare was an even greater defeat for Trump and the Republican Party than was the loss on the Muslim ban. The Republicans made a second and third attempt, which eventually passed the House by appeasing the Freedom Caucus, but not yet the Senate.

The one victory that Trump enjoyed in his first few months in office came with the Senate's confirmation of his nominee to the Supreme Court, Neil Gorsuch, an extremely conservative judge who could be expected to vote to limit gay rights, to uphold restrictions on abortion, to invalidate affirmative action programs, and to reduce the power of labor unions. Evasive about his views during the Senate hearings, Gorsuch was confirmed on a near party-line vote in the Senate, with Republicans being joined by three Democrats for a vote of 54 to 45.

The Budget and the Tax Plan

The other major Trump initiative in the first hundred days was the budget. Trump's budget proposal for the fiscal year would total over $4 trillion. It called for large increases for Defense (up 10 percent), for Homeland Security (up 7 percent), and for Veterans Affairs (up 6 percent) while at the same time cutting the Environmental Protection Agency (down 31 percent), the Agriculture and Labor departments (both down 21 percent), Justice (down 20 percent, through cuts to crime victims, for example, though the FBI will see an increase), Health and Human Services (down 16 percent), and Education (down 14 percent). (Parlapiano and Aisch, *New York Times*, March 16, 2016) As the *Washington Post* observed (March 16, 2017),

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

The budget also eliminates nineteen small programs particularly disliked by conservatives, whose cost is only $500 million, among them: the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the Legal Services Corporation, AmeriCorps, and the National Endowments for the Arts and the Humanities. (LaFraniere and Rappeport, *New York Times*, Feb. 17, 2017; Blake, *Washington Post,* March 16, 2017)

Trump's proposed tax plan also works to further enrich the wealthiest. Proposed in April, it would, according to the *New York Times* (Davis and Cohen, Apr. 27, 2017), "amount to a multitrillion-dollar shift from federal coffers to America's richest families and their heirs." The plan would repeal the estate tax, cut corporate taxes from 35 to 15 percent, and end a surtax that funds the Affordable Care Act. Like presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush before him, Trump argues that tax cuts will lead to economic expansion that will recoup lost taxes, so that there will be no increase in the deficit. Voodoo economics all over again, and virtually no one believes this. The budget sits in Congress as we are writing.

Trump Reverses Himself on Nearly Everything

Candidate Trump told his followers that he rejected the American foreign policy of military intervention and regime change, and he specifically promised that he would not become involved in Syria. But when he received news of a chemical weapons attack that killed 72 men, women, children, and infants, Trump ordered a missile attack on the airbase that had supposedly carried out the chemical attack. According to the Pentagon, 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles were fired at Al Shayrat airfield in Syria, though there was no report on damage or casualties. Three other U.S. airstrikes in Syria in April, which had received less media attention, reportedly killed dozens of civilians.

Democrats, while criticizing the process, "either condoned or did not take issue with the military action":

> [Charles] Schumer, the Senate minority leader, said on Thursday night that "making sure Assad knows that when he commits such despicable atrocities he will pay a price is the right thing to do," while House Minority Leader [Nancy] Pelosi said the strike appeared "to be a proportional response" to the chemical weapons attack. Senator Elizabeth Warren said the "Syrian regime must be held accountable," while Senator Mark Warner said that Assad "could not go unpunished," and Senator Dick Durbin called it a "measured response." (Bernstein, *Atlantic*, Apr. 7, 2017)

Democratic Party leaders tacitly supported Trump's airstrike, though polls showed that 61 percent of Democrats disapproved of America's latest belligerent act. (Stein, *Vox*, Apr. 14, 2017)

The attack on Syria's airbase in reprisal for the chemical attack led to a series of dramatic shifts in Trump's foreign policy positions. Previously Trump had seen Syria as a de facto ally in the struggle against ISIS, but not only did Trump order an airstrike in Syria, but a few days later his Secretary of State Rex Tillerson stated that the Assad era is "coming to an end." (Harris, *New York Times,* Apr. 11, 2017) Putin, suddenly no friend to Trump, condemned the U.S. airstrike as a violation of international law and denied that Syria had been responsible for the chemical attack, suggesting that the regime's opponents had carried it out. Russia also rescinded the agreement to coordinate air operations in Syria to avoid potential U.S.-Russian conflict there. Trump, who had previously condemned NATO as obsolete, now hailed it as a bulwark in the defense of Europe and the United States and definitely "not obsolete." (Baker, *New York Times*, Apr. 13, 2017)

Trump reversed himself on a host of other issues as well. After meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping, he announced, breaking a campaign promise, that he would not label China a currency manipulator. He also declared that the Export-Import Bank, which he had previously characterized as unnecessary, was now "a very good thing." *New York Times* reporter Alan Rappeport wrote on April 12, "The shifts confounded many of Mr. Trump's supporters and suggested that the moderate financiers he brought from Wall Street are eclipsing the White House populist wing led by Stephen K. Bannon, the political strategist who is increasingly being sidelined by the president." Trump the populist had knuckled under to the Wall Street and Washington establishments.

Trump's aggressive language with regard to Korea, stating that a "major, major conflict" with "socialist" North Korea is possible, represents a continuation of longstanding U.S. hostility to North Korea because of its production of nuclear weapons and development of a long-range missile to deliver them to targets as far away as America. President George W. Bush had famously called North Korea, together with Iraq and Iran, the "axis of evil," and Obama had warned President-elect Trump that Korea was the number one national security priority. While Trump has adopted a more threatening attitude, accompanied by dispatching naval forces to the region, his policy is not new. Trump's visit in May to Saudi Arabia and Israel indicated his turn from Obama's attempt to establish an alliance with Iran to the building of an alliance with the Sunni Arab states and Israel against Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah, that is, a return to an earlier U.S. posture.

The Resistance

Trump's aggressive right-wing politics have been greeted with resistance at all levels, from federal judges to Democratic Party politicians, and from many sectors by protests in the streets and even some small strikes. The resistance has continued now for four months, with a major event every few weeks. Most impressive was the Women's March: Millions of women around the world marched on Saturday, January 21, the day after Trump's inauguration, to repudiate his presidency, his vulgar and misogynistic language and behavior, and his anti-woman policies. In the United States about four million marched in the largest national protest demonstration in the country's history, reawakening the women's movement. While Washington, DC, was the main march, there were some 700 sister march-

Time to take out the garbage

es—some involving hundreds of thousands and many, tens of thousands—in dozens of other cities and towns in the United States and many more on every continent.

Less than a month later came the protests against Trump's Muslim ban. On January 28, thousands from New York City to Seattle went to the nation's major airports to protest President Donald Trump's order banning, for 120 days, Muslim immigrants and refugees from seven nations, an order issued that same day. The protests, initiated by immigrant rights groups through social media, took place at John F. Kennedy Airport in New York—where it grew to several thousand—and also at Dulles in Washington, DC; O'Hare in Chicago; and at the Los Angeles and San Francisco airports.

The following month it was "Not My President Day." Thousands of protestors in New York, Chicago, Atlanta, Los Angeles, and some two dozen other cities marched in opposition to President Donald Trump and his policies on Monday, February 20, what is usually called "President's Day." On what was, in the Midwest and the East, a beautiful spring-like day—thanks to climate change—protestors marched to protest Trump's environmental and immigration policies and just about everything else that the new president stands for.

In the following weeks of February, thousands of people showed up at town hall meetings across the United States to challenge Republican congressional representatives and senators on their plans for the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) as well as on issues from immigration to the environment to Trump's relations with Russia. The rowdy demonstrations, mostly organized by Democratic Party networks, virtually disrupted a few Republican legislators' meetings, while in most town halls angry voters rose to demand that the health care plan's fundamental features be preserved, that immigrants' rights be respected, and that the Environmental Protection Agency be funded.

There were also two Day Without Immigrants protests, one on February 16 and the other on May 1, International Labor Day. Tens of thousands of immigrant workers and their allies protested in cities across the country, with small-scale strikes in some areas. And there was a Day Without a Woman. Women in small numbers struck or more often protested against gender discrimination, wage inequality, and racism. Some five thousand meetings were held across the country in February, and by early March tens of thousands of women had pledged their support on line, and on International Women's Day they joined actions large and small.

In mid-April there were the Tax Day protests. Tens of thousands of Americans in some two hundred cities and towns from New York to San Francisco participated in Tax Day marches on April 15 to demand that President Trump release information about his tax payments. Largely organized through Democratic Party groups like Indivisible, the Tax Day demonstrations were peaceful but spirited affairs. And later in April, on Earth Day, came the March for Science in cities across the United States and around the world. There were some four hundred marches in the U.S., with crowds estimated at 20,000 in New York and Los Angeles. Other marches took place in hundreds of other cities around the world from London to Tokyo. The March for Science was largely motivated by Trump's proposed budget that would cut funding for many science programs, such as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which is being cut by 31 percent, and the National Institutes of Health, which is being cut by 18.3 percent, or $5.8 billion.

Finally, on April 29 some 200,000 joined the People's Climate March in Washington, DC, while tens of thousands of others marched in cities across the country to protest Trump's environmental policies, such as weakening the EPA while supporting coal mining and the expansion of oil drilling, all of which contribute to climate change and jeopardize the future of human life on earth. As we go to press, other demonstrations are planned for the summer.

The Future of the Resistance

The resistance has been impressive for its size, for the many sectors of society that have become involved, and for taking up so many crucial issues. We have not experienced anything like this new movement since the 1960s and 70s. Yet there are several serious problems. First, there's the virtual absence of the labor movement. The unions, deeply divided, seem to have no clear plan to mobilize the working class to fight Trump even though he and the Republicans propose legislation that will promote anti-union right-to-work laws. Second is the fact that the resistance has been largely led by the Democratic Party, which remains a corporate and neoliberal party committed to austerity. The resistance as a movement has failed to create its own political character and identity independent of the Democrats.

Ideally there would be a new left to provide leadership for the movement and perhaps that will happen, though we don't see it yet. In addition to the social movements, there has been a remarkable growth of the left, most spectacularly the Democratic Socialists of America, which in the last two years has grown from a nominal 7,000 members to 22,000. Many other left groups, numbering from a few dozen to a thousand or more, have grown as well. Still the left remains small, divided, often ultra-left and sectarian, and incapable of having much of an impact on the movement at large. If the left can overcome its divisions, it might be able to help create an independent radical identity for the movement, but at the moment that does not seem likely. Without a united left, those of us who are on the left will have to work to build that radical independent position through our work with immigrants, labor unions, women's and LGBT groups, and with the environmentalists.

Since the Republicans are the majority in both houses, Trump's impeachment would depend upon the Republican leadership coming to the conclusion that the president has become a liability to advancing their right-wing agenda. Republicans and Democrats together could rid of us Trump, but this might in fact simply create a more powerful and effective Republican government under Vice President Pence, House Majority Leader Paul Ryan, and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell. The battle then is not simply against Trump; it's against the entire Republican Party. Yet, while a Democratic Party victory in the congressional elections of 2018 would block the Republicans and stop some of their more reactionary proposals, the Democrats appear to have no other goal then the restoration of corporate neoliberal policies of their past, together with their own brand of austerity. There is no new Democratic Party agenda for the nation, and the progressives seem to be having little impact on the party. The resistance must continue, but it must involve the labor unions and working-class people. It must become politically independent. And it must become bigger, stronger, more defiant, and more disruptive.

RUSSIA: THE REVOLUTION AND BEYOND, CONTINUED

Our last issue included a special section on "Russia: The Revolution and Beyond," with articles by Thomas Harrison, Dan La Botz, Saeed Rahnema, and Stephen Shalom. In this issue, we continue with articles by Samuel Farber, Thomas Harrison (part 2), and Stefanie Prezioso, and an interview with Suzi Weissman.

One Hundred Years of the Russian Revolution: A Retrospective View

SAMUEL FARBER

AT A DISTANCE OF ONE HUNDRED years, the Russian Revolution, which truly shook the world, deserves to be remembered once more in terms of its emancipatory significance and its downfall and betrayal. This revolution would not have happened had it not been for the crucial role played by the Bolshevik party. It is true that the profound crisis affecting the Russian society, worsened by the country's disastrous participation in World War I, could have sooner or later led to a massive upheaval. But it is questionable that a socialist revolution would have taken place without the organizational skills of the Bolshevik party and the political, strategic, and tactical genius of V.I. Lenin.

Contrary to characterizations of the revolution as a Bolshevik coup d'etat, the October Revolution came to power as a popular uprising led by the Russian industrial working class allied with the peasantry. The straightforward program put forward by the Bolshevik party advocated two policies that resonated very deeply in the Russian worker and peasant heartland: first, a quick end to Russia's participation on the side of the Allies in the imperialist World War I, a war that had bled the tsarist empire white and immiserated millions of its people; and second, a radical land reform—implementing the program of the Socialist Revolutionary Party (SR), a non-Marxist party supported by the peasantry—nationalizing and distributing the land to the peasantry, who were freed to cultivate and sell its produce. The first promise turned out to be hard to keep for reasons beyond the will of the Bolshevik leaders: Germany took advantage of the revolutionary upheaval to refuse any peace agreement and to press its military gains until an agreement was finally reached, at great territorial cost to Russia, at Brest-Litovsk in the early spring of 1918. Notwithstanding these difficulties, the revolutionary government conducted the peace process in a transparent and open fashion, exposing before the people inside and outside Russia all imperialist treaties and annexationist claims and publishing the secret agreements that the tsar had made with

SAMUEL FARBER *was born and raised in Cuba and is the author of many books and articles dealing with that country. He has been involved in socialist politics for well over fifty years. His most recent book is* The Politics of Che Guevara: Theory and Practice *published by Haymarket Books in 2016 and reviewed elsewhere in this issue.*

the Allies to share in the territorial loot to be gained after victory. Regarding its land reform, the new government recognized that, in spite of its wishes, there was no objective possibility for large-scale collective agriculture beyond a small number of communal experiments that were entirely voluntary. At the same time, aware of the threat that agrarian capitalism represented to the Russian countryside, the new government did not include the right to sell and buy the land in the free usufruct rights over the land allotments that it gave to the peasantry; this prevented land from being converted into a commodity.

As soon as it came to power, the revolution implemented democratic and egalitarian policies, which included the extension and consolidation of workers' control over production. That process had begun to spread as part of the "dual power" that challenged the conservative and ineffectual Provisional Government which briefly ruled Russia after the earlier February Revolution that overthrew the tsar. But the democratic spirit of the October Revolution was expressed most of all in the rapid spread of the soviets (councils) as organs of grass-roots democracy. These institutions had their origin in the 1905 Revolution, when during that year's strike movement, deputies were elected in various factories, eventually leading to the foundation of the St. Petersburg Soviet, which became the general political organ representing all workers and the revolutionary movement in the city. The soviets re-emerged after the February 1917 Revolution, with elected delegates (subject to immediate recall by their constituents) who in turn elected representatives to the higher soviet bodies. These early 1917 soviets spread from Petrograd to other large cities and industrial towns. Later they spread to nonproletarian locations, like those housing large garrisons, and to smaller and more remote places. A number of left political parties and currents became very active and indeed dominant in those soviets, including the Socialist Revolutionaries, Mensheviks, Bolsheviks, Anarchists, and a number of smaller socialist groups. It was the radicalization of the soviets after the defeat of the attempted right-wing Kornilov Coup in August 1917 that produced a Bolshevik majority in those representative bodies and established the political basis and democratic legitimacy of the October Revolution that same year.

The profound and radical nature of the Russian Revolution had a great impact that went beyond the working class and the peasantry. The cause of women's liberation greatly advanced with the revolutionary government's recognition of the rights of divorce and abortion, among others. As the revolution advanced and consolidated itself, the cause of other oppressed groups, such as ethnic and national minorities, gays,[1] and the disabled,[2] made significant advances. Education was revolutionized with radical advances in popular access and the elimination of the backward and anti-scientific educational philosophy and methods that had governed the tsarist educational system only available to a minority of the population. The arts teemed with innovation, creativity, and controversy as conflicting schools of style and thought fought each other, with great passion and even ferocity. The worldwide international implications of the Russian Revolution triggered movements and political upheavals in countries spanning from China to Latin America. The old social democracy, the cradle of the classical Marxist tradition in Europe from which the Bolsheviks had sprung, went into crisis, and a new international political movement emerged to the left of it, combining the revolutionary wing of that old social democracy with people emerging from other political traditions, such as syndicalism and anarchism, and with newly politicized people without previous organized political experience, to create the Communist International in 1919.

The Stalinist Counter-revolution

By the late twenties, however, as a result of the rise to power of Stalinism, all of the above-mentioned gains of the October Revolution were well on the way to extinction. Soviet democracy and workers' control had long disappeared, and a one-party totalitarian state had been established that was to be supported by a ruthless secret police and the infamous Gulag system of forced labor in concentration camps. In the late twenties and early thirties, the peasantry was forced into state collective farms in a bloody process that included the deliberate creation of a famine in the Ukraine. The industrial working class was subjected to compulsory unpaid labor and further exploited by the government's policy of *Stakhanovism* (incentive pay systems) with the support of the official unions, which had become mere conveyor belts of the government. Artistic freedom disappeared, and the Stalinist official philistine "socialist realist" aesthetic became dominant. Stalinism also abandoned the principled internationalism of the 1919 Third International, imposing in its stead a Russian chauvinist policy that subordinated the policies and practices of foreign Communist parties to Russian state interests. The regime adopted a cynical realpolitik foreign policy that included the Hitler-Stalin Pact of 1939, leading to the partition of Poland, with Russia appropriating its eastern part and Germany, the western part. Reversing the gains of the October Revolution, Stalin's regime also adopted a very conservative policy on gender and family matters. Official anti-Semitism reared its ugly head once again, leading to mendacious accusations—supposedly justifying ruthless punishment, including executions—leveled against Jewish doctors and writers during the last years of Stalin's rule. Millions of people were imprisoned and killed by Stalin's regime through executions, deliberately created famines, the Gulag, and genocidal policies against ethnic groups such as the Volga Germans.

Why Did the Russian Revolution Degenerate?

Many explanations have been given as to why the Russian Revolution degenerated into the Stalinist nightmare. According to the cultural determinism of early commentators on Soviet Russia, such as Nicholas Berdyaev, Bernard Pares, and Sir John Maynard, much of the post-revolutionary Russian degeneration was explained by the supposedly immutable authoritarian Slavic character and historical institutions. Far more important in terms of its vast political influence was the orthodox, so-called totalitarian, school, represented by the work of people like Zbigniew Brzezinski, Adam Ulam, and Leonard Shapiro, which was the hegemonic explanation for a considerable number of years and became closely linked to the political line of the United States and its Western allies during the Cold War. As their revisionist critic, historian Stephen F. Cohen summarized the totalitarian school's point of view, insofar as the early years of the Russian Revolution and the Soviet State are concerned:

> In October 1917, the Bolsheviks (Communists), a small, unrepresentative, and already or embryonically totalitarian party, usurped power and thus betrayed the Russian Revolution. From that moment on, as in 1917, Soviet history was determined by the totalitarian political dynamics of the Communist Party, as determined by its original leader, Lenin—monopolistic politics, ruthless tactics, ideological orthodoxy, programmatic dogmatism, disciplined leadership, and centralized bureaucratic organization. Having quickly monopolized the new Soviet government and created a rudimentary totalitarian party-state, the Communists won the Russian Civil War of 1918-1921 by discipline, organization, and ruthlessness.[3]

From there, the orthodox interpreters drew a straight line to the Stalinist denouement of the Russian Revolution as a fitting and logical conclusion to its supposedly totalitarian origins. Although Stalinists as well as Cold War apologists in the Western world held on to the myth that there was no difference between the Bolshevik and Stalinist parties, numerous historians, like Alexander Rabinowitch, William Rosenberg, and Stephen F. Cohen himself, found that before undergoing the process of bureaucratic degeneration that began with the Civil War of 1918-1920, the Bolshevik revolutionary party had been pluralist and democratic. For example, even though Bolshevik leaders such as L. Kamenev and G. Zinoviev had opposed the October Revolution, they continued being important party leaders after October 1917, and even though N. Bukharin publicly agitated for a political line radically opposed to Lenin's regarding the peace of Brest-Litovsk in 1918, he remained a party leader for many years afterwards. Lenin was considered the "first among equals" of the Bolshevik leaders and was actually on the losing side of many controversial party decisions, including the early decisions regarding how to bring peace with Germany, before he eventually prevailed. Meanwhile the controversies within the party concerning the issue of peace were being publicly aired and discussed by the press organs of contending Bolshevik factions. Far from the totalitarian character attributed to it by the orthodox school, the Bolshevik party was characterized not only by a plurality of political positions on the war and other matters, even including the seizure of power, but also by a chronic tendency to factionalism that nevertheless did not generally prevent it from coming together in what is known as "unity in action."

The Connection Between Leninism in Power and Stalinism

It is true that the "Leninism in Power" that emerged from the Civil War had become a one-party dictatorship. But it was still qualitatively different from the Stalinist totalitarian system that began to develop in the late twenties. Stalin's system took over the complete control of the whole Soviet society including not only the political and economic life of the country, but also the whole direction and control of such diverse fields as the sciences, culture, and the arts. All criticism and opposition to this system was squelched in a long-lasting reign of terror and massive use of forced labor, the worst features of which were eliminated only after Stalin died in 1953.

Yet, to affirm that "Leninism in Power" was different from Stalinism does not mean that what happened under the former had no bearing on the development of the latter or that choices made under Lenin made no difference in facilitating the development of Stalinism. This issue is largely bypassed by many socialist authors including Chris Harman in his frequently cited article, "Russia: How the Revolution Was Lost."[4] For Harman, the die was cast once the working class was decimated in the Civil War. Soviet institutions

> took on a life independently of the class they had arisen from. Those workers and peasants who fought the Civil War could not govern themselves collectively from their places in the factories. The socialist workers spread over the length and breadth of the war zones had to be organized and coordinated by a centralized government apparatus independent of their control—at least temporarily.

The Bolsheviks, Harman contends, had no alternative:

> They could not give up power just because the class they represented had dissolved itself while fighting to defend that power. Nor could they tolerate the propagation of ideas that undermined the basis of its power—precisely because the working class itself no longer existed as an agency collectively organized so as to be able to determine its own interests.

For Harman, however, the many decisions made by the revolutionary leaders virtually disappear from the historical record. He ignores the most decisive choice that Lenin and his circle made: converting necessity into virtue by usually equating the undemocratic one-party institutional arrangement that emerged from the Civil War—justified by Harman as a temporary feature to deal with the inability of the socialist workers dispersed over the length and breath of the war zones to exercise collective power—as coterminous with socialism. Harman's article makes several important and valuable points, but it refrains from a critical examination of Lenin's own record and whether and how it might have facilitated the rise of Stalinism.

In fact, the choices made by "Leninism in Power" were not limited to the issues of not giving up power or tolerating opposition parties, but to a whole range of other critical matters about which even Bolshevik groups and individuals differed from Lenin's Bolshevik mainstream. One was the issue of repression and terror before and during the Civil War. It was the source of continued criticism and debate *within* the revolutionary government and the Bolshevik camp. Those criticisms focused mostly on the policies and practices of the secret police—the Cheka—created at the end of 1917 to combat the counter-revolution, which were often abusive and corrupt (notwithstanding the rectitude of Felix Dzershinsky, the head of the Cheka) and which even deliberately violated government policy.[5] As detailed in my book *Before Stalinism: The Rise and Fall of Soviet Democracy,*[6] these critics included not only revolutionaries such as Victor Serge, who became well-known in the West, but also old Bolsheviks such as Mikhail Stepanovich Olminsky (1863-1933), a member of the editorial staff of *Pravda* and a longtime personal friend of Lenin and Krupskaya, who repeatedly expressed his criticisms in the very pages of *Pravda*. In fact, in late 1918, *Pravda,* then under the editorship of N. Bukharin, was publishing more articles by detractors than by supporters of the Cheka. This kind of public criticism of the Cheka would not survive Lenin's rule.

It is true that Lenin did not stand for the worst stupidities and excesses of the Cheka. He frequently went to considerable lengths to stop some of those excesses in individual cases. (Maxim Gorky was one of the personalities who would desperately contact Lenin to stop one or another arrest or execution, often successfully.) But Lenin did nothing substantive, from a political and institutional point of view, to significantly control or reverse the unlimited powers of the Cheka. Instead, like in other areas of Soviet life, Lenin tended to see changes in leadership personnel as the solution to the political and structural-bureaucratic problems of the Cheka.

Red Terror and Collective Punishment

In one critically important matter Lenin not only sided with the worst Cheka excesses, but actually encouraged them: collective punishment, the officially sanctioned practice of punishing not only the specific people who actually committed counter-revolutionary crimes, but also the families, social class, and ethnic groups to which they belonged.

Lenin's approach was most dramatically expressed in his conflict with the Bolshevik leadership in Petrograd when, in the summer of 1918, the latter refused the policy of collective and even random punishment, labeled and pushed by Lenin himself as "Red Terror," in response to the assassination of Bolshevik leaders. As detailed by the historian Alexander Rabinowitch in his 2007 book *The Bolsheviks in Power: The First Year of Soviet Rule in Petrograd,*[7] the Petrograd Cheka, in contrast to the policies prevailing in Moscow during the Civil War, deemphasized policies aimed at "restoring order" through terror and focused instead on concrete measures aimed at halting violence, economic crimes, and abuses of power. With respect to the latter, it developed guidelines to strictly regulate searches and to catch fake and corrupt Chekists. Citizens were given a couple of days to turn in unauthorized arms, bombs, grenades, and explosives without threatening them with executions. Judicial proceedings were speeded up for political figures lingering in jails waiting to be processed, a decision that was also influenced by the need to reduce Petrograd's prison population.[8]

The conflict between the Moscow and

Petrograd approaches came to a head when Petrograd Bolshevik leader V. Volodarskii was assassinated on June 20, 1918. Some district-level Bolsheviks and a stream of worker delegations demanded immediate repression as retaliation for Volodarskii's killing. The Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet met in an emergency session to discuss the greatly inflamed mood and concluded that lynch justice should be opposed. Infuriated by this decision, Lenin immediately cabled a strong rebuke to Zinoviev, Lashevich, and other members of the top leadership bodies: "We heard only today that in Piter, workers wanted to respond to the killing of Volodarskii with mass terror and that you held them back. This is in-tol-er-able!"[9]

While undeclared Red Terror in all its forms had been going on in Moscow and other Russian cities for months, Lenin got his full way in Petrograd only after the Petrograd Bolshevik leader Uritskii was assassinated and an attempt on Lenin's life was carried out in Moscow in late August. The Bolshevik party leadership in Petrograd ordered a full-scale Red Terror including mass summary executions.[10] But by mid-September, Rabinowitch relates, having become alarmed by the indiscriminate character of this Red Terror, the Bolshevik-led Petrograd Trade Union Council appealed to the Petrograd party leaders to institute strict controls and safeguards on shootings generally, on arrests and searches at trade union offices, and on arrests of trade union officials. Even Zinoviev, who had recently advocated giving free reign to the Red Terror, became concerned about the inadvertent arrests and shootings of Bolsheviks, Bolshevik sympathizers, and individuals who were playing important roles in running the government. He was also exasperated by the difficulty he encountered in getting information about prisoners held in the Cheka prison presumably because of their bourgeois class membership, including professionals, important figures in theater and music, technical specialists in the soviets and on the ships of the Baltic fleet, and physicians trying to deal with epidemic diseases in Petrograd and nationally. It was clear that the "lynch justice" feared by the Petrograd leadership had finally come to pass and that nobody felt safe.[11]

It has been argued that although excessive, these were measures adopted during the Civil War and thus justifiable given the need to combat the even greater atrocities carried out by terrorist oppositionists and the White armies. One of the problems with this argument is that collective punishment became a controversial issue in government circles soon after the October Revolution and before the beginning of the Civil War. I.N. Steinberg, the Left Socialist-Revolutionary party leader who was Commissar of Justice during the Left SR-Bolshevik coalition at the very beginning of the Revolution, had strongly objected to this government policy during his ministry in late 1917 and early 1918. Pointing at the difference between counter-revolutionary opinions and actions, he advocated for punishing the latter and not the former. He also vocally opposed the decision of the chairman of the soviet in the capital of Estonia, who, upon learning about a counter-revolutionary plot among the German Barons, outlawed the entire class of the Barons, except men below the age of 17 and women below the age of 20, instead of punishing the culprits involved in that plot. As it turned out, the order was not carried out because the Soviet leadership did not want to alienate the German government with whom they were negotiating an end to the war.[12] The same policy of collective punishment was applied to other armed conflicts, as in the decree of June 1921 ordering the punishment of the families of the peasants involved in the so-called "green" peasant rebellions in the Tambov area, a conflict that was substantially different from the earlier armed confrontation with the counter-revolutionary Civil War "Whites."[13]

As explored in my 1990 book, during that same period, other worrisome practices developed, including major violations of soviet and inner-party democracy, workers' control, freedom of the press, and socialist legality**.** As in the case of the Red Terror, these practices and the political justifications advanced by the government had a substantial impact on the political culture of Soviet Russia and a serious effect on norms for acceptable political behavior. This helped to undermine Russian society's political and organizational ability to resist the totalitarian thrust of Stalinism. The institutions and the political culture prevailing in the country disarmed Soviet citizens, including the remnants of the working class and the peasantry, of the means with which to resist the establishment of the Stalinist system.

Lenin's Politics on Terror

It is ironic that among socialist leaders of his time, Lenin had been uniquely insistent on the importance and necessity of democratic struggles to advance the revolutionary cause. Even in his much, and unjustly, criticized *What Is to Be Done?,* he underscored the centrality of the struggle for political democracy in contrast to the indifference and hostility of the "Economists," who downplayed the political struggle against tsarism. His polemic against "Parabellum," a factional opponent, in the latter part of 1915, was even more powerful in its arguments for the centrality of political democracy for socialism:

> We must *combine* the revolutionary struggle against capitalism with a revolutionary program and tactics on *all* democratic demands: a republic, a militia, the popular election of officials, equal rights for women, the self-determination of nations, etc. While capitalism exists, these demands—all of them—can only be accomplished as an exception, and even then in an incomplete and distorted form. Basing ourselves on the democracy already achieved, and exposing its incompleteness under capitalism, we demand the overthrow of capitalism, the expropriation of the bourgeoisie, as a necessary basis for the abolition of the poverty of the masses and for the *complete* and *all-round* institution of *all* democratic reforms. … It is … quite inconceivable that the proletariat, as a historical class, will be able to defeat the bourgeoisie, unless it is prepared for it by being educated in the spirit of the most consistent and resolutely revolutionary democracy.[14]

There was an aspect of Lenin's politics, however, that may help explain his political shift during the Civil War: his "quasi-Jacobinism," that is, his positive view of the French Jacobin Terror and his emphasis on what the revolutionary dedication and consciousness of a party could accomplish. In contrast with Marx and Engels,[15] Rosa Luxemburg,[16] and the early Trotsky,[17] all critical of Jacobinism, Lenin went as far as describing, in his pamphlet *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back,* the social democratic revolutionary as "the Jacobin indissolubly linked to the organization of the proletariat now conscious of its class interests." This was consistent with his emphasis on what the revolutionary dedication and consciousness of a few groups such as parties could accomplish. This was distinct from an approach that, while recognizing the indispensability of political leadership, places the central emphasis on the development of class democratic institutions such as factory committees, unions, and soviets.[18]

Toward a Theory of Revolutionary Democracy

Thus, the defeat of the Russian Revolution did not only come from hostile outside forces, but also from inside the revolution. As the post-1917 degeneration of this revolution showed, the loss of working-class power was not an event that happened overnight but the result of a deterioration process that led to the emergence and consolidation of a bureaucratic class with its own interests. After the revolutionary overthrow of the old order, the absence of working-class democracy will strengthen the *hierarchical* aspect of the *division of labor,* which will become the bureaucratic Trojan horse inside the revolutionary ranks. As the anti-Stalinist Communist leader Christian Rakovsky noted in 1928:

> When a class takes power, one of its parts becomes the agent of that power. Thus arises bureaucracy. In a socialist state, when capitalist accumulation is forbidden by members of the directing party, this differentiation begins as a functional one; it later becomes a social one. I am thinking here of the social position of a communist who has at his disposal a car, a nice apartment, regular holidays, and is receiving a maximum salary authorized by the party; a position which differs from that of the communist working in the coal mines and receiving a salary of fifty to sixty roubles per month. … The function has modified the organism itself; that is to say, that the psychology of those who are charged with the diverse tasks of direction in the administration and the economy of the state, has changed to such a point that not only objectively, but subjectively, not only materially, but morally, they have ceased to be a part of this very same working class.[19]

For socialists today, a re-examination of the Russian Revolution should be part of an effort to begin the construction of a theory of the politics of a post-revolutionary transition to socialism in the light of that experience.

NOTES

1. Thomas Harrison, "Socialism and Homosexuality," *New Politics* (No. 46, Winter 2009), 19-21; and Sherry Wolf, "LGBT Political Cul-de-Sac: Make a U-Turn," *New Politics* (No. 46, Winter 2009), 34.

2. Keith Rosenthal, "Disability and the Russian Revolution," *International Socialist Review*, Parts I and II, (Issue 102, Fall 2016), 71-91; and (Issue 103, Winter 2016-2017), 89-109.

3. Stephen F. Cohen, *Rethinking the Soviet Experience: Politics and History Since 1917* (Oxford University Press, 1985), 5-6.

4. Chris Harman, "Russia: How the Revolution Was Lost," *International Socialism* (1st series, No. 30, Autumn 1967), 8-17. www.marxists.org/archive/harman/1967/revlost.htm

5. Thus, when on January 17, 1920, the Bolshevik government abolished the death penalty except in districts where there were military operations still taking place, the Cheka issued a secret order instructing its officers to transfer prisoners to the zone of military operations so they could then be executed. See Lennard D. Gerson, *The Secret Police in Lenin's Russia* (Temple University Press, 1976), 161.

6. Samuel Farber, *Before Stalinism: The Rise and Fall of Soviet Democracy* (Verso, 1990).

7. Alexander Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks in Power: The First Year of Soviet Rule in Petrograd* (Indiana University Press, 2007). Professor Rabinowitch is also the author of *The Bolsheviks Come to Power: The Revolution of 1917 in Petrograd* (W.W. Norton and Company, 1978; recently reissued by Haymarket Books).

8. Rabinowitch, 221.

9. Rabinowitch, 314-316.

10. Rabinowitch, 330-331.

11. Rabinowitch, 340-341.

12. Steinberg, I.N., *In the Workshop of the Revolution* (Rinehart and Company, 1953), 97, 105.

13. Farber, 122-23.

14. V.I. Lenin, *The Revolutionary Proletariat and the Rights of Nations to Self-Determination*, in *Collected Works*, vol. 21, August 1914 - December 1915 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964), 408-09. Lenin's emphases.

15. For a detailed account of Marx's and Engels' critical views of the Jacobins and the French Terror see Hal Draper, Special Note C, "The Meaning of 'Terror' and 'Terrorism'" in *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution, Volume III, The "Dictatorship of the Proletariat"* (Monthly Review Press, 1986), 360-374.

16. Rosa Luxemburg saw Jacobinism as leading directly to the small-group putschist notions of the French Blanqui and the nihilistic terrorism of the Russian Nechaev. Peter Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* Abridged Edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 195.

17. Leon Trotsky, "Part IV: Jacobinism and Social Democracy," in *Our Political Tasks*, www.marxists.org/archive/trosky/1904/tasks/ch.05.htm In this pamphlet, Trotsky astutely observes that the Jacobins were utopians and idealists who had "total distrust toward real men. 'Suspicion' was the inevitable method for serving the Truth," which stood in clear contrast to what Trotsky saw as the "revolutionary confidence" of social democracy.

18. For a fuller discussion of Lenin's "quasi-Jacobinism," see Farber, 208-215.

19. Christian Rakovsky, "The 'Professional Dangers' of Power," in Tariq Ali (ed.) *The Stalinist Legacy* (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1984), 49, 53.

The Russian Revolution, Soviets, and Socialist Democracy

An Interview with Suzi Weissman

"Revolutions are the mad inspiration of history"
LEON TROTSKY, *MY LIFE*

DAN LA BOTZ FOR* NEW POLITICS*: Suzi, you're the author of a biography of Victor Serge, and you're currently making a movie about Leon Trotsky, so you have been for years deeply immersed in the history of the Russian Revolution. What is it that makes the Russian Revolution so important for the left?

SUZI WEISSMAN: The Russian Revolution was an epoch-changing event, one that transformed the nature of the century. We are still debating everything about it, including whether, in the end, it was a positive for world socialism.

There is much in the Russian Revolution that is important for the left and for history: For a time, another class was in power, and that had never happened before, nor did it last long. It was a first and was greeted with enthusiasm by workers around the world. Suddenly workers were in power, led by the Bolsheviks, who were determined to make good on their demands: peace, land, bread, factories to those who toil, all power to the soviets.

The Revolution was a beacon of hope for humankind: For the first time the people, rather than their rulers, were determining their own destiny. It was that act and the hope contained within it that was so powerful and so invigorating. The oppressed, exploited, and powerless were now summoned to political life in a workers state, something that had never before existed. There is a witness in the film *Reds* who captured the joy of the moment when the workers in Petrograd brought down the tsar: He described dancing with happiness through the streets of New York. The revolution emboldened workers all over the West who had been radicalized by war, revolution, and the deepening capitalist crisis.

Though the revolution didn't spread, it was a transcendent, historic event, and despite what it became, it changed the nature of the world.

Although the revolution was destroyed by Stalin, transforming the epoch into one of Stalinism instead of socialism, the important point is that there was, for a time, a working class in power. However short-lived the period when workers exercised power, the fact remains that they did: They overthrew capital in Russia, threatening capitalism in the world. The reaction to the Russian Revolution, as well as to its subsequent evolution and destruction, constitutes the epoch we live in, and in this sense it can still be said that we live in the epoch of the actuality of the revolution.

In 1936, Serge wrote, in one of his many articles for *La Wallonie*, a socialist daily in Belgium,

> The essential gain of that day, of those years, is the fact that for the first time in history the workers were able to achieve total victory, sustain it, take control of all the levers of command of society, both the economic and the political, get the machine working, and, under the worst conditions, reorganize, despite unbelievable difficulties, all of production on a collective basis. This is what remains and will remain; this is what makes the Russian October shine behind us like a flame that nothing can tarnish.

***NP:** At the center of the Russian Revolution were the soviets, or councils of workers, soldiers, and peasants, which initially formed the base of the government. What happened to these soviets?*

SW: The unique element that lay at the heart of the Russian revolutionary process was its revolutionary working class—and the democratic form of self-organization that it created in struggle that made the idea and reality of power possible. Urban workers led and dominated the opposition to the old order and ultimately brought into being—for the first time in world history—a workers state, albeit in embryonic form, functioning as an effective alternative government.

When the Russian working class came to power in 1917 with the slogan "all power to the soviets," workers around the world greeted the revolution that they had accomplished with jubilation because it represented their broadest aspirations, "a new democracy of free workers, such as had never before been seen."[1]

This new democratic form of workers' self-organization arose spontaneously and quickly blossomed independently from the existing political parties, distinguishing the Russian revolutionary process from the beginning and enormously inspiring working people around the world. Soviets were organized democratically, joined voluntarily, enjoyed freedom of speech and representation for all the political currents of the left, and were hotbeds of revolutionary ferment. This was a significant step forward for concretizing democracy because it meant that the parties had to compete for workers' allegiance in a common political arena. Russian workers developed their politics, their leaderships, and their power to fight the employers and the state at the same time.

The soviets, or councils, made their first appearance in 1905 and were swiftly adopted as an organizing tool by workers around the globe—especially after the successful October Revolution—as a higher form of political organization for the working class in struggle. Trotsky, leader of the Saint Petersburg soviet in the 1905 revolution, recognized the importance of this new form of organization, which he saw as "authentic" democracy—without chambers, without bureaucracy, with the right of recall at any time.[2]

The promise of the soviets was the promise of socialism—an *authentic* democracy, a society in which people organized collectively, at every level from bottom to top, to become the masters of their work, their lives, and their fate. The Russian Revolution held out the promise of socialism, but it was doomed by its isolation and dashed by the rise of Stalin. Given the huge influence the experience of the Russian revolution had on revolutionaries everywhere thereafter, the particular circumstances that choked democracy in the USSR were overlooked while the authoritarian model was generalized. The benchmark of a healthy revolution—organs of democratic control from below as an integral part of a successful revolution and transition—was relegated to rhetoric, not reality. Yet revolutionary socialists, committed to socialist democracy, judged (and continue to judge) revolutionary struggles as politically healthy if there exists that key marker, councils or soviets.

The soviets did not make it through the Civil War in anything but name. Their revolutionary content and potential fell victim to the dire reality of a country torn by foreign invasion and internal civil war. What survived were moribund institutions that served the empty rhetoric of the Bolshevik Party. The soviets became auxiliary rubber-stamp organs of the party, de facto party committees. The leadership in these circumstances was not committed to the "democratic self-governance of the working class"—the working class barely survived the Civil War. The country was exhausted and the notion of "all power to the soviets" was truly an empty one given the overall situation.

This wasn't the doing of the party per se, but of the transformed composition of the soviets as the Bolsheviks became the majority force within them, outnumbering the Mensheviks and

Socialist Revolutionary Party (SRs). Political power resided in the Bolshevik Party. In a one-party state, soviet governance is easily co-opted, corrupted, de-fanged, or simply sidelined by the party of power. In the Stalin years, the soviets stopped holding meetings, even for ceremonial purposes.[3] The soviets existed in form, but were lifeless assemblies that could hardly even be called governmental institutions. Power was administrated by higher ups in the party-state hierarchy: the secret police, state ministries, and party apparatus.

But let's go back to the period after the Civil War, to the revolutionary wave from 1918 to 1923. With the failure of the European working class to extend the Russian Revolution to more advanced countries, the Bolsheviks found themselves isolated in power and in the world. The revolution was under siege: The SRs took up arms against the Bolsheviks, and the suppression of the Kronstadt sailors revolt was the last straw for the anarchists, who then withdrew their support for the revolution. The Bolsheviks hadn't intended to rule alone, but they only trusted themselves to understand the nature of the struggle for socialism in the world. No other political party saw the importance of the extension of the revolution as the only way they could survive, so Lenin and Trotsky didn't trust the others to rule with them.

After Lenin died in 1924, there was an inner-party struggle about which way forward—the party divided into essentially three tendencies: the Left Opposition, led by Trotsky; the Right Opposition of Bukharin; and Stalin's "Center." Discussions about democracy henceforward were about *inner-party* democracy, not multi-party democracy, and not about reviving the soviets.

There is both tragedy and irony in heralding the soviet as a superior form of democratic governance from below—a tool in the revolutionary arsenal that the Russian proletariat gave to the international working class—even as it could not itself survive the aftermath of the Russian revolution. The world political reality the Bolsheviks operated in was hardly conducive to the flourishing of democratic self-governance. The country faced economic crisis, civil war with internal counter-revolution, and foreign invasions. The front-line workers of the revolution perished in large numbers in the Civil War, leaving the Bolsheviks—representing the revolutionary working class—in power with a peasant majority. The revolution failed to spread to countries where workers were in the majority and could come to the aid of the besieged and isolated soviet revolution. All these conditions acted together to strangle the feasibility of socialist democracy. No alternative existed to the emergent Bolshevik dictatorship, other than chaos or worse. Lenin and Trotsky, who were attacked from the beginning for advocating democratic control from below, actually found themselves having to rule from above.

The question becomes, can governance from below survive the heady days of revolution, and if so what form must it take? The model of the soviet failed, and this raises the issue of whether it can be resurrected and whether it can be viable. As we have seen, the Bolsheviks themselves were unclear on this critical point.

***NP:** The Bolshevik Party played the leadership role in the Russian Revolution. How would you characterize this party? What made it different from the others? How did its strengths and weaknesses affect the revolution?*

SW: The Bolshevik Party differed from the other social democratic parties of the day inside and outside of Russia. Marxists at this point in history called themselves social democrats, but this was a different animal than the social democrats we know today: They were Marxists and fought for socialism, not capitalism with a human face.

What distinguished the Bolsheviks was their view of the hegemony of the working class in the revolutionary process, as well as their organic link with the working class; their conviction to put their program into practice—Serge called this "the unity of word and deed;" their insistence that revolutionary practice had to be nourished by solid revolutionary theory; and their method of organization, though this was one of the main issues at the base of the split between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks in 1903. Trotsky, before becoming a Bolshevik, cautioned in 1914 that Bolshevism may well be the best instrument for winning power, but on the eve of power it would reveal all its counter-revolutionary aspects.

More importantly, the Bolsheviks were the revolutionary party of the Russian working class. In 1905, the newly split Mensheviks and Bolsheviks were still developing their revolutionary theory when the workers took center stage, organized themselves into soviets, elected Trotsky as head of the largest Saint Petersburg soviet, and began the series of strikes leading to the most general strike in history and a year of revolutionary struggle, culminating in the 1905 revolution, which went down to defeat. Had the Bolsheviks been more together at that point, perhaps the workers in the Russian empire could have won power, and there would have been just one, not three revolutions.

After the defeat of the 1905 revolution there was a period of deep reaction driven by the repressive, authoritarian autocracy. But within a few years the autocracy saw the need to rapidly build up their military capacity in reaction to the intensification of the inter-imperialist rivalry leading to World War I. The growth of heavy industry in this period led to a tumultuous expansion of the urban working class, largely recruited from the countryside and concentrated in coal, iron, steel, and military equipment. This meant the terrain of struggle for working-class democracy and power shifted to industrial workers. In the period between 1912 and 1914 there was an enormous growth of workers' struggles and strikes. The trade union struggle became the main school for working-class democracy, radicalism, and revolutionary politics, and it was in this period that the Bolsheviks demonstrated their dynamism and capacity to lead. By the outbreak of the war, the Bolsheviks had won a strong political majority in the trade union movement and this became the springboard for their winning over the urban working class in 1917.

World War I temporarily ended the dynamism of the Russian working class. Russia suffered more deaths, more oppression, and more misery in a war that mowed down an entire generation of young men. Soldiers began to mutiny, to march home with their rifles and bayonets to join the revolution.

In February 1917, there were massive strikes in Petrograd as the increasingly combative, mobilized masses took to the streets to demand peace and an end to the intolerable autocracy. Women and men poured into central Petrograd and toppled the tsar and his regime. This was the initiative of the workers—they were in the lead. The urban workers expanded their democratic base because they overthrew the tsar and the feudal aristocracy, demanding land, bread, and peace, thereby winning the support of the peasants. But the overthrow of the autocracy posed in acute fashion the nature of the revolution in progress. Dual power emerged, almost overnight: the soviets versus the new provisional government of Kerensky that had replaced the tsarist autocracy.

Lenin and Trotsky were still outside the country and the Bolshevik leadership at home vacillated. Serge wrote that one Bolshevik committee in Petrograd advised against the strikes that led to the downfall of the empire. In this instance, the workers were in the lead, while party members were caught up in the stream of events, lacking the audacity of Lenin and Trotsky, who returned to Petrograd in April and May respectively. As Serge put it, "The revolutionists of every party, who had spent their entire life preparing for the revolution, did not realize that it was at hand, that the victory had already begun."[4]

Lenin arrived at Petrograd's Finland Station in April 1917, and immediately realized that Trotsky's conception of permanent revolution was presented in concrete terms before him. The workers in the Petrograd soviet would have to make the revolution by overthrowing the provisional government.

All the Marxists in Russia had thought the revolution would have a bourgeois democratic character because Russia lacked the conditions for a socialist revolution. The Russian bourgeoisie, however, lacked the capital and skills to carry out the tasks of developing modern industry. Russian capitalists were dependent on the old regime, particularly because the military industry was directly driven by the state. This meant that the weak bourgeoisie identified with the old order, opposed bourgeois revolution in any form, and confronted a revolutionary working class. The liberals in the provisional government accepted the continuing existence of the old monarchy, demanding merely that it be constitutional. So it was left to the working class to make the revolution and push the democratic revolution to its democratic limit with free elections, free speech, free press, the eight-hour day.

Lenin dared the soviets to seize power, but the majority of the Bolsheviks disavowed him. The workers, however, in the streets, factories, and barricades agreed, and within three weeks Lenin had a majority in the party. The program was for power, a democratic proletarian and peasant soviet republic with the hegemony of the working class at its center. They called for the right to elect and recall functionaries; nationalize the banks, trusts, and cartels; confiscate the land to be turned over to the peasants organized in soviets; and a workers' peace directed against all the capitalists. Trotsky arrived in May and echoed Lenin, calling for the soviets to take power.

NP: *The Russian Revolution of October 1917 faced enormous challenges, and its leadership was faced day after day with life-and-death decisions involving millions. Gradually the combination of the objective situation and the decisions made by the Bolshevik Party began to change Russia. What do you see as the decisive moments in this process?*

SW: The Bolshevik Party had led the revolution and legitimized its leadership by winning formal majorities for its program in the soviets. But, as your question implies, the young revolution faced huge challenges and impediments, even before the ruling classes of the world came together to (try to) stop the revolution in its tracks.

Most writers would no doubt begin in January 1918, when the Bolsheviks dissolved the Constituent Assembly because the assembly was dominated by the right SRs who opposed the soviets—and most writers would denounce the Bolsheviks for this anti-democratic move. Lenin prioritized the implementation of revolutionary goals, encapsulated in the slogan "Bread, Land, and Peace," and counterposed soviet democracy to the bourgeois parliamentary form the assembly represented.

Of these goals, the most pressing for the new revolutionary government—represented by the Bolsheviks—was to make good on its program, and that required securing peace. No reconstruction of society could be initiated without withdrawing from the imperialist World War. The debate over peace terms had to begin from the recognition of the immediate threat from occupying German forces—and be consecrated on unfavorable terms. While this debate caused substantial division in the party and society, it was also an example of the health and vitality of democracy in these early days. However, it led to divisions that had deep consequences, one of which was breaking the alliance with the Left SRs.

The Left SRs and Left Communists argued against the "peace of shame," as they called the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Bolshevik leaders Evgeny Preobrazhensky and Nikolai Bukharin, later to stand on opposite sides of the industrialization debates, joined with others to write the "Theses of Left Communists of 1918"[5]—opposing the treaty and proposing to wage a revolutionary war against the Central Powers, most importantly, Germany.

Lenin maintained that the old army didn't exist and the new one was just forming, so the proposal was unrealistic. He said, "I want to lose space in order to gain time." That is, he wanted to settle quickly and place his hope in the revolutionary developments in the West. His critics warned against trying to preserve the revolution at any cost. Policies that led to the soviets losing their independence would result in transforming Russia from a commune state to one ruled by a centralized bureaucracy.

Trotsky's position, "neither peace nor war," meant using the negotiations to stall for time, holding out to give strength to the western proletariat, who saw a separate peace as a capitulation to German imperialism. While it seemed to be the reverse of Lenin's proposal, it was also based on the perspective of seeking aid from the western working class that would soon be in power.

The terms of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk were ruinous: revolutionary Russia lost Poland, the Baltic regions, and huge tracts of the Ukraine (in total, 27 percent of Russia's farmland, 26 percent of the population, a third of the average crops, three-quarters of iron and steel, and 26 percent of the country's railway network). The country was forced to pay six billion gold marks in reparations.

One last calamitous consequence was that the terms of the peace sealed the sacrifice of the Finnish proletariat: The Finnish Commune went down in bloodshed in April 1918, in part because Soviet troops had to leave the border under the treaty's provisions. Forced to accept the harsh terms by the advance of the German army, Lenin signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918.

The Civil War (1918-1921), brought on by the world bourgeoisie, led to the destruction of a significant proportion of the agent of the revolution, the urban working class—already a minority of the society, now even more so. This long and bloody conflict, in which some nine million died, was in dramatic contrast to the relatively bloodless revolution carried out against the defenders of the old order from March through October 1917. It could be said that the Civil War was world capitalism's revenge for the victorious socialist revolution.

By the end of the Civil War, famine and epidemic had taken hold; the economy was in ruins. The famine necessitated rationing in the cities and requisitions in the countryside—and that provoked peasant uprisings. Ironically, the former propertied classes also lost everything, even "factory owners ask to be nationalized, as they cannot live otherwise."[6] The economic policy of this period, dubbed "War Communism," was described by Lenin as "thrust on us by war and ruin. It was not, nor could it be, a policy that corresponded to the economic tasks of the proletariat. It was a temporary measure." In simple terms, it meant the allocation of whatever was available.

Direct exchange between town and country was imposed by the requisitioning of grain and direct state distribution of industrial goods under concentrated economic authority and power. Money was eliminated. Although this reaction to circumstances had nothing to do with Marxism, it became an unfortunate source of illusion about the possibility of a rapid and immediate transition to communism.

How could the horrendous conditions of life under War Communism be construed as having anything to do with communism? The abolition of the market was not based on material abundance, a highly developed productive base, advanced forms of democracy, and citizen participation, but instead on social disintegration, destroyed production, absolute scarcity, and centralized authority. It wasn't viable. Everyone had to use the black market, even party members. Yet Stalin in the 1930s would borrow these methods in peacetime and call it communism.

The Bolsheviks won the Civil War because they were able to mobilize the population, especially the urban proletariat, to defeat the invading armies and the White "contras" of the day. But much of the revolutionary urban working class was destroyed in the process.

With a return to peace, the urban working class could be reconstituted, drawn from the peasants of the nearby countryside. But how to regenerate revolutionary consciousness in a semi-literate peasantry with no class traditions? Without any revolutionary practice, this new urban working class lacked revolutionary politics and labored under conditions remote from socialist goals.

War Communism, with forced seizures of grain and the militarization of labor, had effectively put an end to democratic workers control. The newly recruited working class had no say in factory management and no voice in political decision-making. The revolutionary momentum was lost, as well as the front-line workers who made the revolution. Had there been elections at that point, the Bolsheviks would likely have lost.

The Civil War came to an end with society in a state of siege and democracy curtailed—other political parties were not allowed and factions within the Bolsheviks were banned at the Tenth Party Congress, convened in Moscow in March 1921, just as the Kronstadt revolt began. The sailors at the Kronstadt naval garrison were protesting the economic regime of War Communism and the dictatorship of the party. They called for freely elected soviets and a third revolution. Ironically, just as the Red Army was attacking the Kronstadt fleet, the Tenth Party Congress abolished requisitioning and heralded the transition from the hated privations of unlivable War Communism to the relaxation under Lenin's New Economic Policy, in effect conceding to the demands of the Kronstadters at the moment they were being massacred. The rebellion was handled terribly by the Bolsheviks, who panicked at the revolt. The ideas the sailors expressed were the same ones the Bolsheviks had championed in revolution, but now, after the Civil War had literally destroyed the revolutionary working class, these demands, they reasoned, threatened the survival of the revolution. The party could not govern a starving nation and maintain its popularity. This was the breaking point for the anarchists and a watershed for the revolution.

The Bolsheviks understood that their survival depended on successful revolutions in Germany and Europe—they could not advance to socialism on their own, surrounded by a hostile world capitalism. But they couldn't just wait, they also had to begin to undertake the socio-economic prerequisites of socialism, at minimum the industrialization of the economy, so as to produce a working-class majority. That could not happen if the revolution remained isolated in a backward country with a peasant majority. The revolution would have to spread to countries where capitalism was developed, workers were closer to being a majority, and socialism was on the agenda. Aid from socialist economies in advanced industrial countries could provide the surpluses needed for socialist industrialization in Russia.

The Bolsheviks' hopes for extending the revolution to the more advanced capitalist West depended on their inspiring workers' risings internationally. This was not a fantasy—militant workers across the West saw the Russian working class as speaking for them. They appropriated this novel, profoundly democratic form of organization, the soviet, as a new tool in the arsenal of class struggle. Thanks especially to the centrality of the soviets in the Russian Revolution, but also to syndicalist- and anarchist-led uprisings in places like Spain, direct democracy was the order of the day. Indeed, in the early years of the revolution, the Bolsheviks hoped to forge alliances with revolutionary syndicalists and anarchists to serve as partners in overthrowing bourgeois democracy.

In the wake of the October Revolution that brought the working class to power, committees and councils appeared in sit-down strikes, general strikes, occupations, and insurrections from Glasgow to Belfast, Winnipeg to Seattle, Bavaria to Barcelona. From 1918 to 1920, revolutionary crises rocked Europe's capitals. These insurrectionary general strikes, with soviet or council power, were inspired by the Russian Revolution and aimed at extending it to Europe, the Americas, and beyond. But the German revolution, the Finnish and Hungarian communes, all the insurrectionary general strikes went down to a series of defeats. In Germany, the main hope, the revolutionary possibility breathed its last in 1923.

The tragedy of the defeated revolutionary insurrections in Europe was that they threw the Russian revolutionary leadership back on its own resources, in domestic circumstances of political isolation that were decreasingly favorable for pushing the revolution forward. The Bolsheviks adopted authoritarian practices as emergency measures in reaction to the brutality of the Civil War, and afterward to defend the revolution in power, and in so doing, bit by bit, they transformed themselves politically and the revolution itself. In this way, they preserved the revolution in the face of reaction and the fear of annihilation, but left it as a withering blossom in the eyes of the world, including other revolutionaries. The paradox was that the Bolsheviks used anti-democratic, anti-socialist methods to preserve themselves in power, because they trusted only themselves, among all of the political tendencies, to be committed to the international revolution, to see the world advance to socialism as their only hope for survival. But in undermining the democratic and socialist foundations of their own rule domestically, they ended up greatly reducing the attractiveness of their revolution to the world's radical working class—improving the conditions for the counter-revolution that would be perpetually pursued by the international ruling classes.

When the revolutionary bridge to Germany was lost, as was the westward extension of the revolution, the Bolsheviks were caught in a bind. Had they handed over power, say, to the Constituent Assembly, the revolution would have had a brief half-life. Had they allowed legal forms such as elections, the Bolsheviks sooner rather than later would have been voted out of office. This might have served the cause of revolution by setting a democratic example, demonstrating an overriding commitment to ideals. But the resulting defeat of the Russian Commune State would likely have brought an even worse fate than the massacre of the Paris Communards in 1871, an outcome the Bolsheviks feared awaited them.

If the Bolsheviks could have allowed for the emergence of a broader, society-wide democracy, they might have created a model of socialist governance that could have inspired workers in advanced countries to emulate. Holding on to power as an example of revolutionary democracy rather than as a way to escape restoration would have meant a different political trajectory.

The Bolsheviks' reluctance to share or cede power in the interests of assisting world revolution—to save the revolution at home—is thus understandable. As we know, what actually happened under Stalin destroyed not only the majority of the Bolshevik leadership but many millions more. The failure to inspire successful workers' democratic revolutions abroad led, finally, to the construction of a top-down coercive regime at home.

The Left Opposition from the mid-1920s proposed promoting industrialization to increase the size of the working class and to create a new generation of revolutionary workers with the habits and education of socialist industry under workers' control, hopefully serving as an inspiration to workers elsewhere. Had they been able to hold on as a model of workers' democracy, they might have prevented Stalin's ascendance to power. Revolution in Germany in the early 1930s or Spain in the middle 1930s could have been possible, saving the Russian revolution and sparing the world from the nightmare to come.

But left on its own, it was impossible for the Soviet Union to raise the resources internally without squeezing the population, and that couldn't be done democratically. Dictatorship became inevitable, though not one as brutal as Stalin's, and millions could have been spared.

NP: *What do you think are the legacies of the Russian Revolution and the Stalinist counter-revolution today? What do we do with those legacies and where do we go from here?*

SW: The Russian Bolsheviks, German Spartacists, and their revolutionary comrades around the world fought for revolution and fought to prevent the global calamity that became fascism, World War II, and everything that followed. They recognized the crisis of capitalism and understood that cataclysm was on the agenda. As Victor Serge said, "They were moved by a great will to liberation. Anyone who rubbed shoulders with them will never forget it. Few men in history have ever been so devoted to the cause of men as a whole."

Stalinism destroyed the essence of Marxism and stained it with blood, crushed democracy at home, and betrayed the revolution's promise—and in so doing, Stalinism acted as an essential prop for capitalism. Moreover, the Stalinist dictatorship gave the international capitalist class a tool to use against the working class. The Cold War was beneficial and functional for each of its contestants, both of whom had a vested interest in labeling the Soviet system as Marx's vision of communism. It should be said that for Marx, communism and socialism were synonymous. Social Democrats, especially in Europe, furthered the confusion with their Socialist Parties that were little more than capitalism with a slightly more human face. The Cold War pushed the notion that capitalism and democracy were synonymous, that communism was synonymous with brutal dictatorship.

We are finally, one hundred years later, at a point where we can rescue with credibility the promise of the revolution and begin to call that its legacy. The Arab Spring and subsequent mass occupations and events represent the break with the negative past, and the credible candidacy of Bernie Sanders, an avowed democratic socialist in a mainstream party no less, would have been unthinkable at the height of the Cold War. Socialism is now seen as an attractive alternative to the present, miserable status quo. We can all quibble with Sanders' socialism but that misses the point. Millions voted for him in the heart of the beast, no longer afraid of being called pinkos, reds, or commies—and they weren't. The equation of socialism with anti-democratic statist dictatorship is broken.

The revolutionary working class in Russia developed profoundly democratic institutions and showed the world that workers' self-rule through bottom-up democracy was possible and necessary—that socialism and democracy are inseparable.

The relevance for today is enormous, and this is the message to get out to today's youth who are openly interested in socialism.

NOTES

1. Victor Serge, *From Lenin to Stalin* (Pioneer Publishers, 1937), 22.
2. Leon Trotsky, *1905* (Penguin Books, 1971), 265-280.
3. Michael Urban, *More Power to the Soviets* (Edward Elgar, 1990), 3.
4. Serge, 10-11.
5. "The Left Communists' Theses on the Current Situation (Russia, 1918)," *Critique* (1977), libcom.org/library/theses-left-communists-russia-1918.
6. Serge, 31.

The Tragic Fate of Workers' Russia

THOMAS HARRISON

This is the second of three articles by Thomas Harrison on the Russian Revolution of 1917 and its later fate under Stalin; a longer, online version of this article can be found at www.newpol.org. The first article, "Glorious Harbinger of a New Society: the Bolshevik Revolution," was published in the previous issue of New Politics*, number 62, winter 2017.*

IN HIS PAMPHLET, *State and Revolution*, written in 1917 before the October Revolution, Lenin called for a radically democratic system, under which Russia would be ruled directly by the workers and peasants through their councils, the soviets, with free elections and several competing political parties. And for about six months after the Bolsheviks came to power on November 7, the Soviet state functioned more or less as Lenin had envisioned. The Council of People's Commissars, elected by the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets, governed; its members included Left Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs) as well as Bolsheviks. The Right SRs had withdrawn from the soviets, but the Mensheviks had returned; they and smaller parties, such as the anarchists, operated freely within the soviets as outspoken opponents of Bolshevik policies. The Bolsheviks' coalition partners, the Left SRs, often disagreed with Lenin and Trotsky, and the Bolshevik—now Communist—Party itself was frequently divided over issues such as the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. In the Communist Party and in the soviets, differences were decided by democratic votes.

Every party, and every faction within a party, had its own newspaper. Socialists had always regarded "freedom of the press" under capitalism as a sham: Even if everyone had the theoretical right to publish a newspaper, the cost of production and printing meant that mass-produced and widely distributed papers were all owned by the rich. The Bolsheviks tried to make press freedom a reality. All printing presses and paper supplies were nationalized; the government then distributed them free to political parties in proportion to the size of their vote and to any group with at least 10,000 members.

Personal freedom was also greatly expanded. The Soviet government repealed all laws against homosexuality. As one Bolshevik commented, the new policy established "the absolute non-interference of the state and society in sexual matters, so long as nobody is injured and no one's interests are encroached upon."

Major steps were taken to achieve equality for women. Among the Bolshevik leaders, Alexandra Kollontai, commissar of public welfare, was the most prominent advocate for women's rights. Kollontai argued that a workers state must liberate women from enslavement to continuous childbearing and to the drudgery of endless cooking, cleaning, and child care. At her urging, communal restaurants and laundries were set up and child care facilities created for working women. In addition, all laws against abortion were repealed, and contraception was made available to all. Women could divorce their husbands by simply notifying the authorities,

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and men could do the same. Women who did the same jobs as men had to be paid the same wages.

Another important reform that especially benefited women was mass education. Illiteracy was widespread in Russia, but almost universal among peasant women. If women were ever to be treated as anything more than beasts of burden, they had to learn to read and write. Thousands of dedicated teachers fanned out through the length and breadth of Soviet Russia, working to stamp out illiteracy. Apart from literacy, however, the government's efforts to liberate women were limited by a desperate lack of resources. So, for example, some of the child care centers sought by Kollontai were set up, but they were bleak institutions full of malnourished children cared for by half-starved attendants. Communal restaurants serving watery cabbage soup were not appealing alternatives to a working woman's kitchen.

"War Communism"

The bitter reality was that the Russian economy had almost ceased to function. By 1921, the country's total production was one-third of what it had been before the World War. In retaliation for the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the Allies had imposed a blockade on Soviet Russia in 1918. Until it was lifted two years later, no food, medicine, or anything else, even mail, could enter the country. For nearly three years, wheat, coal, and iron from Ukraine were cut off, first because of German occupation and then because most of the province was controlled by White armies. With no fuel, the bitter winter of 1919 was a nightmare: People froze to death on the streetcars, in hospitals, in their homes. Supplies of oil and cotton from other parts of the former Russian Empire were also severed by the Civil War. Russia's cities were depopulated as workers left to scavenge for food in the countryside. The working class was reduced in size by half. Workers who remained in the factories that still functioned frequently fainted from hunger at their machines; many survived only by stealing what they produced and bartering it for food.

Because the factories were producing so few goods, there was nothing for peasants to buy in exchange for their crops. Consequently, they hoarded their surplus grain, hoping for better times to come. But this meant starvation for the cities. To prevent complete disaster, the Soviet government initiated a policy of requisitioning grain. Armed battalions were sent out to the countryside, and peasants were compelled to surrender all they produced in excess of what was needed for their families' survival. Naturally, this policy was bitterly resented by the peasants.

As far as industry was concerned, the Bolsheviks had originally planned only a very gradual taking over of the economy while awaiting revolution in Germany. After the October Revolution, factories were left under private ownership. But workers immediately began taking matters into their own hands, seizing control of factories and driving out the bosses, just as the peasants had earlier seized the land. As a result, the Soviet government began nationalizing industries. The stock market was shut down, and banks and stores were also taken over by the state. Housing was nationalized, too. In the cities and towns, economic life was now largely controlled by the government. These policies, together with grain requisitioning, were essentially an emergency response to food shortages, low productivity, and industrial chaos. In 1921, when the party ended requisitioning and suspended nationalizations, Lenin referred to them retrospectively as "War Communism," a term that has been used by historians ever since. Despite the fact that it was Lenin himself who coined the term, however, it was something of a misnomer; in the minds of most Bolshevik leaders, hypercentralization, authoritarianism, and the coercion of workers and peasants had nothing to do with communism.[1]

The Civil War

By the time the October Revolution took place, there were few Russians who were willing to fight for the Provisional Government. The old ruling classes—the generals, business owners, landowners, and so on—were thoroughly demoralized. Many went into exile, and the ones who remained in Russia had no idea what to do. General Alexei Kaledin, one of the first to organize a White army, said, right before he committed suicide early in 1918, "Our situation is hopeless. The population not only does not support us—it is definitely hostile. We have no strength, and resistance is useless."[2] But support soon came from abroad. After the Bolsheviks signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the Allies sent troops, military advisers, guns, and ammunition to the Whites; by supporting the counter-revolution, they hoped to bring Russia back into the war.

Now the Whites began to revive, but essentially as mercenary forces financed by the imperialist powers. The United States funneled millions of dollars to Cossack warlords and then to the White generals in the belief that Russia would only return to the Eastern Front under a military dictatorship; there was no pretense to "restoring democracy." Without the support of the United States and other imperialists, the Whites would likely have collapsed in less than a year, thus obviating the necessity for the harsh, repressive policies of War Communism and perhaps short-circuiting the authoritarian degeneration of the Bolshevik regime, at least for a time—time that might have a made a critical difference in the prospects for international revolution.

As commissar of war, Trotsky had to build up a Red Army almost from scratch. There were a few thousand Red Guards, but these were primarily factory workers with only the most elementary military training. At first Trotsky appealed to the soviets and the Bolshevik party for volunteers; thousands answered his call, and they became the dedicated core of the Red Army. Then peasants were drafted; they were much less reliable and committed than working-class soldiers, and desertions were a constant problem. Therefore, all party members were expected to educate and inspire their fellow soldiers—to explain the aims of the war and set an example of courage under fire.

Like any large army under combat conditions, the Red Army was a strictly hierarchical command organization. At the same time, unlike capitalist armies, discipline was extraordinarily lenient. Relatively few deserters were executed; most were simply fined or assigned to work in rear units. Intense efforts were made to educate soldiers, with literacy classes and even libraries and reading rooms. The goal was to prepare soldiers to participate in the institutions of the workers state once peace was restored—not to create professional soldiers.

> "War Communism" is a misnomer; to most Bolshevik leaders, authoritarianism and the coercion of workers and peasants had nothing to do with communism.

In July 1918, White Admiral Alexander Kolchak's forces approached the town of Ekaterinburg, where the former tsar and his family were being held prisoner. Plans had been made to eventually stage a public trial of Nicholas II, similar to the trials of Charles I by the British Parliament and Louis XVI by the French Convention. But now the Bolsheviks feared the imperial family might be rescued by the Whites and used to strengthen the counter-revolution, which had so far lacked a unifying leader. For this reason, the local Bolsheviks made a hasty decision to execute the whole family. Early in the morning of July 17, Nicholas, Alexandra, and their five children were taken down to the basement of the house in which they were being held, and shot.

The Russian Civil War was extremely cruel; terrible atrocities were committed by both sides. Back in December 1917, the Bolsheviks had created a special police force to deal with those who conspired against the soviets: the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission to Fight Counter-revolution and Sabotage, known by its acronym as the Cheka. The Cheka had the power to arrest suspected counter-revolutionaries and imprison or execute them without trial. When the Civil War broke out, it launched the Red Terror, a policy of mass arrests and executions designed to intimidate—to "terrorize"—the counter-revolution and break its will to fight. This was seen by the Bolsheviks as an emergency measure, necessitated by the Whites' own ferocity and the need to win the Civil War at any cost. One official of this new political police himself declared that the Cheka "has no place in our constitutional system. The time of civil war, the time of extraordinary conditions of existence of Soviet power, will pass, and the Cheka will become superfluous." Nonetheless, by the time the Civil War ended, an estimated 50,000 people had been executed by the Cheka. About 25,000 prisoners were held in concentration camps, though these were not Nazi-style death camps and half the prisoners were released when the war was over.

> The Whites were essentially mercenary forces financed by the imperialist powers; there was no pretense to "restoring democracy."

The "White Terror" was more disorganized than the Red Terror, but it was far more brutal and cost far more lives. The Cheka was not supposed to use torture on prisoners,[3] and Red Army soldiers who were caught looting or raping were shot; these practices, on the other hand, were typical of the White armies. General Lavr Kornilov, who led the first White army before he was killed in combat, once declared that Russia must be saved from the Bolsheviks "even if we have to set fire to half of it and shed the blood of three-fourths of all the Russians."[4] In Siberia, Kolchak's troops hanged men and women from miles of telegraph poles and machine-gunned them by the hundreds in boxcars and open fields. Anton Denikin's army had occupied Ukraine when German troops were withdrawn after the armistice; there his men launched a pogrom against the Jewish population that far exceeded those of tsarist times. Vowing death to "Jew-Communists," the Whites massacred 150,000 Jews. Whole communities of Jews fled to the Red Army for protection. As fervent Russian nationalists, the White generals also dealt harshly with the other non-Russian nationalities who inhabited the territories they occupied—Ukrainians, Estonians, Latvians, and others. Had the Whites won the Civil War, it is fair to say that Russia would have seen something very like fascism.

During 1919 Trotsky's Red Army managed to defeat the Whites on all fronts. Kolchak's troops were overcome and pushed back into Siberia; Kolchak himself was finally captured and shot. Denikin was driven out of Ukraine. And in the fall, Nikolai Yudenich came close to capturing Petrograd before he too was defeated. The Whites' principal weakness was that they lacked significant popular support. Urban workers were generally pro-Bolshevik. Peasants, the most numerous class, had little love for the Bolsheviks, especially after the forced requisitioning of grain got underway, but they regarded the Whites as an even greater evil. Wherever the White armies went, they were followed by the remnants of the old regime, and above all, by the landowners. Peasants understood clearly that victory for the Whites would mean the restoration of the landlords' estates and the loss of all the land they had just won.

The imperialist powers, as we have seen, gave crucial assistance to the Whites, but mostly in the form of money and munitions, not vast numbers of troops. This was mainly because of a great upsurge of sympathy and support for the Revolution among Western workers. In France, Britain, the United States, and elsewhere, dockworkers refused to load ships with weapons and supplies destined for the Whites. Western governments quickly realized that a large-scale intervention was too dangerous. Troops were unreliable and might mutiny. When Winston Churchill demanded that more British soldiers be sent to Russia, Prime Minister David Lloyd George replied, "If Great Britain undertakes military action against the Bolsheviks, Great Britain herself will become Bolshevik and we will have soviets in London."[5] In retrospect this seems wildly alarmist, but it reflects the fears of contemporary European elites. The British Labour Party finally succeeded in ending their country's intervention, and in January 1920 the blockade was lifted.

The year 1920 saw the last gasp of the counter-revolution in Russia. In March, Polish troops invaded Ukraine from the west, but they were driven back by the Red Army almost to the outskirts of Warsaw. In the fall, Baron Peter Wrangel landed on the Black Sea coast, accompanied by French troops, and pushed into Ukraine from the south. The French soldiers mutinied, however, and Wrangel was quickly defeated by the Reds, thus ending the last significant military threat from the Whites.

One consequence of the Civil War was the re-incorporation into Russia of several border regions. When the Bolsheviks took power they declared the right of all non-Russian nationalities to separate if they wished and establish independent states. Poland, Finland, and the Baltic states—Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia—did so successfully. Ukraine also declared its independence, as did the peoples inhabiting the Caucasus Mountain region in the south—Georgians, Azeris, and Armenians. But during the Civil War, Ukraine and the Caucasus became bases for the White armies, and in the course of the war they were reconquered. In 1922 Russia was renamed the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and several areas in Central Asia became, supposedly, autonomous republics within the larger Soviet federation, but they were not in fact self-governing.

A One-party State

Another casualty of the Civil War was workers' democracy. Soon after taking power, the Bolsheviks suppressed all the other political parties. But, as historian E.H. Carr observed, "If it was true that the Bolshevik regime was not prepared after the first few months to tolerate an organized opposition, it was equally true that no opposition was prepared to remain within legal limits."[6]

After walking out of the Congress of Soviets in November 1917, the Mensheviks and Right SRs joined forces with the Cadets and industrialists to form a counter-revolutionary committee, which called on the troops to overthrow the Soviet government; not one regiment responded. They then fomented a mutiny of the "junkers"—officers in training—in alliance with monarchists, while simultaneously supporting Kaledin, who was marching on Petrograd.

Because the Cadets and the Right SRs supported the counter-revolution, either through their newspapers and other writings or by active participation on the side of the Whites, they were banned as political parties, their leaders were arrested, and by the summer of 1918, all their newspapers had been suppressed.

Many of the Mensheviks joined the Bolshevik party, others retreated into silence or left the country, but some remained in opposition and a few joined the Right SRs in advocating the forcible overthrow of the Bolshevik regime. As a result, the Menshevik party, too, was eventually outlawed. Many of the Left SRs also drifted into the Bolshevik ranks, but others became more and more hostile to Bolshevik policies. As members of the Council of People's Commissars, the Left SR leaders had vehemently opposed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, and they objected strongly to the forcible requisitioning of peasants' grain.

Finally, at the Fifth All-Russian Congress of Soviets in July 1918, the Left SRs broke their coalition with the Bolsheviks. Amid the splendor of the Bolshoi Theater, a dramatic confrontation took place between Lenin and Maria Spiridonova, the Left SRs' chief spokesperson. Spiridonova was, like Alexandra Kollontai, a revolutionary of noble birth. A terrorist since the age of 20, she had suffered many years of imprisonment and brutal beatings under the tsar. Now, she denounced the Bolsheviks for betraying the peasantry. Lenin replied that the government had no choice but to seize the peasants' grain; to do otherwise would mean starvation for the cities. On the final day of the Congress, Spiridonova strode into the theater dressed in black, with a red carnation pinned to her breast; raising a pistol above her head, she shouted, "Long live the revolt!"

The Left SRs tried to seize power in Moscow. In addition, they carried out terrorist attacks on the Bolsheviks. Several Bolshevik leaders were assassinated, and Lenin was shot in the chest by a young woman, Fanya Kaplan; he recovered. The revolt was suppressed, and the Left SRs were outlawed as well. Now the Bolsheviks—the Russian Communist Party—were the only legal party in Soviet Russia.

The Bolsheviks themselves were transformed by the Civil War. A great many party members served in the Red Army. They were usually in the forefront of the fighting, urging on the others, trying to inspire by their example. But as a result, casualties were particularly high among the Communists, and many of the dead had been the most experienced and dedicated members of the party. Thus the party was depleted of some of its most idealistic elements, and these were replaced by new, inexperienced members, many of whom were more interested in a job than in socialist principles.

But even among veteran Bolsheviks, the hardship and cruelty of the Civil War had a coarsening, even a brutalizing, effect. The Red Army, like any army, was not run in a democratic fashion. Officers gave orders and expected them to be obeyed without question—when the enemy is bearing down, there is no time for discussion and votes. But after two or three years of this experience, Communists got used to military ways—became accustomed to commanding instead of persuading—a habit that was hard to break after the war was over.

The Communist Party itself became more authoritarian. Prior to the Civil War, it was a fairly free-wheeling organization, within which there were often strong differences of opinion and fierce debates. Party members never felt afraid to challenge the leaders if they disagreed with them, and the leaders often disagreed among themselves. When the party was divided over an issue—say, whether to sign the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, or even whether to take power in November 1917—organized factions formed around each of the different positions and tried to get the support of a majority of the members. But the need to hold a disintegrating country together during the Civil War convinced most Communists that it was more important to present a united front to those outside the party and not to be seen as divided and indecisive, which might encourage the counter-revolutionaries.

Debates within the party continued, but they tended to take place among the leaders; the membership became more passive. Contributing to this passivity was the increasing centralization of the party. The Bolshevik party had always been led by a Central Committee, elected by the delegates to the yearly party congresses, who were in turn elected by the party members in their local branches, which were called cells. In 1919 a new, smaller body was created—the Political Bureau, or "Politburo." The Central

Committee, which had dozens of members, met only once every two months, but the Politburo, consisting of only five to seven people, met every week; here was where the important decisions were made.

Once the Politburo made a decision, members were expected to carry it out in a disciplined way, much as soldiers must carry out orders. Since Communist Party members held leading positions in factories, banks, universities, and the army and navy, these institutions all came under the party's control. No longer were most party members factory workers, as was the case prior to the Revolution; most were officials, bureaucrats, bosses of the new Soviet state. Officially, the Russian government was still in the hands of the elected soviets; but since the Communists had become the only legal party, political decisions were made by the party's leaders and then rubber-stamped by the Soviet "government." The soviets met less and less frequently. The Communist Party had become a tightly organized control network.

Meanwhile, the economy was going from bad to worse. The Civil War had wreaked complete havoc. Terrible famines broke out in several parts of the country, followed by epidemics of typhus and other deadly diseases. An estimated seven million people died of starvation and disease during the Civil War. Requisitioning drove down grain production; peasants cultivated only enough land to feed their families, refusing to produce any surplus that might be seized. In the cities, the working class was decimated.

War Communism imposed sacrifices on everyone, including Communists. In Moscow's Kremlin, a fortress in the center of the city that now housed the Soviet government, Lenin, Trotsky (when he was not at the front), and the other leaders slept on folding cots in their offices and ate bad food in the cafeteria. A stern equality prevailed. But Marxists had always assumed that socialism would be built in a highly developed economy capable of producing an abundance of goods. Inequality would be abolished by bringing *up* the standard of living for everyone. War Communism, instead, was based on a disastrously scarce supply of goods; inequality was abolished, but by reducing everyone to roughly the same *low* standard of living. Now all were poor.

This dismal state of affairs could be remedied only by revolution in the West, the Bolsheviks believed. But the success of socialist revolution in Germany and other countries depended in turn on the ability of the Bolsheviks to hold onto power in Russia. If the counterrevolution triumphed here, all would be lost, they thought. So the banning of parties, the suppression of freedom of the press, the death penalty, the use of a secret police, all were seen as necessary, if temporary, expedients, means of clinging to power while awaiting revolution in Europe. The trouble was, the Bolsheviks could not cling to power without some popular support, and this was fast eroding. The most acute danger came from the peasantry. Once the Whites had been defeated and the Civil War was over, the peasants were no longer in danger of losing their land. Now they saw no reason to tolerate grain requisitioning, and many saw no reason to tolerate the Bolsheviks at all.

In 1920 peasant uprisings began to break out. There were strikes in factories, where harsh wartime conditions had imposed regimentation and strict discipline on the workers. Then in March 1921 sailors at the Kronstadt naval base, on an island that guarded the approach to Petrograd, revolted, demanding the legalization of other political parties and free elections to the soviets. Among the rebellious sailors were men who had been ardent Bolsheviks back in 1917, but now, influenced by the anger that was spreading through the peasant villages from which they came, they turned against the Bolsheviks. After negotiations failed, the government believed it had no choice but to crush the revolt by force. To do nothing would mean losing most of the Soviet navy, allowing the revolt to spread, and opening the door to the return of the Whites. To give in to the sailors' demands would mean the end of Bolshevik rule—they would probably lose the elections because of the immense peasant vote—and this too would render Russia helpless against a bloody restoration of the old order in some form.

The Kronstadt revolt prompted the Bolsheviks to take two drastic measures. Until the party could win back the support of the peasants and workers, Lenin believed that it must stay united. So, to prevent any splits in the party's ranks, organized factions were banned. Vigorous discussion did not disappear from the party, and members with different opinions continued to argue for them in the party's publications. Lenin considered the ban to be temporary, and he hoped it could be lifted in a short time. But in fact the ban on factions was never lifted, and during the next half-decade it played a crucial role in strengthening the forces of authoritarianism within the party.

The second measure was an attempt to repair the government's relations with the peasants. In 1921 the grain requisitions were ended. Peasants were now encouraged to grow as much surplus grain as they could, and they were permitted to sell their surpluses on the open markets. This was the New Economic Policy (NEP), which will be discussed in more detail below.

The Prospect of International Revolution

Before and during the Civil War, the Bolsheviks saw many signs of an approaching worldwide revolution. Indeed, leaders of the capitalist countries saw the same signs and were deeply troubled. In 1919 Lloyd George wrote,

> The whole of Europe is filled with the spirit of revolution. There is a deep sense not only of discontent, but of anger and revolt amongst the workmen against pre-war conditions. The whole existing order, in its political, social and economic aspects is questioned by the masses of the population, from one end of Europe to the other.[7]

In 1919, revolution was in the air, and not only in Europe. China's cities were shaken by violent demonstrations against imperialism. In India, a campaign of mass civil disobedience led by Mohandas Gandhi brought the country to the very brink of revolution. Even in the United States, which had the most conservative labor movement of any industrialized country, and with a working class bitterly divided by racial and ethnic hatred, thousands of steelworkers fought pitched battles with police and National Guard troops, and the entire city of Seattle was paralyzed by a general strike.

By 1919, conditions in Germany and the former Austro-Hungarian Empire had become especially unstable, so it was there, in central Europe, that the Bolsheviks believed the workers would follow their example and seize power. Afterward, revolution could be expected to spread to France, Italy, Britain—eventually, perhaps, even to the United States.

In November 1918, the German monarchy was overthrown and power was in the hands of workers, sailors, and soldiers councils. But the counter-revolutionary leaders of the German Social Democratic Party, the SPD, having seen what happened in Russia the year before (forewarned is forearmed), were determined to prevent the November Revolution from becoming radicalized and following Russia's pattern. They did this by allying with the army and provoking a premature insurrection in January 1919—the so-called Spartakus Uprising—which enabled them to decapitate the infant German Communist Party; its leaders Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were murdered.

This defeat was a serious setback for the Bolsheviks, but only a temporary one, they hoped. They were convinced, reasonably enough, that central Europe was in the midst of a revolutionary situation. The old ruling groups—the capitalists, landowners, generals, and so on—were weak and unpopular. The masses were in a combative mood. The only thing lacking was a trained revolutionary party capable of leading the workers. But how were revolutionary parties to be created? In 1917 the Bolsheviks had already had the benefit of 14 years of experience as an independent revolutionary organization. Elsewhere in Europe, by contrast, some revolutionary socialists had only just formed Communist parties, which were generally small and amateurish, while others were still members of the established socialist parties and had no organization of their own. The need for *effective* Communist parties was urgent. If they did not emerge in time, the workers would lose hope, the revolutionary moment would pass, and the old rulers, with the help of the right-wing social democrats, would regain their self-confidence and recapture their power—as had already begun to happen in Germany. And then Soviet Russia would be truly isolated, thrown back on its own resources—who could tell for how long?

The Communist International

On March 2, 1919, a group of revolutionary socialists from several European countries gathered in Moscow to form a new International. To distinguish it from the Socialist, or "Second" International (the first dated back to Marx and Engels' day in the mid-nineteenth century), it was called the Communist, or Third, International, Comintern for short. The group was small: Only 19 delegates had managed to get through the blockade; together with the Russian representatives, the meeting was attended by a grand total of 35. But it set up an executive committee and published a manifesto, written by Trotsky. The Comintern Manifesto was a call to workers and peasants throughout the world to revolt against capitalism and colonialism. It repudiated the reformism of the established socialist parties and declared that workers councils—soviets—should be set up everywhere as the basis for revolution.

In July 1920, the second Congress of the Communist International was held. This time, 200 delegates attended, representing organizations in 40 countries. The Bolsheviks drew up 21 conditions for membership. All parties wishing to join the Comintern had to make serious preparations for revolution. All had to declare their total opposition to colonialism and to support freedom for the colonial subjects of their own countries. The Comintern was organized in a highly centralized fashion. Once the Congress of the International, which was to meet every year in Moscow, made a decision, all member parties were expected to pursue essentially the same policies. The Russians, as the leaders of the only successful socialist revolution so far, naturally predominated, and Grigori Zinoviev was elected president of the Comintern. But delegates from other countries also had a say, and there were intense debates over strategy.

> But even among veteran Bolsheviks, the hardship and cruelty of the Civil War had a coarsening, even a brutalizing, effect.

By 1921, however, the first wave of revolutionary ferment had receded in Europe. The Bolsheviks now had to find a way to maintain control of Russia until the next wave, which they expected soon. The October Revolution was still a beacon of hope to millions of European workers, but at home the Bolsheviks had lost much of the popularity they achieved in 1917, particularly among Russia's peasants. Lenin knew full well that without the peasants' support or, at least, toleration, his government could not last more than a few more years. So he proposed the New Economic Policy. The Bolsheviks' ultimate goal remained the same: the overthrow of capitalism in at least one major capitalist country—most likely Germany—as the basis for creating a socialist society in Russia. But in the meantime, there would have to be a temporary compromise with capitalism.[8]

The NEP Period: 1921-1928

The first thing the NEP did was to abolish grain requisitioning and institute an agricultural tax in its place. Now, instead of turning over all their surplus to the state, peasants only had to surrender a fixed percentage of it. This was called a tax "in kind," but in 1923 it was transformed into a tax in money. Since peasants could now keep most of their surplus, they had an incentive to increase the size of that surplus. This was especially true because the NEP also permitted free trade in agricultural produce. Peasants could bring their surplus grain—or cabbages, beets, apples, chickens, pigs, what have you—to markets and charge whatever price buyers were willing to pay. Soon a class of merchants emerged that bought up the peasants' goods and resold them in the towns and cities. These dealers were called "Nepmen." They were essentially capitalists, and many began to accumulate small fortunes from the new opportunities provided by the NEP. Among the peasants, the *kulaks*—the better-off peasants who owned more land and possessed horses for plowing and other livestock—were able to take greater advantage of the NEP than other peasants. Eventually the kulaks were permitted to rent state-owned land and to hire farmworkers. In agriculture, the new policy brought immediate results: Farm production began to increase and within a few years had recovered from the effects of the World War and the Civil War.

The NEP also allowed a limited amount of private ownership in retail trade and manufacturing. Here, too, enterprising Nepmen went into business, establishing stores and small factories—workshops, really, since the NEP only permitted privately owned plants with 20 or fewer employees. The government was careful to retain control of what were called the "commanding heights" of the economy: banking, transportation (railways and shipping), foreign trade, mining, oil production, and large-scale industry (iron and steel, machinery, vehicles, textiles, and so on). All the big factories and major businesses that had been nationalized in 1918 remained state property.

The NEP now meant that Russia had a mixed economy, part capitalist and part socialist, though the socialist sector was clearly dominant. On the other hand, could even the state-owned part of the economy be called "socialist" in reality? Marxists, and especially the Bolsheviks, had always defined a socialist economy as one that is controlled democratically by the working class itself. But in Russia in 1921, could democracy be said to exist? Lenin quite frankly admitted that it could not. He said that the Bolshevik regime was a workers state only in an extremely "deformed" way: The only thing that made it "socialist" was that it was led by a party—the Communists—that had socialist *intentions*. These intentions could be fulfilled only when help arrived from successful revolutions in the West.

Meanwhile, the Bolshevik dictatorship was somewhat liberalized under the NEP. With the end of the Civil War, there was no more need for the Red Terror. Non-Communists were allowed to speak and write with considerable freedom—although they were still not permitted to form political parties. The death penalty had been abolished even before the Civil War was over. The Cheka, with its power to arrest and execute suspects without trial, had been seen as a temporary necessity, in order to combat the counter-revolution. In 1922 it was abolished and replaced by a new political police force called the State Political Directorate Administration, to be known by its Russian initials, GPU. Later, under Stalin, the GPU became a lawless instrument of mass terror, but under the NEP it had to turn over the people it arrested for counter-revolutionary activity to the regular courts. The vast majority of those held in prisons and labor camps were common criminals, not political prisoners.

Also under the NEP there was a flourishing of the arts, especially modern art. Artists involved in more traditional forms—opera and ballet, representational painting—tended to be hostile to the Revolution, and many of them went into exile. But many younger artists—for example painters of nonrepresentational, or "abstract," pictures and architects who wanted to design modern, light-filled housing for the masses—rallied to the Bolsheviks and were in turn supported by government funds. Film was an especially important medium, and Soviet filmmakers of the 1920s—Sergei Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin, and others—had an enormous influence on the development of cinema throughout the world.

Problems of the NEP

The NEP proved to be highly unstable, and it soon ran into problems. By 1923 agriculture was doing so well that there was actually a glut of farm produce on the market, which brought down agricultural prices. At the same time, however, industry was recovering much more slowly than agriculture. This meant that manufactured goods—especially consumer goods such as clothing, furniture, soap, tools, and cooking utensils—were still scarce and their prices high. Consequently, peasants could buy less and less with the money they were making from their crops and livestock; there were too few consumer goods, and they were too expensive. Peasants began to grumble; what was the point of growing more if there was so little to buy with the profits?

Industry lagged behind because there were so few resources for investment. In the "socialist" sector of the economy there was no overall coordination, no planning. State-owned industries competed with each other, and they had to finance themselves. That is, each factory had to make a profit or else it went out of business. Since factory managers were desperate to make as much profit as possible, so as to have funds for investment and to keep from going under, they charged high prices for their products and paid low wages to their workers. And since many industries could not compete, they had to lay off their workers or shut down altogether, so there was high unemployment.

The problem of investment was especially acute in heavy industry—metals, machinery, vehicles, mining. Light industry—consumer goods like clothing and furniture—grew slowly, but heavy industry hardly grew at all and was producing far less than before the war. Textile factories needed machinery, however; as mechanical spinners and looms broke down, they had to be replaced. Where were the new machines to come from? What about the steel and rubber to make the machines? And how could even light industry expand without a corresponding growth in the heavy industries that produced the fuel to power the machines—coal and oil?

The Struggle to Succeed Lenin

In December 1922 Lenin suffered a serious stroke that left him partially paralyzed. Lenin could no longer write or speak in public, and he stopped attending meetings of the Politburo. Within the Politburo there had always been friction between the "Old Bolsheviks"—individuals who had worked with Lenin since before the 1905 revolution—and Trotsky, who had not joined the Bolshevik party until 1917 but had nevertheless played a role second only to Lenin's ever since. Now that Lenin's health was jeopardized, the leading Old Bolsheviks—Grigori Zinoviev, Lev Kamenev, and Josef Stalin—formed a secret faction calling itself the "Troika," a Russian word for a sled pulled by three horses. The aim of the Troika was to isolate Trotsky and prevent him from succeeding Lenin as the party leader.

Trotsky's most implacable enemy was Stalin. A good part of the latter's hatred was based on envy. Trotsky was a supremely gifted writer, a passionate and spell-binding orator, and a profound Marxist thinker. Stalin was utterly pedestrian and uncouth. His writings were dull and leaden, his personality coarse and abrasive. He had no talent for public speaking and in fact rarely appeared in public. He was incapable of producing an original idea. He was secretive to the point of paranoia. But Stalin did not lack talent. He was an extremely skillful organizer—patient, meticulous, and hard working—and it was this that enabled him to rise in the party's ranks.

> Once the peasants were no longer in danger of losing their land, many saw no reason to tolerate the Bolsheviks at all.

In 1922 Stalin was given the post of general secretary. The Russian Communist Party had, by this point, become a vast and complex organization that, as we have seen, essentially ran the Soviet government. The Party Secretariat, of which Stalin was now the head, consisted of thousands of full-time officials who prepared meetings, collected information, transmitted decisions, and kept files on all party members. As general secretary, Stalin had the authority to appoint, promote, and fire all of them. Because he worked behind the scenes, few ordinary Russians had any inkling of how much power the general secretary possessed, and most did not even know his name.

Meanwhile, in 1923 Trotsky, who was not yet aware of the conspiracy against him, became an outspoken critic of the NEP and the growing authoritarianism of the party and the Soviet state. He stressed four points: (1) a plan was needed to speed up the pace of industrialization, (2) workers' democracy should be revived, (3) the growth of bureaucracy must be reversed, and (4) a greater effort must be made to spread the revolution internationally. Every one of these points was a challenge to the Troika, and especially to the party bureaucracy headed by Stalin.

Trotsky warned that kulaks and Nepmen were getting richer and more powerful and might soon constitute a counter-revolutionary force. Industry must become more productive, but for that the workers themselves needed to be drawn into factory management. This proposal directly threatened the bureaucracy—the factory managers and party officials who preferred to manage the economy in a totally authoritarian, top-down manner, with no participation by ordinary workers. Trotsky thought that workers should be encouraged to criticize the way things were done and to offer new ideas. With input from the workers, a rational plan could be put together.

Trotsky deplored the bureaucratic condition of the Communist Party, most of whose members had been reduced to a mass of passive, silent hand-raisers. In theory the party was supposed to be controlled by its members, and party officials were supposed to be elected. In reality, elections were a farce: Officials were, in effect, appointed by the party secretaries. At party meetings, the members were given the names of candidates selected beforehand by the secretaries, one for every position, and then they were asked, "Who is against?" Most members were afraid to oppose the secretaries' choices, especially since it might mean losing their jobs. Trotsky wanted to see real elections, with debates and competing candidates.

Trotsky angrily denounced the bureaucracy's mismanagement of the Communist International. He believed that the bureaucracy was increasingly reluctant to promote revolutions elsewhere. A successful revolution in Germany, say, would establish a much more democratic socialist state than Russia's had become, and this might threaten the bureaucracy's dominance.

Lenin too had become alarmed by the growing power of the bureaucracy in general and Stalin in particular. He and Trotsky made an agreement to work together on this issue. After his second stroke, Lenin dictated a series of suggestions to the party—his *Testament*—which included an explicit call for the removal of Stalin. The Troika, however, refused to allow Lenin's *Testament* to be published, so the public was unaware of its existence. In March 1923, Lenin had a third stroke that left him almost totally incapacitated. Trotsky now stood alone against the four other members of the Politburo: Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Stalin—the Troika—and Nikolai Bukharin, a strong supporter of the NEP and another enemy of Trotsky.

The Left Opposition

Despite the jealousy and hostility of the Troika, Trotsky had many supporters outside the Politburo among idealistic younger party members and among the older generation of Bolshevik leaders, who were as appalled as he was by the degeneration of Soviet Russia. In October 1923, 46 well-known Old Bolsheviks signed a letter addressed to the Politburo declaring their agreement with Trotsky. The Platform of the Forty-Six, as it became known, denounced the stifling of internal democracy within the Communist Party; it demanded a plan for rapid industrialization and the lifting of the ban on organized party factions.[9] There was now an informal grouping of critics under Trotsky's leadership that called itself the Left Opposition. It included prominent Bolsheviks such as Karl Radek, a leader of the Comintern; Christian Rakovsky, a Soviet diplomat; Ivan Smirnov, a hero of the Civil War; and the economist Yuri Pyatakov.

When vigorous discussion of the Opposition's proposals began to break out among party members, Trotsky's enemies launched a powerful counter-attack. The Troika controlled the press, so for every article by an oppositionist there were ten or more by Zinoviev, Stalin, Kamenev, Bukharin, and their supporters. Trotsky was attacked as a latecomer to Bolshevism, a former semi-Menshevik who had always been against Lenin; the Troika, on the other hand, posed as Lenin's true heirs. The program of the Left Opposition was dismissed as reckless and impractical. Its leaders were accused of trying to destroy the unity of the party by their insistence on permitting factions. The Opposition's criticisms of the NEP were branded as "anti-peasant." Stalin, who by now controlled an extensive network of party secretaries, factory managers, and other bureaucrats, expertly choreographed party meetings so that the Opposition was always outnumbered.

On January 21, 1924, Lenin suffered a fourth stroke and died. The Troika then started to create a Lenin cult. A massive mausoleum was built in Red Square, next to the Kremlin. In it, Lenin's embalmed body was put on display under glass. All his writings and speeches were collected and treated henceforth as sacred writ. The city of Petrograd was renamed Leningrad. All this would have horrified Lenin himself, who was an extremely modest, almost self-effacing man.

Immediately after Lenin's death, the Troika admitted 240,000 new members—the so-called Lenin Levy—to the Russian Communist Party, doubling the party's membership. For the most part, these new recruits were young, inexperienced, and ambitious; admission to the party was a ticket to a successful career, and they could be relied on to support the bureaucracy. Sure enough, within a few weeks, the party voted officially to condemn the Left Opposition.

The Troika Breaks Up

Despite this setback, the Left Opposition did not disband, although it was clearer every day that it was swimming against the stream. Within the party its isolation grew. Outside the party, among ordinary workers and other citizens, there was a certain amount of sympathy for the Opposition, and Trotsky was still widely admired, but most people were too intimidated by the bureaucracy and the GPU—which the

Troika controlled—and too exhausted by years of turmoil and hardship. To publicly support the Opposition took courage, and by 1924, courage in Russia was a scarce commodity.

Meanwhile, the Left Opposition continued to warn that the NEP might lead to the complete restoration of capitalism unless Russia embarked on a program of rapid industrialization. But the problem was, without aid from the West, how was the Soviet state going to obtain the capital and machinery needed to invest in industry? Evgeny Preobrazhensky, an economist who belonged to the Opposition, argued that the resources for industrialization had to come from agriculture. He called for increasing taxes on the peasantry, especially the kulaks, and channeling this money into a government fund for industrial investment. At the same time, agricultural productivity would have to be significantly increased. Most of Russia's peasants farmed small plots of land with primitive tools; they were extremely inefficient. If landholdings could be consolidated into larger units, equipped with modern tools and fertilizers, and if peasants could be induced to work cooperatively instead of competing with each other, Russia's farmlands could be made to yield far more produce. A larger agricultural surplus, especially grain, could be exported. With the foreign currency Russia would earn, it could purchase machinery and technological know-how from the West and use these to promote industrialization at home.

This was the idea of "collectivizing" agriculture as a way of bringing industrial-style efficiency to farming. Instead of millions of separate, minuscule peasant plots, Russia would have a far smaller number of large, government-owned farms on which the peasants would work as employees, like workers in a factory. Moreover, since far fewer peasants would be needed, many of them could move to the cities and swell the ranks of the urban working class, which would contribute further to industrialization. But Preobrazhensky was against using force to bring this about. Peasants would never give up their customary way of life unless they could actually see that life on a collective farm was better. So Preobrazhensky proposed setting up model collective farms in the countryside. As peasants were shown the advantages of using modern farm machinery rather than horse-plows and scythes, as they saw the benefits of living in new houses with electricity rather than their dilapidated hovels, they would voluntarily join the new collective farms.

Nevertheless, this program was seen by the Left Opposition as no more than a temporary solution to the problems of the NEP. Even by collectivizing agriculture and speeding up the pace of industrialization, Russia could not achieve socialism. For that, help from workers' governments in the West was still needed. Spreading the revolution remained, for Preobrazhensky and the other members of the Opposition, a question of life or death.

All the members of the Troika, as well as their myriad supporters in the bureaucracy, joined in ridiculing Preobrazhensky's analysis. The NEP, while not without problems, was still working well on the whole, they insisted; as long as the Soviet state controlled the "commanding heights" of the economy, and as long as the Communist Party held a monopoly of political power, there was no reason to fear that the kulaks and Nepmen might get the upper hand. As for the Left Opposition's schemes for rapid industrialization, they branded these as totally unrealistic.

Nikolai Bukharin went even further. He regarded the NEP not as a necessary evil, an unavoidable compromise with capitalism, but as a positive good. Bukharin openly encouraged the kulaks to enrich themselves, believing that if they did so the peasantry as a whole would prosper. The result would be greater and greater demand among the peasants for the goods produced by state-owned industries. The "socialist" sector of the economy would grow, even if very slowly; Russia, he said, would achieve socialism "at a snail's pace"—even without aid from socialist revolutions in the West. The program of the Left Opposition, Bukharin said, was a direct threat to the peasantry that would ensure they would turn against the Soviet state. Bukharin and his supporters—who included Alexei Rykov, the prime minister of the Soviet Union, and Mikhail Tomsky, the head of the trade unions—were known as the Right, though they were not in opposition to the Troika (the "Center") and were in fact in league with them in their efforts to get rid of Trotsky.

In December 1924 Stalin published an article that seemed to agree with Bukharin. In it he put forward the theory of "socialism in one country." Attacking the idea that full-scale socialism could not be achieved in a backward country like Russia, Stalin insisted that Soviet Russia *could* build socialism without help from the outside. To many older Bolsheviks, this was heresy, since Stalin appeared to be abandoning world revolution. But to the younger generation of party officials, to the bureaucracy, "socialism in one country" made sense. It appealed to their nationalism and pride in Soviet achievements.

It was all too much for Zinoviev and Kamenev, however. Alarmed by Stalin's repudiation of internationalism and acceptance of Bukharin's pro-kulak position, they broke off their alliance with him. Zinoviev and Kamenev now began to sound like Trotsky: they criticized the NEP, warned that the kulaks and Nepmen were getting too powerful, denounced the growth of bureaucracy, and demanded a revival of workers' democracy. They admitted that Trotsky had been right all along. In Politburo meetings, they even revealed some of the plots against Trotsky in which they had been involved since 1923. In April 1926, Zinoviev and Kamenev, along with Krupskaya, joined forces with the Left Opposition to form the United Opposition.

Crushing the Opposition

The United Opposition looked impressive at first glance, including as it did so many prominent Bolsheviks. But by 1926 Stalin and his supporters in the bureaucracy were much stronger than in 1923. The leaders of the Opposition soon learned how weak and isolated their position had become. Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Kamenev could not get their articles published in the party's newspapers. The Opposition drew up a program, but it was banned; when oppositionists tried to print it on secret duplicating machines, the GPU found the machines and smashed them, confiscated copies, and arrested all those involved. When Opposition leaders tried to speak at party meetings, they were booed and interrupted constantly. In July 1926 Zinoviev and Kamenev were removed from the Politburo (Trotsky had been ousted seven months earlier).

> Central Europe was in the midst of a revolutionary situation. But how were revolutionary parties to be created?

November 7, 1927, marked the tenth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution. Massive parades were scheduled for Moscow, Leningrad, and other cities. The Opposition planned to participate, but also to appeal peacefully to the marchers with signs and slogans; Stalin made sure they would be silenced, however. Police and party activists broke up the Opposition's demonstrations, tore down their signs, and beat them up. In Moscow, when Trotsky tried to give a speech to the crowd from an open car, Stalin's thugs smashed the car's windshield and fired gunshots; one of them shouted, "Down with Trotsky, the Jew, the traitor!" Fearfully, the parading workers filed past and did nothing.

A few days later, the Opposition was expelled from the party, charged with trying to start an "insurrection." Zinoviev and Kamenev panicked: They had always been Bolsheviks and could not imagine life outside the party. Besides, they reasoned, the time would come when the party's cowed membership would revive and turn against Stalin, and they needed to be on hand when that moment arrived. So they "capitulated"—repudiated their oppositional views as "anti-Leninist," proclaimed the correctness of Stalin and Bukharin's policies, and begged to be readmitted. Under these humiliating conditions, the two were allowed back into the party. Thousands of other members of the Opposition did the same. Others—Radek, Rakovsky, Pyatakov, most of the leaders of the original Left Opposition—refused and were deported to remote corners of the Soviet Union. Within a few years, however, they too capitulated. Only a small core stood firm.

Trotsky would not give in. In January 1928 he was sentenced to exile at Alma-Ata, a town in Soviet Central Asia, near the Chinese border. Trotsky declined to go voluntarily: In an act of symbolic civil disobedience, he forced the GPU to literally carry him out of his Moscow apartment and put him on a train. A year later he and Natalia Sedova were deported from the Soviet Union.

Toward the Second Russian Revolution

Almost immediately after the expulsion of the Opposition, the Soviet Union faced a serious crisis. In January 1928 peasants throughout the country went on a "grain strike," refusing to sell grain to the government unless they were paid much higher prices. The government's grain supplies were low, and Russia's cities were now faced with a real threat of starvation.

The Right, led by Bukharin, favored giving in to the peasants' demands by raising grain prices. Stalin at first didn't know what to do then dramatically turned against his former allies on the Right, calling for decisive measures against the peasants. Armed detachments were sent out to force the peasants to surrender their grain. But Stalin wanted to go further than that. He now began to take up some of the Opposition's economic program. He demanded increasing the pace of industrialization, a gradual collectivization of agriculture, and an overall plan for the economy. After several months of tussling with the Right, Stalin emerged triumphant. Bukharin, Tomsky, and Rykov were driven from power, and, ultimately, forced to capitulate just as most of the Opposition had done. Stalin was now completely in control.

By the end of 1929, it was clear that Stalin intended something quite different from the Opposition's economic program. To collectivize agriculture, he initiated a full-scale violent assault on the entire peasantry. Simultaneously, he launched a Five-Year Plan for industrialization at breakneck speed that devastated workers' living standards and imposed on them the most draconian working conditions. Terrorized by a gigantic system of prisons, secret police, and forced-labor camps, the Soviet masses were transformed into something like state serfs. Finally, to sever the last remaining tie to the workers state, even in its degenerated form and even if by this point it was a symbolic tie, almost every living representative of the October Revolution was killed or disappeared into the Gulag. A new society, neither socialist nor capitalist, was born, a society dominated by a new ruling elite of party officials, factory officials, and other bureaucrats, who were in turn dominated by an all-powerful, semi-deified dictator, a mass murderer with few equals in history: Stalin himself.[10]

Conclusion

Just as Lenin and Trotsky feared, the result of Soviet Russia's isolation was counter-revolution. What they had not foreseen was that this counter-revolution would come not from foreign imperialism or from the domestic forces of capitalist restoration, but from within the party itself. And they could not have known that many of their own policies would pave the way for the horrors of Stalinism, a system that became the deadly enemy of everything they had fought for in 1917. The question remains, however: What could the Bolsheviks have done differently? In terms of specific policies, this is a question that is extremely difficult to answer. Should they have refrained from suppressing the Kronstadt rebellion, or even acceded to the sailors' demands, for example? To do so would, in all likelihood, have led within a very short time to the Bolsheviks' loss of power. One-party rule is deplorable in principle, but an exceedingly strong case can be made, in my opinion, that under the conditions of civil war, economic chaos and ruin, and a mostly hostile peasantry that was fundamentally anti-socialist and moreover incapable as a class of governing Russia itself, the Bolshevik party was the only one that possessed the experience, discipline, tactical flexibility, and foresight to prevent a bloody, fascist-style counter-revolution. It was a unique, tested crucible of socialist consciousness, even as that consciousness became distorted and attenuated by the experience of authoritarian rule. Moreover, Russia's fate was far from the only thing at stake. Through at least the first six years after 1917, while European revolutions remained objective possibilities, the Bolsheviks had to hold on, the Comintern had to exist. I think it is not too much to say that the fate of humanity hung in the balance.

In 1921 Lenin admitted that the Bolshevik regime was a workers state only in an extremely "deformed" way.

Even if this premise is accepted, however, and even if one agrees that most of the Bolsheviks' policies were the result of harsh necessity, it is true, as Rosa Luxemburg warned, that the "danger begins only when they make a virtue of necessity and want to freeze into a complete theoretical system all the tactics forced upon them by these fatal circumstances."[11] In part, the Bolsheviks did succumb to this danger, for example when Trotsky and Lenin took the position that one-party rule was not just a temporary necessity, but the *only* way a workers state can function. Although Trotsky's life was cut short, he did live long enough, unlike Lenin, to repudiate this particular position, fortunately.

It does seem clear that most of the Old Bolsheviks, the leaders of 1917, did not consider the harsh, undemocratic policies of War Communism—again, except for the idea of a one-party state—to be part of a transitional form of socialism; or if they were tempted to think so under the extreme tensions of the Civil War, they came to their senses afterwards. The basic question remains: Were they right to try to hold onto power while awaiting—and, of course, promoting—international revolution? I think the answer is yes, mainly because, except for renegades such as Stalin, their ultimate goal—a vision of socialism as a system of equality and mass participatory democracy based on the soviets—did not change.

NOTES

1. Many historians have claimed that the Bolsheviks regarded the policies of War Communism as intrinsically progressive, even as a "leap into socialism." On the contrary, these measures were generally considered justifiable only as a temporary, emergency response to the conditions of Civil War and economic collapse.

2. Quoted in Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed: Trotsky, 1879-1921* (Verso, 2003), 477.

3. There were, nevertheless, many instances of extreme brutality in Cheka prisons, and the organization, like any police force, attracted a fair number of thugs and sadists. But these practices were often criticized in Bolshevik newspapers and were opposed by the party's leaders. The trouble was, the Cheka grew so large and amassed so much power that it was difficult—though, arguably, not impossible—to monitor and control.

4. Quoted in Arno Mayer, *The Furies: Violence and Terrorism in the French and Russian Revolutions* (Princeton, 2002), 254.

5. Quoted in David Mandel, "The Russian Revolution, Ninety Years On," *Canadian Dimension*, October

10, 2007.

6. Quoted in Tony Cliff, *Trotsky: The Sword of the Revolution, 1917-1923* (Bookmarks, 1990), 193.

7. Quoted in E.H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917-1923, Vol. 3* (W.W. Norton, 1985), 135-136.

8. In fact, the NEP was essentially the same as the Bolsheviks' economic program in the immediate aftermath of the October Revolution, the transitional program they planned to implement while awaiting revolutions in central Europe. War Communism can thus be seen as a temporary and unanticipated interruption to these plans.

9. Neither the Fourteen nor Trotsky, however, advocated legalizing opposition parties. It was only in the 1930s, while reflecting in exile on the degeneration of the Revolution, that Trotsky returned to an understanding of the necessity of a multi-party soviet system.

10. This new Stalinist social system will be the subject of a forthcoming third article.

11. Rosa Luxemburg, *The Russian Revolution* (Ann Arbor, 1961), 79. Despite her criticism, Luxemburg was an ardent champion of the Bolshevik revolution.

CHAMPIONS OF JUSTICE

"Where there is so much racket, there must be something out of kilter. "

" I feel safe in the midst of my enemies, for the truth is all powerful and will prevail."

"You may hiss as much as you please, but women will get their rights anyway."

"You have been having our rights so long, that you think, like a slave-holder, that you own us. I know that it is hard for one who has held the reins for so long to give up; it cuts like a knife. It will feel all the better when it closes up again."

"Life is a hard battle anyway. If we laugh and sing a little as we fight the good fight of freedom, it makes it all go easier. I will not allow my life's light to be determined by the darkness around me."

— Sojourner Truth, *abolitionist and women's rights activist*

Antonio Gramsci: From War to Revolution

Stefanie Prezioso

Eighty years after his death, Antonio Gramsci is among the most influential Marxist intellectuals across the board. By the end of World War II, liberal intellectuals had already found in him "a Marxist you can take home to Mother." The tone was set by Benedetto Croce, who allegedly gushed in 1947, upon reading Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*, "He's one of us!"[1] It reached the point that the Sardinian activist can be presented today as no less than the guarantor of "Italian Democracy."[2] Having been inducted into the public domain with all the implied imprecisions and distortions, Gramsci's heritage enjoys "the backhanded compliment accorded to every classic: more often referenced than actually read,"[3] all the more so for the abundance and range of the public and political appropriations of his thought—from Berlusconi to Sarkozy and up to Alain de Benoist, founder of the French New Right and Steve Bannon's intellectual of reference, who claims "a right-wing Gramscianism."[4]

Despite this hijacking by his enemies, Gramsci's thought continues to be among the richest and most stimulating Marxist intellectual contributions bequeathed to us from the early twentieth century and undoubtedly the most relevant today. One measure of that is the Historical Materialism conference held in London every November. In 2015, the theme of the conference was Gramsci's dictum, "the old is dying and the new cannot be born."[5] This year, it will be the title of Gramsci's December 1917 article, "Revolution Against 'Capital,'" in which Gramsci attempted to make sense of the resumption of the revolutionary process in Russia. Setting off from the idea that the exceptional situation created by the war had radically invalidated the Marxists' "dogmatic utterances, never to be questioned," Gramsci proceeded to reflect on the ways the revolution might be extended to Italy. In particular Gramsci considered Turin, the so-called Italian Petrograd and the presumed epicenter of the revolution to come, as the experiences of the labor struggle during the *biennio rosso* (red two years), and especially the factory councils in Turin, had suggested.[6] It was a vexing question that would preoccupy not only the Italian activist until his death, but also the Bolsheviks, and Lenin in particular. At the second Congress of the Communist International, July 19 - August 7, 1920, Lenin would qualify the experience of the factory councils as the experience most in line with the goals of the international.

Impending War

Antonio Gramsci arrived in Turin in 1911, barely twenty years old, to pursue studies in the humanities, studies he would have to abandon in 1915 for lack of funds compounded by an already deteriorating health. He joined the Socialist Party in 1913 and soon after began writing for the local party newspaper, *Il Grido del Popolo*, as well as for the Turin pages of the national party paper, *Avanti!*—among other roles including theater critic. Gramsci was a member of a political and cultural generation nourished by the idealism of Benedetto Croce and Giovanni Gentile, the activism of George Sorel, and the "concretism"

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that Gaetano Salvemini developed in *L'Unità*, the journal he founded in 1911. As such, Gramsci argued for a break with the excessive bureaucracy of old Italian socialism, to which he counterpoised the ideas of the "ethical meaning of politics," voluntarism, and action.[7] He was thus of a generation that sought to reread Marx, liberating his thought from "naturalist and positivist dross," and scrubbing historical materialism of all determinism.[8]

Italy was at that time in the grip of multiple quasi-insurrectional contestations of the social order, of which the most acute was the series of strikes and worker unrest that came to be known as the Red Week (*Settimana Rossa*). In Gramsci's words, the "Red Week in June 1914 … was the first, magnificent intervention of the mass of the people in politics, to directly oppose the arbitrary actions of the authorities and to give effective expression to the sovereign will of the people, which no longer found any voice in the Chamber of Representatives."[9] But it was, above all, the eruption of the war in August 1914 and the subsequent debates among Italian socialists that constituted Gramsci's first political testing ground. From its very inception, the first global conflict embodied for a small but not insignificant part of the European youth of the time the possibility of a dramatic dawn of a new revolutionary era. The possible link between revolution and war had already been invoked by the leaders of the Second International. Jean Jaurès suggested already in 1905 that "revolution [could] spring from a European war."[10] Yet by 1914 Gramsci was a member of the only European socialist party in the belligerent states to have rejected—in what seemed like agreement with the stance adopted by the Socialist International—the call of war. A year later Lenin, doubting the Italian Socialist Party's ability to maintain its position in case Italy joined the fray, noted "the indisputable fact that the workers in most European countries have been *deceived* by the fictitious unity of the opportunists and the revolutionaries, Italy being the happy exception, a country where no such deception exists at present."[11] But in 1914, Gramsci was questioning the modalities of that "happy exception."

Indeed, during the ten months between the eruption of the war and Italy joining, the Italian Socialists were faced with the concrete task, not of stopping the war, but of preventing Italy's participation. They reacted by trying to attach a series of qualifying adjectives to the terms of neutrality: Theirs was a "vigilant and armed" neutrality, an "active and forceful" one, or an "active and operative" one. The idea of neutrality they put forward came to mean different things according to the different ways they conceived of their relation to the state and the nation, as well as the effect of the growing sense that the war would be a long one. This was also the case with the "unique" position Gramsci defended, all too often mistaken for support for revolutionary interventionism. In one of his most "enigmatic and controversial" articles, "Active and Operative Neutrality" ("*Neutralità attiva ed operante*"), written in late

Antonio Gramsci

October 1914, Gramsci concerned himself with the means of neutrality, neither of the Italian state, nor of the working class of which he was certain, but of the Socialist Party. His point of departure was the observation that

> even in the midst of the extraordinary confusion which the present European crisis has triggered in individuals and in parties, there is one point on which all are agreed: The present historical juncture is a desperately serious one and its consequences could be extremely grave. Because so much blood has been spilt and so many efforts have come to nothing, let us arrange things so that the maximum number of questions left unsolved from the past may be resolved, and humanity may once more proceed without its way being blocked ever again by such a grim expanse of sorrow and of injustice, without its future being marred in a short time by another catastrophe demanding just as formidable an expenditure of life and activity as this present one.[12]

"What role" then "should the Italian Socialist Party … play at the present juncture of Italian history?" To answer this question, Gramsci qualified as "passive" the neutrality defended by the reformist wing of Filippo Turati and Claudio Treves. According to Gramsci, advocating that kind of neutrality in the concrete Italian situation at that moment inevitably meant more or less directly supporting the politics of the government, all the "while the proletariat's opponents are themselves creating their own hour and busy preparing their platform for the class struggle." Young Gramsci called therefore to move away from absolute neutrality and toward an active and operative one, so that the workers movement would not be relegated to the role of an "impartial observer in these events," while others are left to shape them:

> Revolutionaries should not rest content with the provisional formula of "absolute neutrality," but should transform it into the alternative formula of "active and operative neutrality," which means putting class struggle back at the center of the nation's life. … Only in this way will class dualism be re-established, and the Socialist Party be able to free itself from all the bourgeois encrustations with which fear of war has encumbered it. … Then, having demonstrated to the country … how [the country's] self-styled representatives have shown themselves incapable of any action whatsoever, the party will be able to prepare the proletariat to replace them: prepare it for the last supreme wrench which will signal the transition of civilization from an imperfect to an alternative, more perfect one.[13]

Against the "wait and see" formula of the reformists, "enthusiastically accepted, moreover, by the ruling class," Gramsci sought thus to restitute the antagonistic role of the workers movement by actively affirming the incompatibility between working-class interests and taking part in the war. For the revolutionaries, he continued, "history is the product of their own actions, made up of an interrupted series of wrenches executed upon the other active and passive forces in society." The war should be therefore understood as a transition between a before and an after, one that lets revolutionaries "prepare the most favorable conditions for the final wrench (the revolution)."

As we know, Italy only entered the war in May 1915. The ten months of nonintervention marked the unique and sought-after moment of searching for the means to subvert the order of the world. After May 1915, Constantino Lazzari's watchword, "neither support nor sabotage," imposed itself as a way of acknowledging the internal contradictions of the Socialists' position without trying to resolve them.

"The Revolution Against 'Capital'"

As it went on, the war, "this all-powerful 'stage manager,' this mighty accelerator" and potential trigger of social change, became the site for experiencing the "utopian" spaces opened by the intense period of political elaboration that spanned the years 1914-1915.[14] Conscious of that, Gramsci's efforts to grasp the war's impact on the class struggle intensified after 1917, notably through editorial projects such as the single issue of *La città futura* (*The Future City*), which sought to be "the hearth of the new moral energy, new spirit, and idealism of our youth."[15] In it he described the effect of the war on a large segment of Italian youth: "The war has mowed down the young; but above all, it took away all their efforts, their struggles, their splendid dreams of utopia, which the war, by merely stimulating action and achievements, could not deliver." Yet for Gramsci, the socialist youth were largely spared, not from death on the battlefields, but from disillusionment, saved by the strength of their "concrete idea" and "moral principle," and a political program that Gramsci defined as a "concrete universal." Furthermore, "the socialist youth organization did not suffer too much in itself and for itself. The thousands of young men torn from their struggles were quickly replaced." On the eve of the February Revolution, Gramsci was in fact certain that Italy was where the future would play itself out first, a future he thought of as "the projection of today's will into the future as if it has already changed the social environment."

In April 1917, when the news of the February Revolution reached Italy, necessarily in a very sketchy form, Gramsci insisted on the dissimilarity between the revolutionary events taking place in Russia and the French Revolution, emphasizing the former's "extraordinary novelty," formidable creative force, and socialist character. *Notes on the Russian Revolution* opens likewise with the question, "Why is the Russian Revolution a proletarian revolution?" According to Gramsci,

> We … are convinced that the Russian revolution is more than simply a proletarian event, it is a proletarian act, which must naturally lead to a socialist regime. … What the revolution has created in Russia is a new way of life. It has not only replaced one power by another, it has replaced one way of life by another.[16]

In the following weeks, Turin, which saw no abatement in working-class combativity, became the epicenter of the insurrection. A Russian delegation arrived in the city in August and was greeted by a jubilant crowd with shouts of "Long live the Russian Revolution! Long live Lenin!" The news from the revolution in Russia brought new hope to a population already made furious by severe hardship, stirring up uprisings nearly everywhere in the north of Italy during the summer of 1917. The mobilizations—in Piedmont, Venice, Tuscany, Emilia-Romana—combined opposition to the war and demands for improving living conditions. But it was in Turin that revolution seemed closest, as the city experienced what the Italian historian Leonardo Rapone called "the most remarkable episode of popular insurrection during the war outside of Russia."[17] On August 21, 1917, bread shortages led workers in the city, primarily women, to launch a general strike that turned immediately into an insurrection. The uprising held until August 25, and a few of the army units sent to quell it joined the insurgents. The eventual repression of the revolt left forty dead and two hundred wounded.[18]

Barely a couple of weeks later Gramsci wrote an article—which was censured in toto—for *Il Grido del Popolo*, of which he was then the editor, reflecting on that insurrectional experience and arguing,

> The proletariat has a collective life that cannot be accounted for by any abstract scheme. It is a continually changing organism with its own will. … Its existence, the demonstration of its existence, is at this time the Italian proletariat's greatest problem. And this proletariat is not the same as it was three years ago. It grew numerically. It went through more intense spiritual experiences. [19]

The war, for Gramsci, had nourished "the emergence of a new class-consciousness," both because of the high concentration of workers and peasants in the trenches and because of the increased social control exercised by the state. It was that "concrete experience of the masses in movement" that led to a turning point in Gramsci's political and intellectual development.[20]

On December 1, 1917, Gramsci published an essay that is undoubtedly among the most "canonical" of his early writings, "The Revolution Against 'Capital.'"[21] With the scant information at his disposal, he laid out one of the most original analyses of the Russian October Revolution. First, and in line with his *Notes on the Russian Revolution*, what happened in October was "the continuation of the general revolution of the Russian people"—a revolution against Marx's *Capital*, or better even, against the Marxists and the "cannons of historical materialism":

> These people [the Bolsheviks] are not Marxists, that's all. … Marx foresaw the foreseeable. But he could not foresee the European war, or rather he could not foresee that the war would last as long as it has or have the effects it has had. He could not foresee that in the space of three years of unspeakable suffering and miseries, this war would have aroused in Russia the collective popular will that it has aroused.[22]

Gramsci would return to the attempt to clarify his own idea of Marx in another article written on the occasion of the centenary of Marx's birth:

> Marx did not write a nice little doctrine, he is not a Messiah who left a string of parables laden with categorical imperatives, with absolute, unquestionable norms beyond the categories of time and space. … Marx … is a man of action. … In glorifying Karl Marx on the centenary of his birth, the international proletariat is glorifying itself, its conscious strength, the dynamism of its aggressiveness of conquest which undermines the rule of privilege and prepares for the final struggle which will crown all its efforts and all its sacrifices.[23]

During the "four red years" of 1917-1920, "the spirit's myriad sparkling lights" that Gramsci saw shining in the collective will projected into the future seemed almost palpable. After the war, Turin was again at the center of new political experiments. On May 1, 1919, Gramsci, together with Palmiro Togliatti, Umberto Terracini, and Angelo Tasca, the core group of the future Communist Party of Italy, founded a new journal, *L'Ordine Nuovo (The New Order)*. Gramsci's liberal revolutionary friend Piero Gobetti would later describe it as "a journal of thought, unique in Italy, aware of the importance of national problems, concerned with founding a new political consciousness and being attuned to the cultural needs of the modern world."[24]

From the end of 1919, Gramsci and his journal stood at the center of an attempt to experiment—through the emerging factory councils—with the creation of "a new order." Gramsci immediately seized upon the factory councils as tools for autonomy and the "self-governance of the masses," and saw in them the embryonic, Italian form of the soviets and a point of departure for new revolutionary processes.[25] Gramsci was enthusiastic about this experience of workers democracy from below, not the least because Turin, which occupied a special place in his mind at the time, appeared to him, perhaps too optimistically, destined to "conquer the country once again."[26] The council movement quickly advanced to organizing tens of thousands of workers, and Gramsci theorized the subversive and revolutionary role of the councils against the organizational forms of the workers and trade-union movement in Italy, seeing in them a first step toward the socialist revolution. In particular during the strikes of April 1920 and the factory occupations that followed in September of the same year, the movement supported by Gramsci and the team of *L'Ordine Nuovo*—despite some internal conflicts and disunity—appeared indeed to constitute the prelude to a "revolution in action."[27] When an explicitly political strike was launched in April by the workers of Fiat "for the workers' control of production," it grew to encompass all of the city's workers:

> For the first time a proletariat was seen to take up the fight for the control of production without being forced into this struggle by unemployment and hunger. And we are not dealing just with a minority vanguard of the local working class; the entire mass of the working people in Turin went united into the struggle, which they upheld forcefully, without defections, subjecting

> themselves to the harshest deprivations and greatest sacrifices. The strike lasted a month for the engineering workers, and ten days for the entire mass of the working people.[28]

The factory occupations represented the "last revolutionary upswing" before fascism assumed power. With more than 180 factories in Turin occupied, and thousands of workers radicalized by a class war ever more tangible, revolution seemed at hand. Gramsci, however, was concerned, noting the ease with which workers took over the factories:

> We must tell the truth to the masses of workers. They should not believe for a moment that the communist revolution will be as easy as occupying an undefended factory. … The occupation of the factories by the masses of workers is a historical event of the first order. It is a necessary step in the revolutionary development and the class war. But it is necessary to ascertain its significance and reach rigorously and draw from it all the elements that can serve the education of the masses and the strengthening of the revolutionary spirit.[29]

Already in May, soon after the April strikes, Gramsci was acutely aware of the stakes:

> The class war in Italy is currently in a phase that can lead, either to the conquest of political power by the revolutionary proletariat and the movement to new modes of production and distribution that can revive productivity, or to the terrible reaction from the owning and governing classes. No violence designed to reduce the industrial and agricultural proletariat to a state of servile labor will make us retreat.[30]

The Second Congress of the Fascist Movement was held in May. Benito Mussolini began then preparing his "preventive counter-revolution" that would usher him into power two years later—past the debris of the Italian workers' movement.

Translated by Gabriel Ash

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Looking Back at the June 1967 Middle East War

Stephen R. Shalom

June 2017 is the fiftieth anniversary of the 1967 Middle East War—the June War or, as Israelis like to call it, the Six Day War.

Why should we care today about this historical event? For one, the war—with its resulting conquests, refugees, and shifting alliances—helped define the modern Middle East and make it one of the world's great flash points for further conflict. But there are other reasons as well why this war bears re-examination.

The 1967 war helps us focus on the question of when war is justified. To pacifists, all war is unjust. But most people, including most leftists, don't agree that war is always wrong. They believe that under certain limited circumstances war can be justified. But what exactly are those rare circumstances that would permit going to war? Self-defense or defense of others might be such situations. What about preemptive self-defense? To normalize preemption would make the world a much more dangerous place, undercutting the strong presumption that ought to obtain against the use of force in international affairs. But is preemptive self-defense sometimes permissible? Many analysts point to the June War not only as a case of justified war, but as a case—the strongest case, perhaps the only case—of justified preemptive self-defense.[1] So reflecting on the origins of this war will allow us to consider what is widely held to be the strongest case for preemptive war.

Re-examining the June War is also important because Israeli apologists continue to defend the ongoing Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories with claims that Israel acted justly fifty years ago. Now, even if it were the case that the 1967 war were wholly defensive and justified on Israel's part, this cannot justify the continued rule over Palestinians. Even if Egypt, Jordan, and Syria were totally at fault in the war, Palestinians would not lose their right to self-determination or to be free of foreign military occupation. But if Israel acted unjustly fifty years ago, then its occupation is all the more objectionable.

Was an Attack Imminent?

In May 1967, following various Israeli threats against Syria, Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser declared his intention to deter an Israeli attack on Syria and sent his forces into the Sinai Peninsula. On May 18, Nasser ordered the UN peacekeeping force, the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF), to leave the border, and on May 23 he announced the closing of the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping. Bloodcurdling rhetoric about throwing the Jews into the sea was blaring from Radio Cairo, and many people around the world were deeply worried for Israel's safety.

But those who understood the military situation—in the Israeli and U.S. governments—knew that Israel would prevail over any combination of Arab forces, even if the Arabs attacked first.[2] (And this doesn't even take account of Israel's possession of primitive nuclear weapons, unknown to U.S. officials.[3]) Until the historical record became clear, it was difficult for contemporary observers to accurately assess the

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situation, which is why, for example, someone such as Richard Falk, a later champion of Palestinian rights, at first judged Israel to have acted in legitimate self-defense (a view he changed as more evidence became available).[4] But knowing what we do now, it is evident that Israel did not face the danger of destruction.

Moreover, commentators are agreed that no Egyptian attack was imminent on June 5. The Egyptians were deployed defensively. "On the morning of 5 June, when Israel launched her air attacks against Egypt's airfields, the Egyptian armed forces had orders to hold in a defensive posture, ready to absorb an Israeli first strike."[5] Far from preparing to initiate hostilities, on June 4 "Egyptian generals were seen on the tennis courts of Cairo," and the Egyptian commander of the Sinai front was vacationing in Ismailia when the Israelis struck.[6]

The fact that some captured Egyptian documents showed plans for offensive operations does not change things. Many military plans include counter-attacks as part of a defensive strategy. Ben Gurion biographer Michael Bar-Zohar has described a May 25 Egyptian attack plan, but he explains, "It should be mentioned that this attack, as well as an airborne offensive against the Israeli airfields, was to take place only in the event of an outbreak of hostilities in the area."[7]

U.S. intelligence examined the disposition of the Egyptian forces and concluded they were defensively deployed. British intelligence and the UN came to the same conclusion. When Israeli officials warned on May 25 that an Egyptian attack was imminent, Lyndon Johnson ordered the intelligence community to "scrub the data," and they reported back that three U.S. intelligence agencies, looking specifically at the evidence pointed out to them by the Israelis, rejected the Israeli assessment.[8]

Of course, however, in assessing Israel's actions we will be interested to know what Israeli officials reasonably thought at the time. Did they believe that an attack was imminent? The evidence shows that they did not. On June 1, the head of the Israeli intelligence agency, Mossad, told U.S. Secretary of Defense McNamara "that there were no differences between the U.S. and the Israelis on the military intelligence picture

The Egyptian commander of the Sinai front was vacationing in Ismailia on June 4 when the Israelis struck.

or its interpretation."[9] Menachem Begin, who was invited to join the cabinet the week before the war began, commented in 1982, in a speech at the Israeli National Defense College, "In June 1967, we again had a choice. The Egyptian Army concentrations in the Sinai approaches do not prove that Nasser was really about to attack us. We must be honest with ourselves. We decided to attack him."[10]

And in his memoirs, Israeli Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin reported the argument that Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan put forward on June 1:

> The urgency regarding our attack, he felt, was related to the question of how long we could operate before international intervention halted the fighting. We would probably be limited to a time span of three or four days. As long as the Egyptian army was not fully fortified in the Sinai, we could break through its lines swiftly and complete the opening phase of the war in a relatively short time. This would give us more time to rout the Egyptian troops and solidify our gains. But if we dallied, the breakthrough phase would take longer; and if we failed to complete our operations, a partial victory would be interpreted by Egypt as a setback for us. In a nutshell, Dayan's message was that the longer it took to decide, the less we stood to gain from a war. And war, after all, was really the only option open to us.[11]

So it was not the imminence of an Egyptian attack that concerned Dayan, but the imminence of Egypt becoming "fully fortified."

Brigadier-General Aharon Yariv, the head of military intelligence who had favored an Israeli first strike on May 22, well before any suggestion of an Egyptian attack,[12] told the cabinet on June 4 that he was in possession of Egyptian orders indicating a planned assault before the next day.[13] But if he really believed this then he would have insisted that Israel's June 5 attack be moved up. And if the cabinet believed him, they surely would have demanded an immediate initiation of hostilities. On the contrary, several members of the cabinet—including Begin—suggested postponing the June 5 attack.[14]

Operation Dawn

Michael Oren, an American-born Israeli historian and later Israel's ambassador to the United States, argues that in fact there was an Egyptian plan to attack Israel on May 27, Operation Dawn, but that Nasser, warned by the Soviet Union that the Israelis were expecting the strike, cancelled it at the last moment.[15] This argument fails on several grounds.

• The United States had directly told the Egyptians on May 25 that the Israelis said they expected an imminent attack,[16] so there was no new information on May 27 that would have led Nasser to change his mind.[17]

• Oren's evidence for claiming that Nasser ever approved the first-strike plan is very thin. He ignores the testimony of foreign ministry official Salah Boussiany, who recalled that when Nasser learned that Field Marshal Abdel Hakim 'Amr reported that there had been a leak of Egyptian plans, Nasser asked, "Why is 'Amr upset? Does he think we shall start the war?"[18] Whatever Field Marshal 'Amr or Defense Minister Shams Badran may have favored, it was Nasser who had the last word, and he had not opted for war.[19]

• Even if Nasser had approved air strikes on May 27, this would only be relevant if Israel knew about it, which seems highly unlikely.[20] Israeli officials did tell the Americans that they feared an imminent attack, but we know something of what went into that warning. On May 25, the director general of the Israeli Foreign Ministry wanted to inform Washington that Israel was about to initiate an all-out assault. Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol stated, "Better say there is a danger of an attack on Israel." And Chief of Staff Rabin declared, "We'll say there is a danger of a comprehensive Egyptian-Syrian attack on Israel."[21]

• Israel told U.S. officials that an Arab attack was imminent,[22] but the CIA reported that it did not consider this a serious estimate: "We think it is probably a gambit intended to influence the U.S."[23] This was the same view held by Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban, who—writing after the events, when he would have had access to information that he might not have been aware of at the time—referred to the Israeli warnings as "hypochondriac."[24] The CIA and Eban were correct: The Israeli intelligence assessment was not reporting any imminent attack.[25] On a copy of the telegram sent to the Israeli ambassador in Washington, Eshkol wrote, "All to create an alibi."[26]

• Oren's argument also fails from a logical point of view. His claim cannot justify Israeli preemption because whatever Egypt may have been planning on May 27, no Israeli preemption of those plans took place. The Israelis launched their attack more than a week later, after (on Oren's reading) Nasser cancelled Operation Dawn, after Nasser had agreed to send his vice president to Washington for talks, after Nasser had made categorical promises to UN Secretary-General U Thant[27] and to various U.S. and Soviet emissaries, publicly and privately,[28] that he would not initiate hostilities. Abba Eban has recorded what he told the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Arthur Goldberg, when Goldberg reported to him what Nasser had said to U Thant: "I said that I found this assurance convincing. Nasser did not want war; he wanted victory without war."[29] Such a view clearly doesn't indicate an imminent attack that had to be preempted. And interviews with Egyptian participants indicate that Nasser told his commanders on June 2 that Egypt would not strike first.[30]

The Dangers of Waiting

Any assessment of the justification for preemption must take account of the dangers of failing to preempt. That is, if failing to preempt would lead to national extinction, there would certainly be a stronger case for preemption than if what was at stake was a somewhat higher casualty rate in a future war. Any country could argue that by refraining from striking first it might suffer higher casualties than if it waited, and if this justified preemption then every country would have the right to attack any other country. The case for preemption must be based on a more substantial danger than this.

U.S. experts were confident that Israel would win a war against its Arab neighbors. Lyndon Johnson told Abba Eban that U.S. intelligence analysts were unanimous that if Egypt attacks, "you will whip the hell out of them."[31] Note that this assessment was not just about the result if Israel struck first, but if Egypt did.

Even if an attack was not imminent, would waiting have constituted an existential threat to Israel? Would waiting have led to an increasingly precarious military position for Israel or to Israeli economic collapse?

The U.S. National Security Council concluded if Israel waited a week it would still win. The "Israeli concern about delaying a war which they fear is inevitable is based primarily on their concern about a deterioration in their political and diplomatic position rather than on military factors."[32]

In the weeks before the war, arms were pouring into Israel from Europe, especially from France, which had "opened its armories to Israel."[33] On the eve of the war, France declared an embargo on arms to Israel, and Israeli officials suggested that this made it imperative to go to war before the military balance shifted.[34] In fact, however, the French embargo covered heavy equipment, but not spare parts, which continued flowing until 1969.[35] More importantly, the French embargo was a (failed) attempt to prevent the impending war. As De Gaulle told the Israeli ambassador, the embargo would last "as long as it is not clear if you will not go to war."[36] Had Israel been able to assure France that it had no intention of launching a first strike, French arms could have continued flowing. So Israel's defensive military position was not at risk of declining after June 5, only its ability to carry out an offensive war. As Lyndon Johnson advised Israel, "If Israel is attacked, our judgment is that the Israelis would lick them. Time would not work against Israel, it would not lose by waiting. … During this period there would not be any deterioration in the Israeli military position."[37]

> U.S. intelligence examined the disposition of the Egyptian forces and concluded they were defensively deployed.

If there was no great military danger from waiting, what about the economic danger? Did the economic costs of having called up its reserves make the Israeli mobilization unsustainable, leading to collapse if maintained much longer?

The first point to note is that the burdens of mobilization impinged not just on Israel. The Egyptian army on the eve of the war (excluding those tied down in Yemen) included 80,000 reserves.[38] Egyptian boys of 17 to 18 had been hastily recruited, given weapons, and sent to Sinai with no training.[39] Undersecretary of State Eugene Rostow told the Israelis that Washington had taken steps to put financial pressure on Egypt, and reported that "we see signs UAR [Egyptian] forces [are] beginning to hurt from lack [of] food and water in their desert deployment"; Rostow indicated that it was the U.S. view that Egypt would "likely suffer more from long mobilization than Israel."[40] But whatever the impact on Egypt, a lengthy mobilization did not spell disaster for Israel because U.S. officials made clear that they would compensate Israel for the costs of mobilization.[41] At $1 million a day,[42] the amounts were hardly beyond the capabilities of the United States. And the amounts would be no more an affront to Israel's spirit of self-reliance than the massive amounts of foreign aid provided by Washington following Israel's recourse to war in 1967.

Last Resort

In judging the justice of a preemptive war, we need to look not just at the imminent threat, but—as in judging any war—whether the resort to war was in fact the last resort: whether there were means short of war that might have addressed the problems. In the case of the June War there were several steps that Israel could have taken that would have substantially mitigated the dangers of an Egyptian attack.

When Nasser demanded the removal of UNEF from the Egyptian side of the border with Israel, this increased the danger of war because at that point the two adversaries faced each other directly without the presence of UN troops between them. UNEF had first been deployed in 1957, following the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Egyptian territory after the combined Israeli-British-French invasion of Egypt in 1956. UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold raised with Eban (then the Israeli ambassador to the UN) the possibility of UNEF being placed on both sides of the armistice line, but Eban "ridiculed this matter and refused to discuss it."[43] Hammarskjold as well as U.S. officials worried about the "mortal danger to life of UNEF, which is implicit in Israeli unwillingness to station it on her side of demarcation line."[44] Secretary of State Dulles instructed his UN ambassador to tell Hammarskjold regarding the necessity of stationing UNEF on both sides of the demarcation line, "In this case Israel is very much in the wrong. The Secretary-General should make clear Israel's refusal to agree to this. He should press this point hard in public and make it clear to all the world."[45]

In May 1967, when Nasser withdrew his consent to UNEF being stationed on Egyptian territory, Secretary-General U Thant, as well as the governments of the United States, Britain, and Canada, asked Israel if it would be willing to accept the UNEF troops on its side of the border. The Israeli UN ambassador dismissed the idea out of hand: "Ridiculous, Israel is not the Salvation Army and would not be willing to accept UN discards from Egypt."[46]

Israeli officials noted, correctly, that repositioning UNEF on the Israeli side of the border would not address the problem of the Gulf of Aqaba. (The presence of UNEF forces on Egyptian soil at Sharm al-Sheikh had prevented Egypt from closing the Gulf to Israeli traffic. Nasser had formally ordered the withdrawal of UNEF on May 18 and declared the straits closed to Israeli vessels and strategic cargoes on May 23.) We will consider the closure of the straits below, but here it is sufficient to note that Sharm al-Sheikh, which did not border Israeli territory, had no relevance to the question of an Egyptian armed attack on Israel. Therefore, Israel's refusal to accept UNEF on its territory undermines its argument that its preemptive strike was justified by the threat of imminent attack. U Thant and Odd Bull, the chief UN observer in the region, both believed that Israeli agreement to reposition UNEF on its side of the border might have averted war.[47]

Was Closing the Straits of Tiran the First Strike in a War?

Many Israeli officials and advocates have argued that Israel's attack on June 5 was justified not so much by the threat of an imminent attack by Egypt, but because the war had already begun: Nasser's closing of the Straits of Tiran was an act of war in violation of international law, an act that Israel had warned in 1957 would justify

Israeli action in self-defense. So in this view the war began on May 22 or May 23—with the closing of the straits—and Israel's June 5 actions were a response to and not an initiation of war.[48]

But almost all others—including many who supported Israel's position that it was entitled to unimpeded access to the Gulf of Aqaba—rejected this notion of what constituted the first shot. Lyndon Johnson and numerous other U.S. officials warned Israel not to "make itself the guilty party by starting a war"[49]—a warning that would make no sense if the war had already begun. The French government too did not believe that the first shot had already been fired.[50] And, of course, the Israeli government refers to the 1967 war as "the Six Day War," not the "19 Day War."

But even if the war didn't begin on May 23, was the Egyptian action in closing the gulf an act of war, entitling Israel to take military measures in response? This is a two-part question: first, whether the Egyptian move violated international law, and second, what Israel's legal recourse was.

The U.S. government and many other maritime powers took the view that the Gulf of Aqaba was legally an international waterway and that Egypt had no right to restrict access to it. There were many good arguments in support of this position, but there were some good counter-arguments as well.[51] The Convention on the Territorial Sea adopted at the Law of the Sea conference in 1958 supported the right of innocent passage in the gulf, but the relevant section was adopted in committee by the far-from-overwhelming vote of 31-30, with 10 abstentions.[52] Moreover, under international law, a convention binds a state only if the state itself has ratified it, unless the convention is reiterating existing law. Egypt did not accede to the convention, and, according to the head of the U.S. delegation to the conference, the relevant section of the convention represented a "new" rule,[53] thus at least raising doubts as to whether it bound Egypt.[54]

Under international law the right of innocent passage normally even permits the passage of warships that are not acting in a manner prejudicial to the coastal state. But the state of belligerency between Israel and Egypt made this not a normal situation. In 1957, UN Secretary-General Hammarskjold had advised that if Israel tried to send warships through the straits, he would consider Egypt justified in stopping Israeli commercial shipping in the gulf.[55] And, tellingly, from 1957 to 1967 Israel—normally so quick to assert its rights—never sought to have its military vessels transit the straits.[56] Because of the issue of belligerency, Charles Yost, Lyndon Johnson's special envoy to the Middle East, stated that the legal case for free passage "is at least open to doubt."[57] But even more significantly, in private "Israel was not at all sure about its legal right to freely pass through the Straits."[58]

> Interviews with Egyptian participants indicate that Nasser told his commanders on June 2 that Egypt would not strike first.

Even if Israel's right of passage were clear-cut, however, that doesn't mean that Egypt's declaring the straits closed justified a military response from Israel. On March 1, 1957, Israeli Foreign Minister Golda Meir had declared that the country considered interference with its shipping in the Gulf of Aqaba to be a casus belli. But such declarations do not by themselves provide justification for a military response. In 1967, the State Department's legal adviser wrote a memo arguing that there was grave doubt whether international law gave Israel the right to initiate the use of armed force against Egypt in the absence of an actual armed attack and that closure of the straits and even mining did not in themselves constitute an armed attack.[59] And even if Israel were entitled to use force in self-defense in response to an actual armed attack on its shipping through the straits, the legal adviser noted, this would not justify the all-out attack on Egypt that Israel in fact launched.[60]

Though Abba Eban told U.S. officials that denying Israel access to the Gulf of Aqaba would be like requiring Israel to "live on one lung,"[61] this dramatically overstated the economic importance of Nasser's blockade. First, the blockade covered only Israeli-flagged ships or strategic cargoes, including oil, on non-Israeli ships. Israeli-flagged ships arrived at Eilat rather infrequently—117 ships over ten years. In May 1967, Washington asked Israel for this data; Israel collected it but then promptly declared it to be classified, fearing that U.S. officials would conclude that this sea traffic wasn't substantial enough to wage a war over.[62] But the rarity of Israeli flags was known. UN officials reported that an Israeli-flagged ship had not gone through the straits in almost two years,[63] and the French foreign minister considered the number of Israeli ships that used the straits to be "insignificant" and not enough to justify going to war.[64]

> Lyndon Johnson told Abba Eban that U.S. intelligence analysts were unanimous that if Egypt attacks, "you will whip the hell out of them."

As for non-Israeli ships, Israeli exports were not barred at all (except presumably for weapons sales) since nonstrategic cargoes were not affected. So the only significant interruption in Israeli trade was the import of oil. But Eilat was not Israel's only source for oil: It could enter via Israel's Mediterranean coast, and Venezuelan oil via Haifa was cheaper and had roughly the same shipping cost as Iranian oil.[65]

One might argue that even if access to the straits was of no practical value at all it was important for Israel to challenge the announced blockade simply on principle: One shouldn't allow aggressors to benefit from their aggression. But this principle cuts two ways. Before 1956, Israeli ships were barred from the straits. Then, following the Israeli-French-British aggression on Egypt, Israel was able to use the straits. As Nasser wrote to Lyndon Johnson on June 2, 1967, Egypt's position "indeed aims at removing the last vestige of the tripartite aggression, in consonance with the moral principle which rules that no aggressor be rewarded for his aggression."[66] Ten years earlier, President Eisenhower had enunciated the same principle, noting that Israel was unjustly insisting on conditions for its withdrawal from territory it had seized in the Suez war.[67]

One way to resolve the legal issues regarding the status of the Gulf of Aqaba would be to submit the issue to the International Court of Justice (ICJ or World Court). Over the years, Israeli officials were petrified by this prospect.[68] On the other hand, in May to June 1967, Egyptian officials gave several indications that they would be willing to submit the matter to the ICJ, and even that they might have been willing to let oil go through while the court was deliberating.[69] Israel's attack preempted any possibility of a legal resolution.

Israeli officials did consider sending a ship through the straits to have it fired on, as a way to provoke and justify going to war, but they rejected the idea for fear it would warn the Egyptians that an attack was imminent, thereby undermining their surprise attack.[70]

Was War Inevitable?

Was there a possibility of a negotiated solution to the crisis? On June 2, Nasser offered to send his vice president to Washington and to accept

Vice President Humphrey in Cairo for talks. Some U.S. officials saw some promise in these talks,[71] others were skeptical.[72] What is clear, however, is that no vital interests of either Israel or Egypt or any other Arab state were at stake,

> Undersecretary of State Eugene Rostow indicated that Egypt would "likely suffer more from long mobilization than Israel."

given that the shipment of strategic cargoes through the straits was not essential to the Israeli economy, as noted above, and that Israeli access to the straits had not in fact led to passage by military vessels that might have threatened Arab security. Nevertheless, states sometimes fear concessions on nonvital interests out of concern that this will lead to a Munich: a series of incremental reductions in security, none of which is vital, but that cumulatively undermine a vital interest.[73] Many believed that the appetite of the aggressor was whetted by appeasement.

But looking at Israeli-Arab relations, it was not obvious that Israel had been the one victimized by continual aggression.

- In 1953, an Israeli raid on the Jordanian village of Qibya killed 69 civilians, even though Jordan had offered full cooperation in tracking down the infiltrators (not from Qibya) responsible for killing three Israelis. The Security Council, with the affirmative vote of the United States, expressed its "strongest censure" of the Israeli action, while privately the Israeli foreign minister told his colleagues that the attack had "presented us to the entire world as bloodthirsty bandits," and the "stain … would not be washed away for many years."[74]

- In 1954, Israeli military intelligence activated a terrorist cell in Egypt to set off bombs in public places.[75]

- In 1956, of course, Israel had joined with France and Britain to launch an attack on Egypt that world opinion—including the U.S. government—considered an act of unjustified aggression. Even when Israel withdrew from Sinai—under international pressure—it did so in a manner befitting a bully. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) "on Ben-Gurion's instructions … left scorched earth. All military camps and buildings were destroyed; railway lines were dismantled and carted back to Israel; roads were plowed up and certain areas mined."[76]

- In subsequent years, Israel had many border clashes with Syria. Syria surely bore some responsibility for these, but the evidence seems clear that the primary responsibility was Israel's.[77] The Israelis, wrote the commander of the UN Truce Supervision Organization, were "always encroaching on Arab-owned property," in a policy of "deliberate poaching."[78] UN observers reported that 9 out of 10 shooting incidents were provoked by Israel;[79] Moshe Dayan said he thought at least 80 percent of the incidents were intentionally provoked by Israel.[80] In 1964, a U.S. State Department official reported that whereas Syria basically was seeking to retain the situation envisioned in the Armistice Agreements, "Israel consistently sought [to] gain full control." Most UN observers, the official went on, credited the Syrians with restraint in the face of Israel's seizing control of the demilitarized zones by force or threat of force.[81]

- In November 1966, Israeli forces attacked the Jordanian village of Samu, allegedly in response to Palestinian terrorist raids. U.S. officials considered Jordan's efforts to control these raids "active and sincere,"[82] even "extraordinary,"[83] but in any case, "retaliation is not the point in this case. This 3,000-man raid with tanks and planes was out of all proportion to the provocation and was aimed at the wrong target."[84]

- Later that month, Israel shot down two Egyptian MiG-19s. Israel claimed that the planes had entered their airspace, but U.S. officials expressed doubts as to whether Israel's behavior was "as 'innocent' as it claims. We have some difficulty in understanding how aircraft allegedly destroyed over Israel territory happened to fall in" Egypt.[85]

• On April 7, 1967, Israel launched 130 planes over Syria, penetrating deep into the country, hitting numerous targets, and downing six Syrian planes.[86] "Have you lost your mind?" Moshe Dayan screamed at Ezer Weizman, head of military operations. "Can't you see that you are leading this country into war?" David Ben Gurion too thought Prime Minister Eshkol was recklessly turning each reprisal into an act of war.[87]

• In May, the Russians informed the Egyptians that Israel was preparing a major strike on Syria. The specific information relayed by Moscow—that Israeli troops were concentrated on the border—was almost certainly false. But there really were serious threats issued by Israeli officials (at least one of these made it into the CIA's daily brief of the president[88]), and if the attack was to come from the air, border deployments wouldn't be necessary.

Given this background of Israeli aggression, provocations, and threats, it seems hard to suggest that Israel had to go to war rather than accept a compromise that might have whetted the appetite of an aggressor.

Justified War?

There are three additional considerations that should lead us to doubt the Israeli claim that it was acting in justified anticipatory self-defense.

First, there is the matter of the lies on June 5, and well after, as to who fired the first shot. Israel insisted—falsely—that Egypt attacked first. Cover-ups are not usually engaged in by innocent parties. Note that the lie was not just battlefield deception trying to confuse the Arabs. The lie was told to the United Nations and even to the United States, and was repeated long after the guns had fallen silent.[89] At a minimum, Israel's lying suggests that it didn't think its claimed right of preemption under the circumstances would be widely accepted.

> UN officials reported that no Israeli-flagged ship had gone through the straits in almost two years.

Second, there is the matter of Israel's territorial aggrandizement. Consider the case of a defendant explaining that he killed his neighbor for fear that the neighbor was about to kill him. The credibility of this claim would be seriously undermined if, after the killing, the defendant had looted the neighbor's property. This is, of course, not a *decisive* refutation of the claim: The preemptive killing could have been carried out in utterly good faith, with the defendant deciding to commit the theft only afterwards. Nevertheless, we would certainly be suspicious.

On June 5, when Israel launched its offensive, Prime Minister Eshkol publicly declared that Israel had no territorial ambitions and Defense Minister Dayan told his troops, "Soldiers of the IDF, we have no objectives of conquest."[90] When later that summer Dean Rusk reminded Abba Eban of Eshkol's statement, the Israeli foreign minister "simply shrugged his shoulders and said, 'We've changed our minds.'"[91] But in fact, we know that several key Israeli policymakers wanted to acquire more land before the first shot was fired. Yigal Allon wrote an article before the outbreak of fighting in which he stated we "must not cease fighting until we achieve total victory, the territorial fulfillment of the Land of Israel."[92] Levi Eshkol himself told his wife the evening before the war, "We have to take back Jerusalem."[93] And more generally, Ben Gurion had been saying since 1949 that Israel's failure to conquer East Jerusalem and the West Bank in the War of Independence was "a lamentation for generations," a phrase used by many Israeli politicians over the subsequent 18 years.[94]

This is not to say that in April 1967, Israel had a master plan to seize the territories it did.

Clearly there was much that was unpredictable about the way things developed, and appetites grew as the opportunities for conquest became available.

It might be argued that Israel's holding on to East Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza, and the Golan Heights for the next half-century are not evidence of territorial aggrandizement, but simply a bargaining chip for achieving peace, as occurred with Egypt, to whom the Sinai was returned following the Camp David Accords. But there are several reasons for thinking that expansionism has been the consensus view of Israel's leaders, whether or not they all held this view before June 5: (1) Numerous Israeli officials stated early on that Israel would never go back to the 1967 borders.[95] (2) The Israeli cabinet formulated an early peace proposal that offered the Sinai and the Golan Heights to Egypt and Syria in return for peace treaties. Even if this is taken as sincere—and not a maneuver knowing that the Arabs would never accept a deal that failed to include the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem[96]—holding on to these latter territories cannot be reconciled with a lack of territorial ambitions.[97] (3) Israel annexed East Jerusalem on June 27, 1967. (4) Several hundred thousand Palestinian residents of the occupied territories were expelled and most of them denied the right to return to their homes,[98] policies consistent with conquest, not bargaining chips. And (5) Israel began moving settlers into the occupied territories within months of the war's end[99]—a policy their legal advisor told them was in contravention of international law[100]—and again, consistent with creating "facts on the ground" for permanent border changes, not bargaining chips.

The third consideration bearing on the Israeli claim of having acted in justified self-defense relates to Syria and Jordan. These two countries fired at Israel before Israel fired at them, so it might seem that this was a clear case of self-defense—not preemptive self-defense, but self-defense when "an armed attack occurs." Indeed, Israeli officials note that they issued a plea to Jordan's King Hussein to stay out of the war, and attacked him only when he rejected their plea and struck Israel first. This

> Ten years earlier, Eisenhower noted that Israel was unjustly insisting on conditions for its withdrawal from territory it had seized in the Suez war.

argument is not compelling, however, because Syria, Jordan, and Egypt all were joined in a defensive military alliance. Article 51 of the UN Charter allows both individual and collective self-defense in the face of an attack. When there is a defensive alliance, an attack on one gives the victim's allies the right to join in the defense. Few argue, for example, that the British and French declaration of war against Germany in 1939 was an act of aggression after Germany attacked their ally.

So if Israel's attack on Egypt was unjustified, then Syria and Jordan had every right to come to the assistance of their ally as part of collective self-defense. But in fact, despite their right to do so, they barely did:

- "While the IAF [Israeli Air Force] pummeled the Egyptian Air Force, the Syrians, Jordanians and Iraqis launched desultory air raids against Israel—all of which failed to find their targets and none of which did any significant damage," in the words of U.S. security analyst Kenneth Pollack.[101]

- "Both the Syrians and the Jordanians did their absolute minimum to help the Egyptians during the war," said Israeli security expert Zeev Maoz.[102]

- The Syrians from the start of the crisis "were prepared to stand immobile on the sidelines while Israel pounded their ally, Egypt, and

Jordan." And "during the initial days of the war, until the Israeli attack commenced on the Golan Heights, the Syrians kept a low profile. Their conduct did not deviate from Syrian behavior patterns from the days before the outbreak of the crisis," according to Israeli historian Eyal Zisser.[103]

• The "Syrians have done the bare minimum to help out since beginning of conflict," reported the U.S. Embassy in Amman on June 6.[104]

Looking at Israeli-Arab relations, it was not obvious that Israel had been the one victimized by continual aggression.

Thus, military necessity could not have been the justification for seizing the West Bank and the Golan Heights.

After Jordan's perfunctory military efforts and Israel's strong response, King Hussein desperately sought an end to the fighting. He prevailed upon Washington to try to arrange a ceasefire directly with Israel, but, in the words of Avi Shlaim, the Jordanian monarch's leading biographer, the "American request prompted the Israeli government to order the army to take the Old City of Jerusalem before the Security Council had a chance to order a ceasefire."[105] At 11 p.m. on June 6, the council did order an immediate and unconditional ceasefire, but the IDF did not respect it. "On the contrary, it intensified its offensive in order to gain as much territory as possible." It was "only after military intelligence reported … that King Hussein had ordered his forces to retreat across the [Jordan] river that Dayan ordered the capture of the entire West Bank." Washington and London urged Israel to accept the ceasefire, but it refused, leading the British prime minister to tell "the Israeli ambassador that Israel's refusal to respond to Hussein's offer of a ceasefire cast doubt on its claims that its war aims were defensive and not territorial."

On the Syrian front, Defense Minister Dayan at first prohibited an Israeli offensive. When kibbutz residents near the border urged an attack, Dayan commented that it would be better to move a few kibbutzim 15 kilometers back, out of range of Syrian artillery, than to conquer the Golan Heights. But he then changed his mind and ordered Israeli forces to take the territory. Was there a new Syrian threat that compelled this reversal? On the contrary. Dayan insisted at the time and later that the capture of the Golan Heights "was unnecessary"; that "the Syrians on the fourth day of the war were no threat to us"; that "we did not have to enter into war with Syria because of their initiatives." What *did* occur between Dayan's two decisions was that the Egyptians had been defeated, the Syrians accepted a ceasefire, and the danger of Soviet intervention seemed reduced. As historian Eyal Zisser concluded, "it seems that the determining factor was the desire of the decision-makers in Israel … to settle accounts with the Syrians for their conduct over the previous two decades of prolonged conflict between the two countries."[106]

Consequences

United Nations Security Council resolution 242 famously refers to the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war. This principle applies both to offensive and defensive wars, but when the war is a war of aggression, the crime of occupation is far greater. Some would argue that it is sometimes permissible to strike first, when one is preempting an imminent enemy attack. But this was not the situation in 1967, which was a clear case of Israeli aggression.

Occupation was only one result of the 1967 war. Israel's decisive military victory led to a tremendous growth of hubris among Israel's leaders. The forces of militarism and maximalist positions were greatly strengthened and those favoring diplomacy and compromise sidelined.

France, once Tel Aviv's closest ally, was replaced by the United States. Before 1967, U.S. support for Israel had been rather minimal; now Washington became Israel's strongest international backer, providing massive military aid and diplomatic protection. From the record, it's not entirely clear whether the Johnson administration gave Israel a green light to go to war, or just an amber one.[107] Either way, with half a million troops in Southeast Asia battling on behalf of militarily incompetent allies, Washington was now delighted to have a partner that could bloody those backed by Moscow without any need for deploying U.S. personnel.

For many American Jews, the 1967 war led to a dramatic increase in support for Israel. For some, it was the pride of being "tough Jews," and no longer passive victims. For others, it was now possible to support Israel while supporting U.S. foreign policy, with no risk of raising the issue of dual loyalty.[108]

Israel's alliance with the United States, however, no more promoted justice for the people of the Middle East—Palestinians, Jews, and others—than did Zionism's and Israel's earlier alliances with other imperial powers. Peace and dignity for all the region's people have always required breaking with Western imperialism. But nor would justice come from the Arab states, whether Nasserist, feudal monarchary, or Ba'athist dictatorship. These regimes have continually pursued their narrow national and class interests and always betrayed the interests of Palestinians.

> Several hundred thousand Palestinian residents of the occupied territories were expelled and denied the right to return, policies consistent with conquest, not bargaining chips.

A socialist alternative to war needs to be built on other foundations: on a real resolution of the Palestinian refugee issue, on an end to occupation, and on true self-determination and social justice for all the people of the Middle East. Zionism claimed its purpose was to offer a safe haven for persecuted Jews. Israel today is instead one of the most dangerous places in the world for Jews to live. The security and well-being of some requires the security and well-being of all.

NOTES

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9. FRUS, 1964–1968, XIX:124, June 1, 1967.

10. Address by Prime Minister Begin at the National Defense College, August 8, 1982, www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/mfadocuments/yearbook6/pages/55%20address%20by%20prime%20minister%20begin%20at%20the%20national.aspx.

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44. FRUS, 1955–1957, XVII:194, March 5, 1957.

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48. See, e.g., statement of Ephraim "Eppy" Evron, the minister at the Israeli embassy in Washington, in Parker, *Six-Day War*, 307. Oddly, Avi Shlaim, generally such an astute analyst of Israeli-Arab relations, has recently written that he considers the closing of the straits for

all intents and purposes to be the firing of the first shot. (Avi Shlaim, "Israel: Poor Little Samson," in *1967 Arab-Israeli War*, ed. Louis and Shlaim, 54.)

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60. Parker, *Politics of Miscalculation*, 111; Parker, *Six-Day War*, 295-96.

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62. Barak, "Between Reality and Secrecy," 679.

63. Rikhye, *Sinai Blunder*, 78. See also Parker, *Politics of Miscalculation*, 47, and Thant, *View from the UN*, 235.

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83. FRUS, 1964–1968, XVIII:332, November 13, 1966.

84. FRUS, 1964–1968, XVIII:333, November 15, 1966. The U.S. later revised the scale of the attack downward, but it was still the largest IDF operation since Suez.

85. FRUS, 1964–1968, XVIII:353, November 30, 1966.

86. Moshe Gat, "On the Use of Air Power and Its Effect on the Outbreak of the Six Day War," *Journal of Military History* (vol. 68, no. 4, Oct., 2004), 1209-10. See also Parker, *Six-Day War*, 97 (F.T. Liu).

87. Gat, "Air Power," 1210.

88. CIA Daily Brief, May 13, 1967, nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB116/pdb19670513.pdf. See also FRUS, 1964–1968, XIX:4, May 15, 1967; Neff, *Warriors for Jerusalem*, 59; Gat, "Air Power," 1213; Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 304; Parker, *Politics of Miscalculation*, 224; Parker, *Six-Day War*, 7, 14-15 (L. Carl Brown & Parker); Popp, "Stumbling Decidedly," 287-88; Thant, *View from the UN*, 228; Yost, "The Arab-Israeli War," 309; Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (Norton, 2001), 236-37.

89. Oren, *Six Days of War*, 169; Segev, *1967*, 337; Odd Bull, *War and Peace in the Middle East: The Experiences and Views of a UN Observer* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1976), 113; Parker, *Six-Day War*, 100; FRUS, 1964–1968, XIX:169, June 5, 1967; Neff, *Warriors for Jerusalem*, 210.

90. Rusk, *As I Saw It*, 388; Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 313. For further quotes along these lines, see Sami Hadawi, *Bitter Harvest: A Modern History of Palestine* (Olive Branch Press, 1989), 222-23.

91. Rusk, *As I Saw It*, 388.

92. Brecher with Geist, *Decisions in Crisis*, 100. The article was published after the war but written before.

93. Neff, *Warriors for Jerusalem*, 195.

94. Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 321.

95. See, e.g., the quotes in Hadawi, *Bitter Harvest*, 223-26; Seth S. King, "Dayan Rules Out Total Pullback from Arab Areas; Links Security of Israel to Occupied Territories," *New York Times*, August 11, 1967, 9. Note that Israel indicated its refusal to return to the 1967 lines *before* the Arab states' September 1, 1967, Khartoum Conference with its famous "three nos." On Jerusalem, Dayan declared on June 7, "We have returned to the holiest of our holy places, never to part from it again." (Quoted in Neff, *Warriors for Jerusalem*, 233.)

96. As Patrick Tyler (*A World of Trouble: The White House and the Middle East—from the Cold War to the War on Terror* [Farrar Straus Giroux, 2009], 103) suggests.

97. The offer to Egypt and Syria was probably never communicated to them. (Shlaim, *Iron Wall*, 253-54.)

98. Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 327-29. See also Segev, *1967*, 523-42.

99. The government resolution on settling Golan lands was adopted at the end of August 1967 and "classified top secret." (Segev, *1967*, 574-75.)

100. Donald Macintyre, "Secret memo shows Israel knew Six Day War was illegal," *The Independent* (London), May 26, 2007; Segev, *1967*, 576. About six months after the war there were more than 800 settlers. (Segev, *1967*, 580.)

101. Kenneth Pollack, "Air Power in the Six-Day War," *Journal of Strategic Studies* (vol. 28, issue 3, June 2005), 474.

102. Maoz, *Defending the Holy Land*, 310. See also van Creveld, *Sword and Olive*, 179-80, 191.

103. Eyal Zisser, "June 1967: Israel's Capture of the Golan Heights," *Israel Studies* (vol. 7, no. 1, Spring 2002), 172, 181.

104. Neff, *Warriors for Jerusalem*, 229.

105. Shlaim, *Lion of Jordan*, 249, 245, 251.

106. Zisser, "Israel's Capture…," 188, 168, 169, 185, 189, 187. As Lt. Gen. Haim Bar-Lev put it, "I do not want to think of a situation where the war ends without the Syrians getting what they deserve." (Ibid.)

107. Shlaim, "Israel," in Louis & Shlaim, 38; Gluska, *Israeli Military...*, 249.

108. Paul Breines, *Tough Jews* (Basic Books, 1990); Norman G. Finke lstein, *Knowing Too Much: Why the American Jewish Romance with Israel Is Coming to an End* (OR Books, 2012), 36-43.

Self-organization in the 2016 Palestinian Teachers Strike

Mike Noonan

From February 14 to March 13, 2016, 35,000 Palestinian teachers in the West Bank government-run school system were on strike. The teachers' goal was to hold the Palestinian Authority to the terms of a 2013 agreement between the General Union of Palestinian Teachers (GUPT) and the Ministry of Education, an agreement the Palestinian Authority had reneged on for three years running. (*Ma'an News,* Feb. 16, 2016) The strike was enormous, mobilizing mass demonstrations involving up to 20,000 teachers and supporters who flooded the streets of downtown Ramallah with signs and bullhorns. (*Ma'an News,* Feb. 22, 2016) According to Murad Tamimi, the International Relations Coordinator for the GUPT, "I've never seen anything like it; I thought it could be the end of the P.A." These mobilizations were met with unprecedented repression on the part of the Palestinian Authority, which set up checkpoints to intercept teachers traveling to Ramallah and used violence and intimidation to try to suppress the movement. (*Ma'an News,* Mar. 11, 2016) The strike ended when Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas announced his support for honoring the 2013 agreement, a statement that the teachers accepted. (*Ma'an News,* Mar. 12, 2016)

How did the Palestinian teachers mobilize on such an unprecedented scale? The answer lies in the form of organization that the teachers used to mobilize: democratically elected strike committees that took the lead of the strike away from the official union apparatus.

Moral and Material Grievances

Teachers in the Palestinian government-run schools work under horrendous conditions that make education nearly impossible. According to one teacher from Hebron who participated in the strike, his current salary is 3,900 shekels ($1,000) per month, although he has worked as a teacher for 23 years. At the same time, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics reports that the average budget of a West Bank family is 5,091 shekels ($1,333). (*Ma'an News,* Mar. 1, 2016) It is no surprise, therefore, that most teachers have a second job. The absolute insufficiency of teachers' salaries was a major theme in all of the speeches, signs, slogans, and messages teachers used to represent themselves in their mobilizations.

The Scope of the Strike

The strike was a spontaneous reaction on the part of the teachers after three years of petitioning the Palestinian Authority to honor the 2013 agreement, which, however insufficient, stipulated yearly wage increases to keep up with the cost of living. According to strike committee member Wasfi al-Bargouthi, "The strike happened accidentally. [The strike] was not planned. After the teachers announced the strike, the strike committee began to organize, committees at schools, meetings, and many things. No one planned [the strike]. It was an explosion without leaders." (interview with the

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author, July 27, 2016)

On Monday, February 15, 4,000 teachers marched to the Prime Minister's office, where they were met with stony silence. (*Ma'an News,* Mar. 11, 2016) Protests escalated, and the next day, 20,000 teachers and supporters demonstrated in Ramallah. After that, protests were

> The teachers' goal was to hold the Palestinian Authority to a 2013 agreement that it had reneged on for three years.

met with repression by armed security forces, and ultimately 22 teachers as well as two school principals were arrested. (*Ma'an News,* Feb. 18, 2016)

The repression on the part of the Palestinian Authority included the official use of police violence and checkpoints, repressive techniques associated with the Israeli occupation forces. In addition to the official repression, there are indications that threats were made to bus and taxi drivers that their licenses would be revoked if they facilitated teachers reaching the protests. (*Ma'an News,* Mar. 2, 2016) This repression is deeply embarrassing for the Palestinian Authority. The authorities claimed that the checkpoints were "not to deny teachers entry to Hebron," but were there to "ambush fugitives." (*Ma'an News,* Mar. 1, 2016) The official story does little to obscure the naked fact that the Palestinian Authority brought a new level of repression down against the population it supposedly represents.

The GUPT Caves In

The teachers organized and sustained the strike by forming strike committees elected from the ranks of the teachers. The formation of the committees during the 2016 strike was a direct response to the default of the GUPT in its formal role representing the teachers. According to Anwar Awad, a teacher from Nablus,

> The general union didn't do right by the teachers. They put them down, humiliated the teachers, and didn't give them their rights, so [the teachers] started this kind of strike. And because the government has a policy not to give the union anything and make it so weak, [the teachers] tried to do something on their own, away from the union or any official body or institution. (Interview with the author, July 22, 2016)

The strike committee method was transmitted by veteran activists of past strikes. Nabeel Samarra, a former teacher, veteran activist, and one of the renegade school principals who spent time in jail during the strike, relates his role in the 2016 strike: "We held a big meeting, and we said every school should choose one teacher … and form a committee in each governorate." (Interview with the author, July 27, 2016)

Anwar Awad was part of a committee formed in response to the meeting in Ramallah:

> We chose one representative from each of the 150 schools in Nablus, and then we chose five to represent the governorate. The five were not decision-makers. They had to go back to the 150 and discuss with the 150. So we have 150 representatives. If they want to do something they go to the 150 and discuss it, then they go to the other governorates and take the decision. The 150 representatives met whenever there was anything coming from the government. (Awad interview)

The committees facilitated the mobilization of teachers to carry out various roles in the strike movement. The committees formed subcommittees to deal with negotiations, legal affairs, and communications. Everything was posted on Facebook or other social media for the rank and file teachers to engage with and was widely disseminated through professional, social, and family networks. (Awad interview)

The Role of Political Leadership

The political leadership of veteran activists was essential to the organization of the strike committees. According to Omar Assaf, a veteran teacher activist and historian of the teachers movement, the committees have a history stretching back decades: "The strike committees have their roots in the underground committees organized during the period of direct military occupation from 1967 to 1993." (Omar Assaf Interview with the author, July 29, 2017)

During the period of direct Israeli rule, such committees were underground, constituted by self-selected activists. The Palestinian political parties that make up the Palestine Liberation ORganization (PLO) actively facilitated the creation and extension of underground unions among other popular organizations. During this period the union activists framed their mobilizations in terms of nationalist demands directed against the Israeli occupation, as well as demands for union rights and material gains. As Omar Assaf relates,

> We had three main demands during that period. We wanted a curriculum that reflected Palestinian history, culture, and identity, with adequate libraries, sports, and other programs for Palestinian youth. We wanted the right to have a legal union, a human right, and finally we wanted higher salaries, smaller class sizes, and shorter hours of work. (Assaf interview)

While the PLO was encouraging these struggles as part of the nationalist project, it was simultaneously preparing their absorption into the hoped-for project of state-building.

During the Oslo period, these formerly underground activists found themselves in conflict with the Palestinian Authority. The teacher activists confronted the officialdom of the GUPT, part of the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU), which was founded in 1965 with links to the Palestinian Liberation Organization. Along with the PLO, the PGFTU returned to the Occupied Territories and, according to Assaf, "established from above unions for everyone: women, teachers, etc. The political parties were apportioned seats based on their political importance in the PLO. There was no democratic representation. The sector and the leader didn't correspond." Of course, this is not an anomaly in the history of nationalist movements in the Middle East or elsewhere.

The current GUPT, part of this Oslo apparatus, is no more democratic today than in 1994. The union's general secretary and central committee are elected by 10,000 teachers, electors hand-picked by the current GUPT leadership and ultimately the PLO. Furthermore, the union is funded by the PLO rather than by dues collected from its membership. The union's general secretaries tend to receive lucrative diplomatic appointments from the PLO after serving their time. All of these factors make it difficult for Palestinian teachers to see their interests reflected in the activities of the GUPT.

During the Oslo period, many activists remained outside of the GUPT but continued organizing committees when conflicts erupted. Unlike during the period of direct military rule,

Democratically elected strike committees took the lead of the strike away from the official union apparatus.

these committees could function in the open with broader participation and elections. One of those activists, Naim Aruri, recalls an important teachers strike in 1997:

> So the first meeting was here in the park in 1997. [The activists] contacted each school and said you have to send one representative per school. One from each school in each governorate. A democratic way. They chose a committee for each city or governorate. Through the governorate committees they chose the top committee.

This expanded committee structure developed a further innovation. Regular elections were held to fill open positions on the committee so that "if one of us got arrested, we would just elect someone else." (Interview with the author, July 27, 2016)

Accepting the Unacceptable

The strike committees are the crucial component that enabled teachers not only to mobilize for the 2016 strike but also to demobilize without feeling defeated. On February 16, the GUPT under General Secretary Ahmed Suhail met with the officials of the Palestinian Authority and brokered a deal that would secure an implementation of the 2013 agreement by the end of 2016. The teachers, through the strike committees, flatly rejected the agreement and maintained the strike. However, on March 13, after a month of the strike, President Mahmoud Abbas announced his plan to settle the strike under the same conditions, and on that day, the strike committees accepted those conditions. For the teachers, the element of victory lay in the fact that they had presented such a visible force in the face of the Palestinian Authority, and that the strike committees could be called upon again to organize another round of struggle. As Anwar Awad puts it,

> Repression on the part of the Palestinian Authority included the official use of police violence and checkpoints, repressive techniques associated with the Israeli occupation forces.

> The most important thing is that we sent a message and our voice was spread all over, especially to the government, our voice as teachers. The other thing, the Palestinian people and other people heard about the teachers' rights and they know that the teachers need rights. … If the government does not apply what it promised, we will do different activities, including strike as well as going to the court and pressing charges." (Awad interview)

Likewise Naim Aruri sees the movement as a success in spite of the demobilization. According to him,

> You have to try to do something. The union is against you, the P.A. is against you. In spite of that we succeeded to do something to tell the Palestinian people these are our problems, and we need this and that. The majority of the Palestinian people and the students themselves supported us. Many of them were with us. (Aruri interview)

Wasfi al-Barghouti adds,

> The biggest demonstration ever in this country took place in this strike. There were 20,000 people in the streets of Ramallah! No one was paid. No one was forced. And many teachers came even though it cost them money! The security forces set up checkpoints and threatened us! But our teachers were brave and we continued until we told them to finish." (al-Barghouti interview)

Omar Assaf, speaking today as an adviser and ally of the teachers, states, "Until you establish a true union, the problem will continue. Democratic, independent, and unified. I think the movement is active because the teachers' situation is bad and the union does nothing. And the teachers write on Facebook and Twitter. It's not finished." (Assaf interview)

Reviewing the Movement, Looking Forward

The Palestinian Authority's reneging on the 2013 agreement provided the trigger for the mobilization in 2016. The unwillingness or inability of the GUPT to impose the conditions written into the 2013 agreement created a situation in which it was possible for the teachers to act through the strike committees, sustain their movement, and finally demobilize.

The reaction of the Palestinian Authority to the strike has been to reshuffle, but ultimately strengthen, the union bureaucracy. On March 14, the PLO appointed a new Central Committee of the GUPT, led by General Secretary Said Irziqat. On October 2, the Palestinian Authority announced that teachers engaged in any new strike action would be subject to layoffs. (*Ma'an News*, Oct. 3, 2016) The minister of education has visited the GUPT offices repeatedly since the strike, aiming to enlist the union itself in monitoring and disciplining teachers who are engaged in organizing. (Murad Tamimi interview with the author, July 15, 2016) Even after the strike, teachers have faced continued intimidation including violence. (*Ma'an News,* Apr. 7, 2016) During my interview with Nabeel Samarra, our volunteer translator, an English teacher from Ramallah, broke off halfway through the interview and excused himself because the content had become too alarming for him to translate.

The teachers' relationship to the GUPT and the Palestinian Authority is only one facet of changes between Palestinian society and the Palestinian Authority. Elections to municipal positions were to be held in October 2016, however these elections were called off by the Palestinian Authority at the last minute when it appeared that their favored candidates would be challenged by Hamas-linked candidates as well as by a joint list of the left-wing parties. (*Ma'an News,* Oct. 2016) Official avenues of contestation are being closed off, and dissident voices are being disciplined.

The future is far from certain, but everyone involved in the strike anticipates more conflicts over the same issues. The teachers do not feel defeated, and they don't feel that the story is over. As Anwar Awad said, "We have the committees ready to go; they are just sleeping." Of course, a real solution to the problems the teachers face is wrapped up in all of the political problems of the Palestinian situation, beginning first and foremost with the Israeli occupation. The importance of the strike committees is in demonstrating that self-organization on a class basis is a latent force that can shake the foundations of oppressive power structures, potentially shifting the balance of forces that seem so overwhelmingly arrayed against the majority of ordinary Palestinians, both within their own society and in conflict with the Israeli occupation. Viewed from this angle, the experience of the strike committees will be to the credit of future struggles of all sorts.

"The strike committees have their roots in the underground committees organized during the period of direct military occupation from 1967 to 1993."

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Socialism from Below? Bolivia in an Age of Extractivism

NICOLE FABRICANT AND BRET GUSTAFSON

BOLIVIA RECEIVED GLOBAL ATTENTION for its anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist social movements in the twenty-first century. Best known perhaps were the Water Wars, against water privatization, in 2000 and the Gas Wars, demanding nationalization of the gas industry, in 2003. These rebellions entailed a radical rethinking of natural resource use and distribution. Protestors were challenging the privatization mantra of the free-market "Washington Consensus" and demanding rights to assert popular sovereignty over natural resources like gas. Both helped propel the self-proclaimed socialist and Indigenous coca grower Evo Morales to the presidency in 2006, where he continues today. This was the emergent strategy of the Latin American left, to assert popular sovereignty in the streets and to gain power through the ballot box. With Morales' victory, the movements pushed for the remaking of the state into one founded on the politics of movements, with the decadent and elitist political parties relegated to the dustbin. The movements proposed an ambitious agenda: radical agrarian reform, nationalization of key industries, deepening of Indigenous rights, and the dismantling of racism, patriarchy, and inequality, in short, decolonization. A new constitution would give birth to this new state, no longer a liberal republic of (un)representative electoralism, but a "plurinational state" founded on the organic reality of the grassroots—Indigenous peoples, workers, and small-farmers unions.

This was an ambitious agenda for an electoral project lacking hegemonic control over the military and confronting reactionary, de facto power holders in much of the country. Over a ten-year period, the government has accomplished some of its goals. There have been great successes on some fronts, for example land redistribution and a range of redistributive mechanisms such as jobs programs, cash transfer policies, and infrastructure investment. Bolivia has seen a notable reduction in extreme poverty (which dropped by half), tripling of the minimum wage, and the inclusion of Indigenous people and women into important government positions. The new constitution was adopted in 2009,[1] and at least symbolically, there is an ongoing dismantling of a white supremacist logic of rule that is at least 500 years old.

At the same time, many on the left in Bolivia and beyond have felt disappointed and defeated. The old-style political parties were not relegated to the dustbin, nor did the movements achieve their goal of becoming

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the organic representatives of the people. The dominant economic structure of the country—the export of raw materials, especially soy, gas, and minerals—has not changed much. While redistributive policies and the move to keep capital in the country have had notable and positive effects, Bolivia remains entangled in the interests of global capital. These forces continue to structure internal power relations and increasingly undermine progressive legislative actions. Today many radical intellectuals and movements who backed Morales and the *Movimiento al Socialismo* (Movement for Socialism, or MAS) are disillusioned by the many compromises of this administration. These include corruption scandals, a revival of militaristic nationalism, and Evo's own machismo.

Some of this discontent was reflected in the referendum vote in February 2016. A "yes" vote would have allowed Morales to run for a fourth term in 2019. Yet the "no" vote won by 136,000 votes, or 2.6 percent. As many commentators have mentioned, perhaps this is simply voter fatigue, where many feel that MAS has been in power long enough. But it may also be the case that the traditional bases of support may be starting to question this government. Ultimately, the future of Bolivia remains uncertain. There are stirrings of a new attempt to allow for a re-election, and the right-wing opposition has neither an alternative plan nor an alternative candidate. The MAS may field its own successful candidate in Evo's place. So, has the electoral path to socialism been exhausted? No. But its outcome has been troubling: the demobilization of movements and modest changes to a state system that is still constrained by structures of economic dependence. So what happened over the past ten years? And where does Bolivia go from here?

Critics of Morales have argued that extractivism, even with "social" redistribution, destroys nature, deepens authoritarian politics, and furthers dependence on global capitalist markets. Critics also charge that the apparent boom in the present masks the absence of a real economic vision for the future. In the name of the Pachamama, or Mother Earth, it follows, extractivism contributes to ecosystemic ruptures such as global warming. In contrast, those defending social extractivism argue that it is merely an instrument of economic transformation, necessary to address poverty in the present and lay the foundation for a new economy and society in the future. Compared to neoliberal regimes, it follows, Bolivia (and Ecuador) are socially and environmentally progressive, with the state using gas and mineral rents to promote economic diversification through industrialization, new local economies, and education for a post-extractive technology economy. Despite ongoing dependence on global capital, it is argued, this is the path toward twenty-first-century socialism.[2]

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Obstacles or Challenges Within the MAS

One of the MAS regime's greatest challenges has been confronting Bolivia's dependency on large-scale agro-industry (mostly soy) and extractive industries (particularly gas and minerals). These industries are the key source of export revenues, and, at least under the MAS, are now crucial for sustaining the redistributive agenda (limited as it is). Bolivia's former ambassador to the UN, Pablo Solon, now part of the sympathetic yet critical opposition, writes that the "original idea of MAS was to nationalize hydrocarbons in order to redistribute the wealth and advance from extractivism of raw materials and diversify the economy."[3] Yet a decade later, Bolivia is more dependent than ever on exports. Solon asks, "Why have we stalled?" Some would argue that this is Bolivia's history (or destiny): An abundance of natural resources that are coveted by foreign markets leads to an almost inevitable push to monetize them. The least worst option, the MAS seems to say, is exerting state control over the distribution of rents, royalties, and taxes derived from them. Yet what is often overlooked is the ongoing embeddedness of foreign capital in local, regional, and national political decision-making. Can a socialist economy be constructed on an extractivist base? And how, and in what ways, does a model of extractivism shape and influence multiple scales of governance? A look at each of these sectors—the agrarian, the gas and energy, and the minerals—outlines the complex political challenges for rethinking socialism from below.

Eastern Bolivia, with its economic center in the city of Santa Cruz, is the stronghold of the agro-industrial sector and has also been the key site of opposition to the MAS project.[4] Local elites spawned a racist and separatist opposition movement even before Evo was elected. Their supporters—including, at times, the U.S. government, but more nearby, Brazilian rural elites with ties to Sao Paolo and international financial capital—continue to influence politics in the East. Morales began in 2007 with plans to implement a radical agrarian revolution in a region where 90 percent of the land is owned by 1 percent of the population.[5] Yet resistance from elites in the lowlands prevented any large-scale recovery of "private" lands—though much of these were ill-gotten in the era of Bolivia's dictators. For the moment, political-economic relations between foreign capital and regional agrarian power have pushed Morales to negotiate with agrarian elites. Linda Farthing calls this "private sector pragmatism."[6] Against MAS' proclamations in defense of Mother Earth, and against GMO capital, Brazilian soy producers have allied with regional elites of Santa Cruz to press MAS to remove all restrictions on genetically modified soy. By 2010, the MAS reached a kind of détente with the eastern business elite in order to quell the reactionary putsch of agrarian capital. Vice President Álvaro García Linera, former guerrilla fighter and Marxist theoretician, went so far as to affirm in 2014 that the MAS government would be neither a rival nor a competitor to the Santa Cruz business community, but rather an ally for economic growth. Thus, little by little, the agrarian revolution stalled. As Pablo Solon argued, "The process of change had not only been captured by the logic of power but the interests of the right-wing business sectors undermined it from within."[7] Solon argues that those government leaders who were captured by the logic of power opted for a strategy of signing agreements with economic representatives of the opposition, "an economic carrot to go with the political stick." The social, economic, and ecological consequences are troubling.

What has happened to agrarian social movements? One case is revealing. The Landless Peasant Movement (MST-Bolivia)—taking inspiration from the more well-known Brazilian Landless Movement—was a force to be reckoned with in the East in the late 1990s and early 2000s. As allies of the nascent MAS upsurge, they occupied *latifundio* (estate) lands in the East typically owned by enemies of the left. They squatted on haciendas, creating makeshift homes and communities until—with the MAS in power—the government seized and redistributed the land. The intent of the movement was to call for a wider and more radical agrarian reform while also challenging the agro-industrial and export-oriented model. This meant rescaling production to peasants—or at least, cooperative-scale agriculture—and building local, domestic markets. Prior to MAS' rise to power, there were vibrant

MST communities in the East experimenting with intercropping instead of fertilizers and pesticides, producing foods like peanuts and beans for domestic markets, and building a horizontal form of politics in contrast to the hierarchical union model. MST communities struggled with the question of collectivizing labor and redistributing surplus wealth back into the settlements. These communities represented a kind of hope for an alternative agricultural model but also for a distinct political and economic model that through "occupations" across the countryside could spread and reproduce itself. While MST did not imagine meeting the food needs of the entire population, these small-scale communes served as a form of political resistance and a practical way to meet subsistence level needs for campesino families. Much like what George Ciccariello-Maher describes in *Building the Commune,* about Venezuelan grass-roots experiments with socialism,[8] MST communes were "experiments" or political projects whereby workers seized the means of production from economic elites and began to govern and produce within these spaces, at best an escape from the crisis of capitalism. However, in the case of Bolivia, these more radical initiatives failed to build the kinds of autonomous agrarian initiatives that we might see in northeastern Brazil or Chiapas, Mexico. These ideas of horizontality and self-governance are still nourished in local memories, but with the agrarian détente, the movement has been debilitated. Pressures for land redistribution are now selectively addressed, while occupations have been deemed illegal by the Morales administration. Many of the rural proletariat migrated to peripheral neighborhoods on the outskirts of booming city centers like Santa Cruz and are now eking out a living in the informal economy. Hopes for alternative agro-ecology may still be part of a vision of "socialism from below," but for the moment have been somewhat disarticulated.

Energetic Revolution?

Bolivians rallied to nationalize the gas industry in 2003, and President Evo Morales fulfilled the demand in 2006. Though not technically "nationalized," since foreign firms still operate most of the exploration and extraction processes, the move increased transfer of rents (superprofits), taxes, and royalties from natural gas to the government treasury. This has provided most of the financing for the redistributive efforts of the state. It has also fueled corruption and enriched regional governments that have a decidedly anti-socialist orientation. Bolivia's government now speaks of the country as the "energetic hub" of South America. Gas exports go mainly to Brazil and Argentina. There are also plans to export electricity produced by gas, solar, and hydropower. For the moment, gas is king. The country appears poised to drill new gas (and oil) wells in protected areas and has already sparked protest in some Indigenous territories. Fracking may not be far behind. In the short term, gas rents have shored up the economy. Yet structurally and materially, fossil-fuel based growth will only deepen contradictions and exacerbate historic inequalities. The ecological left in Bolivia is pushing for a more radical vision such that extractivism truly becomes a bridge to collectively owned and controlled alternative energy projects. Though Brazil wants to dam rivers on the shared border (and another dam is planned in the Amazonian region north of La Paz), many commentators have suggested that if Bolivia were to invest one billion dollars, it could generate 500 megawatts of solar energy, which is about one-third of the present national demand.[9] Bolivia could support solar at multiple scales that would turn electricity consumers into energy producers. Electricity export—from solar—may also be a possibility.

The political effect of fossil-fuel extraction—capital intensive, labor scarce, and centrally managed—can only be dismantled by new energy infrastructures, whether in the United States or Bolivia. Yet a socialist praxis in energy—collectively controlled and decentralized renewable energy production and distribution—seems a distant dream for the moment. The state would have to subsidize local investments and encourage local control. This contradicts both the state's own push for exerting sovereign control over resources as well as its priorities for monetizing energy production to contribute to state coffers. Existing patterns of regional energy production are firmly capitalist. The agro-industrial elite of the East, for example, maintains a grip over its regional electricity "cooperative." Designed on the U.S. model of the rural electric co-op in the 1960s, the "cooperative" was captured by elites and remains a central bastion of economic and political power for the conservative elites of eastern Bolivia. Between the state urge to centralize control and this regional conservatism, more localized projects face an uphill struggle. This alternative energy from below would be more environmentally and socially sustainable than hydroelectric dams or the never-ending quest to drill for more gas and oil. The pressure to seek more fossil fuel, nonetheless, is strong. Bolivians have rightly come to enjoy more access to natural gas for cooking and home use, and there is broad support for drilling. And, the political forces exerted by Brazilian capital—which treats Bolivia as an energy provider for São Paolo industry—have an outsized influence given that the MAS government also depends on rents to stay afloat. It is, needless to say, a difficult political conundrum.

We Eat the Mines, and the Mines Eat Us

Thus read the title of June Nash's classic work on the Bolivian tin mines. Written in the 1970s, during a time of revolutionary ferment, the book describes the mutual reinforcement of Andean notions of underworld earth beings and Trotskyite ideologies of class struggle. Bolivia has long been a mining country and will continue to be for the foreseeable future. Is there a way that mining can once again be made more amenable to a socialist project from below? Certainly the mining unions in their heyday represented a radical form of socialism from below. However, after the privatizations of the mines in the 1980s and 1990s, the mining industry was divided into operations of multinational firms and smaller, residual efforts that involved the organization of cooperatives. These cooperatives were sometimes locally controlled, worker-managed operations. In other cases, cooperatives were merely fronts for multinational investors, since Bolivian law sought to ameliorate privatization by granting some legislative benefits to those who formed cooperative ventures. Rather than collectively managed production, these were more like units of labor control financed by foreign firms, with workers who enjoyed few protections or benefits. Even so, Evo's MAS government sought to make of the cooperatives a key ally and further advanced their legislative privileges for better and worse. Late in 2016, the government, confronted with falling mineral prices and aiming to rebuild a state mining industry (COMIBOL), moved to extend labor protections and organizing rights to the cooperative miners. This would expand the reach of the national miners union (and the state). It sought to assert more government control over a sector still largely dominated by foreign firms. Cooperatives, large and small, resisted. Tragically, in response to police repression, factions of the cooperative leadership spurred the lynch-mob killing of a government vice-minister sent to negotiate. The death, still subject of much speculation, nonetheless turned public opinion against the cooperatives, and the changes went through.

Tensions remain between those cooperatives who might pursue a more environmentally friendly and socially redistributive mode of mining that skirts the boundary between autonomy and state control, and efforts to rebuild the state mining industry in a more conventional manner.

Is this possible? To date, the ecological impacts of nearly all forms of mining have been devastating. The pollution of rivers and waterways is the most concerning. As we have written elsewhere, the proposed venture into lithium may exacerbate these environmental tragedies. Ideally, it might be carried out in a more ecologically sensitive way and articulate with the move to renewable energies. Nonetheless, the long tradition of radical and autonomous thinking of Bolivian miners might still be seen as an important reservoir for emergent forms of socialism from below. Yet small-scale mining in cooperative forms—mining communes of a sort—do not benefit from economies of scale and can be more ecologically damaging than larger-scale efforts. If Bolivia is to be a mining country, as many seem to accept, it suggests the need for a concerted socialist politics articulating organized labor, the state, and hypervigilant environmental oversight. Contrary to the past, when the miners were expected to be the vanguard of revolutionary transition, the locus for grass-roots socialist renewal today is more likely to be found elsewhere.

The Indigenous Territorial Question

Much attention has been given to the putative advances of Indigenous rights during the MAS government, which enshrined international Indigenous rights law into the new constitution. Yet in practice, Indigenous movements, heterogeneous as they are, have been largely frustrated. In 2010, for example, MAS announced its plans to build a massive highway through Indigenous lands and territories (the TIPNIS case). Morales failed to consult with lowland Indigenous peoples before signing the agreement, and this sparked two spectacular Indigenous marches from lowland Bolivia to the highlands. When Indigenous peoples marched in the first TIPNIS march in 2011, Morales sent the repressive arm of the state to quell resistance. Yet in other regions, government investments in schools, Indigenous language training institutes, and three new universities have been taken as signs of positive support. And, a law in support of Indigenous autonomy has indeed been passed. The law would grant Indigenous peoples some autonomy at the municipal scale. Notably though, the legislative hoops are many and some regions have opted to stick with the current model of electoralist engagement through the MAS party. One fledgling effort is in the far southeastern municipality—now an autonomous territory—of Charagua. Guaraní leaders there managed to get their statute for self-government through the procedural hurdles. Only time will tell if therein lie seeds of a new form of politics.

> These ideas of horizontality and self-governance are still nourished in local memories, but with the agrarian détente, the movement has been debilitated.

Yet older patterns of patronage and clientelism persist. Those who oppose the government face potential repression. Those who support may benefit from some state largesse. Indigenous organizations are thus riven with internal disputes—some ordinary, many provoked by government meddling, a pattern that has been around since long before the MAS took power. The rising autonomy of movements, Indigenous and otherwise, was taken to be a fundamental part of the MAS resurgence and the new constitution. Yet many commentators have highlighted the state's penchant for centralizing power by absorbing the movements into the state through a logic of *caudillismo,* the top-down, hierarchical structure of governance and control. MAS has strategically demobilized radical movements by incorporating key leaders into positions of power within the government. One key example is what happened to the Landless Peasant Movement in the eastern region. Morales pulled leaders out of their bases and strategically placed them inside the state to become advisors on land policy. This happened with many other leftist social movements across the country. By 2016, social movements were a shadow of their former selves, with leaders working in the government, or in organizations controlled by the government, or demoralized.[10]

It is too simplistic to discard the state altogether. Nor is it the case, given the right-wing opposition's efforts to use social movements to attack the government, that a wholesale attack on the MAS is merited. The MAS relies on social movements, just as movements rely on the MAS. (And remember, Evo took 50 percent of the vote in the re-election referendum. He maintains significant popular support.) But it is important not to place blind faith in the MAS and lose track of the slow weakening of movements on the ground. Instead of the promotion of free-thinking activists, organic intellectuals, and movements whose critiques nurtured progressive evolution, critics were silenced, marginalized, or persecuted. The movements persist, but critics—especially from the feminist and anarchist left—should be supported. Bolivia's once radical movements have lost the independence, coherence, and mobilizing strength to force through more radical changes. So is this the age-old dilemma of social movements who surrender to becoming a part of the state? How and in what ways can they remain autonomous and pressure the state for more radical reforms?

Lessons of a Compromised Socialist Agenda

In 1972, the brilliant Bolivian scholar and revolutionary thinker René Zavaleta fled to Chile from the Bánzer dictatorship. There he gave an interview to the U.S.-based NACLA (North American Congress on Latin America) journal.[11] He was asked what the role of the U.S. left might be in supporting the revolutionary struggle in Bolivia. Zavaleta responded that North Americans would do well to support the Bolivian proletarian classes, where the true revolutionary spirit of the country resided. At the time, Zavaleta had seen how the right's control of the military had defeated the mobilization of the masses in the street. He was concerned that the Bolivian left was flush with revolutionary spirit but had not captured the importance of having some model—armed, to be sure—to contest the right. Without reading too much into things, today the Bolivian left has moved somewhat closer to recrafting the armed power of the state. At least symbolically, the terms of "anti-imperialism" are increasingly absorbed into military doctrine. This is necessary but highly risky, given the military's own inertia toward patriarchal *caudillismo*. Yet, increasingly in regional isolation as neighboring governments are seized by the right, Bolivia faces an uphill struggle. This is a region where the United States has long used its own military and associated institutions to wage an ideological, cultural, economic, and financial war against progressive change. If Zavaleta were around today, he might advise North Americans to pay closer attention to the Unites States' deepening military empire in the region—much of it seemingly linked to key territorial resources like biofuels, water, and zones of transit. Against the wider, global militarization of politics, the left must find new ways to push back against that logic of colonial control. In the days of Trump, the particularities of Bolivia might be overshadowed by more immediate struggles. Yet certainly identifying and actively resisting the conjoined interests of the militarized fossil fuel industry here and certain aspects of U.S. foreign policy might be part of what North-to-South solidarity should look like today. Those pursuing solidarity might also deepen other lines of critique that have emerged in recent years—anti-racist, anti-authoritarian, anti-patriarchal struggles being key among them. This does not suggest joining the rabid right and dismissing MAS out of hand, but rather maintaining a critical solidarity while also refocusing attention on our own challenges, now intensified and the risks ever greater, back home. We certainly have a long way to go before we begin to see a clear and coherent vision of socialism from below mapped onto a state-based agenda in Bolivia.

Bolivians, for their part, will carry on with a deeper historical project aimed at recovering sovereignty while rethinking underlying patterns of economic exploitation. As Solon argues, instead of "referendums for re-election of two persons, we should be moving to promote referendums on GMOs, nuclear energy, megadams, deforestation, public investment, and many other subjects that are crucial for the process of change." We may say the same about the United States. But the time is ripe to act with renewed commitment if we are to have any hope for our future generations and the future of our planet.

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Puerto Rico and PROMESA: Reaffirming Colonialism

PEDRO CABÁN

"Puerto Rico will be in a death spiral!"

WITH THIS DRAMATIC ANNOUNCEMENT, Governor Alejandro García Padilla transformed the island nation's long-simmering debt overhang problem into an international spectacle. A financial mess that seemingly concerned only institutional investors, municipal bondholders, and some hedge fund managers exploded into a full-blown debt crisis with disquieting parallels to the situation in Greece.

Puerto Rican officials revealed that, given the depressed economy, the government could never generate the revenues required to pay the staggering $73 billion debt. They warned that without federal assistance Puerto Rico would soon face a profound humanitarian crisis that the insular government was incapable of managing. The federal government's response was the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act, popularly known by its acronym, PROMESA. The law, signed by President Obama on June 30, 2016, authorizes the president of the United States to appoint a financial control board with extraordinary powers and with a mandate to enforce measures to compel Puerto Rico to repay its creditors. According to the law, the financial control board "holds supremacy over any territorial law or regulation that is inconsistent with the Act or Fiscal reform plans."

PROMESA gives the oversight board "certain sovereign powers over the Puerto Rican government and its instrumentalities."[1] The sublimely understated purpose of the bill "is to provide a method for a covered territory to achieve fiscal responsibility and access to capital markets." But PROMESA was designed to protect bondholders from catastrophic losses, imposes fiscal discipline, and mandates deep structural adjustments. Ultimately, PROMESA will enforce a friendly investment environment for U.S. capital. Title III of PROMESA also authorizes the U.S. District Court to restructure the debt if the oversight board is unable to reach a consensual agreement with the creditors. The oversight board filed the petition for debt restructuring with the court on May 5, 2017.

PROMESA has resurrected issues that are troubling legacies of Puerto Rico's status as a colony of the United States. One persistent issue is the measure of authority granted by the federal government to the Puerto Rican people to govern themselves. Puerto Ricans, whether living in the diaspora or the colony, have consistently fought to diminish or eradicate the bonds of colonialism. Throughout their history, Puerto Ricans have contested the federal government's overbearing control, relentlessly seeking to end or redefine the onerous terms of their colonial subordination. PROMESA also revealed that irrespective of which political party controls the colonial state, whether the Popular Democratic Party or the New Progressive Party, neither can halt the inevitability of Puerto Rico's fiscal debacle and in fact are both duplicitous in creating

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the debt crisis.

PROMESA reaffirms without equivocation that Puerto Rico is a colony of the United States. Alone among the four U.S. congressional representatives of Puerto Rican descent, Luís Gutíerrez waged a vigorous campaign against PROMESA. He pointed out that "the control board and its members, no matter who they are, start with a deep ocean of mistrust from the Puerto Rican people, who question why a new layer of opaque, undemocratic, colonial oversight and control is being imposed in secrecy."[2] Governor Alejandro García Padilla objected to the extraordinary powers of the board, which are "excessive" and "not consistent with our country's basic democratic principles."[3]

But PROMESA has also energized Puerto Ricans to actively confront the financial control board and protest the austerity measures imposed by the island's ineffectual political class. This resistance is binational, multisectoral, crosses ideological lines, and might be unparalleled in Puerto Rico's long quest for self-determination. Puerto Ricans have overwhelmingly derided the United States for enacting this avowedly colonial legislation. They have challenged the credibility and legitimacy of an oversight board comprised in part by financial capitalists implicated in the very debt crisis they are tasked with resolving. Students have marched by the thousands to protest the $450 million cut to the University of Puerto Rico that the oversight board ordered. Puerto Ricans have demanded an audit of the outstanding debt to determine the legality of government debt issuances. Activists in New York and Puerto Rico have disrupted meetings of the oversight board. The Center for Puerto Rican Studies at the City University of New York organized "Diaspora Summits" for grassroots organizations and activists. New York-based Puerto Rican journalists Juan González and Ed Morales have written extensively on the politics and economics of PROMESA and have disputed complacent narratives from established media sources. The nonpartisan Center for a New Economy in Puerto Rico generates sobering, well-documented position papers that are critical of PROMESA. Federal Judge Juan Torruella called for civil resistance and an economic boycott, after denouncing PROMESA as "the most denigrating, disrespectful, anti-democratic, and colonial act" the United States has perpetrated against the people of Puerto Rico.[4]

The process that resulted in the enactment of PROMESA was every bit as colonial as the legislation. Neither the Puerto Rican government nor representatives of the different political forces in Puerto Rico were formally involved in designing the law. PROMESA is not the first time that Puerto Ricans were denied any voice in a decision that will affect their futures. In the 1898 Treaty of Paris negotiations, the fate of the inhabitants of the Spanish colonies ceded to the United States was decided without involvement of the people of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. Article IX of the treaty simply states that "the civil rights and political status of the native inhabitants of the territories hereby ceded to the United States shall be determined by the Congress." Indeed, by 1898 the United States had a long tradition of excluding racialized inhabitants of acquired territories from any role in deciding their legal standing within the empire. PROMESA has resurrected this shameful imperial practice. In effect, PROMESA redefines the U.S. citizens

PROMESA has also energized Puerto Ricans to actively confront the financial control board and protest the austerity measures imposed by the island's ineffectual political class.

of Puerto Rico as racialized native inhabitants of a mere territorial possession. They are denied representation in Congress but are subject to its plenary powers. Ultimately PROMESA embodies the quintessential contempt for Puerto Ricans as colonial subjects who have been granted a substandard U.S. citizenship that is highly racialized and who can be discounted in momentous decisions that affect their lives.

U.S. citizenship is inconsequential for the inhabitants of Puerto Rico when it comes to determining their economic and political future. But with the conferral of statutory U.S. citizenship in 1917, Puerto Ricans were allowed to migrate freely to the United States. Migration flows linked to changes in the island's political economy are an unintended consequence of granting U.S. citizenship to Puerto Ricans. In the last decade, 10 percent of the population, among them many highly educated young professionals, has left the island. Depopulation started in 2006 when Section 936, a fiscal measure enacted by the United States to enhance capital accumulation by American firms operating in Puerto Rico, was terminated. The current phase of depopulation surpasses the great migration during the post-World War II years. In both cases the United States served as a safety valve for the relocation of Puerto Rico's army of redundant labor. But there is a critical difference. Post -World War II migration was designed as a population-control measure by policymakers in order to mitigate the profound labor market disruptions caused by Puerto Rico's transition from an agrarian to a manufacturing economy. The twenty-first-century migration is also characterized by the movement of superfluous workers, but it is an unplanned, desperate action by Puerto Ricans. They are compelled to seek employment in uncertain labor markets in the United States rather than live with the certainty of a life of economic privation, drastically reduced public services, diminished educational opportunities, and a collapsing health system.

PROMESA is actually a more restrictive anti-democratic law than either the Foraker Act (1900) or the Jones Act (1917), the foundational documents of Puerto Rico's current colonial status. Under both laws, veto authority over insular legislation was reserved for an appointed insular governor, Congress, and the president. Moreover, Puerto Rico falls within the jurisdiction of the 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, which can vacate legislation enacted by the insular government that the court deems unconstitutional. In 1947, Puerto Ricans were permitted to elect their governor, although legislation approved by the governor could still be overwritten by either Congress or the president. The financial control board reclaims the federal government's triple veto over local legislation. However, there are two significant differences between PROMESA and the early colonial legislation. The Foraker and Jones acts were comprehensive colonial legislation that assigned Puerto Rico key strategic and economic roles in the expanding American empire. In contrast, PROMESA's function is strictly pecuniary, to find ways of extracting wealth from Puerto Rico. Secondly, Congress also designed the Foraker and Jones acts to generate revenue to finance the operation of the colonial administration. PROMESA, on the other hand, will enforce a large reduction in the scope, size, and financing of the colonial administration in order to generate cost savings that will be transferred to the creditors. The oversight board has the authority to deny the Puerto Rican government from fulfilling its constitutional responsibility to "promote the general welfare" and instead will operate as a collection agency for panicking creditors, many of whom are high-risk speculators.

The financial control board is historically unprecedented. Although it is an instrument of the federal government, it acts independently as its surrogate to impose fiscal discipline and will do so by enforcing harsh austerity measures. PROMESA is promoted as being revenue neutral, or as its advocates put it, "at no cost to American taxpayers." The nefarious feature of

PROMESA is that it restores the humiliating practice first established by the Foraker and Jones acts to force Puerto Ricans to pay for their colonial subordination. PROMESA authorizes "the board to require the Puerto Rican government to provide the board with a dedicated source of funding, not subject to further legislative action, to cover its expenses." The Congressional Budget Office estimated the administrative costs for the oversight board at $370 million for the decade starting 2016.[5] Included in this amount is the $625,000 annual salary for Natalie Jaresko, the former finance minister of the Ukrainian government, who serves as the board's executive director. Congress has ordered heavily indebted Puerto Rico to finance the operation of an autocratic board whose purpose is to intensify wealth extraction from inhabitants of the island. This fundamental inequity in the law moved San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz to remark, "So not only are they taking democracy away from Puerto Rico, but they're also doing the following: It's costing us money to inflict pain on our own people. And that is totally unreasonable. I cannot think of anything more un-American than that."[6]

Not since the establishment of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico in 1952 have Congress, the president, and the Supreme Court acted in such unison to sort out a colonial problem of national import. But unlike the process that culminated in the Commonwealth, a process that created a legitimating chimera of consultation between the colonized and colonizer, PROMESA is a flagrant demonstration of U.S. colonial power and contempt for Puerto Rico. As such, PROMESA is not merely a device to extract wealth from an impoverished people to profit U.S. financial institutions. PROMESA is also a muscular reaffirmation that Puerto Rico is a mere territorial possession of the United States, without any constitutionally valid recourse to challenge the wonton exercise of imperial power. House Speaker Paul Ryan's press office affirmed that Puerto Rico had no place at the table to discuss the debt crisis. His office "verified" the constitutionality of the bill. "Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory and the Constitution explicitly gives Congress the power to 'make all needful Rules and Regulations respecting the Territory or other Property belonging to the U.S.' Need we say more?"[7] PROMESA gives the lie to President Truman's proclamation that the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico "will be a government which is truly by the consent of the governed." Whatever illusions may have lingered from the glory days of the Commonwealth, when Truman announced that "full authority and responsibility for local self-government will be vested in the people of Puerto Rico," were dashed when President Barak Obama signed the PROMESA bill.[8] The blunt exercise of imperial power and callous dismissal of a post-World War II narrative that symbolically cast Puerto Ricans as autonomous political actors within the territory mark a watershed moment in U.S. colonial rule. Indeed, PROMESA degrades the 1950 Senate Committee statement that the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico "is designed to complete the full measure of local self-government in this island by enabling the 2 1/4 million American citizens there to express their willingness and to create their own territorial government."[9] Federal Judge Torruella warned that under PROMESA, the "colonial grip of the plenary powers" invested in Congress would in fact "be tightened to a virtual stranglehold."[10] Indeed, in a 2017 study, the Harvard Law Review concluded that "Puerto Rico is even further from true self-

The process that resulted in the enactment of PROMESA was every bit as colonial as the legislation.

governance today than it was in 1953."[11]

Ryan cynically continues to perpetuate the myth that Puerto Rico has sovereignty over domestic affairs when he claims that "the Puerto Rican government's ceding of its authority to the financial control board is a huge, but necessary move." To assert that Puerto Ricans voluntarily relinquished a sovereignty that was stolen from them by the United States 120 years ago is an astounding deception. Puerto Ricans cannot cede a sovereignty they never possessed under U.S. colonial rule. The rationale for imposing the control board is based on a barely concealed racist depiction of Puerto Ricans as lesser Americans who are incapable of responsible political behavior. Notions of Puerto Rican foreignness are happily parroted in the right-wing media. In his interview with Governor Ricardo Rossello, snarky right-wing commentator Tucker Carlson could not resist the impulse to cast Puerto Ricans as "third-world people" unfit for U.S. statehood. In his insolent interrogation of the governor, Carlson revealed a skepticism that Puerto Ricans were "real Americans," notwithstanding their U.S. citizenship.[12]

PROMESA revives a dormant and derogatory image of Puerto Ricans as colonial subjects who cannot be trusted and who lack the requisite aptitude to manage a complex political economy. Paul Ryan placed most of the fault for the crisis on Puerto Rico: "Decades of fiscal mismanagement have created a nightmare scenario where this U.S. territory is in way over its head—to the tune of $118 billion in the form of bonds and unfunded pension liabilities."[13] Ryan justified federal intervention by denouncing the Puerto Rican government because "it paved the way for this disaster with decades of irresponsible policies like overspending and fiscal mismanagement."[14] He does reserve some scorn for Wall Street, which "didn't help by giving the government loans that it was clear it couldn't pay back," but ultimately PROMESA was designed to compensate speculators for their reckless actions.

Representative Sean Duffy, one of PROMESA's sponsors, lashes out at the Puerto Rican government: "Years of disastrous polices have completely wrecked Puerto Rico's economy. As a result, the island and its millions of American citizens face a humanitarian crisis."[15] Bob Bishop, who chairs the Senate Committee on Natural Resources, accused "Puerto Rico's local politicians" of having "accelerated the crisis on the island through the passage of harmful legislation."[16] The American Enterprise Institute argued that the crisis was not simply "a result of highly irresponsible public spending activities and of the egregious mismanagement of its economy by the Puerto Rican government." The "reckless lending behavior of the creditors" also spurred the crisis.[17]

The portrayal of Puerto Ricans as inept is part of a long-standing trope U.S. officials have deployed to deny the inhabitants of Puerto Rico self-government. Ryan informed Puerto Ricans that they "will learn fiscal discipline from a board of experts who can create efficiencies in state-run corporations." Indeed, PROMESA is portrayed as well-intentioned and beneficent and designed primarily to help debt-ridden and poor Puerto Rico forestall an imminent humanitarian crisis. In this official account, the United States had little choice but to intervene to protect the Puerto Rican people from an inept government. The proponents of PROMESA make their case on grounds that are disturbingly similar to those uttered by Secretary of War Elihu Root. Root was the principal architect of U. S. colonial policy for the territories acquired from Spain, and he adamantly resisted self-government for Puerto Rico. In 1898 Root warned that Puerto Ricans "would inevitably fail without a course of tuition under a strong and guiding hand." He argued that Puerto Ricans could not be "fully entrusted with self-government." Root reasoned that after a sustained period of benevolent colonial tutelage, eventually Puerto Ricans could "demonstrate their increasing capacity to govern themselves with less and less assistance."[18] Similarly, PROMESA details the specific conditions that Puerto Rico must meet for termination of the oversight board. The oversight board will exercise sovereignty over Puerto Rico for at least four consecutive years and will relinquish it only if the government regains access to credit markets, has developed an approved budget, and abandons deficit financing. Puerto Ricans will regain their supervised autonomy only if they behave responsibly by exercising "fiscal discipline" and by acquiescing to the oversight board's orders.

It is characteristic of an imperial mindset that among the thousands of articles that have been published on the Puerto Rican debt crisis in U.S. sources, seldom is colonialism discussed as a source of the debacle. Economist and Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz is one of the few prominent national figures who calls on the U.S. to "take responsibility for its imperialist past and neocolonial present. Washington owes Puerto Ricans a future based on democratic legitimacy and a financially and socially viable development strategy—a development strategy that is more than a set of tax breaks for profitable U.S. corporations."[19]

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Remembering Dependency Theory

A Marxist-Humanist Review

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This article aims to show that dependency theory underlines vividly the problem of examining the logic of capital independent of Marx's concept of value. It is impossible to completely understand the essence of Marx's critique of political economy, especially a vision of an alternative to capitalism, without grasping value as distinct from exchange value. The distinction is of vital importance, since uprooting relations of exchange cannot itself eliminate the defining principle of capitalism: abstract labor, production for the sake of value. In the reflections that follow, I will argue that dependency theorists remained fixated upon the fetishized world of appearances, that is, exchange value, without penetrating into social relations of production. On the other hand, my intention with this article is to stimulate a discussion among revolutionary activists on the necessity of transcending abstract value production.

I.

The anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles that swept through Africa, Asia, and Latin America following World War II inspired the emergence of a diverse and heterodox set of theoretical schemas, collectively known as "dependency theory," whose key texts deployed concepts borrowed from Marx and Lenin to offer a rival theory of imperialism. The general consensus among dependency theorists was that the process of global capitalist expansion generated development in its core locations (Western Europe, North America, and Japan) and underdevelopment (poverty) in its periphery locations (Africa, Asia, and Latin America). According to this perspective, the advance of the Western world was not the result of an inescapable whim of nature, but only made possible following an exogenous path of development, focusing on international trade, raw material extraction from colonies, and profits made by providing the world economy with financial services.

Dependency theory spanned the political spectrum: from the revolutionary socialist school of Andre Gunder Frank, Samir Amin, and Theotonio dos Santos to the bourgeois nationalist and social-democratic school of Arghiri Emmanuel, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, and Enzo Faletto. The founders of dependency theory aimed at examining the characteristics of peripheral states, which are conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy. The starting point, therefore, was relations with the external world, that is, divergent networks of international exchange. Drawing from this premise, dependency theorists argued that peripheral states are those that have historically been dependent on the export of primary commodities for the international market.

The central argument was that the interests of the core states lay in freezing the international division of labor so that peripheral states continued to be producers of primary commodities. For example, the destruction of the Indian textile industry by England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries represents the general

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attitude of metropolitan corporations toward industry in the satellites. Therefore, it was believed that the interests of companies exporting primary commodities to the metropole did not lie with general economic development of the satellites. This led the so-called "dependentistas" to believe that little change was possible within the framework of capitalist development, while others still believed that political reforms were capable of promoting self-sustaining growth.

One of the main mechanisms that led to the development and persistence of underdevelopment is unequal exchange in international trade (Birkan 2015). The theory of unequal exchange expounded by Raul Prebisch, Arighi Emmanuel, and Samir Amin sought to clarify Marx's law of value through differential wage costs. The Prebisch-Singer thesis argued that there is a secular tendency for the price of primary commodities to fall relative to manufactured commodities due to different income elasticities of demand. In other words, technical progress, which increases incomes in the developed nations, leads to lower demand and consequently lower prices for primary commodities in the underdeveloped nations (Birkan 2015). Therefore, if you are stuck producing cotton or silver, the purchasing power of your imports will fall, and your ability to invest, grow, and develop will remain implausible.

In following the Ricardian theory of value, dependency theorists maintained that foreign trade simply mediates the exchange of use-values, while the magnitude of profit and value remains unaltered. This hypothesis starts with the assumption that there is an *international equalization in the rate of profit and an immobility of labor power.* The underlying logic of this reproduction scheme is that commodities exchange at value; that is, that their prices coincide with their values (Grossman 1929). This notion is only possible if we abstract from competition and assume that all that happens in international trade is that a commodity of a given value exchanges for another at the same value. But in reality *prices of production* deviate from their value because of the specific kind of labor that creates value: abstract or indirect social labor.

In contrast, Marx draws out the role of competition in international trade, in particular, the labor-time socially required for production (Grossman 1929). For Marx, the magnitude of socially necessary labor-time differs from country to country on the basis of competition among capitalists to introduce new methods of production, wherein the capitalist who sells goods below their social value appropriates to surplus labor a greater portion of the working day. Hence, there is a constant tendency in capitalism to increase the productivity of labor, in order to cheapen commodities, and by such cheapening to cheapen labor itself (Marx 2011). Thereby, the commodities of advanced countries with a higher organic composition of capital will be sold at prices of production higher than their value, while those of the underdeveloped countries, at prices of production lower than their value.

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Therefore, Marx argued the price of any given commodity generally deviates from its value, because abstract labor is measured by a social average that is always fluctuating, especially because of technological innovations (Hudis 2012). To Marx, the technologically advanced countries make a surplus profit at the expense of technologically less-advanced countries. In other words, unequal exchange is not a question of differential wage costs but of additional surplus value, which is obtained through competition on the world market through non-equivalent magnitudes of socially necessary labor-time. In Chapter 20 of *Theories of Surplus Value*, entitled "Disintegration of the Ricardian School," Marx writes,

> Three days of labor of one country can be exchanged against one of another country. ... Here the law of value undergoes essential modification. ... The relationship between labor days of different countries may be similar to that existing between skilled, complex labor and unskilled, simple labor within a country. In this case, the richer country exploits the poorer one, even where the latter gains by the exchange.

Here, Marx highlights the international effects of the law of value, in particular, the unequal determinations of labor-time which he modified into a social average in *Capital Vol. 1*. Similarly, in Notebook VII in the *Grundrisse*, entitled "The Chapter on Capital / Bastiat and Carey," Marx states,

> From the possibility that profit may be *less than* surplus value, hence that capital [may] exchange profitably without realizing itself in the strict sense, it follows that not only individual capitalists, but also nations may continually exchange with one another, may even continually repeat the exchange on an ever-expanding scale, without for that reason necessarily gaining in equal degrees. One of the nations may continually appropriate for itself a part of the surplus labor of the other, giving back nothing for it in the exchange, except that the measure here [is] not as in the exchange between capitalist and worker.

Furthermore, in *Capital Vol. III,* Marx writes,

> Capitals invested in foreign trade can yield a higher rate of profit, because, in the first place, there is competition with commodities produced in other countries with inferior production facilities, so that the more advanced country sells its goods above their value even though cheaper than the competing countries. In so far as the labor of the more advanced country is here realized as labor of a higher specific weight, the rate of profit rises, because labor which has not been paid as being of a higher quality, is sold as such. … As regards capitals invested in colonies, etc., on the other hand, they may yield higher rates of profit for the simple reason that the rate of profit there is higher due to backward development, and likewise the exploitation of labor, because of the use of slaves, coolies, etc.

In the examples cited above, Marx emphasizes the colossal importance of foreign trade as a means for advanced countries to exploit less-advanced countries. One of the many simplifying assumptions that underline dependency theory and theories of the "new imperialism" is that Marx only examined the phenomenon of an isolated capitalism or national capitalism. Yet Marx himself consistently highlighted that capitalism is a world-polarizing and ever-expanding system (For detailed evidence see Pradella 2012 and Anderson 2010). In 1859, Marx proposed a six-book structure for his examination of the development of capitalism and intended that one of the six be devoted to the world market. At the same time, within his activity in the First International he declared the necessity of building unity between class struggles in imperialist countries and anti-colonial resistance in colonized countries and dependent countries (Anderson 2010, Pradella 2012).

It should also be noted that dependency theory focused exclusively on the quantitative side of value—that is, the amount of labor-time embodied in a commodity—as opposed to the qualitative side, on the kind of labor that creates value. In other words, those theorists contended the value of any commodity is purely and solely determined by the quantity of labor required for production. Marx, on the contrary, argues that living labor forms the substance of value only when it takes a specific form—indirect social labor or alienated labor (Hudis 2012).

Thus, dependency theorists never investigated the social relations that create exchange value, which made them reduce socialism to overcoming relations of exchange as opposed to ending abstract value production. In the next section I will explore the ramifications of reducing the law of value simply to a quantitative relationship.

II.

From the beginning, nearly all dependency theorists argued that industrialization was the key ingredient of economic development—the idea that a transition from the production of primary commodities to finished commodities signaled the beginning of development, what came to be coined *"import substitution industrialization."* There was, however, a sharp division among dependency theorists on the strategic objectives of industrialization. For the bourgeois nationalist and social democratic school, industrialization was simply a means to construct autonomous capitalist development by removing obstacles deriving from unequal exchange, while for the revolutionary socialist school, industrialization was a means to overcome the unequal hierarchy of exchange and the transition to socialism.

This division culminated in the formulation of two divergent descriptive theses: (1) "associated dependent development," (2) "development of underdevelopment." The followers of "associated dependent development" maintained that some peripheral states have historically experienced economic development, which involves some degree of industrialization combined with an alliance between international and local capital (Cardoso and Faletto 1978, Evans 1979). This is not a phase all peripheral states will be able to reach, as it implies a very distinct position within the international division of labor, namely, that they form what Immanuel Wallerstein calls the "semi-periphery." On the other hand, the followers of "development of underdevelopment" maintained that peripheral economies are incapable of recapitulating the developmental trajectory of the core. Nevertheless, what they all held in common was the notion that the periphery must "delink" from the exploitative conditions of the capitalist world economy.

The concept of delinking can be understood as a strategy of autonomous development or a fundamental withdrawal from capitalist relations of exchange. The original form of delinking was similar to mercantilism, a strategy for states in the early stages of industrialization to close off external relations with the core to protect infant industries (Pieterse 1994). This model was essentially delinking for the sake of relinking, re-entering the world market once industries reach a sufficient level of development. The second form of delinking was disassociation from capitalism as part of the transition to socialism (Amin 1985, 1990; Frank 2005; Pieterse 1994). This strategy of disassociation and "socialism in one country" was formulated to suppress domination from the core by implementing national reconstruction in the periphery. The secondary strategy of this program was weakening the capitalist world economy: It was thought that if enough peripheral states delink, capitalism will decline, resulting in a structural crisis reducing growth in the core.

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Like Ricardo, the followers of dependency theory reduced the logic of capital to market phenomena without grasping social relations at the point of production. As a result, dependency theory is concerned with how products come into being (commodities, capital, and money) and how their value is unequally distributed.

The product (capital) is the unit of analysis, not the human subjects that create and shape it. Since exchange value is inseparable from value it cannot transcend the very essence of capitalism: abstract labor, production for the sake of value. For Marx, capitalism exists wherever the principle of social organization is the reduction of human labor to abstract forms of value-creating labor. Marx argues the exchange of things is not merely a quantitative relationship since there must be a commonality that enables them to be exchanged. And the common element of relations of exchange is abstract labor.

Thereby, the strategy of delinking inverts the order of things; more specifically, it constitutes a limited standard for transcending capitalism that brings us right back into the jaws of capital. This is because delinking is presupposed by the idea that the source of capitalism's contradictions lies not in its abstract value creating form but, rather, in its unequal form of distribution. Hence, socially necessary labor-time continues to operate but now in a national or regional context. The individual capitalist or bureaucracy of the state continues to be driven by the incessant need to extract the maximum amount of surplus value from labor, as was reflected by the state-capitalist experiments in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. But now delinked capitalist enterprises are cut off from access to the social average of their competitors, which leads to inferior methods of production.

As long as capitalism has not been totally uprooted by human subjective activity, its basic laws of motion persist via the law of value and surplus value (Dunayevskaya 2003). This means both the exploitation and reification of labor by the despotic plan of capital. As Raya Dunayevskaya argues in *Philosophy and Revolution*,

> The Marxist truth, the plain truth, is that just as economic reality is not mere statistics, but is the base of existence, and just as the greatest productive force is not the machine, but the human being, so the human being is not only muscle, but also brain, not only energy but emotion, passion and force—in a word, the whole human being. This, just this, was of course Marx's greatest contribution to "economics," or more precisely, to revolutionizing economics, to unearthing the whole human dimension.

When the masses are denied their self-activity, there is no way to avoid being subsumed into the barbarous whims of the world market dominated by advanced technologies. This was the case for the newly independent nations across Africa and Asia trapped in their monocultural past as the price of their one crop was determined by the price structure of the world market. Whether or not they negated private property or imposed a state plan had little effect on the neocolonial structure (Dunayevskaya 2003, 225). Even a state like Cuba, where state planning is basically universal, the price of sugar is still determined by socially necessary labor-time established by world production. Moreover, the level of technological development and accumulated capital become the main determinants of unequal exchange when the masses are not allowed their self-activity. As Marx shows us, the law of value can only be eliminated when freely associated labor takes its destiny into its own hands; only freely associated labor can strip the fetishism from commodities.

But what perhaps put the final nail in the coffin of dependency theory was its failure to anticipate the emergent "new industrial division of labor" in the world economy. For example, the rapid export-oriented industrial development of the "East Asian Tigers" in the 1970s presents major problems for Andre Gunder Frank's thesis of the "development of underdevelopment." Not only are nations like South Korea and Taiwan producing consumer durables (cars, phones, tablets, TVs, and so on) for profit, but also exporting capital to other parts of Asia and Europe. By contrast, in places like Brazil and India, foreign multinationals of the North flourish alongside local bourgeois industrial development. According to John Smith, author of *Imperialism* *in the 21st Century* (2015), the globalization of the production process is the most unique and transformative feature of so-called neoliberal globalization. Smith argues the relocation of production takes two main forms: foreign direct investment, when outsourcing is shifted to the periphery but "kept in-house," and "arm's length outsourcing," when firms outsource production to an independent subcontractor (such as Foxconn or Pegatron), yet maintain control of the process of production and continue to capture the benefits of output (Smith 2015).

Despite some of the analytical weaknesses of John Smith's understanding of modern imperialism (which I briefly discuss below), he is quite right to underline the distinctiveness of the globalization of the production process. Smith shows that the world's "economically active population" grew from 1.9 billion in 1980 to 3.1 billion in 2006, a 63 percent increase. The so-called "emerging nations" now account for 84 percent of the global labor force, of which 1.6 billion perform wage labor and 1 billion are small farmers and workers of the "informal economy" (Smith 2015). However, Smith sees the foundation of modern imperialism as the super-exploitation of wage workers in the South (the periphery) through driving wages below the value of labor power. Smith's case for super-exploitation theory depends on the premise that capitalists seek to increase profits by the replacement of high-wage workers in imperialist countries with low-wage workers in the global South—so-called "global labor arbitrage" (Smith 2015). One of the conclusions that Smith draws is the error of portraying the workers of developed nations as a "labor aristocracy" basically living off the surplus value produced by workers in underdeveloped nations.

In many ways, Smith's analysis of imperialism is consistent with dependency theory's argument that imperialist countries are developed only because of their exploitation of the underdeveloped nations. As Michael Roberts has recently argued, the higher wages and social benefits of workers in developed nations may indirectly derive from the super-profits of multinational corporations they work for—but that is the result of the class struggle over the share of value going to wages, not directly as a result of imperialist exploitation (Roberts 2016). It is incorrect to maintain that super-exploitation operates internationally, simply because wage levels are lower in underdeveloped nations relative to developed nations. What determines exploitation in Marxist terms is the ratio between surplus value or profits and the value of labor power or wages (Roberts 2016). Therefore, what matters is whether the wages of workers in developed nations exceed the value they create. I am not at all suggesting that super-exploitation does not exist, but rather expressing my doubts as to the extent that it operates as the basis of modern imperialism.

As I have already shown, the lens through which to view imperialism is that of Marx's law of value. It is the race for higher rates of profit that is the real driving force of world capitalism. Historically, imperialism has served as a major counteracting factor to the tendency for the rate of profit to fall. For example, beginning in the 1980s and onwards, the rate of profit in major capitalist economies began to decline, resulting in a renewal of capital flows into underdeveloped nations. This significant increase in capitalist investment brought a massive supply of peasant and non-capitalist labor into the capitalist mode of production for the first time and sometimes at a cost below the value of labor power in developed countries, that is, super-exploitation (Carchedi and Roberts 2013). However, several Marxist analyses of the world rate of profit suggest efforts to relocate production to the South coupled with neoliberal policies on wages, public services, and trade unions in the North have failed to fully restore the rate of profitability. There is still a long way to go for the world rate of profit to be driven up, and it will likely take the further destruction of wealth and value.

The failure of dependency theory to creatively reconstitute Marx's law of value in light of new problems presented by the imperialist evolution of world capitalism resulted in its overall decline as a school of thought. Of the founders of dependency theory, one, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, became a neoliberal Brazilian president (succeeded in 2002 by Luis Inácio da Silva), implementing policies that he would have surely denounced as ultra-reactionary during his Good Old Days as a "dependentista." Samir Amin remains a self-declared Maoist who maintains that China has been following an original path of development since 1950 that is neither capitalist nor socialist. On the other hand, Andre Gunder Frank eventually began arguing that capitalism and socialism are ideological inventions that have never existed. Nonetheless, the debates sparked by dependency theory in the 1960s and 1970s remain an important reference point for individuals attempting to understand the theories of imperialism and exploitation.

In some respects, today's situation has not changed much, as many on the left—including both anarchists and Marxists—continue to assume that a socialist society consists of simply overcoming the market and private property. More promising are the new global justice movements that have largely rejected the concept of a vanguard party, the seizure of existing state power, and the bureaucratic state planning of the former so-called socialist countries. However, there appears to be little or no consensus on how these decentralized and anti-authoritarian movements can break with the law of value. Marx's critique of Proudhon, the neo-Ricardian socialists, and later the followers of Ferdinand Lassalle demands that we re-examine abstract value production—the very heart of capitalism—responsible for the production of value, surplus value, and capital accumulation. Today's generation of revolutionary activists will have to choose its future: We can build freely associated human relations that negate the law of value, or we can repeat the old illusions of past "socialist experiments." The choice is ours!

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U.S. Workers in the Late Neoliberal Era

The Pressures, the Changes, the Potential

Kim Moody

Capitalism in the United States and across the world has gone through a series of mind-bending crises, spatial "fixes," and continuous restructurings that have disoriented organized labor in most of the developed economies since the beginning of the neoliberal era in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Since then, however, continued problems of profitability and competition have altered the structure of U.S. capitalism and the working class in ways that could lay the basis for renewed class struggle, as union activists, non-union workers, insurgent immigrants, and urban-based workers caught in low-wage jobs increasingly come face-to-face with deteriorating working and living conditions and with each other in new concentrations of labor on the edges of urban America.

On May 3, just a couple of days after tens of thousands of immigrant workers struck and demonstrated, a few hundred railroad workers rallied at rail yards across the country to demand a fair contract, defend of their medical benefits, and advocate for national single-payer health care. With bargaining stalled for months and the leaders of most of the several unions that represent railroad workers reluctant to act, the 40,000-member Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division of the Teamsters (BMWED) took the initiative to call these rallies on company property at major rail yards. This small, racially diverse union of track workers saw a rank and file reform movement in one of its divisions in the 1990s that still influences what is now a Teamster affiliate. In the 2017 Teamster elections, its members voted 3-to-2 in favor of Teamsters United, the reform slate that challenged the Hoffa leadership and whose presidential candidate Fred Zuckerman came within a whisker of winning. This anomaly among rail craft unions advocates single-payer health care and endorsed Bernie Sanders in 2016.

There were workers at these rallies from other rail unions as well, including another Teamster affiliate, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, which also voted 3-to-2 for the Teamster reformers. Bringing these various rail union activists together was the rank and file, cross-craft Railroad Workers United (RWU). Founded in 2008, RWU's object is to bring together activists from the 13 unions that represent most of the 150,000 unionized rail workers to fight for unity, solidarity, democracy, and an end to concessions bargaining. RWU is also fighting the introduction of single-worker crews on North America's rail freight carriers—the rail boss's version of lean production. Not surprisingly, some RWU members also belong to Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) now that two rail unions are affiliated with the Teamsters. RWU, the rallies, the campaign for single-payer are examples of contemporary workers' self-activity that falls below the radar of the mass commercial media.

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Why start this article with a report on a relatively small event when the nation was rocked by bigger direct actions by striking women on March 8 and striking immigrants on February 16 and May 1? The reason is to look at the potential relationship between the highly visible grass-roots movements among workers and those still below society's radar to see if there is the potential for something even bigger. Unlike the high-profile strikes of women on March 8 and immigrants on February 16 and May 1, which certainly got less press than they deserved, no mainstream media outlet that I am aware of reported the actions of the black, brown, and white men and women rail workers who invaded key points in North America's emerging just-in-time, digitally driven logistics network and even faced police intimidation at one Chicago yard.

There are plenty of other invisible worker movements and actions, but this one illustrates an interface between these unionized rail workers and tens even hundreds of thousands of workers, many of them immigrants, African Americans, and women as well, who work in the logistics networks that link production, transportation, express delivery, service, IT, call centers, e-commerce, and retail workers in today's just-in-time supply networks. Before examining this potential dynamic, we first must take a quick look at the dire state of organized labor.

Counterpoint: Business-as-usual Unionism

While millions demonstrated against the new president of the United States, and a few of the more democratic and progressive unions endorsed the May 1 event, some top union leaders knelt to kiss the ring. Trump, of course, courted these selected labor leaders. Building trades leaders, some of whom already had dealings with the billionaire real estate developer, were among his early guests, lured by the promise of tens of thousands of jobs in infrastructure projects. Sean McGarvey, head of North America's Building Trades Unions' division of the AFL-CIO, said of the meeting with Trump, "So far so good." Terrance O'Sullivan of the Laborers waxed enthusiastic: "It is finally beginning to feel like a new day for America's working class." Most other top union officials were wary or opposed to most of Trump's policies and proposals, but some, such as UAW President Dennis Williams, were drawn to his promise to rewrite the country's trade deals, notably NAFTA. Williams has gone a step further and proclaimed a new "Buy American" campaign—even though domestic car and truck production has reached an all-time high, in part on the backs of his depleted membership. This latter poisoned apple, we will argue below, ranks high among labor's self-imposed points of vulnerability.

Things have changed in the U.S. labor movement in the last decade or more, to be sure. Yesterday's civil war between the SEIU-led Change to Win federation and the AFL-CIO has cooled. The AFL-CIO has embraced some of "alt-labor" by bringing the New York Taxi Workers Alliance into the federation and giving it a national existence. More generally the AFL-CIO recognized the contribution of workers centers to actual and potential growth. Nurses unions have led a new militancy and progressive politics. Unconventional efforts to organize warehouse workers are underway. And the Sanders campaign shook labor's political routine for a time and gave many workers and local union activists a new vision of the possible. But overall, the record tells a tale of continued decline and business-as-usual-unionism.

The crisis of organized labor in the United States, is, nevertheless, deep and is likely to get deeper in the face of increased political attacks on both public and private sector workers. Union membership is down again, having dropped another quarter-million members from 2015 to 2016, to 14.6 million members. Public workers have come under vicious attacks with their unions losing more than a half-million members since 2010. The level of official strike activity continues to decline, hitting about 112 work stoppages in 2016—at least as measured by the three government agencies that keep count. Real wages remain below their 1973 levels. Annual wage increases negotiated by unions ran at an average of 2.7 percent in the private sector—saved from further real decline only by the recently collapsing consumer price index. Surveys showed that in 2016, cost-saving changes were imposed in 79 percent of health insurance plans covered by labor contracts and in 24 percent of pension plans. Of course, there have been some wins, such as the strike by 39,000 Communications Workers at Verizon, many of the nurses strikes of the last several years, and the Chicago Teachers 2012 strike.

The economy has not helped. Recovery since the Great Recession of 2008-2009 has been sluggish with growth at less than 1 percent, while employment for private sector production and nonsupervisory workers only reached its 2007 level of 95.7 million by 2014, finally reaching 100 million in 2016. Despite falling unemployment, the reserve army of labor remained large as the labor force participation rate fell from 66.6 percent in 1994 to 63 percent in 2014, and for "prime age" men (25-54), from 84.4 percent to 80.9 percent over those years.

Beyond Lean Production

From the early 1980s to today, the neoliberal era has seen major changes in the working class, the conditions in which most workers labor, and the very infrastructure of U.S. capitalism. While manufacturing jobs disappeared by the millions over this period, manufacturing output increased, so that by 2010 manufacturing production workers were producing four-times what they had in the 1950s and twice their production of 1983. While imports hit some industries hard, it was the twin forces of four serious recessions and rising productivity that killed most of these jobs. On the other hand, millions of "service" jobs were created as capital's needs for the social reproduction of labor-power and the maintenance of its vastly expanded built environment and transportation arteries called forth armies of low-paid workers—many of them immigrants. Overall, today's working class is far more racially diverse in most occupations than at the dawn of the neoliberal era. Today, about 40 percent of the nearly 30 million workers who produce, transport, move, maintain, or build things are black, Latino, or Asian—well over twice their proportion in 1980. In service-producing occupations it is over 40 percent.

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By the 1990s most of these old and new jobs had become reorganized along lean-production lines, measured and intensified by programs such as Six-Sigma, statistical process controls, total quality management, and so on, all enabled by new technology. By the early twenty-first century these techniques had been supplemented or superseded by new electronic and biometric means of worker monitoring and job measurement that now reached beyond the factory to the hospital, warehouse, hotel, supermarket, and beyond. Sixty-seven percent of employers electronically monitor their employees, while one estimate reports that 80 percent of U.S. workers are monitored. Across both service and goods-producing workforces, those in semi- and unskilled work saw their break time reduced from 13 percent of the day in the 1980s to 8 percent in the 2000s, "filling up the pores of the workday," as Marx put it in *Capital*. Taken together, these changes created the greatest work intensification in U.S. history—far surpassing the now quaint norms of Taylorism.

Service jobs, like those in manufacturing, became more capital-intensive as the nation's capital-labor ratio increased. Unlike those in goods production, concentrations of workers became larger on average in the service sector as the number of workers in workplaces of 500 or more grew from 16.5 million in 1986 to 24.7 million in 2008, and those in places with 1,000 or more increased from 10.7 million to 16.5 million over this period. On top of this, more and more new jobs were low-skilled and low-paid, with the Bureau of Labor Statistics projecting that 70 percent of nonmanagerial and nonprofessional jobs would fall in these categories by 2024. This is a workforce producing "service" commodities in jobs transformed in the image of the modern factory for wages akin to those in agriculture.

The Forging of the Just-in-time Supply Chain Gang

Even more recent has been the emerging "logistics revolution" of the last two decades. The supply chains that have always characterized the flow of goods from produce to producer, producer to retailer and service provider, have been streamlined, digitally tracked and guided on a just-in-time (JIT) basis, and moved by intermodal transportation systems from "node" to "node" along upgraded rail, road, water, and air "corridors" and through high-tech cross-docking warehouses. Time has become the centerpiece of competition. It is an irony that amidst today's crumbling national infrastructure that is the object of so much political opportunism, the nation's five dominant rail freight carriers have spent billions to upgrade cross-continental rail corridors. These improvements are meant to carry double-stacked container platforms of both domestic and foreign-made goods along North America's major "land bridges"—much of the system built and maintained by the members of the BMWED we met above.

Like the JIT rhythms of lean production, these reshaped supply chains set the brutal pace of work throughout the entire process of capital accumulation. They underlie capital's new slimmed-down just-in-time supply chain gangs. But these chains are now famously vulnerable to worker actions and can be broken. Their time-bound nature and the role of delivery speed in competition have increased this vulnerability in the last two decades.

The major "nodes" in this backbone of production and circulation are not only key points of transshipment, but also huge concentrations of workers. If the pressures of today's faster-moving production of goods and services are an incentive to resistance and to some extent the means of effective action, the new concentration of workers in massive "logistics clusters" has provided potential sites for a major rebellion. There are about sixty logistics clusters in the United States, each concentrating thousands of mostly blue-collar or manual workers. By one estimate there are 3.2 million people employed in these clusters, but this leaves out many rail, road, and communications workers and others who service and link the clusters together across the country.

Among the largest are those adjacent to Chicago, with 150,000-200,000 mostly blue-collar workers; Los Angeles and the port of New York-New Jersey, with at least 100,000 each; UPS's "Worldport" in Louisville, employing 55,000; and the FedEx hub at Memphis, directly employing 15,000 with a total of 220,000 in the surrounding cluster. They draw on the vast reserve armies of labor in the cities of which they are extensions. These are the Detroits, Garys, and Pittsburghs of today. These urban centers are the homes to those immigrants who struck twice this year, to the activists in Black Lives Matter, and to tens and even hundreds of thousands of current union members, some of whom, at least, could be mobilized to help organize these new proletarian heartlands—if, that is, the eyes and minds of both union leaders and many members were not so firmly focused on the imagined "others."

It is in these giant concentrations of workers that rail workers, truck drivers, mechanics, IT specialists—mostly white, relatively well-paid, unionized, but also under attack—meet the growing mass of those who move goods into, across, and out of huge factory-like warehouses. These latter workers are mostly Latino and black, about a quarter of them women, all are poorly paid, non-union, and often employed by labor supply agencies. The opportunity to organize hundreds of thousands of workers is obvious. But barriers of race, ethnicity, and immigration status, always present, are if anything more pronounced in the aftermath of Trump's victory. Taking on racism and nationalism will be key to organizing and uniting these different groups of workers. In this respect, the legacy of business-union ideology and practice presents one more barrier to an opportunity that could turn the labor movement around.

The Great Diversion: Imports, Immigrants, and Benign Management in Business-union Ideology

One reason so many workers, union members, and labor officials are drawn to Trump's xenophobic promises to end immigration, imports, and offshoring is that for decades the official union explanation of job losses in manufacturing and elsewhere has centered on imports and offshoring. This focus, of course, has been encouraged by the entire "free trade" ethos of the neoliberal era, with its trade agreements like NAFTA, the now-dead Trans-Pacific Partnership, and the not-yet-dead Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement and its rule-making institutions like the World Trade Organization and the European Union. These are policies and structures that labor should oppose because they prevent the sort of state intervention that developing nations need to industrialize, develop domestic markets, and increase incomes. At the same time, these trade agreements demand privatization, marketization, reduced government spending, and the undermining of labor rights in the developed economies as well. But much of the rhetoric that comes from labor leaders appeals to base forms of nationalism and anti-foreign sentiment. Yet, while imports and offshoring do take away some jobs, they are not the major cause of lost manufacturing jobs or more recently of slow job creation in the United States and most developed nations. These are functions of capital's profitability problems in an increasingly competitive world.

The systemic instability spawned by globalization, falling profit rates, and neoliberal remedies that brought on the deep recession of the early 1980s, the lesser ones of the early 1990s and 2000s, and the Great Recession of 2008 destroyed millions of manufacturing production jobs. The increased productivity of most of this era, a result of the intensification of work as well as new technology, guaranteed that when production rose again between recessions, few if any new manufacturing jobs were created. The double irony here is that not only did most U.S. union leaders focus almost exclusively on the sometimes imagined (and sometimes real) results of free trade, but they submitted to or even encouraged the concessions and various labor-management cooperation schemes that accompanied lean production *and* promoted the very productivity increases that were the major cause of job loss and of growing inequality over most of this period. Talk about shooting yourself in the foot—twice.

The legacy of this analysis and practice is not only a misguided focus on imports and a willingness to make concessions in hopes of saving jobs by becoming "competitive," but also a labor nationalism that encourages a dim view of immigrants as the "foreign other" job stealers. "They" steal your jobs when work goes to their countries, and "they" steal them when they come here. Nationalism and racism, of course, have been there in one degree or another since the birth of the republic, but the official labor focus on things foreign has only strengthened these and legitimized them through the mantra of globalization. Even though most top union leaders no longer take this line on immigration and most unions actually, indeed, necessarily, attempt to recruit immigrant workers, the legacy of "Buy American" is deeply ingrained and only a stone's throw from "Make America Great Again."

Aside from the fact that "Buy American" was a total flop in the 1970s and 1980s in textiles, garment, and auto, its revival by the UAW and possibly others is sure to be a gift to the Xenophobe-in-Chief in the White House. It is also likely to stoke up anti-immigrant sentiment, since "Buy American" is neighbor to "American Jobs for American Workers." Now that U.S. auto workers are producing more cars and trucks than ever, with a much smaller workforce, wouldn't it make more sense to fight the conditions in those auto plants that cost all those jobs in the first place and to organize the non-union suppliers in the Midwest and the "transplants" in the South? Wouldn't internationalism, at home in alliance with immigrant workers who fill supplier plants and abroad with auto workers facing the same conditions, competition, and hostile employers, provide a more durable future?

The twin scams of labor nationalism and labor-management cooperation have worked well for capital, with owners' share of income growing apace over this whole period. It is the enormous increase in capital's share of value added (that is, surplus value) extracted on the job through lean and post-lean methods, more than

tax policy or financial (that is, fictitious) capital, that is the source of increased income inequality. As political economist Anwar Shaikh points out in his monumental work *Capitalism,* "the overall degree of income inequality ultimately rests on the ratio of profits to wages, that is, *on the basic division of value added.*" (Shaikh 2016, 55, emphasis original).

One is heartened by an all too rare union leader like Chuck Jones, president of Steelworkers Local 1999 at the Carrier plant in Indiana where Trump posed as savior. Jones not only questioned Trump's sincerity in this grandstand move to get the state of Indiana to bribe Carrier to save a few hundred of the much larger number of jobs being moved to Mexico. Jones also routinely tells his members that it isn't Mexican workers who are taking their jobs, but greedy corporations like Carrier. What a breath of fresh air from the home state of Gene Debs and, well, Mike Pence.

From Under the Radar into the Sunlight

Like the protesting rail workers we saw above, the conflict and upsurges within today's apparently monolithic and bureaucratic unions receives little media attention. To find out anything about these internal rebellions you have to read *Labor Notes, Union Democracy Review,* or some of the left press. Change, however, rumbles below the surface and under the media radar. Most of the grass-roots rebellions in the unions want real democracy, oppose labor-management cooperation, reject concessions in favor of greater militancy, attempt to draw on the increasing racial and gender diversity of many unions, and generally go beyond the norms of business unionism.

Rank and file reform movements sometimes win national power, as in the Postal Workers and Amalgamated Transit Union. Other national reform challenges to incumbent union leaders came close, as in the Teamsters, or made a respectable showing as in the International Association of Machinists, winning a third of the vote. Some, like those in the Machinists, Teamsters, and New York State Public Employees Federation, got a few members on the union executive board.

More typical are rebellions in local unions. Some of these, like in the Chicago Teachers, the New York State Nurses Association, Communications Workers Local 1101, or various Teamster locals, won in large local unions. In the huge United Federation of Teachers in New York City, the MORE/New Action caucus swept the seven high school seats, as the opposition often has in the past, but couldn't beat the powerfully entrenched Unity Caucus. Most, however, are neither clearly victorious nor visible. But when they are, they can inspire others. The Chicago Teachers Union, for example, has spawned similar movements in teachers unions across the country and even set up a national caucus, the United Caucuses of Rank-and-File Educators (UCORE) with about twenty affiliates. This grass-roots trend is growing, but is still a minority and largely invisible to the public, other union members, and even much of the political left.

Most of these challenges arise from previous efforts to organize against concessions, unresponsive or pro-company leadership, or conditions in the workplace discussed above. The IAM (Machinists) Reform Slate, for example, arose in part from a grass-roots movement called Rosie's Machinists 751. This local movement against concessions and deteriorating conditions has gone national and was important in the 2014 challenge. Sometimes it also goes the other way as well. After reformers took over Communications Workers Local 1101 in New York, they went on to play a key role in the activist nature of the 2016 Verizon strike.

Do these movements or organized labor in general have any relationship with the mass strikes and demonstrations we saw in the spring of 2017? So far, the answer has to be: not much. To be sure some unions, particularly those with reform leaderships, large numbers of immigrant members, or the few with left traditions, endorsed the May 1 Day Without Immigrants. The International Longshore and Warehouse Workers, the Communications Workers, the United Electrical Workers, National Nurses United, American Postal Workers Union, Amalgamated Transit Union, SEIU United Service Workers West, and some local unions endorsed May 1. Of course, many of the May 1 strikers surely were union members. But it was not an action organized by unions or their leaders.

> Taking on racism and nationalism will be key to organizing and uniting these different groups of workers.

The highly visible events on February 16 and again on May 1, when tens of thousands of immigrants and their supporters struck and demonstrated in 40 cities across the United States, were possible because of the work of immigrant-worker organizations that are themselves as invisible to the public and other workers as the rank and file rebellions in the unions. Many of these are immigrant-based workers centers such as Make the Road New York and Make the Road Pennsylvania, the Restaurant Opportunities Center, and other immigrants' rights or neighborhood groups. The organization most behind this remarkable strike nationally, however, appears to have been *Movimiento Cosecha* (Harvest Movement). Itself until recently under the media radar, Cosecha explicitly advocates striking and noncooperation as the only way to make immigrants' rights an issue in the United States. Their statement on this is instructive:

> Time and time again our community is asked to vote for the next Deporter-in-Chief, whether Obama or Trump, who will shape immigration policy for the next four to eight years. Each election, we're promised that if we vote for the Democrats, they will give us immigration reform. When their promises go unfulfilled—when Obama deports three million immigrants or when Trump expands his power to deport and terrorize our communities—what do we do? We strike.

But isn't the strike dead? Isn't it the case that strikes associated with collective bargaining have almost disappeared? The Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS), which unlike the Bureau of Labor Statistics attempts to report all strikes associated with contract negotiations, records a mere 112 strikes during fiscal 2016, down year after year. In the first three months of 2017, the FMCS reports only 20 strikes ongoing or ended in these months. To be sure, in a rudimentary search I found a few strikes in early 2017 and more in the last two years that the FMCS missed. Most of these were wildcat, grievance, or unfair labor practice (ULP) strikes. Some workers have turned to ULP or grievance strikes where permanent replacements can't be deployed.

The fact remains, however, that union leaders and members have shied away from conventional strikes due in part to the threat of replacement workers, the uselessness of most current labor law, and the growing anti-union fervor of capital and its politicians. This, in spite of the fact that a growing number of employers are vulnerable to strike action due to the just-in-time nature of their production or inputs and supplies.

Yet, tens of thousands of mostly working-class people, by holding demonstrations on work days, have turned to the strike weapon to vent their grievances. It's hard to know just how effective this year's immigrant strikes were. Fox News, of all places, reported that on February 16, "thousands were estimated to have abstained from work, school, and other commitments in protest and solidarity." *The Atlantic* (February

21, 2017) cited bricklayers, shipyard workers, and paint manufacturers who were fired for striking on that day, though most participants did not face retaliation. *Bloomberg* reported that construction felt the impact, but that it was the restaurant industry that was hardest hit on February 16. The U.S. Senate coffee shop had to close as workers stayed away.

May 1 was much smaller than the 2006 Day Without Immigrants, when construction sites, meatpacking plants, and trucking in Los Angeles's busy ports were shut down. Yet, May 1, 2017 was also called "A Day Without Immigrants" in most cities, meaning withholding their labor. Reports of businesses closed were common. In Reading, Pennsylvania, for example, about three-quarters of that city's businesses were closed. The *Huffington Post* spoke of people "skipping work" and Philadelphia teachers calling in sick on May 1. It was not only immigrants fighting for the right to stay and work in the United States, but also the women who struck on March 8 for gender equality and against Trump. The Fight for $15 also called its actions strikes, although some question whether these actions over the last few years really involved many strikes. It has to be noted, however, that $15-minimum-wage laws have been passed in a number of cities and states as a result of that effort and of unions picking up the issue.

So far, all these have been limited to one-day actions with necessarily limited impact. Labor historian Nelson Lichtenstein speculated, "We may be entering an era of political strikes, in which unions and other groups set a date and an agenda, but in which lots of unaffiliated people join in. The question is: Can these strikes be given any sort of institutional backbone, any impact other than a one-time event that needs to be recreated from start each time?" In a more optimistic tone, Cosecha has stated, "We will start with one day, but we are going for seven—a week without immigrants." This is a tall order that will be hard to deliver, but it is a goal worth pursuing. All this remains to be seen.

The use of the strike for broad social and political goals, no matter how limited, is something we have not seen in the United States since the May 1, 1886, strike for the eight-hour day by 300,000 or more workers who were themselves mostly immigrants. The significance of this should not be lost or underestimated in understanding the state of the U.S. working class. These previously unrecognized workers and their mostly under-the-radar organizations have reintroduced, if not perfected, the mass political-social strike and brought their struggles into the sunlight that even the self-censored media could not ignore.

Will this inspire more unionized workers to turn to the strike and use the new, often interconnected, vulnerabilities that the reorganized production and circulation of goods and services offer? Will the overlaps of these seemingly different groups of working-class people in the urban centers and their adjacent "logistics clusters," where millions are concentrated, contribute to another worker upsurge on the scale of the 1960s and 1970s, or even the 1930s? Will working-class struggle in general come out from under the radar into the sunlight, bringing new troops to an embattled labor movement?

Union growth and mass strike movements, the British historian Eric Hobsbawm reminds us, do not come in "a mere rising slope," but from "accumulations of inflammable materials which only ignite periodically, as it were under compression" (1964, 139). This certainly describes the conditions of most working-class people in the United States, indeed, across the world, today. This isn't something to be predicted, but to be sought in practice. To paraphrase the well-known Wobbly, "don't wait, organize!"

The Left, the Right, and Globalization

Robin Hahnel

Don't be tricked into thinking that what is going on is a debate about "free trade"—the unhindered exchange of goods—because it is not.

All of the grand neoliberal transformations of the international economy over the past three decades—which include the transformation of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) into the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995, granting China "most favored nation" status in 2001, as well as many other treaties beyond NAFTA, the TPP, and the TTIP—are first and foremost about increasing international protection for intellectual property rights (patents and copyrights) and making it easier for financial capital and productive facilities to relocate anywhere they choose. Those pushing for these changes want people to think the debate is about trade liberalization to distract them from what is really being done, which is to further empower multinational corporations. Trade liberalization has been the *least* important component of the neoliberal globalization process.

Prior to World War I, average global tariffs were low. World War I led many more-developed countries (MDCs) to raise significant tariff barriers, which were not reduced during the 1920s and were then further increased as MDCs tried to protect jobs from import competition during the Great Depression. This is where the phrase "beggar thy neighbor" came from, and the consensus after World War II was that while raising tariffs might seem rational for an individual country in the short run, it invites retaliation and becomes a negative-sum game globally, thus everyone loses in the long run. Founded in 1947, the GATT did more to reduce tariffs and promote "free trade" in the decades after World War II than the WTO has done to reduce tariffs since its founding in 1995—giving the lie to the claim that neoliberal globalization is primarily a push for trade liberalization.

Not only was trade liberalization GATT's main mission, the emphasis under GATT was primarily to reduce tariffs in MDCs. This provided some leeway for less-developed countries (LDCs) to industrialize through "import substitution." It also initially advantaged the United States because unlike other MDCs, its productive infrastructure had not been reduced to rubble during World War II, so that lower tariffs for all MDCs boosted U.S. exports more than imports in the post-World War II years. More importantly, the GATT had negotiated reductions in tariffs without forcing countries to acquiesce to "trade-related investment measures" and "trade-related international property rights," whereas the WTO has made acceptance of these provisions a requirement for membership. So don't be distracted by talk of "free trade."

Neither Neoliberal Globalization ...

Instead, ask yourself whose interests are served by protecting international property rights and liberalizing both direct foreign investment (DFI) and international financial investment

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(IFI, or portfolio investment), and whose interests are harmed. Because what neoliberal globalization has actually been is a corporate-sponsored political project to rig the global economy ever more in the interests of multinational financial institutions, multinational corporations, and corporate patent holders at the expense of ordinary people everywhere.

In MDCs, less-skilled industrial workers have been hurt first and foremost by liberalization of direct foreign investment, as their employers both threaten to and do move their jobs to LDCs where wages are much lower. In addition, as Heckscher-Ohlin trade theory predicts, trade liberalization puts downward pressure on "payments to relatively scarce factors of production" because it makes them less scarce than when there was less trade. In the case of the United States this means trade liberalization depresses the wages of less-skilled workers. Combined with a decline in unionization, liberalization of DFI and trade has led to a dramatic deterioration of employment and wages of less-skilled workers in MDCs. After forty years of this, it is hardly surprising that many less-skilled workers in the "industrial heartlands" of MDCs rebelled against the political establishment that had presided over this grand transformation and voted for Brexit in the UK, Sanders over Clinton in the Democratic primaries, Trump over a field of establishment Republicans in the Republican primaries, and finally Trump over Clinton in the U.S. general election.

Meanwhile in LDCs the effects of financial liberalization were disastrous, as currency crises triggered deep recessions that took years to recover from in Mexico (1995), Thailand (1997), Malaysia (1997), Indonesia (1997), South Korea (1998), Russia (1998), Brazil (1998), Turkey (2001), and Argentina (2002). And since neoliberal globalization threw more peasants off the land in LDCs than it added new jobs in labor-intensive manufacturing, there was often little or no increase in LDC wages, with the notable exception of China. Because the Chinese government protected its currency from international speculators and deployed a highly visible hand to orchestrate a successful industrialization strategy, productivity in China rose dramatically over the past three decades, some of which finally even trickled down to some segments of the Chinese working class.

Neoliberal globalization has been a corporate-sponsored political project to rig the global economy.

... Nor Xenophobic Isolationism

For decades the ill effects of international financial liberalization were confined to LDCs. But in 2008 the biggest financial crisis since the crash of 1929 hit the United States and the European Union harder than elsewhere. When establishment political parties in MDCs bailed out the banks but not the victims of foreclosures, and allowed unemployment to linger far longer than necessary, conditions were ripe for political rebellion.

Center-right and center-left political parties in MDCs have taken huge hits everywhere as they struggle to maintain power. Sometimes the revolt has been led by left-wing forces such as Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain, Uncut and Jeremy Corbyn in the UK, and Bernie Sanders in the United States. But unfortunately the populist rebellion against the establishment has more often been led by right-wing politicians such as Marine Le Pen in France, Nigel Farage in the UK, Geert Wilders in the Netherlands, and most spectacularly Donald Trump in the United States. Right-wing populists scapegoat immigrants and refugees from wars and poverty—caused in no small part by globalization and imperial machinations—denounce international economic treaties and organizations, and threaten to raise tariffs dramatically. It remains to be seen how much of their pre-election rhetoric is a program with concrete substance and how much is pure demagoguery.

The left has honed a compelling critique of neoliberal globalization. (See Hahnel, "What Mainstream Economists Won't Tell You About Neoliberal Globalization," *Socialist Studies* (1,1, 2005), 5-29.) The left also has had little difficulty denouncing racist campaigns by right-wing populist forces against immigrants, refugees, Muslims, and people of color as vicious scapegoating—even when doing so makes it more difficult for left politicians to compete against right-wing populists for the allegiance of white, working-class voters. But the left has struggled to agree on an alternative international economic program and consequently has had difficulty distinguishing itself from right-wing populism except to champion multi-culturalism over racism and bigotry.

… So What Is to Be Done?

If neither neoliberal globalization nor xenophobic protectionism is the answer—both of which are variants of corporate-managed globalization—what international economic program would serve the interests of the vast majority in both MDCs and LDCs? It is important to state the goal this way, because if in our haste to compete against right-wing populism we begin searching for a program that benefits workers in MDCs only, we will betray our fundamental principles and lose global allies unnecessarily. There is no reason that international trade and investment cannot benefit workers in both MDCs and LDCs if done properly. However, to do this: (1) International finance must be restrained so it does not trigger currency crises which generate recessions. (2) A more extensive global division of labor must only happen when it truly does generate global efficiency gains. And (3) global efficiency gains must be distributed equitably between citizens of MDCs and LDCs alike. Because all this can be done so as to leave worker-consumers in both MDCs and LDCs better off, there need not be a conflict of interests.

It is also important to be clear that we need a program short of replacing global capitalism with global eco-socialism. To command the attention of a wide audience, and compete successfully against right-wing populism, we need an international economic program that progressive governments in capitalist MDCs can pursue today. This does not mean giving up on preaching the virtues of eco-socialism over capitalism, nor on explaining the need for a "next economic system," nor on organizing "experiments in equitable cooperation," nor on promoting "future economy initiatives." But we also need a coherent international economic program for the here and now. What does it look like?

Traditionally when left economic strategists approach international economic policy they start with tariffs, regulations on DFI, and regulations on IFI—they do not start with the environment. But they should! Because for the next two decades winning the war to prevent cataclysmic climate change before it is too late is our most urgent goal. If one begins with this task in mind the immediate conclusions are:

- Energy systems and economic infrastructure must be completely transformed in all MDCs.
- LDCs must pursue development paths that are *not* based on fossil fuels.
- All this must be accomplished in less than two decades.

And the important consequences that follow from these conclusions are:

- The problem of how to eventually transition to an economy where technological advances have eliminated the need for much work is still decades away.
- Large multinational companies must play a major role in bringing this necessary transformation about.

The good news when one begins this way

is that there are plenty of socially useful jobs for everyone—in MDCs and LDCs alike. The bad news is that the left must learn to do something more nuanced than simply categorically denounce multinational corporations as the universal boogeyman. And the trick is how to make sure that the considerable income generated by global full employment is distributed more equitably. Concretely, what can progressives in MDCs do?

The Environmental Movement

The environmental movement must support an effective and equitable international agreement (which may no longer be a treaty). Such an agreement should (1) reduce global emissions sufficiently to keep average global temperatures from rising by more than 1.5 degrees Celsius; (2) assign responsibility for emission reductions according to countries' differential responsibilities and capabilities; and (3) leave the choice of whether to certify carbon emission reduction credits for sale, and to purchase credits, up to national governments. (See Hahnel, "An Open Letter to the Climate Justice Movement." *New Politics* (56, Winter 2014), 76-83.) This will establish powerful incentives for MDCs to decarbonize their economies, provide financial resources for LDCs to pursue non-fossil fuel development trajectories, and distribute the burdens of preventing climate change equitably. Whereas the environmental movement in MDCs has fought hard for reducing carbon emissions, it has been largely missing in action on assigning national responsibility for reductions, and terribly confused and inconsistent on carbon credits. To forge an effective alliance with progressive movements and governments in LDCs, environmentalists in MDCs will have to get up to speed on assigning responsibilities and stop squabbling over carbon credits.

The environmental movement must champion a domestic Green New Deal. There are more jobs in energy conservation, expansion of renewable energy production, and building a smart electric grid than there are in coal and natural gas production. As long as there are plenty of jobs transforming MDC economies, there is no need to wage what would be a losing fight in any case to bring back jobs from China and Mexico producing shirts, TV sets, or smart phones. Just as jobs mining coal are gone forever, many jobs producing manufactured consumer products are gone forever as well. Trump isn't going to bring them back, and hopefully those who voted for him because they believed his promises to do so will become quickly disillusioned when he fails to deliver on this campaign promise. But the left should understand that we can't bring back many of these jobs either. The important thing is that we don't need to, because what we can do that Trump isn't going to do is provide plenty of green jobs as well as jobs producing next-generation machinery for export.

> When establishment political parties bailed out the banks but not the victims of foreclosures, and allowed unemployment to linger, conditions were ripe for political rebellion.

The environmental movement not only has to emphasize that a Green New Deal provides the only remedy for joblessness in MDCs, it must also join in principled solidarity with the labor movement and insist that these new jobs be good jobs, with decent pay and benefits. Since large corporations producing renewable energy and transforming our built infrastructure will be part of the political coalition pressing for a Green New Deal, and since these corporations will have to be pressed hard to embrace unionization and pay decent wages with benefits, this is a key role that the environmental movement will have to embrace in order to keep a red-green alliance together. The days when the environmental movement could wash their hands on the issue of unionization and fair wages, and say to labor, "That is your problem not ours," are over.

The Labor Movement

The labor movement is weaker than it has been in over a hundred years and has reached a crossroad. Traditionally the labor movement has left the choice of what it produces to others and fought for more jobs, better pay, and better working conditions. In a world where what we are producing and not producing has become the crucial issue of our time because it will determine whether or not we trigger climate disaster, labor can no longer be agnostic about what workers produce.

> We need a coherent international economic program for the here and now.

Labor cannot continue to fight for more jobs mining coal, extracting natural gas, and building pipelines and fossil fuel export facilities and expect other progressive movements to ally with labor and support labor in its fight for better pay and working conditions. And make no mistake about it, without broader support the labor movement will continue on its march to oblivion. Labor must make a clean break and hitch its wagon to the Green New Deal. The bargain is this: Labor will stop lobbying for environmentally destructive jobs and instead throw its political muscle behind fighting for the largest Green New Deal possible. In exchange the environmental movement will pledge to do everything labor asks of it to help labor make those jobs good jobs—steady jobs with career ladders, well-paid jobs, jobs with benefits, jobs on which a worker—male or female—can raise and support a family.

There are many progressives in both the environmental and labor movements who realize that this is the deal that both must strike if they are to be successful. Unfortunately this red-green alliance has suffered numerous setbacks as elements in both camps have betrayed the other camp repeatedly over the years. The environmental movement was painfully slow to realize that it needed to craft policies that did not generate adverse effects on jobs and income distribution. Most recently the behavior of leaders of some building trades unions—doing photo ops with President Trump in the Oval Office and lobbying to restart pipeline construction that the environmental movement spent eight years pressuring the Obama administration to finally shut down—is a huge setback. At this point there is a clear internal problem in the labor movement. And if the labor movement does not solve this problem—which may require some organizational splits—the labor movement will end in the dustbin of history. The choice is really that simple.

Fixing Trade

One can quibble about whether U.S. exports are more labor-intensive than imports on average. But there is little enough difference to matter, so that if we exported as much as we imported there would be little loss of jobs, if any. Instead it is trade deficits that cost jobs. Every year from 1960 to 1970 the United States ran a trade surplus, and our exports created more jobs than our imports lost. Every year from 1976 through 2016 the United States has run a trade deficit, and our exports have created fewer jobs than our imports have lost. There are many measures the government can take to generate employment to make up for job losses caused by trade deficits. But the fact remains that forty years of chronic trade deficits make it more difficult to provide jobs for everyone who is able and willing to work, which in turn puts downward pressure on wages.

In the long run, the U.S. needs to develop the kind of strategic trade policy pioneered by Japan and copied by other "Asian Tigers" like South Korea. After World War II the Japanese Ministry of Trade and Industry used differential tax rates and terms of credit so that companies in lower-productivity industries like textiles and toys would be those who moved operations abroad, but only after firms in higher-productivity industries like steel, automobiles, and electronics had developed sufficiently to absorb employees who lost their jobs. The choice is not between managed trade and free trade. The choice is about *who* will manage trade. Corporations have been allowed to manage trade policy in the United States, which they have done very much to their advantage. Instead we need the government to step in and manage trade policy and orchestrate changes in trade patterns to maximize increases in labor productivity. Moreover, when all countries take this approach the result is a positive-sum game where productivity rises more quickly everywhere.

However, the transition from managing trade in the national interest, not the interests of corporations, will take some time. In the short run, the most effective way to reduce trade deficits is to allow the dollar to depreciate, that is, to fall in value relative to other currencies, not to raise tariffs, which is not only a regressive form of taxation but more likely to invite retaliation, as Trump has already discovered. The negative consequence is that U.S. consumers will pay more for imports. But there is no better time to take this hit than when inflation has been historically low for going on a decade. Other policies will be needed to make sure that wage increases in the United States once again keep pace with increases in labor productivity. But eliminating chronic trade deficits will help since it keeps labor markets tighter.

International Financial Regulation

An unregulated financial industry is an accident waiting to happen, as we discovered when deregulation of the mortgage industry, the insurance industry, and the rating industry predictably led to the greatest financial crisis since 1929. (See Hahnel, *The ABCs of Political Economy* (Pluto Press, 2014), 193-199.) But elimination of safeguards to prevent international financial crises,

Labor can no longer be agnostic about what workers produce.

put in place at the Bretton Woods conference after World War II, occurred even earlier than domestic financial deregulation.

Properly regulated, the financial industry can provide a useful service and help the real economy perform better. But when unregulated, the financial industry becomes the tail that wags the dog, to its own delight but to the detriment of the dog. And unfortunately, as we discovered in 2008, the dog is the real economy where the rest of us live and work.

Not only is financial regulation necessary to prevent more financial crises, it is also needed to facilitate the massive redirection of investment resources that a Green New Deal requires. The job of the financial sector in capitalist economies is to channel savings into socially productive investments. Instead, for the past forty years Wall Street has been channeling savings into one asset bubble after another. There is only so much the government can do to jump-start a Green New Deal using fiscal policy. We need a much bigger Green New Deal than a green fiscal stimulus can generate. This can only happen if the financial sector begins to channel loans into investments in energy conservation and clean energy, and that will only happen if the government intervenes in the financial sector more rather than less.

The answer is either strong, competent

regulation of the financial industry, or nationalization. Accepting deposits and making credit-worthy loans is not rocket science and is fully within the skill set of public servants. And guiding loans to the most socially beneficial borrowers and industries must be done according to priorities set by international and industrial planning in any case. Wall Street has no factual basis to any claim to expertise in this regard.

You Can't Take Our Jobs and Run

When capital is free to pick up and move plant and machinery to any country where wages are lower, labor is put in an untenable bargaining position: "Do you want to keep your job? Then sign a give-back contract." Capital has long been more mobile than labor, but neoliberal globalization has magnified the difference. In the mid-twentieth century, when unions were organizing workers in the Northeast and Midwest they only had to worry about companies picking up and moving to the South where there were no unions and wages were lower. Now unions anywhere in the United States must worry that if they do not capitulate in negotiations, companies that are ever more footloose will pick up and move to Mexico or China where wages are even lower than the depressingly low U.S. minimum wage.

> Building trades unions doing photo ops with President Trump and lobbying to restart pipeline construction is a huge setback.

On December 1, 2016, less than a month after becoming president-elect, to great fanfare, Donald Trump announced that he had met with Carrier, a unit of United Technologies, and convinced them to keep 1,100 jobs in Indiana that they had previously scheduled to move to Mexico. The number of jobs saved turned out to be only 730, and 1,873 jobs were still lost, and the concession to keep 730 jobs in Indiana was made only after the State of Indiana, where vice-president-elect Mike Pence was still governor, promised Carrier an additional tax break of $7 million. One has to wonder if the 730 who kept their jobs would not have preferred to simply receive a payoff of $96,000 each. But the important point is that the left should be clear that the problem with what Trump did was not that he intervened to save American jobs. The problem was not that the government has no legitimate role to play with regard to companies moving jobs abroad. Instead the problem was that his claims of success were exaggerated and deceptive. The problem was that what he achieved was a drop in the bucket rather than a systematic approach to saving significant numbers of jobs. In short, the problem was that it was merely a publicity stunt. Not surprisingly, Trump has moved on to new publicity stunts in other areas, and we have heard nothing further about our "great negotiator" saving American jobs single handedly by making "great deals."

As long as capitalism is with us the only solution to this problem is to erect barriers to deter companies from changing location when they are earning a reasonable rate of return and when moving would be detrimental to the communities where they are located. At a fundamental level this means challenging the notion that stockholders should always be free to do whatever they wish. This means distinguishing between a legitimate rate of return and the notion that any rate of return one can achieve is what is fair and legitimate and beyond challenge or rebuke. In the case of monopolies, it is an established economic principle that if left to do as they please, stockholders would charge prices and enjoy profits that are unwarranted and unfair. The accepted response is regulation, where regulators restrict prices to yield a fair rate of return lower than what the monopoly would otherwise achieve. We must make the same case about large employers in our communities. If leaving would seriously damage communities where they operate, and if they are making a reasonable rate of return, they should not be free to take advantage of their greater mobility to move abroad to earn an even higher rate of return elsewhere.

Just as federal legislation requires an environmental impact review, we can pass legislation that requires a community impact review when companies wish to move operations abroad. Nor is there anything preventing the federal government from passing legislation to authorize a division of the Justice Department to monitor and prosecute U.S.-based firms that move plants abroad, just as the anti-trust division of the Justice Department monitors and prosecutes firms for price fixing. State governments could also review plant shutdowns just as state governments regulate private utilities that are monopolies. In the meantime, an idea that Trump floated when a candidate, but we have not heard about since he was elected, is an import surcharge on goods of a company that moves operations outside the United States and now wants to sell its products again inside the U.S. Until we can develop the institutions and policy tools necessary to carry out strategic trade and industrial policy, surcharges on companies immune to moral suasion are not a bad idea.

Conclusion

Carving out a coherent approach to international economic issues that is different from both neoliberalism and xenophobic protectionism is a crucial task for the left today. There is a massive popular audience tuned in to this subject, and the battle over who will successfully attract their attention and allegiance will go a long way toward determining how the world evolves over the next few critical decades. Critique is important and has a role to play. But critique alone is not sufficient. Without a coherent alternative we will lose, because you can't beat something with nothing.

The key to a progressive alternative is (1) a massive Green New Deal, and (2) a much more active role for government. Center-left political parties in Europe and the United States made a huge mistake acquiescing to neoliberal changes in the global economy championed by banks and multinational corporations, for which they have recently paid a steep price at the polls. Instead, revitalized, progressive political parties must work with progressive parties in other countries to redesign treaties and institutions like the IMF, WTO, and World Bank to help regulate and manage international trade and investment in the interests of citizens not corporations.

> The choice is not between managed trade and free trade. The choice is about who will manage trade.

The U.S. government must adopt policies, many of which have been pioneered elsewhere, to orchestrate socially beneficial changes in trade and investment patterns, and most importantly, to guarantee workers in declining industries an easy transition to work in industries of the future through retraining, relocation, and income support during their transition. And this program must be coordinated with aggressive fiscal and monetary policies to guarantee full employment and rising wages. Once we have a coherent alternative, we will also have to learn how to present it in simple terms that can be understood by ordinary people who are increasingly hard-pressed to simply keep their heads above water.

Agrarian Reform and the Radicalization of Food Politics

ANTHONY PAHNKE

IF YOU'VE SEEN ANY OF THE documentaries that are critical of U.S. agriculture, then you're most likely aware of the increase in some innovative and somewhat unconventional experiments in growing food—bee hives and gardens on hospital roof tops, abandoned warehouses turned into greenhouses, farms that double as a local community's source of fresh produce *and* the pizzeria. Extreme changes are also taking place in other ways. In the Midwest, mega-factory farms, with thousands of animals in confinement, are rapidly replacing operations of fifty or a hundred cows. To profit off the ethanol boom, which has since gone bust, many indebted dairy and livestock farmers throughout the country ploughed up their pastures to plant, and then spray with the latest in chemical technology, genetically modified (GMO) soy and corn for biofuel, export, and cattle feed. Meanwhile, more than three million farmworkers, who live in subhuman conditions and receive next to nothing in pay—the average farmworker receives approximately $13,000 a year[1]—toil on massive plantation-like operations, whether for apples or strawberries on the West Coast, sugar beets in the Upper Midwest, or blueberries in the Northeast.

Land-poor, creative small farmers are growing food in the least likely of places, while thousands upon thousands of acres are used to produce animal feed. Millions of farmworkers from rural areas in Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America often have knowledge and experience growing food on small-scale farms using methods that in the United States are called sustainable or organic. Yet, instead of putting their small-farming skills to use, immigrant farmers become wage-laborers in field-factories. Incremental, piecemeal changes, such as periodic wage increases for farmworkers or small loans for farmers specializing in sustainable agriculture, may ameliorate some of the problems in agricultural production but miss the need for structural change. The potential for a more just, equitable, and sustainable agricultural system is readily available in the United States—the problem is that land and labor are distributed in the wrong way.

The Problems Are Not New

Exploitative labor relations, unequal ownership patterns, and environmental degradation have long characterized the U.S. mode of agricultural production. Plantations for the production and export of cotton dominated the pre-Civil War southern slave system as well as the post-war tenant and share-cropping economies. In the West, Carey Williams' account of farm labor in California, *Factories in the Fields,* which was published in 1935, documents how various immigrant communities, first the Chinese, then later the Japanese, Philippine, and Mexican, toiled on plantations the size of small countries.

Neither slavery nor the plantations have disappeared. Reasons for the now monthslong, transnational boycott of Driscoll's—the corpo-

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ration responsible for the sale of strawberries, raspberries, and blackberries harvested from Washington state to Baja California—are in part found in the denunciation of forced labor, in many cases involving children.[2] Figures on slavery in the southeastern United States have been collected by the Florida-based farmworkers organization, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, which has discovered over 1,200 cases since 2000.[3] Plantation-factory operations, instead of existing as aberrations, are becoming the norm. The average farm size has quadrupled since the 1930s, from around 150 acres to close to 500 currently. During that same period, the number of farmers has fallen from 7 million to 2 million. And that 2 million figure is deceptive: According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, half of farm households must work off the farm to remain in agriculture.[4] How many occupations, if one is to continue in that line of work, require employment elsewhere? Agribusiness elites tout this figure as proof of productivity gains and the successful adoption of technology. California's plantations now account for 99 percent of artichokes, 99 percent of walnuts, 97 percent of kiwis, 97 percent of plums, 95 percent of celery, 95 percent of garlic, 89 percent of cauliflower, 71 percent of spinach, 70 percent of lettuce, and 69 percent of carrots that are harvested in the United States.[5] In terms of a farmer-to-citizen ratio, one farmer is responsible for feeding approximately 320 people. What is concealed is how the United States' growing population of approximately 320 million people is increasingly dependent on fewer and fewer producers. Environmental costs are also hidden. Pesticide expenses have increased from $2 billion to $10 billion since 1960.[6] Chemical inputs are promoted to increase yields as well as to control crop production. Unintended results include pesticide-resistant super weeds and contamination of water and soil. What has contributed to the imperative to increase yields is price volatility in nearly every market. The Depression-era price policies that were governed by parity—the notion that producers are assured the cost of production through various public policies—were steadily dismantled in the 1970s and 1980s in the name of free markets. Freedom for markets has been a tyranny for farming—the thinly traded commodity markets at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, which determine prices for virtually every agricultural commodity, are frequently under investigation for illegal maneuvers[7] that benefit agribusiness elites and corporate shareholders who have little to no real connection to labor and land.

U.S. food and farm activists have begun to recognize how the problems in agricultural production are integrally connected to land access.

Reconnecting People with Land

U.S. food and farm activists have begun to recognize how the problems in agricultural production are integrally connected to land access. A recent entry on the Facebook page of the Wisconsin-based Family Farm Defenders reads, "And which nation needs land reform the most? Why the U.S., of course!" In 2013, activist-scholar Raj Patel, and Bob St. Peter of Maine's small-producer organization, Food for Maine's Future, wrote an article for the online magazine *Civil Eats*[8] calling for limitations on the size of land holdings in the United States, public policies to subsidize beginning farmers to receive land, and state-directed infrastructure projects aimed at creating new rural communities. After winning the 2015 U.S. Food Sovereignty Prize, Ben Burkett of the Mississippi Association of Cooperatives remarked, "Our view is local production for local consumption. ... [This means] the right of every individual on earth to wholesome food, clean water, air, and land."[9] Some rural producers in the United States are beginning to believe that land is a "right," instead of a commodity. Others see the need to create conditions for the emergence of a new generation of farmers, directly challenging agribusiness' praise for technological change emptying the countryside.

These voices are part of an actual, growing movement that is demanding agrarian reform. They are also members of the international social movement, *La Via Campesina* (The Peasant's Way, or LVC). LVC includes around 164 local and national organizations in 73 countries of Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas, representing about 200 million people. In the United States, member organizations include the National Family Farm Coalition, Rural Coalition, Border Farm Workers Project in Texas, and the Farmworkers Association of Florida. Active membership amongst these groups is well into the thousands. What unites these members is the concept of food sovereignty. Developed in opposition to the perceived conservatism of policies devoted to food security, food sovereignty is rooted more in redistributive projects that challenge multinational corporations, privatization, and strictly technological solutions to world hunger and rural poverty. The movement has broken down the concept of food sovereignty into seven separate principles, the second of which is the demand for agrarian reform.

Redistributing land is central to, but does not exhaust, an adequate definition of agrarian reform. Agrarian reform deals fundamentally with the reappropriation of land. It entails systematic changes to already-existing ownership and labor relations like individual proprietorship, share-cropping, tenant-farming, and wage labor, as well as redistribution and acquisition, which may be in the form of top-down, state action or through movement demands and seizures. In general, agrarian reform is a coordinated set of actions to reorganize land and labor for an alternative mode of food production or raw material extraction. In addition to the initial acquisition of land, it also includes ways to sustain rural populations in the countryside through price-support policies, technical assistance, and education initiatives. Just as important, agrarian reform involves ensuring land access via nonmarket mechanisms. Agrarian reform is often beyond the market, which means that farmworkers and dispossessed rural people acquire land without purchase.

There are many examples to show how this has taken place, especially in Latin America.[10] Twentieth-century efforts include the Mexican, Cuban, and Sandinista revolutions. In these cases, revolutionary processes divided large landholdings, secured land access to farm laborers, and promoted the formation of cooperatives. The results of these experiences are mixed: The Mexican and Nicaraguan cases show a lack of continuity, dedication, and resources, while land redistribution in Cuba changed ownership drastically on the island but was also sheltered by generous subsidies from the Soviet Union.[11]

More recent developments in Brazil, specifically the success of the Landless Workers Movement (*Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* or MST), show that agrarian reform is not confined to the past. At the end of 2014 there were more than 9,000 agrarian reform settlements[12] on over 88 million hectares of land (about 170 million acres).[13] The movement's membership comprises dispossessed small farmers, farmworkers, as well as poor, marginalized people from the Brazilian urban periphery.

One of the central causes of the Brazilian movement's success is its use of innovative direct-action tactics, namely land occupations. Far from indiscriminately or randomly deployed, the occupations are targeted at large landholdings and properties that are subject to expropriation due to certain productivity requirements. According to the Brazilian Constitution of 1988 and the *Estatuo da Terra* (Rural Land Statute), land not serving its *função social* (social function) can be expropriated by the government for redistribution. The social-function clause sanctions expropriation in the event that an owner violates environmental or labor law or fails to productively use at least 80 percent of the area. Redistribution also deals with irregular landholdings that have conflicting ownership claims by multiple individuals.[14] Such irregularities, the movement argues, can only be fixed by redistributing the particular property in question to certain people, that is, movement members, who will use it productively and responsibly.

While the MST draws on Latin America's revolutionary traditions, the movement has also made amendments. Principal amongst LVC members, the MST advocates a new style of agrarian reform. According to the latest LVC statement from this past April,

> Capitalism no longer requires classic land reform to increase production. No longer needed are past alliances in favor of agrarian reform among the landless and some state sectors representing productive capital. Now, agrarian reform is directly about class struggle. … We must question, with the whole society and the working class, rural and urban, is capitalist production adequate?[15]

This reflection on past experiences concerning agrarian reform is critical. First, the LVC finds no way that agrarian reform can benefit capitalism. Second, it is the movement—not only transnational in nature, but primarily led by farmworkers, small farmers, and First Nations—that is presenting a radical new project for society.

Legal Maneuvers and Agrarian Reform in the United States

Historically, actors in U.S. agricultural policy have only periodically flirted with radical redistributive programs. Late nineteenth-century policies such as the Homestead Act and efforts by the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, usually referred to as the Freedmen's Bureau, in the post-Civil War South, do not qualify. In the case of the latter, while redistributive measures aimed at former slaves did result in many new homesteads, the programs abruptly ended once political rights trumped economic redistribution during Reconstruction. Concerning the Homestead Act, redistribution created more irregularities than were fixed. Vogeler, in his *The Myth of the Family Farm*, compiled congressional studies and secondary research on late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century land acquisitions. He finds that 40 percent of the homesteads designated as "family farms" from 1862 to 1900 (about 130 million acres) were fraudulently obtained due to corrupt administrators and absentee landowners falsely (and illegally) claiming residency. Similar irregularities, Vogeler notes, characterize many of the 128 million acres that were granted to mining and railroad interests during the same time period. Undergirding these corrupt land-grabs was the dispossession of Native American nations, not only with the Homestead Act, but also with subsequent legislation such as the Dawes Act, which aided entrenched political and economic elites, relying systematically on widespread fraud and violence.

A string of relatively recent lawsuits against the United States government show a willingness on the part of the government to address rural poverty, but not through creating new farmers. In *Pigford v. Glickman,* Black farmers won a class-action lawsuit against the USDA for discriminating against African American landholders in the 1980s and 1990s. Approximately $1 billion has been paid to African American farmers from this lawsuit. Similar cases include *Keepseagle v. Vilsack* (2010) and *Corbell v. Salazar* (2009), which awarded native farmers similar indemnities, and *Garcia v. Vilsack,* which is currently seeking redress for Latino farmers and ranchers. What these lawsuits reveal is systematic discrimination against farmers of color, which in many cases led small producers to leave rural areas. While the settlements are redistributive in nature, they do not alter property ownership, but instead grant cash awards.

So, is agrarian reform in the United States a utopian fantasy? Is it a demand made by a few, with no real potential to grow? Native American movements help us answer these questions in the negative. Increasingly in the second half of the twentieth century, movements used laws, particularly treaties, to claim space for alternative and radical initiatives. Two particular events are of particular relevance: the occupations of Alcatraz, briefly in 1964 and then for two years beginning in 1969, and at the Pine Ridge Reservation in 1973. The Alcatraz occupation, especially the latter two-year attempt, referenced the broken Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 (also known as the Sioux Treaty of 1868) as the basis for their land claim. The treaty, between the Oglala, Miniconjou, and Brulé bands of the Lakota people, the Yanktonai Dakota, and the Arapaho Nation, and the federal government, guaranteed Lakota ownership of the Black Hills. Discovery of gold led white squatters onto the land claimed by the Lakota, in disregard of the treaty's provisions. At Pine Ridge, evoking the Sioux/Laramie Treaty of 1868 had greater symbolic and practical effect. First, the Pine Ridge Reservation was the place where the Wounded Knee Massacre took place in 1890. Second, the treaty provided Native American activists a concrete legal mechanism to legitimize their demands.

So, is agrarian reform in the United States a utopian fantasy? Is it a demand made by a few, with no real potential to grow?

The use of the treaty at its intended site of application highlighted the legal system's own inconsistency and contradictions, similar to how the Brazilian MST organizes occupations on irregular land holdings. While the territorial claims made at Alcatraz and Pine Ridge quickly ended in violence, a more sustained effort took place in the Kanienkehaka (Mohawk) Nation in northern New York. In 1968, a dispute began over the legitimacy of paying tolls to use the bridge that connects Canada with the United States. To contest this, as well as make a claim to territory, the Kanienkehaka evoked the Jay Treaty of 1794 and gained the right to cross the border freely. Gaining momentum after this victory, their reservation has become a place where the *Akwesasne Notes*, a Native American-led newspaper, is issued, as well as a space where schools have developed to proliferate Indigenous language, values, and culture.

Disputed lands due to broken treaties between Native Americans and the U.S. government are not the only spaces subject to potential redistributive measures. African American farmers during the Great Migration of the post-Civil War period, especially after 1920, abandoned millions of acres[16] due to legal and extralegal violence and usury loan arrangements with landlords and creditors. The Federation of Southern Cooperatives emerged on the heels of the civil rights movement to keep Black farmers on their land. To this day, it remains an open question who rightfully possesses much of the southern United States, as well as what are the legal means for repossession. The millions of acres involved in the fraudulent transfers for railroad concessions and homesteads in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries add to the vast system of irregular property holdings throughout the United States. U.S. society rests upon falsely documented territorial claims forcibly brought and held together. To alter the poor distribution of land and people that currently exists will require further exposing the country's complex web of broken treaties and fraudulent titles. Movements, many of whom are active within the LVC, are beginning to question this system.

Questioning territorial claims directly poses the question of how to develop radical change in the United States. The focus on space, in particular, provides a means for movements to initiate transformations in culture, politics, and economics. Native American leaders, more so than others, have engaged in tactics that show the contested nature of territory in the United States. The protests last year in North Dakota challenging the construction of a 1,200-mile-long oil pipeline evoke the contested territorial claims found in the Fort Laramie Treaty. Recognizing treaties calls attention to the fractured, incomplete, and contradictory land tenure system in the United States. Such a use of law to claim space and resist economic elites is one place where the struggle for agrarian reform in the United States is currently developing.

Not urban, but rural spaces are where we currently find radical change. Two opposing trends, with cross purposes, are unfolding. In one, farms-turned-massive-plantations, with hyperexploited workforces and governed by corporate imperatives of efficiency and profit, continue a rural exodus. On the other, we find rural repopulation, new and innovative experiments in food production, and transnational movements beginning the revaluation of land and labor. Developments within both trajectories are taking place. Movements, such as the LVC, are posing the question, which side are you on?

NOTES

1. For figures on farmworkers, see www.ncfh.org/uploads/3/8/6/8/38685499/fs-migrant_demographics.pdf.

2. Tom Philpott, "The People Who Pick Your Strawberries Have Had It with Rat-infested Camps," *Mother Jones*, March 25, 2015.

3. For more on the persistence of slavery in U.S. agriculture and the Coalition of Immokalee Workers' ongoing campaign to contest it, see www.ciw-online.org/slavery.

4. Figures from USDA-ERS. Available at www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/chart-gallery/detail.aspx?chartId=40163.

5. Brian Palmer, "The C-Free Diet: If We Didn't Have California, What Would We Eat?" Slate.com.

6. Fernandez-Cornejo, et al, "Pesticide Use in U.S. Agriculture: 21 Selected Crops, 1960-2008," USDA-ERS 2014.

7. U.S. Government Accountability Office, "Market Oversight Has Increased, but Concerns Remain About Potential Manipulation," (Report to Congress, 2007).

8. Bob St. Peter and Raj Patel, "This Land Is Our Land?" *Civil Eats*, October 18, 2013.

9. Full text of the speech available at foodsovereigntyprize.org/this-is-a-new-posts.

10. For more on the past and present of agrarian reform, especially in Latin America, see P. Rosset, R. Patel, and M. Courville, *Promised Land: Competing Visions of Agrarian Reform* (Food First Books, 2006).

11. For more on twentieth-century agrarian reform initiatives in Latin America, see W.C. Thiesenhausen, *Broken Promises: Agrarian Reform and the Latin American Campesino* (Boulder CO: Westview Press, 1995).

12. For data on settlements, land redistributed, etc., see www.incra.gov.br/assentamento.

13. That only 67 sites—a fraction of a percent—existed before the MST's official emergence in 1984 shows how the movement's efforts are the primary catalyst for land redistribution. See Sérgio Pereira Leite, *Impactos dos assentamentos: Um estudo sobre o meio rural brasileiro* (São Paulo State University, 2004).

14. Large proprietors in Brazil historically acquired land through a process that became known as *grilhagem. Grilhagem,* derived from the word for cricket, *grilho,* took place when forged titles were placed in desk drawers with crickets that would nibble at the edges of documents, giving the semblance of deterioration that presumably would come with age. When asked to prove their claim, large landowners and speculators would brandish these titles.

15. Text translated from www.mst.org.br/2016/04/25/declaracao-de-maraba.html.

16. Bruce Reynolds, *Black Farmers in America, 1865-2000: The Pursuit of Independent Farming and the Role of Cooperatives* (USDA, 2000).

The Jewish Role in the Industrial Workers of the World

Bennett Muraskin

The most radical and militant union in American history was the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), colloquially known as the Wobblies. Its active years were from 1905 to 1919, or at best until mid-1920 when it led its last major struggles—a maritime workers strike in California and a miners strike in Colorado. Fierce government repression during and after World War I, along with vigilante violence and internal divisions, dealt the IWW blows from which it never recovered. The mass industrial union movement during the New Deal passed it by. Yet, the IWW continues to exist on a small scale to this day.

Its philosophy can be described as anarcho-socialist. Workers, organized into one big industrial union, would seize the means of production through a general strike and run the economy on a cooperative basis. Voting was a waste of time under capitalism, and no government would be necessary under socialism.

The IWW made absolutely no distinctions among workers on racial, ethnic, or religious lines, welcoming whites, blacks, Mexicans, the native-born, and immigrants, including the Chinese who were shunned, if not despised, by the mainstream American Federation of Labor and were even mistrusted by the Socialist Party. The IWW published its literature in a multitude of languages, including Yiddish.

A remarkable IWW poster, evidently from the mid-1920s or later, warns workers against the Ku Klux Klan on the grounds that it is "anti-Jew, anti-Negro, anti-Catholic, anti-foreigner, and anti-labor" leaving no doubt where the IWW stood on the plagues of anti-Semitism, racism, religious bigotry, and xenophobia.

Could the IWW have done more? In its opposition to big business and imperialist war, it never blamed Jewish bankers. Perhaps it did not specifically denounce Henry Ford's publication of *The International Jew* in 1922, but neither did the American Federation of Labor led by the Jewish Samuel Gompers. Gompers also supported the severe restrictions on immigration from Eastern Europe, enacted in 1924, that endangered millions of Jews facing persecution. The IWW, on the other hand, welcomed foreign-born workers, including Jews, with open arms.

The IWW did not have many Jewish members because it did most of its organizing among workers in heavy industry or out west, among miners, agricultural workers, maritime workers, longshore workers, and lumberjacks. Some of these were migratory laborers. These were not occupations that attracted Jews. Of the few Jews living out west, most tended to be peddlers, merchants, and shopkeepers. The workers among them were employed mainly in the garment industry or in other skilled trades in the cities.

Yet one of the five known victims of the 1916 Everett Massacre in Everett, Washington, was a Jew. Nineteen-year-old Abraham Rabinowitz joined hundreds of Wobblies who hired a boat in Seattle to transport them to Everett, where they planned to launch a "free

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speech fight" demanding the right to speak on street corners in support of labor organizing. They were met with police gunfire as the boat attempted to dock. Some were shot, others drowned. The IWW press eulogized Rabinowitz as one who was "born of a race without a flag, a race oppressed by the intolerance and superstition of the ages, and died fighting for the brotherhood of man." (See Philip Foner, *The Industrial Workers of the World* (1965), 534-35.)

The IWW's headquarters was in Chicago. Although it did not represent many workers there, it had a considerable presence among hobos, who were essentially migrant laborers. During the warmer weather, they would hop freight trains to take them to jobs further west, returning over the winter to Chicago, where there were many flop houses and soup kitchens.

Beginning in 1908, it was in Chicago that Dr. Ben Reitman found housing for hobos and organized a Hobo College, featuring lectures and other educational programs, in which hobos themselves participated. Reitman had hoboed around as a teenager and was so enamored of their way of life that in his later years he wrote a work of fiction that purported to be the memoirs of a female hobo, *Sister of the Road: The Autobiography of Boxcar Bertha as Told to Dr. Ben Reitman* (1937). In it, the fictional Bertha describes her encounters with a variety of types, including Wobbly organizers.

Reitman was best known as the manager and lover of anarchist Emma Goldman. His brief but intense involvement with the IWW occurred in San Diego in 1912, when he and Goldman arrived to lend their support to an earlier "free speech fight." A mob of vigilantes dragged him from his hotel room and forced him into a car. He was brutally tortured and dumped 20 miles out of town in his underwear. None of his attackers were charged with a crime.

Reitman also lectured on sexual health and was a strong advocate of birth control. He went into Chicago's brothels to treat prostitutes for venereal disease and perform abortions. His advocacy of birth control landed him in jail.

Only in the IWW's forays into the East, most notably the famous 1912 Lawrence, Massachusetts, textile workers strike and the 1913 Paterson, New Jersey, silk workers strikes, was there significant Jewish participation. Hannah Silverman, a 17-year-old Paterson mill worker, became an important strike leader in the silk workers' struggle.

Mathilda Robbins, born Tatiana Rabinowitz, led a strike of textile workers in Little Falls, New York, in 1912. She was one of two paid IWW female organizers. During the 1920s, she was active in the IWW Sacco-Vanzetti Defense Committee. She wrote a column and contributed poetry to the IWW press and, in later years, became a social worker in Los Angeles.

> "The image of the immigrant Jewish radical is superimposed onto that of the native migratory hobo to combine threats to economic life and the bourgeois family in an anti-Semitic representation. ... "

Minnie Corder, a Jewish immigrant, was one of a few female Wobbly soapbox orators. Her turf was the Lower East Side of New York City and other Jewish working-class neighborhoods on the East Coast. Before joining the IWW in 1919, she participated in garment workers strikes in Boston in 1913 and 1915 and became a Socialist Party activist. She stuck with the Wobblies for the rest of her life.

Perhaps the best known Jewish Wobbly was Frank Tannenbaum. He organized unemployed workers in New York City to demand food and shelter from churches during the bitter cold winter of 1913-1914. He was falsely accused of

incitement to riot and served a year in a notorious city prison, where he organized a strike of inmates against harsh conditions. After World War I, Tannenbaum dropped out of the labor movement to pursue a higher education. He earned a PhD from Columbia University and became a scholar specializing in race relations, criminology, and Latin American history.

Irving Abrams joined the IWW as a teenager in Rochester, New York, where he met Emma Goldman. Moving to Chicago, he found work in the garment industry, where he participated in a general strike led by the Amalgamated Clothing Workers in 1915, in which he was arrested 39 times. In 1920, he became an attorney specializing in civil liberties cases. He is best known for his role in the association that preserved the monument in a Chicago cemetery honoring the Haymarket martyrs and provided support to their families, duties he diligently carried out until 1971. His Jewish affiliations included the Workmen's Circle, the Jewish Labor Committee, and the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society. Abrams wrote a memoir, *Haymarket Heritage* (1989).

Abrams was the product of an improbable marriage—both his parents were converts to Judaism who met in Europe before immigrating to the United States. Ironically he may have been the most Jewish of Jewish Wobblies.

Meyer Friedkin was one of the few Wobblies said to have been on close terms with songwriter and poet Joe Hill, who was executed for murder, on false charges, in Utah in 1915. Friedkin was convicted of conspiracy in 1918 in the mass trials targeting the IWW and sentenced to 10 years in prison. There was even a half-Jewish, half-Indian Wobbly organizer known only as "Lone Wolf," who was involved in the Wheatland farm workers strike in California in 1913, in which three people were shot dead, and was active in Chicago during the 1920s.

The best known Wobbly of all (except for Joe Hill), William D. (Big Bill) Haywood, had a Jewish lover known as B. Shotac. The daughter of Russian immigrants, she was employed as a public school teacher. He stayed in her apartment when he visited New York City, and it was there that the pageant to publicize the Paterson silk strike of 1913 was conceived by Mabel Dodge and John Reed. Haywood died in 1928 in the Soviet Union, where he had fled to escape government prosecution.

Although not technically a Wobbly, Archie Green, the son of secular socialist Jewish immigrants, is considered the premier "laborlorist" of the IWW. He corresponded with and interviewed aging Wobblies, collected original documents and other ephemera, co-edited *The Big Red Song Book* of Wobbly songs, and wrote a book on Wobbly culture. Franklin Rosemont, a Wobbly himself, dedicated *Joe Hill: The IWW and the Making of a Revolutionary Working Class*, his 2003 work on Joe Hill and the cultural impact of the IWW, to Green, dubbing him "the Shakespeare and Hegel of laborlore." That is quite an encomium.

Three of the major historians of the IWW were also Jews: Melvyn Dubofsky, Philip Foner, and Joyce Kornbluh. The introduction to Kornbluh's anthology, *Rebel Voices,* was written by IWW activist and keeper-of-the-flame Fred Thompson (not Jewish).

There is another side to this story. The Socialist Labor Party, one of the founding members of the IWW with a considerable Jewish following, pulled out in 1908, bitterly attacking the IWW and forming a rival organization called the Detroit IWW.

In 1912, Boris Reinstein, acting on behalf of this rival organization, led a strike of textile workers in Passaic, New Jersey. His ability to speak five languages allowed him to communicate effectively with the multi-ethnic mill workers. But he was at odds with the regular IWW. When the strike failed, the two sides blamed each other. A refugee from tsarist Russia, Reinstein returned there after the 1917 revolution and became an official in the Communist International.

Yet the influence of the Socialist Labor Party was not entirely negative. Its leader, Daniel De Leon (Jewish, but not openly so) provided the theoretical underpinnings for the IWW at its founding convention. Until 1908, the SLP newspaper, the *Daily People*, was the only socialist daily to support the IWW without reservations.

SLP intellectuals who left the party, including two Jews, Justus Ebert and Austin Lewis, continued to advocate for revolutionary industrial unionism, the former as an IWW journalist and the latter as a spokesperson for the left wing of the Socialist Party friendly to the IWW. Ebert wrote *The IWW in Theory and in Practice,* the most reprinted of all IWW publications. Lewis wrote *The Militant Proletarian,* an outstanding work of Marxist theory embraced by the Wobblies.

However, when IWW left the Socialist Party in 1912 over the issue of "sabotage," many of the SP's prominent Jewish leaders were glad to see it go, and most SP Jewish members remained loyal. Jewish anarchists associated with the Workmen's Circle and the newspaper *Freie Arbeter Shtimme* also proved to be hostile to the Wobblies.

The Jewish-dominated International Ladies Garment Workers Union fought the Wobblies tooth and nail in the workplace. Gompers and the entire American Federation of Labor showed no mercy when the IWW was under siege during and after World War I.

On the other hand, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers (ACW), the second most powerful Jewish union, and one that did not join the AFL until 1933, engaged in some jurisdictional disputes with the IWW but welcomed its adherents and absorbed some of its radicalism. The best example is Joseph Schlossberg, who was an SLP stalwart before joining the ACW and becoming its secretary-treasurer. He brought with him a radical socialist orientation that stressed worker control and pushed the union to the left.

If the quintessential Wobbly was the unskilled industrial worker in the West—or the hobo—then it is hardly surprising that in the big picture, there were relatively few Jews among them. Historically, Jews are an urban people. Occupationally, Jewish workers gravitated to skilled trades. Yet American xenophobes and anti-Semites did not see it this way. Because Jewish immigrants to the United States were prominent in the labor movement and the left, their Christian detractors, influenced by the negative stereotype of the "wandering Jew" conflated them with the most hated and dangerous of radical organizations—the IWW. As Philip Webb wrote in his book *Homeless Lives in American Cities: Interrogating Myth and Locating Community* (2014), "The image of the immigrant Jewish radical is superimposed onto that of the native migratory hobo to combine threats to economic life and the bourgeois family in an anti-Semitic representation. ... The Russian Jew thus becomes an easy symbol for the radical threat of homelessness." To the WASP elite and a portion of the American middle class, "Russian Jews became the poster child for all radicals." If evidence was required, the links between Emma Goldman and Ben Reitman—two demonized Jewish radicals—and the IWW was more than enough.

Only in the IWW's forays into the East, most notably the famous 1912 Lawrence, Massachusetts, textile workers strike and the 1913 Paterson, New Jersey, silk workers strikes, was there significant Jewish participation.

After the IWW's decline as a labor union, it evolved into an advocate for revolutionary change. Sam Dolgoff embodied this evolution. Born in 1902, he was a painter by trade but spent part of his youth as a hobo. During the Depression, he served the Wobbly cause as a soapbox orator and organizer in New York City. He was a dissident in the AFL Painters Union. During the Spanish Civil War, he raised money for the Spanish anarchists. In 1954, he and his wife Esther formed the Libertarian League, an organization that attracted a Wobbly following. During the 1960s he spoke up for Cuban labor activists imprisoned by Castro. He also wrote books on anarchism. In the last decades of his life, Dolgoff became a living link between the old libertarian left and the New Left, sharing his memories and opinions with members of Students for a Democratic Society and other young radicals, as a speaker at college campuses. He died a rebel in 1990.

The influence of the IWW on the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s was felt in The Living Theater, an avant-garde troupe of actors led by two Jewish anarchists and Wobblies, Julian Beck and Judith Malina. The Living Theater itself became an IWW affiliate and raised money for the organization by holding a benefit.

Anarchist, internationalist, and pacifist Fredy Perlman was among a group of left libertarians who established a printing cooperative in Detroit in 1970 that published *Black and Red* magazine and other like-minded literature. The co-op became an IWW local. Perlman designed its union label which called for the abolition of the wage system and the state and "all power to the workers."

Over 2004-2005, the IWW made history by organizing baristas at the Starbucks retail chain across the United States. The campaign's co-founder was Daniel Gross, an attorney who co-authored, with Staughton Lynd, *Labor Law for the Rank & Filer* (2008) and was a member of the National Lawyers Guild Labor and Employment Committee. He is currently working with Brandworkers, organizing retail and food-service employees in New York.

Based on primary research, Franklin Rosemont wrote in 2008 that "in recent years an impressive number of labor activists, radical environmentalists, socialists, anarchists, feminists, pacifists, poets, puppeteers, novelists, artists, musicians, cartoonists, and historians have concluded … that of all revolutionary and labor organizations in U.S. history, the IWW is the single most important inspiration and model—or at least one of the top two or three—for a new revolutionary movement in our time."

As it turns out, I was recently in touch with Diane Krauthamer, the outgoing editor of the IWW newspaper the *Industrial Worker*. She told me that she is Jewish. If Rosemont was right, there should be more than a few young Jews like her. To borrow a phrase from the 1968 worker and student uprisings in France, *la lutte continue* (the struggle continues).

Harvey, Klein, Smith, Foster: Militant Particularism and Ecosocialism

Brad Hornick

In "Militant Particularism and Global Ambition: The Conceptual Politics of Place, Space, and Environment in the Work of Raymond Williams" (1995), David Harvey discusses the challenges presented by moving from *place out across time*. In the midst of his involvement in a participatory research project within a high-stakes local struggle against the closure of an automotive plant, he was accused of being a "free-floating Marxist intellectual," an outsider, and he was given the "evil eye" and asked to explain "where his loyalties lay." (71) This is in an environment where people were losing jobs, and families and communities were being destroyed. Harvey takes the accusation to heart and proceeds to explore the alienation inherent in the intellectual's role and the responsibility of abstracting concepts from the lived experiences of local activism.

Harvey approaches this research with an eye to understanding the politics of community and "broader social forces" as a "parallel force to the politics of the workplace" in a context where working-class solidarities at the particular worksite were diminishing. But Harvey is reproached by his co-researchers for his allegiance to methodological distance and his perceived shift to "reactionary intellectualism" in his contextualizing the passion of struggle within the closure of political categories. In negotiating a broadening of the conceptual space of interpretation, he is "disloyal" to local union and community activism—the active, vivid, and unique lived experience of struggles for socialism in his midst. (70-73)

His preoccupation with larger theoretical and strategic concerns potentially undermines the "structures of feeling" that embolden the activists involved in the immediate struggle. His motivation comes from the desire to positively influence local militancy but also to extend its program toward broader socialist aims, to "break out of its local bonds and become a viable alternative to capitalism as a working mode of production and social relations." (73) But what right does Harvey have to intervene and impose layers of "scientific" strategy to divert the energies of a group of people in a particular place toward a more universalist political project? He asks,

> What might it mean to be loyal to abstractions rather than to actual people? …What is it that constitutes a privileged claim to knowledge, and how can we judge, understand, adjudicate, and perhaps negotiate different knowledges constructed at very different levels of abstraction under radically different material conditions? (73-74)

Harvey confronts a paradox: In order to understand and contribute to the militant particularism of local struggles and not become a "spectator" abstracted from the local situation, he needs to immerse himself in and identify with that struggle. In order to accurately account for scientific and analytical causalities and meaningfully appraise particularism and become strategic, he needs to maintain distance from the

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struggle. One threatens loss of subjectivity from approaching the object (embodiment), the other from receding (disembodiment).

Naomi Klein, John Bellamy Foster, Richard Smith

Harvey's idea is that a militant project begins in a place, and if it maintains its energy and gets properly strategic over time, it will translate into a more consequential movement. An "intellectual" parachuted into the midst of an incipient militant particularism would betray a sense of entitlement, privilege, and potentially reactionary energy by saying, "What you're doing is wrong." Rather, "traditional intellectuals" (working within studied social scientific rules) might more usefully ask, "How can we contextualize what is happening in relation to larger issues." This would occur in discussion and solidarity with what Gramsci calls "organic intellectuals," individuals usually within subaltern groups working within grass-roots language and practices.

In recent debates within the ecosocialist community, Richard Smith and John Bellamy Foster discuss similar themes of *moving from place out across time*. For ecosocialists, capitalism and the Anthropocene are the global signifiers upon which all worker and environmental movements must focus with urgency. The fate of humanity in the short term literally rests upon this universalist pursuit. Ecological alternatives are not possible within the framework of capitalism, so socialist demands must be articulated alongside transitional concrete ecological demands and reforms. In recent posts to climateandcapitalism.com, Smith and Foster (2017) brew over the subject of Naomi Klein and the ongoing tug-of-war to claim or disclaim her as an ecosocialist. At issue is her theoretical rigor and tendency to straddle the organic and traditional.

Ecosocialists can be quick to identify the dramatic irony in how the aims of environmental activism are consistently neutralized by activists themselves. Constrained by time and place, local activism is compelled by immediate circumstances to act on the self-evidential nature of particularist truths at the moment of apprehension. Capitalist culture is powerfully resilient for the very reason that it incorporates these contingent system threats into its own reproduction. If activism remains compartmentalized or reformist, it remains embedded in, and will not threaten the global power and inertia of, capital. If theory is neither precise nor rigorously explicit, it also evacuates revolutionary potential.

Klein positions herself within movements where people are already engaged in forms of making sense of the world while responding to immediate vital and existential needs. She is also, as are Foster and Smith, a "free-floating intellectual" maintaining methodological distance in order to infuse, widen, and contextualize conceptual abstraction and offer strategic direction. Her book, *This Changes Everything* (2014), is important for popularizing the critique of our whole socio-economic system and the geological time scales of climate science. As I have argued elsewhere, whether intentional or not, she appeals to wide audiences in part because of theoretical and strategic ambiguity, or "wiggle room." (Hornick, 2015)

In Smith's writing, there is a potent sense of climate emergency and the desire to "keep the (strategic) eye on the ball." Read Smith's short book on *Green Capitalism: The God that Failed* (2015), which could have been subtitled *Ecosocialism: How to Be Loyal to Abstractions*. It is a series of smartly written polemics, but with a sober theoretical foundation. Smith's irreverent, in-your-face fury is infused with the will to *impose abstractions with different versions of scope and truth* upon the "impeccably respectable premises" (22) of conventional economics (and environmental activism).

Smith argues that Klein has "broken open the mainstream discourse, cataloguing the failures, contradictions, and corruptions of so-called green capitalism," and that she "nails climate change squarely on the door of capitalism with a withering indictment." (72) But when

Klein talks about capitalism, she does so in an equivocating sense, qualifying "capitalism" with adjectives such as "neoliberal," "extractivist," and so on, which also reconfigures strategic goals. Klein's "Blockadia is not a strategy," says Smith, and neither are her other "maddeningly confusing, contradictory, even incoherent" prescriptions. Klein is thus "an eloquent liberal-radical investigative journalist … but she is no ecosocialist … with no systematic analysis or critique of capitalism as a system whatsoever." (73)

In Smith, you will not see pithy pronouncements like Klein's "to change the world we need everyone." You will read sharp, interrogative distinctions drawn between ostensibly "radical" economists and environmentalists and a forceful evocation of Marxist and political economic positions geared toward the contemporary ecological crisis. Warrior up on a rhetorical level!

Ruthlessly reveal mainstream environmentalist absurdities, deconstruct platitudes, call out euphemisms! Strike at the heart of false gods and zero in on the unequivocal message: shut the system down … move beyond technological visions of "decoupling" and "dematerialization" … depose the 1 percent, halt market and profit driven growth, bring on radical global industrial economic contraction that the ecological crisis demands.

By contrast, John Bellamy Foster responds that while he may not agree with everything Klein says, "her influence and her radicalism, at the left end of the climate movement, are beyond question," that she "walks a fine line between social democracy and socialism/anarchism," and is "openly anti-capitalist." Foster argues that we don't want so much a movement that is "limited to advanced ecosocialists" but a "broader movement that can actually be effective today." Ecosocialists should "stay to the left of those like Klein and sharpen the critique within the movement but also support and work with them so as to not separate themselves from broader radicalism. … If she does not always articulate this explicitly in terms of an ecosocialist strategy, it is because her strategy is rooted in the real movement as it exists today." (Smith and Foster, 2017)

Foster is confident that he knows Klein as a comrade. He concludes the exchange with Smith with a personal story that is emblematic of the role of relationship and solidarity-building in action. Foster and Klein are together being chased by police in Johannesburg at a climate meeting in 2002. Outfitted in military gear, police throw percussion grenades, then kettle and point rifles in a stare-off with climate protestors. Foster claims Klein heroically "disregard[s] the danger." He remembers prophetically "thinking at that time that she was the kind of leader that the movement needed—if she would once embrace the issue of capitalism versus the climate." As it turns out, Klein later penned a book with that name, Foster's uncanny prescience realized.

Foster's and Klein's shared "fuck-you-to-power" moment of anarchist rebelliousness is a powerful performative statement. The embodied moment concretely codifies political position vis-a-vis the state, capital, and ruling class as well as international, class, and gender solidarity. The moment is felt as something immediately trustworthy and an alternative to the certainties that abstract concepts promise but rarely deliver. The story illustrates that as much as conceptual clarity is important in moving goals forward, a sense of discernment about the metaphoric and affective dimension that initiates and builds associations and relationships requires cultivation.

To use Walter Benjamin's vocabulary, the moment's auratic quality imbues the relationship with profound symbolic density and meaning. A redemptive moment, it connects their present with history's revolutionary acts and cements their personal pact. In these moments, Foster seizes on the dialectical image of revolutionary negation and exits the argument with Smith without further explanation. Foster wants to enable Klein as a comrade rather than diffusing the power of the moment with theoretical dissimulation. Smith, in equally necessary moves, wants to embolden and equip comrades with revolutionary intellectual tools by asserting objective and logical necessity into vital and existential necessity.

Radicals are a tricky bunch. Anyone who has attempted to rouse significant numbers of Marxist intellectuals to action, or coalesce disparate groups of direct-action anarchists to a shared cause, knows it is like herding cats, and it is much easier to attract hoards of environmental nonprofit careerists, with their banal spectacle activism, with an ounce of foundation funding. This makes anti-(green)-capitalist and ecosocialist organizing that is directed to undermining the systemic logic of capitalism challenging. Yet, what inspires ecosocialist faith in their own relevance is the methodically reasoned account of a stable, identifiable *conceptual and affective fault-line of the entire social whole* that divides our present totality from the future, one that if we can name and permit ourselves to cross, and then recruit others, will open a new set of (non-catastrophically terminal) possibilities for the world.

Both Smith's and Foster's life work has done as much as anyone to point the world toward identifying and engaging with that fault-line, rather than pursuing much less ambitious or counterproductive goals. (The latter would include COP21-inspired, market-based adjustments such as carbon pricing, alone, as the holy grail of climate mitigation.) Climate scientists reach toward comprehensive and authoritative understanding of earth systems, which by now are sufficiently objectively definitive to be actionable. But if we believe that progress is even possible within the severe time limits that ecological crisis imposes, we also recognize that action at the level of wholesale change (for instance in terms of relations of production) is dormant in this deadly game of catch-up … and the "procrastination penalty" to be paid for inaction is getting beyond reach.

Marx showed how history was materially transformed through a series of contradictions toward greater complexity, but held out the promise of one particular class representing the universal interests of humanity, if activated within objective conditions by political agency. The problem today is that cyclical and conjunctural crises that have propelled capitalism to hegemonic global reach and to the point of near absolute structural crisis have also eliminated resistance in the form of a consequential collective agent that would avert ecological collapse.

Harvey concludes the above episode referencing a kind of intellectual's *sovereign exceptionalism*, the notion of the intellectual's role being at once "inside" and at the same time "outside" of experience. (Agamben, 2005) The right to engage and impose interpretations follows from the need to fulfill obligations to comrades who are simultaneously political allies as well as obligations to the considered political saliency of the immediate and long-term objectives of a political act.

The former may lead toward a more arbitrary or instrumental relationship with immediate objects and objectives, the latter toward suspended intellectualism, abstract deconstruction of the immanent rationality of a particularism. Both are potential vehicles toward immobilization, or toward empowerment. In the meantime, our atmosphere is well over 490 parts per million CO2 equivalents. Welcome to our apocalyptic, or revolutionary, future.

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Art Spiegelman on Si Lewen

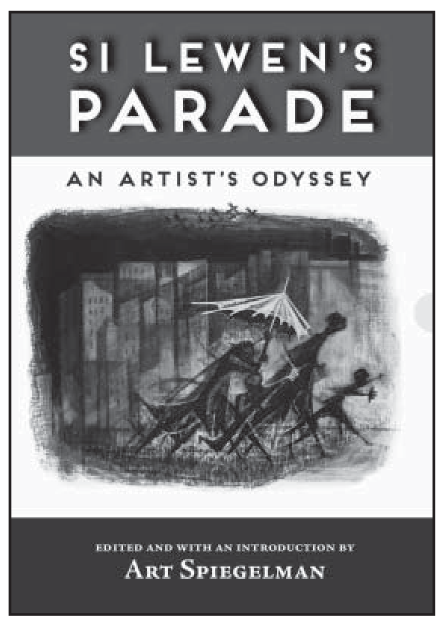
PAUL BUHLE

Si Lewen's Parade:
An Artist's Odyssey
Edited and with a commentary by
ART SPIEGELMAN
New York: Abrams, 2016. Boxed set, 148 pp plus unnumbered art pages. $250.

READING, ACTUALLY LOOKING obsessively at the pages of, this volume and non-volume inevitably brings to mind an unpublished, uncompleted 1967 essay by Herbert Marcuse, "Lyric Poetry After Auschwitz," translated and published after his death. Here Marcuse says, in part,

> What is involved is more than the "tragic experience" of the world of death and destruction, cruelty and injustice. . . . The Ultimate cannot be re-presented, cannot become "literature," without mitigating the horror. This is the guilt of the aesthetic form which is essential to art: sublimation. And the Anti-form, the negation of form, remains literature while the slaughter continues.

Quite so. Artist Si Lewen, survivor of the Holocaust, brought to abstract modernism his notion of horrors, creating what might be called the human saga as war, and war as the human saga summed up. In the lucid explanation of his friend Art Spiegelman, the artist's work is allied with and inspired by the "wordless novels" of Frans Masereel, the Belgian woodcut master so popular with European high-literary types during the 1920s and 1930s. Spiegelman's ongoing documentation of comic art, increasingly important in his own artistic ventures, has recently highlighted Lynd Ward, an American version of the wordless novelist, actually a wood-cut artist of extraordinary talent. Ward, a great figure never much known outside of his children's books, was raised to the canon of American art, in a three-volume set for the Library of America—the first graphic artist to reach that apex—through Spiegelman's effort. The Lewen project follows a similar melody, albeit in a somewhat lower key.



PAUL BUHLE *has edited several volumes of comic art, exhibits from which have appeared sporadically, from campus galleries to Wobbly halls and Workmens Circle branches, for a decade. He is now organizing artist funds for a graphic biography of Eugene V. Debs.*

From The Parade by Si Lewen, 1957.

Spiegelman suggests that in Lewen's masterwork, beginning with children in a parade, images go to darker, darker, and still darker. The tonality becomes almost unbearable until we return, at the end, to the child in a mother's arms. Mercy may triumph over horror yet. Masereel, Lewen told Spiegelman, had a decisive influence on the young artist, presumably in form but also doubtless in content. The great art of Masereel, and that of Lynd Ward as well, may be described as laconic, a commentary on the lamentable state of humanity, so obviously capable of happiness and community but denied both of these by the powers-that-be, perhaps also by a pitiless fate, a doom that seems to surround society and the individual even in the most optimistic moments.

Gradually, painfully, Spiegelman learned the elderly artist's full story. Lewen barely escaped Germany at age 14, with an older brother, and after a time in Paris with a family friend, managed to get to the United States and live with his father, also a survivor. On an otherwise normal Manhattan day of the later 1930s, Lewen was in effect kidnapped in a park by a cop, taken out onto a lake in a boat, clubbed brutally and cursed as a Jew. He returned to shore so downhearted that not long after, he attempted suicide for a first time.

A few years later he was an Army volunteer in the struggle against fascism, seeing war up close and, interestingly enough, like my own late friend, noir filmmaker Abraham Polonsky, assigned to use his projected voice to encourage German soldiers to surrender. With his comrades, Lewen later entered Buchenwald. This was arguably the learning experience that set the aspiring young artist upon a life's work. His drawings are unique in many ways, but perhaps can be said to present the mixture or fusion of what resembles both certain vernacular forms (comic strips) and a kind of expressionism, lacking in dialogue as expressionism would be, naturally. Perhaps this is the element that drew Spiegelman to the artist and his work, as much as the theme of the Holocaust handled in a

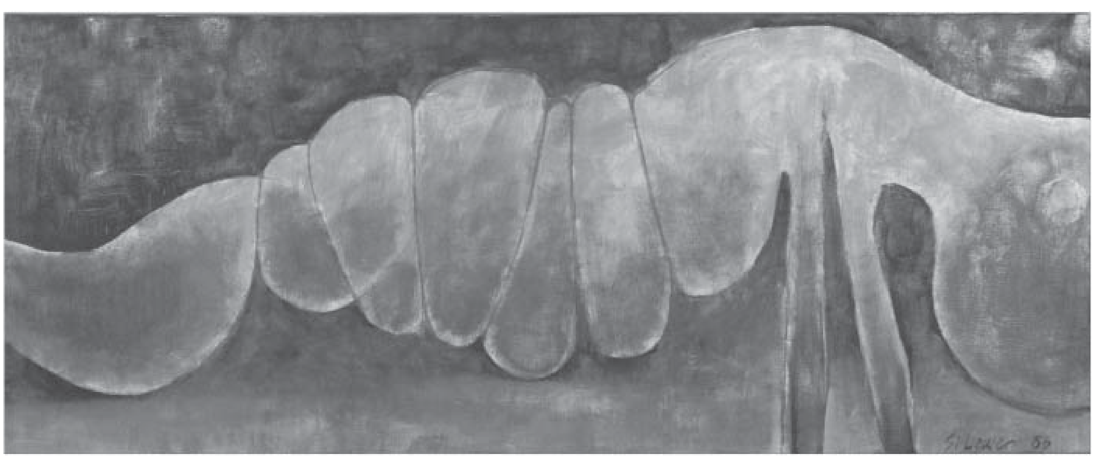
Ghost, 20" x 40", c. 2013 (from the collection of Art Spiegelman).

unique manner. Spiegelman's *Maus*, the epic (and Pulitzer Prize-winning) two-volume work arguably rendered comics acceptable as "Art," so that Spiegelman might be seen here as returning the favor.

Workers in the Snow, watercolor, 1932.

A book of Lewen's drawings actually appeared in 1957, from a small arts publisher, and made no particular dent. If Lewen had been raised briefly out of obscurity, he fell back into it again. Not that he lacked admirers, Albert Einstein among them. From a standard art-history standpoint, Lewen was one more abstractionist, of whom many, being Jewish immigrants, were trying to express at mid-century and after their sense of horror and their search for meaning "after Auschwitz" and so much else. This field was crowded with craftsmen better connected, if no more skilled or visionary, than Lewen.

Lewen's work (he died in 2011) might never have emerged except that Spiegelman became fascinated with the work and with the artist, visiting him repeatedly. I am reminded of


Untitled, 36" x 60", 1991.

seeing an old print of a surrealistic painting—the horses of a Coney Island merry-go-round escape in the moonlight—in a Yiddish literary magazine in 1978, and seeking the artist himself, who was by that time living in distant Brighton Beach, Brooklyn, next to the boardwalk. There was Maurice Kish, surrounded by his paintings and as active, for a few more years, as his physical and mental conditions allowed. Lewen was luckier, in a way, because the "Odyssey series" seen here extended to nearly the end of the artist's life. A project of more than three hundred pieces done 2002-2007, it manages to combine family snapshots, printouts from an unpublished memoir, postcards of travel, and details from seven decades of painting, some collaged and others Xeroxed. In the artist's vision, this was prepared for an imagined, vast book, twenty by thirty inches, images somehow placed against each other. A megawork, in other words, of an

Ecce Homo (Behold the Man), a series of large works begun in January 2005 and continuing for about five years. The large heads are composed of bits and fragments from previous works, some going back to when Lewen was five years old. The examples here measure 200" x 200" overall and are made up of ten 20"-x-20" panels.

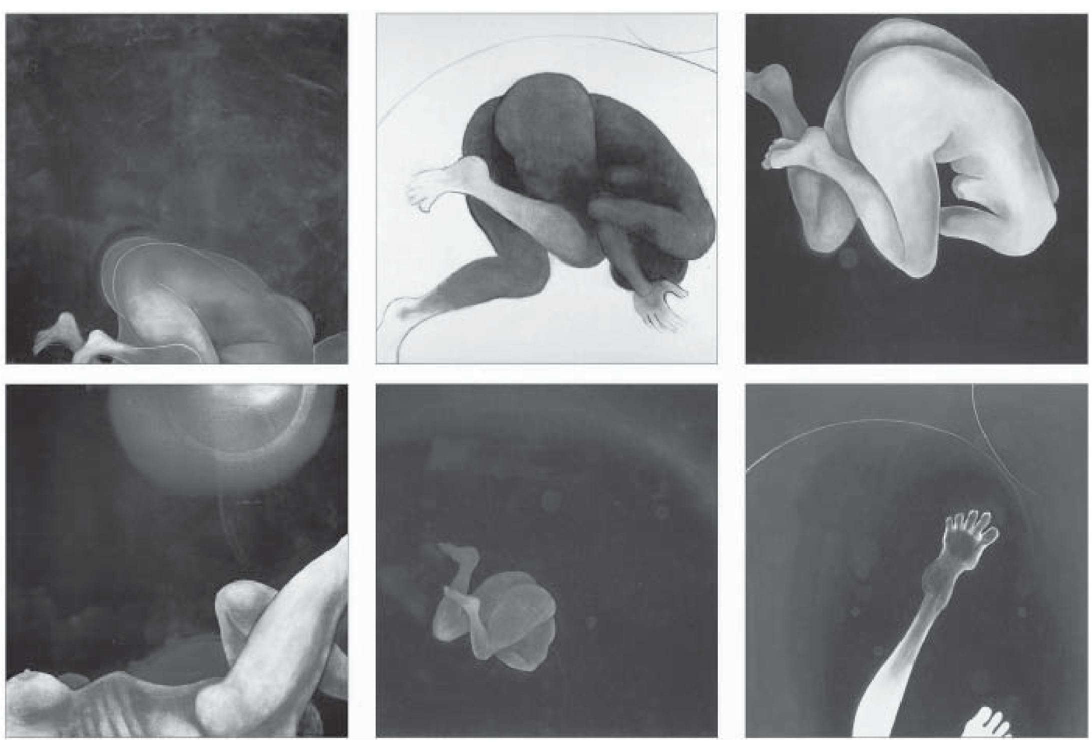
exhibit virtually impossible to stage.

The "odyssey" of the volume's title is also in part an odyssey of artistic form, as Lewen worked through assorted experiments, but more an odyssey of the artist's own life.

At one point, frustrated with himself and the world, Lewen sought to cut off his hand with a power tool. He failed and … recovered artistically, the best as he could continue. Yiddish poet and painter Maurice Kish, who lost his hand-eye coordination in later years, began drawing pictures of his childhood shtetl in something resembling comic book art: his version of artistic survival. Lewen carried on experiments—some examples offered here—and thanks to sponsorship, achieved some real recognition through exhibits and such. It was a vindication that a widowed Lewen, bereft of his closest companion, must have relished. The accordion-like pages of Lewen's later work are in fact a second book inside the first one. Spiegelman's own text explains both, with a remarkable lucidity.

There is also something more here, artistically embedded in Spiegelman's effort. For this point, we must leave Lewen and take up a Spiegelman favorite, nineteenth-century essayist Gotthold Lessing. How, the distinguished figure asked, were words and pictures actually related? Lessing's influential argument had been that painting and poetry, each with its own proper sphere, have no valid relation, and that a mixture of forms inevitably ended in vulgarization. Masereel's woodcuts (and Lynd Ward's, later) found what Spiegelman calls a "loophole" in this rigid formula, with a single completed (and wordless) image followed by another and another. Are these avant-garde comics? Spiegelman does not give us a clear answer, but it must come down to the cheerful embrace of vulgarity.

Or does it, in an age when "comic art" is a functioning phrase (and museum description)?

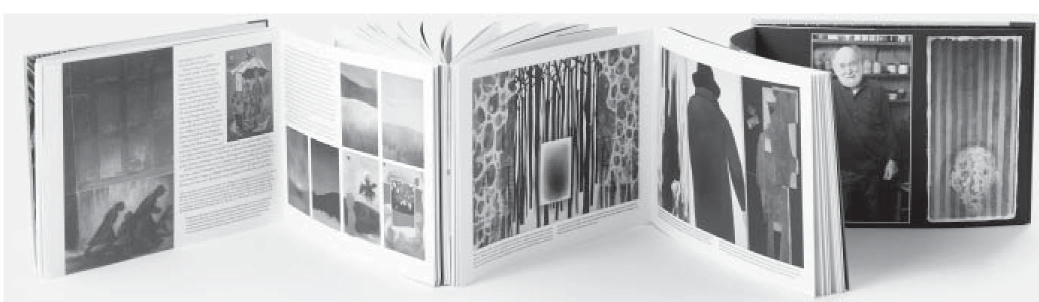


Excerpts from Eva, a series of 40"-x-40" acrylic panels meant to be presented interchangeably, in no specific order and with no preconceived right-side up.

From The Parade by Si Lewen, 1957.

Can pictures, comic-art pictures, "talk to each other" when exhibited side by side, or proximate, in a public place? Is this the contemporary high-art version of the newspaper comic strip or the comic book? It's a question that perhaps returns us to the Middle Ages when stories would naturally be told in pictures, stained glass windows in particular, before the Enlightenment intellectuals cursed this mix as suitable only to children and to adults with small minds. Can comics, even in museum exhibits, escape such a fate?

This is a question best left, perhaps, to future developments. Comics exhibits in substantial galleries of museums and other public places are now common in Europe, for instance. On this side of the ocean, they seem to come and go without making any deep impression on the critics or the public. If things change, Art Spiegelman will have had a notable role in the change. Should they change, would the change deprive comic art of its juvenile escape from high-art circles? For Spiegelman, the near exhaustion of the daily press and of the mainstream comic-book world has already decided the issue. I am not so sure.



The Real Tragedy of Che Guevara's Life

HÉCTOR REYES

IN LATIN AMERICA WE HAVE a saying, "*Poner el dedo en la llaga*," a phrase that means to call attention to a delicate or worrisome point. However, *llaga* means literally an open sore or ulcer. I believe that Cuban socialist and scholar Samuel Farber puts his finger indeed on a significant sore point in revolutionary history with his latest book, *The Politics of Che Guevara: Theory and Practice*. While recognizing the undeniable determination, egalitarianism, and selflessness of Che Guevara in his fight against imperialism, Farber meticulously exposes the contradictions of Che's thought and the political, economic, and social detours that Guevara took in his honest quest for a better world.

The Politics of Che Guevara: Theory and Practice
SAMUEL FARBER
Haymarket Books, 2016, 192 pp., $16.95

Why is this important? Beyond the obvious fact that *El Che*, half a century after his death, still is a symbol of defiance against injustice for countless people across the world, key questions remain: Are his politics and methods applicable to our modern struggles and to contexts other than guerrilla warfare, and what did his ideas and policies actually accomplish in Cuba in the quest for liberation and socialism?

Farber's political dissection takes as a starting point his own understanding of socialist revolution being the act of "self-emancipation of the working class," in agreement with Marx's historical formulation, and deeply tied to the question of democracy—of workers and peasants ruling themselves. A pervasive theme in his analysis is the inherently anti-democratic character of a one-party state as practiced and justified in Cuba by Guevara.

After initially addressing Guevara's youthful political formation, for instance his family's social position, their politics, and Che's bohemian rejection of Argentinian upper-class politics and mores, Farber avoids a chronological analysis of Guevara's revolutionary life in favor of addressing four key components of Guevara's theory and practice. These are his views and actions regarding (1) "revolutionary strategy and the road to power," (2) "strikes, workers' representation, and civil liberties," in

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the larger context of democracy and self-rule, (3) "his overall political ideas and philosophy" once he became one of the top three leaders of the Cuban Revolution, and (4) his "political economy," that is, how he administered the Cuban economy and how his methods fit within his vision of how to attain "full communism."

Throughout his narrative, Farber makes the connections between Guevara's bohemian Argentinean political baggage and the undemocratic, ascetic formulation of socialism that he came to espouse during his revolutionary years. Guevara was born into an economically unstable, upper-middle-class family that professed contradictory politics: antifascist and bohemian (their form of rebellion against Argentinean Catholic identification with Spanish fascism), but also profoundly disdainful of Peronism, which had attracted overwhelming working-class support.

Thus Che's youthful rebelliousness against Argentinean high society took a bohemian character, too, in the form of a "deliberately shabby appearance" and a propensity to "say outrageous things and scandalize people around him," which dovetailed with his reluctance to join any leftist political organizations. He admired Mahatma Gandhi's anti-imperialism as well as his asceticism, which reinforced in the young Guevara his "bohemian critique of bourgeois materialism"—a stance more grounded on moralism than politics.

Guevara's asceticism, as Farber extensively describes, was a foundational element in his later formulation of moral incentives, as opposed to material ones, for the Cuban working class once the rebels seized power. The truth was that while Guevara was in charge of the Ministry of Industry, and after he died, the Cuban revolutionary leadership periodically reinvigorated the notion of moral incentives in response to periods of scarcity of basic commodities in a calculated effort to maintain the productivity of Cuban workers.

Farber highlights Guevara's "political tone-deafness," which manifests itself on multiple occasions throughout his revolutionary life and which is inextricable from his "voluntarism." For instance, Guevara's insistence that revolutionaries make revolution regardless of the political conditions ended up costing him his life in the Bolivian countryside after he grossly ignored the specific political and social conditions of that country. Concretely, those conditions included a Bolivian peasantry that failed to identify with Guevara and his imported rebels, and a militant working class located in far-away mining regions and cities, whom Guevara, when he infrequently addressed them, asked to leave their jobs, unions, and families to join him in his isolated enterprise.

Guevara regarded with suspicion the political struggles that took place in urban areas, largely because he did not trust the leadership of those struggles. This was a key strategic bias that Farber covers in detail while providing a full political and organizational context describing the limitations and unexploited possibilities of the radical segment of the Cuban working class at the time. Guevara was partial to rural guerrilla warfare because it could be tightly controlled through a military hierarchical structure. However, Guevara's *foco* strategy, the creation of multiple guerrilla foci in the rural areas that would eventually surround and take over the major cities, was never successful in Latin America—a failure that Farber contrasts to the 1979 Nicaraguan Revolution "relying primarily on urban uprisings to succeed."

Farber does an outstanding job of concisely describing the various political and social currents that coalesced to bring about the Cuban Revolution, which he correctly characterizes as a "social revolution." That revolution was nonetheless led by an eclectic group of middle-class individuals, which, given the nature of the guerrilla struggle and the politically fragmented nature of the mass movement in the cities, made the top leaders of the revolution socially detached from the movements, or *déclassé*, to use

Farber's formulation.

Farber characterizes Fidel Castro as the ultimate politician, who maintained the various factions together in the aftermath of the revolutionary victory through his sheer personality and astute political ambition. Indeed, Fidel Castro did not consider himself a socialist or communist before or in the immediate aftermath of taking power. In contrast, Guevara (and Raúl Castro) had already subscribed to a Stalinist notion of socialism by the time the rebels landed in the Sierra Maestra mountains.

Although Guevara eventually became critical of the Soviet Union, he never wavered from the Stalinist principle of a one-party state, as Farber amply documents. At a fundamental level, Guevara refused to accept the right of workers to form independent unions, to bargain as adversaries, and to control production, explicitly aligning himself with one-person management of the workplace. For Guevara, the state was the revolutionary vanguard which, for better or for worse, represented the interests of the workers, even if they had no recourse to democratically challenge those who controlled the state. The workers unions were meant to be transmission belts in the pursuit of the overarching goals decided by the top leadership of the vanguard party, which was inextricable from the state. The workers were responsible for implementing the decisions from high above, while having little or no control over their working conditions.

The tensions this context created resulted in a mismatch of ill-conceived production plans and material reality (such as technology, raw materials, skills, or transport capacity). Yet Guevara insisted that the workers had to raise their consciousness, to accept their lot, and improve their efforts. Or, as Farber writes, "Guevara was arguing for workers to have responsibility, but without power."

After the rebels' victory, it took a few years for Fidel Castro to fully embrace the formulation of a one-party Stalinist state, while in contrast, his brother Raúl and Guevara collaborated all along with the thoroughly Stalinist *Partido Socialista Popular* (Popular Socialist Party) in a political contest of maneuver approved by Fidel Castro that eventually led to the formation of the Cuban Communist Party. It was throughout this period that "Guevara played a key role in inaugurating a tradition of administrative, nonjudicial detention subject to no written rules or laws and solely based on the discretion of top leaders and administrators." In the long run, after Guevara was gone from the government, these practices were used in camps for the confinement of dissidents and social "deviants" (including gays, Jehovah's Witnesses, Catholic activists, practitioners of Afro-Cuban Santería, and years later, people suffering from AIDS).

> Guevara was partial to rural guerrilla warfare because it could be tightly controlled through a military hierarchical structure.

In Guevara's *Socialism and Man in Cuba*, perhaps his most famous revolutionary proclamation, he exalts the qualities of the "new man": selflessness, idealism, heroism, self-sacrifice. While all these qualities are admirable, they occurred or did not in the specific context of a class society, a society that was economically underdeveloped. And they occurred or did not within a political and social context in which Guevara deemed most of the Cuban population as not conscious enough to be part of what he considered the "vanguard" that inhabited the higher layers of administrative and political power. Therefore, the bulk of the population found itself outside the decision-making process, without any formal or informal mechanisms to affect those decisions.

Unfortunately, Guevara's "new man" is oblivious to the struggles against racism, sexism, homophobia, and other oppressions. This is a narrow conception of the liberatory potential of socialism. Farber actually describes Guevara's traditional views of the social position of

> Unfortunately, Guevara's "new man" is oblivious to the struggles against racism, sexism, homophobia, and other oppressions.

women, and how he shared his father's disdain for homosexuals. His is a literally Spartan, militaristic notion of socialism. Farber connects this rigid framework to the influence that Edward Bellamy's nineteenth-century novel *Looking Backward* had on Guevara; the novel describes a utopian future in which a beneficent state is modeled along the command structures of an army.

As Farber argues, "Guevara arrives at the Stalinist conclusion that the dictatorship of the proletariat operates '*not only over the defeated class but also individually over the victorious class*' [Guevara's own words], through a 'conscious' vanguard elite that will decide in some undefined fashion if and when the people are educated enough to participate in deciding their collective and individual fate."

One of the most outstanding contradictions in Guevara's thought has to do with his views of the Soviet Union. He made no secret of his increasing frustration with the USSR and what he described as economic practices that seemed to be sliding in the direction of capitalism, a tendency to which he counterposed his own centralized budgetary system. While leading the Ministry of Industry, Guevara assumed that he could neutralize the effect of the "law of value"—the core element of capitalism analyzed by Marx—by applying his budgetary system.

Yet, as thoroughly described by Farber, the myriad of economic obstacles found in a small and underdeveloped economy such as Cuba's demonstrated in practice the limitations of his method. In order to overcome low productivity he repeatedly peddled the practices associated with moral incentives, voluntary work, and socialist emulation—an extraordinary but unsuccessful effort that diverted resources to expand production at the expense of basic goods. Guevara's ascetic and egalitarian mind transmuted socialism into the egalitarian sharing of scarcity for a population that had no real say in the national priorities.

In this context, the combination of the siege imposed by U.S. imperialism and his frustration with both the USSR and China—the alleged socialist giants of that era—figured prominently in Guevara's decision to pursue international revolution, first in Congo and later in Bolivia. Nonetheless, despite his sharp criticism of the USSR, he never broke with the idea that the one-party state there somehow constituted socialism.

Guevara is considered by many a tragic figure who died heroically fighting the most powerful empire that humanity has seen. The real tragedy is that despite his fierce commitment to fight the injustices of capitalism and imperialism, he chose to elevate a minority of society as the unimpeachable guardians of the best interests of society, in essence recreating the system of bosses and subalterns.

In this new era of authoritarianism and naked greed inflamed by Donald Trump and his associates, as new mass struggles emerge, the need to fight for socialism presents itself in sharp contrast to the barbarism of our rulers. If these masses are to appropriate the ideas of revolutionary socialism, we need to firmly move beyond the anti-democratic ideas and methods of Che Guevara. Otherwise the masses, in their need to wrestle with the scorching harms of pilfering authoritarianism, will seek answers elsewhere, at a dangerous and exacting cost to the downtrodden.

At Long Last . . . A Complete Story of Attica

ELIZABETH RAPAPORT

HEATHER ANN THOMPSON has written a magnificent history of the Attica Prison uprising, the deadliest prison rebellion in U.S. history. It is a long book, nearly 600 pages of text and another 150 of notes and apparatus. It's a timely book: Attica casts its uneasy shadow over our halting steps to unwind the social catastrophe that is mass incarceration. *Blood in the Water* embodies ten years of research. This lengthy gestation reflects Thompson's battles with an officialdom unwilling to release any more of the documentary record than it was legally compelled to do. It also reflects Thompson's commitment to tell this story from the vantage points of all those caught up in the Attica rising and its brutal repression. Accordingly she has given us a virtually hour-by-hour, 360-degrees-in-perspective account of the events leading up to the rebellion, the five days in September 1971 when 1,300 rebels held part of the D Block and the D Yard, and the brutal retaking and reprisals that followed. Rarely has an historian been able to reconstruct a complex set of events with such completeness. Thompson also chronicles the decades of litigation over criminal liability and compensation in the long wake of the uprising.

Blood in the Water:
The Attica Prison Uprising of 1971 and Its Legacy
HEATHER ANN THOMPSON
Pantheon Books, 2016, 750 pp

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Then and Now

In some respects the conditions at Attica that sparked the September 1971 rebellion are unchanged. The population of the prison is today, as it was then, roughly 2,200, close to maximum capacity. Now as then, the largely urban black and Latino inmate population is overseen by a hostile, white, rural correctional workforce. Material conditions were deplorable in 1971. The men were ill-fed, ill-housed, and medically neglected. Prison wages were too low to allow prisoners to buy enough of what was not provided. Material conditions have improved at Attica, although shameful conditions obtain in many other U.S. prisons. Attica today as then is among the most racially oppressive and violent New York state prisons.

The Attica rising occurred two years before the Rockefeller drug laws were enacted. These and subsequent draconian sentencing measures drove up the number of prisoners in New York. In 1971 there were slightly fewer than 20,000 prisoners in New York state. That number peaked in 1999 at 72,000. It is now at approximately 50,000. New York repealed the Rockefeller drug laws in the 1990s. New York's prison population has decreased by 29 percent from its height. New York is a leader among the states in curbing its prison population, one of a small handful of states with comparable reductions. Almost all the decrease is attributable to prosecutorial and diversionary policies embraced in New York City, rather than uniform reductions throughout the state. There are 2 ½ times as many people in New York's prisons today as was the case when Attica blew up. The beat goes on.

The Riot that Became the Attica Rebellion

The early 1970s saw a dramatic uptick in prison and jail riots across the United States. Corrections authorities in New York were confronted by riots in New York City jails and upstate prisons. In an attempt to stave off contagion, New York City inmates were shipped upstate, and troublemakers upstate were shuffled to other prisons. As a result of this churn, in September 1971 Attica was crowded, severely understaffed, and home to Black Muslims, Black Panthers, and a sprinkling of white radicals.

A security breach permitted the rebellion to launch. In the first hours, corrections officers (COs) were assaulted. There were raids on the infirmary and the commissary. Twin 19-year-old brothers were gang raped. Some men stepped up to protect COs and vulnerable prisoners in the midst of the chaos. Once the prisoners had taken control of D Yard, the 1,300 rebels quickly established order and an almost Occupy-like democracy. Black Muslims took the lead in protecting the 30 hostages. A volunteer patrol kept the peace in the yard. The men elected representatives to conduct negotiations with the authorities. All decisions were plebiscitary. Negotiations were conducted in the yard and broadcast for all to hear via a makeshift public-address system.

The negotiations were doomed from their inception, despite some unusual circumstances favorable to the rebels. Astonishingly, the authorities acceded to the prisoners' request to invite "observers," notables whose presence would bring public attention to their cause and their fate. Newly appointed Commissioner of Correction Russell Oswald was a reformer. He agreed to implement almost all the prisoners' "demands" that their basic human needs be met and due process be respected. The sticking point was amnesty for the rebels. Oswald and other doves were sidelined when Rockefeller took command. No one who wanted a peaceful resolution then had power, and no one who had power wanted a bloodless resolution. Thus no resolution involving partial amnesty and limited retribution was explored. Rockefeller distained further negotiations and authorized the use of armed force to put an end to convict defiance in the full glare of national publicity. The state police and COs retook D Yard with guns blazing under a heavy canopy of tear gas. All casualties were by gunfire, all inflicted by the state's forces. The rebels had no guns. Nine hostages and 29 prisoners were shot to death; another 128 were injured by gunfire. Thompson's account of the bloodlust and savagery of the retaking is a remarkable piece of history. For these men whose job it was to enforce order at the ground level, the rebellion of black convicts was terrifying and enraging. (Of course) a rumor circulated just before the yard was stormed that the rebels had emasculated a CO hostage.

Governor Rockefeller's Ambition and the Fear of Black Radicals

Thompson traces Governor Rockefeller's response to the rebellion to his political ambition. Rockefeller wanted to run for president. He was saddled with a reputation as a liberal in a party that was moving to the right. Attica was his chance to position himself as a stalwart of law and order. But Thompson also finds that the fear of black insurrection in the prisons and beyond was endemic in government, shared by President Nixon and Governor Rockefeller and permeating the institutions of the state. The radicals of that era would no doubt have been flattered had they appreciated how serious a threat those in power believed they posed. A tragic facet of Attica is that this mindset blinded and anesthetized so many to the privation, dehumanization, and racism prisoners endured.

Decades of Litigation

Attica had a long aftermath in which the state of New York, prisoners, hostages, and their survivors jousted in the courts over what happened,

> Once the prisoners had taken control of D Yard, the 1,300 rebels quickly established order and an almost Occupy-like democracy.

who was to blame, who should go to prison, and who should receive compensation. In short, the cover-up began before the last shot was fired, and multiple investigations were so flawed that the state had to abandon criminal charges against almost all the prisoners originally in its crosshairs. A few prisoners and lawyers showed astonishing grit and resourcefulness in pursuing compensation for the men injured in the retaking and beaten and tortured thereafter. These heroic efforts yielded modest victories some 30 years after the carnage in D Yard. These pages are full of interest. The pattern is familiar: This is a tale of official lies and cover-up, of reprisals against truth tellers and whistleblowers, and callous indifference to those with little power.

More Then and Now

Attica was and remains a maximum security prison; the majority of the 1971 rebels had been convicted of serious crimes. For this reviewer, the story of the prisoners' manner of conducting life in D Yard is all the more significant and poignant for that fact. They demonstrated the aspirations and capabilities of those on whom society has turned its back. Thompson seems reluctant to acknowledge the import of Attica's being a maximum security prison. She highlights examples of minor offenders thrown into the Attica mix. Then as now, it is easy to find irrationality in any prison. This shying away is perhaps the only instance of Thompson's political sympathies coloring a history that is notably fair-minded and humane in its treatment of all its subjects (admirers of Nelson Rockefeller will disagree). I enter this cavil with both eyes on the politics of mass incarceration.

The well-advertised goal of current reform initiatives is to keep low-level, nonviolent offenders out of prison or to at least curtail their time in prison. These reforms are sold politically as protecting public safety by keeping the really bad people behind bars while also taking us out of the era of mass incarceration. However, the math does not work. There are too few minor criminals, relatively speaking, and too many violent and serious offenders in our prisons. More than half the inmates in state prisons are violent offenders. We will continue to be a gulag nation until or unless violent and other serious offenders are also treated as redeemable.

Blood in the Water could hardly be more relevant to current evasions and engagements with criminal justice.

Memories of Struggle and Despair in the Philippines

ALEX DE JONG

IN THE FOREWORD TO *Subversive Lives: A Family Memoir of the Marcos Years*, the authors write it "was not intended to be about communists and communism"—still the book provides remarkable insights into the Philippine communist movement. The book is a collective memoir of the surviving Quimpo family, relating their lives during the years of the Marcos dictatorship from the early seventies to the mid-eighties. With many of the siblings involved in the revolutionary movement, their memories furnish stories of underground organizing, imprisonment and torture, repression and resistance.

Subversive Lives: A Family Memoir of the Marcos Years
SUSAN F. QUIMPO AND NATHAN GILBERT QUIMPO
Athens: Ohio University Press, 2016.
485 pages, index

The name Quimpo would be familiar to students of the history of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). Nathan Gilbert Quimpo, one of the main authors of the book, was, in the early eighties, a leading cadre in the movement on Mindanao. The second largest and southernmost major island of the Philippine archipelago, Mindanao became a bulwark of the communist rebels during those years. Although the movement, and especially its guerrilla wing, has diminished since then, it remains powerful, especially in Mindanao.

Under various pen names, Nathan Quimpo wrote several papers in the early eighties criticizing the CPP's Maoist strategy of "protracted people's war," or PPW in the often-used shorthand. The PPW strategy argued that the party should build up armed strength in the rural areas until its guerrilla forces were strong enough to defeat the government army in regular battle, encircle the cities, and take power. Inspired by the example of the Nicaraguan revolution and the rapid development of militant mass movements in Mindanao, Quimpo, on the other hand, argued for a strategy in which urban protests and insurrection would play a decisive role.

Such debates were of literal life-and-death importance for Philippine leftists. On September 21, 1972, President Ferdinand Marcos had declared martial law, making himself dictator. Under Marcos, the Philippines became a model of crony capitalism; state power and policies were crafted to the benefit of the Marcos family, relatives, and friends. Democratic freedoms were abolished, opposition activists were jailed, and often tortured and murdered—everything to keep Marcos and his allies in power. The declaration of martial law followed a series of militant protests in the early 1970s against the government's increasing authoritarianism, corruption, and subservience to U.S. imperialism.

This "First Quarter Storm" also drew the first of the Quimpo siblings into radical politics. The movement was set off by student protests but rapidly escalated. Protesters stormed the

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U.S. embassy, hurled a burning effigy of a crocodile (symbol of corruption) at Marcos, and hijacked a fire truck to ram the gates of Malacañang Palace, the presidential residence. For many of the participants, it felt as if they were involved in a dress rehearsal for a revolution that would sweep away the ills plaguing the Philippines, such as the dominance of the United States and the stranglehold of the local oligarchy on democracy. The police responded with deadly violence, killing several over the span of these weeks.

When the protests broke out, the Philippine left was still at a low point. A guerrilla insurgency led by the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP) was defeated in the fifties, partly because of U.S. support for the Philippine state. The PKP barely survived. Just before the First Quarter Storm, the party had started to reorganize itself, setting up legal organizations that would draw new people into the movement. But some of the new radicals attracted to the PKP, inspired by Mao's China, favored restarting the armed struggle. In 1968, a small group "refounded" the party, now using the English name, and adopted Maoism and its strategy of armed revolution. A few months later, the fledgling party joined with a remnant of the old guerrilla movement, which formed its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA).

For many participants in the protests of 1970, the Maoist guerrillas were a distant phantasm, an inspiring myth, but part of a reality many of the urban, middle-class students had difficulty relating to. *Subversive Lives* relates how at one of the protests, a speaker rouses the crowd with made-up stories of communist guerrillas shooting down army helicopters. In the following years, however, many would find their way to the CPP and the NPA.

When Marcos declared martial law and the government cracked down on all opposition, young activists, many of them barely out of their teens, were decisive in reorganizing the suddenly illegal movement. They eventually built the CPP and its allies, the "National-Democratic" movement, into a formidable opposition force.

An Extraordinary Family

The oldest Quimpo sons were the first to be attracted to the radical movement, inspiring several of their siblings to follow. It was a commitment that often came at a high cost. One son, Ronald Jan F. Quimpo, was "disappeared" by the army, and another, Ishmael "Jun" Quimpo, joined the guerrilla forces but was killed by a comrade. Several of the siblings were arrested and relate experiences of beatings, electric shocks, sexual assault, and other forms of torture. Susan Quimpo, the youngest of the siblings and the other main author, writes, "For most, myself included, it seemed like there was no tomorrow. When my brother Jun died at the age of 24, I caught myself thinking, 'That is a good *ripe* age to die for one's principles.' I knew Jun was ready to die for the revolution, and it seemed most of the *kasama* [comrades] felt the same way. An early death was a risk that just came with the territory."

The format of *Subversive Lives*, with separate chapters written by different authors, provides a kaleidoscopic view of the movement as it developed. Susan and Nathan Quimpo have different but complementary styles of writing. After breaking with the party, Nathan Quimpo began a scholarly career, writing *Contested Democracy and the Left in the Philippines After Marcos* and becoming an associate professor in Japan. His writing is analytical and constrained. Susan Quimpo, who felt unable to make the sort of commitment she saw in Jun, always refused to join the party. As a member of a leftist cultural performance group and as a reporter, she witnessed brutal police violence. Her writing is more evocative, and her account of a police assault on striking workers is especially moving.

The book gives the reader an idea of what life was like in the Philippines for a family like the Quimpos. Their family was unusual in that so many of the siblings joined the movement, but in other aspects, the experiences of the Quimpo household must have been similar to those of many others whose children joined the revolution. Like many in the Philippines, the Quimpos grew up as practicing Catholics. The father, Ishmael de los Reyes Quimpo, was the breadwinner and disciplinarian, while the mother, Esperanza Ferrer Quimpo, stayed at home and looked after the children. The father had a middle-class, white-collar job, but with ten children, the family struggled to make ends meet. Not only the gender division of labor, but also the emotional dynamics in the family were traditional. Her daughter Susan relates how Esperanza sacrificed her own happiness and her life's wishes for the family. The sons and the father were unable to express their love for each other. When the sons joined the movement, they were not only rebelling against the government, but also against the authority of their father. Ishmael de los Reyes Quimpo died while one of his sons was in custody and others in hiding. The impact of martial law and political struggle reached far beyond the ranks of activists.

For the Country and the People

A driving force behind the publication of *Subversive Lives* was historian Vicente L. Rafael. Rafael, a scholar of colonialism and nationalism, also offers a foreword in which he describes Philippine communism as "nationalism's uncanny other":

> Communism has been part of Philippine modernity for over a century. It has supplied nationalism with its anti-imperialist outlook, mass movements with much of their organizational structure, and even civil society with the ideological ballast of "national-democracy." But unable to seize state power, communism has also been relegated to the margins of Filipino historical consciousness.

The term "communism" is used here, and throughout the book, to refer to the Philippine inflection of Maoism, a movement that still dogmatically continues to insist on its supposed monopoly on being "left-wing."

Subversive Lives shows how this movement was able to become an integral part of Philippine society by connecting with two existing, strong traditions: nationalism and religion, especially Roman Catholicism. After being granted independence by the United States, the country remained under the influence of its former colonial master. For many in the Philippines, the United States is simultaneously admired, envied, and resented. In the revolutionary mythology of the CPP, their struggle is first of all one of national liberation from U.S. imperialism. With this, it is the heir of previous anti-colonial movements. The social force that would realize this liberation is "the Philippine people" in the classic Maoist conception of a multi-class bloc of the national bourgeoisie, petty bourgeois, peasants, and workers.

This worldview sees the essence of the Philippine people in the last two classes, that is, in the poor. The poor are more than a social layer that has the potential to break the power of imperialism; in a fusion of Maoist populism and Christian reverence for suffering, "the poor" become the incarnation of the good. The CPP's links with a movement that was developing a Philippine version of Liberation Theology, Christians for National Liberation (CNL), provided them with important local roots. Many in the CPP would agree with words of liberation theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez: "We find the Lord in our encounters with men, in particular with the poorest, marginalized and exploited by other men. A gesture of love toward them is a gesture toward God." A CNL slogan summed up the Philippine encounter of Maoism and Catholicism: "Love thy neighbor; serve the people."

References to communism as a "gospel" and party cadres as "missionaries" show the influence of this sensibility, even among activists who were not explicitly religious. Undoubtedly, this sensibility was an important source of inner strength for many activists faced with hardship and danger—but as the poor became an ideal, they also became less real as human beings, as individuals, capable of fighting for their own emancipation.

A Continuing Past

The period covered by the book ends soon after the fall of Marcos in the 1986 "People Power" rebellion. After years of building the resistance against the dictatorship and increasingly feeling the struggle was a direct confrontation between the CPP on the one hand, and the U.S.-backed Marcos regime on the other, the Communists were outmaneuvered by the bourgeois opposition. The dictator fell as a result of an unexpected popular urban insurrection, and Cory Aquino, the widow of the murdered liberal opposition leader Benigno Aquino, was brought to power. The party was at its peak but unable to steer developments or even to decisively influence events. An intense debate on strategy, inner-party democracy, and alliance-building erupted in the party but was shut down in the early nineties by founding chair Jose María Sison and his circle. He imposed a return to Maoist orthodoxy and expelled dissidents, leading to a series of severe splits. Several former members who had broken with the party and criticized its orientation were killed by their former comrades. The party eventually stabilized, much more homogeneous than before but severely contracted in size and influence.

Almost half a century after the beginning of its armed struggle, the NPA today is smaller than it was in the mid-eighties. Suggesting he would be able to play an "anti-imperialist" role, the CPP recently made a disastrous attempt at building an alliance with the current far-right Philippine president, Rodrigo Duterte.

By that time however, the Quimpos had already long left the movement, breaking with the party in the post-dictatorship period. That their past is not just past was made clear after the publication of the U.S. edition of *Subversive Lives*; outreach for talks by Susan Quimpo had to be limited and one talk canceled after U.S.-based CPP supporters spread the claim she was misrepresenting the history of the movement. But the history of Jun and Jan Quimpo, and of so many other Filipinos who sacrificed in the struggle against oppression, does not belong to the CPP's leaders and their apologists.

Subversive Lives shares an essential piece of history and deserves to be read by anyone with an interest in the Philippine and international struggle for liberation.

Marvin Mandell, Who Fought for Equality, for Life, and for Art

Dan La Botz

In 1996, at the height of the culture wars, Marvin Mandell joined the battle, writing a long essay, "Canon on the Left," in which he argued that the left should not allow conservatives to claim the literary canon. While he of course supported the expansion of the canon to include all of the writers of color, as well as the women and all of the others who had been neglected and excluded, he refused to allow the right to claim the great tradition of European literature. He concluded the essay with these words:

> The Great Tradition is a treasure. For the left to abandon that treasure either because the expeditions to find it were often financed and supported by a ruling class or because many were unjustly prevented from joining the expeditions would be a deprivation not only of ourselves but of posterity. Let the right read Homer, Euripides, Dante, Shakespeare, and the Bible with open eyes and heart and weep. And let the left not forsake them, but read them and take heart.

What is remarkable here is that Marvin believed in the power of literature to reach even the hardest hearts on the right, if only they will read "with open eyes and hearts," and if they do, they will "weep." The fight for socialism was a struggle to liberate all of humanity, even if it must be carried out against the will of part of it.

While Marvin Mandell, the editor of *New Politics* from 2006 to 2013, was a socialist, it was a socialism rooted in a profound humanism. He and his late wife Betty Reid Mandell—she died in 2014 at the age of 89, and he, this year at the age of 90—spent their lives together in a common search and struggle for socialism. Their search led them not only to contemplate literature and art, to teach and practice social work, but also to experiment in radical psychology and to join the socialist movement.

Marvin Mandell was born on January 26, 1927, in Rochester, New York, the son of Harold and Frieda Sarachan Mandell. During World War II, he served in the United States Army from 1944 to 1946. After the war he became a member of the Workers Party, adopting its "Third Camp" position of opposition to both war camps, later encapsulated in the slogan "Neither Washington nor Moscow." His friend Mathis Szykowski, in his *Betrayal and Survival and Beyond: A Memoir,* describes Marvin as he knew him in the late 1940s at the University of

Marvin Mandell

Dan La Botz *is a co-editor of* New Politics.

Rochester, shortly after Mandell had divorced his first wife:

> Marvin was an honor student in English literature at the University of Rochester. He had embraced Marx and Freud. He was attending school on the GI Bill. … He had served in Italy and had been, he told us, the heavyweight-boxing champion of his regiment. He was a bulky man, full of energy. When you met Marvin you were assaulted by a myriad of ideas and suggestions. In the coming years I got used to hearing Marvin presenting some fabulous idea or tale as he was crossing the threshold of my door. Some people found him to be offensive and even obnoxious. I was often baffled by his outlandishness, but I was never bored. You could depend on Marvin to keep the conversation going. He had and still has, beyond his bounding energy, a generosity of spirit. … Marvin's saving grace, if he needed one, was that he laughed easily at the absurdity of the world and even more easily at himself.

Marvin became involved not only in the Workers Party, which had its roots in the Trotskyist movement, but also in the psychoanalytic movement of Wilhelm Reich, who had begun his career as a disciple of Sigmund Freud. Reich had been a Socialist, then a Communist, and eventually sympathetic to Trotsky. Marvin appreciated Reich's interests in liberating human beings not only from the state and class society, but also from the sexual repression that distorted so many human lives.

From the University of Rochester, where he graduated with honors in 1950, Marvin went on to Columbia University in New York. After earning his master's degree there in 1951, he taught English literature in the New York City schools from 1951 to 1959. In the mid-1950s Marvin met and fell in love with Betty Reid, who was studying social work, and the two were married and became lifelong partners. Marvin introduced Betty to Marxist theory and both were involved in the successor to the Workers Party, which in 1949 had changed its name to the Independent Socialist League (ISL).

As Max Shachtman, the leader of the Workers Party and then of the ISL, moved to the right on a variety of questions, Marvin and Betty continued to uphold their left-wing views. Marvin joined with Julius Jacobson and Phyllis Jacobson to found *New Politics* in 1961. Later, after the death of the Jacobsons, Marvin and Betty became the journal's editors.

While continuing with their political activities, Marvin and Betty also began a family. They had two daughters, Christine and Charlotte. They encouraged their children to call their parents by their first names. As Charlotte Mandell Kelly said, "They wanted everybody to be equal. They didn't want us to think of them as authoritarian."

When the U.S. military decommissioned Cuttyhunk Island, off New Bedford, Massachusetts, Marvin and Betty bought a lot, ordered a Sears Roebuck house, and had it assembled there. Cuttyhunk became the family's summer refuge, though they also enjoyed vacations in France. Marvin loved the out-of-doors, particularly skiing, sailing, swimming, and hiking.

Marvin continued to pursue the study of literature and his teaching career. From 1959 to 1961 he was a professor of English at Colorado State College in Greeley (now Northern Colorado University); then at the State University of New York at Potsdam from 1964 to 1967; then at the University of Connecticut in Hartford from 1967 to 1969. From 1969 to 1993, he taught at Curry College in Milton, Massachusetts, where he became the chair of the Humanities Department.

In Boston, Betty and Marvin Mandell formed part of a community of committed social activists who became involved in all of the issues of the day, but, under Betty's influence, with a particular emphasis on questions of economic equality and poverty. Taking over the editorship of *New Politics* in 2006, they continued also to carry out a struggle for socialism from below.

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