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From the Editors

In this issue we are proud to present a previously unpublished lecture by C.L.R. James, the noted Afro-Caribbean Marxist intellectual. His discussion of Oliver Cox's book *Caste, Class, and Race*, first published in 1948, brings an historic Black socialist voice to illuminate some of the issues that face our own times and the demand that Black Lives Matter.

In addition to that special feature, we bring you an absorbing issue of *New Politics*. We begin with a statement from the Campaign for Peace and Democracy, "Washington and Moscow: Halt the Bombing and Stop Supporting Dictators in the Middle East!" This is a region whose conflicts have become a center of international conflict, but also a test of one's commitment to anti-imperialism and a democratic foreign policy and a challenge to the view that the enemy of my enemy is my friend.

We also bring you a section dedicated to the issue of inequality and its manifestations in contemporary life. So many of the ongoing and emerging struggles around the world are at root about inequality. We include an interview with Saskia Sassen and essays by Michael J. Thompson on the "servant society," Colin Jenkins and Cherise Charleswell on debt, and Sean Posey on housing, as well as several relevant reviews.

Another special section offers three articles on Turkey, Kurdistan, and Rojava. Essays by Daniel Johnson, Alex de Jong, and Petar Stanchev provide a range of views on reaction and revolution in the midst of civil war and military conflict.

The issue also presents two views on Bernie Sanders and the Democrats and other articles that discuss climate change and Africa, the economic crisis of Puerto Rico, and the Podemos organization in Spain. And, of course, we have our usual "Words & Pictures" feature and reviews of important new books.

Note that we now have a five-person team of co-editors, having added Saulo Colón, Nancy Holmstrom, and Jason Schulman who join Dan La Botz and Julia Wrigley, while former editor Steve Shalom takes a well-deserved leave from the crew.

We welcome a number of new authors to our pages in this issue and also new readers who might have been previously unaware of *New Politics* and our website newpol.org. If you enjoy the articles in this issue please subscribe or contribute online so that we can continue to bring you an independent socialist journal committed to the principle of socialism from below.

Saulo Colón
Nancy Holmstrom
Dan La Botz
Jason Schulman
Julia Wrigley

Visit *New Politics* on the Internet at www.newpol.org

CHAMPIONS OF JUSTICE

"I was born a slave, but nature gave me a soul of a free man...."

—Toussaint L'Ouverture

"It is Toussaint's supreme merit that while he saw European civilisation as a valuable and necessary thing, and strove to lay its foundations among his people, he never had the illusion that it conferred any moral superiority. He knew French, British, and Spanish imperialists for the insatiable gangsters that they were, that there is no oath too sacred for them to break, no crime, deception, treachery, cruelty, destruction of human life and property which they would not commit against those who could not defend themselves."

— C.L.R. James

Toussaint L'Ouverture freed the slaves of Haiti in the most successful slave revolt in history. "[He] was the finest product of that greatest period in human history: The Age of Enlightenment."

— C.L.R. James

This drawing is based on a painting by Alexandre Francois Girardin.

"In March of last year, after Haiti's tragic earthquake, a friend of mine, researcher Mario Valdes, whom I had the opportunity to work with at PBS Frontline, emailed me a photograph of what may be the only historically accurate painting of Toussaint, shattering any and all previous notions I held about his physical appearance and affect. In his email, he wrote: 'This portrait by the son of Rene Louis de Girardin, the patron of the great French philosophe, Jean Jacques Rousseau, represents Toussaint as the ideal revolutionary. It is not the figure of the ferocious dictator he later became and which has dominated the political ethos in Haiti for the last two centuries. It is, therefore, this image and all that it philosophically stands for that has to prevail if Haiti is billed as the world's first black republic.... To judge from the expertise exhibited in the work, this is undoubtedly the most important representation of Toussaint L'Ouverture discovered to date. Because of the high realism this 25 5/8 X 21 3/8 inches oil on canvas offers in comparison to the dozen or so 19th century frontis page engravings extant, and which it is important to note, are quite different from one another, this work by the still relatively unknown French artist, Alexandre Francois Girardin, is, therefore, the most authoritative image of the celebrated general we now know.'"

—Patrick Sylvain, bostonhaitian.com

Washington and Moscow

Halt the Bombing and Stop Supporting Dictators in the Middle East!

Campaign for Peace and Democracy Statement*

Outside powers have had a long and shameful history of cynically supporting dictatorships in the Middle East because maintaining friendly autocratic states in the region suits their geopolitical objectives. And today those criminal policies are flagrantly on display.

The United States

Since the end of the Second World War, the United States has been the world's leading ally of the Saudi Arabian kingdom, a violent, ultra-reactionary fundamentalist dictatorship that this year has beheaded more than a hundred people, possibly more than ISIS.[1] Saudi Arabia is currently leading a bombing campaign in Yemen that has indiscriminately killed many hundreds of civilians. Weapons—including cluster bombs—intelligence, military advisers, and diplomatic support for that bombing campaign are provided by Washington.

Egypt's Mubarak dictatorship was backed by the United States for three decades. He was ousted in the Arab Spring, but when the Egyptian military took power again, Secretary of State John Kerry declared that they were "restoring democracy"[2]—and U.S. military aid has been restored.

As Israel continues its nearly 50-year dictatorial rule over the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Washington provides the military aid and diplomatic support at the United Nations that make the occupation possible.

Although Damascus had long been allied with the Soviet Union and then with Russia, Washington backed Syria's bloody suppression of the Palestinian movement and the Lebanese left in the 1970s and counted on its support in the 1991 invasion of Iraq and the "war on terror." Assad's torture chambers proved especially useful to the U.S. policy of "torture by proxy," which involved sending prisoners to Syria as part of the Bush administration's "extraordinary rendition" program.[3]

Assad's usefulness to Washington ended when he drew too close to Iran and seemed likely to be overthrown by the 2011 Syrian revolution. At that point, U.S. policy shifted towards trying to win influence among the rebels, though carefully limiting the kinds of weapons they could receive.[4] More recently, Obama, along with Britain, France, and other U.S. allies, has turned to a policy of selective bombing, not of Assad, but of ISIS, and sometimes other opposition groups, leading most of the rebels to condemn the air campaign.[5] Washington has generally favored a "Yemen solution," keeping Syria's Baathist police state apparatus in power, preferably without the Assad family mafia—although lately it has moved towards the "political solution" favored by Paris and London, which might include Assad.

ISIS might not even exist, or at least not wield the power it now possesses, had it not been for the U.S. invasion of Iraq. It was out of the extreme chaos and vicious sectarian conflict which engulfed Iraq in the wake of the American occupation that ISIS emerged, recruiting thousands of brutal jihadi fighters in Iraq and especially in eastern Syria. This was not, as many argue, because Saddam's regime

*October 10, 2015

was thoroughly dismantled, leaving a "power vacuum," but because regime change was imposed from outside by an American government that showed contempt for the Iraqi people and hostility to genuine democracy. If Saddam Hussein's repressive state had been overthrown from within by a coalition of Sunni, Shiite, and secular democratic movements against tyranny, the subsequent history of Iraq—and Syria—might have been fundamentally different. Certainly, this coalition would have been difficult to build given Iraq's long history of sectarianism, but the U.S. invasion stifled any possibility of such a development.

We condemn and call for an immediate end to U.S. military interventionism and support for dictatorships and authoritarian governments in the Middle East and around the world. U.S. bombing of Syria and Iraq must stop—likewise bombings of Afghanistan, where the horrific slaughter of helpless hospital patients and medical personnel in Kunduz has added a particularly gruesome outrage to the United States' long list of war crimes.

Russia

Russia has been a major backer of the Assad family dictatorship since its inception in 1970. Since the uprising against Bashar al-Assad in 2011, Russian support—along with support from Iran and Hezbollah—has been critical to maintaining the survival of the Syrian regime. That support has dwarfed the outside aid going to opponents of Assad. Now Russia has markedly increased its military efforts on behalf of the Syrian despot with bombing, the launching of cruise missiles, and the announced possibility of "volunteer" ground troops.[6]

To be sure, ISIS is opposed by many—including by Syrian rebels—but Russian military involvement is not confined to attacking ISIS. In fact, Russian attacks seem on all accounts to concentrate on non-ISIS forces, including against non-jihadi groups. Clearly, this serves to bolster the Assad regime. (And, ironically, it may also be helping ISIS by weakening those who have been fighting against them.[7]) Moreover, Russian bombing has already killed numerous civilians and damaged medical facilities, and there are reports of the use of cluster munitions.[8]

In his focus on non-ISIS rebels, Putin is behaving no differently from Assad. Assad has always concentrated his fire on rebel groups other than ISIS. In 2014, only 6 percent of Assad's "counter-terrorism" operations were aimed at ISIS.[9] (And ISIS returned the favor: only 13 percent of their attacks that year targeted Syrian security forces.[10]) The Syrian air force, in addition to barrel bombs and chlorine gas, is reported to have been using cluster bombs since 2012.[11]

The exact strength of the non-jihadi forces among the Syrian rebels is unclear, but what can't be doubted is that attacking them is a major blow in favor of the Assad dictatorship, which is why there have been protests against the Russian bombings in Aleppo.[12]

Of course, Assad is thrilled at the new Russian role, and Putin hides behind Assad's invitation to justify his intervention. But invitation by a dictator provides no more legitimacy in the case of Syria than it did when the South Vietnamese government invited in the U.S. armed forces or when the Salvadoran junta invited in U.S. military advisers. Supporting tyrants is wrong, invitation or not.

We condemn the Russian intervention on the side of the Syrian dictatorship and demand that it cease immediately.

THE GREAT POWERS HAVE LONG pursued their own narrow interests in the Middle East, whether on behalf of oil or strategic advantage, with no concern for the well-being and democratic rights of the people of that region. There is now a risk of spiraling escalation and superpower conflict, with grave consequences.

On the ground, there are people armed and unarmed who are challenging dictatorships across the region, aspiring to more democratic futures. It is with them that we express our

solidarity.

The inspiring popular uprisings of the Arab Spring opened up a new era of democratic challenge from below to the police states of the Middle East. Despite defeats in Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain and elsewhere, and despite the drastically reduced strength of secular and non-jihadi democratic oppositional forces in Syria, peoples' revolution remains the only progressive solution to the problems of authoritarianism, repression, and sectarian strife in the region. The intervention of the United States and Russia, as well as regional powers such as Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey, rather than strengthening democratic forces, instead creates a powerful obstacle to their success and indeed a threat to their very survival. All of these states fear democracy in the Middle East like poison.

We firmly reject the approach taken by the Obama administration and by many on the left that choose support for Assad or his regime as the only alternative to ISIS. The extraordinary barbarousness and cruelty of ISIS have horrified much of the world. But the Syrian regime, a torture state that has become one of the most murderous in the world today, is no alternative, and its monstrous slaughter of the Syrian people in fact serves to promote the spread of ISIS.

The suffering of the Syrian people, and of other peoples in the Middle East, has been appalling. Only indigenous democratic forces are capable of ending the peoples' agony. That is why we continue to support the authentically democratic elements of the Syrian revolution. Their victory is by no means assured, but at the very least we must exert the utmost pressure on the United States and Russia to abandon policies that allow the dictators to continue torturing and murdering with impunity.

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Bernie
Lyons

A DISCUSSION OF THE SANDERS CAMPAIGN

The Bernie Sanders campaign in the Democratic Party has attracted the support of millions, raised an economic reform program such as we have not seen in decades, and has led to a national discussion about the nature of socialism. At the same time, he has ceased to be an independent, has joined the Democratic Party, and has promised to support its nominee, in all likelihood Hillary Clinton. This has led to much discussion and debate on the left. New Politics *has solicited two articles from different points of view on the Sanders campaign, one by our co-editor Jason Schulman and the other by Lance Selfa and Ashley Smith of the International Socialist Organization.*

Bernie Sanders and the Dilemma of the Democratic "Party"

Jason Schulman

Some months ago I responded to a piece that appeared on the *New Politics* blog by my longtime fellow *NP* editorial board member and friend Barry Finger.[1] In my own blog, I argued that Barry had a better, more sophisticated understanding of the peculiarities of the Democratic Party and the U.S. electoral system than do many on the radical left who refuse to support any Democratic candidate regardless of that candidate's personal political platform. However, I also made clear that I believed that Barry still suffered from certain misunderstandings regarding just how different American political parties are from parties that exist anywhere else in the world, and this meant there were defects in his suggestions as to how left-wing socialists should relate to the Sanders campaign. Other defects still characterize the arguments of those who claim that to support Sanders, however critically, is to support a candidate of a party of capital. While invoking my debate with Barry, I'll touch upon those other arguments and their problems and explain why I think that critical support for the Sanders campaign is a necessity if we're to build a much larger socialist movement and how the campaign may lay the basis for an independent party of the left.

The Non-Party Party

Barry writes:

> The totality with which socialists have traditionally viewed the Democratic Party has been this. The agenda of the Democratic Party is determined by its corporate financiers. It is they who keep the party competitive, who write and prioritize legislation and it is they who provide lucrative post-electoral revolving door employment opportunities for faithful party standard bearers. The two parties provide a full spectrum career subculture, designed to

Jason Schulman *is on the editorial board of* New Politics *and the editor of* Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Legacy *(Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). His newest book is* Neoliberal Labour Governments and the Union Response: The Politics of the End of Labourism *(Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).*

> incentivize, entice and indoctrinate candidates and office holders to ruling class perspectives. Its base, organized as voting blocks, has no membership privileges.
>
> Indeed, the two parties are not private, voluntary organizations sustained by membership fees, but political utilities of the ruling class, which, like other public utilities, are internally regulated by the state and protected from outside competition by upstart third parties through a dense network of legal encumbrances to market entry. Because the Democratic Party is sustained and disciplined by the mobilization of outside capitalist wealth, the voting blocks aligned to the Democrats cannot compete for influence on this terrain. Their power is limited primarily to the threat of abstention from electoral participation.[2]

Much of this is true. Regardless of their origins, today the Democratic Party and Republican Party are not real, "European-style" political parties. They ceased to be so over the course of the twentieth century. The political machines with their party bosses that used to control who could run for office on which party label—particularly in the Democratic Party—are overwhelmingly a thing of the past. In the words of former *NP* editorial board member Arthur Lipow,

> Only in America is it true that direct membership participation in the parties does not exist except in the sense that individuals register their party preference with an official agency of the state or are habitual voters for one or another party. The parties themselves and the choice of candidates are strictly regulated by law in the states in which the individual parties exist. … As a party, control over its own candidates is virtually non-existent.[3]

That is to say, both the Republicans and Democrats (and any "third" parties on the ballot in any state) exist as state-run ballot lines, not private voluntary associations that can control their own memberships or who runs on their ballots.

Barry and others have some understanding of this. But where their analysis goes awry is the conclusion that if you are running on the Democratic Party ballot line, you yourself are *necessarily* being "sustained and disciplined by the mobilization of outside capitalist wealth." Were this true, it's unlikely that Bernie Sanders—with his rather radical platform and his steadfast refusal to take any money from "the billionaire class" to fund his campaign—would be able to run for president in the Democratic presidential primary in the first place. Michael Hirsch, another *NP* editorial board member, was not wrong to write, "The Democratic Party is barely a party; it's a series of shifting coalitions in 50 state organizations and some 3,000 U.S. counties. In many states, the center-right controls it. In city and county politics, real estate and banking interests dominate the local councils. But that doesn't make it a corporate party."[4] Why not? Because its leaders at either the national or local level have no control over who runs on the Democratic Party ballot line. Each candidate runs on their own specific political platform (the official Democratic Party platform is an irrelevancy that no one reads). And party leaders find it all but impossible to ensure that all elected Democrats will vote in legislatures the way that they're "supposed to." Hence, different Democrats will vote in different ways—with no fear that they'll be kicked out of the Democratic Party for disloyalty. There exists no legal basis by which they can be kicked out, unlike in parliamentary systems with real, private-association political parties. Dissidents can get kicked out of Democratic Party or Republican Party clubs, of course—but as those have no real power over what the elected officials do, they don't really count.

Obviously, those Democrats who do rely on "outside capitalist wealth" have an advantage over those who do not—just as in our single-member-district, winner-take-all electoral system, those who run for office as Democrats or Republicans have an advantage over those who do not. (In nonpartisan races this advantage is greatly diminished; this helps to explain why an

open socialist like Kshama Sawant, taking no corporate cash and winning support from local unions, was able to win a seat on the Seattle City Council.) And it is true, unfortunately, that at the national level even the most left-wing Democrats do take some corporate political action committee (PAC) money. For example, a cursory glance at opensecrets.org reveals that the top three contributors to Rep. Keith Ellison for 2013-2014 were TCF Financial, General Mills, and Masimo Corp.; for Rep. John Conyers, DISH Network, Avenue Ventures, and Sony; for Rep. Barbara Lee, a union, the IBEW, but also the San Francisco Regional Center and Gallo Winery.

Of course, *proportionally* Ellison, Conyers, Lee, and other progressive Democrats take more PAC cash from labor than from capital. But why do these elected officials accept corporate PAC money at all? It's not because as Democrats they're required to do so, but because of the horrendous U.S. campaign finance system. If one hopes to win a major House (let alone Senate) race against an opponent with much more money to spend, and who gets 95 percent of his or her funding from business PACs, then it's almost inevitable (except in Bernie Sanders' Vermont, it seems) that one will take some amount of corporate PAC money—albeit much less than the truly pro-business candidate. Further, the bulk of business PAC contributions will come from those who are ultimately unable to press the leftmost Democrats to vote the wrong way on important legislation. Money may buy *access* but not always *influence* in regards to votes. This is what explains why the leftmost Democrats are able to vote the right way most of the time. (On Israel/Palestine, matters are often different—but Sanders himself, as many of his leftist critics have noted, is also rather imperfect on this issue.) As long as the current rotten system of private financing continues—and as long as the labor movement remains a shadow of its former self—one will find few progressive politicians, at least at the national level, who take no money at all from corporate PACs. Will those campaign contributions that one needs to win be a heavy influence on one's voting record? The evidence suggests that if one has a diversified contribution base and receives one-third or more of one's money from labor and progressive ideological groups, then one will most likely be able to vote from the left without serious problems. (It's worth noting that business PACs are incredibly dispersed, as no PAC can give more than $10,000 to any one candidate.)

Given these circumstances—parties that are not really parties and an oligarchical system of campaign financing—I do not consider supporting the leftmost Democrats to be a betrayal of class-struggle politics, or to be the equivalent of supporting (say) the Canadian Liberals. There are, of course, Democrats who obviously represent the ruling class, like Barack Obama and his dominant wing of the Democratic Party, and also there are Democrats who, however very imperfectly, represent the working class. I see nothing class-collaborationist in opposing the former and critically supporting the latter. Yes, ruling-class politicians *usually* win Democratic primaries simply because they raise more campaign funds, have name recognition, are incumbents, and so on—but not always. (Only the Democratic Party fundraising committees are pure shills for corporate America, and left-liberals and radicals running as Democrats aren't *required* to take any money from those committees.) So when genuine left-liberals or radical leftists win office on the Democratic Party ballot line, as has happened and will continue to happen in various parts of the country, the Democratic Party is *not* simply a "political utility of the ruling class." It *would be* if the neoliberal, bourgeois leadership of the Democratic Party could impose parliamentary discipline on all elected Democrats, but there really is very little that it can do beyond removing dissidents from congressional committees.

Does this mean that it's likely that the Democratic Party will be taken over by pro-

gressives, that the "realignment" sought by the late Michael Harrington is near? No. But the primary reason for this, aside from the fact that it's rather hard to democratically control a state-run ballot line, is the same reason why an independent labor party, which left-wing socialists have advocated for years, is not forthcoming any time soon. Organized labor is simply too weak and, due to the AFL-CIO's lack of control over its affiliated unions' political choices, too diffuse. I agree with most American socialists that a labor party based on the unions should have been formed at least by 1948, when 35 percent of the U.S. workforce was unionized and the United Auto Workers in particular was a real power in the country. But Walter Reuther didn't do what we wanted him to do, and today we are unfortunately where we are. I was active in Labor Party Advocates and then the Labor Party in two states in the 1990s; I really wanted it to take off and become politically important. It didn't. Nor is it likely that the Green Party, which has existed in one form or another since the 1980s, will ever displace the Democrats. As former Labor Party national organizer Mark Dudzic has said, "If you can't even put out enough poll watchers to cover every precinct in an election campaign, and you can't call on a substantial portion of the labor movement to come out and support your candidate, you're not building anything, and there'll be little that remains afterwards."[5] I've voted for Greens many times in my life but eventually one tires of voting for protest candidates.

Pushing Political Discourse to the Left

This brings us back, finally, to Bernie Sanders. Whatever the flaws in some of his political positions, his running as a candidate in the Democratic presidential primary has led millions of people, even in the corporate media, to talk about "democratic socialism" and "political revolution." His interpretation of those terms may be far more moderate than that of *NP* writers, but he is pushing political discourse in the U.S. significantly to the left, and in a country where "socialist" has long been a swear word in mainstream politics, this is no small feat. His campaign is providing an opening for U.S. socialists that hasn't existed in decades, and he's made it clear that it won't be possible to win the radical reforms that he (and we) want without an ongoing mass movement that will outlast his campaign. Yes, we must, as Barry says, "hold Sanders' feet to the flames if he wavers or weakens his stance against the Party establishment." But to do this *effectively* we have to *actively support him*, not abstain and only offer criticism, however constructive, from the outside. Both the "critical" and "support" in "critical support" are very important in this case. Support of Sanders is the only way to get the thousands of working-class people already involved in Sanders' campaign—most of whom know nothing of Marxism or the organized socialist left—to take us seriously. Criticism of Sanders' shortcomings will fall on deaf ears if we do not work with such people in an honest effort to get Sanders elected president.

And Sanders would not be winning over millions of Americans if he had not decided to run for president as a Democrat. He would not have been able to introduce himself to millions who knew little or nothing of him via the Democratic presidential candidates' debates. The mainstream media would have simply ignored him, and so would have virtually everyone else in the country, had he run as an independent or as a Green. As the late Julius Jacobson, founding co-editor of *NP* and a genuinely revolutionary democratic socialist, said of Jesse Jackson's run for president as a Democrat in 1988, "To take advantage of the facilities offered by a Democratic Party primary involves no necessary compromise of socialist principles" provided that it is being used "as a vehicle for propagandizing a position with an eye on building a movement outside the Democratic Party."[6] Jackson failed to do this, but this describes precisely what Sanders *is* doing, which is commendable.

Furthermore, contrary to the "Bernie Sanders as sheepdog for Hillary Clinton" argument made by various far-leftists, at the moment there's hardly anyone at all to "sheepdog," not even a quasi-mass movement for a left-wing third party. If there was, my judgement of Sanders running in a Democratic primary would be quite different. I do acknowledge that Ted Kennedy in 1980, Jesse Jackson in 1984 and 1988, Dennis Kucinich in 2004, and John Edwards in 2008 all ended up endorsing the candidate of the ruling class in their respective Democratic presidential primaries once they lost. And they *should not have done so*. But it's important to realize that they did not *have* to do so but *chose* to do so. Most have forgotten, but Jerry Brown did *not* endorse Bill Clinton in 1992. More recently, on the Republican side, look at Ron Paul. He very openly *did not* support John McCain in 2008 or Mitt Romney in 2012; he supported minor right-wing party presidential candidates. And yet he remained in office as a Republican. Look at the Seattle Democratic elected officials that have endorsed Kshama Sawant's re-election campaign. Such a thing is simply not possible anywhere else in the world—try to imagine Canadian Liberals endorsing New Democratic Party candidates for office!—and it further proves that our "parties" are not real parties because they lack party discipline, and that applying class-struggle principles to U.S. electoral politics is a far messier business than it is anywhere else in the world.

Yes, Sanders has already said he would endorse Hillary Clinton if he loses to her in the 2016 Democratic presidential primary. But Sanders, as explained above, can't be *forced* to do this. He's made a *choice*. Contrary to what some socialists believe, there are no actually enforceable Democratic Party rules that prohibit him in advance from "harming the Democratic Party." So, I think that socialists should pressure Sanders' campaign to "pull a Ron Paul"; at the very least he should *not* encourage his voters to support Clinton if he loses the presidential primary. If he refuses this request we should openly criticize him for it. But again, the only way we can effectively apply such pressure is if we are active in his presidential campaign. Pressure from the outside simply won't work. By all means, let's relentlessly attack Clinton and other "billionaire class Democrats" who dominate the Democratic Party line. One can do this just as easily as a registered Democrat as a registered Green or independent. No one can silence you, just like Fannie Lou Hamer couldn't be silenced as a civil rights and anti-Vietnam War activist of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, which in 1968 did become the official Democratic Party of Mississippi, despite being betrayed by Lyndon Johnson and those who supported him in 1964.

Barry argues that

> If the Sanders campaign is competently run, Hillary Clinton and the Democratic Party establishment will be confronting an incipient rank-and-file mutiny demanding the complete overhaul and repudiation of what the party currently stands for. An increasingly politically conscious grassroots movement motivated by a militant and credible anti-austerity message heralds the development in the foreseeable future of a "split" situation in the Democratic Party when these demands are blocked, watered down, frustrated or compromised with, as they invariably must.

This split may very well happen. Sanders campaign activists are quite aware of the problem of Democratic Party Superdelegates. To quote a recent email I received from People for Bernie, the Superdelegate system is "*one of many ways that the system is rigged to ensure corporate-friendly Democrats almost always get the presidential nomination.* And it's almost always longtime party insiders that cast votes as Superdelegates. In an ordinary election year, it's one of many ways that they disenfranchise people like us." This is why it's important that Rep. Raul Grijalva and Rep. Keith Ellison endorsed Sanders, and more pressure needs to be put on other Congressional Progressive Caucus Democrats

to do the same. Selection of Superdelegates in fact depends on state Democratic Party rules, and state Democratic parties are not immune to popular mobilization.

But let's assume the ruling-class Democratic Party Superdelegates turn out to be the sole barrier keeping Sanders from winning the Democratic presidential primary. Then it's entirely possible that People for Bernie and the mass movement supporting Sanders will make up the base of an independent left-wing party, sooner rather than later. But again, we need to be *in* the Sanders campaign to help make this happen, and, as *NP* writer and lifetime class-warrior-unionist Steve Early has said, we need to get as many unions as possible to support Sanders and not Clinton (either in the primary or the general election).[7] And we will need the leftmost elected Democrats—the ones who support social-democratic reform and primarily rely on union PAC money and the financial contributions of "ordinary" people—to "jump ship" to this new party, which requires critically supporting them as well. (I see this as no worse than voting for the social-democratic wing of a popular front, which revolutionaries certainly did in the past, and the Democratic Party today is more like a popular front unto itself than a genuine political party.)

Yes, this is a complicated process, and I wish Marxists could simply stand outside Democratic Party politics entirely and convince the toiling masses to "break with the elephant, break with the ass, build a party of the working class." But decades of revolutionary socialists doing precisely this has been no more successful than the attempt in the 1970s by the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee, a predecessor of today's Democratic Socialists of America, the only U.S. socialist group fully supporting the Sanders campaign, to realign the whole of the Democratic Party into a social-democratic party. The movement to elect Sanders represents the best opportunity to build a much larger socialist movement—and hopefully a split from the Democratic Party that results in an independent leftist party—that I've seen in my lifetime. To make that party a reality, ironically enough, means getting involved in a Democratic Party presidential campaign. Yes, most elected Democrats are ruling-class politicians; yes, the Democratic Party was once *the* party (a real party) of white supremacy in the United States; yes, it was the party of dropping nuclear bombs on Japan and of the Vietnam War. Therefore any involvement in Democratic Party primaries involves "dirty hands" to some extent. But, to paraphrase a French philosopher, "it is easy to have clean hands if you have no hands." Better dirty hands than none at all.

NOTES

1. Jason Schulman, "The Sanders Campaign and the Democratic 'Party,'" *New Politics* blog, May 27, 2015, newpol.org/content/sanders-campaign-and-democratic-"party".

2. Barry Finger, "Further Reflections on the Sanders Campaign," *New Politics* blog, May 26, 2015, newpol.org/content/further-reflections-sanders-campaign/.

3. Arthur Lipow, *Political Parties & Democracy: Explorations in History and Theory* (London: Pluto Press, 1996), 20-21.

4. Michael Hirsch, "Socialists, Democrats, and Political Action: It's the Movements That Matter," *New Politics* (Vol. XI, No. 2, Summer 2007), 119.

5. Mark Dudzic and Derek Seidman, "Whatever Happened to the Labor Party?" *Jacobin* blog, October 11, 2015, www.jacobinmag.com/2015/10/tony-mazzochi-mark-dudzic-us-labor-party-wto-nafta-globalization-democrats-union/.

6. Julius Jacobson, "The Duality of the Jackson Campaign," *New Politics* (Vol. II, no. 2, Summer 1988), 5-6.

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The Sanders Campaign and the Left

Lance Selfa and Ashley Smith

Senator Bernie Sanders' run for the Democratic Party nomination for president has certainly energized thousands. It has also rekindled an old debate on the American left that revolves around the question: Should the left join, endorse, support, or work for campaigns in the Democratic Party?

Socialists should have nothing but sympathy for the aspirations of those thousands who support Sanders for all the right reasons: his call for "political revolution" against the "billionaire class," his support for a single-payer health care system and a massive "green jobs" program, and for his refusal to run away from the "socialist" label. Sanders is helping to inject some idea of socialism into the mainstream political discussion, and socialists and other radicals should take advantage of that to raise the profile of socialism in the broad left, especially with those who are new to radical and socialist ideas.

If that was all that had to be said about Sanders' campaign, there wouldn't be much of a debate to be had. But the strategic discussion of the left's relationship to Sanders' campaign specifically, and to the Democratic Party in general, is much more contentious. Nor is it a peripheral or academic discussion. In fact, the left's relationship to the Democratic Party is arguably the main explanation for its failure to build a sustained mass political alternative representing, and projecting the politics of, an anti-capitalist left.

Some readers may wonder why it's important to discuss building a mass anti-capitalist left party. If Sanders can win the Democratic nomination on the platform on which he has campaigned so far, wouldn't that constitute a victory for the left? Why would the left need its own political vehicle? This perspective—call it an "optimistic" scenario—presumes that the Democratic Party will actually allow Sanders to win its nomination. Second, it assumes that the left can take over the Democratic Party and even transform it into an instrument to stand up for working people. We will argue that neither of these "optimistic" outcomes is likely. In fact, history shows that betting against these outcomes is about the closest approximation to a sure thing there is.

But to establish that assertion, we have to understand just what the Democratic Party is and what it is not. Since at least the time of the New Deal, when organized labor gained a solid institutional foothold in the Democratic Party, liberals and activists have proposed that popular forces or the left can democratically take over the Democratic Party. If the left could accomplish this, the argument went, it could transform the Democrats, one of the two big-business parties in the American political duopoly, into a vehicle for progressive social change. This was the core contention of the "realignment" thesis of the post-World War II era.[1]

The realignment thesis was premised on the idea that the social movement pressure of the labor movement and the civil rights movement would provoke a split in a party that, after

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all, incorporated both those forces and (at the time) the leaders of the Jim Crow South. Even under better circumstances for the left than exist today—back when a quarter to a third of U.S. workers were unionized and thousands engaged in mass action against Jim Crow—the Democratic Party remained a cross-class amalgamation of interests where labor and liberals consistently surrendered to business. Sanders' supporters today have a lot of enthusiasm and hope, but they have little of the social weight of the postwar labor and civil rights movements.

Only a Ballot Line?

Some on the left reject characterizing the Democrats as a party of capital. For example, Jason Schulman argues that the Democratic and Republican parties have now become "state-run ballot lines, whose 'membership' consists of registered voters rather than dues-payers. It is the state, not the party, which controls who can register as a Democrat or a Republican."[2] Given that, he and others contend that the Democratic Party can be taken over by progressive candidates and voters.

This claim does not stand up to the test of facts. It's true that the Democratic Party machine no longer exists as it once did and that it does not have "members," but only registered voters. But these developments do not weaken capital's hold on the party. They have actually strengthened it.

The party is now more dependent on capitalists because elections have become big business. The Center for Responsive Politics reports that nearly $6.3 billion was spent on the 2012 federal election: $3.7 billion for the Congress, and a whopping $2.6 billion on the presidential race.[3] By bankrolling campaigns, the capitalists control the Democratic Party and its candidates. The ones they back have an overwhelming advantage over those they don't.

Capitalists have also set up institutions to shape the party program. They fund think tanks that generate policy positions for candidates to advocate. They also possess an army of lobbyists that encircles politicians, dangling promises of cash support in elections if the politician turns their proposals into laws.

If anything, the capitalists are using the Democrats to advance their agenda more now than ever before. In fact, some conservatives are actually frustrated with how business and the rich have divided their investment between the Republicans and the Democrats. *Forbes*' Steven Hayward complains, "Of the ten richest zip codes in the U.S., eight gave more money to the Democrats than Republicans in the last two presidential elections."[4]

This is one reason why the election season is so interminable. Not only does it have to run through a series of state-based primaries, but wealthy individuals and companies can sustain the process as a virtual auction in which candidates bid for their support as much as—and probably far more than—the support of voters. Meanwhile, a whole industry of political consultants, pollsters, data-mining experts, "get out the vote" organizations, and the media thrive off the financial arms race that modern elections have become.

The corporate political parties exist at the confluence of all of these multiple tributaries of corporate and individual—typically derived from corporate—wealth. They still perform the function of officially nominating candidates, providing the label under which they run and an easy identification for voters to use when they choose. But before they get the party stamp of approval, candidates have already won the "money primary," signifying that corporate America has signed off on them. Voters don't determine party behavior—of either capitalist party. Instead, as Thomas Ferguson argues in *Golden Rule*, "parties are more accurately analyzed as blocs of major investors who coalesce to advance candidates representing their interests."[5]

Nor is it the case that "the party" is irrelevant to the process of deciding the Demo-

cratic presidential nominee. As political scientist Marty Cohen and his colleagues wrote about the "invisible primary," "[P]arties remain major players in presidential nominations. They scrutinize and winnow the field before voters get involved, attempt to build coalitions behind a single preferred candidate, and sway voters to ratify their choice. In the past quarter century, the Democratic and Republican parties have always influenced and often controlled the choice of their presidential nominees."[6]

In Democratic politics, where corporate money outspends money from labor and liberals by many orders of magnitude,[7] the fix is usually in from the start. The preferred corporate-friendly candidate usually comes into the nominating convention with the requisite number of delegates locked up. But if that isn't the case, the Democrats have provided a failsafe—the votes of "superdelegates," Democratic elites (elected officials, Democratic National Committee members, former presidents, and the like) who can assure that the preferred elite candidate wins.

The superdelegates, who in 2016 will account for 714 of the 4,483 delegates at the Democratic convention, will have a decisive role in picking the Democratic nominee.[8] If they vote in bloc, or close to it, they would account for about a third of the delegates needed to win the nomination. As of this writing (October, 2015), mainstream neoliberal candidate Hillary Clinton claimed the commitments of more than 400 superdelegates, compared to three committed to Sanders.[9]

Those who think that Sanders' impressive turnouts at rallies or popular policy positions will sway the superdelegates to his side are missing the point that, in the world of superdelegates, pleasing big donors, career advancement, lucrative contracts, and post-political-career sinecures count for much more that doing right by the people.

If their manipulation of funding and ballot-line restrictions doesn't work, corporations and their Democratic Party lackeys can always withdraw support from a rebel candidate, preferring that the rebel goes down to defeat rather than use the party to advance an anti-corporate agenda. The classic example of this is the Democrats' all-out war against Upton Sinclair, the long-time socialist writer who won the party's nomination for governor of California in 1934 with a progressive platform and the slogan "End Poverty in California." The Democratic establishment, from President Franklin Roosevelt on down, funded a red-baiting scare campaign against Sinclair, created a fake third party to siphon votes from him, and ultimately guaranteed reelection for Republican Frank Merriam.[10]

A Strategic Dead End

Some have caricatured those on the left who do not support Sanders' campaign as purists who are subjecting him to a litmus test.[11] Marxists don't, however, frame our position toward Sanders based on every point of his platform, though the platform is important. Actually, Sanders advocates many demands for reforms that we support. Who could disagree with his proposal to impose a Robin Hood tax on Wall Street transactions to pay for free public higher education? Similarly, everyone on the left should endorse his bill to break up the big banks and his plan for a federal green jobs program to rebuild the United States' decaying infrastructure. And of course it's to the benefit of socialists that a mainstream political figure is trumpeting socialism in the media.

There are many positions Sanders takes—from his near total support of Israel against the rights of Palestinians, to his China-bashing and his failure to champion the rights of immigrants, his support for higher military spending, and his reluctance to speak out on non-class social issues—that the left should roundly criticize. But the main problem with Sanders' campaign is his decision to run inside the Democratic Party rather than as an independent or third-party candidate. The Democratic Party is not a

labor party or people's party. It is what Richard Nixon's former adviser Kevin Phillips has called it, "history's second most enthusiastic capitalist party," bankrolled and controlled by big business.[12]

The Democratic Party is not the same as the Republican Party, which has traditionally been the "A Team" of American capitalism. The Democrats with their liberal wing play a different role. When the Republicans' brazen capitalist rule loses popular support, capital turns to the Democrats as its "B Team" to come off the bench, coopt the left, and prevent it from building a third party that would pose a challenge to the system.

Once in office, the Democrats obey the dictates of their capitalist paymasters, not of their popular voting base. If lightning struck and Sanders was elected president, he would face a Congress stuffed with both parties' corporate lackeys who oppose all the good things Sanders stands for and only support his mainstream positions like support for Israel, China bashing, immigration controls, and the continuation of Obama's drone war. At best he could get little done. At worst, he would only do the things that the establishment approves of, thereby betraying his supporters. He would remain a prisoner of the two-party system.

And because the left and social movements suffer from the illusion that the Democrats are "our friends," they can get away with policies that would provoke protest if a Republican attempted them. The Democrats have launched some of the worst neoliberal attacks on workers and the poor, like Bill Clinton's destruction of welfare.[13] And, despite their mythical status as a peace party, the Democrats initiated most of America's imperialist wars, from World War I through Vietnam to Obama's war on Libya.[14]

In entering the Democratic Party, Sanders is violating the cardinal principle of his hero, the Socialist Party leader Eugene Debs, who advocated for working class independence from the two capitalist parties: "[The Democrats and Republicans] are pledged to the same system and . . . whether the one or the other succeeds, [the worker] will still remain the wage-working slave he is today." Even in cases where the two parties differ, such as on the issue of abortion rights, the Democrats rarely go beyond rhetorical opposition to the Republican attacks. More often than not, they meet the GOP half way. One recent example came during the legislative sausage-making that produced the Affordable Care Act (ACA, also known as Obamacare). Liberal House Speaker Nancy Pelosi pressured members of her caucus to pass the ACA even after conservative *Democratic* Representative Bart Stupak (D-Mich.) and Republicans inserted language barring government subsidies for health insurance to pay for abortion services. This came after Pelosi had pressured supporters of single-payer health care to withdraw their proposal—on the grounds that it would open the door to other amendments, including those barring abortion![15]

This example illustrates the "lesser evil" conundrum in which the Democratic Party traps the left. Even though most progressives (including Sanders) support single-payer health care, they surrendered to the argument that Obamacare was "better than nothing." They went even further, concluding that Obamacare with restrictions on abortion was acceptable, too. Here is yet another reason why building a mass independent party on the left is so important. It would help to shift the political terrain and widen the political spectrum. Our side wouldn't constantly face the electoral choice between bad (the Democrats) and terrible (the Republicans).

Although a self-declared independent, Sanders has been "basically a liberal Democrat" through most of his years in Congress, as his old nemesis, former Vermont Governor Howard Dean, once said.[16] Sanders has chosen to campaign inside the party that has proved to be opposed to the "democratic socialist" positions he supports.

Keeping Hope Alive in the Democrats

While there certainly are real disagreements between the mainstream neoliberals and more traditional liberals of the Democratic Party, that doesn't mean there's a fundamental divide within the party. Indeed, the rise of "the new new left" of progressive Democrats celebrated a couple years ago has turned out to be more of a mirage.[17]

But even if we set aside the weaknesses of the party's liberal figures and accept the characterization of a two-winged Democratic Party, no one could deny—least of all readers of *New Politics*—that the tensions are a far cry from a couple generations ago, when the Democrats were much more fundamentally rent by the two burning questions of the 1960s and 1970s: civil rights and the Vietnam War.

Then, the pig-headedness of the barons of the Democratic Party in 1968, who imposed the pro-war liberal Hubert Humphrey on the party whose voters had largely come to oppose the war—helped create a generation of activists who spoke of "new politics" and radical change. But—and we should keep this in mind when we hear about the potential for a Sanders campaign to create an independent force for change—it's likely that many thousands more people moved from the Senator Eugene McCarthy campaign into the Democratic Party than into radical politics.

That's because leaders of the Democrats realized that they had to adapt to the political climate by opening up the Democratic nominating convention to young people, women, and people of color. The results proved very effective for Senator George McGovern, who locked up most of the votes he needed to win the presidential nomination before the 1972 convention. The outward appearance of his coalition of supporters—young, multiracial, anti-war, even "hip"—made it seem as if the "left" really had a chance to take over the Democratic Party. In reality, McGovern had the backing of a segment of business executives who had decided that the United States should end its war in Vietnam. McGovern's campaign pursued a conscious strategy of "co-opting the left," in the words of McGovern campaign manager Gary Hart, by recruiting anti-war activists to participate.[18]

But the bulk of U.S. business, and the George Meany-run AFL-CIO, weren't willing to follow the McGovern backers. These sections of the Democratic establishment largely abandoned McGovern and contributed to his landslide defeat in 1972 by incumbent Richard Nixon.

Even so, the McGovern campaign proved to be a watershed for the regeneration of the *neoliberal* Democratic Party over the next generation. Gary Hart went on to become a senator and future presidential candidate himself. Bill Clinton and his future wife, Hillary Rodham, managed McGovern's campaign in Texas. Sections of the National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC), formed in 1971 by prominent feminists such as Gloria Steinem and Betty Friedan to push for passage of the Equal Rights Amendment and abortion rights, became key McGovern supporters.

Also in 1972, more than 8,000 Black activists participated in a National Black Political Convention in Gary, Indiana, to consider a Black political agenda that would include independence from the two corporate parties. But the Reverend Jesse Jackson, who played a key role in opposing a break from the two-party system at that convention, joined up with McGovern's 1972 Democratic presidential campaign afterward.

1972 may have marked Jackson's most prominent initial foray into Democratic Party politics, but his presidential runs in the 1980s are the most important to consider as historical precedents for Bernie Sanders' campaign today. In fact, it might be plausibly argued that Jackson's runs had a more left or movement character than Sanders' today. Jackson was a figure from the civil rights movement. Sanders is a sitting

member of one of the United States' most elite clubs, the U.S. Senate, where, though formally an independent, he hasn't used his position to proclaim the need and build support for a new progressive party in this country.

Jackson's National Rainbow Coalition's (NRC) founding document called the NRC a "political movement." Plus, Rainbow supporters argued, activists could use Jackson's rhetoric and his access to the media to build grassroots struggles, like the movement in solidarity with the struggle against apartheid in South Africa.

The 1984 Jackson campaign won about 21 percent of the votes in the Democratic primaries, including outright victories in several key Southern states. Nevertheless, the party's rules limited Jackson's showing at the convention to only 11 percent of delegates. With an overwhelming advantage achieved well before the convention, former Vice President Walter Mondale won an endorsement from Jackson without conceding anything. Mondale dismissed all of the Rainbow Coalition's platform proposals—which, in fact, included only two of the seven proposals comprising a minimum Black political agenda, according to two Jackson advisers quoted by political scientist Adolph Reed, Jr.[19]

While many on the left at the time viewed the Rainbow as providing a mass base for an independent break from the Democrats, this was a highly unlikely proposition, no matter how disdainfully the party treated Jackson and the NRC. As Jackson explained at the 1986 conference that transformed Jackson's campaign into an ongoing organization, "We have too much invested in the Democratic Party. When you have money in the bank you don't walk away from it."[20]

After giving the party establishment a little discomfort in 1984, the 1988 Jackson campaign focused on a mainstream strategy based on gaining the support of the Black Democratic establishment. Jackson appointed Black California Assembly Speaker Willie Brown, one of the most powerful politicians in California, to be chairman of his campaign. With experienced Democratic hands in charge of the campaign, it was more difficult than ever to distinguish Jackson's "movement" from any other mainstream Democratic campaign. Nevertheless, the end result in 1988 was the same as in 1984, with Jackson delivering his supporters to the dull neoliberal, Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis.

Activists who gave so much energy to nominate Jesse Jackson then went on to vote for the conservative ticket that Jackson endorsed—a stark illustration of the ultimate problem with the Rainbow Coalition strategy. From the start, the NRC only succeeded in binding activists to the big-business interests that really control the Democratic Party. A whole generation of the 1960s and 1970s revolutionary left, especially the "new communist movement," crossed the Rainbow into the Democratic Party.[21]

Bernie and Hillary

While many people today might consider this 30- and 50-year-old history to have little relevance, it's worth noting that much of what is being said on the left today about Bernie Sanders' presidential campaign was said about Jackson's campaigns in the 1980s. For those who would like a more contemporary example, consider how the 2000s campaigns of former Ohio Representative Dennis Kucinich ended up disappointing their left and anti-war supporters.

Both Jackson and Kucinich ultimately delivered supporters to the more conservative Democrats against whom they had mounted their challenges in the first place. They did this so effectively and seamlessly that it must be said their campaigns aimed to do this from the start. Solidarizing with people who invest their hopes in Sanders should not prevent the left from speaking clearly about these realities.

Candidates like Jackson or Kucinich occasionally flirted with the rhetoric of breaking with the Democrats, but their clear commitment in

practice was to bring people disenchanted with the party back into the Democratic orbit. And meanwhile, Sanders, for his part, won't even use the rhetoric—he has ruled out running outside the Democratic Party. "No matter what I do, I will not be a spoiler," Sanders has said. "I will not play that role in helping to elect some right-wing Republican as President of the United States."[22] History teaches us that the real impact of these inside-outside challenges was to, in the words of Jesse Jackson, "keep hope alive" in the Democratic Party.

Anyone who watched the first Democratic candidate debate on October 13, 2015, will know that Sanders hardly criticized Hillary Clinton at all. His most noteworthy moment occurred when he came to Clinton's defense over the Beltway pseudo-scandal of Clinton's email server. As Truthdig's Robert Scheer put it,

> Bernie blew it. By embracing rather than confronting Hillary Clinton, Senator Sanders fell into the trap of sellout mainstream politics, improving his personal brand as an appealing but ultimately non-threatening advocate for the downtrodden while studiously avoiding any suggestion that the smiley-faced woman standing next to him is deeply complicit in Wall Street's rape of the nation.

Even Sanders' applause line about Clinton's "damn emails" undercut another of his appeals against Clinton:

> Sanders remains proud of his opposition to the Patriot Act—still supported by Clinton—which authorized mass surveillance by the National Security Agency. So why didn't he point out the hypocrisy of a Cabinet member not trusting the government with her personal emails but feeling perfectly fine about the most intimate private data of the rest of us being subject to a vast and secret system of government spying?[23]

By refusing to confront Clinton, Sanders seems content with a strong run for second place, cementing his role "to warm up the crowd for Hillary" in the memorable phrase of *Black Agenda Report*'s Bruce Dixon.[24]

Let's be clear about the political climate that will be facing the left in November 2016. Barring a miracle, Sanders will not be the nominee of the Democratic Party. Hillary Clinton or some other corporate-friendly neoliberal will be and will most likely be locked in a very close race with a reactionary Republican. And liberals and progressives—led most likely by Sanders and Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren—will be warning us of the myriad disasters that will befall the working class, the elderly, women, people of color, and the poor if we don't get behind Hillary and the Democrats. You can bet that leading social movement figures, possibly including people identified today with Black Lives Matter and climate justice advocacy, will be exhorting (or browbeating) their supporters to get behind the Democrats, too. Of course there's no denying that the Republicans will try to implement vicious reactionary policies if elected, and these attempts must be resisted. But what should have become clear by now is that the Democratic Party, with its neoliberal policies, has helped to create the breeding ground for the right to take advantage of popular discontent.

For those who want to build a stronger left in the United States, there is no substitute for the work—however slow and painstaking it might be—of building a genuine political alternative. In 2016, that will likely mean supporting Jill Stein on the Green Party ticket. Even beyond 2016, we should dedicate ourselves to build a genuine left party independent of the twin parties of capitalism. Such a party could play a decisive role in reversing American capitalism's agenda of austerity and empire. We are not now in a position to create such a party, but *we will never be in that position* if we allow ourselves every four years to be lured by the tinsel of left rhetoric waved in our faces by progressives whose purpose is to sweep up radicals back into the Democratic Party fold.

NOTES

1. See Eric Chester, *Socialists and the Ballot Box* (Praeger, 1985), 131–47, for an account of the realignment perspective.

2. Jason Schulman, "The Sanders Campaign and the Democratic Party," *New Politics*, May 27, 2015, newpol.org/content/sanders-campaign-and-democratic-"party".

3. Center for Responsive Politics, "The Money Behind the Elections," www.opensecrets.org/bigpicture/.

4. Steven Hayward, "How Did the Democrats Become the Party of the Rich," *Forbes*, January 8, 2014, www.forbes.com/sites/stevenhayward/2014/01/08/how-did-the-democrats-become-the-party-of-the-rich/.

5. Thomas Ferguson, *The Golden Rule: The Investment Theory of Party Competition and the Logic of Money-Driven Political Systems* (University of Chicago Press, 1995), 27.

6. Marty Cohen, David Karol, et al., *The Party Decides: Presidential Nominations Before and After Reform* (University of Chicago Press, 2008), 3.

7. According to tabulations from the Center for Responsive Politics, labor unions donated $618,000 to President Obama's 2012 reelection effort, compared to $21 million from the finance, insurance, and real estate sector, and $19 million from the health sector. No doubt this tabulation vastly understates labor's contribution, much of which is "in-kind" (phone-banking, door-knocking, etc.), but it does give an idea of the huge gulf between labor and business money going to the Democrats. Even if the totals obtained from labor and liberal ideological groups are combined, they still accounted for only about 8 percent of Obama's total haul, for funds that CPR could assign to an industry or sector. See www.opensecrets.org/pres12/.

8. See the superdelegate tally in the Green Papers at www.thegreenpapers.com/P16/D-Alloc.phtml#Alph.

9. As of late August, 2015, the Clinton camp claimed the public support of 130 superdelegates and the private commitment of 440 superdelegates. See Mark Halperin and Jennifer Epstein, "Clinton Camp Says One-Fifth of Delegates Secured for Nomination," *Bloomberg Business Week*, August 28, 2015, at www.bloomberg.com/politics/articles/2015-08-28/clinton-camp-saying-it-already-secured-one-fifth-the-delegates-needed-for-nomination. According to published reports, as of October 2015, Sanders has the commitment of at least three superdelegates: a DNC member from Maine, and Progressive Caucus Reps. Raul Grijalva (Ariz.) and Keith Ellison (Minn.).

10. Lance Selfa, *The Democrats: A Critical History* (Haymarket Books, 2012), 210-211.

11. For an example see Jacob Swenson-Lengyel, "Why Radicals Like Bernie Sanders Should Run as Democrats, Not Independents," *In These Times*, May 13, 2015, available at inthesetimes.com/article/17948/bernie_sanders_democrats.

12. Kevin Phillips, "Reagan's America: A Capital Offense," *The New York Times Magazine*, June 7, 1990.

13. Selfa, *The Democrats,* 63-85.

14. Selfa, *The Democrats*, 166-198.

15. Eugene V. Debs, "Outlook for Socialism in the United States," *International Socialist Review*, September 1900, www.marxists.org/archive/debs/works/1900/outlook.htm.

16. Dean made this statement on NBC's *Meet the Press* on May 22, 2005.

17. Lance Selfa, "The left Democrat mirage," *Socialist Worker*, October 1, 2014, socialistworker.org/2014/10/01/the-left-democrat-mirage.

18. See Thomas Ferguson and Joel Rodgers, *Right Turn: The Decline of the Democrats and the Future of American Politics* (Hill & Wang, 1986), 31, 37 on the McGovern campaign.

19. Adolph L. Reed, Jr., *The Jesse Jackson Phenomenon: The Crisis of Purpose in Afro-American Politics* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1986), 14–15.

20. *Guardian* [US], April 30, 1986, 15.

21. Max Elbaum's *Revolution in The Air* (Verso, 2006) tells this story.

22. Connor Jones, "If Bernie Sanders Runs for President, It Won't Be as an Independent: 'I will not be a Spoiler'," *In These Times*, January 16, 2015.

23. Robert Scheer, "Bernie Blew It: He Sold Out Instead of Confronting Clinton," *Truthdig*, October 16, 2015, at www.truthdig.com/report/item/bernie_blew_it_he_sold_out_instead_of_confronting_clinton_20151016. In the debate, Sanders agreed with Clinton that an NSA whistleblower should suffer legal consequences: "He did—he did break the law, and I think there should be a penalty to that. But I think what he did in educating us should be taken into consideration before he is …" From the *New York Times*' transcript of the debate at www.nytimes.com/2015/10/14/us/politics/democratic-debate-transcript.html?_r=0.

24. Bruce Dixon, "Presidential Candidate Bernie Sanders, Sheepdogging for Hillary and the Democrats in 2016," *Black Agenda Report*, June 6, 2015.

SYMPOSIUM ON INEQUALITY
INTRODUCTION

INEQUALITY HAS BECOME a defining issue of our time, with political commentators of all stripes discussing its causes, effects, and possible solutions. Thomas Piketty's 2013 work, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, set off a chain reaction of books, journal articles, conferences, and debates focusing on questions of inequality. We intend to push this critique further.

As socialists, we believe that inequality is caused by, and integral to the maintenance of, the capitalist system and its most recent manifestation, the neoliberal globalized economy. *New Politics* presents here a symposium that seeks to reclaim the debate, showing where analyses of inequality are lacking and then presenting an alternative, socialist view.

The symposium opens with a conversation with Saskia Sassen, whose new work *Expulsions* seeks to uncover and articulate the systemic logic that drives the development of the current stage of global capitalism. At the heart of our conversation is a discussion of how the development of capitalism in the twenty-first century finds its roots in the decay of the forms of production that characterized capitalism in the Global North during the twentieth century. The new logics of capital accumulation not only continue to create unequal societies, but also intensify the discarding of people that are deemed unnecessary while expanding the expropriation of the resources it requires.

Michael Thompson's piece, "The Rise of the Servant Society," provides a theoretical background to our symposium. In it, he argues that growing economic inequality gives rise to particular and unique forms of power and domination, both social and psychological. The birth of a new economy based on service creates with it a form of precarious labor that is socialized into obedience. This critique then forms the basis for a call to action.

The next two contributions, written by members of the Hampton Institute (a new "think-tank for the working-class"), reveal mechanisms by which capitalism enforces domination and inequality. We are pleased to be furthering our collaboration with the Hampton Institute, a group forged in the memory of Antonio Gramsci and Fred Hampton. The first of these articles, by Colin Jenkins and Cherise Charleswell, illuminates the role of debt in producing a form of twenty-first century serfdom. The next, by Sean Posey, analyzes the growing problem of the unaffordability, and racial re-segregation, of housing while also analyzing the ways in which that inequality is both economic and spatial.

Two of our book reviews are also part of the symposium. *New Politics* board member Riad Azar reviews sociologist Robert Putnam's latest work, *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis.* Azar pushes Putnam's analysis to focus on the ways in which the richest 0.01 percent have been reshaping the economy to their benefit. And London-based activist Tom Peters reviews Lisa Mckenzie's *Getting By*, an ethnography of a UK public housing project in an age of austerity. Both reviews reveal how social reproduction structures class formation and resistance to it.

We hope this symposium helps to clarify the problem of inequality and suggest how it might be challenged.

RIAD AZAR and SAULO COLÓN

The Systemic Edge

An Interview with Saskia Sassen

Riad Azar and Saulo Colón

SASKIA SASSEN is the Robert S. Lynd Professor of Sociology at Columbia University (www.saskiasassen.com). She was interviewed for *New Politics* by editors Riad Azar and Saulo Colón about her new book, *Expulsions: When Complexity Produces Elementary Brutalities* (Harvard University Press, 2014).

New Politics: In your new book Expulsions*, you talk about a "new logic of expulsions." You claim "expulsion" is a new logic, yet state that the relationship between this advanced form of capitalism and traditional capitalism is similar to the one between capitalism and feudalism. Does "expulsion" operate the same way that "enclosures" did in the development of capitalism? Or in the way "extractivism" works currently in Latin America? What is the significance behind the spatial connotation of the term "to expel"?*

Saskia Sassen: The point of inquiry in this book is the systemic edge. The key dynamic at this edge is expulsion from the diverse systems in play—economic, social, biospheric. This edge is foundationally different from the geographic border in the interstate system. The focus on the edge comes from one of the core hypotheses organizing this book: that the move from Keynesianism to the global era of privatizations, deregulation, and open borders for some, entailed a switch from dynamics that brought people in to dynamics that push people out. Whether such a switch from incorporation to expulsion might also be emerging in China and India requires expertise I lack; China, especially, has seen a massive incorporation of people into monetized economies, but now many of these are among the growing masses of "monetized" poor! China is also experiencing sharpening inequality and new forms of economic concentration at the top, not to mention corporate bullying.

Each major domain has its own distinctive systemic edge—this edge is constituted differently for the economy than it is for the biosphere. One of the organizing assumptions in this book is that the systemic edge is the site where general conditions take extreme forms precisely because it is the site for expulsion. Further, the extreme character of conditions at the edge helps us detect more encompassing trends that are less extreme and hence more difficult to capture. I conceive of these larger trends as conceptually subterranean because we cannot easily make them visible through our current categories of meaning—thus, from there also the importance of positioning my inquiry at the systemic edge.

Today, I see new systemic logics arising from the decaying political economy of the twentieth century ... and these include expulsion logics to a far larger and more extreme extent than the preceding Keynesian period, which also had some of this but not as widespread. This decay began in the 1980s. By then the strong welfare states and workers' syndicates established in much of the West, including in several Latin American countries, had either been devastated or were under severe pressure. To some extent state projects with people-oriented welfare programs had also been strong features in other parts of the world, including, in their own ways, communist countries and

those with varieties of socialist nationalism, as illustrated by Nasser's welfare-state policies in Egypt, systems developed in several post-independence African countries, and in India's brand of state socialism. In these countries too, decay began in the 1980s and 1990s.

To talk of this decay is not to romanticize the twentieth century, a period marked by devastating wars, genocides, and starvation, and by extreme ideologies of both left and right.

On the *traditional* capitalism bit, I mean above all the era dominated by mass consumption, when this is the sector that is the key organizer of capitalism and hence the higher the consumption capacity of individuals, households, governments, and firms, the better for the system overall. It brought a vast expansion of those who were incorporated into the system. This was an economic phase where the broad middle—from the working class to the modest middle class—expanded rapidly. The construction of suburban housing and infrastructure meant a sharp increase in the demand for an enormous range of goods. The expansion of the demand for automobiles meant the vast expansion of road, tunnel, and bridge building. The U.S. is the most extreme case certainly, partly given the very physical fact of its vast territory, but we see this dynamic also in Europe and Latin America and in parts of Africa, as well as in Communist Russia.

Mass consumption continues to be a major economic factor, but it is not the sector organizing capitalist logic. That moved to finance. Thus, from my perspective, the decline of the prosperous working classes and the modest middle classes is linked to this systemic shift, much more so than to the outsourcing of jobs, where the financializing of our economy functions as a kind of extractive sector. I love this image: finance is an extractive sector (unlike traditional banking).

The issue of enclosures is just one vector here, and these enclosures from my perspective take the form of a massive set of grabs—of rural land and now increasingly of urban land. This in turn renders the displaced somewhat invisible. ... They go to the margins. The dominant visual order in the rural and in the urban setting is one of grand projects and advanced technologies, all of it easily read as progress, technical advancement. It is that too. But it makes those who are not part of these advanced sectors and luxury consumption increasingly invisible. And insofar as even their consumption capacity matters less if it is not high-end luxury consumption, they are doubly invisible.

> The generic subject in times of peace in our Western history was and is the immigrant.

As you can tell, I am intrigued by the fact that the material can become invisible, so brutally invisible. When I speak of "expulsions" I am alluding also to this fact, that at a certain point the familiar can become so extreme that it crosses a systemic edge and becomes difficult to capture with our standard categories and measures.

NP: How would you compare your notion of expulsion to David Harvey's concept of "accumulation by dispossession"? Or your thinking of "crises as systemic logic" to Naomi Klein's concept of "shock doctrine"?

SS: I think we are all detecting something that cannot quite be captured by our standard categories, including critical categories. And we want to name that. What is actually good is that we have diverse starting points, and diverse points of engagement with the extreme moment of our system. I am particularly keen on including a fairly broad range of conditions, including the fact of the expanding amount of what I call dead land and dead water. I find the language of climate change almost pretty; we

need to describe what has been brutalized in brutal terms.

Harvey is focused on a specific feature of the logic of capitalism that has been present since the start of capitalism. I am interested in capturing the specifics of this current period; this does not negate Harvey—not at all. I think he is spot-on in so many of his arguments. It does mean, however, the need to develop a range of new analytic tools and data sets that concern the current period. Similarly, with Naomi Klein: She captures a specific feature of the new phase of capitalism. And I agree with her identifying the destructiveness of capitalism. My interest, like hers, is also in a broad array of consequences: documenting them in order to make them visible to all of us. One difference, perhaps, is that I am keen on getting at that which is not self-evident.

More generally vis-à-vis both Harvey and Klein, I would say the social scientist in me also wants to detect at what point we need to de-theorize, go back to ground level, in order to re-theorize. This angle into what it means to gather knowledge organizes the research and interpretation in *Expulsions*.

Further, I have developed a logic that emphasizes the importance of cutting across the domains through which we have specialized our knowledge and organized our analyses about the world out there, ... the ways we position ourselves and our categories in order to study our world.

That leads me to make some unusual moves. One of these is the need to exit the silos through which we have pursued our research and within which we have placed our data. For instance, I want to explore what I can discover if I place the long-term imprisonment in the U.S. in conversation with the internally displaced in war zones. This is not to provoke but to give ourselves a chance of learning, of seeing something that we do not see if experts of each prisons and displaced camps only focus on their respective domain. I do this with the environmental question, too.

NP: Your writings engage in a number of contrasts between the material and nonmaterial economy. How do you see the relationship between Capital and Knowledge? Between Inequality and Expertise? Between Destruction, (economic, environmental, and so on) and notions of Progress?

SS: Knowledge with a capital K is not a useful category in my research practice. It is an abstract concept that functions a bit as an invitation not to think: "Ahh, 'Knowledge'! Well, of course ...."

This mode generates no need to interrogate or interpellate the term. We somehow "all know what it means."

Those are not the tools that serve my purposes. On the contrary, I am keen on understanding, for example, the type of knowledge embedded in the neighborhood and its people, knowledge that might be of great use to "urban experts" in the government and in the academy. From there arises one of my projects: the need to open-source the neighborhoods, to bring that knowledge into the government and the realm of experts. I could go on and on, on this, but I will spare the reader!

As for Capital and Knowledge, both in caps, that is a deep but utilitarian project. Rarely is knowledge inspirational in capitalist circuits—it is a tool, an enabler.

One basic aspect I seek to capture in *Expulsions* is the fact that types of knowledge we admire for their complexity are today often leading to very elementary brutalities. One simple example is outsourcing jobs: It takes enormously complicated logistics, brilliant engineers, and all of that, for what?! To pay low wages so that the stock market valuations of these companies go up—it is not even to avoid paying minimum wage. ... It is about what investors want.

NP: There has been a lot of recent writing on globalization and capitalism, much of it inspired by a re-engagement with Marx. What role does Marxism play in your current thinking?

SS: Well, I grew up on Marxism in Buenos Aires. ... It has shaped me, but I cannot simply deploy the old Marxist categories. ... I need to develop new categories. Harvey is the master at this. I am less of a European Marxist than Harvey, and more of a Latin American, mixed up with my own set of categories that come out of the Latin American condition.

NP: Some recent Marxists have focused on integrating ecology into Marxism. As you suggest that workers are playing a diminishing role in capitalist accumulation, is your current work also a challenge to, or an expansion of, Marxist thinking?

SS: I do think that if Marx were alive he would be developing some new categories to get at the current extreme financializing of our economies, at the environmental question, and more! In *Expulsions* I really went sprinting with the environmental question, developed new modes of thinking of it. I like that chapter a lot: "Dead Land Dead Water."

NP: You offer many comparisons of categories of people around the world that we might not have paid as much attention to in the past, for example, the relationship between the poor of sub-Saharan Africa and the poor of the United States. Can you explain what the "emerging systemic logic" is here that is transcending borders? What can two groups with assumedly no contact with each other have in common in the twenty-first century? And also can you reflect on the relationship not solely between the poor of two countries, but the growing rich of one country with the poor of another. Is there a relationship?

SS: One example is my comparison of Norilsk, the highly destructive nickel-producing complex in Northern Russia, and the gold mines of Montana, also very destructive. Each has a distinctive history: one deeply communist, the other deeply capitalist. I describe the specifics in the book. I ask what matters more, these distinctive histories that belong to the geopolitical world we live in, or that both have enormous capacities for destroying the environment. In this way I interpellate the older categories.

NP: Those who are faced with expulsion do not simply disappear, they often are forced to migrate as we are seeing now with the refugee crisis in Europe. Can you comment on the relationship between expulsion and migration?

SS: The immigrant has long been a familiar figure in our Western history: someone in search of a better life. She or he has also long been the most familiar instance of people on the move. Refugees and the displaced are typically seen as a very different lot—victims of larger forces, defeated souls at the mercy, or lack of it, of governments, often sequestered for many years in dedicated camps. And then there were the "exiled" of European history: mostly distinguished and once powerful figures, well received, and at home in the great European cities. They came to fight to get back to their home countries.

The reality at ground level is often fuzzier than these clearly delineated personas. But one feature stands out across this diversity of people on the move: The generic subject in times of peace in our Western history was and is the immigrant, the one ready to work, to start her own little business, to send money back "home," often imagining herself going back home for visits or for good.

Today there is a whole new set of migrations: Their epicenters are the Mediterranean, the Andaman Sea, and Central America. It is not Russia, Germany, or Italy that are sending the migrants.

And, most importantly from my perspective, the causes are not so much the search for a better life, but the push of murderous conflicts, wars, massive land grabs for plantations, the destruction of their habitats through toxicity of land and water, droughts, desertification, an explosion in mining for the metals that we need for our electronic revolution. Whole families and communities are being pushed out of their home territory. There is increasingly no more

home to go back to.

These flows of desperate people are an indication of emergent processes that are more likely to grow rather than diminish. These flows may well be the merest beginnings of new histories and geographies made by men, women, and children in desperate escape from unsustainable conditions. For them, there is no home to go back to: Home is now a plantation, a warzone, a private city, a desert, a flooded plain.

One encompassing way of capturing this emergent condition is an extreme loss of habitat.

NP: You don't refer to this global inequality and austerity by its popular term, neoliberalism. Instead you call it the "current systemic deepening of capitalist relations, … a new phase of a certain type of global capitalism." Can you explain what you mean? Why don't you call it neoliberalism? How does your beginning "with the facts at the ground level" lead you to these new ideas?

For one, neoliberalism covers specific aspects, and leaves out others that I care about. Neoliberalism captures today's logic of corporate economies and how governments enable this. It leaves out other logics at work including massive environmental destruction, abuse of law and of power.

My entry point into this subject is a bit transversal. The core fact for Western-style economies, which nowadays are most, is the move from an economy where mass consumption was the key sector, and hence, as I said earlier, the spending capacity of each person and household mattered, to an economy where the financializing of everything becomes the key sector, the one that can make new orderings, ... not change everything, but make new orderings.

Finance is very different from traditional banking. We all need such banking. Finance is a sort of economy of extraction: Complex instruments are developed that allow financial firms to extract value from even modest assets or capitals. Once extraction has happened, it does not matter what happens to that from where extraction was executed. This is the opposite of mass consumption, where the system needs to ensure ongoing consumption by more and more individuals and households.

In the financialized global economy many extreme situations are invisible. The financialized economy can be extremely brutal because it uses whatever it can use to build up a financial instrument, a source of profits. Nor is it like making cars and baby strollers—highly visible products where an imperfect part will get a vast amount of attention and put the full burden on the originating manufacturer. Financial instruments have a capacity to make their effects and products quite invisible because they use familiar elements (mortgage on a home, student loans, investment pools) to build up a new instrument that can maximize profits for finance but at high risks to that homeowner, student, or investor. In so doing, the original mortgage or student loan itself becomes invisible and often irrelevant to the larger financial project—though not to the holder of that loan. The destructions it can produce (for instance, all those millions of households thrown out of their homes) become invisible because what is destroyed often becomes invisible, and key financial actors (though not modest intermediaries) will have extracted their profits. One contrast I am interested in is this tension between the materiality of the resources used to construct a financial instrument and the potential of the material to become invisible.

But it is not only the economy that is in play, and that is why I do not use the term neoliberalism in this book. I also am focused on how we have destroyed land and water. ... My last and longest chapter is called "Dead Land Dead Water." No commas!

NP: Since the publication of Thomas Piketty's work Capital in the Twenty-First Century, *there has been a groundswell of interest in the discourse of economic inequality. Of course, much of this discourse focuses on symptoms rather than causes. What do*

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The Rise of the Servant Society

Michael J. Thompson

We are witnessing a grand shift in the nature of capitalist society. It is not to be found simply in the expanding chasms of economic inequality, nor in the rapid social and cultural transformations shaped by globalization. Of course, economic inequality raises concern among liberals, social democrats, and socialists alike. For all see in it an ethical problem, one of unfairness, of greed, of unequal control and power. But the new explosion of wealth inequality is much larger in scale than in the previous Gilded Age. It poses different questions with respect to the transformation of capitalism and the classical models and assumptions within which left politics typically operate.

New forms of wealth are leading to new forms of labor and to new forms of economic servitude. One element of the phenomenon that is frequently overlooked is the kind of culture that extreme wealth inequality promotes, as well as the kinds of ideas, norms, and attitudes that it shapes. These attitudes and norms are now more integrated than ever into a culture industry that actively erodes any sense of dissent and, as I will show, increases the likelihood of accepting authority relations, thereby cementing the legitimacy of the system as a whole.

Michael J. Thompson *teaches political science at William Paterson University. He is the founding editor of* Logos: A Journal of Modern Society & Culture. *His most recent book, co-edited with Gregory Smulewicz-Zucker, is* Radical Intellectuals and the Subversion of Progressive Politics *(Palgrave, 2015). His books* The Domestication of Critical Theory *(Rowman and Littlefield) and* The Republican Reinvention of Radicalism *(Columbia University Press) are forthcoming.*

Economic inequality leads to broader, more general forms of power and control. Despite the dynamic nature of capitalism, the persistence of oligarchy and elite control should still be seen as the central, salient feature of modern society. Indeed, as Thomas Piketty has pointed out in his exhaustive historical-empirical study of the history of economic inequality, one thing is consistent throughout the data on social stratification under capitalist societies: The return on capital always outstrips the overall growth of the economy. The wealthy are always gaining ahead of the growth of the economy as a whole, and as wealth and income inequality continues to widen, we can see that this is leading to a new kind of economy, a new kind of culture, and a new kind of consciousness.

I maintain that this new inequality is shaping economic life in ways that are erecting what I will call here a "servant society." By this I mean two things. First, that new forms of labor in advanced post-industrial society, as well as new pressures for consumption, are leading to new forms of service labor that is increasingly directed by and toward the needs of the wealthy. Second, and as a consequence of the new pressures for consumption, a new kind of culture and consciousness is emerging that is increasingly docile in real political terms. The legitimacy of the basis of the system is more entrenched now than in previous decades.

The servant society is the result of new developments and currents in capitalism. It is the result of a large-scale de-skilling of work, urban centers concentrating service needs for wealthy elites, as well as the shrinkage of conflict

within the various levels of social relations and the socialization of subjects. What has emerged in the place of the nineteenth-century model of socio-political conflict is one premised on servitude in the most basic and most pervasive sense of the term. In fact, the de-skilling of labor, the rise of consumption pressures, the atomization of workers, and the loss of the values of democratic working life all conspire to promote a new culture of work and attitude toward the political elements of the economy.

In what follows, I briefly probe the emergence of the servant society: an economic and political culture that encourages not political rebellion and social critique, but docility and acceptance in the face of hierarchy and authority. I conclude that it is not a post-work future that we should expect, but a society of servitude: of services for the wealthy and for corporations and a future of meaningless labor for basic subsistence that will be the probable outcome of the trends in contemporary capitalism.

The New (and Old) Economy

Central to the rise of the servant society is the admixture that has emerged of new and old forms of capitalism. For Marx, who developed his theory of capitalism through an analysis of industrial-producer capitalism, the basis of capitalist growth was rooted in the labor process. It was a system of exploitation in which capitalists gained at the expense of labor. This gave rise to radical social and political movements that blossomed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Marx was correct that the crises of capitalism, mixed with a consciousness of the inequalities produced by labor exploitation, would fuel labor and socialist movements. But the failure of these movements politically, and the transformation of capitalism after World War II, gave rise to a society of consumption whereby social democratic and welfare state policies allowed for an increase in economic growth and where wages and consumption could expand. But as the profitability of this model began to wane in the 1970s due to increasing successes of worker militancy on the one hand (or what Samuel Huntington proclaimed as "too much democracy") and the limits to expanded consumption on the other, new forms of labor and consumption would need to be developed.

Globalization, neoliberalism, and the manipulation of consumer demand toward a massified leisure-class mentality all encouraged the expansion of capital and the degradation of political consciousness. The move away from industrial-producer capitalism in the developed world has been accompanied by the emergence of not only a consumer-oriented society and new forms of consumption-based exploitation (that is, paying more than things are worth, purchasing things that are not necessary, and so on) but also an erosion of skilled forms of labor. The rise of the service economy has decoupled work even further from skill than has the technologization of industrial production. Whereas previous generations were able to relate themselves to the world through some meaningful form of productive work, the new economy has flattened out the realm of work to the extent that it no longer offers a space for expertise and highly developed skills. Rather, the emergence of robotic labor, the computerization of many tasks, as well as the outsourcing of many middle-class jobs have meant that the new economy is less dependent on distinctive human skills.

This transformation of modern capitalism has led to two distinct realities that have forged the foundation for the servant society. First, the increased capacity to exploit cheaper labor industrially due to globalization has led to super-profits on the production side of capitalism. At the same time, the new culture of mass-consumption has allowed for the manipulation of demand, the cultivation of new levels of perceived quality of life, and a massified, commodified culture of leisure-class-style consumption, leading to a massive expansion of profits on the consumption side of the capitalist dynamic. The rise in profits from these new developments

in global political economy has meant that the wealth commanded by elites grants them more social power than before. Today's cities are now a site for this new form of economic life. Enticed by the allure of large cities such as New York, San Francisco, London, and many others, young labor flocks to work for the concentrated wealth of the city. This new wealth itself is largely the product of *unproductive labor*, or the fruit of rent-seeking, finance capital, and other forms of non-productive wealth.[1]

As economic inequality deepens, the capacity of the wealthy to control labor for their own ends becomes more intensive and extensive. The servant class—restaurant workers, child care givers, Uber drivers, dog walkers, and so on—is becoming a new economic paradigm, one prefiguring a new economy where service to the consumer becomes the central locus of economic life. The term "consumer" in itself is problematic, as this increasingly means the high-powered, super-wealthy elite. Capital from bloated wealth also chases after new spaces for service provision. Online butlers, online cleaning services, alcohol delivery, and so on, all point toward the spreading out of service provision as the basis of new forms of labor. But it is not only these more obvious kinds of work that constitute the servant society. Increasingly, an ideological framework is being put into place that sees all kinds of labor—teachers, lawyers, doctors—as offering services.

Key to the servant society, as opposed to the purely service society, is that the material reality that grants the wealthy increased control over others also infects the culture and consciousness of the society as a whole. A new form of acceptance and acquiescence to authority begins to be routinized within the consciousness of individuals and the culture more generally. The servant society is therefore the product of a new kind of social power generated by increasing inequality, an inequality based on what I will call here "oligarchic wealth."[2] Oligarchic wealth is essentially measured as the kind of wealth that grants individuals power over the labor of others and the power to control and direct that labor toward their own ends and interests. But it is also a kind of wealth that allows elites to use resources that could otherwise be employed for common goods for their own ends. This is not strictly to employ servants, to purchase yachts, or whatever, but in their control of resources, to orient those resources toward what will grant them the highest return—to change education toward their values, to remake cities according to their consumptive ends, and to remake the nature of everything into a market where they alone will benefit.

But a democratic conception of wealth is one that seeks to orient capital and its various resources toward common goods, ends, and purposes. It requires not only a revolution of values, but of consciousness as well. Only a self-aware class consciousness can grasp the implications of the difference between oligarchic and democratic wealth. But as class mobility continues to stagnate in places like the United States and the de-industrialization and de-skilling of labor continues, the spread of the servant mentality will continue to grow. These new forms of labor and work culture lack the sociological roots necessary in previous, industrial society for class consciousness. This new culture of consent is therefore a product of not only economic inequality itself, but of the kind of labor, the kind of consumption, and the kind of values to which a consumption-based, post-industrial labor force gives rise.

The Culture of Consent

The process of socialization necessitates the routinization, rationalization, and internalization of different values and ideas for social institutions to achieve power and stability. Since these values are increasingly unified by the needs of capital, diversity in value patterns decreases, leading to a more unified set of normative ideas and practices that shape institutions as well as individual consciousness. Now, in place of a disruptive, anomic

break between the individual and society—one that was characteristic of earlier cultural and psychological forms of alienation—the neoliberal world, with its basic economic imperatives, is able to weave a more seamless unity between the subject and the institutions and norms of society. This does not mean, however, that psychological pathologies and neurotic tendencies decrease—indeed, they increase and widen their effects on the self and society at large. But the difference now is that they are no longer experienced, nor are they culturally recognized, as expressions of a pathological society, but rather as a form of deviance that requires adaptation back into the system itself.

The kind of subjectivity that is here created is necessarily a shallow one. The incessant penetration of institutional norms into the domains of the family, education, culture/entertainment industries, and the like has had the effect of increasingly reifying the values that orient identity and role formation. As a consequence, it has succeeded in creating subjects that are ever more compliant to the dominant reality, who find their very sense of self and identity only within that sphere of reality, and who lack any genuine, efficacious sense of critical cognition. Hence, when there is resistance, it is expressed as transgression. Deviance, once disruptive, is now built into the system: The new lifestyles and forms of music no longer shock a pallid, conformist culture, as they did from the1950s through the 1980s. Rather, deviance is now defanged and normalized into smaller mini-publics, where cultural "expression" is merely another form of conformism and a need to construct the self in accordance with the new communities that grant the weakened ego acceptance and a stable, albeit fragile, identity.

This is due to the increasing control that elites have over the culture industry itself. One of the basic principles of economic division needs to be pointed out: Unequal control over resources entails unequal control over the hegemonic ideas and values that dominate that culture. Inequality therefore has the capacity to instill within individuals a new set of norms and values that legitimate forms of hierarchy and authority granted by the new wealth. We are faced with the reality of social trends that will increase conformity to wider patterns of socialization and norms as required by the economic system for its reproduction. As the ego weakens under such conditions, there is little room for the development of the kind of critical cognition that was seen as the hallmark of Enlightenment rationality and culture. This kind of culture would be one where individuals possessed the capacity to cooperate and debate ideas in order to provide a culture and politics of genuine self-determination.

Psychology of Legitimacy and Authority

If my basic hypothesis is thus far correct, namely that the new economic forms of labor, production, and consumption are creating a new culture for consent and legitimacy for the system as a whole, then it remains for me to point to the psychological dynamics of the individual and show that they, too, are shaped by unequal power. Hierarchical inequalities between social groups give rise to attitudes specific to those groups. Hierarchies not only exist because of violence and power, but they persist because of the forms of legitimacy that are woven around them. Individuals are formed by these hierarchies, and their tendency toward either authority or servitude are written into the social roles and scripts of that hierarchy.

This argument finds its first real expression in book IV of Aristotle's *Politics*. His discussion of the defective kind of society that emerges under conditions of oligarchy is illustrative. Whereas in a free society, each citizen, he argues, knows how to rule and be ruled according to the arguments that serve the common interest, under conditions of economic division, wealthy and poor no longer follow reason, but know only despotism and slavery. He argues that for the wealthy,

> by reason of the luxury in which they are

> brought up, they never learn, even at school, the habit of obedience. On the other hand, the very poor, who are in the opposite extreme, are too degraded. So that the one class cannot obey, and can only rule despotically; the other knows not how to command and must be ruled like slaves. Thus arises a city, not of freemen, but of masters and slaves.[3]

Here we have the basic formula, if you will, of the servant society: a pattern of psychological and attitudinal dynamics that reinforce not only economic divisions, but political and cultural ones as well.

More recent studies on the effects of inequality and authority have shown that the more one is exposed to hierarchical relations, the more prone one will be to justify them as well as one's place within them. Individuals become more likely to justify the social order, blaming themselves for their conditions, consistently believing that mobility is everywhere and it will be immanent for them and their family. Even more, the mythos constantly cultivated around capitalist entrepreneurs, from Donald Trump to Steve Jobs, is reinforced by the media and internalized by non-elites. Consistent exposure to hierarchies therefore predisposes people to the attitudes and norms of the wealthy. As Frederick Solt has recently found in his empirical analysis of inequality and attitudes displaying deference to authority, "Societies with higher levels of economic inequality are concomitantly more hierarchical, making experiences that reinforce vertical notions of authority more common and so authoritarianism more widespread."[4] As the scale of inequality continues to expand and the nature of the workplace takes on more of a neoliberal, fragmented, and domesticated culture, the attitudes of compliance lead to a psychology of docility.

Reclaiming Left Politics

The implications of this argument for left politics should be seen in stark terms. On the one hand, the culture of compliance and political docility that forms the essence of the servant society is one that will be largely immune to the political arguments of the left. Lacking any mediating institutions such as labor unions, working people are increasingly routinized into the dominant patterns of the system and its imperatives. On the intellectual side of the coin, decades of post-modernism, poststructuralism, and essentially pseudo-political academic writing has morphed the concept of politics into issues of identity.

What is needed is a new vision of politics that takes aim at the kind of power that oligarchic wealth provides for elites and the ways that they gain control over the goals of the community as a whole. What is needed is a vision of *democratic wealth* that insists on the accountability of capital, as an institution, to the needs of the public. The left must shake off illusory utopias such as a "post-work future" or "post-work imaginary"—ideas spawned from a deeply delusional relation to both economic and historical reality. Rather, it must confront the more likely scenario of declining wages, increasing service labor for the wealthy and for corporations, and the general de-skilling that Harry Braverman rightly saw as the consequence of monopoly capital. Whatever meaningful work might be left will still be rooted in the needs of capital: the rise of the urban-millennial "creative class" will still remain, but their labor will still service the needs of capital.

A new vision of the future must therefore be built around this reality, and the need for the democratization of social surplus must be at the forefront of any valid class politics. This renewed emphasis on the structure of the economy is still to be understood in class terms. But the primary problem is that the classical Marxian model of class consciousness can no longer be assumed. What is needed is an auto-critique of the left: an intellectual and political reorientation that moves us away from the emphasis on issues of identity, of niche concerns that alienate working people, and instead sees that the progression of cultural liberalism is distinct from economic progressivism.

Today's left is a congeries of different "political" concerns, from the legalization of prostitution and narcotics to the promotion of different forms of identity. But whatever it may be, it is not a movement oriented toward building class consciousness informed by a more radical conception of social justice. Liberalism and socialism should not be collapsed into one another. Each has different goals and ends when it comes to the power relations rooted in economic resources, different assumptions about the nature of human beings, and different ideas about the purpose of human association. Marx's model of class consciousness made sense for the time because the sociological substrates of the workplace, worker organization, and the nature of production-oriented economies all made possible a clearer grasp of the power dynamics of capitalism.

But today's left does not provide this clarity for working people. Socialist movements did not marginalize cultural and noneconomic concerns, but they rightly saw that they were part of a broader ethos of non-domination and that the economic structure of capitalist society would always tether all forms of real cultural progress. A new class politics will therefore seek to make a similar move: Working people need to look not simply to their interests in terms of *wage-consciousness*, as the legacy of liberal trade-unionism has always framed the matter, but in terms of a broader class consciousness that seeks the democratic accountability of capital and the reorientation of social wealth toward public ends. This means enlarging the scope of potential political agency: As in Marx's classical theory, anyone not controlling capital is put into subservient relation to it. The material agent of social change is therefore made not through the *nature of work*, but through the *nature of its demands*. Without a shattering of the basic alienation that constitutes what I have called here the culture and mentality of the servant society, no viable, radical political agency can be restored to working people.

The left must therefore make the concrete issues of economic power and its corrosive effects on the common interest its central theme. It must seek to rework and retool the critical categories and theories of Marx and others into a more sophisticated intellectual-political framework that can shape real politics, not utopian dreams. A society defined by social justice is one defined by the free, equal membership of all in the pursuit of a common interest: the preservation of precisely that free, un-dominated, equal, cooperative society itself. This common interest is one where we cease to see the oligarchic use of wealth—for the narrow ends of profit, mass consumption, and so on—as valid and counterpose to it a democratic understanding of wealth that is employed for common goods. We need not appeal to romantic conceptions of revolution, of past movements and their ideals. We must confront the harsh realities of the present with the democratic, rational principles of social justice that true radicalism should have at its core. Perhaps then radicalism can once again capture the imagination and harness the interests of working people toward social transformation, dispatching servitude and mastery altogether.

NOTES

1. See the important analysis by Aldo Barba and Giancarlo de Vivo, "An 'Unproductive Labor' View of Finance," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* (No. 36, 2012), 1479-1496.

2. The twin concepts of "oligarchic wealth" and "democratic wealth" were first introduced by Roy Harrod in "The Possibility of Economic Satiety: Use of Economic Growth for Improving the Quality of Education and Leisure," *Problems of United States Economic Development* (Committee for Economic Development, 1958), 207-213. They are further discussed by Fred Hirsch, *The Social Limits to Growth.* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976) as well in Michael J. Thompson, "The Limits to Liberalism: A Republican Theory of Social Justice," *International Journal of Ethics* (vol. 7, no. 3-4, 2011), 1-27. Harrod and Hirsch do not develop the concept with any sophistication, and my use of it here and elsewhere is my own development.

3. Aristotle, *Politics*, IV, 11.

4. Frederick Solt, "The Social Origins of Authoritarianism," *Political Research Quarterly* (vol. 65 no. 4, 2012), 703-713, 706.

Debt, Underemployment, and Capitalism

The Rise of Twenty-First-Century Serfdom

Colin Jenkins and Cherise Charleswell

Systemic contradictions of capitalism have only intensified in the neoliberal era. Structural unemployment, a phenomenon directly related to capitalist modes of production, has continued unabated, creating a massive and ever-growing "reserve army of labor" that has been disenfranchised on an unprecedented scale.

Working classes, en masse, have been corralled into legalized systems of education debt with false promises of "middle-class" lifestyles, only to be tossed into a job market that can no longer keep up with the system's inherent deficits and inability to provide a living wage to the masses. Massive inequality and unprecedented wealth accumulation and concentration have paralleled uncontrollable costs of living and widespread housing insecurity for the working-class majority.

The twentieth-century liberal experiment has failed, bringing down with it the delusional hopes of constructing a manageable and benevolent form of capitalism. The ripple effects of capitalism's structural failures, intensified by modern forms of government-facilitated debt slavery, job markets that can no longer keep pace with wage demands, and interrelated housing insecurity and displacement, have pushed us into a twenty-first-century serfdom. We are left wondering how long this balancing act can last.

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Capitalism and Underemployment

Unemployment is not a natural occurrence within society. It is a purely capitalist problem that arises from artificial economic arrangements, most notably the advent of wage labor, which forces people to serve as commodities. This is an important point that is often missed, especially in regards to modern assessments of the labor market and popular reports that focus on the fiction of an unemployment rate. In the United States, since the 1950s, the official unemployment rate has fluctuated between 4.4 percent and 10 percent.[1] Full employment in a capitalist system is neither possible (without government intervention) nor desirable to capitalists or those who benefit from the system. Rather, substantial and perpetual unemployment is both a byproduct of the system's relational mechanisms and a necessity that serves a systemic purpose in regards to profitability and wage reduction (or stagnation). The never-ending search for profit by those who have access to capital, and the means to reproduce it, places those who must sell their labor power to survive in a perpetual state of insecurity. Other than the fundamental extraction of profit through the labor process (surplus value), the most basic method in regenerating profit comes from replacing variable capital

(living labor) with fixed capital (machines), a relationship that Marx referred to as the "organic composition of capital."[2] While the process of creating surplus labor value consists of paying wages that equal a fraction of the value created, the process of increasing productive capacities through the implementation of machinery leaves living labor in an even more precarious situation. This process leads to the creation of what Marx referred to as the "Industrial Reserve Army" (the unemployed)—a phenomenon that becomes both a byproduct and a leveraging tool within the capitalist system.

Attempts to circumvent capitalism's tendency to create and maintain high amounts of unemployment and underemployment have been carried out by industrialized capitalist societies utilizing Keynesian economic programs. By calling on a high degree of governmental involvement in the economic system vis-à-vis taxation and supplementation, John Maynard Keynes believed that structural problems like "involuntary unemployment" could be remedied.[3] When coupled with the post-World War II economic boom in the United States, Keynesian techniques appeared to make positive steps towards remedying structural unemployment. Between 1948 and 1970, the official unemployment rate in the United States was relatively low by historic measures, typically fluctuating between 3 and 5 percent, and falling below 3 percent on a few occasions during the 1950s.[4] The marginal tax rate during this time—also a byproduct of Keynesian thought—was a major factor in the economic success experienced by much of the U.S. population, including the white working class in its ascent to "middle class" status, and also helped create historically low unemployment rates. From 1948 to 1963, the top marginal tax rate remained at 91 percent, with the exception of 1952 and 1953 when it was raised to 92 percent.[5] In 1964, this top rate was lowered to 77 percent, and from 1965 into the 1970s, it was set at 70 percent.[6]

The Keynesian experiment came to an end in the 1980s, when neoliberalism took form as a class project. Coupled with the phenomenon of globalization, which fused formerly industrialized labor markets (unionized with living wages) in the global core with formerly colonized labor markets in the global periphery, underemployment has become an epidemic with disastrous effects. Marx warned of such developments when writing, "The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the entire surface of the globe. … It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, and establish connections everywhere."[7] The global consequence of this constant pursuit of profit is not only the establishment of new markets of consumers and laborers, but also the proliferation of imperialism. For the former industrialized working classes, such as in the United States, it means an intensification of capitalist mechanisms that create unemployment and underemployment. Because of this, the replacement of manufacturing jobs by low-wage service sector jobs has become a distinguishing characteristic of American capitalism since the 1980s. Government involvement in this system has become a necessity, not for the purpose of obstructing it (as many right-wing critics claim), but for the purpose of supplementing it and propping it up via infusions of money and for maintaining the minimum of social welfare programs. The former can be seen in the increased importance of the Federal Reserve and monetarism (including the practice of quantitative easing), while the latter can be seen in the working class's increased reliance on things like food stamps—a direct result of the disappearance of living wages.

The type of government involvement that became common in the 1980s was nothing like its Keynesian predecessor. Rather than seeking public programs and fiscal policies that created jobs, neoliberal intervention seeks to supplement profit accumulation for those at the top of the socio-economic ladder. This is carried out with mantras like "getting government off

our backs," lowering taxes for so-called "job creators," and even blatantly allowing for massive profits to be justified under a promise of such money "trickling down" to the masses. As neoliberalism represents an intensification of capitalism, not only through the dismantling of Keynesian-style interventions but also through a 180-degree reversal in using government to supplement the capitalists rather than the workers, the neoliberal era has brought on a uniquely precarious existence for the working class in the United States. Thomas Palley explains:

> Before 1980, economic policy was designed to achieve full employment, and the economy was characterized by a system in which wages grew with productivity. This configuration created a virtuous circle of growth. Rising wages meant robust aggregate demand, which contributed to full employment. Full employment in turn provided an incentive to invest, which raised productivity, thereby supporting higher wages.
>
> After 1980, with the advent of the neoliberal growth model, the commitment to full employment was abandoned as inflationary, with the result that the link between productivity growth and wages was severed. In place of wage growth as the engine of demand growth, the new model substituted borrowing and asset price inflation. Adherents of the neoliberal orthodoxy made controlling inflation their primary policy concern, and set about attacking unions, the minimum wage, and other worker protections.[8]

The culmination of the disastrous neoliberal measures that began in the 1980s was realized with what has been labeled the Great Recession of 2008, whose effects are only starting to be fully understood nearly seven years later. Some alarming statistics should be emphasized: Between 2008 and 2014, the U.S. labor market lost a total of 1.4 million full-time jobs; more than 20 percent of workers who were laid off as a result of the Great Recession still have not found a new job; when considering those workers who have given up looking for employment, the unemployment rate is closer to 12 percent; of all "prime-age workers" (ages 25 to 54) in the United States, 23.3 percent were "not employed" as of November of 2014.[9]

A January 2014 study conducted by Heidi Shierholz of the Economic Policy Institute, entitled, "Is There Really a Shortage of Skilled Workers?" countered a popular argument presented by the mainstream analysis, which claimed there was a shortage of qualified workers to fill so-called "skilled" positions.[10] Fred Goldstein, writing on Shierholz' research, said,

> The study found that no matter what the skill level of workers, their unemployment rate went up by 150 percent to 190 percent from 2007 to 2013. The unemployment rate for workers with less than high school education was 10.3 percent in 2007 and 15.9 percent in 2013. For high school graduates, the unemployment rate was 5.4 percent in 2007 and 9.6 percent in 2013. For workers with some college, the unemployment figures jumped dramatically from 4.0 percent in 2007 to 7.3 percent in 2013; for college graduates, it went up from 2.4 percent to 4.5 percent and for those with advanced degrees, it went from 1.7 percent to 3.2 percent, that is, almost double.[11]

This highlights perhaps the most alarming effect of the recession, which has been a mass replacement of living-wage jobs with low-wage jobs in the service sector. In sectors that experienced severe job losses during the Great Recession, workers were earning 23 percent less in 2014. In manufacturing and construction, the average salary fell from $61,637 in 2008 to $41,171 in 2014. The jobs that have been added during the "recovery" (2009-2014) have been largely low wage, confirmed by the fact that $93 billion in "lower wage income" has been created during this time period.[12]

Toward Twenty-First-Century Serfdom: Debt, Student Loans, and Rising Costs of Living

The net result of prolonged and skyrocketing unemployment and underemployment and the increasing stagnation of wages is the mounting

epidemic of debt. Debt, in the form of medical bills, housing costs, and ballooning mortgage payments, has contributed to people having to file for bankruptcy as well as finding themselves homeless.[13] This new-age form of debt has effectively divided the United States into an income-bound set of castes, the "Haves" and "Have Nots." The awakening to this unequal balance of wealth and debt set the stage for the Occupy Movement uprisings, which spread globally and advocated on behalf of the 99 percent, the workers who collectively hold much less economic wealth than the richest 1 percent. In real terms, according to the IRS, those who belong to the lower 99 percent of U.S. income distribution are those with a household adjusted gross income of less than $343,927. This valuation not only illustrates how wealthy the 1 percent must be, but it also speaks to the fact that there is still much socio-economic stratification within the 99 percent, including differences in the likelihood of financial hardship and debt.[14] While the outsourcing of jobs has greatly contributed to unemployment, those who are lucky enough to still have a job are finding themselves working long hours or having to work multiple jobs to make ends meet. Despite the noted rise in hours worked, which should logically translate into higher annual incomes, Americans are finding themselves falling into debt at unprecedented rates.[15]

All of this has helped to give rise to what can only be referred to as a *twenty-first-century serfdom*. An example of the indebted economy is the fact that mergers, monopolies, and concentrations of influence have created the present reality of workers finding themselves employed by, and simultaneously indebted to, the same corporate entities. The "pay" that is earned is immediately shuffled back to these corporations in the form of student loan payments, mortgage payments, cable payments, health insurance premiums, and so on. The feasibility of paying off these employer/debt-holding entities in a timely matter, or at all, is difficult or nearly impossible, especially when considering that they are the very ones who set and keep wages low and transfer the profit from workers' increased productivity to the pockets of CEOs, investors, shareholders, bankers, and so on.

Debt is a Byproduct of Capitalism

Within this current era of unchecked capitalism, where citizens must take to the streets in protest to persuade the government to intervene and create policies that will support a living wage or protect workers' rights, debt and inequality are the most recognizable and predictable byproducts. The process of financialization, which began in the 1970s, depends on widespread loosening of banking regulations, environmental laws, and labor laws. Inequality is inherent in capitalism due to its concentrating of wealth in the hands of the few, in the form of monopolies and by the exploitation and maximizing of profits at the expense of, or through the labor of, the masses—the twenty-first-century serfs. Neoliberal capitalism has allowed for unprecedented concentrations of not only wealth, but power, creating a landscape where the wealthy are modern representations of feudal lords. As in feudal societies, it is the pauper (serf) who pays the biggest percentage of taxes (or dues for land usage in the case of serfs), and this is even true under Democrat-led administrations in the United States. Just consider the fact that corporate taxes decreased from 25 percent during the Bush Administration to 12 percent under Obama, while workers' tax rates remained the same or increased.[16]

The Student-Loan Debt Crisis

The biggest driver for debt in the past twenty-five years has been the rising cost of tuition and student-loan debt. This debt crisis may eventually represent the proverbial "final straw that breaks the camel's back," as there do not seem to be any plans for immediate relief. Instead, politicians spend election seasons making false promises and arguments in favor of student debt

relief, but do not offer any concrete measures to bring this into fruition. Further, those outside of socialist and progressive movements remain ignorant of, or will not be honest about, the fact that capitalism is structured to produce exploitation, concentrated wealth and profitability, and debt. Capitalism's constant pursuit of profit has led to the transformation of higher education into a no-holds-barred profit-seeking venture. This process can be summed up as follows**:** Colleges and universities are using decades of cutbacks in state and federal funding for higher education to justify massive increases in tuition, the proliferation of adjunct professor positions, and budget cuts to educational and other services upon which students depend. A 2008 study published by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities made headlines when it shared that on average states are spending $1,805, or 20 percent, less per student than before the recession; some states, such as Alabama, Louisiana, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina, which are for the most part states where there is a Republican stronghold, have slashed their higher education funding by more than 35 percent since 2008, and they are topped by Arizona with a decrease of 47 percent.[17] Back in 1988, in the not so long ago past, public colleges and universities received 3.2 times as much revenue from state and local governments as they did from students.[18] This simply means that the student did not carry the bulk of the burden to finance higher education, which was instead paid for by public dollars, collectively sharing these costs.

As wages go down, the cost of tuition continues to climb, leaving behind an educated populace that is saddled with debt. Tuition jumped 28 percent between the 2008-2009 and the 2013-2014 school years, while real median income fell by approximately 8 percent over this period. To understand the bigger picture, consider that since 1973 average inflation-adjusted college tuition cost has more than tripled—an increase of 270 percent—but median household income has barely changed and is up by only 5 percent;[19] this represents the core of the crisis. What are graduates to do? How are they to survive and afford their most basic needs while working low-paying jobs and still being forced to pay back a student loan that they cannot even write off in bankruptcy, like the corporations and banks do with their debts?

There is no greater evidence of the burden of student-loan debt than the accounting of loans that have fallen into delinquency. The Federal Reserve Bank of New York released a 2015 report that shared that delinquent student loans (those whose payments are 90 days or more past due) increased to 11.5 percent of the $1.9 trillion (yes trillion!) in education loans.

Essentially, the burden of financing the exorbitant costs of education has been passed on to the students, and the high cost with dwindling returns (where are the higher-paying jobs?) has begun to discourage would-be college-goers, a process that is equally by design. Higher education was once looked on as a means to develop a cultured, well-rounded, and informed citizenry. However, this is no longer the case, since cultivation of thinkers would only lead to questioning of the prevailing system of inequality. The Great Society programs that gained steam in the 1960s set out to make sure that students who could not otherwise attend college could do so, without the burden of having to work excessive hours to help cover the cost of education. In fact, at one time students could actually use their summer vacations to "work their way through college," something that is now impossible. In the current landscape, students are forced to take out mortgage-sized loans from financial lenders who are profit-driven corporations and who inevitably put their bottom lines before the needs and best interests of students.

This student-loan crisis has ensured that the last two generations are worse off than were their parents, ending the historical progression of improvements in the quality of life with each subsequent generation. Over a lifetime of employment and saving, someone with $53,000

in education debt can expect nearly $208,000 less wealth than a similarly educated person without debt.[20] Crippled by this debt and entering a job market with lower and stagnant wages, graduates, who were sold the falsehood of the American Dream, are unable to afford the lifestyles that their parents and grandparents once enjoyed. Dispensable income is becoming a scarcity, while more money is being spent to cover the rising costs of food, health care, transportation, clothing, and housing. With this reality the feudal lords, the wealthy 1 percent, are gaining exponential profits through this multi-dimensional exploitation of the working class.

Conclusion

The proliferation of the capitalist system through the neoliberal era has resulted in a modern form of feudal society where there is great inequality and wealth is concentrated among the few. Policy changes, and perhaps a restructuring or change in the current systems of governance, are needed, but this will largely depend on the actions of the working-class majority: the growing number of impoverished, overworked, unemployed, or underemployed *serfs* whose labor and bodies are being exploited and who have been left wholly disenfranchised.

Despite the need for mass action, it has yet to materialize. Despite dire circumstances, there remains a great reluctance to challenge the status quo of inequality. This stems from the fact that far too many are still hopelessly reliant on the illusion of the American Dream, believe in the falsehood of rugged individualism, or merely fear the prospects of instability and the unknown. The motivation for revolutionary change exists throughout, yet many fundamental questions remain unanswered. Some may not have an answer until steps are taken. For instance, if the current system of government—which has become no more than a "dollarocracy"[21] that does not represent or even consider the views or needs of the working-class majority—is overthrown, what would happen next? Fears of the unknown persist and are perpetuated by corporate-sponsored media, which thrives on the sensationalism of doomsday reporting, ignoring the fact that fluctuations in the stock market and other macroeconomic indicators are far removed from the daily lives of many who actually work for a living.

Despite this widespread reluctance and fear that has been peddled to the majority, action is needed. Addressing debt is an immediate concern. Action does not need to be instantly revolutionary, but may be accomplished through gradual steps and reformist means. Some steps include:

- Continue building movements around issues of debt, unemployment, and inequality—movements that are multi-racial, multi-ethnic, and multi-generational. An intersectional approach to such movements will effectively attack the divisions that have been artificially created to ensure that the status quo continues. Examples of this division are most visible throughout the impoverished states of the U.S. South, which despite having vast income inequality and being susceptible to corporate exploitation, also happen to possess high rates of historical, intra-working-class, racial animosity. Hate, fear, and ignorance cause many to vote and act against their own interest.

- Get behind efforts that are working to remove moneyed influence over the U.S. political system; some of that influence comes through the Citizens United Supreme Court ruling that has the audacity to state that corporations are people. Be ready to accept that the entire system itself may need to be dismantled.

- Demand that the federal government gives us a New Deal that can address the problems of unemployment and the crumbling infrastructure. Bridges and highways need to be repaired, and high-speed rail needs to be laid out.

- Join and support unions, which are under assault, because they are the only stakeholder who truly bargains and fights for the working-class majority. Expanding the number of active unions will only benefit the workforce—those who are union and non-union alike.

For short-term and immediate relief of student-loan debt, which has become a critical issue:

- Shift direct-lending administration to the federal government and regulate and reduce interest rates on loans. Work toward de-profitizing higher education, making higher education a civic value.

- Reduce the military budget and replenish the diminished funding to schools, colleges, and universities that once helped to keep tuition costs down or made possible free tuition to public schools.

- Allow for student-loan debt to be included in bankruptcy claims, allowing for full or partial forgiveness of the debt to those who are without the means to pay.

The brief period of Keynesian consensus that ruled from the 1940s to the 1970s is over. The neoliberal imperative that has ruled since is currently subjecting an ever-larger share of the population to brutal austerity measures. Skyrocketing levels of debt and structural unemployment are the most visible manifestations of how far neoliberalism has penetrated into the structures of American society. However, in the years ahead, it will prove increasingly difficult to disguise the full nature of the crisis, and new opportunities to advance programs of systemic change can and will present themselves. If the left does not find a way to rise to the occasion, then it is unclear which track the country will take as it makes its way toward collapse.

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The Roots of the Modern Housing Crisis

Sean Posey

Americans today face a dual crisis: rising rents and increasingly unaffordable housing markets. The housing crisis, far from being over, has metastasized. This new set of problems is confounding economists, who are left to view the situation through the narrow lens of mainstream orthodoxy—one that is highly colored by the ever-present notion of the American (Delusion) Dream. If the country is to deal with this new normal, it must embrace new economic tools and question the veracity of a system that swings from one crisis to the next—a system that is proving incapable of providing individuals and families with affordable housing, a basic need.

Following the end of World War II, a combination of forces made the largest housing boom in American history possible: generous federal housing policies, real increasing wages, and a concerted effort on the part of the government and developers further enshrined the ideal of homeownership in the American mind. Homeownership rates increased nearly 20 percent from 1945 to 1960. Suburban tract housing spread throughout the newly built cul-de sacs around the country, and professionals, blue-collar workers, and middle managers joined the exodus to the land of cookie-cutter Cape Cods and white picket fences. Not everyone was welcomed, however. African Americans were quite purposely excluded. But the new programming did grow the economy, and the expansion of housing provided a convenient bulwark against communism during the height of the Cold War. ("No man who has a house and a lot can be a communist," famed developer William Levitt once declared. "He has too much to do.") Decades later, President Bill Clinton unveiled his "National Homeownership Strategy," which sought to dramatically increase the number of homeowners in a short period of time. Among other things, Clinton's initiative helped relax lending standards in order to achieve the stated goals. George W. Bush largely followed suit, promoting owning a home as a key element of his ideal "ownership society." By 2004, the homeownership rate approached 70 percent. All of that changed in 2007. The spectacular subprime mortgage crisis and the recession put an end, probably permanently, to the American Dream of overwhelming homeownership. Today, homeownership rates are back to where they were in 1994. Now we face a housing crisis of new proportions: Both homes and rental units are becoming increasingly unaffordable for a large percentage of the working class and the déclassé. Despite efforts by the Federal Housing Finance Agency to keep down payments to a bare minimum, the "dream" of homeownership remains out of reach for an increasing segment of the population. The reasons are straightforward: declining and stagnant wages for the majority of Americans, large amounts of student-loan debt, rising rents, and the growth of non-white families facing more extreme problems of access and inequality. Wage growth today is largely concentrated in

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the managerial classes at the top fifth of the income distribution; wages for the vast majority of workers are barely keeping pace with inflation.[1] Between 1979 and 2015, most workers witnessed an outright decline in hourly pay.[2] With more and more people unable to get ahead financially, the prospect of increasing numbers of families putting money away for the down payment on a house seems remote, no matter how low down payments go.

The decline in homeownership and the rise of the rental market is also exacerbated by the problem of inadequate wage growth for young professionals. Only 19 percent of available rentals in the top 25 largest markets are considered affordable for recent college graduates.[3] Once considered a problem mainly in "global cities" like San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York, the lack of affordable rental units for young college graduates is spreading from the coasts to inland cities. In places like Atlanta, once seen as a safe market for middle-income families, the rise in rents is affecting a greater share of wage earners. The same goes for housing: "Many cities are exhibiting decreasing housing affordability, period," writes Professor Todd Sinai. "It doesn't matter whether the houses are owned or rented; in those cities, households of all stripes pay increasing shares of their incomes for housing."[4] Student-loan debt makes it even more difficult for college grads to find suitable affordable rentals (and to save for the down payment on a home). Graduates from the class of 2015 carry an average of $35,000 in debt. The situation is even worse for low-income renters. Over 80 percent of renters making under $20,000 in 2011 paid more than 30 percent of their income in rent. According to the Economic Policy Institute, the average cost of living for a family of four is $50,000 higher than the average salary of a worker making minimum wage.[5] A full 30 percent of American workers are making near the minimum wage. The hourly wage needed to afford a two-bedroom rental is higher than the median hourly wage of the average American worker, and it's nearly three times higher than the federal minimum wage.[6] Dramatic income inequality between white, black, and Latino families fully reveals how the housing and rental crisis is affecting people of color. The median net worth for white households in 2009 was over $113,000, but only $6,325 for Hispanic households and $5,677 for black households.[7] Unlike during the postwar housing boom, both the Clinton and George W. Bush housing initiatives sought to bring black and Latino families into the tainted-dream of American homeownership. Yet the subprime debacle—which disproportionately targeted (and eventually devastated) black and brown neighborhoods—wiped out most of the gains in wealth previously made by these communities. And with a rapidly growing number of "minority" households, the rental and housing crisis will surely only worsen.

Only 19 percent of available rentals in the top 25 largest markets are considered affordable for recent college graduates.

A variety of "remedies" have been advanced by mainstream housing experts and economists in response to what U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Shaun Donovan calls "the worst rental affordability crisis that this country has ever known." Some experts have argued for policies aimed at increasing housing density in cities, especially in so-called "superstar cities" such as San Francisco and Portland. However, high land costs are leading developers to build units geared to those at the top of the income distribution. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, over 80 percent of new apartments built between 2012

and 2014 were targeted at the luxury market.[8] Economist Ryan Avent, blogger Aaron M. Renn, and others argue that density is indeed the key, and that new laws for zoning, historic districts, and floor-area-ratio limits will allow more workers to congregate in "superstar cities," and therefore allow a broader spectrum of wage earners to enjoy the benefits of access to better neighborhoods—which will supposedly buoy low-income and lower-"middle class" families.[9] But these arguments represent a mindset deeply grounded in mainstream economic orthodoxy. Nowhere do they address why economic networks are clustering in a few cities (usually on the coasts) while wide swaths of the country are hollowed out. They fail to consider the importance of communities rooted in place and the impact of forced economic migration on less wealthy cities. These types of "solutions" merely tinker at the edges of a dying economic system, one that is unable to deliver a meaningful standard of living for larger and larger percentages of the population. While policy paralysis reigns at the federal level, local solutions for tackling the rental and housing crisis are slowly spreading. In particular, community development corporations are leading the way. In Newark, New Jersey, the New Community Corporation not only manages two thousand housing units, it also employs well over 1,000 local residents and uses the proceeds to operate a shopping center and grocery store. Community land trusts—which are non-profit corporations that operate and manage housing, developments, and commercial enterprises for place-based communities—are also proving to be powerful local tools for stopping gentrification and providing affordable housing. If we are truly to deal with the new crisis in housing in a structural manner, then we must discard the flawed perceptions we use to analyze the situation in the first place. The postwar American Dream is part of the problem, not the solution. It's time to discard discredited notions that situate housing at the center of consumer utopias and speculative frenzy, which always brings us back to another crisis. Instead, it's time to bring the conversation around to systems change—starting at the local level with tools such as land trusts and community development corporations. Affordable housing should be viewed as a basic right, one enshrined at the center of an American reality—not an America Dream.

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C.L.R. James on Oliver Cox's *Caste, Class, and Race*

Introduction by Paul Ortiz and Derrick White

In 1971 the Institute of the Black World (IBW) was at a crossroads. Founded in 1969 by historian Vincent Harding, literary scholar Stephen Henderson, and other scholars in the colleges that comprised the Atlanta University Center (AUC), as well as with the support of leading national researchers of the African American experience, the IBW served as the intellectual wing of the Martin Luther King Center. The King Center initially was a multi-unit memorial that included King's childhood home, his burial site, a museum, and a civil rights archive in addition to the IBW. During the institute's first year, Harding and Henderson guided the organization as it analyzed the declining civil rights movement and the growing Black Studies Movement. Its support for Black Studies and its willingness to question the orthodoxies of the civil rights movement—non-violent direction and charismatic leadership—led to a painful split from the King Center that cost IBW members' jobs and strained long-time friendships. As the IBW commenced its second year, its first as an independent organization, the institute moved from the shadow of the King Center and beyond the curricular debates surrounding Black Studies.[1]

C.L.R. James

The 1971 Summer Research Symposium marked a vital moment in the IBW's history that would ultimately define the future of the organization. William Strickland, a political scientist and a key IBW organizer, wrote to Harding and others that the social, political, and economic analyses that emerged from the symposium

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Derrick White *is a visiting associate professor of History and African American Studies at Dartmouth College. He is the author of* The Challenge of Blackness: The Institute of the Black World and Political Activism in the 1970s*. He is finishing a book inspired by C.L.R. James's* Beyond a Boundary *and titled,* Blood, Sweat, and Tears: Florida A. & M. University, Black College Football, and Athletic Congregation in the Twentieth Century*, which will be published by University Press of Florida.*

"should be systematic, not scattered; directed to clarifying our conceptual understanding of our history and to explicating what it is we mean exactly by 'education for liberation.'" Central to IBW's developing analysis was a more thorough examination of "the politics of class and mass movements."[2] To this end, the IBW developed a six-week program designed to teach emerging intellectuals "the process of charting a progressive Black future based on our assessment of our past and present condition."[3] To accomplish this task the IBW invited C.L.R James, St. Clair Drake, Edward Brathwaite, and George Beckwith, to teach alongside IBW founders and associates Vincent Harding, Robert Hill, and William Strickland.

C.L.R. James arrived at the Institute of the Black World in June 1971 to give a series of lectures that would contribute to the IBW's mission of revolutionary analysis. On June 14, James opened with a critical examination of his magnum opus on the Haitian Revolution, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*. The next day the elder Black statesman of anti-colonialism offered a riveting comparison of *The Black Jacobins* and W.E.B. Du Bois's *Black Reconstruction: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860–1880.* On June 18, James concluded with a lively rumination on "How I Would Rewrite the Black Jacobins" today.[4]

These lectures feature the Caribbean intellectual in fine form. At age 70, he is at ease with a multi-generational audience, telling jokes as he patiently guides them chapter by chapter through two of the definitive Marxist historical works of the twentieth century. James assesses the potential of a new revolt "from below," one that would not repeat the errors of past revolutionary leaders such as Toussaint L'Ouverture who lost touch with the masses. Of course, these are not mere speeches. The Institute of the Black World emphasized self-activity, historical analysis, and collective struggle. As James sweeps through the history of five centuries of upheaval, audience members are enthusiastically turning pages and marking passages of *The Black Jacobins* and *Black Reconstruction;* they are encouraged by the speaker to connect the revolutions in France and Haiti in the 1790s with the urban rebellions of the 1960s.

Thanks to Dr. Robert A. Hill, James's literary executor and a former IBW staff member, we have been able to read James's lectures at the Institute of the Black World after they were transcribed and published in the September 2000 issue of *Small Axe: A Caribbean Platform of Criticism*.[5]

What has been missing up to now however, is a record of the presentation that C.L.R. James gave the day after his workshop on Du Bois's *Black Reconstruction*. On June 16, James spoke and answered questions for over an hour on Oliver Cox's *Caste, Class, and Race*: *A Study in Social Dynamics*, a landmark book originally published in 1948 and reissued in 1959 by the Monthly Review Press.[6] This hitherto forgotten session ties together several major themes that James touches on in the series, particularly questions of where revolutionary ideas come from as well as the relationship between racial and class oppression in a capitalist society. Midway through the lecture, James sums up Dr. Cox's contributions to understanding the emergence of racism in the modern world: "And now, he's saying that the race question in the United States here, *that* came in Western civilization from about 1500, from the beginning of capitalism and the slave era, and slavery, and modern capitalism. Then it began and before that it didn't exist, and that was something to say. And to say politically."[7]

C.L.R. James provides a critical analysis of one of the most important—and persistently ignored—historical studies employing Marxist methodology in the United States.[8] The lecture's publication by *New Politics* represents a watershed moment in the historiography of the left, a signal contribution to the literature of what Cedric Robinson calls the "Black Radical

Tradition," as well as a critical intervention in the debate over racism and modernity in the era of the Black Lives Matter movement. In *Caste, Class, and Race*, Cox traced the origins of the "Negro Problem" to the economic foundations of Western civilization and the concerted efforts of upper-class whites to exploit Black workers in the modern world. Cox rejected the popular idea that sexual tensions between the races or deficiencies in Black culture were the major culprits in racial inequality. He also criticized the notion that race relations in the United States were locked into a static "caste system" such as that which was said to have existed in India. First, Dr. Cox demonstrated that most intellectuals in the United States misunderstood the origins and operations of the caste system in India.[9]

Most importantly, Oliver Cox argued that American race relations were as dynamic as capitalism, the system that determined social relations in the broader society. In a thesis he continued to develop in his pioneering books on global capitalism, Cox insisted that,

> There can hardly be a greater misconception than to approach this subject [race relations] in the traditional missionary spirit which seeks to discover elementary causes in assumed racial traits and pathologies, or behind the veil of proclaimed sexual fears. To do this would be to misapprehend the profound involvement of the future of capitalism in racial situations. Prime movers, to the contrary, must be sought in peculiar economic interests and power structures mainly in the South. The tremendous resistance to change in that area is suggestive of the role of the power-group which supports the existing social order.[10]

For those like us who came of age in the Reagan Era, the radical triumvirate of Cox, Du Bois, and James provided vital introductions to Marxism and social theory, as well as analyses of capitalism as a system that had to be viewed globally if one ever hoped to grapple with its deformities. These scholars taught many of us how to integrate history and theory into our movement-building work. Above all, they demonstrated that the systems of domination were not all-powerful—that they could be challenged and even overthrown given the right amount of energy, organizing, and solidarity. In the 1990s, the prophets of neoliberalism bragged that there was no longer any alternative to the "free market" world order and that we had reached "The End of History."[11] *Black Reconstruction*, *The Black Jacobins,* as well as *Caste, Class and Race,* taught us how to interrogate the inevitability of a system based on exploitation and gave us tools to uncover the bases of mass resistance to oppression and neocolonialism. These texts remain as vital as ever for building new social movements today. We are indebted to C.L.R. James for bringing the three books together in this remarkable lecture series.

While C.L.R. James finds much to praise in *Caste, Class and Race,* he also finds flaws.

Oliver Cromwell Cox was born in Trinidad in 1901, the same year as James. Like James, Cox left colonized Trinidad as a young man to pursue opportunity abroad. However (and James will emphasize this point in his lecture), while James traveled to England and immersed himself in leftist politics, Cox pursued a career in academia in the United States. Cox completed his master's degree in economics at the University of Chicago in 1932 and went on to earn a law degree at Northwestern and a Ph.D. in sociology at Chicago in 1938. He taught for most of his career at historically Black colleges including Wiley, Tuskegee, and Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri. His academic output was astonishing; however, his works remained dramatically underappreciated during his lifetime. As Herbert M. Hunter notes,

"Many reviewers, especially those ideologically opposed to Cox's ideas, dismissed his work as 'Marxist dogma' or 'communist propaganda' because of his critical analysis of capitalism and race relations."[12]

While C.L.R. James finds much to praise in *Caste, Class and Race,* he also finds flaws. James believes that Cox was an exceptional scholar; however, he argues that Cox's American academic training and his disconnection from broader left organizing—including Trotskyism and Pan-Africanism—placed limitations on his analysis. In contrast, James posits, Aimé Césaire's educational experiences in Martinique and France, as well as his travel within the international circuits of the anti-colonial movement, allowed Césaire to go farther than Cox. Hence, James calls Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (*Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*), "the most devastating critique of Western Civilization that has been done in the twentieth century." C.L.R. James is concerned here with the process whereby an individual comes to challenge the fundamental premises of the society she lives in. His thesis is that it takes more than individual brilliance or experience; it takes a rootedness in a broader community of struggle. James had argued, as a member of the Facing Reality organization in 1968,

> The only program, policy, perspective is the recognition that those with ideas will not lead the mass. As we have once more seen in France, the mass movement, as it has done for hundreds of years, will register its rejection of the social order in decay. And today more than ever the road is open between the mass movement and those who have ideas corresponding to the needs of the day.[13]

This is why C.L.R. James's criticism of Oliver Cox's educational background vis-à-vis Césaire's and W.E.B. Du Bois's is inconsistent. James emphasizes that Du Bois's time at Harvard with reform-minded faculty prepared him for a life of radicalism. He goes on to state that Du Bois's and Cesaire's experiences studying in Europe allowed them to get to the heart of what was wrong with Western civilization. In contrast, James argues, Oliver Cox's academic background as well as the fact he remained in the United States isolated him from the political education and comradeship that Césaire, Du Bois, and James received in Europe. At the same time however, James fails to note that Cox attended the University of Chicago at a time when its sociology and anthropology departments were teeming with scholars attempting to grapple with major social problems as well. Cox's intellectual development and sharpening critique of capitalism allowed him to imbibe and then surpass the best of what Chicago's luminaries such as Robert E. Park and William F. Oburn had to offer.[14] Cox's experiences in the heart of capitalist America, as well as decades of teaching at historically Black colleges such as Tuskegee and Lincoln University, obviously lent strength to his emphasis on the intersection of capitalism and racism. The reprinting of *Caste, Class and Race* by Monthly Review Press in 1959 and again in 2000—as well as C.L.R. James's lecture on the book at the Institute of the Black World in 1971—clearly demonstrate that Cox's oeuvre qualifies as movement scholarship containing "ideas corresponding to the needs of the day."

Now that scholars are returning to study the linkages between imperialism, slavery, and capitalism, *Black Reconstruction*, *The Black Jacobins*, as well as *Caste, Class and Race* should be read in organizing workshops, seminars, and everyplace where "education for liberation" is the ultimate goal.

Ravi Malhotra, a sponsor of *New Politics*, alerted Paul Ortiz to the existence of a recording of James's lecture in the summer of 2015. Malhotra kept the digital recording safe after receiving it from Professor Aldon Nielsen who had preserved it for many years. Nielsen recalls digitizing the original analog cassette tape around 2002. The recording had degraded markedly over the decades. A team of staff members at

the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program at the University of Florida restored a significant amount of the audio quality of the lecture, and then toiled several weeks to transcribe it. A note on editorial method used by the Proctor Program in processing the recording follows the text. Page numbers demarcated in brackets refer to the 1959 *Monthly Review* edition of Oliver Cromwell Cox's *Caste, Class and Race.*

The authors are grateful for the permission of Dr. Robert A. Hill to transcribe this lecture by C.L.R. James.

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The Class Basis of the Race Question in the United States

C.L.R. James

The Institute of the Black World, Atlanta, Georgia, June 16, 1971

Now as usual, ten past nine; I certainly will not go on beyond ten past ten. And I would like to say at once that this is the task. It is so difficult that it is as well to say at the beginning that it can be done. Five hundred and eighty-three pages [Oliver Cox's *Caste, Class and Race: A Study in Social Dynamics*].

And to discuss this book, in a minute I can discuss other books, my own book, Dr. Du Bois's book, or various other books. It is quite instructive.[1] You must have read a book like this over the years, and gradually what the book stands for will emerge. And what I'm very much concerned about today is the writing of the book and what the book *signifies* in the intellectual development of our people. And of our nation.

Now, I remember when this book came out. I was in the United States. I had been in the United States for eight or ten years. And the book created a *sensation*. Because, for the first time, a black man had made a scholarly and highly political attempt to organize and to go into problems which everybody knew were problems which concerned black people in the United States.

I remember very well the sensation that the book made. I remember my wife at that time, we talked about the book, and we heard what people were saying, and the book cost a lot of money. And I looked at her and I suggested, "You want to read it?" She said, "Yes." [Laughs] She went and bought it, and she read it right through.[2]

Now, the first thing we ought to do—and that is what is going to be so difficult and limited—is to decide what the book is about. And then we shall have some more general statements about what the book signifies. The book is about caste, class, and race. And as far as I know, this is the first attempt that has been made to discuss the caste question. And Cox came from the West Indies. I don't know when he came here. But he was very American in his attitudes. He's discussing the caste question, and he's a man of great intellectual energy and moral strength. He's right on this; he's unafraid of his conclusion. A very distinguished person. But his concern is the discussion of caste made *here*. That caste was not based upon race. And the racial attitudes in the United States, and in relation to black people, cannot be justified at all by any reference to the caste system.

I personally would have preferred that he had been to India and had seen the caste system in action over some months. I remember Vidia Naipaul—that West Indian writer.[3] I picked him up one day in London, and he had just returned from India. He hadn't completely moved [to London] as yet. And he told me why, he'd like to go there and see. Meanwhile, he stayed in the Caribbean. But we don't know anything about what the caste system of India is, in the

Transcribed by the staff of the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program: Justin Dunnavant, Randi Gill-Sadler, Justin Hosbey, Ryan Morini, and Paul Ortiz

West Indies. You have to *go* there and see it! And Vidia was not, at the time, an excitable person. And obviously he had been shocked and startled, and obviously *horrified* by the existence of the caste system, which he had seen and personally experienced. He had read about it, and we knew something about it, we had an idea. I remember he was very disturbed. And I would have preferred if Cox had gone, himself. I get the impression that he was writing from books. How can I prove that? Hmm. That not only depends on what is there, but it depends on what is *here*. But the work is very well done. He's obviously not printing a few ideas, he's gone into the subject seriously. And on page three, he says, "We dare to think of caste as we would of such institutions as labor unions, churches, or guilds in this society, and then the caste is some section of the society which exercises certain privileges." But, he says, that is not so! He says, "This society is a *caste society*."[4]

And right at the beginning, you have to understand that he's very much against the idea of using Western conceptions of history, Western conceptions of social development, and applying them to the analysis of different societies.[5] We have come very far in regard to that today. Now, on page five he says that, "The Hindus believe that the man's caste is irrevocably and functionally dependent upon his past lives." You see, Cox has in mind all the time the race question in the United States, and he's quite able, very concerned about, distinguishing [between India and the United States]. Now, nobody in the United States believes that if we're going to past history, and past lives, that you live according[ly] where you are in the United States. But the Hindus believe that. To what extent it was completely to believe, to what extent it was not only accepted by even the intellectuals who were opposed to it in surprising ways—yes, we'll go into that.

Now, on page thirty-three, he shows how different the caste system in India is in its ideological effect upon people. Not only do Hindus believe that a man is a member of a certain caste system because of his ancestors and his past generations, but, he says, it is based on the system of purity and impurity. And one important part of it is [that] the impure are the untouchable! Page thirty-three, "[The] high caste men would be veritably horror-stricken to accidentally come into contact with a Pariah. But the sense of untouchability is not limited to two groups; it pervades the system." What he's trying to do is to make us see that it is a kind of system, which is entirely different from the Western system and *cannot* be judged by the doctrines, the ideas, and the methods of Western civilization. And that was quite scientific to do in 1947 and [19]48.

Look at page eighty-five, the paragraph before the last. We shall refer again to this tendency to transfer one's own cultural attitudes to other social situations. That is very widespread today. That is the kind of mistake that no one can make today. Using the methods and ideas of Western civilization, and Western culture, and judging other civilizations by them. And as far as I know, this was the first time that this [idea] was made definitive, and put forward not only as a sense of dynamic movement, but as an ideological and political lesson. I am strongly moved by the idea that that was the particular point that Cox had in mind when writing the book: to elucidate the method of social investigation. And he took one, and he said, "That is that, and this is not this." Arguably, that has played a great role in argument. This is analysis in action.

Now, an important thing you will find on page ninety-seven: It was not a racial question. It was not a question of biological difference. If you look at paragraph two on page ninety-seven, you will see that Nesfield "insists that no racial theory of caste can stand." Do you understand what that means directly—in the United States? There is no racial theory of caste that can stand. Because before the system became organized, the population had already become inseparably mixed. I remember very well the excitement of

this book. (There were many things in it which many of us could see were quite false. And I will come to that.) "The restrictions of marriage which are *now* imposed by rules of caste did not begin to exist until at least a *thousand years* after the Aryans had come into the country, and by this time the Aryan blood had been absorbed beyond recovery into the indigenous" [97]. That is a tremendous statement. You understand the significance of that for what is taking place in the United States. Again, "The restrictions of marriage which are *now* imposed did not begin to exist at least until a *thousand* years after the Aryans had come!" So it was not a question of biology and racial distinctions. He says, "No!" Not that you have the racial distinction and caste came out of it. He says, "That's a lot of nonsense." He said, "Caste came out of that afterward."

Now, it is very important to see *how* it became that way. The persons who organized and who propagated and made the caste system, something that was absorbed deeply into the very consciousness as well as into the activity of the society, were not the bourgeoisie but the priesthood and whatever they preached. It was a priestly doctrine! Whereas, in Western society, the priests came after the Romans had formed the empire. And the priests guarded the feudal lords and represented the ideological and political importance of the feudal lords over the rest of society. These things had been preached by the masters, and *they* educated the people and promulgated the ideas that we know as the caste system today. That is quite different from Western civilization. *Quite* different.

Now, he goes on to say, "Belief in the fourfold"—paragraph two on page one hundred and five, paragraph three and four—"Belief in the fourfold division of caste in India has persisted from the Vedic period to this day, yet it appears never to have existed in fact. The persistence of this belief is probably due to the influence of Brahmans in the system." (They dominated the system; they were the highest caste, they were the priests, and they taught everybody what to believe.) "Quite obviously this ancient classification of castes is not the result of an objective study of Hindu society; rather, it represents a particular society as seen from the point of view of Brahmans. And, since Brahmans were the authors of practically all the early literature, their insights had more than an even chance of becoming generally accepted. As we have mentioned above, the concept 'Aryan-Anaryan' does not imply a white-caste versus black-caste relationship" [105]. And he goes into the question that the differences were not racial; they were not a difference of color. And he shows that in various places, some of the people at the top of the Indian society, and some of the goddesses and gods whom they worshipped, were dark-skinned people. The idea that it was a racial question and [that] it was a question of color has been introduced into that society by Western writers. And when that was done, the Brahmins themselves took it on! That is a very serious piece of work.

Now, he goes on to the question of class, and what I would like to draw your attention to [is] the question of estates. Because, in the French Revolution and in the French monarchy—the great, substantial monarchy of Europe for centuries—there were classes in the ordinary sense of the word. Yes. But the people had conceptions of themselves as different *estates*. The estate was the social conception of what the role you and your friends and associates claimed in society. … The whole basis of [the] American conception of society is the individual. That is it. But in the Middle Ages and up to the eighteenth century, the estate was the item and vital conception of various classes of society. The First Estate was the monarchy, and the aristocracy, who owned the land. The Second Estate was the clergy, who owned a vast deal of land and carried out a certain function similar to the function of the priests in the caste society where they had dominated completely. Because it did not dominate in that way. They

[the clergy] were landowners, but they carried out the ideas and taught what the feudal lords demanded, what was required. And then you had the rest of society, the bourgeoisie, the Third Estate.

Now, Cox goes on to speak of the change from estates into modern classes. And it is worthwhile mentioning, because he has a lot of vital and important information [about] that. Where did the bourgeoisie come from? Because, society in the Middle Ages existed: there were the nobility, the monarchy, the land owners; there was the clergy; and there were ordinary people around. And it [the bourgeoisie] is the offshoot of ordinary society, the people who could not get on very well [under feudalism]. In ordinary society the serfs who ran away, and [other] people, formed the basis of what became the bourgeois society in the town. Very important today to know where the bourgeoisie came from. It is not decisive, but it is well that you should learn periodically in the course of debates in which you participate. They were sensitive people who were the offspring and offshoots of feudal society. [They] got stuck together in the cities, and began to trade and to carry on business and to talk to one another, and build up so and so, and in time they began to make money. Because you make more money by trade than you can make by rent.[6]

And by the way, there are certain things you ought to know in history. Do you know that there was a tremendous development of trade that gave the bourgeoisie great strength? And made them really begin to move along and accumulate wealth. And do you know where it came from? You ought to know these things automatically. It came from the Crusades. When they went abroad to Jerusalem and the rest of that [region]. It was a religious conception, but they also had trade and commerce in mind. And you get some women and so on, priests and servants had it very good. They went there and they brought back a lot of stuff from the East, and [they] took things to the East, and that [trade] was very valuable. The East was very highly advanced, and that helped to build up the conception of trade. And international interchange [grew] and the bourgeoisie more and more became important people in the social structure.

So the bourgeoisie had established themselves in the city, and they called it a "commune," because they had all things, more or less, in common. Nobody had any aristocratic privileges there. That is the origin of the idea of the commune. But, the land belonged to the lord, and everybody's land belonged to the lord and the king. … And the bourgeois told [the lords], "Well, we would like to be able to do what we like *here*." And they [the lords] said, "Just pay us this rent and you are *free*! You are free from the money and the materials that you have to pay to the lord." So, the commune, having built up the cities and built up trade, and [the bourgeois] were able to buy their freedom from the lord and from the king. So, to this day you will see that the Lord Mayor of London can give the freedom of the city to the queen or to the prince! That is a very deeply established thing! Because in those days, after the commune had made a lot of money, and established themselves, in the city, they were masters. And when they give you the freedom of the city, they make [allow?] you [to] come in. And they will give the freedom of the city to the king and to the prince. That is a privilege because it was accepted that inside there, they were [the] bosses, and that would only take place because of the feudal domination that the landlords and the monarchy exercised in the rest of the world.

All this, Cox has very clear. And it is very valuable for people in the United States to read it. It is history. It is historical writing. But in Europe, it is not. Do you know why? He is an American; that is so obvious to me. In Europe, it is not, because in Europe, the city, and the feudal vestiges, and the habits and so forth, they have there still. As I'm sure, as you begin to open your eyes and you read, you *see* them. But you

don't see them in the United States. The United States only was born yesterday … and what is troublesome. They [Americans] have no sense of history. In Europe, you go to France, you go to Italy, you go to Spain, you *see*. You can't help it. And when you *read* the famous [literature], you read Chaucer, and you read Shakespeare—and you read them not for history, but you read because they're interesting—and you see them all around, you see with the castles, and the Inns of Court, and the rest of them there. The big castles, the Duke of Norfolk, is *still* a duke, and a great Catholic duke, the senior duke in England. And you walk about, once you begin to look at what is happening, it is all around you. And when the queen goes down to Parliament and makes the speech with the prime minister—there was a time when the king read the speech or the queen—and she had written it herself, of all people. But they still have the letters, by which and so forth. Yes. You certainly should go to Europe. And see where all this comes from. Certainly.

Now, we have to take one of the great weaknesses of Mr. Cox. Look at page two hundred and sixty-two. Look at the last paragraph. And I hope that all remember this; it is a very serious error. But it does not alter the great value of the book. "However, the charge of the capitalist politicians that Roosevelt was a communist is in its essence correct." Who believes that? But in 1947 [Cox wrote,] "His policies and actions had the potentialities of taking the economy step by step, inch by inch, out of the hands of the bourgeoisie, and of turning it over to the people as a whole." It's a terrible mistake! And he made that mistake simply because his experience was the experience of an American citizen. "[A]nd that is exactly what is meant by communistic activities. The logical conclusion of such a trend must necessarily result in the overthrow of the capitalist order. There has probably been no individual in the history of the United States who has done so much to bring about democracy and therefore communism in the United States as President Roosevelt; and there has been no individual so much beloved by the people, and so much hated by the bourgeoisie as he" (262). That is very problematic. A European writer of some intellectual distinction could not possibly write that.

Now, if you read the history of President Roosevelt and what he did when he met Stalin and his conceptions of the relationship between the United States and Russia after the war, you will see that Roosevelt believed that he had made a personal impression on Stalin and both of them would be able to work [together]. He was the original leader of calling Stalin what? Do you know what they called him?
Unidentified audience member: "Uncle?"

Uncle! And he was making this colossal mistake, to believe that with his personal connection with Stalin [he could attenuate] this tremendous conflict between opposing societies [that went on] until the end of his days. … And in fact there were times when he—you will see that in [Harry] Hopkins' writing—there were times when he [Roosevelt] made jokes about Churchill and made Churchill very angry, and Churchill was very hostile, and he [Roosevelt] seemed to gang up with Stalin to make jokes against Churchill in the belief that *they're* right.[7] The conflict between Russia and the United States was being solved. I mean, that is there in writing. And you are not to make jokes about it, or to laugh. It is typical. … But, the Americans have their own method, and this is very American, where [Cox] says they loved Roosevelt so much and the bourgeoisie hated him. There you go. This is a *terrible* paragraph. Terrible! Roosevelt was not a communist. He was no more communist than I was a cat.

And I will tell you what is the significance of Roosevelt. It's very important. Up to 1929, America was made, more or less, by the principles and the practice of free enterprise. Capitalistic competition, and something will happen, and the capitalistic political parties would work out this and that and the other. And

free competition was the essence of it. In 1929, the free competition went to *pieces*! It went to pieces all over the world. The Depression was all over the world, and nowhere did it go as far as in the United States. But the principle of free competition was absolutely untroubled by previous historical developments [such] as [those] in Europe. It went to pieces. And what Roosevelt did was to establish that free competition would not run as it did in the past. Roosevelt introduced the fact that the government was responsible for maintaining some balance and order in the economy and seeing that free competition did not rush to its extremes, untouchable by the government intervention. That's what Roosevelt did. He was not a communist. In fact, using dialectical thinking, he was the *savior* of the capitalist system! Because if he didn't do that, God knows what would have happened. But he said, "You will not make as much money as you did in the past. You fellows have dominated the economy, you're not going to do that [any longer]." And then he fixed it—he didn't fix it very much, but he prevented it from going into collapse. That he did. But for Cox to call him a communist is typical of what was happening in 1945 or thereabouts.

And then Cox goes over to the race question. And there, he's extremely good. Cox is aware that the race question did not exist from all the previous facts. He's aware of that. Cox states *definitively* that in 1492, when Columbus leaves Europe to America, and slavery and the slave trade started, that [that] began the modern world. … That time was important, because, not up to today, since World War II happened, and World War I, and for some years after, it was the basis of the South. And the South's ideology dominated. So, Cox had given his blows on the question of the caste system. He said, "[I]t is not a racial hierarchy, is it?" And now, he's saying that the race question in the United States, here, that came in Western civilization from about 1500, from the beginning of capitalism and the slave era, and slavery, and modern capitalism. It began then, and before that it didn't exist—and that was something to say. And to say politically.

And what I want to go ahead, go on with now, is—the last part of what I want to talk about is what he has to say about Gunnar Myrdal. The race problem in the United States. Because Gunnar Myrdal's book is a very American book.[8] There's a mass of information in the book. He got a lot of people together. By the way, do you know how that book was done? The American government, an important person in the American government says, "This race question has reached a state where we've got to do something about it." And they sent for Gunnar Myrdal, who is a great scholar and sociologist, and told him, "Tell us something about it." And he produced this monstrous book. Because Gunnar Myrdal said it was an "American dilemma," the "Negro problem." These words are very important. It is an American dilemma. You see, though it is a dilemma, it was a problem that cut the throat of American society that we have today. We'll use "dilemma." [Laughter] Nowadays people don't believe at all what the government says. President Kennedy went so far as to say, "That it is right when we want to deceive the enemy, that we should make statements that deceive the American people because that is a necessity of government." Kennedy said so. So, when people say, "These fellows are lying all the time, you can't trust them." The bourgeoisie comes up to their friends, says there's a "credibility gap." Credibility gap!

Now modern young people today do what they like. They say, "Your society, what you taught us, you never taught us anything. You didn't know anything, so we are going to do what we want to do." The bourgeoisie, sheesh! The bourgeoisie's in trouble. They put them in a "permissive society." They aren't permitting anything! Nobody asked them permission. But they are still [saying], "You are a permissive society."[9] [Laughter] And Gunnar Myrdal uses "an American dilemma." They do that all the

time! "American dilemma." And he [Cox] says that Gunnar Myrdal will not face the question that it is a conflict of the races based on the economic struggle, and the chapter on Gunnar Myrdal there is *very* fine. The chapter on Gunnar Myrdal is a very fine subject. I understand that Cox is now at work on another big work, and I believe that he will produce something. This book, I'm going to talk about it a little later in general for what it is.

1947. In 1948, I was doing a work on dialectics, Hegel and Marxism.[10] And later sometime, I will be speaking on this in Detroit. And later this year I'm going to give two talks on Huey, Angela, and the dialectic. Now here is C.L.R. James' *World Revolution 1917-1936: The Rise and Fall of the Communist International*. This is a Kraus reprint, 1970.[11] The book was written in 1937. *This* [*Caste, Class & Race]* was written in 1947, but in 1937 I had already gone way beyond where Cox is. And that is not because I was smart; it was because I was working in Europe. I could not have written this book without the *immense* accumulation of material and ideas which Trotskyists [had gathered]. [Cox] was working practically alone in the United States. I don't know if he ever was a member of the Communist Party, but he had decided that their method was not his, and he was independently working at it. I'm trying to get you to understand that the book is the product of a socialist strain. I could not have written this book alone.

I will tell you what this book *[World Revolution]* is.[12] [Chapter] number one, "Marxism"; number two, "The Fore-Runners of the Third International"; number three, "The War and the Russian Revolution"; number four, "The Failure of the World Revolution and the Foundation of the International"; "Lenin and Socialism"; "Stalin and Socialism"; Stalin Kills the 1923 [German] Revolution"; "The Kulak and the British General Council"; "Stalin Ruins the Chinese Revolution"—page 229 to 268, forty pages. And so forth. "After Hitler, Our Turn." Without all my friends and all the material, and so forth, what kind of predicament would I be [in] and what would I have accomplished? But Cox was working, not practically alone, but he didn't have the environment which I did have and which enabled me to produce this in 1937, and I published it. When he was struggling with this [*Caste, Class, and Race]*, I was already working on the Hegelian dialectic and its relation to Marxism.

I wrote another book, *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways.* Do you know that book? It's a book on Herman Melville.[13] Do you know what that book is about? I said [to myself] that Marxists needed a certain book that would give a conception of literature and art in relation to the economic base. We didn't have one—I certainly didn't have one—so I wrote it. And it was a very high standard of political [criticism]—and it wasn't that James was of a high standard. I couldn't be of low standard because there were lots of people around me. And the United States [was backward politically] in relation to Europe; I was living in Europe first, and I came here to the United States, and that's what Cox didn't do. And that's why—[though] he's a fine intellect and obviously a man of great ideological morality, etcetera—[Cox could not achieve such a high standard.] He made some mistakes and he worked for many years, but I could see that he was working with—he didn't have around him what he should have had. I don't know whether he was a member of the Communist Party, but I know this: He had gone away from that method because the Communists used to say, "Marx said," "Lenin said," and therefore [that] tells us the truth. "Marx and Lenin said, and old Stalin continued it with Marx and Lenin—that is the truth." Cox does not say that. So I am interested in the book from that point of view.

Now, I think I should introduce you to some of the things that Cox did *not* do. I believe that it is obvious that I respect him, and I think his book did some *very* important things at that time. And I was here, and I know the impact

that the book made on people. But I wanted to say—so, I wrote *The Black Jacobins*. And I think that today, *The Black Jacobins* as a political organism, and the way it is functioning, is more active and meeting more people and moving more people in the political direction of this movement. I think so.

Now, I want to take another West Indian: Aimé Césaire. He wrote a famous book, *Cahier d'un Retour au Pays Natal*, "A Statement on the Return to My Native Country."[14] And has anybody got *The Black Jacobins* here? And can you give it to me please? Thank you. This was written in 1938, and Césaire was a West Indian. I talked to Césaire in Cuba the other day. I liked his work. He knew that I had written about it, and he said he liked mine. And I asked him, "Where, when did you begin?" He told me at the Victor Schoelcher School, in Martinique.[15] Very fine school, in the Caribbean. I was educated at Queen's Royal College, very fine school. Eight or nine masters, all men from Oxford and Cambridge. They brought something, and they taught us. Victor Schoelcher School. Harrison College in Barbados, one of the famous classical schools in the world, Latin and Greek. But there were very few of us who got it. Education that we were getting through the mainland people who came [from] abroad. … I asked him where he began, he said "I began [at the] Victor Schoelcher School." I said, "What did you do there?" He said, "Latin, and Greek, and French Literature." The essence of Western civilization is Latin and Greek, and French. You get the transference of it into the modern world. I said, "And then where did you venture to go?" He said, "I went to the École Normale Supérieure." This is a famous school, the most famous school in France. Chiefly notorious for producing great scholars and Communists. And they produced one in Césaire; he became a member of the Communist Party. I said, "What did you do at the École Normale?" He said, "Latin, and Greek, and French literature." I said, "And then?" He said, "I went to the Sorbonne." And I said, "What did you do at the Sorbonne? I suppose you did the same." "Yes. Latin, and Greek, and French literature."

And he [Césaire] said, "But I have another thing to tell you." He said, "I went back to teach at the Victor Schoelcher School." But, before he went back, he wrote the most devastating critique of Western Civilization that has been done in the twentieth century. This is the "*Cahier*." In other words, he *attacked* it. He could attack it as he did because he understood it from the inside out. He had spent, from the time he was six or seven until he was a man of about twenty-five, studying it. They had taught it to him, and that was characteristic of every West Indian, and in a sense, that is Europeans' influence upon the West Indian. Cox didn't have that. This is for Césaire. Césaire says we've got to pay for this civilization! Pay for the Western Civilization. (I'm looking for one that says we've got to go to Africa.)

Hoorah for those who never invented anything
Hoorah for those who never explored anything
Hoorah for those who never mastered anything

He says the basis of a human life you can find in the African tribal system. Their art, their philosophy, their politics; that's what Césaire was saying. He had never been to Africa. But the rejection of Western Civilization was so complete after this Western education that he went on to say, "I reject Western Civilization because":

[Recites from Césaire's poem "Displaced"]
Listen to the white world
its horrible exhaustion from its
immense labours

They are tired today, and they were very tired since 1938. Césaire was able to see that.

its rebellious joints cracking under
the pitiless stars
its blue steel rigidities, cutting
through the mysteries of the flesh
listen to their vainglorious conquests
trumpeting their defeats
listen to the grandiose alibis of their
pitiful floundering

He says, that is, "What does 'civilization' mean?" That is Césaire. Cox, brought up in the American environment, hadn't reached so far. I want you to understand that. He was the same intellectual, pointed [in the same direction], [with] the same energy, the same determination, the same honesty, and everything else, but he grew up in this environment. I grew up in the other environment and was educated elsewhere. And by 1937, I could write *World Revolution,* which in many ways was beyond Cox. And in 1948, I was doing *Dialectic*, and in [19]38 Césaire could reject [Western civilization] completely, and so forth. That is the difference. And you can appreciate, therefore, the *immense* worth and *high* significance of the work of Dr. Du Bois.

But you will see, in an important letter that Dr. Du Bois wrote to Kwame Nkrumah, where it said—I think it was in 1958—Africa has to go the socialist way.[16] He says, "Pardon me, Russia and Eastern Europe are socialist." And he says, "In Scandinavia and Britain they are going Socialist. And Mr. Roosevelt, even in America, even in America he's introducing some socialist ideas in the government. You watch," he said. It's not surprising that Cox, a much younger man, and had not getting the background—Du Bois would have never gone so far to say that Roosevelt was introducing communism. But he says "some socialist doctrine." I wish you would look up that. It is in the form of a letter to Nkrumah, telling him what was to be the future of the economy of Africa. When he said that in Britain and the Scandinavian countries certain elements of socialism were being introduced, and [that] even in the United States, some activities of the New Deal were socialist in character, I want you to understand, he [Cox] lived in a certain environment and he had certain contacts. It is not accidental that he did. The West Indian and the Europeans completely—I remember … [missing text]. I couldn't have written that at all. No! I'll tell you what I wrote it in 1936.

> Permanent Revolution or permanent slaughter, Trotsky has written. What other prospect is there? The Tories accept the permanent slaughter. The international Socialists accept the Permanent Revolution. Liberals and Social Democrats, including Roosevelt, are the comedians of the modern world. They are on the side of the permanent slaughter, but want it dignified by the League of Nations, or Collective Security, or some such twaddle. Their special technique lies in being deceived. They were deceived by Grey before 1914; they were deceived by Lloyd George and Wilson in 1919; they were deceived by John Simon over Manchuria in 1931; they were deceived by Samuel Hoare; by Baldwin; by Anthony Eden. If Beelzebub stood on the Treasury Bench without troubling to disguise his horns and tail in coat and topper, and swore to them that this coming war would be fought for Christianity, they would rush to support it, to bewail after that they were deceived.[17]

[Laughter]

You see where I come from? I want you to understand that. You have to take into—I began when I spoke about *The Black Jacobins*. I began with where I came from, and how I met, and who I met, and so forth, that the book came from there. …. What is a person's life but of a whole lot of people? That is what a book is. And Cox's book should be read historically in that way. And I would be glad if you look up that [quotation] in Du Bois, in the letter to Nkrumah, when Nkrumah became ruler, talked about socialism in the way that Cox said. So, okay.

I think now we could be ready to discuss. There were some other things I could say, but there's no need. I've done the best I could. I hope I've given you some idea of what this book was *doing*, what he was aiming at, what he actually achieved, and that there are serious mistakes, but they are part of the environment in which he lived. And I tell you what was happening to us West Indians writers, we who were educated and had the experience of the Europeans, who had a lot of political experience which Cox and company were not able to get in the United

States … Okay.

Facilitator: Okay. Why don't we just start right quick. Questions for discussion, since everything seems so informative. What time is it now? Ten o'clock?

James: By my watch, five past ten.

Unidentified Questioner 1: I would like to know ... because I really don't have a formulated question, but it's kind of bothering me, and maybe you could get to it. And I feel you saying that, Cox being a product of the environment that he was a part of in the United States, but working alone. But you seem also to be—maybe not—it just appears that you're negating the possibility that there was, if not *there*, at least *evolving* within the United States, a kind of a political environment that determines what happens to black people in this country, is what I want to say. So the race question in the United States would be sort of out of context in a European environment. Had he been working in a European environment, he might have been able to come—he would have definitely been able to come up with some position, some statements, about how the racial attitudes came about. But in terms of understanding and knowing what they were in the United States, and dealing with *that* type of thing, you had to be a part of *that* environment. And I know that doesn't salvage the whole book, and I wasn't really trying to, but I was really trying to speak to the point of whether or not within the United States and working in the United States, here alone or amidst the, let's say, semi-intellectual environment, that if Cox was not presenting a total picture of political thought, he was at least presenting that picture of political thought that might have been evolving out of the United States.

James: Cox is very *plain:* "*Caste, Class and Race*." And what I'm saying is, what the comprehensive task that he attempted with such courage and such ability, he lacked certain things which he would have had if he had been in the European environment. And in four of five years, I was learned on the Chinese Revolution, and I was able to read this and that, and I met a marvelous bunch of people. I will tell you something about myself. I went to England in 1932, with this immense knowledge of European literature and history. And I met the Trotskyists in those days, you know; they were the people who had been Leninists from 1917! And they had broken with Stalin, hoping to restore the Leninist doctrine! There is a new generation of Trotskyists who know nothing about that, but the Trotskyists I met in 1932 who educated me were Leninists. And they were seeking to restore the doctrines and practices and political morality of Lenin, over what Stalin had introduced, and those were the people who I learned from. And I haven't the slightest doubt that if Cox had had that environment something else would have come out. Because Cox wasn't attempting a racial question, he was doing everything. But you see that when he wrote about the classes, and he said they began as estates, and then moving from the estates to classes. And then from classes to modern [society]—all that is there. He wasn't even—I said that he was somewhat limited, and limited he had to be, because he was attempting so *much* in this book. That's all. I understand that he did so much.

Unidentified Questioner 2: On the part dealing with fascism, and stuff about classes, he made a statement on page 197.

James: Ah, I like a question that mentions the page. Yes, what does he say?

Unidentified Questioner 2: It's like, in the middle of the page. "But nationalism breeds counter-nationalism; hence fascism merely clears the way for unending struggle 'between mighty antagonists, each of whom can enlist the powers of whole states.'"

James: And that's exactly, that is Leninism, he says basically, but go ahead.

Unidentified Questioner 2: What I wanted you

to do for me, was to tell me how that operated, if it did at all, in your book *Black Jacobins*. In other words, the antagonism between, at one point between mulattoes and Toussaint's former generals, and himself, how does it relate to this particular statement?

James: No. The antagonism that is most important, that is very important in relation to this work—the antagonism between two very different powers: Britain and France. And to set the New World between them, and was able to use the antagonism between them so as to bring Haiti on the map. That is what he's talking about here. And today, however, in the twentieth century, capitalism does not fight another capitalism, but they seek to dominate whole economies! The Japanese sought to dominate a large part of China, not only to exploit them physically, but to have the labor of the population at their disposal. And when these two large state capitalist blocs, the United States on one side and Russia on the other, began to dominate sections of the world, then the struggle was a struggle for world mastery! So there are two sets of antagonisms going on: There is the antagonism *inside* this particular country, but there is [also] the antagonism on a world scale. And in 1800 when Haiti came up, it was the antagonism between Britain and the French. It is out of that that the Haitians came out. And Cuba came out today and has been able to hold itself because of the antagonism between the United States and Russia. And Cuba benefits by that. So in addition to the internal antagonism of different sections of society, you have the antagonism on a world scale of this imperialist model. Cox is very much aware of that. Cox is aware of that. I am very much aware of that, in what I'm doing here also.

Unidentified Questioner 3: Mr. James, if Cox is remembered by Americans writ large. His is a book that takes the question of color and places it in the world. In the context of *Color and Democracy* by Dr. DuBois, how would you compare the two?

James: No, Du Bois was a different type than Cox entirely. Du Bois had an absolutely magnificent education. Du Bois went up to Harvard, and at Harvard, there was … William James, there was George Santayana, some of the greatest intellectuals of the period—as a matter of fact, they were—at no time did Harvard ever have a body of teachers of the intellectual quality and creative capacity that they had when Du Bois went there. And then he left there and he went to Europe, he went to Germany. And studied in Germany because at that time, it was one of the centers of the European development. Two things were taking place in Germany: The Marxists were busily upsetting the ideological ideas of capitalist society. And there were people who were doing splendid work. Werner Sombart was one, and the social democracy of Germany was busy fighting against them; and secondly, sociology was being—what was the great sociologist?

Unidentified audience member: Weber.

James: Weber. They were busy developing sociology against the Marxism, and Du Bois went into the middle of that. So when he came back to the United States, that was the kind of education that very few people had had. Cox *didn't* have that, that's what I'm trying to say. He had already the benefit of all that was most important at the time.

And I would like to mention that at Harvard, in 1900, 1898, or thereabouts, what had happened was, after and during the Civil War, American capitalism had begun to develop. And by 1900, it was clear that the ideas on which the American democracy had been founded had gone by the board, and these capitalistic monsters now dominated the world. Populism was an attempt in the [18]90s to try to do something, but William J. Bryan made a great speech, and that was the end of it as far as he was concerned. And George Santayana, William James, and a whole lot of

these others, were searching for ways in which to develop the old American principles established in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, et cetera, against this monster which had appeared as a result of the Civil War. Du Bois was a part of all that. And he went to Europe and took part in the great intellectual discoveries that were being made. So when he came back and began to write and work, he was not interested in the same thing that Cox was in. Du Bois was one of the great intellectuals of the twentieth century—not one of the great *black* intellectuals. No sir. One of the intellectuals of the twentieth century. It so happened that he had had a magnificent education.

Unidentified Questioner 3: Let me rephrase the question. What I'm trying to say is, at the conclusion of the Second World War, Cox writes a book. Du Bois writes another book. Those books are the product of the environment of the times; the same could [be] said of the dialectical relationship between *Color and Democracy* and *Caste, Class, and Race*. They represent two different kinds of things. That's the question I am asking. What do you see as the dialectical relationship between *Caste, Class, and Race* and *Color and Democracy*? Capitalism?

James: I think that Cox is doing, has accepted at the beginning. He says so. And that's a very useful question. Because there's a lot of—Cox says, "[W]e have an observation by a distinguished sociologist, the accuracy of which would certainly not be impaired, simply because we recognize the nature of the re-statement of the position that has been the very driving force behind the colossal intellectual output of Karl Marx."[18] [xi]. In the history of historical perspectives, it is important that the assertion be known to have been emphasized by Marx. But in so far and so forth. In other words, he was using the Marxist doctrine but applying it to caste and applying it to the race question. But he said he was a Marxist. And he wrote the book because he felt that things should have been said about the class/racial question in the United States, by means of the Marxist analysis, that were not being said. I think that is what he was trying to do. His whole analysis of class, and the estates and so forth, and the analysis of fascism, and the analysis of class consciousness. And his attack on Myrdal, is because Myrdal will not accept the class basis of the race question in the United States. That's what he [Cox] was doing.

Appendix & Editorial Note

This transcript and the lecture are copyrighted and may not be reproduced without the expressed written permission of Dr. Robert A. Hill, the literary executor of the estate of C.L.R. James.

The lecture was transcribed and audit-edited by Justin Dunnavant, Randi Gill-Sadler, Justin Hosbey, Ryan Morini, and Paul Ortiz, staff members of the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program at the University of Florida. Deborah Hendrix, digital humanities coordinator at SPOHP used TwistedWave, SoundSoap, and spot amplitude enhancement to restore the audio quality of the recorded lecture. Minor editorial changes have been made in the text in order to preserve the integrity of the overall lecture. Ellipses in the text indicate passages that were impossible to transcribe with certainty. The notes and citations in the text were added in order to provide the reader with an introduction to key readings, concepts, individuals, and events that James cites throughout the course of the lecture.

NOTES

1. James is referring to his *The Black Jacobins and Du Bois' Black Reconstruction*.

2. Constance Webb (1918-2005) was a socialist and a labor activist as well as an accomplished writer, actress, and biographer of Richard Wright. She was James's second wife. She writes about her life with James as well as her interactions with Wright, Chester Himes, and the political milieu of the left in the 1950s in, *Not Without Love: Memoirs* (Dartmouth Press, 2003).

3. V.S. Naipaul was born in Chaguanas, Trinidad, in 1932. James and Naipaul were friends and correspon-

dents for many years after Naipaul began his literary career. His first novels, foremost of which was *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961), were set in Trinidad. Although political difference separated them, James retained a great respect for Naipaul and the latter depicted James in *A Way in the World* as the character Lebrun. Naipaul received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2001. See Rhonda Cobham-Sander, "Consuming the Self: V.S. Naipaul, CLR James, and A Way in the World," *Anthurium: A Caribbean Studies Journal* (vol. 5, Issue 2, December 2007), 1-22.

4. The full quote from *Caste, Class, and Race* is, "Hence to think of castes as we would of such institutions as labor unions, churches, or guilds is to begin with a false conception. One caste cannot exist in an otherwise casteless society, for castes are interdependent social phenomenon" (3).

5. This was a critical point that Cedric Robinson in *Black Marxism (University of North Carolina Press, 1983)* applied to James's own work and to the scholarship of activists working in the Black Radical Tradition. See Robin D.G. Kelley's introduction to Robinson's *Black Marxism,* xii.

6. In *The German Ideology,* Marx and Engels argued, "By the mere fact that it is a class and no longer an estate, the bourgeoisie is forced to organize itself no longer locally, but nationally, and to give a general form to its mean average interests. Through the emancipation of private property from the community, the State has become a separate entity, beside and outside civil society; but it is nothing more than the form of organization which the bourgeois necessarily adopt both for internal and external purposes, for the mutual guarantee of their property and interest." Karl Marx with Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology* (1846; Prometheus Books, 1998), 99.

7. Harry Hopkins was an adviser of President Roosevelt's and accompanied him to the Yalta Conference in 1945 where Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin met. C.L.R. James was an anti-Stalinist, and he will discuss his ideas on Stalin later in this lecture.

8. Gunnar Myrdal was a prominent economist and a Swedish Social Democrat. He was hired by the Carnegie Corporation to conduct the study that eventually was published as *An American Dilemma* in 1944. Cox was highly critical of Myrdal for eschewing economic explanations in racial inequality. See: Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1944).

9. A popular phrase used in the United States and United Kingdom in the 1960s to refer to changing values in the society, particularly among youth. Mary Evans notes, "The 'permissive' society, as it was called with loathing and hatred by some and with enthusiasm by others, began to allow a greater degree of freedom in the public expression of those forms of personal behavior—for example, homosexuality—that had been publicly unacceptable." Mary Evans, *The Imagination: Detective Fiction and the Modern World* (Continuum, 2009). See also Alan Petigny, *The Permissive Society: America, 1941-1965* (Cambridge University Press, 2009).

10. C.L.R. James, *Notes on Dialectics* (1948; repr., Lawrence Hill & Co., 1981).

11. C.L.R. James, *World Revolution, 1917-1936: The Rise and Fall of the Communist International* (1937; Nendeln: Kraus Reprint, 1970).

12. Here, James is reading actual chapter headings and key themes of *World Revolution.*

13. C.L.R. James, *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways: The Story of Herman Melville and the World We Live in.* With a new introduction by Donald E. Pease. (1953; repr., Hanover: University Press of New England, 2001).

14. Originally published in 1939, Césaire's *Notebook of a Return to My Native Land* became a pivotal text in the burgeoning Pan-African and anti-colonial movements of the time; James frequently drew from Césaire to illustrate the forward motion of Caribbean and African struggles for freedom. In his essay, "From Toussaint L'Ouverture to Fidel Castro," which appears in the revised, 1936, edition of *Black Jacobins*, James draws from *Notebook* to highlight the centrality of Africa to world revolution. See James, *Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, rev. ed. (1938; repr., Vintage Books, 1989), 399-400.

15. Founded in 1902, Lycée Victor Schoelcher helped to produce generations of remarkable students including Césaire, Frantz Fanon (whom Césaire mentored), and Édouard Glissant, among others.

16. The correspondence between Du Bois and Nkrumah, and Du Bois's thoughts on the meaning of independence in Africa, is referenced in W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Autobiography of W.E.B. Du Bois* (International Publishers, 1968), 400-406.

17. James is quoting from *World Revolution*, Chapter 15, "A Fourth International The Only Hope." For a version accessible on the internet, see: www.marxists.org/archive/james-clr/works/world/ch15.htm (Accessed October 13, 2015). See also: James, *World Revolution: 1917-1936: The Rise and Fall of the Communist International* (London: Martin Secker and Warburg Ltd, 1937) p. 419.

18. Cox begins this passage with the statement by Louis Wirth that, "[R]esearch in the social sciences will remain stunted and inadequate until it includes the search for knowledge on power relations among men and the means for generating the will and the capacity for action directed toward the achievement of a good society." Cox traces the origins of this idea to "the colossal intellectual output of Karl Marx." *Caste, Class, and Race*, xi.

Prospects for Turkey

A Historical Perspective

Daniel Johnson

In a June 2015 election, the new People's Democracy Party (HDP) of Turkey passed a highly undemocratic 10 percent threshold to enter the Turkish parliament. In addition to placing a leftist, pro-Kurdish-rights party in the government, the election saw the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) lose its parliamentary majority, seriously damaging President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's ambition to change the country's government from a parliamentary to a presidential system—a barely concealed effort to enhance executive, and hence Erdoğan's, hold on power.

In snap elections called by the AKP just five months later, however, the ruling party obtained 49.4 percent of the vote and regained its parliamentary majority in a dramatic and dispiriting reversal. Though most of the AKP's increase came from voters disillusioned with the far-right Nationalist Action Party (MPH), the HDP lost almost a million votes. Crucially, the leftist party was again able to surpass the 10 percent barrier and therefore remain in government, though Erdoğan and AKP leaders view the election as a true expression of the unitary "national will."

What happened over the summer of 2015 to account for the reversal? For starters, the AKP government consistently tried to link HDP members to the officially outlawed Workers' Party of Kurdistan (PKK) after initiating an "anti-terror" campaign against both the Islamic State (ISIS) and the PKK. One problem with the government's dual anti-terror narrative was the fact that violence over the summer was largely directed against the pro-Kurdish left. In July two ISIS suicide bombers targeted a group of socialist Turkish youths in the city of Suruç, killing 33, while in October, ISIS bombed a "labor, peace, and democracy" rally organized by trade unions in Ankara; more than 100 were killed in the heinous attack. While government opponents blamed the state for failing to protect civilians and holding an election in an atmosphere of violence and intimidation, the AKP (and crucially, pro-government media) implausibly accused the PKK of being involved in the attack, while portraying itself as the only power in the country capable of imposing order in an increasingly chaotic environment.

The AKP's successful strategy to maintain its grip on power in 2015 should be seen as part of a wider authoritarian trajectory in recent years that has included assaults on the rights of workers, women, the press, ethnic and religious minorities, and the commons. A number of scholars have linked the rise of the AKP in the twenty-first century with neoliberal reforms in the wake of a military coup in 1980. The decimation of the Turkish left during the coup led to the implementation of pro-market policies, while the state simultaneously promoted the public expression of citizens' Muslim identity. By the early 2000s the AKP had successfully fused a conservative religious orientation with an apparent commitment to transparency, democracy, and freedom in what a number of writers have referred to as a novel hegemonic project.[1]

While analysis of post-1980 transformations is essential to understanding current strug-

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gles, it is important to recognize that the origins of many conflicts in contemporary Turkey have deep roots in the country and region's past, dating to the demise of the Ottoman Empire and the construction of the Turkish nation-state in the 1920s and 1930s. Moreover, while it is true that the destruction of the left during the coup explains in part the current weakness of radical forces in Turkey, the much longer historical suppression of the left, as well as the left's own shortcomings, plays an important role in the current balance of forces. Understanding the AKP's strategic victory in the fall of 2015—in particular the climate of fear, conspiracy, and nationalist chauvinism that surrounded the election—requires knowledge of a history rooted in divisions and struggles that long predate the AKP, neoliberalism, or the 1980 coup.

Ambiguous Legacies: From Empire to Republic

Since coming to power in 2002, the AKP has perpetuated a phenomenon known as "Ottomania," or "neo-Ottomanism." From the popular historical fiction television series "The Magnificent Century" (about sixteenth-century sultan Suleiman the Magnificent) to the numerous government-sponsored renovations of Ottoman-era mosques, cemeteries, and palaces in Istanbul, the imperial predecessor of the nation has become ubiquitous in Turkish culture. A particularly divisive recent example has been the construction of Erdoğan's "White Palace" in Ankara, a $350 million presidential residence designed to reflect Ottoman themes as well as to symbolize the power of the "New Turkey."

At its peak in the sixteenth century, the Ottoman Empire held vast territories in North Africa, the Middle East, and southeastern Europe. Submerged under neonationalist celebrations of the formerly powerful state, however, lies a narrative of decline in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as growing Russian and Western powers increasingly threatened Ottoman sovereignty. By the late nineteenth century, the once mighty empire had become the "sick man of Europe," and the "Eastern Question"—how to maintain a balance of power with the seemingly inevitable dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire—increasingly preoccupied Russian and European imperialists.

Related internal and external threats to Ottoman rule in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries contribute to current understandings of global power relations and Turkey's—ostensibly resurgent—place in the region and world. In order to finance the creation of modern militaries and bureaucracies to counter threats from France, Britain, and Russia, the Ottoman government ironically became heavily indebted to European capital. The economic liberalization of the empire demanded by European (mainly British) creditors in exchange for European loans largely benefited Christian Greek and Armenian traders, while many traditional handicrafts were destroyed. By the 1870s, as the wealth and power of Christian communities rose, popular opposition to reforms imposed by outside powers unsurprisingly took a xenophobic cast.

During the same period the rise of ethnonationalist movements within the empire increasingly threatened Ottoman territorial integrity. Greece obtained independence in 1821, and by the late nineteenth century, rebellions of Christian peasants in the Balkans and the emergence of an Armenian nationalist movement resulted in large-scale violence and massacres. The Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 ended with the loss of almost all the empire's European territories, and population transfers of Muslims and Christians produced a situation in which ethnic Turks for the first time became a majority of the Ottoman population.

Fears of domestic separatists in league with foreign powers intent on overturning the state culminated in the virtual destruction of the Ottoman Armenian population in World War I. During the war, between 800,000 and 1.5 million Armenians were killed, which is to this

day justified by many in Turkey in terms of military necessity. Though denial of the Armenian Genocide has lost credibility among academics in recent years, influential writers like Andrew Mango, Sükrü Hanioğlu, and others remain circumspect when discussing the "deportations."

Though the Great War brought an end to the Ottoman Empire, a successful war of independence fought under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal created the Turkish Republic in 1923. Kemal was a product of late imperial attempts to create a modern military and bureaucracy. Often educated in Europe, young Muslim recruits constituted a new intelligentsia beginning with the Young Ottomans of the 1860s, and the Young Turks in the late nineteenth century. European intellectual developments greatly influenced these officers and bureaucrats; however, while nationalist and positivist ideas were prominent, socialist theories made no inroads in Young Turk ideology. Kemal would become a member of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), a secret organization initially linked to the Young Turks that came to play a leading role in the creation of a constitutional government in 1908, the massacre of Armenians during the war, and the establishment of the Turkish Republic in the 1920s.

Though committed to the creation of a secular state and fearful of the influence of political Islam, the conservative nationalism of Kemal and the CUP contained a distinctively religious element, a unique characteristic of Turkish nationalism.[2] Thus while Kemal did not hesitate to utilize religious discourse during the independence struggle, under his direction a secular republic was founded and the sultanate was abolished as the new regime undertook a program of rapid Westernization. The "Six Arrows" of Kemalism—republicanism, secularism, nationalism, populism, statism, and reformism—defined the founding ideology of the Turkish nation. For many secular-nationalist opponents of the AKP, the Six Arrows remain a crucial progressive inheritance of the republic's founding, a contradictory legacy all too apparent today.

Crucially, many Kemalist reforms required a radical, and often unpopular, cultural revolution from above. In addition to the incorporation of religion into the state, modernization also allegedly required Turkification, one manifestation of which was the attempted cleansing of Kurdish language and culture from the nation. According to historian David McDowall, a 1925 revolt in the Kurdish-majority southeast marked the beginning of "implacable Kemalism," a form of repression that continued throughout the later 1920s and 1930s. "Systematic deportation and razing of villages, brutality and killing of innocents, martial law or special regimes in Kurdistan now became the commonplace experience of Kurds wherever they defied the state."[3]

Kurdish identity and culture were not the only casualties of the early republican years. A small but growing anti-imperialist left supported the republican independence movement and revolution in the late 1910s and early 1920s, but after independence Kemal eliminated (with death if necessary) any threat from the left. The Law for the Maintenance of Public Order, which followed the revolt of 1925, was used to close down existing unions as well as to suppress socialist, liberal, and religious organizations and publications. The Labor Law of 1936, like Turkey's penal system, was modeled on that of Fascist Italy: Strikes were banned in a number of sectors, and class politics and communist propaganda were prohibited. Government policy in the 1930s, as Erik Zürcher and Feroz Ahmad have argued, came to have fascist and even totalitarian characteristics.[4]

The Working Class and the Turkish Left

In addition to state repression, one of the problems confronting the Turkish left in the early twentieth century was the small size of the urban working class. Large-scale industrialization and urban migration beginning in the 1940s and 1950s changed this, at the same time that po-

litical parties were first allowed to challenge the one-party rule of Kemal's People's Republican Party (CHP), today the largest opposition party in Turkey. The lifting of a ban on class-based organizations and the securing of the constitutional right to form labor associations in the 1940s had distinct limits, however, as political unionism was prohibited, and the end of the decade culminated in a witch-hunt against the left as Turkey came under U.S. tutelage in the early Cold War.

Both the CHP and the new Democratic Party (DP) participated in the red scare, but it was the DP's surprise electoral victory in 1950 that signaled a decisive shift in state policy. Despite the party's classical liberal orientation, the DP continued the CHP policy of coopting labor, most notably in aiding the establishment of the Confederation of Turkish Labor Unions (Türk-İş) in 1952. Türk-İş adopted a Kemalist ideology in rejecting class politics in favor of the corporate nation, and was linked directly to the Cold War through its ties to the AFL-CIO and the U.S. Agency for International Development.

By the second half of the 1950s, however, worsening economic conditions, increasing demands for the right to strike among rank-and-file workers, and the growing authoritarianism of the DP contributed to tensions between Türk-İş and the ruling party. In 1960 the Democrats were removed from power in a military putsch—though not because of the government's labor policies. As guardians of the Kemalist secular establishment, military authorities were worried by the DP's increasingly religious discourse and its relaxation of restrictions on public expressions of Muslim identity. Though the coup was greeted with public celebrations in major cities like Ankara and Istanbul, the countryside "remained ominously silent," and the execution of prime minister and DP founder Adnan Menderes the following year was unlikely to have improved the image of the takeover in the minds of the rural Turkish majority.[5]

After the coup a group of university professors was charged with drafting a new constitution, which was far more progressive than the post-independence constitution of 1924. The ban on political activity was lifted, and workers' right to organize and strike was legalized. In 1961 the Turkish Workers' Party was formed, the first legal political party that focused on advancing the interests of peasants and the working class. Union membership and strike activity exploded in the 1960s, while a new labor federation, the Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions, emerged to challenge the labor movement hegemony of Türk-İş. This organization and militancy pushed the state to implement improvements in workers' social rights and real wages, while an import substitution industrialization (ISI) model guided state economic policy for the next two decades.[6]

Growing working-class power in the 1960s coincided with the radicalization of large numbers of students and intellectuals in the new "social state" of the Second Republic. These developments remained largely parallel, however, rather than integrated. Leftist groups and publications articulated what Ahmet Samim has characterized as a distinctly Kemalist type of radicalism. The idea of a "national democratic revolution" (NDR) projected "that the elite, technocrats and officers, would lead Turkey 'independently' on behalf of the workers and peasants—for the people, despite the people."[7] Sectarian theoretical disputes on the left were countered on the right by the formation of the Nationalist Action Party (MHP) and its youth wing, the fascist Grey Wolves, who received paramilitary training and began a violent campaign to intimidate radical students, teachers, publishers, and politicians in 1969.

A suggestive example of the radical intelligentsia's failure to read the popular mood occurred in 1970 when, in response to legislation that threatened to restrict labor organization, the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey called for a public protest. Tens of

thousands of workers—perhaps as many as 100,000—took to the streets in two days of demonstrations, which were met with state repression and the declaration of martial law. Rather than engage directly in workers' struggles NDR groups began a guerilla war, with many hoping sympathetic officers in the military would help overthrow the government. The military did take power in 1971—but rather than staging a leftist coup, authorities used martial law to apprehend thousands of students and workers and began a campaign to destroy the guerillas.

Street and campus violence continued in the 1970s despite the coup, infamously symbolized by the killing of 39 during a May Day demonstration in Taksim Square in 1977, in which between 200,000 and 500,000 socialists demonstrated in downtown Istanbul. While it is customary to denounce the political violence of both right and left during this decade, under both right-wing and social democratic governments in the 1970s, Turkish security forces were infiltrated by fascists who shielded and aided the Grey Wolves.[8]

The right-wing offensive coincided with a political-economic attack that had profoundly damaging consequences for the left. The establishment of ISI policies to develop domestic industry had contributed to an impressive annual growth rate of 6.9 percent between 1963 and 1976. By the late 1970s, however, debt crises and ballooning inflation were accompanied by serious social conflict. In 1978 the CHP government began negotiations for new loans with the IMF, the World Bank, and the OECD. Negotiations continued under the center-right Justice Party in 1979, and the following year reforms were implemented under the direction of Turgut Özal, Undersecretary of the Prime Ministry and New Right-style politician.

Yet the "Chilean solution" to Turkey's economic problems was fiercely resisted by workers as labor unrest surged in the late 1970s and as political violence continued to escalate. The conflicts of the 1970s thus culminated in yet another military coup in September of 1980. While many in Turkey saw the intervention as necessary in ending the chaos of these years, the hundreds of thousands of arrests and widespread torture that accompanied the military takeover deeply traumatized the populace. The consequences of the 1980 coup for civil society and the economy—and particularly for a decimated left—are still being felt today.

Neoliberalism and the AKP

In the wake of the coup a new constitution was implemented in 1982. In addition to restrictions of fundamental civil liberties, the constitution (which still governs Turkey today) banned political, solidarity, and national strikes; prohibited membership in more than one union; and imposed draconian requirements for union certification. The result, as intended, was a dramatic decline in the number of unions in Turkey and the virtual elimination of organized labor from the policy-making process.

One of the most fateful, and ironic, decisions of the post-coup government was the official encouragement of the "Turkish-Islamic Synthesis." In order to assure there would be no resurgence of formerly powerful forces on the left after the coup, the historical guardians of the secular Kemalist order revived an ideology that linked religion with Turkish ethnic nationalism. Popular among the nationalist right in the 1970s, after 1983 the doctrine became a guiding principle for Özal and his new Motherland Party, and was reflected by increased public funding for religion, especially in education.

The absence of an organized left and a strong union movement to combat neoliberal reforms resulted in the rise of precarious forms of work and the privatization of state enterprises, resulting in wage repression, declining purchasing power for workers, and growing inequality. Crucially, one facilitating factor in the growth in labor exploitation was the outbreak of an armed independence movement in the

Kurdish provinces. Though in the 1960s and 1970s Kurds played a prominent role in Turkish trade unionism and socialist politics, the left's general refusal to place Kurdish grievances at the center of its agenda led to the formation of independent Kurdish organizations. The Workers' Party of Kurdistan (PKK) was established in 1978, and in 1984 the officially banned celebration of the Kurdish New Year signaled the beginning of PKK guerilla activity in the southeast. The ensuing war and brutal repression of Kurds—not only of the PKK—in Turkey displaced close to a million people; more than 40,000 have died. Many of those whose villages were destroyed migrated to cities in the west, where they became urban workers in the new precarious economy.

Political instability was exacerbated by three major economic recessions between 1994 and 2001, which paved the way for the emergence of the Welfare Party (RP). The rapid growth of the RP and its anti-Western Islamist form of identity politics frightened the establishment, however, leading to yet another military intervention in 1997 and the closing of the party. The RP mayor of Istanbul between 1994 and 1998, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, received a ten-month prison sentence in 1999 for his political activities; in 2001 he and other former RP members established the Justice and Development Party (AKP).

The success of the AKP beginning with the general election of 2002 was premised on the lack of legitimacy of the coup, the party's populist strategy of "conservative democracy," and its commitment to EU membership, civil liberties, and government transparency. While the AKP is clearly a capitalist party, through the early 2000s the maintenance of social welfare programs and the growth of religious charity organizations helped gain the party the support of many poor and working-class citizens. Dramatic economic growth in the early 2000s, though driven by speculation and short-term international investment with a historical—indeed chronically debilitating—dependence on external debt, has contributed to the party's popular image in "making Turkey great again." Until 2015, the AKP had seen its support grow in every election since 2002, an unprecedented phenomenon in Turkish history.

Though workers have been crucial supporters of the AKP, they have not greatly benefitted from the party's period in office. Turkey was the third most unequal country in the OECD as of 2011, behind only Chile and Mexico (with the U.S. a close fourth). Though trade union density across the OECD has fallen in an age of neoliberal capitalism, Turkey's decline has been particularly spectacular. Union density shrank from 9.5 percent of the population in 2002 (down from approximately 35 percent of those formally employed in 1980) to just 5.9 percent in 2010-2011—the most precipitous decline of any OECD member.[9] As the regime has promoted a highly gendered agenda concerning individual morality, the family, and religious values, collective and democratic forms of solidarity like unions have come under attack.

A consequence of low unionization rates and new forms of precarious labor has been work accidents and deaths. Turkey ranks first in workplace fatalities among OECD nations, with jobs in deregulated industries like coal mining and construction particularly dangerous.[10] According to the OECD, Turkish workers are the most exploited ("underprivileged" in their euphemistic terminology) in Europe. They experience more accidents, are paid less, and work longer hours than their working-class counterparts in other member states of the capitalist club.[11]

Resistance: Gezi to Today

Though many liberals were initially drawn to the AKP's democratic, if conservative, promises and rhetoric, popular opposition to its policies emerged after its victory in a 2007 general election. A sample of targets of anti-government protest in recent years includes: new legal

restrictions on abortion rights and frequent pro-natalist statements from state officials, neoliberal and religiously oriented education reforms, the imprisonment of journalists, attacks against labor and student demonstrations, and the destruction of historic cultural sites in the interest of pro-market renewal schemes.

Yet a number of developments between 2013 and 2015 have put into stark relief the extent to which the AKP government is willing to resort to repressive measures that recall state tactics of past years. First, the Gezi movement of the summer of 2013—a protest against the demolition of Gezi Park in Istanbul that blossomed into a nationwide movement involving millions—was met with ruthless suppression. While by autumn, state repression and a general lack of direction or strategy led to the demise of demonstrations, the movement indicated widespread opposition to the ruling party and constituted the first major crisis of AKP hegemony.[12] Moreover, while by the end of the year the prefigurative social gatherings inspired by Gezi were gone, a massive corruption scandal involving high-level officials (including Erdoğan) erupted in December. Some writers believe the desperate attempts by Erdoğan to maintain an AKP majority in parliament are more about limiting the possibility of an inquiry into the scandal than changing the country's constitution.[13]

While workers, unions, and Kurdish groups were slow to join the largely middle-class and youth Gezi movement, a mine explosion in the western city of Soma in the spring of 2014 that killed more than 300 coal miners led thousands of workers across the nation to rise in protest. The state used tactics identical to those used on Gezi protestors (tear gas, water cannons, beatings, and arrests) to disperse demonstrators, while during his visit to Soma, Erdoğan informed the relatives of dead and dying miners that "these types of incidents are ordinary things," and listed a series of mining accidents going back to nineteenth-century England.[14]

Further labor unrest has been met with yet more denials of fundamental democratic rights. In recent years the government has consistently invoked a law from the post-1980 coup period allowing the Council of Ministers to suspend strikes if they are deemed "prejudicial to public health or national security." In 2013 and 2014, glass and metal workers had massive strikes "suspended" by the government; in essence there is today no right to strike in Turkey. Worker militancy has nonetheless been evident: In the spring of 2015 thousands of auto workers engaged in a wildcat strike in defiance of management and their union. Notably, opposition parties have failed to seize on working-class hostility to owners and the government.[15]

The AKP's suppression of protests also coincided with its abandonment of a "resolution process" initiated with the PKK in 2012-2013. Though it has been widely reported that a cease-fire ended because of PKK attacks against police forces after the ISIS suicide bombing of the Federation of Socialist Youth Associations (SGDF) in the southern city of Suruç in 2015, according to HDP co-chair Selahattin Demirtaş, the AKP effectually abandoned the resolution process back in 2013.[16] This was also the period during which ISIS began its attacks against Rojava and Kobanê, and some have speculated that the AKP's permissive policy towards ISIS was part of an effort to undermine Kurdish resistance in Syria—and hence weaken the PKK within Turkey. When this failed and the HDP entered parliament in 2015, a new strategy took shape, one that suggests yet more violence in a country that is no stranger to violent conflict.

Conclusion: Reckoning with the Present and Past

The history of modern Turkey shows that forces for radical change have consistently been targets of violence insti gated by the "security state" or elected governments unwilling to cede power. Those aware of the imperial and national past

recognize the ways in which state authorities have directly, or through proxies, enflamed ethnic and religious tensions to forestall radical democratic transformation. The AKP's current discourse of a unified "national will" being threatened by outside forces, parallel structures, and "marginal elements" is not new, and as in the past the left is a prime target of the state's machinery of repression.

It is also the case that despite the authoritarian history of the government, the Turkish left has often utilized a statist, vanguardist approach to change. In part this has to do with the complex legacy of Kemalism—even today the visage of Mustafa Kemal is ubiquitous in Turkey, and with the AKP's rise many in the republican elite cling ever more tightly to the myth of the secular savior. However progressive some of the changes wrought by Atatürk may have been, it must be recognized that the undemocratic nature of Kemalist reforms were widely resented, and acknowledging the historical limitations of the Kemalist state are essential to remaking the Turkish left.

The biggest hurdles for a resurgent left in Turkey remain the same ethnic and religious distinctions that have historically divided the working class. The *only* way forward in Turkey is for ostensible leftists of a nationalist orientation to join with pro-Kurdish forces in creating a truly mass movement at the grassroots level. Importantly, this requires more than a discourse of pluralism or a political party like the HDP—however deserving of support the party may be. If one historical failure of the left has been its inability to grasp the importance of minority issues, a danger today is that the best that can be hoped for is a European-style liberal democracy where the rule of capital goes unquestioned. A revitalized labor movement able to harness widespread working-class discontent and the construction of a movement culture willing to confront reactionary conservatism in neoliberal Turkey is thus essential. Ultimately, formulating a serious democratic socialist alternative to the religious populism of the AKP requires movement building from below, which in turn demands learning from past successes and failures.

NOTES

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A Commune in Rojava?

Alex de Jong

The siege of Kobani by Islamic State (ISIS) brought worldwide attention to the Syrian Kurdish PYD (Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat, Democratic Union Party), the leading force in the Kurdish-majority areas in northern Syria. The PYD calls this region Rojava—literally meaning "land of the sunset" but also translated as "West Kurdistan."

The discourse of the PYD, revolving around terms like democracy and equality and stressing women's rights, exercises a strong attraction on the worldwide left. Likewise, the struggle of the YPG/YPJ fighters (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel, People's Protection Units/ Yekîneyên Parastina Jinê, Women's Protection Units), organized by the PYD against ISIS, receives widespread sympathy.

Different initiatives to support the "Rojava revolution" have sprung up worldwide. A German campaign unapologetically named Waffen für Rojava (Weapons for Rojava) raised over US $135,000; other initiatives focus on humanitarian aid and political support.

In Rojava, the PYD says it is realizing a democratic society with equal rights for women, in which different ethnic and religious groups live together; political power is supposed to be organized through structures of autonomous councils. The PYD maintains that in Rojava a unique revolution is taking place, inspired by the thought of Abdullah Öcalan, the imprisoned leader of the Kurdish Workers Party (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan, PKK). Even after his arrest in 1999, Öcalan remained the political leader and the movement's "philosopher." To begin to understand the experiment in Rojava, and the attitude of the left towards it, one must consider Öcalan's ideology and compare its claims with developments on the ground.[1]

Roots of the PKK

Öcalan was born in 1949 as a son of a Kurdish peasant family. The Kurdish provinces of Turkey were always the poorest parts of the country, partly because of racist state policies that discriminated against Kurds. Speaking Kurdish was a crime, and use of the letters x, q, and w—which exist in the Kurdish alphabet but not in the Turkish—could be prosecuted; even publications that mentioned the word "Kurd" were banned. The state tried to assimilate the Kurdish minority into the Turkish majority.

Öcalan laid the groundwork for the PKK when, in the early seventies, he built the "Kurdish Revolutionaries" (Soresgeren Kurdistan, SK). This group adopted the notion of Turkish sociologist İsmail Beşikçi that "Kurdistan" was an international colony, occupied by Turkey, Iran, Syria, and Iraq. When in 1977 the group was reorganized as the PKK, it had won modest support among Kurdish workers who had moved from the countryside to the cities to earn a living. The SK was a product of the New Left in Turkey but had some important distinctions. In contrast to other Kurdish groups, the PKK was "the only organization whose members were drawn almost exclusively from the lowest social

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classes—the uprooted, half-educated village and small-town youth who knew what it felt like to be oppressed, and who wanted action, not ideological sophistication."[2] The PKK was also exceptional in making armed struggle an urgent task.

Strands of Maoism and Third-Worldism were strong among the Turkish left at the time, and the early statements of the PKK clearly show such influences. They declared that the immediate goal was a "national-democratic" revolution for an "independent and democratic Kurdistan." The struggle would take the form of a peasant-based "people's war" led by a PKK claiming to be the representative of the working class. Allies of the revolution were "socialist countries"—although the ruling parties of the Soviet Union and China were criticized as "revisionist"—as well as "working class parties of capitalist countries" and "the liberation movements of oppressed peoples of the world." After the "national-democratic" revolution, the struggle would proceed to a socialist revolution.[3]

When in 1980 the army staged a coup, the PKK had become the strongest Kurdish party in Turkey. After the coup, the Turkish left was repressed, as tens of thousands were arrested, tortured, and killed. Öcalan escaped the repression because shortly before the coup he had gone to Lebanon and from there to Syria. The regime of Hafez al-Assad allowed him to set up a base of operations in Syria, and the PKK launched its guerilla war against the Turkish state, fighting which reached a peak in the mid-nineties.

An element that set the PKK apart from similar organizations was that it was a "guerrilla-party."[4] In the PKK, being a guerrilla fighter and a party member overlapped; even cadres who did not have military responsibilities were expected to be prepared to join the guerrillas at any time. According to PKK leader Duran Kalkan, "this was not only of military value, but more important was its ideological and moral meaning." Referring to the party's 1986 congress, Kalkan stated,

> Such a guerrilla makes ideologically a complete break with the ruling order; he breaks in a certain degree with the hierarchical system of the state and of power. That is why at the third Congress there was a serious ideological renewal in the conception of really existing socialism; the really existing socialist line of individual and familial, petit-bourgeois equal rights and freedom was superseded. Such a measure has consequences inside society as well where it calls forth changes that bring closer freedom and equality. It destroys individual family life.

Revolutionizing Personalities

Kalkan touched upon what became a distinctive element of the ideology of the PKK and Öcalan: the ambition to create a "new man," characterized by a certain type of personality or mentality. According to Öcalan there is a metaphysical "Kurdish mentality," a certain "composition of the Kurdish psyche." Öcalan claims, "Many of the qualities and characteristics attributed to the Kurds and their society today can already be seen in the Neolithic communities of the cis-Caucasus mountain ranges—the area we call Kurdistan."[5] However, the Kurds have been alienated from their "true" identity by the attempts of the Turkish state to assimilate the Kurds and by traditional social structures, which Öcalan calls "feudalism."

Through criticism and self-criticism and hard work, PKK members were expected to free themselves of views and attitudes that they had learned in their "old life" and remold themselves into "new men." The party journal *Serxwebûn* wrote,

> The new man does not drink, does not gamble, never thinks of his own personal pleasure or comfort, and there is nothing feminine about him; those who [in the past] indulged in such activities will, sharp as a knife, cut out all these habits as soon as he or she is among new men. The new man's philosophy and morality, the way he sits and stands, his style, ego, attitude and reactions [tepki] are his and his alone. The basis of all these things is his love for the revo-

> lution, freedom, country, and socialism, a love that is as solid as a rock. Applying scientific socialism to the reality of our country creates the new man.[6]

Already in 1993, Öcalan claimed that the PKK, when it discussed "scientific socialism," did not refer to Marxism, but to its own peculiar ideology that "exceeds the interests of states, the nation and classes."[7] As remolding people's mentality became central to the PKK's conception of socialism, Marxist notions of classes and revolution were replaced by terms like "humanization," "socialization," and "liberated personality."

Closely associated with its goal of remolding people is the PKK's view of women's liberation. The PKK's distinctive practice of women's liberation was developed in the second half of the nineties, when the participation of women in the Kurdish movement, both as politicians and as fighters, increased.[8] The PKK's ideas on women's liberation are heavily influenced by the myth of a prehistoric matriarchal past, when "woman was a creating goddess."[9] With the rise of class society, the oppression of women began. These notions are clearly copied from Friedrich Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*.

However, an important difference between the PKK's theory of women's oppression and that of Engels is the PKK's neglect of socioeconomic factors. Engels argued that with the rise of social classes came a division of labor that relegated women's labor, and hence their social status, to a secondary position. Öcalan instead puts the stress overwhelmingly on issues like "mentality" (a key word in his ideology) and "personality"; women's oppression is said to be produced by attitudes that are transferred by the family from generation to generation and which are internalized by women. Such patriarchal attitudes oppress women by blocking them from social life and by men's control of women's bodies, behaviors, and sexualities; this explanation thus neglects the role of socioeconomic factors.[10]

In the guerrilla war, independent women's units were formed, as was later an independent women's army—a practice that was adopted by the Syrian Kurdish movement when it organized the YPJ. The motivation was that this freed women from the sexism of male comrades and forced them to break with traditional notions of female obedience and servility. In mixed organs of the PKK and PYD, a mandatory gender quota exists. The leaderships have to include at least 40 percent women, and executive posts are shared by one man and one woman.

The PKK's thinking is strongly essentialist. Not only are women and nature often equated, women as such are assumed to have certain characteristics, such as empathy, an abhorrence of violence, and a closeness to nature. The PKK discourse on women's liberation sees the category of women, one it often regards as a homogeneous whole, as superseding political differences. As its women's organization stated, "The women's liberation ideology is an alternative for all hitherto existing world-views, whether of the Left or of the Right."[11] Today it is women as such who are assumed to be the vanguard of the struggle for liberation.

In the nineties, themes of class struggle and class formation largely disappeared from the PKK's ideology. As it moved from the Stalinist idea that socialism means a party-state that owns the means of production to the idea of the creation of a "new man," the PKK's conception of socialism became more abstract, increasingly receding into the future. "Democratic civilization" replaced an independent, socialist Kurdistan as the goal of the PKK movement. PKK expert Joost Jongerden describes "democratic civilization" as the umbrella term for three intertwined projects: democratic republic, democratic autonomy, and democratic confederalism.[12] The democratic republic entails a reform of the Turkish state, to recognize the existence of minorities, especially Kurds, among its population and to dissociate citizenship from Turkish ethnicity—similarly, the PYD suggests

the Syrian state should abandon the pan-Arabist ideology of the Ba'ath party.

Democratic autonomy is a concept borrowed from Murray Bookchin (1921-2006), a U.S. libertarian socialist, and refers to a combination of social movements and cooperatives that would pre-figure a future egalitarian society. Bookchin was a Trotskyist when World War II ended and, like many Trotskyists, expected to see a wave of working-class social revolutions. When this did not happen, and the Trotskyist movement remained small and isolated, Bookchin reconsidered his ideas.

Bookchin gave up on Marxism, which in his eyes had made a fundamental mistake in seeing the working class as the revolutionary subject. Likewise, the PKK never saw the self-emancipation of the working class as leading the way to socialism. The early PKK was rather distrustful of the working class, which it saw as privileged compared to the peasantry and as too closely associated with the Turkish state in the city. In the early nineties, Öcalan stated that there were no pronounced class divisions in Kurdish society.[13] The real dividing line was between "collaborators" and "patriots," not between capitalists and working people.

For Bookchin, capitalism's weak point was not the contradiction capital-labor, but the contradiction capital-ecology. Capital, endlessly accumulating, destroys the environment. The struggle to save the ecosystem takes on an anti-capitalist character and can unite everybody who sees their lives threatened by the deterioration of the natural environment and who rebels against their alienation from it. Although today the PKK also considers ecology an important issue, for them it is not as central as it was for Bookchin.

For Öcalan, the contradiction driving liberation struggles is that between oppressed identities and the state. The oppression of certain identities is blamed by Öcalan on state policies that are lagging behind the development of the new civilization, a development that is unavoidable because of technological progress.[14] The task is to make the state allow the realization of the democratic potential that already exists. To this end, structures of "democratic autonomy" are supposed to be built across existing state borders and inside the existing nation-states. These structures are based on recognizing and representing different identities, like ethnic groups, women, or workers. In Turkish Kurdistan, these structures are often intertwined with those of municipalities where legal Kurdish parties have been elected.

Structures of democratic autonomy should federate from the bottom up, in a system of "democratic confederalism." Öcalan describes this as "a pyramid-like model of organization. Here it is the communities who talk, debate and make decisions. From the base to the top the elected delegates would form a kind of loose coordinating body. They will be the elected representatives of the people for one year."[15]

The PKK ideology today rejects attempts to set up new states, seeing them as inherently oppressive. Seeds of the current PKK critique of states as such can be found already in its early history. From its beginning, the PKK criticized the Soviet Union and the Communist International of the early twenties for their critical support of Kemalist nationalism. Moreover, in the PKK's eyes, the Soviet leadership prioritized the national security of the Soviet Union over internationalist and anti-imperialist principles. The critique of the supremacy of Soviet *raison d'état* was generalized to nation-states as such. Another impetus for the PKK to abandon its project of a Kurdish nation-state was the multifaceted character of the population it considered to be Kurdish. For example, in parts of Turkish Kurdistan, identities had evolved along confessional lines. In Eastern Anatolia, the PKK was confronted with the fact that many people considered themselves Alevites, not Kurds.[16] To create a unified nation-state out of this heterogeneity would have required cultural assimilation, something to which the PKK was opposed.

Öcalan claims the PKK's struggle is only the latest Kurdish rebellion against centralized state power. In a remarkable example of auto-orientalism, Kurds are presented as a people without history that since Sumerian times (fourth millennium BC) has rebelled against state power, all the while remaining "in essence" the same. The "original sin" that caused the Kurds' oppression was the formation of the state as such, against which they tried to preserve their "natural" free culture. Öcalan describes his goal as a "renaissance" of an idealized society that during the Neolithic supposedly existed in what is now Kurdistan. The positive aspects of this mythic past—a central role for women in society, a "pure" Kurdish identity, social egalitarianism—are to return in a modern form.

Öcalan is not in favor of overthrowing existing states. Rather, these should be superseded at some point by the structures of democratic confederalism. Öcalan's critique of existing states is rather ambiguous in that the democracy he praises is often equated with the parliamentary, capitalist states of the West. For example, he claims that in European countries a "determined democracy" developed and that this led to the "supremacy of the West." "Western civilization can, in this sense, be termed democratic civilization."[17] And in 2011: "In principle, the Western democratic system—which has been established through immense sacrifices—contains everything needed for solving social problems."[18] "Europe, [democracy's] birthplace, has by and large left nationalism behind in view of the wars of the twentieth century and established a political system adhering to democratic standards. This democratic system has already shown its advantages over other systems—including real socialism—and is now the only acceptable system worldwide."[19]

Class and Economy in Rojava

Capitalist development has not progressed far in Rojava. It is a mainly agricultural region with only a small modern working class. But Rojava is very productive, and in Ba'athist Syria it resembled an internal colony. The region produced raw materials like wheat and oil that were processed somewhere else.[20] Öcalan has described the socio-economic situation in Rojava as one where on the one hand there were small, family-based economic units and on the other hand the state economy.[21]

Öcalan's vision of a socio-economic alternative to such conditions can be described as social-democratic: "In my eyes, justice demands that creative work is enumerated according to its contribution to the entire product. Remuneration of creative work, which contributes to the productivity of the society, has to be in proportion to other creative activities. Provision of employment to everybody will be a general public task. Everybody will be able to participate in the health care system, education, sports and arts according to their capabilities and needs."[22]

The relatively vague economic proposals of the PYD for Rojava can also be called social democratic. The goal is a mixed economy with strong social services. The "social contract" of Rojava declares natural resources and land to be property of the people and their exploitation to be regulated by law. At the same time, the contract protects private property and declares that nothing shall be expropriated. About 20 percent of the land in Rojava is in the hands of landlords, and their property is protected by the social contract. Formerly state-owned farms have been distributed among poor families. The formation of cooperatives is encouraged by Tev-Dem (Tevgera Civaka Demokratîk, or Movement for a Democratic Society), the governing structure of Rojava. In the longer term, cooperatives are supposed to become the dominant form of enterprise.

The PYD speaks of Rojava as a new experience, a new kind of revolution based on lessons drawn from the failure of earlier movements. The same applies to the choice of not expropriating property, explained as part of the refusal to use force in order to avoid the authoritarianism

that disfigured earlier attempts to create socialism. The refusal of the PYD to expel Syrian government troops completely from Rojava and to join the insurgency against Assad is claimed to be based on the same refusal of force. However, it was the uprising against the Syrian state that gave the Kurdish movement the chance to form Rojava as the Assad regime decided to focus on fighting the rebels.

There is no reason why the left cannot combine solidarity for the Rojava project with a critical eye on its limitations.

We should be careful not to project Eurocentric ideas of socialist revolution on Rojava. But in the absence of a working class that in its struggle for self-emancipation can be the driving force of social change, it is clearly the PYD itself that is playing the decisive role. Before being largely wiped away by the two counterrevolutionary poles of the Assad regime and Salafi jihadism, autonomous self-organization was an important element in the Syrian revolution, as shown by the grassroots structures that sprung up across Syria in the earlier phase of the revolution. The councils in Rojava, however, are the initiative of a political force, not of autonomous bottom-up initiatives. The PYD is the dominant force in Tev-Dem. The armed forces in Rojava (YPG, YPJ, and the security forces, the Asayiş) are trained in the ideology of the PYD and swear an oath to Öcalan.

The survival of Rojava against attacks from Islamic State is undoubtedly a victory for the left. The Kurdish movement deserves concrete solidarity in its struggle for self-determination, the more so because in Rojava people are trying to construct a progressive alternative.

There is no reason why the left cannot combine solidarity for the Rojava project with a critical eye on its limitations. Maybe Rojava can ask the question of how to overcome capitalism, but this can be answered only in a wider context in the region, in cooperation with other forces.

Considering the tensions between the Kurdish movement and many Arabs in Syria and abroad, this perspective is increasingly difficult. The decisive role of the PYD in Rojava and its refusal to expel Syrian government troops completely and join the insurgency against Assad has led to accusations that it "cooperates" with the dictatorship. Different Arab rebel groups, but also some other Syrian Kurdish groups, describe Rojava as a "PYD dictatorship."

When there are reports about human rights violations, the first reflex should be serious concern. Amnesty International has sounded the alarm over reports that YPG units have driven away Arab civilians.[23] PYD Co-President Salih Muslim has admitted that YPG fighters made a "mistake" when they opened fire on a group of demonstrators in Âmûde in July 2014.[24] Human Rights Watch has also reported critically of repression of protests in Rojava.[25] Implying that criticism is somehow part of enemy plans—for instance, YPG General Commander Hemo's statement that the timing of the Amnesty International report was "suspicious" "at a time when we are … getting ready to wage a big war against ISIS"—is not very convincing.[26]

Accusations such as these, as well as the stance of the PYD regarding imperialist interventions, create the risk of further damaging relationships between Kurds and Arabs. The cooperation between the YPG and coalition forces, and its offers to cooperate with Russia, most of whose bombardments do not target ISIS, might be understandable in a fight for survival, but the left should not turn a blind eye to the consequences of cooperating with imperialist powers.

In the Western left, "solidarity" often has meant providing support and sympathy for movements in the Global South, movements

that were often romanticized, with dreams and hopes of Western leftists projected onto faraway experiences. Disappointment, and the end of links, became almost inevitable. To take seriously the oft-repeated saying that the left should learn from international experiences means it should try to grasp such developments in their complexity and contradictions.

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SASKIA SASSEN/*continued from page 26*

you believe is missing from the current discussion?

SS: What is missing? A focus on how "we" made this, directly or through multiple intermediations.

Inequality is a distribution and we have always had it. No complex differentiated system is going to do without inequality. So we need more than inequality to capture what is wrong in our current epoch. Or we need to interpellate inequality: at what point does it become profoundly unjust, and that is then perhaps also the point where we need a new term. So I went for a term that captures the extreme moment—expulsions.

In fact, in *Expulsions* my point of inquiry is not the distribution we call "inequality," but the systemic edge. The core hypothesis is that we are seeing a proliferation of systemic edges originating partly in the decaying Western-style political economy of the twentieth century, the escalation of environmental destruction, and the rise of complex forms of knowledge that far too often produce elementary brutalities. The expulsion logics I focus on are just a few of the many that might exist; they are, generally, more extreme than whatever expulsion logics existed, for instance, in the preceding Keynesian period. Further, these expulsion logics are also evident beyond the West.

NP: What's next after expulsion? Can we begin to think about reintegration? Progressive change? Revolution? How do you envision a progressive response?

SS: The places where people are expelled could be an interesting laboratory for new ways of organizing an economy or other forms of living together. I see it as a set of very diverse spaces that we need to understand, we need to study, we need to engage the expelled. Localities, and the work of re-localizing what has now been hijacked by major corporate logics, is one (partial!) component of such spaces. This is a first step in a process that can generate elements for change, because it will horizontalize what is now verticalized, and hence require cooperation to replace at least some of what we now simply depend on from large corporations, which always take part of the consumption capacity of a community out of the community.

The Kurds, Bookchin, and the Need to Reinvent Revolution

Petar Stanchev

Today, a year after the heroic resistance of Kobani made it to the world news, it is hardly necessary to give an introduction to the Kurdish struggle, which has now taken a central place in the imagination of the international left, both vanguardist and anti-authoritarian. The autonomy in Rojava and the uprising in North Kurdistan, part of Turkey, shook the world with the determination of both the civilian and armed population, proving the capacity of the Kurdish struggle to mobilize a large number of people and resist an enemy superior in weaponry and numbers, namely the gangs of ISIS, the Syrian regime, and the enormous war machine of the Turkish state. This determination and the brave defiance of death and destruction in the name of a free and egalitarian society captivated the minds of thousands around the globe, some of whom even joined the ranks of the International Brigade in Rojava to fight ISIS and the Syrian regime.[1]

The recent pictures of the city of Cizre resisting the Turkish army's blockade and the stories of the local people's invincible solidarity and self-organization are not only becoming symbols of anti-capitalist and anti-statist resistance on a global scale but are writing an epic that will be of historical importance for the left in the years to come. Nevertheless, this epic should be more than an object of admiration and solidarity; it should be seen as an immense example of revolutionary organization and resistance in the twenty-first century.

What the news from Rojava and North Kurdistan shows is that revolutionary mass organization is possible and has the potential to confront the militaristic and exploitive neoliberal state and create alternatives to it, here and now. This resistance does not happen in an ideological vacuum; the underlying influence of the U.S. political thinker Murray Bookchin has played a crucial role in the transformation of the Kurdish resistance. His works mirror an evolving critique of the Western revolutionary tradition and practice, a critique that maps a new path to building a movement capable of altering the power relations in society in favor of equality and direct democracy. For this reason, the Kurdish examples can help to understand radical change in the West and how to achieve it, especially in times when it seems that the energy from the mass mobilizations after the 2008 economic crash is being channelled into good old electoral politics.

The examples from Kurdistan cannot, however, simply be reproduced in different social and political contexts but should serve as a keystone in a necessary reassessment of our own political strategies.

The Resurrection of the Kurdish Struggle

The Kurdish liberation movement has gone through different stages, from the foundation of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) as a typical national-liberation Marxist-Leninist vanguard party in the 1970s to a complex configuration of communal assemblies, grassroots organiza-

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tions, women's assemblies, and, of course, armed militias such as the People's Defense Force (HPG) in Turkey or Peoples' Protection Units (YPG) and Women's Protection Units (YPJ) in Rojava. This ideological and organizational shift is the key to understanding the rise of the Kurdish resistance both in Rojava and in North Kurdistan.

The ideological life of the PKK has been marked by the times which the party was established, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when the echo of the decolonization period and the struggles for national liberation was still resonating strongly among the wretched of the world. Marxism-Leninism became the dominant liberationist discourse, promising not only national liberation but also the eradication of poverty and exploitation through the establishment of a socialist state. The PKK was not an exception, and it aimed to establish a socialist Kurdish nation-state.

The PKK-aligned guerrillas defiantly fought the Turkish army, which opened a total war on the Kurds and their resistance. As a result, more than two million people were displaced, forty thousand killed, and many villages as well as the forests of Kurdistan were turned into ashes as part of the Turkish counterinsurgency. The 1990s were a particularly difficult period, marked by internal conflicts in the PKK, fratricide, and power struggle. Abdullah Öcalan himself admits in his prison writings, referring to this stage of the history of the movement, "We killed the best of our own comrades."[2] The bipolar world of the Cold War was over, and the PKK, despite its continuing resistance, was in ideological and organizational crisis, culminating in the capture of Öcalan by Turkish federal agents and his imprisonment on the Turkish island of Imrali, which was a significant blow considering the central role to the movement its leader plays.

This crisis could have been fatal for the PKK and could have turned it into a historical relic with a weakening popular base and deepening sectarian division from society. Paradoxically, the state terror and internal meltdown gave the Kurdish movement the necessary push to reexamine its ideological foundations, its aims, and means of struggle and to undertake a deep transformation.

Locked in solitary confinement on an island where he was and still is the only prisoner, Öcalan was influenced by the writing of a number of social theorists and specifically the U.S. political thinker Murray Bookchin. Bookchin's theory of libertarian municipalism, strongly influenced by anarchism, became the cornerstone for the PKK's evolving ideology.

Murray Bookchin was born in New York in 1921, and the trajectory of his political progression followed the timeline of the twentieth century, turning his works into a constant search for a political and a social strategy that can bring about a different, more just society. Initially Stalinist, Bookchin later went through a Trotskyist period after his disillusionment with the Soviet Union's brutal dictatorship and eventually embraced anarchism, rejecting the authoritarian and outdated ideas of the vanguardist left. During his anarchist period, Bookchin wrote some of his most important works, including *The Ecology of Freedom*, considered by some to be his biggest contribution. His constant need to redefine and critically reexamine revolutionary thought finally led him to break with the anarchist tradition and create a new political and social theory based on the idea of dual power and confederated libertarian municipalities.

Bookchin's works were spread in Kurdistan and read and discussed by the militants of the PKK. The shift was tremendous: a vanguard, Marxist-Leninist, and nationalist revolutionary organization, deadlocked in internal violence, over a couple of years embraced a totally new paradigm, rejecting the nation-state, hierarchy, and patriarchy and restructuring the entire struggle around these new principles. Öcalan's rendition of Bookchin's political and social

theory is summed up in his books *Democratic Confederalism* and *Liberating Life: Woman's Revolution.*

What we see today in Kurdistan, whether in its Syrian part, Rojava, or in North Kurdistan, Iraq, or Iran, is a complex system of grassroots organizations, united under the umbrella of KCK, the Group of Communities in Kurdistan. KCK includes political parties, such as Democratic Union Party (PYD) and Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) in Syria and Turkey, community assemblies, women's organizations, and minority groups and aims to establish a society based on direct democratic assemblies, communes, and cooperatives, which would replace the structures of the state and transcend the national borders through confederation.

This dream is neither far-fetched nor a plan for the distant future. In Rojava, northern Syria, following the withdrawal of Assad troops in 2012, the PYD and its armed militias, the Peoples' Protection Units (YPG) and Women's Protection Units (YPJ), took over the predominantly Kurdish-populated northern areas that now constitute the three autonomous cantons, Afrin, Kobani and Cizre. The takeover created the opportunity for a radical implementation of the idea of democratic confederalism. The results, as described by various people who got to know the situation on the ground, are impressive: land and production units, previously owned by local bourgeoisie and by the regime, are collectivized, and municipality-based communes run the everyday life in the towns and villages.[3] Women have 40 percent guaranteed participation in all forms of government, while ethnic and religious minorities are encouraged to practice their culture and have their own representation. New educational structures, such as the Mesopotamian Social Science Academy, the first university opened in Rojava after the revolution, challenge eurocentrism, hierarchy, and professionalization in academia.[4] Gender is at the center of the revolutionary process, and women are seen as a new form of proletariat that has suffered long-standing and brutal oppression in the face of patriarchy. For this reason, women organize their own assemblies, academies, and organizations and have their own armed force, the YPJ.[5] Despite the economic hardship produced by the embargo on Rojava and the lack of international recognition of the autonomous cantons, such examples demonstrate the enormous revolutionary potential of the Kurdish struggle and ideology. Far from perfect, the autonomy in northern Syria should, of course, be seen as a process in development not as a utopia.

> What the news from Rojava and North Kurdistan come to show is that revolutionary mass organization is possible and it has the potential to confront the militaristic and exploitative neoliberal state and create alternatives to it, here and now.

The civil war, unleashed after the June 2015 general elections in Turkey, gives another example of the strength of the Kurdish movement and its ideological values. Prior to the elections and after the HDP, also part of the KCK, surpassed the 10 percent electoral barrier, the Turkish army carried out bombings and attacks on both the PKK armed wing, HPG, and civilians in the Kurdish areas. The war, unleashed by the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, was a clear provocation, aimed at crushing the growing Kurdish resistance and its attempts to create a progressive alternative for the whole country, beyond the Kurdish-populated regions. The Turkish army besieged the city of Cizre and held captive its 120,000 inhabitants, killing at least dozens including babies and elderly people.[6]

Racist mobs, organized and inspired by the AKP, took the streets of the big Turkish cities, lynching people and burning down the HDP offices and Kurdish businesses.

The Kurdish movement's response produced an ideological defeat for the AKP. Instead of bloody retaliation, the PKK narrowed the actions of its armed wing to self-defense and

> Bookchin's works were spread in Kurdistan and read and discussed by the militants of the organization.

called for peace, encouraging towns, neighborhoods, and villages to declare autonomy and self-governance. Dozens followed, including a neighborhood in Istanbul, and recent news suggests that 15 new cities are to follow.[7] The atmosphere in Cizre, as described in reports, was one of mass solidarity, self-organization, and defiance of the Turkish war machine; eventually these elements, combined with a peace march headed by the HDP, managed to break the blockade. This resistance, facing the second-largest NATO army, which does not hesitate to bomb and kill civilians, is a product of decades of organizing but particularly of building democratic alternatives just as in Rojava. The ideology of democratic confederalism has also been implemented for years in North Kurdistan, and despite the existence of the Turkish state, hundreds of alternative government structures, assemblies, cooperatives, and academies have been established.

The given examples are hardly enough to describe the revolutionary process in Kurdistan and the achievements of the Bookchin-inspired democratic confederalism. What the communes of Rojava and North Kurdistan, the defense of Kobani and Cizre, or the empowerment of women in the region demonstrate is the capacity of the Kurdish movement to establish radical anti-statist and anti-capitalist alternatives and, if necessary, to defend them. This revolutionary potential is a product of decades of struggle but also of the ideological transformation of the PKK after the capture of Öcalan.

Reinventing revolution instead of sinking into ideological narrow-mindedness and sectarianism gave the PKK the opportunity to resurrect itself from a profound crisis and become an inspiration for thousands around the world who believe in an egalitarian, gender-equal, and democratic society. Thus the Kurdish resistance shifted from being a traditional vanguard party that sees the revolution as finality and applies a ready-made trajectory to achieve it, to a Zapatista-like movement, which walks and asks questions, instead of giving orders. The capacity to challenge one's direction, questioning the strategies and tactics for achieving a different society in a changing world, seems to be the crucial explanation for the new rise of the Kurdish struggle and should be a seen as one of the great lessons that can be derived from it.

Bookchin and the Critique of the Western Left

Now more than ever, Bookchin's ideas seem to offer a valuable critique of both Marxism and modern-day anarchism, drawing the framework of a practical political alternative to capitalist exploitation of the human being and the environment and to statist violence.

His analysis focuses on the failure of the Marxist left to re-examine its narrow economic analysis and the concept of the proletariat as a leading evolutionary force, something that might have seemed self-evident in the late nineteenth century but clearly does not encompass the complexity of modern capitalism. Bookchin claims that the economic determinism of Marxism has failed to address the dynamic development of capitalism after World War II, and as a result leftist thought has stagnated into either post-structuralist emptiness or sectarianism. He

rejects electoral politics on a national level and the obsession with taking power, giving numerous examples for the ever-repeating scenario of a progressive party winning elections and soon being co-opted to serve both capital and the state.

Bookchin's critique of anarchism focuses on syndicalism as well as contemporary anarchism. The former he sees as outdated in an era when the industrial proletariat simply does not exist in the way it did when Bakunin and Kropotkin were alive. Modern anarchism, Bookchin claims, is characterised by a deep aversion to organization and bears problematic notions of individualism.

What is Bookchin's hypothesis regarding a strategy that can lead to a revolutionary change? He argues that power as such cannot be completely abolished but instead should be given a concrete, institutionalized, emancipatory form.[8] He proposed the concept of dual power, claiming that the only way to avoid totalitarian tendencies is to create a clear structure that does not allow the abuse of power. Bookchin argues in favor of organization that is "enduring, structured, and broadly pragmatic"[9] and that has a long-term strategy, including running for municipal elections and reorganizing the municipalities around popular assemblies. This idea stems from his historical analysis of the municipality as a traditional opposition to the state and the dichotomy between politics and statecraft. The former he sees as the direct participation of the citizen in policymaking, despite the way "politics" is used nowadays as synonymous with "statecraft."

Such municipalities, confederated in a wide network where the policymaking is horizontal and is coordinated by an administrative apparatus, can be the foundation for the dissolution of the state and capitalism. Bookchin believes that what can turn humanity against capitalism might not be rooted only in class issues but in a more sophisticated network of oppression, emphasising the degradation of the environment but also touching on issues of race, gender, and others.[10]

These ideas have been the foundation for Öcalan's democratic confederalism, which we see being put in practice in the different parts of Kurdistan nowadays and achieving a reconfiguration of the power structure, both institutional and interpersonal. Without any doubt, his rendition of Bookchin's ideas and their adaptation to the context of Kurdistan demonstrates once again the constant need to redefine and reexamine revolutionary strategy. As Bookchin himself says, a revolutionary practice, based on the ideas of libertarian municipalism, should be seen as a process, not as finality,[11] a view which by itself is essential to avoiding totalitarian tendencies. His ideas bridge the Kurdish struggle and the West and give an analytical foundation for reassessing our strategy toward building a movement that can offer a genuine alternative to the current social and political system.

Meanwhile, the resurrection of the social-democratic ghost in the face of emerging parties such as the Greek Syriza and the Spanish Podemos and the rise of leftist candidates such as Jeremy Corbyn or Bernie Sanders demonstrates both the necessity of a political alternative in the West and how easily such a need can be filled by political forces who are hardly a structural opposition to capitalism or the state. The energy of years of street politics, mass assemblies, and square occupations since the economic crash in 2008 seems to be funnelled into election rallies and admiration for new messianic white men with flame in their eyes and grand promises for the public. The unimpressive failure of Syriza to stick to its promises to challenge austerity, the continuing harsh repression against social movements, and the ongoing plight of refugees in Greece and the ambiguous stand towards ecological issues such as the Skouries mine in the north of the country demonstrate the dead end of rebranded old-school electoral politics. The mass square occupations of Syntagma, 15M, and Occupy, although successful in reaching a large number of people and practicing direct

democratic assemblies, failed to offer a structure that could transcend the initial momentum of the mobilizations and thus proved ineffective in achieving a large societal transformation. In this context the example of Kurdistan contrasts sharply with the failure of the Western left to create alternatives and organize successfully and should inspire a fresh discussion of our political strategies.

Without any doubt, the model of the Rojava or North Kurdistan communes and assemblies cannot be reproduced and copied in the Western world, and it should not be. What it shows is the necessity of questioning the way we do politics. Instead of falling into the trap of sectarian repetition of slogans and clichés, we should honestly examine our failures and try to scrap the frameworks and strategies that do not lead anywhere. As Bookchin wrote in his essay *The Communalist Project*, the twenty-first century has the potential to be either the most radical of times or the most reactionary, and it all depends on us and our capacity to successfully organize. Beyond the end of history lies a future of uncertainty, full of questions and challenges but also of opportunities for transforming society, as the example of Kurdistan demonstrates. Facing the choice between humanity, dignity, and sustainability on one side and barbarism, environmental collapse, and self-annihilation on the other, do we have any other choice but reinventing revolution?

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Who Wins From "Climate Apartheid"?

African Climate Justice Narratives About the Paris COP21

PATRICK BOND

THE BILLION RESIDENTS OF AFRICA are amongst the most vulnerable to climate change in coming decades, and of special concern are high-density sites of geopolitical and resource-related conflicts: the copper belt of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and mineral-rich African Great Lakes stretching into northern Uganda, western Ethiopia (bordering the Sudanese war zone), Madagascar and smaller Indian Ocean islands, and the northern-most strip of Africa and West Africa including Liberia and Sierra Leone (recent sites of diamond-related civil war and then Ebola epidemics). In other words, the African terrains hardest hit by war and economic looting are going to be sites of climate stress and socio-political unrest, according to the University of Texas project researching vulnerability for the U.S. Pentagon (Busby et al 2013).

The lost opportunity to change this map at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) summit in Paris, December 2015, is tragic. In the 2015 Pew Research world public opinion survey, a near majority of those surveyed—46 percent—identified climate as a threat about which they were "very concerned," the highest score of any issue in the poll (economic crisis was second). But where it counts most, in the top two polluting countries, the percentage of people who name climate as a major threat is just 42 in the United States and 19 in China (Carle 2015). And even if consciousness rises faster from below, global elites apparently remain too paralyzed to take necessary actions to keep temperature increases below 1.5 degrees Celsius, the point at which runaway, catastrophic climate change is likely to take off (Bond 2012, Klein 2014). Going into the Paris UNFCC Conference of the Parties (the 21st, COP21), the French hosts estimated that the combined declarations of voluntary commitments would warm the planet by 3 degrees Celsius this century, but this is a vast understatement given the likelihood of runaway climate change once a 2-degree tipping point is reached.

The annual UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP) has been held in Africa thrice: in 2001 in Marrakech, 2006 in Nairobi, and 2011 in Durban. But the critical moment that

Source: Busby et al 2013

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defined Africa's future climate crisis was in December 2009 in Copenhagen. The negotiations at COP15 were diverted one night into a room where five leaders—from the United States and the group of Brazil, South Africa, India, and China (BASIC)—agreed on a side deal, the Copenhagen Accord. That was the source of Africa's major problems in climate negotiations for years thereafter, including at the Paris COP21.

The fortnight-long COP talk-shops are typically sabotaged by U.S. State Department negotiators, recently joined by brethren governments in Australia and Japan, with Canada a loyal co-polluter prior to the October 2015 election (and probably long after, given the national elites' commitment to exploiting the Alberta tar sands). Initial hopes that the Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa (BRICS) bloc might make a difference in world climate policy as well as address undemocratic global financial governance have since been dashed, not only because of BASIC's 2009 alliance with Barack Obama (Bond and Garcia 2015). Individually, they are each failing to grapple with new responsibilities to decarbonize their economies.

The world's largest single emitter is China, even if in per capita terms it is far lower than the Northern countries. Beijing claims to have recently reduced coal consumption are dubious given notorious undercounting (probably by 15 percent). The Communist Party leadership decided upon an upward trajectory of greenhouse gas emissions at least through the 2020s. The Chinese standpoint that they need more emissions to "develop" is contradicted by a stark reality: Recent U.S. and European claims to be slowing their emissions rely upon their corporations and consumers *outsourcing* large amounts of emissions to new production sites, mostly in East Asia. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, "A growing share of CO2 emissions from fossil fuel combustion in developing countries is released in the production of goods and services exported, notably from upper-middle-income countries to high-income countries" (Hawkins 2014). In the case of China, the amounts of such outsourcing are vast, having risen from 404 million tons of CO2 in 2000 to 1.561 billion tons in 2012.

Moreover, BRICS leaders have all endorsed carbon markets, the capitalist strategy for offsetting local emissions by buying someone else's carbon allowances. Initially, from 2005-2012, these took the form of United Nations "Clean Development Mechanism" (CDM) opportunities to sell often-corrupt and gimmick-ridden "emissions credits" as contributing to emissions mitigation (Bond, Dada and Erion 2009).

In recent years, after the BRICS no longer qualified for CDMs, seven Chinese cities started their own carbon markets, with Brazil and South Africa likely to follow in a few years. Moreover, China's attempts to control emissions in future appear certain to foster faith in dangerous techniques such as nuclear energy, hydropower, and untested carbon-capture-and-storage technology.

The strongest efforts to address climate change from the North are in Europe, where in October 2014 a new goal of 40 percent greenhouse gas reduction from 1990 levels by 2030 (not including the carbon outsourcing of hundreds of millions of tons per year) was sought—far too low according to most scientists, but far ahead of goals set by other historic pollution sites. In a late-2014 deal between China and the United States, the latter's goal was only 15 percent reduction by 2025 (from 1990 levels).

In short, very little reason for hope on climate or other aspects of environmental stewardship can be found in any of the major countries' governments. There is, of course, the exception of Cuba, which by compulsion began a strong decarbonization strategy once Russian-subsidized oil became unavailable after 1990. But the good examples that were anticipated in 2008-2011 from left-leaning Latin American countries—Bolivia, Ecuador, and even oil-rich

Venezuela—subsequently soured, as each turned to more intense hydrocarbon "extractivism," albeit with nationalist redistributive ends instead of multinational corporate profiteering.

When the September 2014 United Nations special leadership summit on climate was preceded by a march of 400,000 people with strong messages of anger about elite procrastination, nothing more than vague promises were offered. The array of global and national power appears as difficult to affect as ever, what with unprecedented corporate influence—including of fossil fuel companies—over policymakers, and with further awareness that major restructuring of vast industries will be needed.

Going back to 2009, the US+BASIC meeting in Copenhagen not only "blew up the UN," as Bill McKibben (2009) of 350.org put it, in terms of evading the more democratic process. The Copenhagen Accord also promised only inadequate and voluntary emissions cuts. Japan, Russia, Canada, and Australia subsequently announced they would withdraw earlier commitments made under the Kyoto Protocol.

By November 2015, the (voluntary) Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) statement of the G20 countries confirmed huge barriers to reaching the required emissions cuts. According to Climate Action Tracker (2015), "None of the G20 INDCs are in line with holding warming below 2°C, or 1.5°C." The agency rated the following contributions as "inadequate": Argentina, Australia, Canada, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, and Turkey, with the INDCs of another set—Brazil, China, India, the EU, Mexico, and the United States—also "not consistent with limiting warming to below 2°C either, unless other countries make much deeper reductions and comparably greater effort."

Four Reasons Paris Failed

The INDC strategy was itself flawed because it is voluntary, with no accountability system sufficiently strong—such as economic sanctions or expulsion from the United Nations. Hence the first reason for the Paris COP21's failure was that the ambition required to cut emissions to survivable levels never materialized. As explained by Pablo Solon (2015), formerly Bolivia's Ambassador to the United Nations and the man who attempted to block consensus at the Cancun COP16 in 2010, all negotiators since Copenhagen failed to address the need leave 80 percent of known fossil fuels reserves under the ground and make deep emissions cuts: 44 Gigatons (Gt) of CO2 equivalent by 2020, 40 Gt by 2025, and 35 Gt by 2030.

Second, the reduction of CO2 emissions agreed upon in Paris will partly occur through "financializing" the climate via carbon markets and offsets. Although this strategy has failed in the main markets to date—the European Union's Emissions Trading System (EMS) and the Chicago Climate Exchange (which completely collapsed in 2010)—it was reasserted the month before the Paris summit in a preparatory conference. New language that emerged to the effect that these markets deliver "real, permanent, additional and verified"

"They blew up the UN" (Bill McKibben): Jacob Zuma, Lula da Silva, Barack Obama, Wen Jiabao, Manmohan Singh sign the Copenhagen Accord. Source: The White House.

emissions reductions reflects awareness of bad publicity stemming from prior mishaps (Carbon Market Watch 2015). The Kyoto Protocol and all subsequent COPs allowed large polluting firms to buy the right to pollute (from other companies) at extremely low cost, and relied on financiers to set up carbon markets and offsets rather than make direct cuts.

The only effective means of cutting emissions is to use state controls to compel deep cuts by the major polluters, as was accomplished with the UN's 1987 Montreal Protocol on chlorofluorocarbons in order to halt widening of the ozone hole.

Third, a "just transition" can be achieved only by rebooting each sector of the world economy with a central role for labor and affected communities, but such radical change was off the Paris table, with the partial exception of renewable energy. Such a strategy would not only ensure a medium-term conversion from a carbon-fueled economy (as the G7 leaders agreed would be done by 2100, about 50 years too late), but in the short term, a saner way of relating to the natural environment and to other human beings.

Indeed the UN has not yet considered the wide-ranging decarbonization, environmental planning, and economic restructuring proposals from climate activists (Klein 2014). Instead, the only strategies adopted will make shifts at the margins, especially those using carbon pricing in attempts to nudge markets with incremental taxation or worse, carbon trading incentives. To address the crisis forcefully, a just transition is overdue in the world's energy, transport, extraction, urbanization, agriculture, manufacturing production, consumption, disposal, and financing systems. But while these continue to be driven by the profit motive, most externalities—that is, ecological and social damage not incorporated as market costs—remain as damages foisted onto the powerless.

Fourth, large parts of Africa as well as low-lying islands, the Latin American and Asian mountain chains, and sites like the Bay of Bengal are already owed reparations for the massive damage done to local climates. But Paris failed to substantively advance the cause of "climate debt" payment by the North to the South. This is damage far worse than the effects that will be felt in France and other sites in the industrialized world where CO2 emissions per person are greatest. While being a climate creditor gives African negotiators the moral high ground, unfortunately it took until 2012 (at the Doha COP18) for the UN to recognize "loss and damage" (the UN's technical term) suffered in weather-related crises.

But the voluntary nature of Copenhagen and its Green Climate Fund means there is no legal liability on the part of climate debtors in the Global North. As Washington's lead negotiator, Todd Stern, famously explained in Copenhagen, "We absolutely recognize our historic role in putting emissions in the atmosphere up there that are there now. But the sense of guilt or culpability or reparations, I just categorically reject that" (Broder 2009).

What are Africa and other vulnerable sites facing, in the wake of the COP21? In Paris, binding emission cuts were not made on the scale required. Market mechanisms were reaffirmed. A just transition for the world economy towards genuine sustainability was rejected. The climate creditors—especially Africans—continue to be stuck with the bill for most damage done, though they did not cause the crisis. The Paris COP21 process did not allow the power change required to address these four major challenges. Those in the mainstream nongovernmental organizations who entered Paris claiming that the conditions were in place for a planet-saving deal (for instance Avaaz's Ricken Patel 2015) were profoundly mistaken.

Climate Apartheid Cooks Africa, and Pretoria Stokes the Flames

Hence Paris merely continued what is being termed "climate apartheid." According to UN

Secretary General Kofi Annan's Global Humanitarian Forum (2009), already more than 300,000 current deaths per year are attributable to climate change, mostly in the Global South. With the present trajectory of warming anticipated to break 4 degrees Celsius above normal by 2100, with inland Africa heating up by 6 to 7 C, not only are humans threatened, but so too is nearly every living species—biodiversity itself—reliant upon water and a stable ecosystem.

With the world insurance industry already facing a rise in annual liabilities associated with extreme weather events from $10 billion during the 1980s to $50 billion since 2000, and with even larger damages simply not covered, even the conservative Bank of England governor Mark Carney (2015) admitted, "Currently modelled losses could be undervalued by as much as 50 percent if recent weather trends were to prove representative of the new normal."

As a result, Africa anticipates worsening weather chaos, and 182 million Africans dead this century, early and unnecessarily, due to climate-related disease (Christian Aid 2006). In this context, the delegate leading the G77+China group of 130 to Paris, Nozipho Joyce Mxakato-Diseko, put it most starkly at October's prenegotiations in Bonn: "It is just like apartheid."

Mxakato-Diseko is South African, and knows of what she alleges firsthand: "We find ourselves in a position where in essence we are disenfranchised" (Doyle 2015). And yet Mxakato-Diseko's own principals let her down in the end. South Africans are especially adept at "talk left, walk right" posturing (Bond 2006), and so it is interesting to consider the stance Pretoria takes on climate at home. To change the world balance of forces requires changing national environmental policy in every country, and South Africa is one of the world's great battlegrounds (Bond 2002).

The large mining-smelting-shipping corporations—whether local, Western, or BRICS in origin—still appear to have inordinate influence in Pretoria (surely as much as enjoyed in Washington by the Koch Brothers and others in the oil and gas lobby). Against them, the Department of Environmental Affairs has a minister, Edna Molewa, who did nothing to shift power relations in defense of the climate, in spite of a relatively high profile in international negotiations. She played a central role in Durban's COP17 (Bond 2011, 2012), and in 2012, she was visible at the Rio+20 UN Earth Summit.

Yet when it counted, in regulating South African polluters, Molewa knew how to avoid conflict. She was silent about the vast bulk of national infrastructure spending on carbon-intensive activities: three major coal-fired power plants, expanded coal exports via a $25 billion rail budget in the first plan of the Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission, and in the second PICC project, the $20 billion expansion of Durban's port and petrochemical complex, aiming to raise container-throughput capacity by a factor of eight by 2040 (Bond 2014a). The government also gave permission in 2013 for Shell Oil to begin the process of "fracking" the arid Karoo region. This was followed in mid-2014 by President Jacob Zuma's Operation Phakisa ("speed up") ocean-economy strategy, including $5 billion worth of deep-sea oil and gas exploration, especially by ExxonMobil. Other carbon-intensive state policies include ever-worsening suburban sprawl facilitated by the doubling of the Durban-Johannesburg oil pipeline at nearly four times the initial budget of $500 million. Pretoria also granted approval for a new $6 billion state oil refinery, and has plans for more smelter-intensive minerals beneficiation including a new Chinese steel factory (in spite of steel imports from China decimating the two main existing producers in 2015).

Facing this intensification of South Africa's capital-carbon metabolism, Molewa's 2014-2015 budget ($400 million) was revealing. In addition to an 8.3 percent real cut in overall climate-change programming, her $1.5 million cut to the South African Weather Service's budget

meant, according to Parliament's Environmental Oversight Committee (2014), "South Africa would be unable to meet its international obligations regarding the monitoring of greenhouse gases through the Global Atmospheric Watch station. … The country would also be unable to formulate baselines and monitor emissions versus set targets."

Writing in the *Mail & Guardian,* Molewa's (2014) reply to concerns expressed (by this author, Bond 2014b) about such developments was defensive:

> Contrary to Bond's analysis, South Africa is not at risk of not meeting its international obligations regarding climate change or its attendant priority, greenhouse gas emissions monitoring and reduction. Our national climate change response policy guides the government's approach to climate change impacts and the country's transition to a climate-resilient, low-carbon, mitigating economy (Molewa 2014).

Yet as the Environment Oversight Committee (2014) had warned, "As a country, we must be seen making our fair contribution to the global effort to mitigate climate change by ensuring that we reduce our greenhouse gas emissions below the business-as-usual by 34 per cent by 2020 and 42 per cent by 2025." In mid-2015, the next opportunity arose for Pretoria to commit to the COP21, but Molewa's offer inspired a scathing response from the South African office of Greenpeace (2015):

> The "Discussion Document: South Africa's INDC: 1 August 2015" avoids quantifying any contribution to mitigation and fails to meet the very basic generic requirements agreed for the mitigation component of the INDC. If not rectified, such blatant evasiveness will undermine South Africa's credibility and any claim to moral authority in leadership of developing country negotiators.

This lack of ambition is consistent with Pretoria's approach of turning a blind eye to pollution violations especially from coal mining, electricity generation, and oil refineries (all associated with climate change) (groundWork et al 2014). Molewa's (2014) rebuttal confirmed an inappropriate degree of state modesty: "We are constantly addressing issues to do with climate change—mostly behind the scenes."

Staying "behind the scenes" can be explained by the durable power of South Africa's so-called minerals-energy complex (Fine and Rustomjee 1996). That power was unveiled when Molewa's cabinet colleagues Nathi Mthethwa and Cyril Ramaphosa assisted London-based platinum firm Lonmin, in August 2012, by deploying the police against striking workers for the sake of maintaining corporate mining profits. Ramaphosa, later to become deputy president of South Africa, was a 9-percent owner of Lonmin, and it was his emails that brought massacre-minded troops to end the wildcat strike (he called it "dastardly criminal"), leaving 34 corpses of workers, many of whom were trying to surrender. Testimony Ramaphosa gave to the investigating commission in mid-2014 confirmed his loyalties: He admitted that instead of building 5,500 houses for Lonmin workers, as promised, the corporation's Transformation Committee that he oversaw built just three. He also facilitated the off-shore "illicit financial flows" of Lonmin profits to Bermuda.

Ramaphosa's massive coal mines and similar dirty-coal corporate operations were, according to insiders, long pampered by Molewa's water officials. At least forty major new mines are now being dug or planned to provide coal to two new power plants, not to mention new export-oriented coal digs to supply China and India. The coal-producing province of Mpumalanga was, by 2014, quite literally wheezing (groundWork et al 2014). Yet electricity producer Eskom applied to Molewa for "rolling postponements" on pollution reductions required by law at 14 power plants there. Eskom's assumption was that its own crises—and regular load-shedding that struck fear into the society—would persuade Molewa of the need for forbearance. By Feb-

ruary 2015, Molewa had agreed to a five-year extension on air pollution regulatory forbearance for Eskom, Sasol, and dozens of other firms whose emissions both harmed local workers and residents and contributed to climate change.

The only hope emerging from the adverse balance of national forces in South Africa could be discerned at the global and the grassroots scales: in plunging world prices for fossil fuels, and in the resistance by community and environmental activists that in late 2015 began to bite. The former included a shrinkage in the coal price from a peak of $170/ton to $50/ton from 2011-2015, and that set the stage for at least a temporary victory at one of the main sites of struggle against new mines: the iMfolozi wilderness area, Africa's oldest nature reserve. There, in May 2015, more than 1,000 women spoke out against a company, Ibutho Coal, associated with mega-corporations Glencore and BHP Billiton. This plus legal objections based on environmental harm drove Ibutho into retreat, withdrawing its plans, even though many of the local Zulu chiefs had been bought off by the firm and the national government.

In a second encouraging case two hundred miles south, in Durban, the world over-accumulation crisis had stalled world shipping to the extent that in November 2015, plans for digging the new $20 billion port and oil terminal were put on hold indefinitely. This again reflected the durability of community opposition, for climate change was a leading reason the local group opposed the port-petrochemical complex's extension, as well as ExxonMobil's plans for deep-water drilling off Durban's shore. It is these grassroots victories that represent South Africa's climate "Blockadia" (Klein 2014). While the Paris agreement led to unmitigated failure, combining local resistance with global capitalist contradictions suggests the way forward.

With the South African population recording 47 percent awareness that climate change is the world's greatest threat in the 2015 Pew survey (Carle 2015), the possibility for turning awareness into activism remains the only hope, given that Pretoria's elites appear unwilling to change course.

Conclusion

The South African case illustrates how difficult it is for the world to solve the climate crisis, even while its highest-profile delegate offers claims of "climate apartheid" as heard during the Paris COP21. The genuine victims of climate apartheid did not make it to Paris (and not only because of the severe impact of terrorism on EU visa availability). But they will continue to make their voices heard at national and local scales, where after all the war against emission sources will be won or lost.

Terrorist attacks that left more than 130 mainly young Parisians dead on November 13 remind us of blowback hazards that will be faced by future stubborn governments of the North and the BRICS. Refugees will arrive in faster, higher waves to their shores, initially from North Africa and the Middle East—which will heat to unliveable temperatures by mid-century—illustrating how mass migrations from many climate-creditor sites are driven by weather-related conflict. Climate refugees from Syria's extreme 2006-2010 drought—treated so carelessly by the Assad regime, compelling popular rebellion in 2011—and the simultaneous difficulties faced by migratory herders in western Sudan's Darfur give these sites the dubious honor of witnessing the first climate wars.

Future COPs will make efforts at enforcement of the non-binding Paris summit agreement. But top-down, this is likely to remain futile, for already in Washington, Obama faces Republican efforts to undue his 2015 Environmental Protection Agency rulings against coal. In Morocco at the December 2016 COP22, conditions for social mobilization will be far more adverse than even Paris. So looking back on Paris, even if the climate marches across the world on November 28-29 played a salutatory role in raising consciousness, it was the protest

activities *against* the COP21's weak outcome that set the stage for climate justice activism in years ahead.

Evidently, nothing useful to solve this crisis will come from world elites. The action will continue to be at the coal-face local sites of "Blockadia" and then an aggregation of these, to make national contestations—such as over South African government economic policy—the battlegrounds where activists can muster strength to change the balance of power.

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Wealth Extraction, Governmental Servitude, and Social Disintegration in Colonial Puerto Rico

Argeo T. Quiñones-Pérez and Ian J. Seda-Irizarry

After ten years of economic contraction, many of the citizens of Puerto Rico find themselves watching the secular decomposition of a reality that in its heyday was painted by many as one of relative socio-economic welfare. The latest economic downturn of the island, which predated the so-called global "great recession" by two years, has confirmed that the current colonial economy could not achieve certain objectives of the economically more advanced economies.

When compared to its own historical record and that of the United States, the performance of the economy of Puerto Rico is not an example of socio-economic convergence or of a process leading to "developed capitalism":

• Economic growth capacity is declining. Compared with the so-called golden period of 1947-1973, when growth averaged 6 percent per year, average growth was 1.6 percent per year after the first oil shock during fiscal years 1976-2014. From 2000 to present, the average annual rate is -0.5 percent, and with the onset of the current crisis in 2006, average economic growth is down to -1.5 percent per year. Preliminary forecasts for growth in fiscal years 2015, 2016, and 2017 are negative. The length and depth of the downturn are those of a depression and not a simple cycle.

• Job creation capacity has declined dramatically. Even during the golden years, full employment was never attained. Unemployment of 10.3 percent during 1969-1970 was the lowest yearly average from 1947 to date. Currently, the participation rate is around 40 percent, more than 20 percentage points lower than in the United States. Unemployment hovers around 12 percent, while the U.S. state with the highest unemployment rate, West Virginia, experiences 7 percent unemployment. The Puerto Rican employment rate stands at 36 percent.

• Median household income, in 2013 inflation-adjusted dollars, was 37 percent of U.S. median household income ($19,183 versus $52,250). Per capita income in Puerto Rico is not quite half that of Mississippi, the poorest state. Around 46 percent of the population lives in poverty, compared to about 15 percent of the United States. Puerto Rico is second to none of the 50 states regarding inequality of income distribution. The island's Gini index (a measure of income inequality) was 0.547 in 2013, higher than those of Washington DC (0.532) and New York (0.510). The U.S. average is 0.481.

• Emigration to the United States is reaching record levels. Between 2010 and 2014, the average number of people leaving the island each year was 53,020. For the period between April 2014 and March 2015, the number reached 86,654. (During the first massive waves of emigration in the 1950s, the yearly average was 47,400.) Combined with lower birth rates, this

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has led to a significant decrease in and aging of the population.

• The island's total public debt is more than 100 percent of its Gross National Product ($72 billion), not counting net liabilities of the public pension system at $43.4 billion. Government faces increasing debt-service burden, a liquidity crisis, creeping default, and tax-backed bonds that are at near-default status.

• The economy has seen nine years of austerity policy, increased tax burden on consumption, attrition and firing of thousands of government employees with reduced fringe benefits for those remaining, big privatization projects, and market liberalization policies.

The roots of this unfolding drama are found in an obsolete economic model once thought of as successful and which the two major political administrations insist on perpetuating, albeit with differences in tonalities. It is a failed model that, combined with regressive neoliberal structural reforms imposed by both administrations, intensifies the economic depression and fiscal crisis, securing Puerto Rico's membership within a group of countries squeezed and looted by austerity policies. While the cost of the adjustment is shared by workers, poor people, and many small businesses, the share of the pie going to the top of our society and external partners increases with the crisis and the adjustments vainly imposed to appease global financial capital and local intermediaries' thirst for more. No wonder some consider the country to be the Greece of the Caribbean.

In this article we provide a general overview of how the decade-long depression in Puerto Rico is connected to the enforcement of an outdated economic model and structural adjustment policies with regressive and procyclical consequences. The search for a new way to organize economic activity is not a technical issue for well-paid advisors; it is a matter of power relations.

In the first section, we examine the characteristics of an *obsolete* economic model that outlived its "successful" period by four decades. We then explore how the crisis of 1974-1975 was tackled and use that context to then analyze the current decade-long depression, one that to a certain extent is structural and self-inflicted. Finally, we indicate where we think our analysis leads in order to tackle the crisis and possible solutions.

An Outdated Economic Model

Puerto Rico's current economic model has its roots in the postwar transition from a rural and agricultural economy to an urban and industrial one. This transformation was based on export-led industrialization dependent on foreign, primarily U.S., direct investment, which was attracted by a host of economic, legal, and political incentives to operate in the island. This process, sometimes referred to as "Operation Bootstrap," involved various phases of industrialization, from light industries (apparel), to heavy industries (refining and petrochemicals), and then to the current high-tech sector (pharmaceuticals and electronics among others). Throughout this process the basic characteristics of the development model have remained unchanged, namely:

• An ideology based on the notion that Puerto Rico's lack of development capacity is due to its small size, overpopulation, absence of natural resources, and very low income, therefore requiring external capital flows and export-led industrialization and now services;

• A fundamental role for governmental promotion of economic activity in an ad-hoc fashion, attracting foreign investment with various incentives and no clear objectives attached to them, for instance giving multiple tax credits and exemptions; environmental subsidies; subsidized public utilities; an abundant, educated, and cheap labor force; and industrial peace through anti-union policies; and

• The contradictory goal of maintaining low absolute costs of doing business to attract investment, regardless of productivity gains and expected personal income gains from growth and development processes.

Between 1947 and 1973, Operation Bootstrap and the ensuing industrialization process promoted relatively high growth rates averaging 6 percent yearly. However, economic growth did not lower unemployment rates to single digits or increase labor participation rates to first-world standards. Migration to the United States was substantial, yet poverty remained extremely high, encompassing 62.8 percent of the population in 1970. Whatever room to maneuver the Puerto Rican government had in negotiating terms for the country was lost: The general attitude of those promoting industrialization was based on the impossibility of endogenous development and a primeval belief in a sort of trickle-down effect. In essence, Operation Bootstrap was a neoliberal endeavor from its inception. When the crisis struck and options were discussed in the new scenario of economic liberalism's rebirth, public strategists were out of options.

> The search for a new way to organize economic activity is not a technical issue for well-paid advisors; it is a matter of power relations.

Flawed Historical Responses

With the onset of the early 1970s crisis, expansion of oil refineries and petrochemical complexes came to an abrupt halt. The onset of neoliberal globalization brought new third-world competitors into the world economy. It was clear that Puerto Rico had lost attractiveness for certain fractions of capital. Competing against low costs in newly industrializing countries was not an option as they gained more access to U.S. and global markets within the new international division of labor. Instead of changing the model in place since 1947, those in power preserved it, and more aggressive subsidies were offered, especially tax breaks, low real wages, cheap infrastructure, and environmental laxity. Vested interests' resistance to change, lack of institutional agility, and determination were the order of the day. Dependency was to remain untouched and growing.

To start the chronology of the early-1970s crisis with the oil embargo and its consequences for the Puerto Rican economy obscures the fact that signs of the economic model's exhaustion were present before that event. Economic growth in the late 1960s and early 1970s was maintained with expansionary fiscal policy. Public debt increased by around 90 percent during 1969-1973. Debt financing grew larger as the government increased public spending to create 40 percent of new jobs in those years.

The process of industrialization, supposed to be the main driver of growth and development, had and still has major flaws. First there is the problem of *improvisation:* The absence of a development strategy and corresponding industrial policy resulted in "taking advantage" of conjunctural opportunities without a long-term, integral, and dynamic vision of the economy, the relationship among its sectors, and major development goals. This lead to the formation of an industrial enclave dominated by subsidiaries of multinational firms, with no substantial connection with the rest of the economy, a policy that used the country as an assembly platform for the export of goods and for global money-laundering. This enclave model limited the benefits usually associated with industrialization, such as increased employment and income, transfer of technology, endogenous capital formation, domestic entrepreneurial development, and so

*Gross National Product refers to the total value of the goods and services produced in one year by the residents of a country within the borders of that same country or others, while the Gross Domestic Product refers to the total value of goods and services produced within a country by both nationals and foreigners in that country.

on. This also applies to other industrial sectors like tourism, with the proliferation of resorts and cruise-ship activity poorly integrated with the rest of the economy.

Furthermore, during the early 1970s a widening gap between Gross National Product and Gross Domestic Product started, one that has grown currently to the equivalent of 50 percent or more of GNP.* The collapse of Bretton Woods opened the gates for the thus-far restricted flow of financial capital worldwide. Puerto Rico became a focal point for investors' global financial strategy when Section 931 of the U.S Internal Revenue Code was replaced by Section 936, providing greater flexibility to capital flows. Numerous tax breaks and the use of transfer pricing for income shifting around the world allowed for a substantial amount of money—over $30 billion in total and more than 75 percent of manufacturing's GDP currently—to be transferred out of Puerto Rico yearly, limiting capital formation and enhancement of economic activity.

The government budget experienced its first (unconstitutional) deficit in 1974, and debt rose to 74 percent of GNP in 1976. Risk classification of government's general obligations was downgraded, and the first contemporary fiscal crisis was born. The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico commissioned a study of the country's public finances in 1974, often referred to as the Tobin Report (1975), named for economist James Tobin.

Tobin's report emphasized the problems of poverty, inequality, and dependence and highlighted the erosion of Puerto Rico's attractiveness to foreign capital, but it also put forward a series of recommendations, many of them typical of neoliberal adjustment programs imposed by the International Monetary Fund principally in third world countries from the 1970s onward. Among its recommendations were: limiting public expenditures; freezing salaries of the central government, public corporations, and private sector; delaying congressional federal minimum wage increments; reducing minimum wages for workers under age twenty; eliminating fringe benefits that increased labor costs; providing direct industrial incentives to firms that invest and create employment in Puerto Rico; and responsibly marketing government bonds.

Current Political and Economic Crisis

From the time of the Tobin report until 2006, the economy of Puerto Rico had undergone an intermittent structural adjustment process with varying degrees of intensity. A detailed account of more than three decades of on-and-off structural adjustment is beyond the scope of this essay. However, as affirmed by Tobin, the early-1970s crisis was not merely a conjunctural problem to be solved by a repertoire of anti-cyclical policies. It was a structural problem that required more fundamental responses.

The disastrous effects of the first postwar crisis in 1974 and the second great recession of the early 1980s, when unemployment in Puerto Rico surpassed 20 percent, were contained through a sizable increase in the flow of federal funds and migration. However, Operation Bootstrap remained unchanged. Thus, the problems of 40 years ago remained latent and made their reappearance in 2006.

Puerto Rico's economy never regained capacity for growth comparable to that of the 1947-1973 period. Public indebtedness remained at 60 percent of GNP during 1977-2000. The labor market continued its mediocre performance, and migration and federal transfers kept conflicts and tensions at bay. After the 2001 recession, growth capacity further weakened, and public debt picked up again. Risk assessment of Puerto Rico's public debt was a notch above non-investment grade in 2006, or Baa3 according to Moody's assessment. At play were the combined effects of an outdated economic structure, the lack of an industrial policy, and new federally mandated parameters—a higher minimum wage and changes in the IRS code affecting Puerto Rico—in a more competi-

tive and globalized economy.

This is the context in which the administrations of the Popular Democratic Party and the New Progressive Party have governed during the last decade of depression and fiscal crisis, applying structural reforms without questioning how this context came to be. The neoliberal discourse adopted by ruling extractive elites in Puerto Rico has had four main components: the excessive size of government; living beyond our means; the need for an adjustment in which all sectors of society must sacrifice; and the need to keep costs of doing business low in order to maintain competitiveness.

The size and role of the government has become one of the principle issues of the debate, with various groups offering often contrasting views on the subject. Both governing parties have adopted the idea that the excessive size of government as one of the main reasons for the Puerto Rican economy's woes. While standard economic measurements do not support the thesis that Puerto Rico's government is "too big," the recent history of the island puts the role of the government at center stage, particularly regarding U.S.-Puerto Rico relations, the origin of the crisis, as well as local government capacity to negotiate with the federal government on possible strategies to solve the crisis.

However, denying the relative fiscal autonomy of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico is a grave mistake. It can be argued that much of the crisis is *self-inflicted*. The lack of an industrial policy with effective oversight and the extension of subsidies to most of the foreign investors in sectors other than manufacturing, as well as to local capitalists, has eroded the tax base and contributed to depressed salaries, wealth and income inequality, poverty, environmental degradation, and the expansion of the informal economy. Despite the fiscal crisis and the lack of evidence supporting the effectiveness of the multitude of subsidies, both governing parties continued granting tax exemptions, wage subsidies, and other inducements for business to invest. In 2004 there were 40 tax exemption laws. As we write, the number of these laws exceeds 80. Furthermore, every instance of tax reform from the mid-1980s until 2010 involved lowering taxes in order to promote economic growth—a failed supply-side strategy for growth but a very effective tool for income and wealth redistribution to the top.

Intensive and indiscriminate use of tax exemptions has made of Puerto Rico a free-for-all fiscal paradise, eroding the tax ethic and tax base of the system. A growing sense of unfairness permeates public opinion. Some events that highlight Puerto Rico's lack of fiscal control are:

- More than 20,000 businesses did not submit income tax reports in April 2014, which meant a loss of revenue on the order of $400 million.
- Big businesses in manufacturing, retail, and other sectors report minimal profits, losses, or breaking even, hiding their revenues through "profit-stripping" strategies with transfer pricing and income shifting.
- Real estate investment trusts siphon hundreds of millions of dollars out of Puerto Rico without paying taxes or being authorized to do business on the island.
- Government bailout payments for debt service of luxury hotels amounted to $400 million during 2012 and 2013.
- Four billion dollars in tax debts went uncollected in 2015. The overall rate of evasion is close to 30 percent of potential revenues.
- Eighty tax exemption laws together cost over $1 billion in lost revenues yearly.
- Dwindling resources at the Treasury Department for tax enforcement has led to the loss of personnel, intellectual expertise, and technological know-how.
- Tax subsidies at the municipal level, granted by central government, result in $850 million per year in revenue losses for cash-strapped towns.
- Waste of public funds amounts to 10 percent of the budget according to past comptrollers (equivalent to $900 million of the general-

fund-backed budget and $2.9 billion of the consolidated budget). Corruption has mounted to almost $900 million of public funds per year, according to FBI figures.

All of these examples of contradictory economic behavior, and more, happen amidst a major fiscal crisis and depression. This is precisely why we see this crisis as self-inflicted and also question the discourse of the adjustment burden being shared by all. So far, the burden of the adjustment has been falling on the working class, the poor, and many small businesses. The tax system—with its complexity, lack of integral connection, and regressive bias—and the use of public funds—reflecting lack of planning, absence of controls, corruption, political cycles, and politicians' whims—are both common problems in the allocation of resources that are *locally determined*.

Although budget deficits are explicitly forbidden by Puerto Rico's constitution, using public debt to finance recurrent expenditures, declaring certain amounts of debt as "extra constitutional," and issuing debt without specific sources for its service have been common practices. However, as the imbalance grows, as the economy contracts, and as less revenue accrues to the treasury, solvency is compromised and risk assessment becomes increasingly negative. As this vicious cycle continues, a cash-flow crisis emerges with incremental default taking place.

The different adjustment programs implemented since 2006 have all targeted the size of government, its labor force, and their fringe benefits: from Acevedo Vilá's governorship imposing Puerto Rico's first sales tax and public-employment attrition, to Fortuño's plan and its iconic Law Number 7 of 2009 firing over 20,000 public employees, and then García Padilla's Law Number 66 of 2014 that reduces the budgets of public agencies, consolidates some of them, and maintains public-employment attrition. The number of public employees has decreased significantly and so has the cost of the public-sector labor force. From the beginning of the crisis in 2006 to September 2015, average government employment has experienced a reduction of 69,000 jobs. The negative multiplier effect of public-employment downsizing is considerable, contributing to a decline in private-sector activity on top of the downturn. Total non-farm wage employment dropped by 137,000 during the same period, deepening the depression, the fiscal crisis, and the precarious state of public retirement systems.

Regressive taxation has also been the order of the day. More taxes on consumption are imposed in a desperate move to shore up liquidity, while big-scale privatization projects have been undertaken by both administrations (Fortuño and García Padilla); more privatization projects are waiting, based on public-private partnerships that bring lump sums of cash to the government in exchange for the transfer of productive public assets to private hands for 40 to 50 years. Finally, more pro-business laws are being approved, reform was undertaken in granting business permits, commercial-sector operating hours have been expanded, and Sunday wages were slashed, while vast amounts of internal and external funds were injected into the economy. Notwithstanding, and with growth still nowhere in sight, government faces a liquidity crisis while gradual default has already begun and most of its debt is close to default status.

The Puerto Rican economy is like a punctured tire tube: You can pump vast amounts of resources into it, and it will not grow. From 2006 to 2015, close to $40 billion was injected into the system, for instance through sales-tax-backed bonds; Bush's 2008 stimulus; bond issuance by the central government, public enterprises, and municipalities; American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds; Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation funds for bank consolidations; the Toxic Asset Relief Program; and Affordable Healthcare Act funds.

In spite of this considerable injection, the only positive growth value from 2007 to the present was a meager 0.5 percent in fiscal year

2012. During 2000-2005, right before the onset of the crisis, average annual growth was just 1.82 percent. From the beginning of the century to 2014, growth has averaged 0.15 percent per year. Average growth from the onset of the crisis in 2006 till the present is at -1.5 percent. According to official estimates and forecasts, growth will remain negative during 2015 and 2016. As it is structured, the Puerto Rican economy has lost capacity for growth.

The problems of the Puerto Rican economy are certainly structural, but the necessary adjustment to solve them is not the classic IMF neoliberal package. Perfect mobility of labor is an effective escape valve whereby some, especially the young, can dodge draconian austerity policies by leaving the island. Dominant groups take advantage of the crisis to advance their own interests, lowering taxes, liberalizing markets, privatizing at a discount, claiming more subsidies, and so on. An enormous informal economy with both legal and illegal activities wraps the island. To think that the remedy lies in more taxes, privatization, budget cuts, and liberalization of markets is to deny major institutional problems not addressed by this neoliberal strategy. After nine years of structural reforms and massive injections, the Puerto Rican economy continues its downward march towards depression and default.

Conclusion: Race to the Bottom, Default, and Change

The double whip of the fiscal crisis and the economic recession that the economy of Puerto Rico faces shows no sign of abatement: Growth is nowhere in sight and government faces a cash-flow crisis with gradual default already in motion. With access to financial markets severely restrained, room for fiscal maneuver is very limited in the context here described.

The demographic situation runs counter to possible future growth and development as the population growth rate diminishes and net out-migration is reaching record levels, perhaps even greater than in the 1950s. Puerto Rico's total population is decreasing and aging fast. Furthermore, a sort of population swap is taking place, with mostly young people leaving (82 percent of migrants are 24 years old or younger) while Law 22 of 2012 (the Millionaire's Law) is attracting hundreds of well-off Americans to this fiscal paradise. Lack of opportunities has led to the growth of a sizable informal economy, which further erodes the tax base. Inequality, poverty, and social tensions have risen in this deteriorated scenario.

A "Fiscal Stabilization and Economic Growth Plan" was presented by the current administration in September 2015. According to the plan, by the end of 2015 the government would have run out of cash and public financing will see an estimated aggregate gap of $27.8 billion over the next five years. The plan proposes a variety of neoliberal prescriptions dating from the time of Tobin's report, while adding some new ones. Most important of all are negotiating debt restructuring with bondholders, obtaining substantial concessions from the federal government with more Medicaid and Medicare allocations, controlling minimum wages, and obtaining exemption from cabotage laws. The plan also proposes revising labor laws in order to strip the working class of many acquired benefits for the sake of competitiveness. It also proposes a local fiscal oversight board with powers not clearly limited. However, the proposal states that even with a 100 percent success rate in its implementation, only half of the public finance gap ($14 billion) could be closed by 2020.

The Puerto Rican economy has become a model of extreme capitalist wealth extraction, with over $30 billion in profits repatriated every year. Meanwhile the share of profits and interest going to local extractive elites, mostly intermediaries of global financial capital and other fractions of capital, increased 70 percent during 2005-2014, according to the functional distribution of net national income. Workers' share of net national income increased only

1.3 percent during the same period. Thus, all groups and classes of society do not equally share the crisis.

As the Federal Reserve Bank of New York's report "An Update on the Competitiveness of Puerto Rico's Economy" (2014) stated, "The island appears to face two alternatives: either manage its own economic adjustment and put the Commonwealth on a secure fiscal basis, or wait for outmigration and the discipline of the market to force an even more painful adjustment, particularly for those unable or unwilling to leave the island."

Among the citizenry more awareness exists of how both major governing parties are responsible for the crisis and therefore incapable of adopting other approaches to the crisis than the socially disruptive structural adjustments they have imposed so far. Average citizens cannot relate to the discourse of having lived beyond their means, as the burden and hardship of daily life keeps growing upon a population already impoverished before the crisis and the adjustments. Rationing of basic public services and lack of opportunities, and increasing poverty, inequality, and migration, constitute major challenges faced by working people and the poor. How much more can they be asked to contribute toward the solution of the crisis? In spite of this, status preferences blur the shared-class nature of the main political parties and their resulting resistance to structural change within, and potentially outside, colonial capitalism.

However, talking about any future lineages of the Puerto Rican economy and society is purely speculative at the moment. A far-reaching social restructuring is taking place, and no significant resistance appears to coalesce in order to restrain it and lead it in a different direction. In Puerto Rico and among Puerto Ricans in the United States, much effort is being mustered for some form of bailout, bankruptcy, or federal oversight board for the troubled economy. Regardless of the mechanisms and amount of funds that a possible federal intervention could allocate to or impose on Puerto Rico's economy, growth will not restart and public debt obligations will last forever if the model based on vast subsidies for capital in exchange for crumbs for the Puerto Rican people is not substantially changed.

Building a new economy and society with more equitable wealth and power distribution in a colonial setting will not be possible without major political struggles, as the examples of sovereign Greece and Argentina show. In the end, the terminal crisis of Puerto Rico's socio-economic model poses imperative challenges that must be addressed head on if future sustainable development is to be considered attainable. The ways and manners this struggle will take depend on people's capacity to organize and transform a political system plagued with political investment, closed entry into the electoral arena for new parties, and centuries-old fears of grasping power and control of our own existence. This represents a formidable challenge as the groups and alliances of local and international classes extracting wealth from the island will do all that is possible to prevent change. However, as this extractive model reaches its extensive and intensive margins, incapable of growing, drained of its productive population, fiscally broke with systemic limits to budget cuts and more taxes, a compromise must come. A broad coalition of progressive forces in Puerto Rico and the United States, capable of cutting the Gordian knot of extractive-class domination, of pushing for institutional changes in Puerto Rico, and claiming for the island a fair share of the surplus extracted and sent to the United States during the last 117 years, would be a good start.

Podemos and the 15M Language Community

Antonio Martínez-Arboleda

The Indignados (in English, the "outraged"), protagonists of what is called the Spanish May 15, or 15M, Revolution (2011-2013), concentrated a great deal of their political action on the construction of a shared conceptual and emotional understanding of the political reality around them. Their reliance on social media, assemblies, and dialogue, as well as a lack of previous common activist experiences for a majority of participants, meant that the Indignados became a community of language as much as a political movement. In terms of specific policies and methods to gain power, sadly, the Indignados did not show the ability to build a political program during that period. As sociologist and philosopher Zygmunt Bauman observed, "The 15M is emotional, it lacks thinking. … It can only prepare the ground for a construction, in the future, of a different type of organization."[1]

In 2014, a number of new political actors led by members of the Indignados movement sprung up in Spain, claiming to be heirs of the 15M Revolution. Hundreds of thousands of Spaniards, including people who had not been actively involved in the protests and assemblies, immediately recognized the Indignado credential of these projects and joined in enthusiastically, particularly after their ambitious electoral plans seemed to be taking shape. The responsibility of maintaining, refreshing, and reinventing the linguistic universe of the Indignados, previously in the hands of a centerless network of collective intelligence and media, fell primarily on Podemos' shoulders. This was in large part due to its connections with papers and televisions, its populist ideology, and its size and organization.

In this article we will look critically at a selection of key elements of the political discourse of the Spanish radical left with a particular focus on the role of Podemos as the main curator and a key producer of Indignados language from 2014 onwards. Also, the use of language by Podemos, as it strives to become a hegemonic mass movement, and the language's impact on Podemos activists and the orientation of their program, will be discussed.

Given the exploratory nature of this brief article, its focus will be on semantic fields whose analysis may help readers to make sense of the current dilemmas of the radical left in Spain. The lack of a definition of the idea of "language community" is deliberate. Hopefully this article will provide a preliminary indication of its conceptual boundaries and an invitation to others to develop it further in order to gain a more critical understanding of populist experiences.

Adiós to the Linguistic Universe of the Traditional Radical Left

If we look at the names of all the radical left-wing platforms and parties that have appeared in Spain in 2014 and 2015 (Podemos, Ganemos, Ahora en Común, Na Marea, En Comú Po-

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dem, and more), all stemming from the 15M movement, and read their literature, we will notice the glaring absence of the words "left," "socialist/socialism," "communist/communism," "class struggle," "people" ("pueblo," in the revolutionary sense), "superstructure," or "working classes." (Interestingly, in the Unidad Popular platform, created in November 2015, some of that language is being recovered.)

This abandonment of left-wing language may seem contradictory, and even upsetting for some, since there is overwhelming agreement that the agendas of these new parties are situated in the radical left of the Spanish and European political spectra, beyond the liberal social-democrat parties like the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (Partido Socialista Obrero Español or PSOE). In fact, the vast majority of the leaders of the new political actors, unlike the organizers of the May 2011 protests, have a revolutionary socialist or anarchist background. This is particularly remarkable in the case of Podemos, whose manifesto, written and published in January 2014, was promoted by Anticapitalist Left, a section of the Fourth International.

The refusal to use the word "left" can be traced back to the very inception of the 15M Indignados movement. The Real Democracy Now group (Democracia Real Ya), who organized the first wave of demonstrations on May 15, 2011, declared emphatically that they were neither left-wing nor right-wing, despite having included in their manifesto a number of clearly progressive socio-economic demands. The reasons behind their attitude can be summed up as follows: First, many of the leading Indignados were very new to politics and had no left-wing loyalty nor acumen. Second, the overhaul of the Spanish political system as a whole and its networks of power ("El Sistema," "The System"), became the objective of the movement, whose leadership was shared through open cumulative networks promoted by small and diverse groups. Rightly or not, the main radical left party, Izquierda Unida (United Left), and certainly the two main trade unions, were regarded as part of "El Sistema," although United Left was seen in a less negative light than the other main parties (the "socialist" PSOE and the conservative Partido Popular, the People's Party). We must bear in mind that the protests started during the government of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, of the PSOE, who proved incapable of stopping the economic and social deterioration provoked by the crisis that hit Spain and the world from 2007.

The "anti-sistema" element of the Indignados' ideology persisted during its two and a half years as an autonomous movement. Despite the active involvement of thousands of left-wing militants from various organizations (including United Left), no fraction of the Indignados ever accepted the idea that they were or could be represented by any party or union during the period from 2011 to 2013, no matter how closely aligned to the movement the demands and methods of those organizations might be.

The role played by different preexisting groups of ideology-based activists (as opposed to protest groups) in contributing to the Indignados' discourse is something that will need to be studied in more detail in the future. For the purpose of this article, it is worth noting that the 15M movement absorbed, or recreated, meanings from revolutionary socialism and took elements from the language and methods of anarchism. However, the main agent responsible for the choice of terms and for the initial construction of the building blocks of the Indignados discourse was not a political party or a group of academics but the relatively spontaneous and open networks of activists with strong online connections. This network flourished between 2011 and 2013, as different members interacted among themselves, with the public, and with the media.

It is also worth mentioning, as Pérez Vicente[2] points out in her detailed account on the 15M slogans, that the Indignados' rhetoric

was from the onset hugely inventive, literary, and colorful, with plenty of humor, metaphors, and popular themes. In my view, this is another reason why the often heavy language of revolutionary Marxism, widely discredited by the establishment, would never have caught on. In the next sections of this article we will look at the most salient expressions used by the 15M and taken up by their political heirs in order to construct this not-so-new political reality of crisis and to articulate effective responses.

The Podemos Language Machine

The creation of Podemos in January 2014 brought about a high degree of institutionalization of the language of the 15M, which had already being internalized by wide sectors of Spanish society. The key figures of Podemos had been politically active, in different capacities, during the 15M revolution, although not as leading organizers of the protests. Despite the numerous and bitter criticisms received by Podemos for rejecting traditional terms of revolutionary socialism, in my view, in January 2014 when Podemos was created, it was too late to recuperate traditional socialist language for the purpose of mass political pedagogy, particularly with the May 2014 European elections approaching. Podemos was born under the skies of the Indignados' universe of meaning, and that was irreversible.

Right from its inception, Podemos' strategy of communication and public engagement seemed to be aimed at the development of a "Podemos Language" that, stemming from the Indignados lexicon and discourse, would ensure the effective control of the framing of issues in the public sphere, not only on television but also in social media. Podemos experts would have to engage with concepts that the 15M had already developed, either by definition or rejection, such as "democracia" (democracy) or "casta" (caste, the political-economic establishment); they would also have to maintain, creatively, a fresh tone in the language, with the extensive use of metaphors and other literary tropes; and finally, they would have to incorporate non-15M concepts for them to be assigned a function in the Podemos discourse, as was the case with "el Estado de Derecho" (the rule of law), "patria" (motherland), or "mochila" (back pack, in reference to United Left as a burden). The early Italian Communist Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony and the thinking of the Argentine leftist Ernesto Laclau on "empty signifiers" (words and expressions whose meaning is up for grabs and can be redefined and repurposed for the construction of a new hegemonic political identity such as "the people") inspired the leaders of Podemos. The most thoughtful and comprehensive interpretation of the 15M under the theoretical framework of Laclau has been articulated by Íñigo Errejón, second in command in Podemos.[3]

An interesting connection between the language of the Indignados and the politics of Podemos can be appreciated when we compare the period 2011-2013 to 2014-2015 in the light of Laclau's beliefs that political identities are socially constructed through discourse. Both the Indignados and Podemos used highly language-intensive political action, but there is a fundamental difference between the two: The Indignados populist discourse was spontaneous and highly endogenous, which meant that people connected with the 15M felt, and were, the owners of that language and therefore of their identity. Podemos' leaders, however (notably Errejón,[4] as early as September 2011), realized during the 15M Revolution that the Indignados were (inadvertently) an impromptu textbook example of Laclau's language-constructed "people" and then decided to create Podemos to attract the social base of the 15M and lead them further through Laclau's route to hegemony. Effectively, the choral jazz voice of the 15M started to be mixed with the sing-along karaoke experience of Podemos. This change in the role and status of language creation impacted, as I explain below, the relationships between Podemos, the

political contents of its evolving program, and its Indignados social base.

Vistalegre and the Wave of Internal Elections in Podemos

The success of Podemos in the European elections of May 2014, when it obtained five seats in Parliament (one less than the coalition led by United Left), also generated a wave of praise of Podemos' language and methods. The communication strategy of Podemos, which was inherent to their program of building a new mass movement, became a topic of conversation and debate amongst activists and experts alike. The honesty and authenticity of Podemos' approach to communication was questioned by many in the left, particularly in the PCE, the Communist Party of Spain, which formed part of the United Left. But the media noise and the popular enthusiasm generated by Podemos' achievement muffled the critics.

Podemos continued to build its strength and popularity over the summer of 2014. In autumn 2014, between September 15 and November 15, the party held a massive, open, predominantly online founding assembly that would lead to the discussion and enactment of its statutes and the election of leaders, committees, and councils. During this clinically organized, visually attractive constitutional process, known as Vistalegre, in reference to the place in Madrid were the final sessions were held, the membership grew to more than a quarter of a million, all registered online.

Vistalegre saw a big celebratory explosion of internal democracy, thanks to the fact that more than a hundred circles in Spain and abroad had presented their own proposals of party statutes, often coordinated with other circles. The proposals were allowed to have their own title and slogans, and even their own visual identity. This process had generated many exciting debates over the summer of 2014 and a sense of activist empowerment. However, Vistalegre and the internal electoral processes that came out of it are also of particular interest for a different reason. The shared purpose of the Podemos Language and the linguistic harmony of the 15M were about to be disturbed by the leadership of Podemos.

Negating most activists' predictions, the leaders of the party, led by Pablo Iglesias, proposed a relatively conventional party structure for Podemos in their draft proposal, entitled "Claro que Podemos" ("Of Course We Can"), according to which there would not be a federal committee, contrary to the tradition of the Spanish left, nor a collegial formula of leadership at state level. It would be unfair to deny the virtues of Iglesias' proposal. On paper, Podemos was far better than most parties in terms of transparency, accountability, and member power. However, for many activists the centralist structure proposed by Iglesias was in flagrant contradiction to the philosophy of the 15M.

At this crucial time in the history of the party, a set of new passionate expressions were produced by Iglesias' team to argue the case for this traditional structure: Podemos needed to build an "electoral machine," a "war machine" that could confront the powerful "caste." Various sectors of the party that were unhappy with the project challenged Iglesias and demanded a negotiated agreement on the statutes of the party. Iglesias' response to the demands for "consensus" was that agreements between different "familias" (an ambivalent reference to both mafia "families" and the different factions of a party) belonged to the world of the "caste," not to Podemos. He also responded that he wanted to take the heavens, adding that "heavens are not taken by consensus, but by assault," showing that good old revolutionary language can be used when appropriate for literary reasons. Some of his detractors accused him of being the "alpha male." Iglesias made it clear that if his statutes were not passed, he would not stand as general secretary (the Podemos top officer). The Claro que Podemos statutes were adopted with the backing of 80.71 percent of the vote—but with

a 40 percent abstention—as the opposition did not manage to articulate a sufficiently engaging and effective process to allow them to reach a consensus around their various proposals.

Once the statutes had been approved, the process of choosing members of the council and the general secretary started. The candidates for the council, organized in lists, and for general secretary were encouraged to have their own websites, advertising materials, logos using Podemos motifs, and so on. A myriad of proposals, slogans, videos, and political designs produced by groups of activists competing for votes suddenly inundated social media. However, these two electoral processes were also won by the circle of Pablo Iglesias, from the Universidad Complutense of Madrid, using as their brand "Claro que Podemos."

The three subsequent internal electoral processes for the regional councils, regional secretaries, as well as the candidates for the regional elections of May 2015 would all be contested in the same way. Activists were encouraged to make up their own lists of candidates, brand them, and compete electorally. Controversially, Claro que Podemos had also decided to take part in these elections by lending their name, logos, and logistical processes to groups of candidates selected by Iglesias' team. Their selection processes were totally secretive. Despite the pain of many, who saw how the organization they had built was turning against them, the lists supported by Iglesias, most of them under the Claro que Podemos brand, were successful in the majority of regions (11 out of 17), thanks to the patronage of Iglesias and his group.

During all these internal elections, the relationship of many activists with the Podemos Language had become ambivalent, if not destructive. Activists were put in a difficult position. They had to repurpose the discourse that united the 15M-Podemos community, with many of the codes and expressions that they used regularly in their political life, for something that it had not been designed for: internal confrontation.

Iglesias and his team promoted their lists with constant references to "balanced teams of people with a variety of talents," "experts in their respective fields," and "the best people." Iglesias had managed to tap into one of the latent assumptions in Spanish society, shared by the 15M, about their politicians: that they are useless. Iglesias and his team knew what they were doing. A recent sociological study in Spain, in which more than 2,000 people were interviewed, shows how support for stealth democracy, or government by experts, appears to be compatible with being a supporter of "participatory democracy" almost as much as it is compatible with being a supporter of "representative democracy."[5] This "safe pair of hands" line of the new Podemos discourse had already appeared prominently on two occasions: in October 2014, when Pablo Iglesias announced, without consultation with the party, that two prestigious left-wing economists, Professor Vincenç Navarro and Professor Juan Torres, would play an important part in designing the economic strategy of Podemos and later on, in the statutes of Podemos, which establish mandatory consultation with experts for certain decisions.

Meanwhile, the non-Iglesias lists, often made up using pre-primaries, would invariably resort to the whole range of 15M-Podemos positive expressions of the semantic field of participatory democracy to promote their lists, but also to the negative ones associated with the idea of "caste." The nature of the Claro que Podemos selection process and the presence of university lecturers in its lists turned Iglesias into a very easy target. For many of his opponents, the Claro que Podemos apparatus and all his collaborators was part of the "caste."

Another factor that led to the deterioration of the Podemos community was the accelerated pace of these competitive electoral processes, exacerbated by an ambiguous sense of popular empowerment. Social media became saturated

with denaturalized Indignados Language, and some Podemos activists suffered a paroxysm of campaigning. Many activists who were contending for positions in councils and lists across the country had their baptism by fire in realpolitik. In a different party and a different situation, the use of language would not have mattered that much, but Podemos' relationship with its activists was heavily based on an identity whose emotional links relied on the shared language, often metaphorical, and was less based on years of militancy, deep personal relationships, or a longstanding political program.

Super Pablo

The irresistible attractiveness of Podemos was evident by May 2014. On June 1, 2014, in an interview by Ana Pastor, Iglesias showed that his ability to frame issues such as the nationalization of strategic industries without resorting to the language of the traditional left had not been affected by his recent election as a member of the European Parliament, where he would be part of the European United Left Parliamentary Group.[6] For a bright communicator such as Iglesias it was rhetorically easy to justify revolutionary socialist policies without abandoning even the conceptual and ideological framework of liberal democracies and the 1978 Constitution. Carefully repurposed expressions such as "democracy," "the rule of law," "patriotism," and "sovereignty" became his rhetorical bulwarks to defend the auditing of the debt, expropriation, confiscation, and even a new monetary policy, while he also championed the recovery of the private sector by supporting very clearly explained Keynesian principles.

When prompted about his connections with Cuba, Venezuela, or Bolivia, an association used to portray him as a radical socialist and to scare voters (bear in mind all the negative propaganda that circulated about these countries), he would declare that Finland was his exemplary country for education, France for intervention in key industries, and Ecuador for refinancing the debt, whilst praising the improvements in the Human Development Index of socialist-ruled Latin American countries. Iglesias had become the communication role model for the 15M-Podemos community.

In a later interview in November 2014 with the same reporter, Iglesias provided some answers that were criticized by numerous Podemos activists.[7] Perhaps the most interesting of Iglesias' statements that evening came when he was asked if Ana Patricia Botín, Executive Director of the Santander Bank, was part of "the caste":

Iglesias: At the moment in time in which Mrs. Botín phones a politician to tell him what to do, [she] is caste, real caste.

Pastor: And, has she called you?

Iglesias: No, to be honest, no.

Iglesias' appeal is based on his wise representation of antagonism as a rebel and eloquent character. As antagonizing journalism disappears, partly due to the watering down of Podemos' most radical economic proposals, Iglesias' opportunities to excel by interpreting successfully his 15M character become more limited. A rock-bottom point in the decline of Iglesias' popularity came in the interview with Albert Rivera, leader of the center-right Ciudadanos Party, conducted by the journalist Jordi Évole on October 19, 2015.[8] In a purposely laid-back atmosphere in a bar, Rivera, with no tie and a very casual shirt, gave Iglesias a lesson, in front of more than five million viewers, on how to be assertive, yet colloquial and amenable, in a normal life situation. This interview was a defeat for Iglesias and his spin-doctors, but, in my view, the defeat also raises the question of the limitations of the 15M-Podemos linguistic universe. It is not clear whether the 15M-Podemos Language enables members of its community to engage, in a politically purposeful and coherent way, in non-political communicative situations whose rules are determined by longstanding cultural practice, often influenced by class, and requiring therefore the use of codes that are not suitable for carrying 15M-Podemos meanings.

The Platforms and the "Convergence"

When the Municipalist Platforms, the other main strand of the new radical left, appeared in Spain in June 2014, it was difficult to anticipate how they would relate to Podemos, both organically and in terms of production of discourse. The Platforms recognized themselves, just as did Podemos, as heirs of the 15M assemblies. Their founding coincided with the deployment of the Podemos Círculos (Circles), the local open assemblies that were meant to become the backbone of Podemos as a party. At the time the Platforms started to emerge, Podemos' universe of meaning was very close to the Indignados Language and therefore to the language of the Platform activists. The risk of conflict between the two initiatives was low because the Platforms only caught on originally in Barcelona, some Catalan towns, and Madrid, and their electoral aim was merely municipal.

This explosion of local political energies was supported by the already centralized 15M-Podemos Language, which provided an intense sense of shared purpose. Expressions such as "desde abajo" ("bottom-up"), related to the 15M "los de arriba y los de abajo" ("the ones at the top and the ones at the bottom") as an alternative to the working classes, or "gobernar desde abajo" ("to rule from the bottom") regained momentum and helped to articulate the political meaning of these exciting developments. "Gobernar obedeciendo" ("Governing by obeying," an expression from the Zapatista Army of National Liberation of Mexico) summarized the commitment to participatory democracy by both the Platforms and Podemos. Concerning the structures and governance of the two movements, the expression "espacios de decisión" ("decision-making spaces"), widely used to refer to the 15M assemblies, dominated the discourse of Podemos and the Platforms. The linguistic departure from decision-making "bodies," "committees," or "organs," which were regarded as elements of traditional representative democracy, was stark. While the Platforms were considered a great example of libertarian municipalism, Podemos circles were described from their inception as "sovereign" (and still are in the party statutes, albeit only symbolically).

However, Vistalegre set Podemos apart from the Platforms, who managed to keep alive the anarchist component of the 15M in their discourse and methods. Since then, their relationship has been erratic: At times, Podemos clashed with some of the Platforms, at times Podemos' engagement has been very productive.

Podemos has also created a new set of expressions to refer to the possibility of United Left and Podemos being part of the same platform: Podemos leader Carolina Bescansa used the "mochila" ("back pack") metaphor in reference to the historic baggage of United Left as a burden that its leader, Alberto Garzón, has to carry.[9] Pablo Iglesias unleashed his rage against United Left on several occasions by suggesting that he was not going to rescue their "sinking" boat. The term "sopa de letras" ("alphabet soup") was used insistently by Iglesias and others to deride any type of multi-party coalition. Juan Carlos Monedero, in reference to a common front of the left, said that, "by adding up the little heads of many mice, you will only get a Frankenstein mouse who is not going to be able to generate any emotion."[10] Podemos' attitude toward those organizations whose members do not integrate in Podemos under its terms can be encapsulated with the metaphor of the "caballo" (the knight's horse) jumping over the line of pawns in the opening of a chess game. This metaphor was used by Podemos officer Eduardo Maura to justify the lack of consultation with 15M organizations when Podemos was created,[11] and still applies.

Concluding Thoughts

Following their populist beliefs, Podemos leaders are determined to occupy, using their terminology, the "center of the chessboard." That means, effectively, the moderation of Podemos'

socialist proposals, as the reader will have learnt through conventional media and by simply looking at the evolution of the rhetoric that we have outlined in this article. This transformation is not new in politics. We only need to consider the evolution of the Spanish "socialist" PSOE and other European social-democrat parties in the last 40 years.

So what is different this time? Populism. Podemos leaders wanted to capitalize on the enthusiastic Indignados social base and felt extremely pressed by the need to succeed electorally. So, moved by their populist beliefs, they needed the Indignados to become the base of their foundational discourse-built "people." However, the Indignados had become, three years before Podemos appeared, a very specific and strong community of language of its own. Self-made language produced in a networked non-hierarchical manner was not just a way of expressing politics but also an essential component of the Indignados as a community. Therefore, by acting as the main curators of the 15M Language, Podemos became the chief custodian of the Indignados.

Podemos leaders believed that their new political community would have to include voters whose electoral leaning was more "mainstream" than that of their core activists and voters. That meant that after the May 2014 election, Podemos' leaders resorted to language production in an intensive and targeted way in order to pursue the different strands of their more "centrist" people-building agenda. This move seriously undermined the very political fabric of the Indignados.

As the Indignados language community started to collapse by the autumn of 2014, it became clear to Podemos' leaders that they needed to build a new language community using some of the surviving pieces of the Indignados. In my view, had language not been such a constitutive element of the Indignados, their relationship as a political community with Podemos would have been completely different.

Building a new party community on the base of a diminished group of Indignados loyal to Podemos will take time and cannot be done without enthusiastic and generous mass activism. In this respect, the Podemos leaders have fallen in one of Laclau's contradictions that Cassegard points out: They have excluded the "minority activist," in the way that Marx excludes the lumpenproletariat, for not being part of the populist dynamic, in this case the new populist dynamic set by Podemos.[12]

The left would have been better off if Podemos had supported the organic and autonomous expansion of the 15M community and had made a serious effort to join forces with United Left during 2015. A network of Platforms would have been more successful in maintaining and developing, in a collaborative

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way with the rest of the Indignados community, their universe of shared understanding, because the production of meaning would have been far less centralized and less subject to being monopolized.

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Radical Art: Art Young and the Cartoons of American Socialism

MICHAEL MARK COHEN

ARTHUR HENRY YOUNG (1866-1943), known to the world as Art, was arguably the most widely recognized and beloved cartoonist in the history of American radicalism. A working cartoonist for sixty years, Art Young drew thousands of simple black-line drawings with biting captions that appeared in big-city newspapers, liberal magazines, and, most importantly, in the socialist, labor, and radical press of the early twentieth century.

Starting in Wisconsin shortly after the end of the Civil War and ending in the midst of World War II, Art Young's life, art, and activism span the Age of Monopoly and the Great Depression. At the peak of his influence, Art's clear yet stylish cartoons helped give a visual design and humo rous edge to a wave of anti-capitalist social movements—socialist, anarchist, communist, Wobbly, feminist, labor, and Black radical—organized in opposition to the unchecked power of monopoly capitalism, Wall Street finance, government surveillance, and racist nationalism.

For these reasons, after the passage of a century or more, Art Young's cartoons strike us as surprisingly relevant to our current era of inequality, ecological crisis, police violence, and war.

Formally educated in art schools in Chicago and Paris, Young chose graphic and cartoon art from an early age as his "road to recognition." Art recognized that painting was singular and slow, whereas, in his words, "a cartoon could be reproduced by simple mechanical process and easily made accessible to hundreds of thousands. I wanted a large audience." Young published

SKETCHING DEVILS.

Art Young's Inferno (1934).

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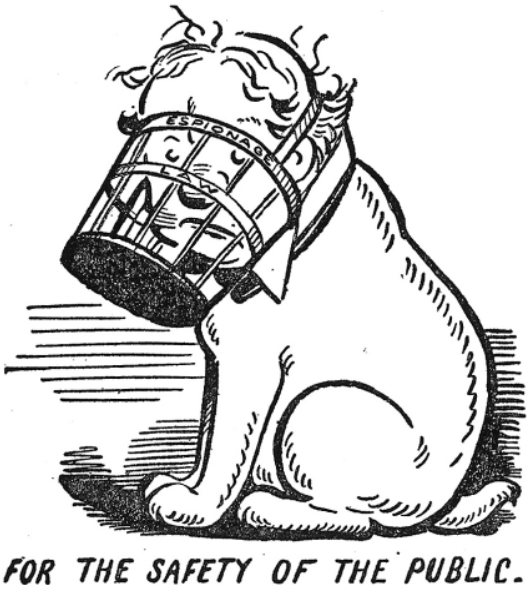
his first cartoon in *Judge* magazine in 1883 and thereafter learned his craft in the editorial offices of Chicago and New York's biggest papers, working for a time under Thomas Nast, the most important American cartoonist of the nineteenth century.

In both art and activism, Young's career stretched between his jailhouse portraits of the Haymarket Anarchists, drawn days before their execution in 1887, and a Fourth of July picnic in 1918 at the home of Eugene V. Debs, the Socialist Party presidential candidate, just a few days before Debs' arrest for an anti-war speech. Somewhere in between, Young converted to socialism and turned against the capitalist system. Art even ran for public office in New York City on the Socialist Party ticket. "I have always felt," he wrote in 1928, "that there is more power in my talent than in the mind of the statesman."

Young published his best cartoons in the early twentieth century alongside John Sloan, Maurice Becker, William Gropper, Stuart Davis, and George Bellows in small radical magazines like *The Masses*, *The Liberator*, and his own brilliant, if short lived, journal *Good Morning*. Art stood at the center of a community of radical artists working in the heart of Greenwich Village's modernist bohemia.

Nearly unique in the history of political cartooning and the American left, Art Young's talent as a humorist enabled him to reach deep into the mainstream. Art drew cartoons for the liberal *Metropolitan* and *The Nation* magazines, and he sold sentimental and ironic drawings to family magazines like *Life, Puck,* and the *Saturday Evening Post*. He once explained that he could draw his anti-capitalist cartoons for middle class readers as long as he labeled the villain "greed" rather than "capitalism." But he made these choices so that he could afford to express himself fully in the pages of the radical press.

"Radical publications paid little," wrote Young of *The Masses*, "generally nothing in real money, for contributions, but paid a good deal

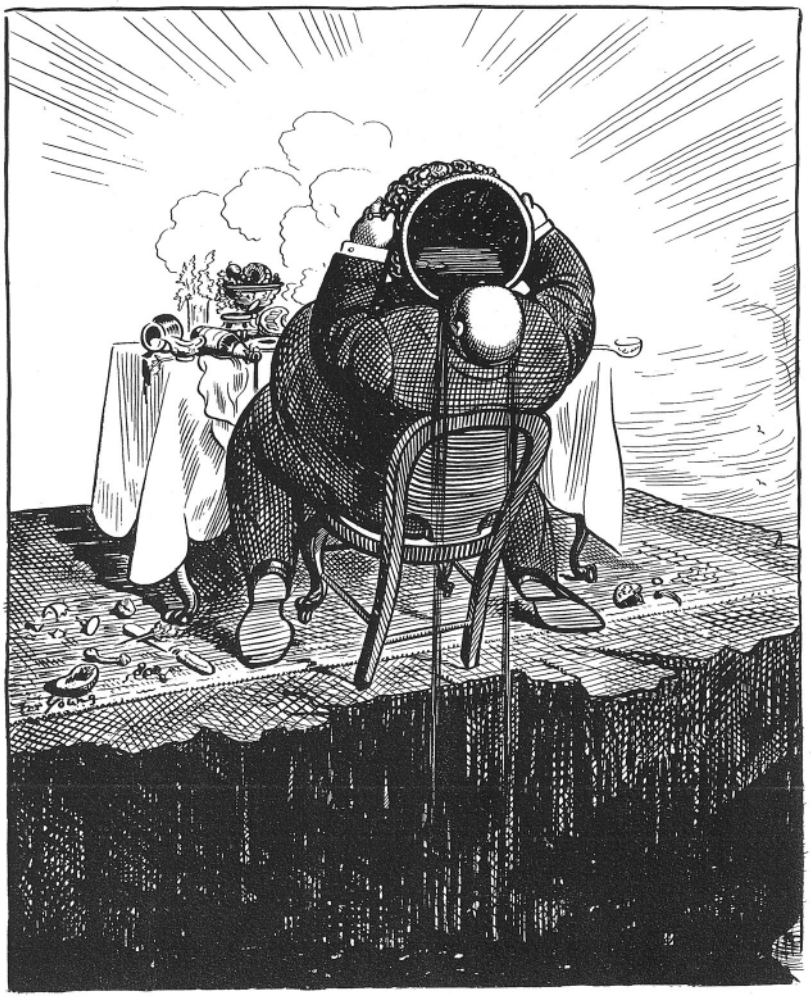


Art Young, Self Portrait from *On My Way, Being the Book of Art Young in Text and Pictures* (1928).

in that coin of consolation, that comfort to the mind when it is relieved of pent-up grievances against social conventions and the tyranny of wealth."

For his troubles, Young was censored by the Postal Service, threatened with libel suits by the Associated Press, and, in 1918, he, Max Eastman, Jack Reed, and the rest of the editors of *The Masses* faced two federal sedition and criminal conspiracy trials where they narrowly escaped life sentences. In the defeated years of the 1920s, he covered politics and presidential campaigns, and in the resurgent 1930s he drew for the *Daily Worker* and *New Masses,* published two autobiographies, and created his greatest work, a vision of the inferno in which dead capitalists have colonized hell itself.

Almost exclusively drawn in pen and ink, Art Young's cartoons are notable for combining formal simplicity with conceptual complexity. His best cartoons depict vast social conflicts on a level of abstraction—plutocracy versus democracy—that made his work instantly accessible, effortlessly humorous, and deceptively



Art Young, "Capitalism," *Good Morning* (January 1, 1920).

didactic. "I was much more interested always in drawing cartoons which would strike at a vulnerable point in the armor of the common enemy," wrote Young, "than in battling over the fine points of tactics."

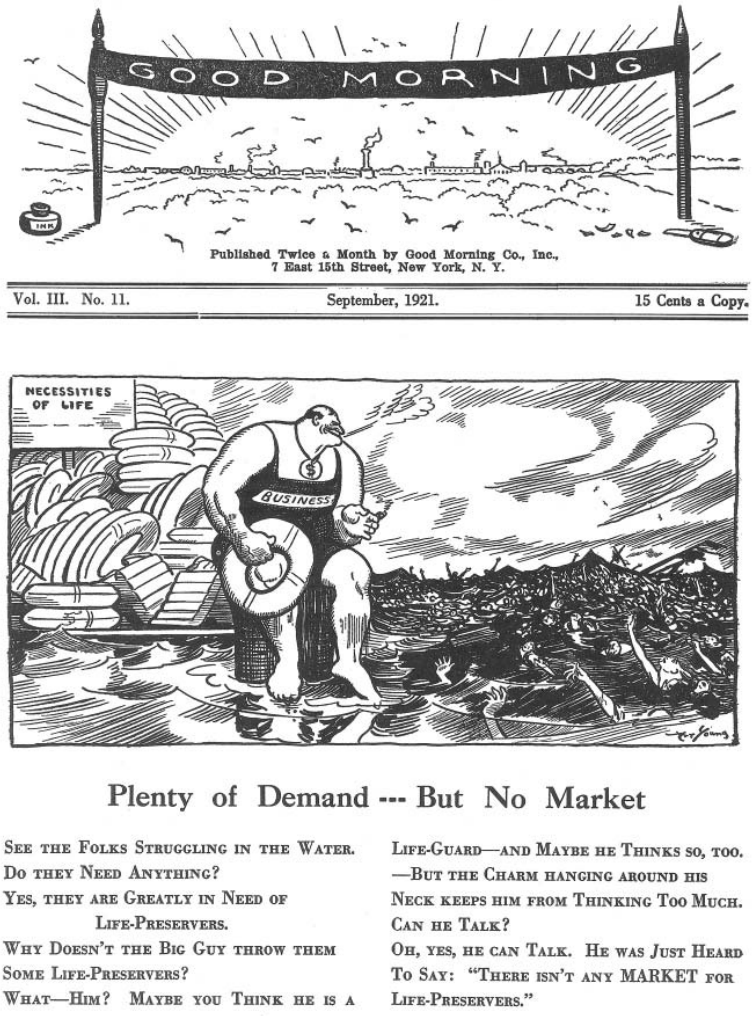
Material social forces are abstracted into individual cartoon characters, his single panel images forming broad social melodramas featuring bloated and arrogant plutocrats, the puppet politician, the bull-necked police and jackbooted militarist, the harlot "capitalist press," the dignified yet dispossessed poor, and the occasional heroic socialist. By this method of abstraction, Art's cartoons frequently sought to represent or reveal the nature of capitalism as a whole, cartooning the social totality in a single, simple image.

We can see Art's gift for abstraction in a 1920 cartoon simply entitled "Capitalism." Young's image personifies a global economic system with billions of working human and industrial parts as a fat, bald white man, tipping back in his chair over a blackened chasm. He is an intoxicated glutton blindly eating himself to death—that much is obvious. But the image also dramatizes the fiction of corporate personhood (established by the Supreme Court in 1886), transforming the abstract logic of accumulation into a personal appetite blind to all that it endangers, including to the grotesque capitalist himself. Dangling unaware on the edge of a cliff, the capitalist world is dangerously out of balance. "'*Après moi, le déluge!*' is the watchword of every capitalist," writes Karl Marx in one of many possible sources for this image.

Perhaps this cartoon telegraphs a vision of ecological disaster for our own time. The steam billowing off the heaping platters builds into storm clouds, while the radiating heat of the unseen sun adds its energy to the inevitable tipping point. But what happens when the chair tips over and the capitalist falls off the cliff? What happens to the rest of us? The answer was as true for Marx as it was for Young and

as it remains for us now: Without socialism we will all drown.

For more on this theme of capitalism personified in a drowning world, consider another cartoon from the early 1920s. At the center of the page sits a pompous man labeled "business" occupying an ocean pier, dressed in the height of Newport Beach swim fashion, with his toes leisurely playing in the water. A mountain of life preservers looms uselessly behind him, while countless men, women, and children struggle in the rising waters. The caption simply states what any good economist recognizes as an iron law: "Plenty of Demand — But No Market."



Art Young, *Good Morning* (September 1921).

Both immediate and sophisticated in its critique, Young's cartoon helps visualize Marx's theory of value in two ways. First, in taking the laws of supply and demand at face value, Young depicts the capitalist system as a grotesque catastrophe in which plentiful (overproduced even) resources are incapable of being matched up with overwhelming need. That which cannot be sold (without exchange-value), has no value at all in a capitalist society. So waste and privation pile up side by side.

Secondly, Young's drama explicitly humanizes the economic system by insisting upon the moral encounter behind the supposedly impersonal laws of exchange. In Young's image, the "laws of supply and demand" are revealed to be the result of real ethical choices in which profits (to the capitalist at least) are more valuable than people. Economics, mocked in both image and text, merely offers a pseudo-scientific justification for ruling-class moral blindness. The socialist solution of organizing "use values" (and kicking the bully off the pier) seems the only option for our collective survival.

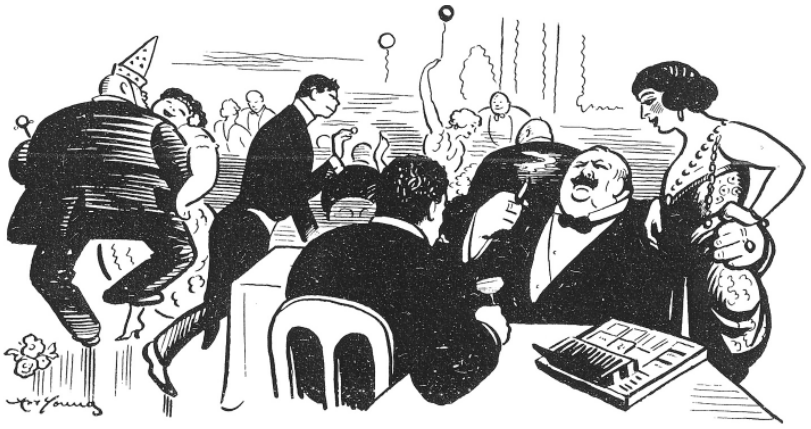
If Art Young's plutocrats reveal a self-destructive logic, his vision of the state is one in which plutocracy has defeated democracy. In this cover of *Good Morning* from the presidential

Art Young, *Good Morning* (June 15, 1920).

election of 1920, an enthroned and "manspreading" sovereign serves under the banner of the "Money Power" while scraping minions from the two political parties polish his jackboots, pedicure his toes, and replace his repressive "Iron Heels." Young's black-uniform-wearing agent of repression is labeled "Wall Street" and "Militarism" for the counter-subversive coalition that pushed the United States into World War I and the Red Scare. In short, this cartoon offers a unique vision of an authentic American fascism at the start of the 1920s.

If one of Art's gifts was the totalizing allegory, he also had a talent for capturing the political stakes in simple human encounters. These far more intimate cartoons—socialist morality plays—enabled Young to satirize the platitudes and conventions of social interaction. In one example, seen below a fattened "Profiteer," cigar in one hand and a fashionable young lady in the other, professes his concerns (or thinly disguised disgust) for the moral choices that poor workers make with their scant earnings. He seems like one of those men who pay his employees lowered wages out of concern for their moral well-being. Of course, the Profiteer spends his boundless money on parties and liquor, frivolous merriment that seems to leave him feeling judgmental but seemingly no happier. "*Apres moi, le deluge*" indeed.

Art's last major work, *Art Young's Inferno,* published in 1934, was his third book-length updating of Gustave Doré's famous engravings of Dante's *Inferno*. In his darker moods, Young believed that capital-



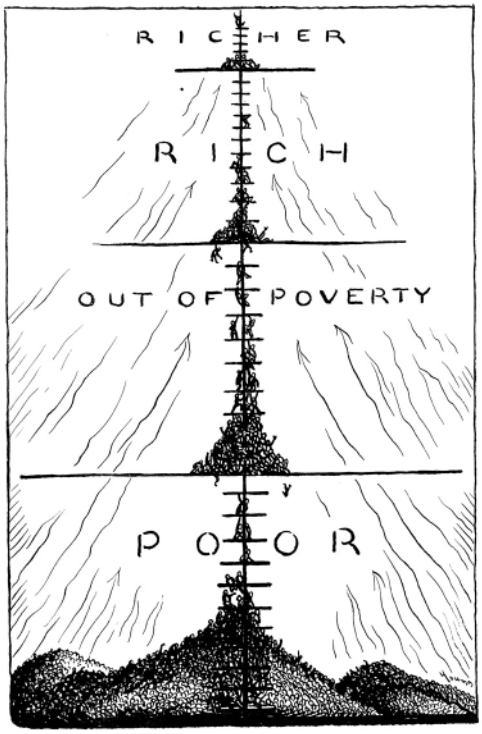
THE PROFITEER: *"I'm as good a friend of labor as the next man—but there's no denying the fact that workingmen do spend their money foolishly."*

Art Young, *Good Morning* (January 1, 1921).

ism made a hell of the earth, the struggle to climb the economic ladder being the equivalent of struggling out of the pit itself.

But with so many of their class condemned to hell, Art imagined the capitalists leading a hostile takeover, deposing old man Satan, installing their own CEO, and transforming the inferno into the last refuge of the free market. "Capitalism on earth is doomed," declares a damned soul to Young along his travels. "It spread over the world for hundreds of years, now Hell is the only available place left - the last outpost, and believe me, we are going to make a good job of it - no fool notions. They say, 'We live and learn,' but *we* had to die to learn."

Of course, capitalism seems to naturally thrive in hell, triggering a wave of privatization, monopolization, and gentrification, upsetting many of the older natives of the underworld. Thanks to the Hell Water Power Co., the single most powerful entity in hell, all the parks



Art Young's Inferno (1934).

Satan's Summer Palace Now Owned by American Millionaire

Art Young's Inferno (1934).

charge admission and cool breezes cost a dollar, bathrooms are rare and expensive, and highways charge a toll each and every mile. Hospitals only treat sinners who can pay ("the fraternal racket of gouging the sick"). Real estate speculation has grown so fevered that caves are rented for a fortune and an American millionaire just set a record by buying Satan's old summer home. Sounds like San Francisco in 2015. In short, the entire book is a lost masterpiece of anti-capitalist humor and a priceless assault on the fundamentalist logic of free-market capitalism that may be more relevant now than it was 80 years ago.

Comedian and radical teacher, popular artist, and a revolutionary critic, Art Young's time has come again, and we need him now more than ever.

Social Capital and Class

RIAD AZAR

THE AMERICAN DREAM, that fantasy of growth that has long girded the ideology of entrepreneurship and a better future, is in crisis. Many haven't felt the dream for decades, some never having experienced it at all. Robert Putnam, in his latest work, *Our Kids*, seeks to confront this stagnation in our economic dreams by interrogating the forces that have taken hold of communities across the United States. In some ways a continuation of the issues he grappled with in his now famous work *Bowling Alone*, *Our Kids* provides a compelling account of the symptoms of inequality manifested in the behaviors, practices, and habits of increasingly unequal populations within the United States.

Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis
ROBERT D. PUTNAM
Simon & Schuster, 2015. 400 pp.
Hardcover, $28.

Our Kids opens with a portrait of Putnam's hometown of Port Clinton, Ohio, a city which—in the 1950s—embodied the stereotype of the small American town. Port Clinton serves as the example, a town that has gone through the social and political transformations that have shaped the United States up to the present day, to open up Putnam's discussion of what went wrong. *Our Kids* springs from the staggering statistics of youth unemployment, the spatial separation of the rich and the poor, and the undermining of the values and community life that, Putnam claims, once defined his hometown.

The author seeks to get at the heart of the inequality debate, while distinguishing between equality of income and wealth on the one hand, and equality of opportunity on the other. In maintaining this traditionally American fixation on equality of opportunity, Putnam asks, "Do youth today coming from different social and economic backgrounds in fact have roughly equal life chances, and has that changed in recent decades?" (31) The text that follows is an exploration from inside out, starting with individuals and their families, to the neighborhoods they grow up in and the schools they attend, pursuing the effects of inequality and how it has manifested itself in cognition, family life, institutions, and space.

Written for a non-specialist audience, *Our Kids* utilizes a mixed-method approach to investigate its research question. Putnam begins each chapter with a collection of life stories from anonymized characters, chosen as representatives of the great class divide. But behind each story lies a wealth of quantitative data, statistics that take certain segments of the individuals' life stories

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and show how their experiences are common occurrences in this new landscape of growing inequality. It is this blending of the individual case with societal trends that represents, in my opinion, the best kind of social science. How do we find the general in the particular?

Putnam is tracing a trend that began in the 1950s when he claims that "the power of race, class, and gender to shape life chances in America has been substantially reconfigured" (18). His findings show the dominance of class in discussions of the variables that have come to define social existence, stating that while "gender and racial biases remain powerful," there is evidence to show that these divisions are lessening (19). In the twenty-first century, class inequalities are widening, and therefore it is class analysis that forms the backbone of the text.

How does he make this argument? Going back to the theme of equality of income versus equality of opportunity, Putnam contrasts the concepts of absolute and relative mobility. Absolute mobility is experienced during times of growth, when all classes are experiencing increasing standards of living, albeit within their own class categories. Relative mobility—historically a much less frequent form of mobility—is when a child born to lower-class parents can move him or herself into a higher class. When Putnam was a child in Port Clinton, both absolute and relative mobility were high. This was a period when the United States was experiencing an incredible amount of growth due to the post-World War II economic boom. But while research has shown conclusively that absolute mobility has been halted since the 1970s, Putnam wants to focus on relative mobility. He argues that the opportunity gap has widened to such an extent, with both absolute and relative mobility at a standstill, that those who are unfortunate enough to have been born into the underclass are faced with immense challenges in the makeup of their social reality. The story of how inequality has manifested itself into this inescapable trap in the experiences of everyday Americans is the focus of the book.

The data begins with families, drawing on two radically different life experiences from the same town in Bend, Oregon, to illustrate the decline of family life. The reader is presented with a study in contrasts, one that repeats itself in every chapter. On one side of the river lives a family where the parents have university educations, planned their futures according to their finances, held well-paying jobs, and were able to use their resources to help their kids when they needed them most. On the other side lives a poor family, the result of financial hardship, broken homes, drug and alcohol abuse, and other barriers to mobility. Putnam's focus here is on how family life has been restructured based on class origin.

His evidence demonstrates how the number of less-educated mothers giving birth out of wedlock is rising, while a similar statistic for educated mothers has remained constant. It is not an "uncaused first cause" (79), but ties together with lowered wages, a rising prison population, the sexual revolution, and so on. The consequences are that younger mothers have less time to focus on ways they could improve their economic well-being, resulting in less upward mobility. Here we begin to see Putnam's conception of social capital in play. A difference in the quality of family life between the upper and lower classes leads to lower-class children having less social capital, seen in the "stable parental support" of the first family example against the "dreadful chaos" of the second (78).

The discussion of family leads into a focus on parenting and child-rearing strategies. Perhaps the most interesting discussion here is how the neural development of children who are born into lower-class households is influenced by their environment. Citing recent research by the National Academy of Sciences, Putnam shows how behavioral and cognitive development that begins to materialize in middle age is present in children as young as 18 months, and often earlier. This leads him to conclude that

"the brain, in short, develops as a social organ, not an isolated computer" (110); toxic stress from neighborhood stimuli and parental neglect shape brain chemistry from our earliest years.

The breaking up of family units that lose the ability to socially reproduce because of "bad" parenting influences the communities of which those families and individuals form a part. Putnam's discussion of schooling shows how cognitively fit children with better-educated parents attend schools and grow up in neighborhoods that have been segregated in such a way as to encourage success only on behalf of the fortunate ones.

It is not my intention in this review to repeat the author. I simply want to show how Putnam's chapters and argument relate to one another to give a sense of the narrow scope that Putnam is working with in addressing the subjects he puts forward. Putnam presents a constellation of variables, and then discusses how they relate to and reflect each other rather than establishing a first cause. While the raw data is true, and we cannot deny the humanity of the people discussed in Putnam's cases, there is a problem in how Putnam analyzes the data that goes back to his conception of class and his reliance on his theoretical conception of social capital. Putnam himself claims that his is "a book without upper-class villains" (229), but this is partly because Putnam's scope is not wide enough to include the "villain" in the picture. It's this "end of ideology" argument that has become all too familiar; the elephant in the room is that political economy has been replaced by culture.

Part of Putnam's problem is that his metric for viewing class is based on educational credentials. In other words, for him the great class separation is between those who have a Bachelor's degree and those who have only attended high school. All of his discussions of class are boiled down to this division; all of his charts illustrate the same scissor pattern showing the divide between upper and lower classes. As an indicator of social class, Putnam prefers looking at education over income, which he argues is "much 'noisier' (error-prone or entirely missing) and because when both are available, education is typically the more powerful predictor of child-related outcomes" (44). If modern educational credentials have become the signs by which we assign individuals and classes their status in the social hierarchy, viewing class as defined by education will lead to expressions of social divisions. However, this view of class focuses much more on habits, behaviors, and tastes than on socio-economics, and therefore lacks history.

Putnam's inspiration for operationalizing class as education stems from sociologist Douglas Massey, who in his work *Categorically Unequal*, which Putnam cites, argues that education is "the most important resource in today's knowledge-based economy" (45). This is undoubtedly true, but the question must be: What is the knowledge economy and who is responsible for creating this kind of social map?

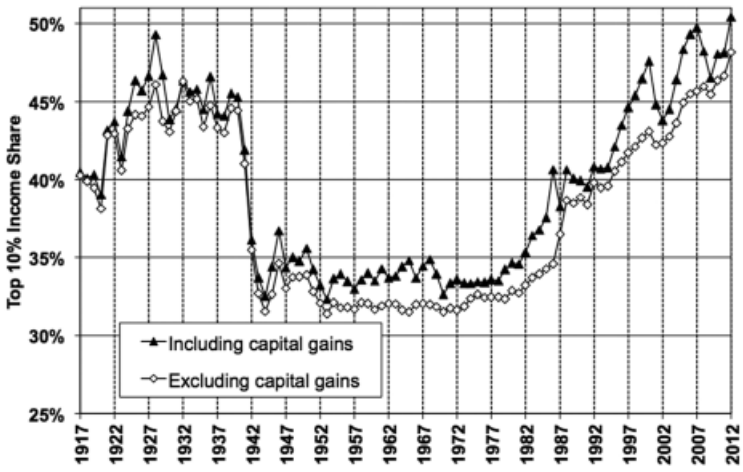

FIGURE 1
The Top Decile Income Share, 1917-2012

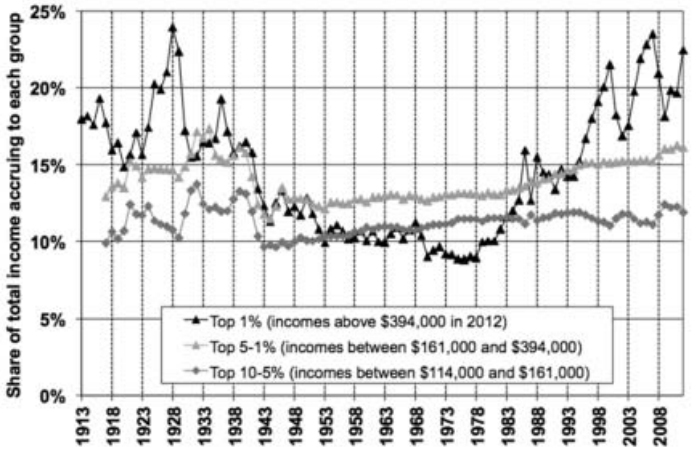

FIGURE 2
Decomposing the Top Decile US Income Share into 3 Groups, 1913-2012

credibly powerful group. It is the enormous wealth increase that was experienced by this top 0.01 percent that has redrawn the class hierarchy, bestowing enormous economic and political power to a group that can utilize that influence to reshape American society to its ends. To put it bluntly, the distinction that Putnam draws between upper and lower classes based on education represents a division in cultural taste and access to resources rather than a separation of classes. An insistence on seeing class through the lens of social capital, rather than economic capital, obfuscates this much starker phenomenon. Putnam's analysis very opportunistically ignores not only policies but the historical reformation of the transnational capitalist class, including the battles it has waged in the political arena to get us to where we are today and its influence on domestic and foreign policy.

The term "knowledge economy" is frequently cited along with other related concepts: the "information age," "globalization," "post-scarcity," and so on. These concepts have come to reflect the significant shift in the economic, political, social, and cultural landscape that the United States experienced in the second half of the twentieth century.

The graph in figure 1[1] is a common sight these days, representing how the income of the top 10 percent of the population has skyrocketed since the 1980s. This is the segment of the population that Putnam has in his sights when demarcating an upper class.

However, when one looks at Figure 2, which subdivides the top 10 percent, it is clear that it is the top 1 percent that has been making the most gains and by the sheer force of their wealth has curved the trend of the top 10 percent upwards. This is even starker in Figure 3, which subdivides further into the top 0.01 percent.

Here we see the historical rise of a really dominant class, which is a much smaller yet in-

How the U.S. middle class shrank, and how the upper middle class retained its share of resources post-1980 is a discussion worth ten

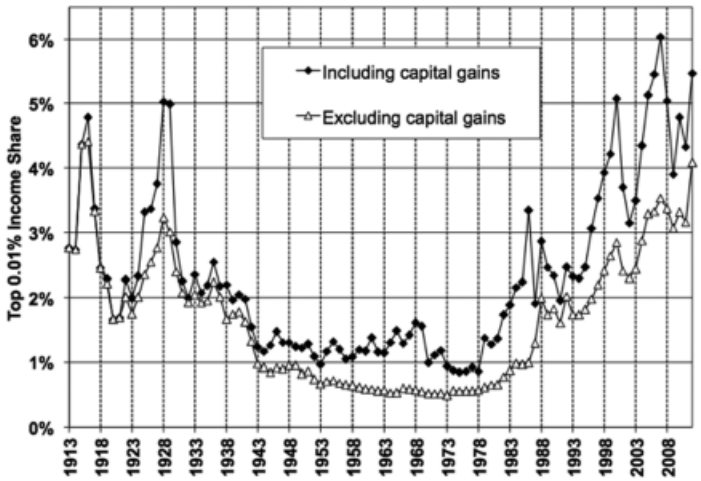

FIGURE 3
The Top 0.01% Income Share, 1913-2012

dissertations. I would argue it has to do with the loss of manufacturing jobs and the growth of management positions related to the service, knowledge-based, and financialized economy. The distinction between the lowest classes and the upper middle class is an important issue that Putnam's research reveals, but he fails to analyze it fully. What's needed is a discussion of how the social hierarchies have been redrawn and how the space they have come to occupy was created.

The class-as-education model comes from Putnam's reliance on the theoretical framework of social capital. Social capital is a concept that has been around for a long time and one that has many different definitions. At its core is the idea that social networks and relationships have an intangible value of which an individual can possess varying quantities. Putnam defines it as "informal ties to family, friends, neighbors, and acquaintances; involvement in civic associations, religious institutions, athletic teams, volunteer activities; and so on" (207). However, one cannot really discuss social capital without discussing political economy, since it is political economy that allows for the space and resources that develop the institutions of social capital.

The historical legacy of social capital theorists is much less forgiving. By utilizing theories of *domesticated* social capital (those that eschew a relationship to political economy), intellectual cover was provided to some of the worst policies of neoliberalism. To be fair, Putnam disagrees with the relationship drawn between social capital and neoliberalism.[2] But that did not stop the World Bank from utilizing measures of social capital to legitimize privatization.[3] In the geopolitical sphere, social capital has been used as a measure to determine "weak" or "failing" states.[4] Following Bill Clinton's lead, former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair even cited Putnam's work when introducing New Labour policies.[5] These conceptions of social capital reflect an inability to seriously grapple with the instability and suffering produced by neoliberal reform and late capitalism.[6]

It's no surprise then that Putnam only briefly mentions some of the economic realities behind his community studies. Port Clinton saw the death of manufacturing. Bend, Oregon, suffered from a huge loss of jobs in the logging industry. His discussion of schools only briefly mentions the struggle of inner-city schools over tightening budgets due to fiscal austerity. And when discussing private for-profit colleges and their bogus degrees, there is only a brief musing on the predatory nature of for-profit institutions.

All this is not to say that Putnam is flat-out wrong. His findings are obviously important, and the variables that he discusses in the social lives of his respondents are related in some way. But it is myopic to think that this transformation has come out of nowhere. The phenomena Putnam is talking about are symptoms of inequality, an inequality that is economic, the result of a class-based political project forged for the interests of a particular class, by a particular class. Putnam's work is important in showing us the human cost of such a project and the shaping of the underclass that is the harbinger of a new gilded age. However, his focus is too limited for helping us engage in the political struggle needed to oppose it.

NOTES

1. All figures from eml.berkeley.edu/~saez/saez-US-topincomes-2012.pdf.

2. www.oecdobserver.org/news/archivestory.php/aid/1215/Bowling_together.html.

3. Sheoli Pargal, Mainul Huq, and Daniel Gilligan, "Does social capital increase participation in voluntary solid waste management? Evidence from Dhaka, Bangladesh," in Christiaan Grootaert and Thierry van Bastelaer (eds.), *The Role of Social Capital in Development* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 205.

4. F. J. Schurmann, "Social capital: the politico-emancipatory potential of a disputed concept," *Third World Quarterly* (vol. 24, no. 6, 2003), 991-1010.

5. Tony Blair, "New Labour and community," *Renewal* (vol. 10, no. 2, 2002), 12-13.

6. For an excellent discussion on the relationships between social capital and neoliberalism, *Variant* magazine has published an informative piece, www.variant.org.uk/26texts/LawMooney26.html.

An Insider's Look at What it Takes to Get By

Tom Peters

In 2001, Professor Danny Dorling wrote an essay entitled "Anecdote Is the Singular of Data." In it he explored how, during his teenage years, he grasped the idea that the places people live impact the lives they lead. Dorling opens the essay by describing a pedestrianized subway near his childhood home. The subway had four entrances, each leading from a different housing development. The entrance through which a child entered the subway on their way to the local school was an easy signifier of their social position and hence a likely indicator of their future prospects. Those who arrived via the entrance leading from a large council estate—the British term for an urban public housing project—would not go to university; those who entered from a neighboring middle-class "urban village" would, and so on. It is therefore fitting that Professor Dorling authors the foreword to *Getting By*, Dr. Lisa Mckenzie's sociological analysis of the St Ann's estate in Nottingham, England—an estate associated in the British bourgeois imagination with hyperviolence and criminality. Mckenzie, who herself lived in the estate, managed to take an unusual exit to become a research fellow at the London School of Economics. *Getting By* is a culmination of the research work Dr. Mckenzie undertook on her way to LSE, a study through which she returns to St Ann's to listen to the stories of its residents, hoping to better understand how they view their own lives in contrast to how they are viewed by others.

Getting By: Estates, Class, and Culture in Austerity Britain
Lisa Mckenzie
Policy Press, 2015. 224 pp. Paperback, $26.95.

The author has risen to increasing prominence since the publication of *Getting By*. In the 2015 general election, she ran against the infamous Secretary of State for Work and Pensions Iain Duncan-Smith as a candidate for the party Class War—a parliamentary formation born of the militant London anarchist group of the same name. Since then, Mckenzie has been the subject of further attention for participation in Class War demonstrations against gentrification in East London, notably a weekly protest against the "Poor Doors"—separate entrances built for social-housing tenants living at new, privately developed sites—which culminated in her arrest and charge for "joint enterprise." She was cleared when the prosecution failed to bring any evidence against her.

Mckenzie's commitment to radical politics is also reflected in this work. Much of the book is structured around interviews with the women of St Ann's, with a particular focus upon white, working-class women with mixed-race children, who form a significant part of the estate community. Over a number of years of research (and having lived in the estate for 20 years previous to

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undertaking the project), Mckenzie has gained the trust of these women, weaving conversations on how they view their estate, its community, and their relationship to wider society into a compelling narrative. The study also develops a handful of themes that emerge from these conversations, through which the reader can begin to get a sense of the social, economic, and cultural dynamics of the estate.

The text could be regarded within a tradition of similar socio-political explorations, from Young's *Family and Kinship in East London* to Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier* (both of which Mckenzie cites), but it stands apart from these for two reasons: first, its narrower focus upon a single estate, and second, the author's direct experience of the subject of the study, life in St Ann's. Indeed, having "been St Ann's" not only allows Mckenzie access to a community that is wary of outsiders (with good reason), but the phrase itself forms a central conceptual device of the study. As Mckenzie posits, the women's repeated mention of "being St Ann's" is more than simply an informal reference to their residence in the estate, but is a complex identity formed both through their embeddedness in the present social relations of the estate community and their connection to its history and development. These identities are further constructed in contradistinction to those outside, those who have never "been St Ann's." In Mckenzie's words, "belonging to the estate, and 'being St Ann's' were ways that the residents of the estate mapped out geographical space, and also emotional boundaries, as defensive means" (149).

But Mckenzie's astute analysis of this phrase also helps to surface a deeper argument running through *Getting By*. That is, to "be St Ann's," to live within its boundaries and as part of its community, requires that one's life assumes a new logic, one necessary to survive under a deeply oppressive set of structural conditions, the result of a prolonged attack on working-class communities across the UK. The fundamental thesis of *Getting By* is that the residents of St Ann's both understand what is happening to them, and respond collectively and with agency to improve their material conditions in any way they can. They do this by building communities founded on dense networks of social relations often in direct antagonism to the apparatus of the state. This theme is apparent throughout the conversations between Mckenzie and the women of St Ann's, but is most pointed in a chapter exploring inclusion and exclusion and estates as places of safety. Here Mckenzie shows how the women find solace in St Ann's among those who share similar lived experiences, in contrast to the negative associations and class prejudice that allow outsiders to depict the estate as a community predicated on violence and illegality.

This thesis forms a vital counter-argument to the contemporary dominant political discourse. When the Conservatives gained power in 2010, five years after Mckenzie started her research in Nottingham, they quickly launched an attack on this idea. Most notably, the Centre for Social Justice, a think tank created by Iain Duncan Smith in the years preceding the election, began to pathologize poverty, arguing that people were poor because of the choices they made, rather than the structures into which they were born. Duncan Smith's center pointed to a range of social issues, from problematic substance abuse to family breakdown, as evidence that effect was now cause, and cause, effect. Once Duncan Smith entered the Conservative cabinet as secretary of state for work and pensions, this rhetoric became government policy. It remains so to this day, forming the ideological underpinning of an unprecedented attack on the living standards of working-class communities everywhere, who often have the misfortune of having been born into a place where industry had been liquidated by Conservative governments gone before (and left in the same dire economic condition by the Labour governments in between). *Getting By* is a necessary response to this new narrative, one that shows a working-

class community as agents trying to negotiate these impossible conditions, rather than as the sole creators of them.

But the study is not narrowly bound by a class analysis. While the focus is almost exclusively centered around the white working-class women of St Ann's (there is a brief chapter exploring the experience of men in the estate), throughout the book these women are seen in relation to other residents, most notably the first, second, and third generation Jamaican migrant community with whom many of the women form relationships and construct a common local culture. This lends the work a necessary complexity by examining how class, race, and gender intersect in the residents' everyday experience and, importantly, the way that these intersections further compound the negativity with which these women are perceived by those existing outside of the estate.

However, despite this interesting and detailed analysis of those class-based, racial, and generational interlinkages that form the community, the book does not deal with a range of other actors on the estate. Reference is repeatedly made to the high levels of both problematic drug use and sex work occurring there, but *Getting By* provides little platform for estate residents with those experiences. This has the occasional, unintentional effect of depicting them as "others" to the main protagonists of the study—silhouettes who sit at the periphery of Mckenzie's analysis without ever being fully engaged by it. Clearly, there are always restrictions upon the researcher in the scope of their analysis, and there are obvious reasons why those whose voices are not directly reflected in the work might not have wished to participate. Furthermore, it is clear that Mckenzie is very cautious about leaving her work open to recuperation into the reactionary narratives described above. However, given how compelling an account of the lives of the women participants she presents, it feels a shame not to have devoted more to those who live in the estate with direct lived experience of the issues repeatedly referenced as part of the context of St Ann's.

Nevertheless, the book is a powerful contribution to the present political terrain. This vital exploration of the actual realities of working-class communities in the UK, as interpreted by them in their own words, counteracts the claims made by neoliberal administrations across the planet—that the working classes are the victims of their own behavior. By talking with these communities rather than about them, Mckenzie demonstrates in detail how the choices they make are rational within the limited set of opportunities available to them—how the entrance by which they arrive at the subway limits the paths they can take thereafter. The fact that it is written by someone who herself has shared in those experiences only adds to its radical potency.

That it continues to be necessary to make this argument is of course a sad reflection of the state of contemporary political discourse. Conservatism has made significant advances in refuting a structural understanding of the composition of society through individualizing class oppressions. This narrative has allowed the right to continually undermine the material conditions of those who are blamed. *Getting By* operates as an important resource in the fight-back against this trend. As the ideological attacks upon communities like St Ann's continue to worsen, providing a platform to those on the receiving end of such offensives becomes itself an act of defiance. Let us hope that many more can find ways to do so, because any worthwhile revolutionary project must be led by the voices of working-class communities, particularly those most marginalized by our current economic system. A socialist project constructed through practice rather than pontification, *Getting By* is one example of how this ambition can begin to be realized.

Who's in Charge?

The Power Structure and Foreign Policy

MARTIN OPPENHEIMER

THE GODFATHER OF MACRO-LEVEL power structure research in the United States was the sociologist C. Wright Mills, author of *The Power Elite* (1956). He defined that elite as "those political, economic and military circles which act as an intricate set of overlapping cliques that share decisions having at least national consequences."[1] Although he has been criticized for giving insufficient weight to the economic or business class in this equation, his work popularized (in New Left circles particularly) the idea of the revolving door of personnel between those three "circles."

Wall Street's Think Tank: The Council on Foreign Relations and the Empire of Neoliberal Geopolitics 1975-2014
LAURENCE H. SHOUP
Monthly Review Press, 2015. 400 pp.
Hardcover, $34, $36 Can.

Following in his footsteps is the collected work of G. William Domhoff, surely the dean of contemporary power structure studies (most accessible are his *Who Rules America?* and his website, an invaluable resource today).[2] His thesis is that "there is (1) a small social upper class (2) rooted in the ownership and control of a corporate community [and] (3) … integrated with a policy-planning network,"[3] which, sometimes after some debate, promotes policies consistent with upper-class interests across a broad range of issues. Through its interchange of personnel with government it has the ability to carry out those policies.

Within this policy-planning network is the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), which has drawn the attention of Lawrence H. Shoup for a long time. Its journal *Foreign Affairs* "is a key place where the foreign policy ideas of the Council community are floated" (71). In spring 1975, *The Insurgent Sociologist* (now *Critical Sociology*) published a special issue on "New Directions in Power Structure Research," edited by Domhoff, in which Shoup's "Shaping the Postwar World: The CFR and U.S. War Aims During World War II" is the lead piece. This essay was largely incorporated into *Imperial Brain Trust* (1977, with William Minter).[4] It covers the history and work of the CFR till about 1975, and in great and fascinating detail shows us, among other things, how the CFR influenced the Roosevelt administration to undertake a foreign policy that led directly to Pearl Harbor (131-135). Perhaps Charles A. Beard and the other "revisionist historians" were not far off the mark after all.[5]

The volume under review carries the story forward from 1976 to 2014. The CFR was founded immediately after World War I and "has been pursuing a world-spanning hegemonic project" that is promoted through a foreign policy "suitable to the U.S. capitalist class" since that time (10-11). Shoup tells us that

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the consequences of this "neoliberal geopolitical empire" has been "the destruction of unions and working class communities, privatization, speculation, grotesque economic inequality, ecological destruction, and … war and conquest" (199). This is quite an indictment; the book is a carefully documented effort, largely successful, to provide the evidence for that description.

By 1970 the council had 1,467 members, mainly from the Wall Street-oriented financial and law firm elite. It is organized like a corporation, with a board of directors. A 1999 dinner presided over by Chase Manhattan's David Rockefeller featured no less than five former secretaries of state plus then-Secretary Madeleine Albright. By then the CFR had expanded from its upper-class Social Register base to incorporate younger people and even a few Jews (for example Robert Rubin, who helped formulate NAFTA, and of course Henry Kissinger, who started as a Harvard professor, served as national security adviser and secretary of state, and ended as the entrepreneur founder of Kissinger Associates).

Shoup describes how Kissinger Associates fits in: "Although think tanks like the Council handle large-scale policy developments and recommendations for action for the capitalist class as a whole, in our neoliberal era multinational corporations feel the need for additional expert advice" (118-119). Kissinger's group, founded with loans from Goldman Sachs and other banks, fills that bill. "Prominent KA staff … have included many CFR members, all of whom have served in important roles as 'in-and-outers' in the U.S. government" (119-120). These include cabinet members, Federal Reserve officials, CIA staff, ambassadors, and so on. Kissinger Associates is only one of many corporations, institutes, lobbies, and elite universities (of which Harvard and Yale are the most important) described in a chapter on the CFR's domestic network.

The CFR's day-to-day operations take the form of study groups on various topics, for example at one time the "problem" that the Soviet Union "stood as a partial roadblock to U.S. global ambitions" (17). These groups serve as a "breeding ground" for the development of the guiding strategies of U.S. foreign policy. In the 1950s there were five study groups on Southeast Asia alone. "The U.S. government, led by Council men … went to war" (19), but when it became clear that the conflict was unwinnable, the CFR urged President Johnson to negotiate and the war ended soon after—not the first, nor the last, time the CFR suffered from imperial overreach (Afghanistan, almost needless to say, would be another).

It was under President Richard Nixon that CFR's directors or former directors managed to reach "the top levels of economic policymaking … [and] successfully launched the first great wave of neoliberalism, using the power of the state to implement … the capitalist goal of unrestricted freedom for corporations and capital at the expense of popular forces" (172). This included the 1973 overthrow of the democratically elected reform government of Salvador Allende in Chile (directed by Kissinger, then national security adviser, and other CFR members) and the imposition of "free market" policies on the Chilean people by the Pinochet dictatorship and its neoliberal economists.

In 1974 President Gerald Ford appointed CFR member Alan Greenspan as head of the Council of Economic Advisers. Greenspan reacted to an economy racked by both stagnation and inflation ("stagflation") by cutting taxes and instituting a program of deregulation. That program was continued under Carter, who cut business taxes, "something called for by his treasury secretary, former CFR director W. Michael Blumenthal" (173). Carter appointed a classic Wall-Street-to-government-to-Wall-Street CFR director, Paul Volcker, to head the Federal Reserve. Volcker followed a neoliberal economic program that resulted in a recession with increased unemployment. Then, with Ronald Reagan as president came the onslaught on

organized labor, highlighted by his decertification of the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization in 1981.This was followed by "structural adjustment," as the World Bank tied loans to poorer nations to neoliberal measures (cutting the public sector, suppressing unions, and opening the door to foreign investment at the expense of local self-sufficiency).

Today's CFR has about 5,000 individual members, 170 corporate members, a staff of some 330, and a budget of $60 million annually. It has recruited academics from outside Wall Street circles and some of the "newly rich," but the leadership, Shoup insists, is still dominated by Social Register types. Technically it is a think tank, but functionally it is a policy-planning and indirectly a policy-promoting organization, "the world's most powerful private organization, … the ultimate networking, socializing, strategic planning, and consensus-forming institution of the U.S. capitalist class. It is the central 'high command' organization of the plutocracy that runs the country and much of the world" (7). In 1994 it launched a series of Independent Task forces that were allowed to promote policies directly. Policy recommendations find their way to fruition through published papers and books, meetings that include heads of state as guests, and of course the "in-and-out" exchange of personnel with corporations, foundations, other think tanks, and many levels of the federal government.

Over the years Democratic administrations adhered more closely to CFR programs than did Republican ones, although Republican presidents have also held the door wide to CFR influence. In Democrat Jimmy Carter's administration, "all twelve of his top foreign policy makers were CFR members at some time in their careers" (95). Likewise in Bill Clinton's administrations, 15 of 17 foreign policy officials, including two Secretaries of State and two out of three Treasury Secretaries (Robert Rubin and Lawrence Summers), were interlocked with the CFR. Although President Obama, unlike Clinton, is not a member, his national security team has been infused with CFR members from the start. Hillary Clinton appears not to be a member, but believe it or not, Chelsea Clinton was brought on board by her dad in about 2013, "allowing her to expand her network to the … powerful people that she will meet at the Council" (29).

The CFR has generally represented the transnationally oriented fraction of big capital and has favored a bipartisan foreign policy whenever feasible. It has promoted foreign aid, NATO, and, given its free market biases, such policies as NAFTA and the Trans Pacific Partnership. The Middle East, and possible Russian (then Soviet) attempts to gain influence on the CFR, became a source of concern as early as 1980 (182-183). "Important elements within the Council … were also engaged in at first subtle, and later overt, lobbying for a war with Iraq, beginning … in 1997-99" (205). In 2002 it initiated a quasi-independent Center for Geoeconomic Studies, which solidified the CFR's orientation towards an aggressive foreign policy (not excluding military interventions) in order to safeguard U.S. access to commodities, especially oil. In Chapter 6, Shoup provides further details about the CFR's role in the Iraq war and its "midcourse correction," and in a later chapter he shows how U.S. policy in Ukraine today reflects the CFR's worry as early as 1990 that Moscow not regain "control over Ukraine … and (its) major resources" (251). Shoup also provides details about the relationship between a CFR study group's membership (including representatives from Monsanto, Dupont, and others) and the group's endorsement of crop engineering ("GMO s") (265-266), the role of its corporate members in suppressing garment workers in Bangladesh, as well as other examples of its "key role in creating the overall system of neoliberal exploitation" (174) .

Consistent with its transnational approach, the CFR actively promoted the founding of the Trilateral Commission linking Western Europe,

North America, and Japan into a policy-planning network. (The Trilateral Commission is the target of ultra-right paranoia about a "new world order of socialism.") Similarly, the CFR encouraged the creation of the Davos World Economic Forum, as well as other links "between the financial capitalist class of the United States and the rest of the world's globalizing plutocracy" (131).

However, CFR leaders also understood the need for power at home. Its leadership pushed for domestic "reforms," proposing shredding the social safety net, further curbing unions, and assuring that the U.S. remain the "energy superpower" by exploiting domestic sources including fracking (197-198). This leads Shoup, in his penultimate chapter, to analyze the CFR's approach to "the global ecological crisis" (277). CFR's leadership is seriously worried about this issue, mainly because it has "national security" implications: damage to infrastructure, refugee crises, unrest, and so on. Shoup's concluding chapter points to *the* critical contradiction of this concern: The crisis develops "directly out of the current predatory neoliberal capitalist system's need for constant growth, for maximum profit" (296). The council of course "cannot be relied upon to develop any serious proposals, … cannot think holistically and is incapable of addressing climate heating, let alone the wider ecological crisis" (297). Shoup insists, "Only mass social movements can now save the people and the planet" (307).

Shoup then lays out a detailed "Ecosocialist" program to which very few readers of *New Politics* will take exception.

POWER STRUCTURE RESEARCH rests on two interacting methods: network analysis, which focuses on the interconnections between individuals and institutions, and decisional analysis, which tries to demonstrate how particular decisions are made, by whom, and why. The assumption of researchers like Shoup, Domhoff, and others is that decisions flow from networks of powerful individuals who share values rooted in their class-based experiences: their upbringing, their social lives, their positions in finance and industry, and the constant reinforcement of these values by continuing interaction with one another. This oligarchic group attempts to have its decisions carried out in both the private and the public (governmental) arenas. However, this oligarchy is not always in agreement on specific policies because there are disputes among different fractions of capital; hence spaces for debate must be established so that a consensus can emerge, what has been termed a kind of pluralism at the top.

This kind of analysis has been subjected to the charge of "conspiracy theory" by social scientists, media pundits, and mainstream politicians who like to believe (or like us to believe) that a genuine pluralism exists in which we all have a say via our membership in different interest groups. The conspiracy theories of the ultra-right generally target specific groups (Jews, the Chinese government, foreigners, and finance but not industrial—or "productive"—capital among other villains) but not capitalism as such. Those of the left (in its broadest historical sense) have focused on industries such as the railroads but also Wall Street—the One Percent. Where power structure studies depart from conspiratorial approaches is that they are attempts at real, fine-grained description and analysis. One Percent is a useful slogan, but it is not an analysis. It can only minimally help us to decipher events.

Is the CFR a conspiracy? In the sense that a small oligarchic group created the CFR as an instrument to promote its agenda, yes. Is it a secret cabal? No, its own documents and speeches state its aims and strategies openly and without the slightest apology. It is these that we must understand if we are to mount effective resistance.

C. Wright Mills has rightly been criticized as being undialectical, that is, he and some other power structure theorists present a picture of an oligarchy, including its cultural apparatus,

against which it appears hopeless to struggle. Shoup does not share this pessimism. He clearly believes that another world is possible: "[T]he workers/producers themselves must create … a fundamental transformation from below" in order to overcome the "predatory economic system of neoliberal financial monopoly capitalism" (307, 304). Amen.

NOTES

1. C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (Oxford University Press, 1956), 18.
2. Now in its 7th ed.; www2.ucsc.edu/whorulesamerica/
3. *State Autonomy or Class Dominance?* (Hawthorne, N.Y.: Aldine De Gruyter, 1996), 18.
4. Monthly Review Press.
5. Charles A. Beard, *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War, 1941: A Study in Appearances and Realities* (Yale University Press, 1948). The revisionists have published many volumes on Pearl Harbor; Beard was one of the first.

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What Is This Thing Called Leninism?

Jason Schulman

First, allow me to come clean: I count Paul Le Blanc as a friend and comrade and am in his debt—along with Peter Hudis, author of *Marx's Concept of the Alternative to Capitalism* (Haymarket, 2013)—for inviting me to join the editorial board of the *Complete Works of Rosa Luxemburg* being published by Verso Books. And I am in agreement with many of the positions on politics and historical matters that Le Blanc expresses in *Unfinished Leninism*. But I disagree with his book's basic thesis: that there is a specific doctrine called "Leninism" that should be upheld and renewed by socialists in the twenty-first century and that Lenin himself is deserving of pride of place in the Marxist pantheon not simply for his leadership of the Bolshevik Revolution but for his theoretical innovations.

Unfinished Leninism: The Rise and Return of a Revolutionary Doctrine
Paul Le Blanc
Haymarket Books, 2014, xi + 237 pp., paperback, $18

Le Blanc's book comes in the wake of much discussion about Lenin, generated by the publication of Lars T. Lih's *Lenin Rediscovered: "What Is to Be Done?" in Context* (Haymarket, 2008). Lih's extensive research and, in particular, his new translations of heretofore badly translated Russian terms, make it clear that Lenin was not, in 1902 (when Lenin's pamphlet *What Is to Be Done?* was published), the elitist-minded reviser of Marxism that he is generally thought to be, nor was Bolshevism an authoritarian political trend prior to the Russian Civil War. *Lenin Rediscovered* forthrightly challenges the traditional interpretation of Lenin's political thought, an interpretation shared across the political spectrum from conservatives to much of the left—including the avowedly Leninist left. This well-known "textbook interpretation," to use Lih's phrase, is that through *WITBD?* and the 1903 split in the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party (RDSLP), Lenin and his Bolsheviks (the 1903 majority faction) created a "party of a new type"— a despotically centralized "vanguard" party of "professional revolutionaries" (often characterized by opponents of "Leninism" as ex-student intellectuals rather than real workers), dominated by an all-powerful central committee. This vision of the Marxist party was counterpoised to the mainstream Second (Socialist) International notion of a mass party of the whole working class, which the Bolsheviks' rivals in the Menshevik faction of the RSDLP (and the leaders of the German Social Democratic Party) supposedly held. This idea of what it is to be a "Leninist" has often been upheld not just by supporters of official Communism—in its pro-Moscow or pro-Beijing variants—but by the Trotskyist ("Bolshevik-Leninist") left as well. But thanks

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to much scholarship over the decades, culminating in Lih's massive book, it has become quite evident that the 1903 Bolshevik-Menshevik split did *not* create two separate parties, merely public factions of the RSDLP; that two distinct parties did not even emerge in 1912, as older works on Russian Social Democratic history claimed, but only in 1917, prior to the Bolshevik Revolution; and, hence, the authoritarian "vanguard party" allegedly outlined in *WITBD?* did not, and could not, ever exist in real life before the Russian Civil War.

A rejection of "1921 Leninism" is a prerequisite for building a revolutionary organization "that is inclusive, diverse, democratic, and cohesive."

Le Blanc is decidedly not a promulgator of "textbook Leninism," and there is much to be appreciated in his book. Le Blanc's judgments on various recent books that concern Lenin in some fashion, particularly those by Carter Elwood, Christopher Read, Bryan Palmer, and Lars Lih, are valuable. The second chapter, a fourteen-page biography of Lenin originally written for the eight-volume *International Encyclopedia of Revolution and Protest* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), is particularly excellent, most likely as good a short summing-up of Lenin and his legacy as anyone has ever written. The chapter entitled "Lenin and Luxemburg Through Each Other's Eyes" is similarly outstanding. Moreover, Le Blanc does not simply praise Lenin without criticism. While on the one hand he claims that Lenin's famous pamphlet *The State and Revolution* provides "a libertarian and democratic vision of working-class revolution and the socialist future" (33)—a position which, in my view, fails to see how in that text Lenin effectively collapses politics into nonpolitical administration and assumes that "the armed workers" running the new proletarian state will have no political differences in need of peaceful resolution—on the other hand, he acknowledges that Lenin's vision of "workers' democracy" was in practice impossible to establish in Russia after October 1917. As he states,

> Workers' committees and councils in the factories and neighborhoods did not have enough information and knowledge to form practical decisions nor enough skill and practical experience to carry out decisions for the purpose of running a national economy, developing adequate social services throughout the country, formulating a coherent foreign policy, or running a factory. (86)

And he realizes that by November 1918 the Russian state under the Bolsheviks had become repressive and authoritarian.

That said, one wishes that Le Blanc had mentioned that even if much of this authoritarianism may have been unavoidable given the context of World War I, the White Terror, bourgeois army encirclement, economic blockade, and so on, Lenin's *justifications* for authoritarianism, as Rosa Luxemburg made clear in "The Russian Revolution" (1918), made virtue out of necessity and were even introduced into Communist International (Comintern) resolutions that were wholly inconsistent not just with pre-"Leninist" Marxism but with political principles which Lenin had held for his entire adult life. Le Blanc could have done more to explain, or at least admit, the contradiction between Lenin the revolutionary democrat—which indeed he once was—and the Lenin who accepted Gregory Zinoviev's judgment in "The Role of the Communist Party in the Proletarian Revolution" (adopted by the Comintern in 1920) that "particularly in the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the Communist Party must be built on the basis of an iron proletarian centralism. To lead the working class successfully … the Communist Party must

create an iron military order in its own ranks." Clearly, having been on the receiving end of an "iron military order" in the 1970s by the leadership of the Socialist Workers Party (U.S.), Le Blanc has no desire to see it replicated in a future revolutionary socialist party. So why not openly admit that Lenin was wrong to embrace such words, especially since we know from historians ranging from Alexander Rabinowitch to Lars Lih that the Bolsheviks were never structured as an "iron military order" themselves, either as a faction of Russian Social Democracy or as an independent party? Lenin himself may have proclaimed that the Bolsheviks were characterized by "iron discipline" as early as 1903 in *Left-Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder* (1920), but we should all know by now that this simply was not the case.

Indeed, Le Blanc rightly denounces the perversion of the Bolsheviks' internal regime of "democratic centralism"—a term which, as Charles Post explains in an article in the 2013 *Socialist Register*, originally meant merely "the authority of democratically elected party congresses *alone* to make decisions binding on all party committees and members"—into authoritarian, *bureaucratic* centralism within the "Stalinized" Communist parties. (The Mensheviks, like the Bolsheviks, were also democratic-centralist—a fact that many avowed anti-Leninists simply miss or ignore.) And he recognizes that *bureaucratic* centralism has been the typical organizational structure of much of the anti-Stalinist far left, including (certainly by 1980) the American Socialist Workers Party as well as the identically named British group currently led by Alex Callinicos. But Le Blanc does not concede that Lenin himself is partly at fault here. He argues, correctly, that the 1921 Comintern theses "The Organizational Structure of the Communist Parties, the Methods and Content of Their Work" were "put forward at Lenin's insistence" and that Lenin "defended them after they were adopted" (162-3). But he does not seem to see anything *wrong* with these theses and claims that they defend *democratic* centralism. It is true, as Le Blanc notes, that they warn against the party bureaucracy trying "*to dominate* the other members of the Party or the revolutionary proletarian masses outside the Party." But the theses also demand that Communist parties publicly present themselves as politically monolithic:

> The different levels of the party apparatus must decide whether any given question should be publicly discussed by individual comrades (in the press, in pamphlets), in what form and to what extent. If the decision of the organization or leading party body is in the view of certain other members incorrect, these comrades must not forget, when they speak or act in public, that to weaken or *break the unity of the common front* is the worst *breach of discipline* and the worst mistake that can be made in the revolutionary struggle.

In other words, if members of Communist parties hold dissident ideas, they must publicly pretend that they do not hold them. Le Blanc claims that the 1921 Comintern theses "contain nothing to contradict what Lenin was saying in 1906" (170), when Lenin was arguing that criticism of the revolutionary party's program was acceptable even in public meetings. But to me it seems quite obvious that what Lenin argued for in 1921 does contradict what he argued for in 1906, and Marxists ought to both own up to this and support the 1906 Lenin over the 1921 Lenin. A rejection of what Mike Macnair has called "1921 Leninism" is a prerequisite for building a revolutionary organization "that is inclusive, diverse, democratic, and cohesive" (172), which I do not doubt that Le Blanc sincerely desires and which, in fact, the Bolsheviks actually were, at least through 1918.

But then we must address the question of "Leninism" itself, unmodified by "1906" or "1921." Le Blanc is adamant: He dismisses Charles Post's belief that Lenin was, for the most part, *not* an original theorist, that in most respects his theoretical orientation was exactly that of the Second International's "Pope of

Marxism," Karl Kautsky. Le Blanc does this within the context of an argument with Post over a pamphlet by Ernest Mandel, deceased leader of the Fourth International, entitled *The Leninist Theory of Organization,* and over whether or not Mandel would have agreed with Post. As someone who thinks Mandel was quite wrong quite often, I have no dog in that particular fight. But I do think that Le Blanc fails to prove that Lenin was a major theoretical innovator within Marxism. He summarizes "genuine Leninism" with a series of bullet points (123), few of which either originate with Lenin or were exclusive to him. Examples: Lenin opposed anti-political "economism," though this was true for virtually all Second International socialists outside of the revisionist wing spearheaded by Eduard Bernstein. Lenin is credited with "the development of the united front tactic," though it was Paul Levi, leader of the German Communist Party between 1919 and 1921, who was its first prominent advocate. Lenin is credited with "a commitment to a worker-peasant alliance," though this was common to all Bolsheviks, even those who disagreed with Lenin in various ways (and is of no contemporary relevance for those of us in the so-called First World). Lenin had "a profound analysis of imperialism and nationalism"; nationalism yes, but Lenin's views on national liberation are today held by many socialists who would never call themselves Leninists, and Lenin's *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, which largely restated various theses by Kautsky, Rudolf Hilferding, and John A. Hobson, has been discredited numerous times by Marxist political economists ranging from Michael Kidron in the 1960s to Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin in the twenty-first century. And one could go on.

So what remains of "genuine Leninism"? Here again I concur with Post's piece referenced above, and which Le Blanc quotes:

> The enduring legacy of Leninism [or, perhaps put a better way, of the principled Marxists of the early Communist International] remains the goal of constructing an independent organization of anti-capitalist organizers and activists who attempt to project a political alternative to the forces of official reformism not only in elections, but in mass, extra-parliamentary social struggles. (125)

Le Blanc claims that this reduces Lenin to a more left-wing version of Saul Alinsky. To paraphrase Post's response to Le Blanc's comment in an article for the British Marxist journal *rs21*, given Alinsky's overt hostility to "injecting politics" (in other words, debates over strategy and tactics) into extra-parliamentary social struggles as these would fracture *alliances* with "the forces of official reformism," I am at a loss as to how Le Blanc can make this analogy.

Did it once make sense for revolutionary socialists to refer to themselves as Leninists? Yes. To call oneself a Leninist in the 1920s (at least before the "Bolshevization" of the Communist parties) was, in most respects, simply to identify with principled Marxism, with what Le Blanc describes as "a refusal to make certain compromises, either with capitalist politicians or labor bureaucracies, and a determination to follow through to the end the implications of the revolutionary Marxist orientation" (188). This distinguished Leninists from those who spoke in Marxist-sounding language but whose political practice had become revisionist, such as Kautsky and Hilferding, as well as from "left communist" sectarians. It was also understandable that those in Leon Trotsky's International Left Opposition of the 1930s, and then his Fourth International, would describe themselves as "Bolshevik-Leninists," given that they were in a struggle to delegitimize Josef Stalin's claim to be following in Lenin's political footsteps. But what once made sense will not necessarily make sense today. Even if it is true, as Le Blanc states, that "there was a decisive element of difference … between the kind of party that Kautsky was a member of in Germany and the kind of party that Lenin and his comrades were building in Russia" (188), that difference was

not expressed *in theory* but only *in practice*. Yes, today's Marxists should study Bolshevism—by studying Bolshevism's history, its *actions* as a political tendency, not by reading most of Lenin's *Collected Works*. Furthermore, given that "Leninism" is usually understood by today's leftists as primarily referring to an organizational structure ("iron military order"), while "Marxism" is not, for Marxists—for democratic revolutionary socialists—to refer to ourselves as Leninists is to immediately invite misunderstanding.

Ultimately, all Paul Le Blanc is calling for in *Unfinished Leninism* is for contemporary leftists to be principled, serious Marxists, that is to be—as Lenin was—"concerned in all of [our] political thinking and activity with the question of what it would take—actually—to take power" (203). There is absolutely nothing wrong with this, and I agree that the demonization of Lenin so common in certain parts of the left should end. But even if it was not once so apparent, today it should be clear that Lenin was simply not so original a thinker as to merit his own "ism." And the word "Leninism" itself, because of the authoritarianism and sectarianism of so many self-described Leninists, has become a barrier to winning working-class people over to the Marxist left. Le Blanc's intentions are commendable. But it is time for the term "Leninism" to be retired.

The Intelligent Human's Guide to Socialism

SANDY BOYER

THIS IS THE BOOK MANY SOCIALISTS have been waiting for, although we probably didn't know it. In just over 150 pages it describes the core socialist ideas in a clear, highly accessible way. The fact that the book is frequently laugh-out-loud funny makes it even better. *Socialism … Seriously* is written for people who are new to socialism and want to find out what it's all about.

Socialism ... Seriously: A Brief Guide to Human Liberation
DANNY KATCH
Haymarket Books, 2015, 165 pp.,
Paperback, $13.95

The first question about a book that sets out to explain socialism is, of course, what the author means by socialism.

In the introduction Katch says, "A short answer is that socialism is a society whose top priority is meeting all its people's needs—ranging from food, shelter and health care to art, culture and companionship."

Later he spells it out as:

1. Working people control the government.
2. The government controls the economy.

In a chapter on "Workers' Power" he writes, "The simplest definition of Marx's socialism is that it is what society would look like if the working class were in charge."

Danny Katch is a member of the Interna-

SANDY BOYER *is a long time socialist living in New York City. He co-hosts "Radio Free Eireann" and writes for* New Politics, The Wild Geese, *the* International Socialist Review, *and* Socialist Worker.

tional Socialist Organization (ISO), and the book is written from that point of view without being a recruiting tool. The underlying theme is what Hal Draper called "socialism from below" and what Marx set forth as "the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves."

In the final chapter on "Five Habits of ~~Highly Effective~~ Relatively Undamaged Socialists," Katch recommends, "Organize with other socialists," but he doesn't say, "Join the ISO." This means that you can recommend S*ocialism … Seriously* even if you're not in the ISO and you have no intention of joining.

Still the book can't help but reflect the ISO's basic politics. It makes it clear that Russia, China, Cuba, and their ilk aren't socialist because the workers aren't in control. In the age of Bernie Sanders, "the Democrats are that loud guy in the bar pretending to be held back by his friends to keep him from going after someone he has absolutely no intention of fighting."

Katch freely admits that, "Despite its title this book isn't really an introduction to socialism. It's an introduction to just one branch of the socialist tree." The book sets out revolutionary socialism, which Katch champions, but also explains social democracy and Stalinism.

At the end of this chapter Katch takes on the idea posed by people like Stanley Aronowitz that the word socialism itself comes with too much baggage. Katch comments, "I'm happy to welcome any new name that works better than the old ones. I'll be that shameless old guy eager to use whatever lingo the radical kids are using these days. But until that happens, I'm not going to waste my time trying to rebrand the revolution. *Open Source Economy! Wiki-ism."*

The book is admirably free of abstruse Marxist terminology that many wouldn't understand. Surplus value is described—without ever using the term—by the experience of someone earning $25 an hour making CD's for a label specializing in German house music and late nineties slow jams. It's clear that the worker is being exploited and why.

I would have gone a step further and used "government" instead of "the state" whenever possible. People in this country who haven't been introduced to socialist language think "the state" means New York, Iowa, or California. The point is to make it as easy as possible to understand what we're talking about.

Socialism … Seriously has two main sections, appropriately enough titled "Capitalism" and "Socialism." Each has a series of brief chapters on related themes.

Perhaps the two most important chapters in "Capitalism" are "Freedom Isn't Free," which deals with Adam Smith's analysis of capitalism, and "Who's in Charge."

Katch shows that behind Adam Smith's "invisible hand" is the economic exploitation of workers by capitalism. Profits are only possible because what workers produce is worth so much more than what they're paid. The capitalists' blind competition for ever greater profits leads to both over production and recession and to the destruction of the environment.

He describes how, while all working people are exploited by capitalism, some are also oppressed. "Oppression refers to the systematic mistreatment of some groups of people on the basis of their ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual identity, or some other factor." Oppression "comes straight from the top," not from individual prejudice.

"Who's in Charge" aims to show that in reality you can't have both capitalism and democracy, or, "You can have billionaires or you can have democracy, but you can't have a little of both." The book describes the drastic limitations on the right to vote. There are, for instance, no votes on plant closings, layoffs, executive bonuses, or even government spying.

Beyond the relatively popular idea that government operates by and for the 1 percent, Katch describes how government is needed to keep individual capitalists from hurting the system as a whole. "Capitalists are like children,

and the state's job is to be the grownup pushing the shopping cart while capitalists sit in the front and make a grab for whatever they want, leaving the state to clean up their spills and put the five boxes of Frosted Flakes back on the shelves." In reality, to stick with this analogy, the state increasingly has to tell capitalists that they can't even touch the Frosted Flakes.

"Socialism" begins with an amusing fantasy about a lousy day under socialism in 2015 in Philadelphia. It isn't meant to actually predict the future. But behind the humor there's a serious point that socialism wouldn't be all sweetness and light and also that society wouldn't fall apart if people could democratically decide things like cars versus mass transit, or whether we want to live individually or share with others, and even whether to keep stores open 24 hours a day.

"Socialism" finishes as it should, with "Revolution!" Here Katch convincingly argues that there is no electoral road to socialism. After all, if we can't vote for full employment, to stop hospital closings, or even to end omnipresent sexist TV ads, we're never going to be allowed to vote to take away the capitalists' property. Or as Henry Kissinger said about Chile, "I don't see why we should stand by and allow a country to go communist because of the irresponsibility of its own people."

The book develops the theme that it's only the experience of making a revolution that prepares working people to run their own government and economy. It's the only way that the working class, both individually and collectively, can develop the confidence and capacity they have been prevented from acquiring.

The section finishes with a brief description of the Russian Revolution and its degeneration. It debunks both the idea that the revolution was just a coup to put Lenin and the Bolsheviks in power and the even more popular notion that there was no real difference between Lenin and Stalin. There's also a valuable description of how the communist parties became blind agents of Russian foreign policy and even helped to defeat subsequent revolutions throughout the world.

The book concludes with Gramsci's "Pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will." "Try to steer clear of the twin traps of bullshitting yourself that things aren't bleak and wallowing in self-pity as long as we still have a chance to win. In my experience the best way to stay on track is to keep finding reasons to laugh—at the absurdities of capitalism and at our own sometimes clumsy efforts to challenge it."

Apart from the humor and elegant descriptions, like the Democratic Party as the loud guy in the bar pretending to be held back, many *New Politics* readers may not find a lot new in *Socialism … Seriously*. But if you know someone who's just getting interested in socialism, by all means invest the $14 and give it to them. If it helps win them to socialism, it will be $14 well spent.

Full disclosure: Both Danny Katch and I write for *Socialist Worker* online (SocialistWorker.org). He writes much more often than I do, and his articles can be hilarious, something no one has ever accused me of.

The Party of "Peace and Justice"

FRANK A. WARREN

FIRST, FULL DISCLOSURE: I read most of Jack Ross's *The Socialist Party of America* in draft. Although it is normally not good policy to then review the book, I felt I could express my respect for what Jack Ross is attempting and share my concerns in a way that could serve a useful purpose.

The Socialist Party of America: A Complete History
JACK ROSS
Potomac Books, 2015. 601 pp. plus notes, $50

Jack Ross attempts two things in his history of the American Socialist Party. One is to write a complete history. Aside from David Shannon's 1955 book, he is, as far as I know, the first historian to attempt this. His scope goes beyond Shannon's, and, with some exceptions, he is successful in covering the important aspects of that history. I felt that his discussion of World War II socialism was too narrowly (although understandably) concerned with the issue of foreign policy to the exclusion of the party's heroic defense of the Japanese-American internees and imprisoned conscientious objectors, but overall his coverage is remarkable.

The second thing Ross attempts is to revise how the history of American socialism is remembered. Too often its early stages have been interpreted through the lens of Ira Kipnis's *The American Socialist Movement, 1897-1912* and his misunderstanding of the left-right divisions of the early Socialist Party. Following the earlier work of James Weinstein (and expanding on it), Ross is able to show that the interpretations following Kipnis were framed by the Communist Party's view of the Socialist Party, which exaggerated the importance of the Bill Haywood Industrial Workers of the World and its left to the success of the Socialist Party and distorted the views of the more conservative Victor Berger-Morris Hillquit wing. Later Ross takes on the more recent romantic memories of the Popular Front as the epitome of 1930s radicalism. In these efforts to rectify memories of American radicalism, he is successful.

One of Ross's important themes involves the Socialist Party's missed opportunities to participate in insurgencies that could have produced Farmer-Labor-style third parties with a socialist orientation. In his discussions of these opportunities, from the 1896 Populist convention through the Huey Long movement, he is most persuasive in his analysis of the 1920 Farmer-Labor insurgency and of efforts by the League for Independent Political Action to build a 1930s third party. He is less persuasive in discussing Huey Long.

Ross correctly rebuts the Popular Front's fears of fascism, fears that transformed tradi-

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tional conservatives into fascist threats, but he appears to take seriously the anti-war left's fear that the New Deal was becoming a fascist state. He censors Roosevelt and the New Deal from every angle. Ross exaggerates the intellectual role (he calls it the "intellectual bodyguard") of the Communist Party in the New Deal. He appears to attribute the modern American empire solely to Roosevelt's actions prior to and during World War II. Having written critically of the New Deal in comparison to the Socialist Party in the 1930s, I am well aware of the New Deal's and Roosevelt's faults. But Ross's one-dimensional view of the New Deal results in such baffling statements as his comment on Herbert Hoover and Al Smith: "Both the forgotten Iowa Progressive and the pro-labor 'new Tammany' governor were in many ways more reflective of the Socialist legacy in American politics than Franklin Roosevelt." Hoover, who opposed direct relief and ordered the U.S. Army to march on the Bonus Army, and Smith, who soon forgot any concern for labor and joined the Liberty League, are a greater part of the Socialist political legacy than Roosevelt? I am not arguing that Roosevelt is part of that legacy; certainly Abraham Cahan's attempts to transform Roosevelt into a Socialist were misplaced. But a sense of proportion in evaluating the New Deal is needed.

Another problem results from Ross's viewing isolationism as central to the Socialist Party's legacy. He writes of Charles Beard, Oswald Garrison Villard, John Flynn, and Lawrence Dennis that "to one degree or another they were all fellow travelers of the Socialist Party." Party leader Norman Thomas cooperated with Beard, Villard, and Flynn in the Keep America Out of War activities, and he and Dennis exchanged letters that shared some similar concerns about the modern state. But in the 1930s, while Thomas was calling for socialism and many liberals were calling for national planning that would go beyond capitalism, Beard called for planning that only addressed the peaks and valleys of capitalism. In 1935, Villard expressed satisfaction with the New Deal although it was not the "whole loaf." And when he turned against the New Deal, he supported Wendell Willkie in 1940. And in the 1930s Dennis was writing his intellectual fascist tracts, and Flynn, as far as I am aware, never said anything about the Socialist Party until his anti-war activities, and he would wind up in the camp of Joseph McCarthy. While the conservative and liberal isolationists of the 1930s viewed Neutrality Legislation as able to prevent war, Thomas saw it as a stopgap measure to help the United States get to socialism. He never viewed himself as an isolationist in the 1930s; unlike the isolationists, he gave critical support to World War II and he organized the Post War World Council, which was not an isolationist organization.

Ross exaggerates the intellectual role (he calls it the "intellectual bodyguard") of the Communist Party in the New Deal.

I am also bothered by Ross's analysis of the legacy of Trotsky. In Ross's analysis of Trotsky's American sojourn, he quite correctly points out Trotsky's misunderstanding of and hatred for the American Socialist Party, the party of "Babbitts." Ross believes that this moment of scorn left a legacy that contributed to the "ultimate demise of the Socialist Party and subsequent birth of neoconservatism." It is easy to see the same disdainful attitude toward the American Socialist Party in Trotsky's manipulation of the "French turn" in the 1930s. But then we come nearly half a century later to the figure of Max Shachtman, who, for Ross, carries on the legacy of Trotsky. I have no quarrel with Ross's antipathy to Shachtman's tactics, but when we arrive at his legacy in neoconservatism, there is a

problem. Of Shachtman's critique of the George McGovern candidacy, Ross writes, "Attacks on the 'new class' were but an echo of Trotsky's pathological hatred of Morris Hillquit, the 'Babbitt of Babbitts,' . . . the ideal Socialist leader for successful dentists." Except they weren't an echo. Trotsky spoke as an avant-gardist in culture and politics while the critique of the "new class" was precisely that it had no institutional roots and was susceptible to the latest fashionable ideas.

I am also bothered by Ross's analysis of the legacy of Trotsky.

Ross's focus on Shachtman attributes to him a Svengali-like influence. No matter that Michael Harrington broke with Shachtman; according to Ross, everything Harrington did subsequently was due to his intellectual roots as a Shachtmanite. The result is a caricature of Harrington—at least the Michael Harrington I knew. Harrington made his share of political mistakes, but to attribute every decision he made to the Shachtman legacy is an overstatement.

I also have questions about the trajectory that Ross describes for the Socialist Party Militant group in the early thirties: a line from the Militant group to New Deal supporters (largely breaking with the Socialist Party over World War II), to helping found the war-time Union for Democratic Action which then became the Americans for Democratic Action, the organizational center of Cold War liberalism. Ross appears to be claiming that there was something central in the Militant group's thinking that led to these developments. He has a particular antipathy to the Militants. Even though the Revolutionary Policy Committee group in the party was more sympathetic to an extra-parliamentary revolution, it is the Militants who are faulted for the 1934 Declaration of Principles. And even though one of his heroes, Morris Hillquit, earlier wrote a more scathing attack on capitalist democracy than the Militants' critique of "bogus democracy," Ross can only attribute their thinking to fellow travelling instead of a response to what they believed was a crumbling capitalist system. The Militants (as well as Thomas for a short period) did look with favor on the Russian economy as distinct from its dictatorship. But this did not mean they took their "cues," from the Communist Party as Ross claims, since the Communists objected to this distinction. As I argued in my book *An Alternative Vision*, a lot of the short-lived sympathy for the Russian economy among Socialist Party members had to do with what they felt was necessary to attract new members to the party and keep restive young radicals in it. There was nothing particular in the Militant way of thinking in the early thirties that would determine the trajectory to either pro-New Dealers or later Cold War liberals. Their evolution, as well as the evolution of their intra-party Old Guard rivals in the same direction, had more to do with what was happening in the world in the late thirties than it did with what stance they took on the party quarrels of the early thirties.

I have said that Ross is successful in rescuing the history of the Socialist Party from the romanticizing of the Popular Front. However, in the process, he often uses the term too loosely. Ross writes that Theodore Draper "overstated the case that the Popular Front was a 'four-year' interlude in the history of American Communism." But Draper was right: The political Popular Front existed from the summer of 1935 until the Nazi-Soviet Pact of August, 1939. What I call the cultural Popular Front lasted longer. The political Popular Front in the United States involved a shared world and domestic analysis between the Communist Party and a large segment of the liberal community and a shared program of resisting fascism domestically. It did not involve the New Deal as a participant, although both the liberals and the

Communist Party supported the New Deal during the period. The political Popular Front existed only so long as the Communist Party was part of the shared coalition. When Michael Harrington later said, in terms of socialists supporting the Democratic Party, that we should have the Popular Front without the Stalinists, he ignored the historic meaning of the Popular Front. It is not a Popular Front without the Communist Party. It is simply socialists working in the Democratic Party.

Thus, when Ross calls the nomination of Roosevelt for a fourth term the "high water mark of the Popular Front," which had only been temporarily interrupted by the Hitler-Stalin Pact, he is wrong. The political Popular Front ended with the Nazi-Soviet Pact. The Union for Democratic Action barred Communists. Its members consisted of liberals who were sympathetic to the Soviet Union and others who were hostile, but all ridiculed the Communist Party. Max Lerner called its "free enterprise" line ridiculous, and *The New Republic* (edited by Bruce Bliven, a leader in the Union for Democratic Action) described the Communist Party as "a pathetic little group of negligible people." Sidney Hillman created the CIO-PAC in the aftermath of the 1942 Republican Congressional gains in order to bring liberals and labor together. Communists and non-Communists worked through it. But unlike the Popular Front committees of the late thirties, it was not part of a larger Popular Front strategy. Like the 1936 Labor Non-Partisan League, it was basically designed to get out the vote for Roosevelt. It did not mean even for pro-Russian liberals that the Communist Party was part of an anti-fascist, pro-democracy alliance.

Despite these concerns, Ross's story of the Socialist Party should be seen as a major contribution. At the very end, Ross calls it an "exceptional party" of "peace and justice." In reading his vivid description of the party's opposition to World War I and of Eugene Debs's eloquent response to Woodrow Wilson's suppression of civil liberties, one is reminded of the party at its best. So too when we see Norman Thomas visiting the sharecroppers of Arkansas in order to force the country to face the terror and repression at work there. At such moments, Ross's book reminds us of just which radical past we should remember.

A Bottom-Up History, Not a Comfortable Reinforcement

MARTIN COMACK

AGUSTÍN GUILLAMÓN IS A dedicated anarcho-syndicalist activist whose partisanship has not affected his critical sensitivities nor prevented him from graphically outlining what he regards as the errors and inconsistencies of the Spanish libertarian left. His narrative relies extensively on the records of meetings, documents, and manifestos of the various factions and committees of the National Confederation of Labor (Confederation Nacional del Trabajo or CNT) and the Iberian Anarchist Federation (Federación Anarquista Ibérica or FAI), most especially those of the rank-and-file militants. This is a history from the "bottom up" not usually found in studies of the Spanish Revolution and Civil War.

Ready for Revolution: the CNT Defense Committees in Barcelona, 1933-38
AGUSTÍN GUILLAMÓN
TRANSLATED BY PAUL SHARKEY
AK Press/Kate Sharply Library, 2014. 261 pp. $14.95

Guillamón's book, as the editors of the Kate Sharpley Library note by way of introduction, "makes us reassess and debate what we thought we knew" (12). And it is "not an easy read for those of us looking for a comfortable reinforcement of the purity of our anarchist ideal" (10). The libertarian left in Spain, the CNT and FAI, were neither naïve nor unsophisticated, nor for that matter "filled with saintly militants driven by the purity, righteousness, and moral correctness of their mission." They were organizations shaped by their members' "experience of strikes, insurrections, imprisonment, exile, cultural activities, and lives led in the working class barrios and villages of Spain" (6-7). The anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists and their organizations formed an organic part of the working-class community, involved in each and every aspect of working-class life, social and cultural. And for all that it was a remarkably complex movement, containing various currents and tendencies that were frequently in conflict—both between and within the two organizations. They could almost be considered as separate entities. For although membership in the two groups often overlapped, the FAI never could claim more than several thousand militants, while by 1936 the CNT numbered its members in the hundreds of thousands. The CNT sought to organize the entire working class of Catalonia and of Spain on the basis of need and physical survival. The FAI was a voluntary association of ideologues.

From its founding in 1910, and throughout the early years of the twentieth century, the CNT was characterized by internal factionalism that only intensified with the outbreak of the revolution and civil war in 1936. From the outset there were those who sought some means of collaboration or coexistence with the state and with other political and social movements, a policy

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often followed by labor organizations elsewhere in Western Europe. On the other side were the revolutionary elements for whom armed class struggle was both unavoidable and desirable—a position Guillamón unequivocally defends—but who were soon to be labeled "incontrolados" (the uncontrolled) by the government collaborators and Stalinists.

The CNT defense committees were formed in reaction to the ferocious repression visited upon the union in the 1920s as it attempted to organize in the workshops and factories of Barcelona and the province of Catalonia in the most difficult and dangerous of conditions. It was the era of pistolerismo (literally, the use of pistols): Under both the monarchy and the dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera, attacks on the CNT went far beyond the routine blacklisting of militants, lockouts, and the use of scab labor. The Civil Guard, the employers, and Catalonian vigilante groups did not hesitate to employ officially sanctioned terrorism against strikers, union members, and the working class in general and followed an unrestrained policy of physical assault, imprisonment without trial, and assassination. This general policy of repression did not essentially change with the proclamation of a Spanish Republic in 1931, much to the disillusionment of many in the CNT who had actually taken the Republican promise of popular power and rule of law at face value.

From the outset, CNT union militants were forced to arm themselves, form self-defense teams, and retaliate shot for shot against the agents of the state and the employers. Under conditions of mass unemployment and widespread impoverishment, some groups began to engage in expropriations, bank holdups, and raids on payroll offices to sustain themselves, their neighbors, and the union itself. In the author's words, "the distinction between legality and illegality was meaningless in a wretched and forlorn world of rampant exploitation, where it was a struggle simply to eke out a bare existence" (33).

Funded by and subject to the CNT, the defense groups provided the union with its own militia force. Generally, each defense group consisted of some six dedicated militants, each charged with specific tasks. These included liaison with other cadres, gathering intelligence on government forces and the employers' pistoleros, drawing up plans of urban structures, reconnaissance of strategic areas for purposes of street fighting, surveillance of public services, and the provision of weapons and resources.

By the early thirties, under the pressure of constant attack, the defense committees took the offensive and engaged in a series of mini-insurrections—preparations for what they considered to be the inevitable social revolution. But Guillamón considers these latter actions to have been merely examples of "a childish policy of revolutionary gymnastics," that left the organization severely weakened, and a course of action that was finally superseded by more realistic plans that emphasized intensified training, organizational coherence, and the stockpiling of resources (24). By the outbreak of the revolution and civil war in 1936, the CNT defense committees could mobilize some 20,000 armed militants. And it was the defense committees that met head on and defeated the military uprising in Barcelona. Guillamón describes this battle between the pro-Franco forces and the anarcho-syndicalists in some detail.

In the wake of the fascist defeat in July of 1936, the CNT armed cadres held effective power in Catalonia. Now the CNT was forced to make an immediate choice: cooperation with the Republican government in Madrid and the provincial authorities in Barcelona—the better to concentrate on the military defeat of General Franco's army that had succeeded in taking over half the country—or the immediate launch of the social revolution and the implementation of libertarian communism? Or was the one somehow dependent upon the other?

On the one hand, some demanded the assumption of power by a Committee of Militias,

but that would have constituted a dictatorship under another name and a complete betrayal of libertarian ideals. Besides, the anarchists were not strong enough to initiate libertarian communism in the rest of Spain. Even in Catalonia the collectivizations that the CNT was able to immediately effect in industry and agriculture were opposed by some peasant farmers, small business owners, and more conservative Republicans. And would the central government in Madrid, not to mention the governments of Britain and France, tolerate such a radical social upheaval in the midst of a civil war?

On the other hand, although the provincial government of Catalonia could rechristen itself a council and be granted a certain measure of autonomy by the federal republic, it still remained, and retained the powers of, a traditional state, representing a coalition of different classes, political parties, and groups with opposing interests, ranging from the radical to the reformist to the socially reactionary. This was true whether the CNT entered into collaboration with it or not. Such had been the bane of revolutionaries since the days of the Paris Commune—an existing governmental structure always ready at the first opportunity to ally with conservative or reactionary forces against popular control and popular power. This choice broke the ranks of the "pure" anarchists of the FAI as much as the CNT. Collaboration meant that the CNT was absorbed into the machinery of the state, merely one of several parties and unions represented in the Popular Front political alliance, despite the CNT's membership of over half a million. And the CNT could not enter the government and still maintain its own independent defense committees, its own armed militia.

Guillamón makes frequent reference to the "higher committees" of the CNT, whom he charges sought collaboration with the Catalonian and the Republican state from the beginning. "In July 1936, the defense committees … were potential organs of the power of the working class. They could have become everything had the revolutionary situation of July 19 spread and deepened" (133-134). Instead, the confederation engaged in a "succession of retreats and an undermining of their revolutionary gains" that included the reduction and eventual disarmament of the defense committees (132).

The ebbing of the revolutionary tide paralleled the simultaneous growth in power and influence of the reactionary Communist Party, the conduit through which a dependent Spanish Republic received arms and resources from the Soviet Union. Stalin's foreign policy aim was to forge an alliance between Russia and the Western powers against Hitler and Mussolini. A social revolution in Spain would undermine this effort, panic the ruling circles in Britain and France, and turn them in the opposite direction.

The anarcho-syndicalist incontrolados, now calling themselves the Friends of Durrutti, aligned with the radical socialists of the Workers Party of Marxist Unification (Partido Obrero de Unificacion Marxista) in attempting to resist the Stalinist-led counter-revolution. But it was too late. The events of May 1937 in Barcelona saw the final suppression of the revolutionary militants and the opening of a campaign of imprisonment, torture, and murder directed against them. It was, Guillamón insists, "the Republic rather than Franco's dictatorship that defeated the Revolution" (190).

"Throughout history," Guillamón instructs the reader, "revolutionary movements have never been unblemished and flawless; they have been motley and contradictory, naïve and forward-thinking, irksome and blinkered, surprising and far-sighted, all at the same time" (246). The mass movement of anarcho-syndicalism in Spain proved to be no exception.

Happiness Is Political

William Thompson's Utilitarian Argument for Democratic Work

JOHN W. LAWRENCE

"HAPPINESS IS POLITICAL," is the opening line of Kaswan's provocative book on William Thompson's theory on the social nature of happiness and its ramification for organizing a just society. Kaswan introduces the reader to Thompson (1775-1833) as "perhaps the paradigmatic case of a traitor to his class." Thompson was the only son of a wealthy merchant in Cork, Ireland; however as a political theorist, he developed ideas of the Enlightenment in a liberatory direction, calling for the elimination of subordination in all its manifestations. He was an ardent feminist, an abolitionist, an advocate for the working class, and a "founding theorist of socialism."

Happiness, Democracy and the Cooperative Movement: The Radical Utilitarianism of William Thompson
MARK. J. KASWAN
State University of New York Press, 2014. 319 pp. Paperback or electronic, $25.95

Kaswan argues that Thompson's political philosophy is grounded in his theory of happiness. In the first section of the book, Kaswan gives an overview of the history of the concept of happiness with a focus on distinguishing Thompson's view of happiness from that of Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832). Thompson and Bentham were contemporaries and friends, and Thompson was greatly influenced by Bentham's work. However, in the end, Thompson's conceptualization of happiness is much more social than Bentham's and led Thompson to call for a reorganization of society into democratic egalitarian communities.

Bentham is the father of modern utilitarianism and articulated its fundamental reframe, the greatest happiness principle: "It is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong." Bentham believed that humans are primarily motivated to maximize pleasure and minimize pain. In the political sphere, Bentham advocated representative democracy and believed that the people could hold politicians accountable for realizing the greatest happiness principle by voting. In the economic sphere, Bentham couched utilitarianism in the classical economic ideology of Adam Smith and David Ricardo. Bentham had an individualistic concept of happiness and believed people pursued happiness in the context of the marketplace. Bentham posed that pain and pleasure could be accurately quantified by the invisible hand of the market, thus money was the measure of happiness. According to Bentham, individuals could realize happiness in large part by accumulating wealth. Wealth not only allowed people to purchase the necessities of life but also lessens the pain of anxiety about the uncertainty of the future. Bentham did not believe that the government had a role in helping people meet their needs, even less

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their desires. He thought the intrinsic drive to maximize happiness was so powerful that people could realize their own happiness in the right social context. He believed the primary role of government was to provide the security necessary for people to be assured that their work and investments now had a realistic chance of realizing their material goals in the future. Thus, Bentham's conception of the role of government was similar to John Locke's, who believed the primary purpose of government was to protect property.

Like Bentham, Thompson also believed that maximizing happiness was the center of ethics and politics. However, in contrast to Bentham, Thompson was much more cognizant of how the elite use their power to maximize their interests at the expense of the majority. In the context of the industrial revolution and enclosure of common lands, Thompson witnessed the miserable conditions in which the working class lived. Moreover, Thompson was keenly aware of the fact that a large majority of humanity was subjugated by multiple forms of oppression including class domination, slavery, racism, and the suppression of women. Thompson anticipated many of Marx's criticisms of capitalism, a term not yet coined in Thompson's era, arguing "the system of individual competition" was the primary impediment to happiness for the vast majority in society. He pointed out that class conflict was inherent in the system: "The real interest of the capitalist, as such, is always and necessarily opposed to the interest of the laborer." Thompson asserted that capitalists' wealth was created by expropriating the products created by labor. "There can be no other source of this profit than the value added to the unwrought material by the labor guided by skill expended upon it. The materials, the buildings, the machinery, the wages, can add nothing to their own value. The additional value proceeds from labor alone." Thompson decried the fact that the organization of production by capitalists debased workers. It deprived workers of a means of subsistence and thus coerced them into working in degrading conditions for capitalists. Dependent on capitalists, workers lived under a perpetual state of material insecurity. Moreover, it was in the capitalists' interest to keep workers in a state of ignorance depriving them of education and the intellectual pleasures that come with it.

In planning an alternative to capitalism, Thompson was greatly influenced by Robert Owen (1771-1858) who gained fame for managing a cotton mill and company town while implementing progressive reforms to improve the lot of workers in New Lanark, Scotland. The village of New Lanark is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Thompson adopted from Owen two primary ideas. First, Thompson and Owen rejected the bourgeois individualism assumed by Bentham and argued that social circumstance is the primary determinant of the development of an individual's character. Thus, it was important to organize social institutions that nurtured the positive development of individuals. While Bentham's focus was on the individual, Thompson focused on the nature of social institutions and the structure and pattern of social relationships. Since the production of wealth was the primary prerequisite for happiness, Thompson was particularly concerned with economics and the nature of work. The second idea that Thompson adapted from Owen was the importance of cooperative communities.

Kaswan argues that Thompson's most important contribution to political theory was extending the application of democracy beyond representative democratic governments to cooperative communities and work. Thompson developed detailed plans for creating self-sufficient democratic communities populated by 500 to 2,000 people. Thompson believed that a population that size was great enough for a community to benefit from specialization and the division of labor but small enough so that members could have personal ties with all other members. All productive capital and land

in the community would be jointly owned and the fruits of the community's labor would be shared equally. Thus, class interests would be eliminated and the self-interests of community members would be aligned with the entire community's interest. The community would be governed democratically. Thompson posited that there would be a synergetic effect between democratic participation and education. Participating in self-governance would stimulate interest in education both individually and communally. Moreover, the community would be invested in the education of its members, thus potentially improving democratic decision making over time. Thompson also hypothesized that aligning personal and community interests would increase work productivity and create more opportunities for leisure time.

Thompson advocated an evolutionary approach to social change. He believed that if several democratic communities were founded, then they would spread by example. However, Thompson died before trying to found a democratic community. He attempted to leave his land and estate for the express purpose of founding a cooperative community, however his sister sued to have his will overturned, and the resulting 20-year legal battle exhausted most of the wealth of the estate.

In the last chapter, Kaswan discusses Thompson's influence on the development of the global cooperative movement. He argues that Thompson's and Owen's cooperative community proposals were a "kind of prehistory" for the modern cooperative movement. Kaswan states that Owen provided the passion and vision for cooperative communities, and Thompson articulated the guiding principles that were grounded in his social utilitarian philosophy. The author provides an interesting discussion of the founding of Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers in 1844, one of the first consumer cooperatives by working class activists. Originally, the Rochdale Society was founded with the goals of both providing more affordable consumer goods for its members and communally saving the surplus for founding a cooperative community in the future. The society formulated the Rochdale Principles, which became the guiding principles for the cooperative movement. Kaswan persuasively argues that the Rochdale Principles incorporate Thompson's principles for egalitarian cooperation and mutual self-help. Like Thompson, the Rochdale Society never founded a cooperative community; however, their philosophy influenced the cooperative movement.

The questions with which Thompson grappled throughout his life continue to be of utmost importance in our time. Exploitation, expropriation, inequality, racism, sexism, colonialism, and militarism continue to be inherent characteristics of global capitalism. Moreover, we are facing multiple imminent environmental catastrophes. The imperative to reorganize society to create a political economy in harmony with the physical world based on egalitarian democratic institutions controlled by ordinary people has never been greater. Kaswan's exploration of Thompson's ideas on happiness, mutual aid, and cooperation is a valuable contribution to the social struggle to find a rational way forward.

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