

The Permanent War Economy ♦ Europe's Political Turmoil

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AGAINST THE **CURRENT**
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**The Strange
Career of
the Second
Amendment**
BY JENNIFER JOPP



The Ongoing Black Liberation Struggle

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A Letter from the Editors:

The Menace of Right “Populism”

CAN IT ALL really be Donald Trump’s fault? Do the antics of the worst, most malicious and willfully ignorant president in modern U.S. history serve to explain the spread of authoritarian regimes, racist and anti-immigrant parties, and rightwing fake-populism across much of the planet?

In some cases, to be sure, Trump is a direct enabler. The murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi on orders from Saudi Arabia’s “reform” ruler and Jared Kushner’s great friend, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, was followed by a coverup so absurd that no one — except Trump — pretends to believe it, even while the U.S.-backed “Saudi-led coalition” war in Yemen assumes genocidal proportions.

But there are widespread and chilling examples of authoritarian rule from above supported by a popular rightwing base, attacking the most vulnerable groups in society. The Philippines president, Rodrigo Duterte, openly boasts of extrajudicial mass murders by his police forces. The incoming Brazilian president, Jair Bolsonaro, promises to exterminate political opposition, revive torture, unleash the police and military on poor communities, and crush indigenous peoples’ resistance to “development” of the Amazon — with the potential to turn the world’s most ecologically vital rain forest into desert by mid-century.

Violent “Hindutva” nationalism in India is encouraged by the Modi government. The Erdogan regime in Turkey has jailed journalists by the hundreds and purged the civil service and professions of hundreds of thousands of opponents, real or imagined. In Tanzania, LGBTQ people are in hiding for fear of their lives. These vicious attacks on democratic rights and targeted populations are not simply perpetrated by totalitarian government repression (as is the case with the Chinese regime’s mass incarceration camps and “reeducation” of the Uighur people), but gain significant support “from below.”

The European situation is just as disturbing. The Polish “Law and Justice” party government attacks women’s rights and purges the courts; Hungary’s “illiberal democracy” strongman Viktor Orban and Italy’s so-called “populist” coalition government build support by brutal assaults on immigrants and desperate asylum seekers. How much of this behavior is enabled by Trump’s rhetoric over the “invasion” of refugees from Central America, the family separations and mass detentions at the U.S. border, and his incitement against journalism as “the enemy of the people”?

Vladimir Putin’s regime, with its pre- and post-election relations with Trump and his extended family business, sends operatives abroad to poison defectors while Russian journalists, antiwar critics and LGBTQ rights advocates at home are rubbed out with much less publicity. In Ukraine, the Baltic states and Eastern Europe, Russian and western military provocation and counter-provocations are dangerously increasing, feeding back (as war crises generally do) into the repressive and anti-democratic tendencies arising in all these places.

Causes of Crisis

Of course, asking whether Trump is responsible for all this is only half-serious. But there are deeper substantive issues to be addressed about this reactionary pattern. What are the underlying causes of the surge in rightwing pseudo-populism, including in U.S. politics — this alliance of the wealthiest and most privileged elites with an angry popular and working-class base? What are the counter-trends, and what are the prospects and responsibilities of the radical and socialist left in this turbulent period?

The so-called “rules-based global order,” so highly praised by the wealthy classes who have prospered from it, has left behind much of the population. So-called center-right, liberal and social-democratic parties have pushed the

elites’ agenda of “free trade” — meaning free movement of capital — financial deregulation, and austerity for the poor.

Today, as that neoliberal order slowly crumbles and lurches toward the next recession or financial crisis, some of those who were relatively well-off see their own futures vanishing. The latest example among many is General Motors’ planned idling of five North American plants, which may throw 14,000 auto workers’ jobs on the scrap heap, threatens many thousands more and devastates affected communities. (Many observers feel that this move is GM’s ploy to scare autoworkers into dropping their demands in the 2019 contract negotiations.)

The elites move to the right — especially in South America, most dramatically shown in Brazil — while workers and the poor are left to fend for themselves. Their response can take retrograde forms such as white U.S. working class support for Trump, but also more promising revolts against austerity as in the widespread popular support in France for the “yellow vests” protests, (see “What is at Stake in the ‘Yellow Jacket’ Mobilization” by Leon Cremieux, posted at www.solidarity-us.org).

We can step back and view part of a larger pattern. Within Europe, the gap between wealthy nations (like Germany) that benefit from the common euro currency and the less affluent (especially Greece) that are trapped by it — and within each country, the widening gap between richer and poorer regions and classes — are pulling the European Union apart. In Britain, that dynamic enabled opportunist, anti-Muslim and barely disguised white-nationalist forces to carry the Brexit referendum, leading to a Britain-EU “divorce” that seems to be leading somewhere between a messy deadlock and a chaotic disaster.

Take another step back, and the bigger picture emerges. For the global South, the whole story of the “peaceful post-World War II liberal order inaugurated by the United States” was always a giant lie. From the Congo and southern Africa to the Middle East, southeast Asia and Latin America, multinational corporate pillage, superpower proxy wars that became genocides, western-backed dynasties and military dictatorships were the order of the day. Popular and revolutionary movements were routinely crushed.

Now, with old and new conflicts also intensified by the effects of climate change — particularly droughts and extreme weather driving masses of rural people off the land — refugees are taking their lives in their hands in

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AGAINST THE CURRENT is published in order to promote dialogue among the activists, organizers and serious scholars of the left. We promote the vision of socialism from below, of a revolutionary, working-class, multinational and multiracial, feminist and antibureaucratic socialist movement. *ATC* is sponsored by Solidarity, a socialist organization founded in 1986, together with a group of advisory editors who believe that this magazine can contribute to building an effective U.S. socialist left.

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Nationalism, Patriotism & Hate Crimes By Malik Miah

FRENCH PRESIDENT EMMANUEL Macron's November 11, 2018 speech, during the 100th anniversary of the end of World War I, called rising nationalism across Europe a "betrayal of patriotism" and warned against "old demons coming back to wreak chaos and death."

In rejecting claims that "nationalism" of states can be positive, Macron completely ignored the crucial distinction between the nationalism of oppressors and the oppressed.

"The lessons of World War I were not the same everywhere," argues Walter Russell Mead in *The Wall Street Journal* (Nov. 12, 2018) in response to Macron. "In Eastern and Central Europe, the war demonstrated the value, not the dangers, of nationalism. It broke the transnational bureaucratic empires that denied Poles, Lithuanians, Czechs and many others their freedom."

Nationalism, he continued, later helped countries break out of the Soviet bloc and thus "confirmed their belief that the cause of nationalism was the cause of freedom" from that "multiethnic, bureaucratic imperial system." (Mead is Professor of Foreign Affairs and the Humanities at Bard College.)

The debate about nationalism, thus, is not so black and white. But it is extremely important. Nationalism has been used by oppressors to cause divisions and scapegoat peoples who are not like the majority. The nationalism of oppressed peoples on the other hand, such as the Palestinians living under the state of Israel, is justified and can be a progressive force.

Trump's Nationalism

Donald Trump is a master at using reactionary nationalism to advance his political and economic interests. He declared himself a proud "Nationalist" two years after his election, because it whips up his supporters and aligns himself with white supremacists.

He claims he is an American "patriot" who has "Made America Great Again" — because he is president. He grades his presidency with an A+. Such false stories have a cynical purpose that he effectively used in his real estate career — misdirection and big lies as he carried out his agenda of

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self-promotion and enrichment (which he even boasted about in *The Art of the Deal*).

White nationalism erupted after Barack Obama, the first African-American president, was elected in 2008. The Republican establishment and far right then strengthened their alliance to suppress the votes of Blacks and other minorities.

Trump seeks to re-define patriotism as identical to his "nationalism." Unless you accept his definition, he says, you are not a true patriot. Worse, you are an enemy of the state. Hitler or Mussolini could not have said it better.

Trump also understands the uses of the U.S. electoral system, which is institutionally rigged — just as the Founders intended. They feared how uneducated and property-less people used the vote. The Constitution, at the time, made sure that the slave-owning states got "credit" for owning slaves and established the Electoral College to prevent direct popular vote of the president.

Today it's a system that allows voter suppression and gerrymandering to benefit the rich and white majority. In Republican controlled states, the targets are Blacks and other ethnic minorities. When the Democrats controlled all three branches of government, they refused to change the voting system — such as mandating weekend voting or making election day a national holiday as occurs in most other countries.

White nationalism erupted after Barack Obama, the first African-American president, was elected in 2008. The Republican establishment and far right then strengthened their alliance to suppress the votes of Blacks and other minorities.

The same tactic was applied in the late 1800s to end the promise that former slaves and their descendants would become full citizens. Jim Crow-type segregation became the effective law of the land, and not just in the former Confederacy.

With the Civil Rights revolution, southern states had been restricted in their voter suppression efforts under the 1965

Voting Rights Act. When Chief Justice John Roberts wrote the 2013 narrow majority decision to gut that law, Southern states and Republican-controlled legislatures immediately imposed strict voter ID and other laws to suppress the Black vote.

White Nationalism in Practice

The largest segment of the population to be arrested, convicted and imprisoned are African Americans. The private prison industrial complex now depends on this for its massive profits.

Blacks are disproportionately arrested and criminalized, assaulted and shot by cops for no reason except the color of their skin.

The one group to whom the Second Amendment does not apply is African Americans. If Black men and women walk around with legal guns, as whites do, the assumption is never that they are expressing their Second Amendment rights.

This November a Midlothian, Illinois white cop murdered a Black security guard in the neighboring Chicago suburb of Robbins. Jemel Roberson was using his gun to protect patrons from an active shooter in a bar. The cop only saw a Black man with a gun even though patrons told him the guard was a hero.

On Thanksgiving night, Emantic Fitzgerald Bradford Jr., an army veteran running into a Birmingham, Alabama mall to help people fleeing a shootout, was gunned down by a police officer who just saw a Black man with a (legal) gun.

That's what white nationalism looks like in practice.

A 2017 FBI report on hate crimes shows a rise in right wing extremism and bigoted violence. According to the annual report, there has been a 17% increase since 2016.

Of the more than 7100 hate crimes reported, nearly three out of five were motivated by race and ethnicity. Religion and sexual orientation were the other two primary motivators.

Reporting hate crimes to the FBI is voluntary. The data show that victims often do not trust that reporting will help them.

When a Black female reporter challenged Trump's support for white nationalism, he said the question itself was "racist."

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How the U-M Punished Pro-Palestinian Instructors Disciplined for Acting with Integrity

By Alan Wald

IS THE WOLF of academic repression once more at the door of the University of Michigan (U-M)?

Since the exhilarating radical days of the founding of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in 1962 and the first Vietnam Teach-in in 1965, the 200-year-old educational institution in Ann Arbor is customarily recalled as a site for idealistic social protest and outspoken dissidence.

Yet a half-century after these historic events epitomizing the end of the McCarthy era and advent of “The Sixties,” an alarming political climate change is under way.

At the start of the September 2018 term, two young instructors felt ethically compelled to take action in support of the pro-Palestinian BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) movement. John Cheney-Lippold, an Associate Professor of American Culture, and Lucy Peterson, a Graduate Student Instructor (GSI) in Political Science, declined to write letters of recommendation for two undergraduates who wanted to participate in study abroad programs in Israel.¹

In e-mail communications, Cheney-Lippold and Peterson clearly explained that this determination was not based on any attributes of the students themselves: Non-compliance in letter writing was owing to a human rights embargo against institutions of a state carrying out brutal discrimination.² The instructors were happy to assist the two students in other ways.

Whose Academic Freedom?

One doesn't have to agree with all BDS tactics to recognize that honoring such a boycott is consistent with U-M's own policy of a commitment to policies of non-discrimination; it's not the imposition of some “personal” opinion or bias.³ Facts are facts, and Israel had over sixty individual laws discriminating against Palestinians even *before* the infamous “nation-state” law of 2018 that makes discrimination constitutional.⁴

Moreover, for over a decade anti-racists have been assembling documentation showing that the educational institutions of Israel conduct research for the military occupa-

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Dr. John Cheney-Lippold, the University of Michigan professor against whom punitive action was taken.

tion of the West Bank, build campuses on stolen Palestinian land, and limit academic freedom as well as political freedom for Palestinian students.⁵

In contrast to such abuse, the two U-M students would be slightly inconvenienced in a manner hardly uncommon on a large campus where faculty bow out of recommendations for many reasons. In distinction to the friendly apologies offered by Cheney-Lippold and Peterson, too many faculty never even bother to acknowledge receiving a request for a letter!

Making Up the Rules

Within days, however, sensationalized news reports appeared online and then sparked a global controversy in which Cheney-Lippold and Peterson were charged with anti-Semitism, the mistreatment of their undergraduates by denying them “academic freedom,” and even abetting terrorism. Headlines include “BDS Bully: U-M Professor Discriminates Against Student Wanting to Study in Israel” and “University of Michigan Enabling Terrorist Sympathizers?”⁶

This was followed by an orchestrated campaign of outraged voices, including those of the parents, Zionist organizations, U-M Regents, and Republican Trump supporters,

all demanding punishment, and some of the more unhinged making death threats.⁷

Two points are critical here:

1) U-M has never had a policy mandating the writing of letters: It's a matter of professorial discretion and a student who can't obtain a letter from one instructor simply goes to another.

2) No U-M declaration, official or otherwise, has ever pointed towards punishment for one who honors a human rights conviction, especially through a refusal to facilitate collaboration with an institution associated with abhorrent practices.

On the contrary, recent court decisions hold the support of a boycott against the Israeli state to be protected speech, just as the right to boycott in general has long been maintained.⁸

It was appalling, then, that top administrators at U-M hardly stopped to blink before publicly announcing that U-M *as an institution* (not just its officers) had an official policy *against* the pro-Palestinian movement of BDS.

This matter had never been democratically discussed in the U-M community, and is a big departure from the neutral political stances that the administration had insisted it must maintain in the past — during the student-faculty boycott of South African Apartheid and the mass opposition to the Vietnam War.

Moreover, the administrators made national headlines by quickly broadcasting that serious disciplinary action for declining to write the two letters was on the table.⁹

Echoes of the Past

What's at stake in this controversy goes far deeper than merely BDS on campus. In targeting the two instructors for obvious political reasons, U-M's leaders have taken steps that lead back to the earlier time of U-M's Harlan Hatcher's presidency in the McCarthy era.

In 1953-54, the U-M administration was similarly pressured by outside forces, although the federal government played a greater role. In that instance, it made efforts to intimidate faculty and students on the Left by signaling out certain dissidents to be sanctioned as a warning to others.

The designated scapegoats of the

Hatcher years, taken from an initial list of 15 faculty members, were three scholars who were former members of the Communist Party: biologist Clement Markert, mathematician H. Chandler Davis, and pharmacologist Mark Nickerson.

Known to be hostile to the House Committee on Un-American Activities, they were subpoenaed to testify at the hearings organized in Lansing by Representative Kit Clardy ("Michigan's McCarthy") in November 1953. When they refused to co-operate in "naming names," they were at first suspended by President Hatcher and then variously forced out of their jobs.

These victims were denied academic freedom on the spurious grounds that they themselves posed a threat to the academic freedom of others by refusing to co-operate with forces of state repression.¹⁰ Today, the U-M administration claims that it is defending the "academic freedom" of U-M students who are inconvenienced, even as it denies to Cheney-Lippold and Peterson any semblance of the robust procedural protections that AAUP guidelines mandate.¹¹

Such an unwelcome reversion in U-M norms is occurring because the university is sandwiched between two warring forces. On the Right is a national and international political reaction that includes a deep suspicion of the values of the liberal university for various reasons; on the Left, the growing sway of the pro-Palestinian movement of BDS among socially conscious faculty and students.

Neither side is homogeneous, but defense of Palestinian human rights has become to some degree an acid test for the future of those who want to be active in progressive politics and preserve authentic academic freedom.

The Center Does Not Hold

At the moment, the coalescing ideology on the Right is taking the shape of Cerberus, the snarling three-headed dog of Greek mythology that guards Hades. It amalgamates: 1) high-pitched whistles to a nativist anti-Semitism, the conspiratorial bigotry that sees rich Jews like George Soros behind immigration of the poor and non-white; 2) zealot-like fealty to the present Israeli state as an outpost of imperial power; and 3) rants against something called "cultural Marxism" by which professors are plotting to undermine Western Civilization. (In sum, think Trump/Kushner/Bannon.)¹²

The genealogy of the Left that incorporates BDS is rooted in the tradition of internationalist solidarity with all victims of repression and racism. It's a line that can be traced back to the Spanish Civil War, partisan resistance to the Nazis, and boycotts and divestment aimed at the apartheid regime of South Africa.

To the horror of an aging Jewish estab-



University of Michigan faculty Clement Markert, Mark Nickerson and H. Chandler Davis refused to cooperate with the House Unamerican Activities Committee and were subsequently suspended.

lishment, a steadily growing number of young Jews are taking seriously the traditional belief that Jews should act as ethical models in our behavior, and thus link arms with Arab, Christian, and other sisters and brothers against discriminatory Israeli state policies.

BDS has further come into its own by gaining a small foothold in the Democratic Party due to the recent election of members of the Democratic Socialists of America.

Young people drawn to BDS are also active in decrying racism and repression in many countries throughout the world by various means, but they see boycotting the Israeli state as neither an arbitrary priority nor representative of a double standard. Indeed it is a logical candidate for such a strategy, because the United States pours billions of dollars a year into propping up its atrocious policies and because BDS emerged as a grassroots movement in Palestine in 2005 to put nonviolent pressure on the Israeli ethno-state.

A refreshing change on the ground from the calamitous leaderships of Hamas and Fatah, BDS has won sympathy from human rights activists throughout the world, including from well-known figures such as Bishop Desmond Tutu and Naomi Klein.

Nonetheless, opponents of BDS maintain that the allocation of equal citizenship rights to everyone in Palestine will mean an end to the Jewish privilege required to prevent the destruction of the only kind of ethno-state form that can (in their minds) guarantee Jewish survival.

They redefine and weaponize the term "anti-Semitism" to be used to batter Muslims, Arabs, anti-racist Jews, and others who stand up for Palestinian human rights. They interpret the demand that Israel conform to international law as "demonization."

To be sure, U-M has a conventional liberal leadership that would never sign on to the ideology of the Right, and President Mark Schlissel and other administrators were subject to an unsuccessful lawsuit by

a new organization called "Speech First" for anti-Trump remarks and other policies.¹³ So why has it been so quick in denouncing BDS and allowing its faculty supporters to be mischaracterized as anti-student and anti-Semitic?

Witches Must Be Found

A tragedy of academic life is that hounding from donors, parents, regents and well-funded conservative groups searching for threats about which to hyperventilate, is what usually wins the day.¹⁴ When such powers are in a rage with pitchforks raised, witches must be found to burn, and John Cheney-Lippold has become the new super-villain of the pro-Zionist crowd in particular.

To appease their ill-informed fury, the administration made it open season on Cheney-Lippold in ways that we have not seen since the 1950s.

First, the Interim Dean of the College of Literature, Sciences and the Arts (LSA) addressed a long, censorious letter to Cheney-Lippold, rapidly made public under the Freedom of Information Act.

With much finger-wagging, a narrative is presented in which Cheney-Lippold is accused of publicizing his decision so as to gain a "political platform" for his "own personal views" both "in the media and in the classroom." He is accused of acting "on the basis of your personal beliefs rather than the best interests of the student."

He is said to have "violated privacy" of the student because he "drew an unwanted national spotlight" on her. Also, he spent fifteen minutes of one class session and all of another "discussing...reasons for not writing the recommendation, as well as...opinions on the boycott movement." We are told that this is a violation of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) policy that "it is improper for an instructor persistently to introduce material that has no relation to the subject" of a class.¹⁵

None of this seems to be true. Cheney-Lippold's private e-mail to the student was

first obtained by a Zionist club and placed on Facebook with the student's name. There may be some question here as to how this happened, but it strains credulity to believe that Cheney-Lippold is responsible.

Then, after a flood of attacks and slanders, Cheney-Lippold was forced to respond to newspaper queries and felt obligated to devote a few minutes of one class and the entirety of another to explaining what was and wasn't accurate.¹⁶

The dubious narrative that he aimed from the outset to commandeer a personal platform served the Interim Dean as justification for freezing Cheney-Lippold's salary and cancelling his sabbatical research leave for two years.

Moreover, he was notified that "further conduct of this nature is subject to additional discipline, up to and including initiation of dismissal proceedings under Regents Bylaw 5.09."¹⁷ Insult was then added to injury with further statements from the President and Provost of U-M.

The Decontextualization Game

As with the Interim Dean's letter, there is no mention in these additional statements of the paramount issue that triggered the behavior of the instructors: Their desire to defend academic freedom and oppose discrimination related to *Palestinians*.

There is no crisis in letter writing at the university, but there is certainly one in occupied territory such as Gaza: The present controversy is unimaginable without the Middle East context. Ignoring the nationwide attacks on campus BDS activists and the reframing of the local matter as that of faculty "punishing" students give off the cold chill of political calculation.

A published letter from President Schlissel and Provost Philbert only states that "We want everyone in our Jewish community and beyond to know that we are committed to upholding an equitable and inclusive environment."

Next, in a model of bureaucratic leg-erdemand that gives a cloak of "faculty governance" to decisions *already* made and implemented, they announced a "panel of distinguished faculty members" to "examine the intersection between political thought/ ideology and instructors' responsibilities to students."

What about faculty members' obligation to carry out U-M's anti-discrimination policies even if it means supporting the boycotting of or divestment from other institutions?

When it was observed that a student government proposal for a panel on divestment from certain companies complicit with the Israeli occupation was earlier rejected by the administration, the two made their decontextualization strategy explicit: "The

panel is not addressing the university's opposition to academic boycotts of Israel, nor of any other nation or industry."¹⁸

Jewish Values

Lucy Peterson, the second instructor and a graduate student (GSI), chose to defend herself in two eloquent public statements worth reading in their entirety. The first, dated 16 October 2018 in the *Michigan Daily*, affirms Ms. Peterson's identity as "a Jewish woman," and her belief that "supporting freedom, justice, and equality for all is a Jewish value."¹⁹

The second, dated 23 October 2018 in *Jewish Currents*, expresses her dismay that the U-M President and Provost — neither of whom had any contact with her — made a connection between her criticism of Israel in her action and anti-Semitism: "In this particular instance, I tried to be very explicit about putting the state of Israel on the one hand and the student's identity, religious and otherwise, on the other. From where I stand, these are separable, and, in fact, need to be separated."²⁰

In the end, her department chair and an LSA associate dean condemned GSI Peterson, but the action taken was less severe than for Cheney-Lippold.²¹ Since both Schlissel and Philbert had earlier announced that there would be "serious consequences" for her as well as Cheney-Lippold, there is no doubt that an outpouring of support for her by hundreds of fellow graduate students, alumnae, and many faculty played a role in lessening her punishment.²²

Still, the implanting of fear is on display now, as in 1953-54. Among the confusion and potential arbitrariness that erupt from the Vesuvius of absurdities that can be found in the administrators' various letters, interviews, and memos, something close to a "don't ask don't tell" approach is suggested for anyone who has convictions about honoring boycotts or refusing collaboration with discriminatory institutions.

It is fine for a faculty member to blow off a request for a letter of recommendation by saying one's work load renders one too busy, but an honest disclosure of a political problem with a student's desired place of study or job (yes, think Breitbart), could bring a loss of one's position.²³

White Men Bearing Tiki Torches

Without question, there have been an impressive number of protests of U-M's actions from professional organizations such as the American Political Science Association, the Middle East Studies Association, the American Studies Association, and the AAUP (which feels that its policies were misrepresented in the Interim Dean's letter).

A faculty group has formed on the U-M campus called "The U-M Academic Freedom

Network,"²⁴ and the Arab American Civil Rights League, the Israeli Boycott From Within, and the campus pro-Palestinian organization SAFE (Students Allied for Freedom and Equality) have given support.²⁵ One teach-in on BDS has already occurred, and more events around academic freedom are scheduled.

At the moment, one might say that a fragile calm hangs over the campus. Let us hope that it will soon be followed by a storm of further protest that will result in a rescinding of the punishments against Cheney-Lippold; an apology to both instructors; the kicking of the smear-charge of anti-Semitism against BDS supporters out of the mainstream and back to the gutter; and the re-establishment of the right of faculty to carry out U-M's professed commitment to non-discrimination — even if it means honoring boycotts.

In a certain sense, the attempt to crush BDS is an unwinnable cause, even if the administration succeeds in intimidating faculty to beg off requests for letter writing with bland excuses that mask real discomfort. The future is with the young, who are increasingly repelled by racism and the dehumanization of the "other."

Leftists, of course, have long been alarmed by Israel's history of international alliances with the Right (apartheid South Africa, Somoza's Nicaragua, the U.S. war against Vietnam) and arms deals with genocidal regimes.²⁶ But now many students — including Jewish-Americans — are increasingly distressed by the authoritarian features that the Israeli state reveals in its treatment not only of Palestinians but also African immigrants and anti-racist dissidents.

They also recognize the peril of directing real fear of anti-Semitism onto scapegoats such as Cheney-Lippold and Peterson, who ought to be explicitly defended against that charge. Acceding to the slander of our colleagues through silence and evasion is a dangerous game for U-M to play, leaving the actual Jew-haters — the white men marching with Tiki torches in Charlottesville and the murderous Robert Bowers — freer to do their dirty work.

When liberal administrators bend to pressure from the Right, the rules go topsy-turvy. In the 1950s many universities promptly caved into outside compulsion, devising mind-bending excuses to purge teachers and students in defense of academic freedom.

Next, in the Civil Rights era, universities variously conned themselves into abiding racial discrimination, especially in the U.S. South, expelling students and firing faculty who joined boycotts and protests as disloyal to their schools and unfit for teaching.²⁷

In 2018 the opponents of discrimination in Palestine are being punished for "discrim-

inating” in the United States. May the mind-forged manacles of the Israeli state-delusion soon be sundered. ■

Notes

1. While some organizations and institutions supporting a boycott, such as the American Studies Association, do not advocate non-compliance in writing letters for such programs, the U.S. Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel explicitly calls for this.
2. For the argument that both the Israeli state and study abroad programs discriminate, see Mondoweiss, <https://bit.ly/2AQWjd3>.
3. For the U-M policy see <https://bit.ly/2QzJQQe>. A cogent explanation of this perspective in the Washington Post by Stanford professor and BDS supporter David Palumbo-Liu can be found at <https://wapo.st/2PgR7Q9>.
4. For the 60 laws see <https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/7771>. For the argument that the nation-state law makes discrimination constitutional, see Haaretz, <https://bit.ly/2D2xutM>.
5. Numerous sources are available online such as *Los Angeles Times*, <https://lat.ms/2PhQHJn>. See also my review of books about the academic boycott, “BDS Versus Settler-Colonialism,” <https://solidarity-us.org/atc/195/review-bds>.
6. Two examples: <https://bit.ly/2Phou5u> and <https://bit.ly/2zLkklv>.

ly/2zLkklv.

7. See *Detroit News*, <https://bit.ly/2Gc02Dx>.

8. See ACLU, <https://bit.ly/2DlvQly>.

9. See *Washington Post*, October 11, 2018, “University of Michigan promises to discipline faculty in Israel boycott controversy.”

10. The best-known history of the events is included in Ellen Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities* (1986). Biologist Markert, a veteran of the Spanish Civil War, was ultimately reinstated but departed U-M for Johns Hopkins University due to anger at his mistreatment and mistrust that his future treatment would be fair. Several other faculty were also driven out, including future Nobel Prize-winning economic Lawrence Klein, who had actually been a friendly witness.

11. See the AAUP letter to U-M cited in footnote 22.

12. The original Nazi-era term was “Cultural Bolshevism,” which depicted Jews as clandestinely orchestrating the spread of Communism, and sexual and gender permissiveness.

13. See <https://bit.ly/2BR4Vxq>.

14. A well-publicized example: *Jerusalem Post*, <https://bit.ly/2Svp8OR>.

15. See *Detroit News*, <https://bit.ly/2FWmUX9>.

16. In an “Open Letter to the University of Michigan” reprinted in reprinted History News Network, U-M Professor Juan Cole observes: “Cheney-Lippold went into

his class room after the social media furor broke out and found his undergraduates puzzled and confused, so opened up some time to discuss the issues. He is also being sanctioned for that.” So far as I know, what he did is pretty much standard practice at U-M: following 9/11 and again after the Trump election in 2016, for example, a large number of class sessions went off topic because students and faculty were distressed. See <https://bit.ly/2ASDulj>.

17. See *Detroit News*, *op. cit.* (footnote 15).

18. The full statement can be found at <https://bit.ly/2QeL9Vm>.

19. See *Michigan Daily*, <https://bit.ly/2RukdNY>.

20. See *Jewish Currents*, <https://bit.ly/2zGVQWq>.

21. To my knowledge, Peterson has chosen to keep this communication private.

22. See <https://bit.ly/2rhN50s>.

23. See <https://bit.ly/2PkQF3l>.

24. Copies of the ASA and Boycott From Within letters are in my private possession. For the American Political Science Association letter see <https://bit.ly/2KXFH3y>.

For the Middle East Studies Association see <https://bit.ly/2QwHgdY>. The AAUP one is of special interest: <https://bit.ly/2RyCCt6>.

25. See *Michigan Daily*, <https://bit.ly/2RvgEal>.

26. See *Jacobin*, <https://bit.ly/2PBhe9E>.

27. See *USA Today*, May 28, <https://bit.ly/2QvblKT>.

Nationalism, Patriotism and Hate Crimes — continued from page 2

African-American civil rights leaders and activists see his blatant appeal to white nationalism as a return to the ideology of Jim Crow and a green light for bigots to go after Black people. It happened before, it can occur again.

(For more information of the racist violence against Blacks, follow these sites and groups: theroot.com, colorforchange.com. The NAACP annual reports and the Southern Poverty Law Center provide details on hate groups and their activities.)

Important Debate on Nationalism

A serious debate about nationalism is about peoples, racism and oppression — and the rise of neofascism.

White nationalism is reactionary by its nature as it promotes continued domination by whites. In Europe it has similar features but emphasizes the pureness of “bloodlines and culture.”

Black Nationalism in the United States historically has been in response to slavery, racism and the white backlash against Black progress. Because the U.S. nation-state can’t be based on ethnic “bloodlines,” skin color is the root of racial tensions.

The 2018 elections saw blatant voter suppression and racism (the “public hanging” comment by the Mississippi Republican Senate candidate, and the newly elected Florida Governor referring to his Black opponent in a derogatory “don’t monkey this up” comment).

Neither white nationalism nor Black nationalism are the same as patriotism — identification with a nation state, a country. Patriotism, of course, can be used as a reactionary tool in war as it’s promoted by the rulers of the United States in its wars in the Mideast and Asia. On the other hand, patriotism is used by former colonial countries

to unite their peoples against imperialist powers.

Marxists make a crucial distinction between nationalism of oppressed people and those of the oppressor. The Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky applied that understanding to the United States and the African-American population (See “Leon Trotsky on Black Nationalism & Self Determination,” Pathfinder Press.) Trotsky convinced his American supporters in the 1930s to see African Americans as an oppressed nation who will play a vanguard role in the working class and the struggle for socialism.

Fighting White Nationalism

Trump and white nationalists are confident that they can win by exercising control of government. The powerful executive branch, however, did not start with Trump. He simply has used it to go beyond what others have done before him.

With Trump’s attacks on the courts and other institutions, comparisons to Adolph Hitler after he legally took over Germany’s government are not entirely far-fetched. “Pure blood” Germans went along with Hitler’s “make German great again” and his vicious anti-Semitism.

Trump sees keeping political power by being more aggressive and limiting the rights of the poor and oppressed — and by speaking lies to whites who see themselves as victims of changing demographics. Poor whites especially see Black people and immigrants as a threat.

The midterm elections saw many progressive Democrats get elected to Congress. The hope for a fightback against the far right and white nationalism, however, will not be realized by elections or in Congress.

Many liberal pundits are concerned

about the progressives being “too left wing.” They are urging long-serving Black Congressional Democrats to push the Party back to the center.

But the way to win working class and impoverished white people to the banner of progress and against neofascism is by a far-left agenda that is fought for openly. There is no middle road or center in this fight.

Slavery was not defeated by elections. Women did not win suffrage by waiting for “good elected men” to support their right to vote. They pushed all of society through street actions to change the dynamic of policies.

Ending the Vietnam War likewise took mass street protest. This includes when the Democratic Party ran the government.

Both then and now, defending democracy and the oppressed also requires exposing the government’s lies and protecting the freedom of an independent press. Those on the left who refuse to defend Wikileaks and Julian Assange because of the release of information about Hillary Clinton and the Democratic Party are playing into the far right’s dirty hands.

African Americans, especially mobilized and enlightened Black women, remain a threat to the ruling class. Black people’s unique position in the U.S. capitalist economy is why they have played a vanguard role in resistance to racism and oppression, and built alliances with progressive-minded whites and others.

White nationalism promotes (conscious or implicitly) white supremacy. Black nationalism as expressed today as “Black Lives Matter” demands full equality and full citizenship protections. The former leads to a dictatorship, the latter to a vibrant democratic state. ■



A flooded Gaza neighborhood — the Israeli embargo restricts pumping equipment.

Oxfam

Palestine and Detroit

Water As a Form of Social Control

By Julia Kassem

FROM DETROIT AND Flint, Michigan to Gaza and the West Bank in Palestine, those struggling against institutionalized racism and apartheid are no strangers to water struggles.

In Gaza, water infrastructure is bombed and water supplies are constrained. In Detroit, water is shut off from people who can't pay, and along with Flint, poisoned by lead. In each case, water is sold back at ever increasingly unaffordable rates.

In Palestine, water struggles are the undercurrent of a colonialist and imperialist project. In Michigan cities, water struggles are inseparable from American chronicles of class and race.

But in all cases these tools of oppression

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— whether an exercise of colonization and imperialism, or domestic structures of class and race — ultimately operate in the service of power and control.

Parallels between the weaponization of water in these separate parts of the world are obscured by the relative incomparability of their situations. Nothing in U.S. inner cities can compare to conditions caused by the complete economic blockade against Gaza, massacres on the border during the Great Return Marches, or routine Israeli air strikes that target homes and community facilities in what is described as “the world’s largest open-air prison.”

Yet weaponizing of water is one aspect of political control in which the two communities can draw similarities, amidst a worldwide campaign by companies like Veolia, Nestle, and PepsiCo to privatize water and take advantage of destruction and loss of sovereignty. Utilizing parallel although very different scales of violence, they are tools for political submission and forced eviction.

Palestine, in its 70th year of occupation, continues to actively resist today’s most

brutal examples of modern day colonization. Their efforts have peaked during the Great Return Marches of 2018, where for over 30 weeks Gazans have rushed towards the border wall in attempts to break a blockade that slowly asphyxiates them.

Most, if not all, conflicts in the Middle East come back to water. The intertwining and complexity of its geopolitics and strife — of which the occupation of Palestine is a part — position the issue of control of water and conflicts ranging from the Israeli occupation of Syria’s fertile Golan Heights to the Saudi-led blockade and attacks on water ports and infrastructure in Yemen.

Destroying Democracy

In Detroit, the sprawl of glitzy development, increasing gentrification and corporatization, mainly centered around the 7.2 square mile downtown area, cohabits an urban and social environment where Detroiters have witnessed the closing of their public schools, the blighting of their neighborhoods, and, in recent years, shutoffs of their water. A similar dynamic rules Flint.

Attacking infrastructure and targeting

institutional foundations of civilian life is a common tactic of war, and a routine practice of the Israeli occupation. But in the absence of overt warfare, under supposedly “democratic” institutions, neoliberal policies attempt to curtail the public’s right and access to water. This parallels the gutting of education, housing and sovereignty in governance.

While Palestinians are deprived of self-determination, citizenship and political rights, the civil rights and protections of those in Detroit and Flint have been curtailed by emergency management policies; the *de facto* economic dictatorship where management and mismanagement of water infrastructure took hold.

Within a year after Detroit Emergency Manager Kevyn Orr was appointed by the Michigan governor, the city faced widespread water shutoffs that Orr authorized. Decades of neoliberal policies in Detroit culminated in the 2014 crisis that levied “service interruptions” onto 100,000 homes, receiving condemnation from the United Nations for depriving hundreds of thousands of the right to drink, bathe and cook.

Neoliberal tactics and policies have gutted budgets needed to help maintain infrastructure across the United States, facilitating their takeover by privatizing entities. Enabled in large part by the economic dictatorship imposed by emergency management, privatization included a host of corporate beneficiaries, such as Nestle, paying only \$200 yearly to suck an unlimited amount of water from the Great Lakes, Nestle is also sustaining in partnership with the Israeli firm Osem.

In that same year, summer 2014, Gaza witnessed an unprecedented assault. The Israeli siege killed more Palestinians — 2314 deaths and 17,125 injuries — than any year since 1967, according to an annual UN report. Israel continued its longstanding attack on Palestinian water and water infrastructure, as it did during the 2008 siege. Reconstruction of water infrastructure was further impeded by Israel’s 2007 blockade of materials crucial to reconstruction efforts.

By the end of 2015 the number of Palestinians cut off from public water networks was estimated at around 100,000 across the West Bank and Gaza territories.

Expropriation and Control

While the gravity of violence in Gaza is incomparable to Detroit or Flint, the strategy of neoliberalization in American cities served a similar objective — water expropriation and control — that wartime destruction and forced appropriation have done in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

The groundwork for water control in Detroit was laid in 2011 and 2012 when the largely gutted Detroit Water and Sewerage

Department entered into interest rate swaps with major banks. This miscalculation resulted in massive debts owed to the financial institutions. With the transfer of authority to the Great Lakes Water Authority in late 2014, the scene was set for the eventual facilitation of privatization.

With decades of rightwing state governance transferring power and resources into private hands, water became the next infrastructural target.

The Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci employed the concept of “hegemony” to encompass unspoken discourses of power and dominance wielded by institutions and reflected through social and cultural norms. This is exemplified in the control of water resources and infrastructure by the owners of the means of production, in which powerful actors deprive populations of the right to any personal or social agency.

Israel’s command of Palestinian water resources is the source as well as the manifestation of its stakes in the region. Water is the central node that determines borders, establishes economic and industrial command, and shapes the proliferation of life and activity that, ultimately defines and claims territory.

Professor Mark Zeitoun, a professor of international development at the University of East Anglia and a prominent analytical scholar of today’s water wars, wrote on “Hydro-Hegemony” as it applies to the Nile, Jordan and Tigris and Euphrates river basins.

He identifies Israel as a “hydro-hegemony” that wields its leverage over multinational water corporations, and its territorial expansion, as an example of asymmetrical command of power that consistently and predictably produces inequitable outcomes.

Discriminatory water-sharing “agreements” resulted in a colonial takeover of not only the land but the water of the West Bank territories after Israel’s seizure of the areas and their aquifers of 1967 Six-Day War. As a result, Israel was granted full control of over 71% of the areas aquifers — and Palestinians just 17%.

This inequality has solidified Israel’s hold on Palestinian lack of agency over water supplies and prices in the territories, the latter amounting to four times the amount Israelis pay. Israel has completely withdrawn and seized all the aquifers under the West Bank, and as reported by the BBC, Gaza’s water is heavily polluted and 97% of it virtually undrinkable.

The surrounding sea is polluted with sewage, leaving Gazans forced to buy water from privatized sources, such as desalination plants, at six times the standard rate.

The result is that, across cases, the poorest pay more for worse water quality. In Gaza, 33% of a family’s entire income goes

to paying for water — in contrast with just an average of 0.7% of the average, middle-class family in Europe. Flint residents pay the highest water rates in America for water that is polluted, and in Detroit, incremental yearly water rate hikes have resulted in water bills that are unaffordable for many families.

Control over water supplies, systems and infrastructure, shaping the livelihoods and activity amongst affected populations, works in much the same way. By forcing populations into desperation in severing them from the right to water, aggressors not only establish the framework of political control but also attempt to stifle the will of those subjugated by such brutality to resist.

Using civilian suffering is not only a method of political and social dominance, but a tactic of war. Thirsty children cannot think to their fullest, cannot make optimal decisions, and thus are relegated to prioritizing their time, effort, and energy, in tremendous efforts to obtain a sliver of a resource that many of us take for granted.

The Oppressors’ Narratives

The expropriation of water in Detroit and Palestine is sustained through narratives that consistently justify water expropriation and the eviction of indigenous or marginalized populations. Class-biased narratives constantly blame Detroiters for not paying their water bills, misidentifying the problem as incompetence rather than of decreasing affordability of water caused by privatization.

Palestinians are blamed for “overuse” and mismanagement of water resources, despite consuming only a sliver of what Israelis use and extract as well as having water materials and infrastructure severely limited through the blockade.

According to IHL [international humanitarian law] provisions, objects that are essential for the survival of the population, including the water supply, cannot be targeted and in fact must be protected, even during armed conflict.

A report by 2015 NGO “Gisha” concluded: “The occupying power has a duty to protect water reservoirs in the occupied territory from overuse and compromised quality, and it must regulate water use in a sustainable and environmentally responsible manner.”

And as a Food and Water Watch statement in 2014 warned:

The creation of the regional authority, the Great Lakes Water Authority, corporatizes the system by putting appointed, unelected officials fully in charge of the big decisions that determine the cost and quality of service. The agreement treats water provision as a business instead of a public service. Corporatization itself is the first step to privatization. The new authority can privatize the management and operation of the water

and sewer system without real city input or public approval.

Worsening Crises

Attacks on agriculture and farmlands targeting agrarian lifestyles and self-sustaining resistance economies also work through the control of water. Water and sewage costs place severe consequences on urban farming in Detroit; Palestinian farmers are denied the subsidies enjoyed by Israeli farmers.

When not facing direct attacks on lands and trees from settlers during settlement expansions or direct airstrikes, their irrigation sources are systemically severed; 70% of agricultural wells, dependent on electricity, are unusable, endangering 69% of these lands. When Israel is not directly withholding water, it regularly floods Palestinian farms with sewage in attempts to drive them from their farms.

Detroiters are burdened with excessive drainage fees, another concession of the 2014 Great Lakes Water Authority during the city's bankruptcy proceedings and periodic water rate hikes. City residents had to pay additional fees enabling the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department to collect \$153 million by 2019.

Water continues to be disconnected from Detroit homes in mass numbers. Last

March alone, nearly five years after the shutoffs began, over 17,000 homes were slated for water shutoffs. The shutoffs have accompanied record-breaking cases of Legionnaires, Hepatitis A, and other water-borne illnesses that have plagued Southeast Michigan, and Detroiters specifically in the last few years — a correlation too telling to be coincidental.

Renewed warnings have been issued about the humanitarian situation in Gaza, reaching another level of fatal extremity as electricity and water become severely compromised and lethal conditions have foreshadowed that the situation “could explode at any minute.” More than a quarter of disease outbreaks in Gaza are attributable to poor water quality, and crop and livestock yields, sometimes totaling a family's entire worth, continue to be completely destroyed by bombardments and water deprivation.

The burden is levied most disproportionately onto children, families and the elderly. The Henry Ford report, citing the American Public Health Association, highlighted that shigellosis deaths occur in the greatest frequency among children. Polluted water is a key leading cause of child mortality in Gaza, with as high as 12% contracting intestinal illnesses from drinking contaminated water.

In 2018, after 57 schools in Detroit tested positive for lead and copper, drinking water was cut off from all 103 public schools, forcing fountains to be replaced with emergency bottled water — this after almost a generation of attacks on children's right to education and decades of negligence of proper testing of water facilities.

For Palestinian refugees, massive UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency) cuts — a complete cut of funding from the United States, after already having slashed UNRWA's budget for 2018 by withholding \$65 million — cripples aid that went to vital services such as health care, schools and infrastructure.

The 2014 human rights investigation following the United Nations visit to Detroit found a “violation of the human right to water” among “other international human rights,” demanding that water to all households be reconnected “immediately.”

That same year, the commission of inquiry into atrocities in Gaza found evidence of war crimes. Since then, the crisis has only intensified. Climate change is rendering water a subject of international crisis and power struggles all over the world, with poor and oppressed communities all facing threats to their survival. ■

GM Closures — What Next?

GENERAL MOTORS CAUGHT U.S. and Canadian autoworkers, their communities and their unions by surprise when GM announced five plant closings by the end of 2019 and projected closing two more, but undisclosed, plants internationally. The year 2018 is slated to be one of GM's most profitable, with \$3.2 billion's worth of net profits in the third quarter alone.

In violation of protocol, GM publicly announced that these plants would be idled (meaning no product assigned) even before corporate officials talked to the workforce or union officers.

After workers in the Oshawa, Ontario plant received the news, they walked out, protesting the decision in the city's streets. They, like the workers in U.S. plants, thought the concessions they'd made in their current contract had won them secure employment for its duration.

U.S. autoworkers, whose contract will end September 2019, were in the process of submitting resolutions for their upcoming Bargaining Council. The mood was to end the tiered division of workers imposed with the GM/Chrysler bailout, along with the growth of permanent “temporaries” and outsourcing work areas such as kitting and material handling.

GM's announcement, threatening 14,000 blue-collar and white-collar jobs, can be

seen as the first, intimidating move before the round of contract negotiations.

With auto industry's high multiplier effect, this would mean at least a 50,000 job loss. Given the U.S. and Canadian governments' bailout of GM a decade ago at a \$15 billion loss to taxpayers, that's a devastating and arrogant decision.

Will union officials (UNIFOR in Canada, the UAW in the United States) attempt to keep a plant open if more concessions are offered? Since both local union officials and politicians have already stated that they will do anything to keep their plant open, will workers in one plant be used to out compete workers in another?

Whipsawing the GM plant in Ypsilanti, Michigan against a sister local in Arlington, Texas resulted in shutting down the Michigan assembly plant even though both locals were represented by the UAW.

GM's CEO Mary Barra maintains the plants must be idled to develop the right “skill set” for the future. She speaks of the need to develop an all-electric car and of self-driving vehicles, but conveniently never mentions what ending reliance on fossil fuels requires for transportation — the building of a mass transit system throughout North America.

This corporate decision, just like decisions the auto industry has made over the

years that jeopardize the health and safety of its work force as well as those who buy their product (most recently faulty ignition switches and air bags), is irresponsible and must be stopped.

The particular case of the GM Detroit-Hamtramck plant starkly reveals the destructive path that allows GM to be in the driver's seat. As GM decided to close down their west side Cadillac plant, the corporation demanded a huge expanse of land or it would exit Detroit.

In what was the first time a city condemned an area under the “eminent domain” provision to turn it over to a corporation, GM agreed to stay. A working-class neighborhood, known as Poletown, was destroyed. It echoed the earlier destruction of Paradise Valley and Black Bottom — Black working-class neighborhoods — cleared for highways.

The skill set does exist in these plants to create what needs to be built for the 21st century. Can workers organize to make this demand? Can Detroit use eminent domain to take over and retool the plant to manufacture electric buses? Can the unions who currently represent them, and the communities that share their fate, demand the retooling that can sweep aside the fossil fuel industry and open the way to the future? —Dianne Feeley

Europe's Political Turmoil, Part II The Spectre of Fascism? By Peter Drucker

The first part of this article appeared in our previous issue, ATC 197. Peter Drucker is an advisory editor of *Against the Current* and an editor of its Dutch sister website *Grenzeloos*. Thanks to Alex de Jong for his help.

WE HAVE ALREADY seen examples of the havoc that the far right in power could wreak — against immigrants and refugees, against civil liberties, against vulnerable populations even within the limits of constitutional rule. But given Europe's history, the question inevitably arises: would the far right in power stay within constitutional limits? Could further advances for the far right ultimately lead once more to the establishment of fascist regimes in Europe?

Answering this question requires clarity about the nature of fascism, and an ability to distinguish between different European political contexts.

Popular accounts of fascism on the left tend to focus on repression of labor and of popular movements. But Marxist theories of exceptional regimes in general, going back to Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire*, stress that they are also responses to the bourgeoisie's inability to sustain its direct class rule. In Marx's words, "The bourgeoisie apotheosized the sword; the sword rules it."¹

In particular, Bonapartism and fascism can be means of resolving tensions among different fractions of capital that the "executive of the modern state[, as] a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie,"² has proved unable to resolve through the mechanisms of bourgeois democracy.

Nicos Poulantzas' account of the rise of German and Italian fascism, which concluded that the major defeats for the working class had preceded the fascist seizure of power, emphasized such intra-capitalist tensions as crucial explanatory factors.³

Events in Europe since the Brexit referendum suggest that capital in many countries is now wrestling with bigger internal contradictions than at any time since the Second World War. The big multinational companies and banks, whose supremacy was virtually uncontested on the right and center left for 70 years, can no longer count on having things their own way: clearly they lost the Brexit referendum.

More nationalistically inclined sections of capital can count on mass support from broad middle-class layers, and from sections of the working class for which nationalism and/or racism trump class interest — as German and Italian fascism could in their time. Theresa May's travails as Britain's prime minister show the increasing difficulty of resolving these contradictions by normal constitutional means.

Shutting Down Democracy

Already in some parts of Europe, the far right in power has gone far beyond true bourgeois democracy toward what Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán proudly calls "illiberal democracy."



Orbán: Hungary's strongman.

Over the last several years, Turkey and Poland as well as Hungary have all (in different ways) combined superficial adherence to constitutional rule and multi-party elections with increasing subordination of the state and society to the ruling far right party. In all three countries, judges have been purged and replaced with others subservient to the country's rulers.

In Turkey and Hungary, one opposition media outlet after another has been closed down or bought out and university administrations (and in Turkey, massively, faculty) have also been purged. There is no reason to assume that the far right in government in a Western European country would be immune from the temptation of resorting to similar tactics. There is already a scandal in Austria involving political intervention in the security services by far right ministers.

On the other hand, bourgeois ideologists have a point when they argue that constitutional government and the rule of law have advantages from a capitalist point of view.

German and Italian fascism preserved capital's economic power, but at the cost of capitalists' political disenfranchisement. As

Putin's rule today in Russia shows, the result can be considerable economic insecurity for those units of capital without solid ties to the regime.

The loss of the ability to make course corrections through periodic elections can also increase the risk of disasters, as German and Italian capital experienced in 1945. The stronger the social roots and the greater the fund of political experience of a particular capitalist class, therefore, the more likely it is to preserve some elements of a constitutional state — particularly if it has not been shaken to its foundations by a major military defeat or economic crisis.

So circumstances can determine how far and fast a country goes towards establishing an exceptional regime. Even among fascist regimes, Nazi Germany was unusual in the speed with which it moved toward full-fledged totalitarianism in 1933-4. Fascist Italy moved somewhat more slowly and a bit less far in the 1920s.

In Western Europe today, following over 70 years of relative stability and without any huge military or economic crisis at the moment, the danger of moves away from bourgeois democracy, even if and where the far right wins a share of power, is less in some countries than in others.

In countries like France or the Netherlands, if far right parties should enter government in coalition with the traditional right — although sudden, drastic changes in the relationship of forces can never be ruled out — the traditional right today seems unlikely to give up its own interests and positions as quickly and thoroughly as Mussolini's and Hitler's coalition partners did in the 1920s and 1930s.

Although it may strike *Against the Current* readers as odd, the experience so far of Trump's U.S. presidency suggests likely limits to the imposition of authoritarian rule by the far right in Western Europe. Trump has unfortunately achieved a solid right-wing majority on the U.S. Supreme Court, but that does not necessarily mean that the right-wing justices will be as supine to him as Turkish judges are to Erdogan.

And if there seems to be no short-term prospect of Trump's closing down or buying out the *New York Times*, the publishers of *Le*

Monde could presumably take comfort from the fact even if Le Pen were to become president.

In short, full-fledged fascism seems relatively unlikely in Western Europe in the near future. Focusing right now on that danger could risk diverting attention from the many, extremely serious dangers that the far right's arrival in power definitely would entail, especially for racialized and sexualized minorities and for labor. The challenges the left faces in its fight against reaction are daunting enough as it is.

Strategic Debates

Given the steady retreat of the traditional right and center left and their capitulations to anti-immigrant demands, the radical left has to play a major role in resistance to the far right, but the radical left is divided. Faced with the rise of racism, the first impulse of many radical left parties is to change the subject to something else.

The leadership of the Dutch Socialist Party, the country's one reasonably consistent anti-neoliberal parliamentary force, exemplifies this attitude. When the far right does something particularly outrageous, the Socialists will issue a dignified, measured condemnation. But its leaders argue openly that it can only lose on both sides by focusing on issues of racism: among voters of immigrant origin, whom they see as increasingly succumbing to religious and ethnic agendas that the SP cannot accept, and among white voters, who may vote far right if their prejudices are openly criticized.

This is a self-fulfilling prophecy. While the Dutch Labor Party was decimated in the 2017 parliamentary elections, the SP, its traditional rival on the left, lost slightly too, while Greens and liberals with progressive social rhetoric but right-wing economics gained — as did the far right. In Germany, too, the Greens' gains have recently kept pace with those of Alternative for Germany, despite the Greens' neoliberal economic stances and growing willingness to join center right coalition governments, largely because of their liberal image on immigration. By contrast, the German Social Democrats' continual concessions to right-wing xenophobia have done nothing to shore up their old working class base.

When an election clearly hinges on issues around immigrants, evasions and shilly-shallying on those key issues, even when combined with decent positions on healthcare and housing, only convinces many voters of a party's irrelevance.

Moreover, by ignoring the concerns of racialized voters, the reformist left is dooming itself to slow-motion decline. Especially in the big cities and among young people, immigrant communities are not only a key force to mobilize in order to defeat the far right, but also the future of the working

class. Appealing to a shrinking pool of older white voters is a recipe for failure.

Even worse than dodging issues of racism is accommodating to racism. The Dutch SP has done this lately too, notably by going along with the idea that asylum seekers should be processed in centers somewhere in Africa instead of on European soil.

Anyone who has seen the images of slave auctions and atrocities against immigrants in Libya should reject such proposals out of hand. Yet in Germany, Die Linke leader Sahra Wagenknecht has made similar proposals for immigration restrictions in the program of a parallel movement she has just founded, Aufstehen.

In France Jean-Luc Mélenchon, leader of the biggest radical left force Unsubjugated France, continues to flirt with occasional support for French imperial interventions and for measures against public manifestations of Islam, in the name of France's secular, republican tradition. With positions like these, radical left parties risk abdicating any significant role in the fight against the far right.

Another issue that divides the radical left is the question of alliances with other parties against the far right. In many countries, big demonstrations against the far right used to feature speakers from across the political spectrum, including the non-fascist right. Back then, though, in the 1980s and early 1990s, the traditional right liked having an anti-fascist profile. This is much less the case today, when these parties see themselves as the far right's electoral rivals if not its potential partners in government.

In fact social democratic parties too are increasingly competing with the far right for votes, by championing restrictions on immigration and making calls to get tough on crime that target racialized young people. Worse, heading toward the next elections the Danish Social Democrats are hinting that they might prefer to form a government with backing from the far right Danish People's Party rather than allying with other left parties.

In these circumstances, it makes no sense for the radical left to try to work in top-down coalitions against the far right with leaders of right-wing and center-left parties. What makes sense is the century-old Marxist united front tactic: appealing primarily to grassroots supporters of the reformist left who have decent anti-racist reflexes, and working with top reformist leaders only when they can be pressured into joining practical, activist initiatives.

In practice, admittedly, life is complicated. Activists on the British Labour Party left, for example, have to contend with the reality that their only short-term hope of blocking a reactionary Tory Brexit is to secure the election of a Labour government, which

would inevitably be stacked with stalwarts of the pro-neoliberal, pro-EU Labour right.

Some compromises, however, are inadmissible. The Labour Party leadership's recent decision to accept the idea that fundamental criticism of the state of Israel is anti-Semitic is a classic case of a tactic that weakens the radical left, demoralizes solidarity activists, alienates many supporters in immigrant communities, and ultimately plays into the hands of the far right.

The key to defeating the far right is not too-clever institutional maneuvers, but extra-parliamentary mobilization. Only action in the workplaces and on the streets can ensure that, if Europe's center truly cannot hold, it is not the reactionary right but the radical left that emerges triumphant. ■

Notes

1. Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/ch07.htm>.
2. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of The Communist Party* (1848), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm#007>.
3. Nicos Poulantzas, *Fascism and Dictatorship: The Third International and the Problem of Fascism*, translated by Judith White, London: Verso, 1979, 139, 172-3, 199, 71-2.

Chemnitz: Europe's Charlottesville

THE FAR RIGHT mobilization this past August 27 in the eastern German city of Chemnitz drove home for Europe the lesson that Charlottesville taught the U.S.: the deadly synergy between the far right in the streets and the far right in government institutions. German interior minister Horst Seehofer, a leader of the Bavarian Christian Social Union that increasingly acts as the far right's relay in government, said he would have joined the mobilization himself.

When video footage showed far right thugs chasing and beating up racialized bystanders, Hans-Georg Maassen, the head of the country's internal security agency, suggested with zero evidence that the footage had somehow been faked.

Christian Democratic Chancellor Merkel, embarrassed, initially responded by trying to have Maassen fired; she then first accepted the "compromise" of having him promoted, and after an outcry the "compromise compromise" of having him shunted aside to a different job.

The whole affair underlined the far right connections and sympathies of many officials in the Federal Republic's state apparatus. By one count, the parliamentary caucus of the far right Alternative for Germany includes among its 94 members 30 with links to Germany's judicial system, security agencies or military.*

*Marcel Tschekow, "The Far-Right Uprising," *Jacobin*, <https://jacobinmag.com/2018/09/chemnitz-germany-far-right-afd-immigration>.

Edward Sard's Permanent War Economy By Marcel van der Linden

*“OUR MILITARY ORGANIZATION today bears little relation to that known by any of my predecessors in peacetime,” wrote President Dwight D. Eisenhower in his 1956 farewell message,” or indeed by the fighting men of World War II or Korea. Until the latest of our world conflicts, the United States had no armaments industry.” (Quoted on the cover of *The Permanent War Economy* by Walter Oakes and T.N. Vance, ed. E. Haberkern, Center for Socialist History, 2008)*

From differing vantage points, an American general turned politician and a perceptive Marxist economist noted that the emergence of a “permanent war economy” marked a new and ominous stage in society. Marcel van der Linden’s essay uncovers the development of this theoretical understanding — and who Vance and Oakes actually were.

The relevance of this discussion is only heightened by a glance at the situation today. For one thing, the post-World War II period is regarded by analysts of the “Anthropocene” as the time when human activity has become the dominant factor in environmental destruction and climate change, and war and weapons technology play no small part in this road to ruin.

For another, recall that in the 1950s the U.S. arms budget amounted to some tens of billions of dollars when Eisenhower warned: “In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex.”

Today’s military budget consumes in excess of \$700 billion, and the big twit presently occupying the White House proclaims the advent of a whole new “Space Force.” Vance, the Marxist economist, presumed that such expenditures would already have led to World War III. And for his part, Ike would have had a cow.

—David Finkel, for the ATC editors

THE THEORY OF the “Permanent War Economy” has played a rather important role in the debates of the radical left from the late 1940s to the 1980s. C. Wright Mills applied it in his *The New Men of Power: America’s Labor Leaders* (1948) and in *The Causes of World War Three* (1958).

The founder of this theory was Edward L. Sard (1913-1999), born Edward Solomon, a brilliant Marxist economist who wanted to remain invisible to a wider public and operated under five different names. Until now his life and work have been shrouded in mystery. The present essay is intended to give some information on Sard’s political biography and the origins of the theory of the Permanent War Economy. His successive pseudonyms will serve as a means of mapping his development.¹

From 1957, the “permanent arms economy” became a the-

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oretical pillar of the British Socialist Review Group (Duncan Hallas, Seymour Papert, Tony Cliff, and others) and from there it spread to several other parts of the world. It also inspired anti-militarist economists such as Seymour Melman in the 1970s and ’80s.

Frank L. Demby

Edward Sard was born in 1913 in Brooklyn as Edward Solomon, the son of Charles Solomon and Augustina Hess Solomon, two college graduates who worked in education at high schools in New York City. Tina Solomon was a suffragette who in 1909, during her student years at Barnard College, co-founded a sorority. It was chiefly through her influence that Edward and his younger brother Eugene V. (born in 1923 and named after the prominent socialist Eugene V. Debs) received a leftwing education.

Edward was an excellent pupil and also played chess at the highest level. In 1929 he won a scholarship and became a student of economics — at first at Cornell University (1929-33) and then at Columbia University (1934-36).

After the onset of the Great Depression, Solomon became attracted to revolutionary socialism. In 1934 he joined, together with a few fellow students from Columbia, a tiny Trotskyist group, the Organization Committee for a Revolutionary Workers Party of the former Wall Street analyst Max Gould (alias B.J. Field), whom Trotsky characterized as “a bourgeois radical who has acquired the economic views of Marxism.”

Solomon became very active. In January 1935 he began to publish substantial articles in the group’s magazine *Labor Front*. He also gave talks on “The Paris Commune,” “How Far to Fascism?” and other topics. In the OCRWP he for the first time used his pseudonym Frank L. Demby (sometimes misspelled as Denby).

In 1936, following Trotsky’s advice, the American Workers Party, the largest Trotskyist organization in the United States, decided to enter the Socialist Party of America. They formed a faction around the newspaper *Socialist Appeal*, strongly supported by many members of the Young People’s Socialist League (YPSL), the SP’s youth affiliate.

B.J. Field refused to make the same so-called French Turn. Solomon and Stanley Plastrick led the opposition inside Field’s group, and amidst growing tensions were “knocked to the floor and beaten about the head” by Field and his associates. After their expulsion they immediately joined the *Socialist Appeal* group of James P. Cannon and Max Shachtman. Here they were welcomed with open arms.

The “entrism” in the Socialist Party did not last long. Already in 1937 the Trotskyists and their supporters were expelled and at the turn of the year they formed a new

organization, the Socialist Workers Party. During these vicissitudes Solomon's star rose. The Philadelphia YPSL convention in September 1937 had elected him as the national officer responsible for education.

Earlier, in 1936, Solomon graduated at Columbia University with an erudite master's thesis on "A History of the Labor Theory of Value." In this work he called the Soviet Union "still a workers' state" and highlighted the danger of fascism:

It is commonly thought that fascism is resorted to by the capitalist class solely because there is a threat of a proletarian revolution. The experience in Austria proves conclusively the contrary. The economic necessity for fascism is based on the falling average rate of profits to such a low point that it is necessary to drive the price of labor-power (wages) down below its value. In order to do this, all those organizations which help to sustain wage levels (trade unions, cooperatives, political parties) must be crushed. This is the first act of every fascist government and shows that, while the threat of proletarian revolution may be a secondary factor, capitalism will not resort to fascism unless economically it has to in order to preserve profits, without which capitalism ceases to exist.

From 1937 Solomon supported himself as a teacher of economics and economic geography at the Abraham Lincoln High School in Brooklyn. Simultaneously he tried to work on a doctoral thesis on an unknown subject, but his many political activities made it impossible to realize this plan.

During the summer months Solomon regularly travelled to Europe. In 1936 he met Trotsky in Norway, and kept corresponding with "the Old Man" thereafter. On his trips he visited Trotskyist sister organizations. In 1937 he went to Switzerland and, with the help of German comrades in exile, also coordinated the production of the English edition of the *International Bulletin* of the revolutionary youth in Paris.

In that same year he already claimed to have "observed myself most of the sections of the Fourth International movement." He was also involved in the preparation and aftercare of Trotsky's tribunal in Coyoacán, April 1937.

In 1938 Solomon went to Europe again. Together with his contemporary Nathan Gould he assisted SWP leader James P. Cannon, who at Trotsky's urging attempted the unification of several British Trotskyist groups [the Militant Group, the Revolutionary Socialist League (C.L.R. James, Harry Wicks), and the Revolutionary Socialist Party (Édinburgh)]. In August '38 the three men stayed for two weeks in London and succeeded in bringing about a merger that, however, soon proved to have been cosmetic and shortlived.

After that, Cannon and Gould travelled to Paris for the founding of the Fourth International on September 3, 1938. Solomon stayed in Europe as well, but apparently did not participate in the Parisian event. He visited Trotskyist comrades in France, Czechoslovakia, Belgium and the Netherlands and drew up a report.

In the Socialist Workers Party he held several important positions. But already in 1940 Shachtman's supporters left the SWP and founded a new Workers Party. By the early '40s they no longer considered the USSR as a (degenerated) workers'

state, but as a form of Bureaucratic Collectivism. Solomon followed Shachtman and became head of the new Finance Department.

In 1940 or 1941 Edward and Eugene Solomon changed their last name to Sard. Eugene wanted to study at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, but its anti-semitic administration had introduced a *Numerus Clausus* for Jews. In order to pass the selection procedure he had to adopt a non-Jewish family name. His brother stood by him. They decided to call themselves Sard, following other family members who — in a sardonic mood — had already made this change.

Edward became Edward L. Sard — the initial referred to his wife Doris ("Bobby") Landau (1920-2007), whom he had met at the YPSL convention of 1938 and married later that year. In 1941 a son (Richard) was born. After the United States had joined the war against Japan and Germany in December of the same year, Sard took up office in the federal administration and moved with his wife and child to Washington.

From December 1942 to August 1943 he belonged to the Office of Price Administration. Next he worked for the War Production Board, first (from August 1943 until October 1944) as editor of the *Statistics of War Production* — a position that gave him access to "confidential data relating to all phases of the war production program for use by 300 top governmental policy makers."

Thereafter he was promoted to Chief of the Office of Component Reports, which made him responsible for the "development of supply requirements estimates for critical components for use by [the] Requirements Committee and policy making levels of WPB [War Production Board] and OWMR [Other War Material Requirements]" (from November 1944 until September 1945). Through these activities Sard gained a thorough understanding of the U.S. war economy.

During his "Demby period" Solomon/Sard frequently wrote for Shachtman's Workers Party weekly *Labor Action*. His short articles were based on a solid knowledge of the facts and did not shrink from statistical analyses. In 1940 he argued that "The U.S., following the example of Europe, has entered upon an armaments economy," and that "Wall Street is well aware of the fact that the 'prosperity' in this country is based on the war and the continuation of the war."

Aircraft was fast becoming the "key industry of the war;" its expansion was "absolutely phenomenal, more so than any other industry in the history of American capitalism." Solomon/Sard pointed out that though corporate profits went up, the purchasing power of the population decreased. Wages were cut through growing inflation. The war economy went together with a rising profit rate and rate of surplus value.

All of this changed the appearance of U.S. capitalism:

Almost 70 per cent of the 1942 fiscal budget will go for war preparations. [...] the United States has truly entered upon a long period of war economy. Representatives of the government and



The young Edward Solomon (1938)

the boss press have been thundering at us for the past several months what this will mean to the working population of the country — gasless Sundays, reduction in the use of electricity for the home, no more aluminum pots and pans, etc. But it will mean much more than a few inconveniences in our normal habits of consumption. The burden of the war economy will be thrown onto the backs of those who toil and sweat for a living — that is the real meaning of this war budget.

Increasingly, the large corporations raised additional capital through their own accumulated reserves of surplus capital and undivided profits. Frequently, a large share of profits were not paid to the stockholders, but put aside so the management and the board of directors could do with it what they wanted.

This altered the structure of the capitalist class. Self-financing meant “the further concentration of control of huge enterprises in fewer and fewer hands” and a growing economic conservatism of the management. “The era of free, competitive capitalism is over. It is not merely dying. It is dead. It cannot be resurrected, no matter how many pious declarations Messrs. Roosevelt and Churchill issue.”

The war economy’s profitability made it clear to Sard that the preservation of profits does not necessarily have to result in Fascism, as he had once held in his master’s thesis.

Walter J. Oakes

To my knowledge, the concept of the “permanent war economy” appeared for the first time in a resolution, adopted by the Political Committee of the Workers Party on September 5, 1941, about three months before the United States officially joined World War II. The resolution paid a lot of attention to economic aspects, and partly seems to bear Edward Sard’s stamp.

The text pointed out that the USA — without a declaration of war on Germany — had already become the “arsenal and larder” of England and the other Western allies. Following Nazi-Germany’s example American capitalism was compelling people to substitute guns for butter.

*The production of consumers’ goods is systematically reduced for the benefit of the production of means of destruction. Even where the war boom has increased the nominal purchasing power of the masses, or sections of them, the government intervenes, as in Germany, to cut down or prohibit the purchase of consumers’ goods (restrictions on installment buying, etc.) and to enforce compulsory “savings,” that is, to reduce effectively the standard of living of the masses by turning over part of their earnings to meet the astronomical war budgets of the government. The frantic attempts by this and other means to prevent inflation may, at most, postpone inflation, but in the end will lead to an inflation of monstrously onerous proportions. If such an inflation is to be prevented at all by the bourgeoisie, it can be done only if a **permanent war economy** is established or if a Fascist regime in this country imposes its “regulated economy.”*

For capitalism the Permanent War Economy had become an alternative to Fascism. In both cases the masses would suffer from a violent reduction of living standards.

During the war years Sard elaborated this analysis. He did this in relative isolation, as he became somewhat estranged from the Workers Party. Three elements probably played a role. The Workers Party was nonexistent in Washington. The large majority of its members lived in the New York area, and Sard and his wife were politically almost on their own. Moreover, as a civil servant, Sard had to abstain from politics.

Finally, Sard’s analysis of capitalist development did not

accord with the Workers Party’s view; his hypothesis, that capitalism could temporarily revive through a war economy seemed to contradict the proposition of Lenin, Trotsky and others that capitalism was in its death throes since World War I.

The minutes of a Political Committee meeting of April 1946 make Sard’s estrangement from the party clear:

Frank Demby and party. Secretariat recommends that Comrade Demby be invited to contribute articles to the NI [New International] and LA [Labor Action], that we maintain a literary collaboration in a more or less formal way, viewing him on the basis of his representations as a party sympathizer; that the question does not now arise and that we do not consider in this connection a bid for his becoming a member of the party again. [...] Motion: Letter be written to membership on decision on Demby. Carried.

In this context Sard’s famous article “Toward a Permanent War Economy?” appeared in the first issue of *Politics* (February 1944), published by Dwight and Nancy Macdonald. Dwight Macdonald had in 1941, after a blinding row, left the Workers Party. Sard’s choice of an ex-Trotskyist’s journal seems to underline his political distance from the Workers Party at the time. The fact that he used a new pen name in *Politics* (Walter J. Oakes) could perhaps support this claim.

In his article Sard assumed that immediately after the end of World War II the preparations would begin for World War III. “World War III is not only a distinct possibility, it is inevitable as long as the world’s social structure remains one of capitalist imperialism.” Senate Bill 1582 (December 1943) showed that the ruling circles of the United States were anticipating a new “total war of three years’ duration, or of any equivalent emergency.”

The outcome would be a Permanent War Economy. Sard defined: “a war economy exists whenever the government’s expenditures for war (or ‘national defense’) become a legitimate and significant end-purpose of economic activity. The degree of war expenditures required before such activities become *significant* obviously varies with the size and composition of the national income and the stock of accumulated capital. Nevertheless, the problem is capable of theoretical analysis and statistical measurement.”

According to Sard, the Permanent War Economy represented a new stage of capitalist development. Previously, economic peacetime activities had focused primarily on the production of consumer goods and of capital goods that could be used to produce consumer goods. Henceforth extensive peacetime expenditures for war would be normal.

Sard estimated that the United States would achieve a Permanent War Economy through annual war expenditures between \$10 and \$20 billion, and that this would profoundly change the inner functioning of U.S. capitalism:

*[War] expenditures accomplish the same purpose as public works, but in a manner that is decidedly more effective and more acceptable (from the capitalist point of view). [...] War outlays, in fact, have become the modern substitute for pyramids. They do not compete with private industry and they easily permit the employment of all those whom it is considered necessary to employ. True, this type of consumption (waste) of surplus labor brings with it a series of difficult political and economic problems. These, however, appear to be solvable; in any case, they can be postponed. **The deluge may come but the next generation, not the present one, will have to face it.***

The up and down of business cycles would be eliminated.

Due to growing state intervention capital accumulation would no longer be accompanied by an increasing industrial reserve army, as Marx had thought: "If the Permanent War Economy succeeds in stabilizing the economy at a high level, unemployment will be eliminated, but only through employment in lines that are economically unproductive. *Thus capitalist accumulation, instead of bringing about an increase in unemployment, will have as its major consequence a decline in the standard of living.*"

The decline in the average standard of living of the workers would in the first instance be relative, but it would soon become absolute, "particularly on a world scale as all nations adapt their internal economies to conform with the requirements of the new order based on an international Permanent War Economy."

Just as with the resolution of 1941, Sard saw the Permanent War Economy as a capitalist alternative for Fascism; the ruling class would rather "stave off the advent of fascism as long as possible." But the Permanent War Economy could only be a *temporary* way out for the bourgeoisie: "It is not my belief that the Permanent War Economy will provide an enduring solution for capitalism. But it can work for the period under consideration."

Substantial tax increases would become unavoidable, and this would lead to an intensification of "political and class conflict." In case this would result in explosive situations, the burden of armament could also be shifted on to the working class through deliberate and uncontrolled inflation. That, however, would imply "that the decisive section of the ruling class is determined to establish fascism as soon as possible. I see no evidence, however, to warrant this belief although, of course, there are many similarities between fascism and the Permanent War Economy."

Sard considered it "more probable that the inflationary sequence is a contender for a prime place on the agenda after World War III than in the Post-World War II period." Only the labor movement was capable of preventing such a catastrophic outcome, and for that the United States would absolutely need a "labor party, independent of capitalist political machines, and based upon trade unionists."

With this analysis Sard not only opposed the Keynesians, but also the "Orthodox Marxists (Trotskyists)" who still assumed that the historical alternative was: proletarian revolution or Fascism. Sard's argument fell indeed on deaf ears with his comrades of the Workers Party.

The Shachtmanites kept believing in the ongoing decline of U.S. capitalism. At their Fourth National Convention (27-31 May 1946) they carried a declaration saying: "All the indications are that for the next period, [...] American capitalism will experience an economic boom." This would be a "temporary prosperity," and "it is the forerunner of another and inevitable, economic crisis."

"There is no reason at all for believing that the coming boom is in any sense in the same class as the economic expansion which accompanied the organic ascension of capitalism. It takes place in the framework of the organic decline of capitalist society, in the epoch of proletarian revolution."

T.N. Vance

The first five postwar years were a period of insecurity for Sard and his wife Dorothy. The pressures of a new family contributed to this. A second child (Barbara) was born in

1947. Sard's employment history was one of ongoing change, with a series of posts following each other in quick succession.

Between 1945 and '50 he worked as a consultant for Fuller Houses, Inc. (Washington), producing airframe dwellings; as a Italy Country Representative of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency (Washington); as director of a division of the National Housing Agency (Washington); as director of the World ORT Union in New York; and as Executive Director of the American ORT Federation, likewise in New York.

For a short period he was also unemployed. In 1951 he finally became director of the National Association of House-to-House Installment Companies, Inc., later renamed National Association of Installment Companies. He held this position until his retirement in 1984.

After an interruption of five years Sard began to publish again. As of then he used a third pen name: T.N. Vance. His outlet was again the *New International*, the journal of the International Socialist League (ISL), since 1949 the successor of the Workers Party. Sard was still a sympathizer, not a member, of this current.

By now the ISL had come to appreciate the idea of a Permanent War Economy; in the 1950s the theory became an essential part of its program. The ISL "Resolution on Situation in the United States" of 1951 declared that the United States had changed into a Permanent War Economy, and that this meant "automatically" also "the development of state power over the economy."

Three years later a similar resolution said: "The Permanent War Economy continues; all the key social and economic questions are decisively determined by [the] course of the imperialist antagonisms and the preparations for war."

In a long series of articles Sard elaborated his theory. In a first contribution "After Korea — What?" he described the arms race after World War II. Since 1945 two different kinds of imperialism were facing each other.

On the Russian side was Bureaucratic Collectivism, with nationalized property, slavery and peonage — essentially an "import" imperialism, "based on the economic necessity of acquiring constantly new sources of labor power; both skilled and slave, and of adding to its stock of producer and consumers goods." On the American side stood an aggressive capitalism, "an 'export' imperialism, inexorably driven by the most rapid accumulation of capital in the history of capitalism to export capital in all its forms in ever-increasing quantities."

This antagonism would not *immediately* lead to World War III, but it was the cause of a world situation that could be characterized as "neither peace nor war." In the United States "the phenomenal expansion of the productive forces during World War II" had virtually continued after 1945 — a development that "has not only been contrary to the expectations of the bourgeoisie but also, let us admit, unexpected by most Marxists."

In a series of six essays in 1951, "The Permanent War Economy," published in *The New International*, Sard further explored the nature and impact of the Permanent War Economy. (These have been republished in the collection *The Permanent War Economy, Center for Socialist History*, 2008: 1-204 — ed.) He praised and criticized the "contributions" and "mistakes" of his precursor Walter J. Oakes, using phrases such as "We do not entirely share Oakes' conclusion concerning ..."

— thus further concealing his identity.

Sard's central thesis remained that the capitalist mode of production, "a system that has long outlived its historical usefulness," could only survive through ever-increasing state intervention. Basing himself on extensive statistical material he revealed that not only the *direct* war outlays had become permanently sizeable, but that the *indirect* war outlays (military aid to other countries, etc.) had grown faster than total output as well.

In addition, the influence of the state grew in other domains as well, such as the control of prices, and it produced "the desired balance between the war and civilian sectors of the economy." At the same time, the ongoing armament made it possible to reduce unemployment to insignificant levels.

However, the Permanent War Economy as a combination of prosperous capital accumulation and (almost) full employment was not without contradictions. First, during this high stage of capitalism a "new and fundamental law of motion" becomes visible, i.e. *a decline of the standards of living*.

This was not an *absolute* decline of living standards, since there was an "indisputable and very sizable increase in personal consumption expenditures." Sard had in mind a *relative* decline of the standard of living compared with the increase in total production. Only for the lowest strata of the working class living standards declined absolutely: "They still remained worse off than in 1939."

Second, increasing state intervention caused a significant *growth of the state bureaucracy*. The size of the Federal civilian bureaucracy had tripled from 571,000 in 1939 to an estimated 1,568,000 in 1950, while the military bureaucracy had increased in the same period from 342,000 to an estimated 1,500,000.

Armament and bureaucratization implied an increasing consumption of surplus value by the state in the form of increasing taxes. Not only the working classes were burdened, but also the bourgeoisie. Public funding was therefore becoming "a major arena of the class struggle."

Third, the Permanent War Economy yielded a *profit bonanza* of fantastic proportions. Sard estimated that the rate of surplus value grew from 92% in 1939 to 123% in 1950, while the average rate of profit for all industry had gone from 25.6% in 1939, via 33.4% in 1944, to 27.7% in 1950.

Fourth, *Bonapartist tendencies* were developing: the intermarriage between the big bourgeoisie and the upper echelons of the military bureaucracy was a basic characteristic of the Permanent War Economy. In its wake the power of the police (the FBI) grew, and the state intervened more frequently in strikes and labor disputes.

"There is, of course, as yet no bureaucratic-military dictatorship in Washington, although there are possible tendencies in that direction. Nor can the present regime, given the tempo at which world history moves, be classified as temporary."

Fifth, there was a tendency towards *military-economic imperialism*. The "almost insatiable appetite" of the Permanent War Economy was rapidly exhausting the natural resources (iron ore, petroleum) within the United States and made American imperialism increasingly dependent on raw materials from foreign sources.

Finally, *inflation* was becoming unceasing and permanent. "The higher the ratio of war outlays to total output, the greater the degree of inflation. There is no method under capitalism whereby the creation of purchasing power through waste (war) production can be so controlled and absorbed that inflation is eliminated."

All in all, the Permanent War Economy had provided capitalism with "a temporary respite, while aggravating every phase of the class struggle. [...] The historic task of the working class is to put an end to the Permanent War Economy without permitting the bourgeoisie and the Stalinists to unleash World War III."

The article series on *The Permanent War Economy* was Sard's magnum opus. In the years thereafter he continued to publish in the *New Internationalist* until the ISL's dissolution in 1958. When unemployment in the U.S. increased in the mid-1950s he could easily explain this with a temporarily declining ratio of war outlays during those years.

He had more trouble with the improving standard of living. In 1957 Sard admitted that "the average standard of living of the employed working class is higher today than, let us say, it was two, three or four decades ago," but, he argued, this trend should be seen as a part of "total misery, the casualties of wartime, both in war and peace, and the psychological impact on want satisfactions in a world that lives under the constant threat of total annihilation."

Obviously, this was a weak argument; it exposed a vulnerable side of his theory. Unfortunately, Sard did not develop his ideas further, though he gave some hints how this could perhaps be done. He observed for example: "Capitalism has visibly, before our very eyes, outgrown its national framework and must burst this integument asunder in one form or another."

Through this statement he implicitly brought under dispute the methodological nationalism of his own theory. But that is another chapter.

To Conclude

In 1958 Sard withdrew from politics. He remained a close friend of Max Shachtman (with whom he shared an interest in the cultivation of ornamental plants) until the latter passed away in 1972 — although they disagreed on Shachtman's conservative turn from the 1960s. Sard became a prize-winning cultivator of bromeliads and, together with his wife, enjoyed trips to Europe and other parts of the world.

Sard's series of articles of 1951 was published as a book in 1970; his theory was developed further by others, and provoked counter-arguments. But for the rest of his life Sard cloaked himself in the political anonymity he cherished throughout his years of political involvement and writing. ■

Notes

1. Reconstructing Sard's biography was like solving a jigsaw puzzle. Joel Geier and Alan Wald gave me the first clues. Through trial and error I found Eugene V. Sard who introduced me to Edward Sard's children and daughter-in-law, Barbara Sard (Washington DC), and Richard and Carol Sard (New York City). They helped me enormously. I am also indebted to Sarah Moazeni and her colleagues of the Tamiment Library and the Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University; Joanna Rios of the Columbia University Archives; Misha Mitsel of the Jewish Defence Council New York Archives; Frank Meyer of the Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek, Oslo; and Sven Beckert and Samantha Payne of Harvard University. Bryan D. Palmer, Barbara Sard, Richard Sard and Alan Wald kindly provided critical comments on the first draft of this article. All remaining mistakes and weaknesses are mine, of course. A fuller and annotated version of the article was published in *Critique: Journal of Socialist Theory*, 46, 1 (2018).



1811 Louisiana Slave Revolt: The aftermath of the largest slave revolt in American history led to the disarming of Blacks and Black militias.

The Strange Career of the Second Amendment! U.S. “Gun Rights,” Part I

By Jennifer Jopp

THERE IS PERHAPS no more compelling contemporary example than the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution of the ways in which Americans fail to understand the complexities and ironies of their own history. We live in a society steeped in violence that is elided from much of our history. Until we come to terms with this violent history, we will have little hope of solving the contentious debate on the Second Amendment.

Both sides of the debate on the Second Amendment in its current form express extreme frustration and can hardly fathom that they live in the same country as their interlocutors. Liberal commentators embrace a powerful role for the federal government in policing and regulating access to firearms. They lament the day that the country came into the hands of the supporters of the National Rifle Association (NRA) who stockpile weapons and resist all attempts at gun regulation.

Conservative supporters of “gun rights” fume that liberals fail to understand the threat of overweening federal power and the dangers inherent in regimes that gain power by dis-

arming the populace. They eschew any attempt at all to regulate gun ownership, background checks, or waiting periods as infringements on personal liberty out of keeping with “the right to bear arms” in the Constitution.

In a country with more weapons than citizens and daily news of gun violence, the issue could hardly be more central to our lives. And when in most places in the country, registering to vote requires a longer residency than the length of time required to purchase a gun, we have to reckon with a country steeped in the weapons of war.

There are a number of flashpoints both in the debate as it has emerged over the last few decades and in the location of much of the gun violence in our society: public schools, public lands and the military. As we will see, these focal points are connected to the issue itself.

Contemporary debate about the Second Amendment often revolves around the question of whether the amendment guaranteed an individual right to “keep and bear arms” or whether that right was contingent on service in the militia. Proponents of gun control measures believe that gun ownership in early America was linked to militia service, while gun

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“rights” advocates assert that the amendment pertains to an individual right to own weapons.

The language of the amendment itself — “*A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed*” — has been the source of countless debates and analyses of the meanings of the words, the placement of the commas, and the intention of its authors.

Many commentators rightly point out that, until relatively recently, both the courts and the general populace largely adhered to the idea that the language of the amendment connected gun ownership with militia service.

A great deal of the recent discussion of the issue focuses on the idea that the NRA has had an outsized influence on public understanding of the issue and that it was, until 1977, an organization of marksmen and hunters, many of whom advocated and supported gun control measures.² These commentators often note that the NRA’s subsequent avowal of an approach that brooks no restrictions on gun ownership is not in keeping with its own history.

There is no doubt that the 1977 NRA convention “revolt in Cincinnati” did, indeed, steer it in a visibly different direction, away from a focus on marksmanship and sportsmanship and towards a focus on opposition to all regulations on guns. That strategy had paid off handsomely: by dint of a heavily funded campaign of public advertising, the funding of scholarships, and the wielding of considerable financial clout, the NRA has succeeded in shifting both public opinion and academic debate.

Yet, such a framing of the issue ignores the much longer history of the fight over guns and their regulation that has existed since the beginning of the republic. Indeed, the debate over gun ownership has always been fraught with questions about access to power, about race, about citizenship, and about military service and its connections to ideas about masculinity.

Those who have been denied access to guns — free Blacks, new immigrants, and Native Americans — have often sought equal access to guns as a sign of their rights to participate in the larger community and as citizens. Many of those who have fought for the civil rights of African Americans and Native Americans have asserted their right to guns both as a means of self-defense and as a right of citizenship.³

The issues posed by the current participants in the debate — on either side — run along another fault line in our society: the question of the power of the central government as against that of the states and that of the people themselves.

To understand something of the complexity of this debate, and its powerful emotional resonance, we need to look at both the historical context of the Second Amendment’s creation, as well as the subsequent history of the issue of guns, gun ownership, and gun regulation in the United States.

This history illuminates a central feature of our fractured society: we have long been two societies. Indeed, each side in the current debate has historical antecedents. The crooked paths along which each thread of the argument has traveled reveals something about the complexity of the tortured history of our republic.

There have always been voices for freedom that seek to make truer our proclamation that “all men are created equal,” just as there have always been forces fearing the

central government and opposing the accomplishment of that dream. The forces of repression have gained more adherents in recent years: the post-Vietnam, post-Watergate world and the steady erosion of legitimacy of the offices of the republic have taken their toll.

In this context arises a growing belief in some quarters that the *government* has no right to regulate. That was never part of the position of those who believed that it was *their own right* to have weapons in their homes for personal protection. Indeed, much of the power that such possession constitutes is dependent on the idea that others — Blacks, immigrants — do not have that right.

Neither side of the debate willingly acknowledges the complexity of the issue, nor their own historical antecedents. The supporters of the militia-as-the-source-of-gun-rights view would then need to proclaim themselves the inheritors of the right-of-revolution stance of the early proponents of this approach, while those who advocate for an individual right to own weapons would need to see themselves as the descendants of those advocating a strong central government.

What is clear is that this history — connected as it has been from the beginning of this country — illuminates many of the fault lines in our society.

Despite the focus on the origins of the Second Amendment, the record indicates that the contours of our current debate emerged in the 19th century, sharpened over the course of the 20th century, and have hardened in our current toxic political culture. When we fight about guns, we are fighting about who we are.

Supporters of an individual rights view assert that colonial and early American society was no doubt well-armed, with all (white) male householders armed for hunting (and militia service). In this view, arms were widespread in society and in the hands of individuals themselves. Proponents of this view assert that the Revolutionary generation feared disarmament and clearly intended the Second Amendment to protect an individual’s right to have weapons in his own home.

Those who contend that such ownership was contingent on militia service point to the ubiquity of colonial militias. Those who support this view emphasize the need for colonial governments to muster the population as evidence that the populace was not as widely armed as one might assume. Supporters of this view note the existence of gun regulation in colonial and early national legislation.

What’s essential in trying to understand the historical parameters of the issue is to also remember the sweeping transformation of society that took place in the years between the Revolution and the first decades of the nation. This changed landscape often reworked inherited ideas.

Certainly, colonial legal codes contained all kinds of regulations concerning guns and gun ownership. These regulations did, indeed, often focus on militia service. For colonial society was an armed society, yet few homes had the kinds of weapons that effective militia service required. Thus, colonial governments often required their citizens to be available for military service and conducted searches of homes for evidence of the appropriate weaponry.

Probate records show that most men had the kinds of guns that were most useful in their daily lives in an agricultural society, not military weapons. Colonial militias were, there-

fore, not always well mustered and not always well armed. In addition, colonials tended to leave military service to take care of their farms and families. Thus, the romanticized model of the citizen soldier was often found wanting, even at the moment of its creation.

Colonial governments had little difficulty regulating guns and gun storage. Among colonial regulations were those requiring storing loaded weapons in a home, requirements to appear at militia musters for gun inspections, and those forbidding Blacks and Native Americans from the possession of arms.

Thus, revolutionary and early national era government gun policy encouraged ownership of militarily useful weapons, but did not eschew regulation of guns and access to them.

Militias were also — in the minds of many — a little too democratic, as their members chose officers and, like contemporary juries, the militia had an educative function in society. In the explosive climate of revolution, leaders often had occasion to rue power in the hands of a militia.

In this period, militia service itself was seen as a powerful way to protect a republican society from an overweening central government. This lesson was one drawn from both ancient and English history. Among the fears of the revolutionary generation was the pervasive fear of a standing army and the corrosive impact of wars fought by paid mercenaries.

The only way to protect a republican society was the militia, composed of the community of (white) able-bodied men who would defend their homes and families, not for pay but for love of country. From their reading of ancient history, the model of the citizen-soldier had particular resonance in the period of growing tension with the Crown. This man, modeled on the ancient Athenian story, could take up arms to defend his home and return to the life of the citizen without the corrosive contact with paid military service.

In the period before the break with Britain, as colonials were forging an ideology of revolution, they drew on a number of threads of thought. Revolutionary ideology contained ideas drawn from English opposition thinkers of the 17th century, their understanding of the history of ancient republics and the dangers they faced, and emerging Enlightenment thought.

As the subjects of the Crown became citizens of a new, republican society they drew on both an earlier understanding of the history of republics, such as that of the Florentine Republic, from which they drew lessons about the dangers of standing armies and the need for a virtuous population to



Jamestown, 1608. Captain John Smith's arrival inaugurated centuries of violent attacks by whites against Indigenous peoples.

defend liberty.

From their reading of English history, they drew particular lessons from the Glorious Revolution and the English Bill of Rights of 1689. In the aftermath of the Restoration, James II had used the Militia Act of 1664 and the Game Act of 1671 to disarm those “dangerous to the Peace of the Kingdom” and to forbid those who did not have “Lands and Tenements of clear yearly value of one hundred pounds” from owning guns.⁴

Among the concessions won from William and Mary upon their ascension to the throne was the provision that “Subjects which are Protestants may have Arms for their Defense suitable to their Conditions and as allowed by Law.”

Thus, English law articulated an individual right to own weapons as distinct from owning a weapon for militia service. In his magisterial *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, William Blackstone saw the Bill of Rights as providing “the right of having and using guns for self-preservation and defense.” English case law, too, took this view: the 1744 case of *Malloch v. Eastly* held that “a man may keep a gun for the defense of his house and his family.”⁵

They drew, too, from emerging Enlightenment thought about the new basis for political sovereignty. These threads stood in uneasy juxtaposition to each other, and the fundamental contradictions they posed were not evident in the period in which opposition — first to Parliament and then, in the wake of Thomas Paine’s incendiary *Common Sense*, to the king himself — helped the colonials to forge an ideology of revolution.

The charges laid at the feet of the king in the Declaration of Independence speak to the grievances of the colonials and the ways in which they understood the world in which they lived.

In the revolutionary era and the process of state constitution making, these ideas were further shaped by the experiences of war. As men and women, young and old, slave and free were drawn into a battle for freedom and began to challenge authority, the emerging elite feared an “excess of democracy.”

The leaders of the revolutionary movement needed the support of wide sectors of the population if they were going to achieve victory against the most powerful military force in the world at the time; garnering the support of the people was central to this project. Yet, ideas have a tendency to grow and expand: the genie of social deference could not be put back in the bottle and both urban and rural peoples demanded change.

As George Washington lamented, “there are combustibles in every state.” In the cities, “mechanics were demanding political democracy” while the people in the countryside, too, demanded a new order.⁶ Though the leaders of this struggle for “home rule” were among the wealthiest men in the colonies, their movement brought “laborers and seamen, as well as small farmers” into the fold “by the rhetoric of the Revolution, by the camaraderie of military service, [and] by the distribution of some land.”⁷

War required military service, and men were pressed into service in the colonial militias. Despite the contemporary view of the colonial populace as an armed people willing to defend themselves and their land, the historical record illustrates the lengths to which many colonial governments were required to go to fulfill their militia quotas. Laws, for example, required all men between 16 and 60 to serve and those who failed to show up were jailed.

As the war dragged on, the privations of the poor became more pressing and the privileges of the wealthy more difficult to tolerate. The radical proposition that sovereignty should rest with the people took root in the newly opened arenas for political discussion and pamphleteering.

John Adams lamented that “new claims will arise... and every man who has not a farthing will demand an equal voice with any other.”⁸ From all corners came calls for access to voting rights, more responsive representation, and other egalitarian demands.⁹

The war itself and the eventual necessity to create a standing army, one professionally trained by the French, undermined the belief in the power of the militia to prevent the destruction of democracy. The Constitution, as many scholars have noted, attempted to tame what elites had come to see as excesses of democracy and the dangers of popular uprisings in several states.

Under the previous Articles of Confederation, states were required to maintain their own “well regulated and disciplined militia, sufficiently armed and accoutered” with “a proper quantity of arms, ammunition and camp equipage.” The Confederation Congress was permitted to requisition state militias only for the “common defense.” Yet state legislatures could refuse to comply. And the Confederation Congress could not declare war, raise an army, or engage in any kind of military operation without the consent of nine of the 13 states.

Under the new Constitution, by contrast, a powerful new central government controlled the ability to conduct war, raise an army and call out state militias without the consent of the state governments. The new president would also be Commander in Chief and could call the militias into service to “execute the laws of the Union, suppress Insurrections and



Shays' Rebellion, 1786-87. Four thousand men — led by veteran Daniel Shays — rebelled against economic injustice and were crushed by the Massachusetts militia. This incident led to the scrapping of the Articles of Confederation for a more centralized Constitution.

repel invasions.”

Many people feared the newly powerful government under the Constitution, and for many only the promised amendments in the form of a Bill of Rights brought reluctant support for ratification. The wording of these amendments was hammered out in numerous state conventions, with the final drafting done at the constitutional convention.

Provisions of contemporaneous state constitutions illuminate the wording of what has come to be called our Second Amendment. The Massachusetts constitution of 1780, for example, asserted that “the people have a right to keep and bear arms for the common defense,” while that of Tennessee in 1796 stated, “[T]he freemen of this State have a right to keep and bear arms for their common defense.” Such provisions lend support to a communal rights understanding of the second amendment to the national constitution.

Yet Kentucky’s constitution declared that “[T]he right of the citizens to bear arms in defense of themselves and the State shall not be questioned,” while that of Vermont similarly noted that “[T]he people have a right to bear arms for the defense of themselves and the State.”

Many of the state ratifying conventions issued calls to Congress for a Bill of Rights. Among the demands was that from New Hampshire that “Congress shall never disarm any citizen unless such as or have been in Actual Rebellion.”

These various provisions suggest that there are two potentially interrelated issues at work: one is the idea that a free people should have a militia, and the other is that the people should possess firearms. As Pennsylvania’s state constitution of 1776 noted, “the people have a right to bear arms for the defense of themselves and the state” and the “military should be kept under strict subordination, to, and

governed by, the civil power.”

Virginia’s differently phrased clause reads “That a well regulated militia, composed of the body of the people, trained to arms, is the proper, natural, and safe defense of a free state.”

The Second Amendment, then, contains both these ideas; its “militia component and its right to bear arms recognition have in fact different origins and different theoretical underpinnings.”¹⁰ As David Hardy notes, “by 1780 there were three state models for dealing with the question of popular armaments: the Virginia ... model, stressing a well-regulated militia; the Pennsylvania ... model, stressing an individual right to bear arms, and the Massachusetts ... model, stressing a right both to keep and bear arms, but only for the common defense.”¹¹

The classical republican tradition gave voice to the importance of a militia to a free state, while Enlightenment ideals espoused an individual right to own and carry arms. Incorporating both these ideas in uneasy juxtaposition, the amendment sought to balance competing political forces.

The phrasing that today proves so difficult to comprehend raised few questions at the time. The drafters of what came to be the Second Amendment feared the newly-enhanced power of the federal government to call forth the state militias without the express permission of the states. The use of the state militias to suppress domestic insurrection — in the aftermath of the Whiskey Rebellion, the Fries Rebellion, and the North Carolina Regulator Movement — was no small concern.

The Second Amendment — like its partners in the Bill of Rights — was not seen as a limiting state power until the late 19th century nationalization of the amendments through the incorporation of the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment; before then, the amendments were understood to be restrictions on federal power alone, which was the locus of the fears of many.

The militia statutes of the new states — often revisions of colonial laws “constituted the largest body of laws dealing with firearms.”¹² These provisions show that the states were not reluctant to use broad police powers to regulate all aspects of weapons use: rules regarding use, storage, ownership and access.

One of the other issues addressed by political leaders in this era was the lack of a sufficient number of weapons for all of the men who should be militia members. As Washington noted in his first annual message to Congress, “A free people ought [to]...be armed...” Yet, several surveys of available weapons found severe shortages: a 1803 survey found only 235,831 guns for 524,086 militia members.¹³ Initial attempts to spur domestic arms manufacturing did little to correct the problem.

The rise of a commercial market economy and the dominant form of political economy by the early 19th century helped to contain some of the “most dangerous possibilities of the age of democratic revolutions.”¹⁴ The transformation to an American society wrought by these changes again changed the terrain on which the issues of guns and gun ownership were debated.

The rapid transformation of the United States in the period from the late 18th century to the first decades of the 19th century spurred and intensified developments long underway. The invention of the cotton gin and the growing market for American cotton in England drove a recommitment to slavery

and a tightening of the hold of investments in land and people. The arrival in the United States of white planters and their slaves fleeing the Haitian Revolution also intensified this trend.

The growing demand for land and the post-Revolutionary removal of a barrier to territory in the west — as the Proclamation Line of 1763 had been — unleashed a flood of whites moving into the lands of indigenous peoples. As whites seized lands, marked and surveyed them and sold them for profit, the native peoples met violence at the hands of armed whites.

These armed men were often settlers engaged in “deadly irregular warfare against the continent’s indigenous nations,” and the persistence of all forms of irregular warfare even after the establishment of a professional army “most marks U.S. armed forces as different from other armies of global powers.”¹⁵

The development of American manufacturing, as well as an emerging banking system and new infrastructural development, gradually led to the production of larger numbers of weapons. New technology, too, meant that the weapons now produced were more lethal than had been earlier muskets and rifles.

It was in this time period that new regulations on guns appeared, as did an argument more forcefully favoring an individual rights interpretation. “Legal thinking about the right to bear arms, the militia, and the idea of self-defense” was altered in the new world of the early 19th century.¹⁶ New technology produced smaller weapons, weapons that could now be concealed on one’s person. In the new world of greater economic, social and geographic mobility, such arming with personal weapons produced a deep anxiety and raised the specter of deeper social problems.

[The second half of this article, in the next issue of *Against the Current*, will explore the evolution of the “gun rights” debate in the context of the struggles around slavery and beyond.]

Notes

1. The title of this essay is a nod to C. Van Woodward’s classic *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, a work that explored the relatively “new” history of segregation in the post-Reconstruction south and, in so doing, discussed the discrepancy between the history of the period and the way in which it is commonly understood.

2. See, for example, Nicholas Kristoff, “Let’s Talk about the N.R.A.” in *The New York Times*, Sunday, November 4, 2018.

3. There are countless examples; Ida B. Wells, as one example, asserted that Black men — in the face of a violent campaign of lynching throughout the South — should arm themselves for their own defense.

4. Adam Winkler, *Gunfight: The Battle over the Right to Bear Arms in America*, (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011), 101.

5. Winkler, 102.

6. Howard Zinn, *A Peoples’ History of the United States, 1492-Present* (New York: Harper Collins, 1980), 62.

7. Zinn, 85.

8. Adams to James Sullivan in Charles Francis Adams, ed., *The Works of John Adams* (Boston: 1850-1852), volume 9, 378.

9. *The People the Best Governors, or, a Plan of Government Founded on the Just Principles of Natural Freedom* (n.p., 1776), 13.

10. David T. Hardy, “The Second Amendment and the Historiography of the Bill of Rights” *Journal of Law and Politics*, v. 4 (1987), 1-67.

11. *Ibid.*

12. Saul Cornell, *A Well-Regulated Militia: The Founding Fathers and the Origins of Gun Control in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 27.

13. Michael Bellesiles, “The Second Amendment in Action” in *The Second Amendment in Law and History*, (New York: The New Press, 2000), 64.

14. Seth Cotlar, *Tom Paine’s America: The Rise and Fall of Transatlantic Radicalism in the Early Republic* (Charlottesville and London: The University of Virginia Press, 2011), 159.

15. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, “What White Supremacists Know.” Published on Portside on November 18, 2018.

16. Cornell, *Well-Regulated*, 139; Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York, 2005).

Our Movement, Our Lives By William Copeland

Making All Black Lives Matter: Reimagining Freedom in the Twenty-first Century

By Barbara Ransby

University of California Press, 2018, 240 pages,
paper \$18.95, ebook \$16.95

AS A DETROIT movement activist and cultural organizer who has just entered my 40s, I was aware of Black Lives Matter and the Movement for Black Lives, but it did not play a significant role in my political development, nor I in its development and activities. I saw BLM as belonging to a younger generation, rather than my own.

For six years, I worked closely with Detroit youth ages 13-21, some of whom have gone on to be active in Detroit's chapters of BLM and Black Youth Project 100 (BYP).

They have organized direct actions at police precincts, created banners and rallies to honor Aiyana Stanley Jones — seven years old, killed in her sleep in an infamous botched Detroit police raid — and other victims of not only police murder but state violence more generally. They have also interrupted mayor Mike Duggan's public meetings.

Barbara Ransby's new book dives into the ideas, lives and struggles of those who launched various aspects of the Black Lives Matter movement, both nationally and locally. A professor of African-American Studies and Gender and Women's Studies at University of Illinois-Chicago, her previous award-winning books include *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision* (2003) and *Eslanda: The Large and Unconventional Life of Mrs. Paul Robeson* (2013).

Making Black Lives Matter does an excellent job of telling the stories behind the movements. It not only translates individuals' political and organizational responses to wit—*William Copeland is a cultural worker (Collective Wisdom Detroit) and MC (Will See Music — see <http://willseemusic.bandcamp.com/>) from Detroit. He worked in various roles at the East Michigan Environmental Action Council (EMEAC) including Youth Organizer, Climate Justice Director, and Leadership team. He served as a Local Coordinator for the 2010 US Social Forum.*

nessing the violence from America's police and the tepid or non-existent responses from the courts, it also places the BLM movement in its political lineages of Black liberation.

Thirdly, this wonderful book describes some key contexts that readers may only know as names or places heard on the news: Trayvon, Ferguson, Freddie Gray, and much more. And finally, Ransby increases movement transparency by describing some of the organizations that make up this movement and their relationships and public actions.

Context of the BLM Movement

Going much larger and deeper than simply responding to the killings of Black individuals by police and "citizen agents," this book describes the forces, individuals, and ideas that animated and sustained the Black Lives Matter movement.

Ransby describes BLM as not just a protest movement, but as a "transformational justice" movement that has stood up to oppression in ways that the United States had not seen in decades. She frames it as a "Black-led mass struggle that did not primarily or exclusively focus on women," although Black women — notably Patrisse Cullors, Opal Tometi and Alicia Garza — were central in its formation and leadership.

One of my favorite aspects of the book is the description of the political lineages that made this movement possible. These include the HIV/AIDS activism of the 1990s that helped develop Black LGBT political leadership; the Black Radical Congress, which developed an analysis that included feminism as central to liberation; Critical Resistance and INCITE (Women of Color Against Violence) that advanced thinking about prison abolition that has been foundational to many BLM Movement activists; and lastly, the Chicago battle against police torture.

Many activists of this generation were also affected by the election and presidency of Barack Obama. Specifically, they have gone from great hope to understanding his ineffectiveness in solving problems of the Black community. This has led to discussions throughout the radical Black community on the limitations of Black elected officials.

Intergenerational Black Feminism

Ransby provides fresh insights into this movement. I had never thought of BLM as taking a stance against the neoliberal regime. Yet she begins her Conclusion with a quote from Ruth Wilson Gilmore, a leading expert on mass incarceration: "Sparked by police murder in capitalism's neoliberal turn, the post-Ferguson movement may therefore be understood as protests against profound austerity and the iron fist necessary to impose it."

The book concludes by moving from stories of individual local struggles to descriptions of the theoretical underpinnings of the movement as a whole. First and foremost is an intergenerational Black feminism. Ransby interviewed many movement leaders and found that "bell hooks, Angela Davis, Audre Lorde, Paula Giddings, Beth Ritchie, Cathy Cohen, Beverly Guy-Shiftall, [her] own book on Ella Baker, and finally fiction writer Toni Morrison" were the "intellectual building blocks of their collective consciousness."

This Black feminist consciousness also included lived experiences and the analysis from mothers, grandmother, aunts, and sisters who did not write books, but lived (and shared) their creative survival and resistance.

Detroit activist Marcia Black, a student formerly in one of my programs, who has gone on to other forms of radical study and leadership, had a chance to meet the powerful African-American feminist sociologist Patricia Hill Collins. Her remarks illustrate how the young activists of this BLM moment are studying, internalizing, and making the works of their predecessors their own.

Black Feminist Thought (Collins' pioneering work) changed my life and I'm sure I wouldn't of made it to this point in my life without it. It's my bible. It's a spiritual text that is almost singlehandedly responsible for me coming to understand that BLACK WOMEN ARE INHERENTLY VALUABLE. I'M VALUABLE.

A second theoretical trend, "Unapologetically Black," has become a rallying cry



In 2016 Black Lives Matter activists participated in a police raid on the wrongful death trial of the seven-year-old — Joseph W.



Matter and BYP 100 marked the sixth anniversary of fatal shooting of Aiyana Stanley-Jones, who was killed in a long apartment. The presence of a TV film crew, looking for footage of a dramatic police action, contributed to the 7-year-old girl's death. Charged only with reckless discharge of a firearm — those charges were dismissed after two weeks, the police officer, has been subsequently named co-chair of a police committee on race and equality.

Dianne Feeley

of the movement. This functions as a challenge to respectability politics that promote assimilation for economic and political ends. It also empowers Black activists to challenge silencing and anti-Black racism in people of color (PoC) spaces.

Youth leadership and the prominent role of social media are also pivotal in this movement's organizing. It's through social media that many first learn of the police murders that sparked organizing and action. Further, through social media many people play a role of "citizen journalists," sharing information and narratives that mainstream media can't and won't report on.

Still, many activists question whether dependence on social media privileges popularity and celebrity over organizing. Many also describe an uglier, less comradely tone in semi-anonymous electronic movement communications as opposed to organizing that's rooted in face to face meetings.

Without any doubt, Black activists of this generation have innovated social media as a tool for organizing. Ransby uses the examples of chants to illustrate the passion and determination of these young freedom fighters. Even though many describe themselves

as "young Black activists" or "Black youth," there is an intergenerational strategy that weaves in and around their work.

In these chants, as in many other aspects of their strategy there is a mix of homage to ancestors, renewing previous generations' messages, and making totally new messages/strategies. One example is in: "Ella Baker was a freedom fighter, she taught us how to fight. We gonna fight all day and night until we get it right."

I also learned about and was inspired by Ransby's descriptions of the various works that these organizers have undertaken. These include much more than just responding, mobilizing and organizing. The theory and practice being built goes well beyond punishing killer cops.

Judicial punishment of the police murderers is important, but some campaigns made an important shift when criminal verdicts were not forthcoming. They began advocating for suspensions without pay, firing, watching if the killers were rehired as police, and initiating other professional repercussions.

Intentionally supporting families of victims and survivors conveys another import-

ant aspect of the feminist ethic that is based on restorative justice. The abolitionist ethic of a society without police recognizes that new methods of support must be created that reframe our relationship to the economy and the state — and to each other.

Responses and Conclusions

In order to paint these actors as part of a single movement and moment, Ransby skims over serious disagreements and disavowals that have occurred. Many of these are differences in strategy if not ideology. It would be helpful to hear more of these differences to get a fuller picture.

I have been in too many movement spaces in the last few years where BLM was viewed as synonymous with Black organizing, overlooking or marginalizing other forms of Black organizing. I also have concerns that funders are overvaluing BLM movement organizing and privileging it over others when it comes to support and resources.

Detroit has been the foundation of my political development. For years I've wondered why the BLM movement didn't catch fire here the way it did in other locations. I think gender is a primary reason, in that the gender politics of the BLM space didn't catch hold among young Black masses here.

In "The D" our Black organizing has deep roots in socialist or nationalist theory, which is missing or in the background in BLM organizations. Lastly, I think the messaging of neoliberalism and the struggle that is highlighted around it is different here than in other places around the country.

Although Ransby mentions growing up in Detroit in the 1970s, I don't expect this book to dive into these questions. Its focus is national. Still I think the question of where this form of Black organizing took hold, and where it didn't, is an interesting one that can shine light on how Black communities have been developing and organizing in the 21st century.

With all that said, this movement has had a significant although underreported impact on the #MeToo movement and the American reckoning with sexual violence. Social media communications, intersectional analyses, boldness and refusal to play by the rules of respectability are influencing today's feminist politics in a grand way.

It is undeniable that the "acts of defiance, disruption, and insurgent rule breaking" that come out of organizations such as Black Lives Matter, Black Youth Project, Assata's Daughters, We Charge Genocide, SAYHERNAME, Leaders of a Beautiful Struggle, Million Hoodies, Dream Defenders, and so many more are making an impact — not only on youth struggles and Black liberation struggles, but on radical organizing in the country in general. ■

Still Lonely on the Right

By Angela D. Dillard

Black Elephants in the Room: The Unexpected Politics of African American Republicans

By Corey D. Fields

University of California Press, 2016, 296 pages,
paper or ebook \$29.95

Black Republicans and the Transformation of the GOP

By Joshua D. Farrington

University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016, 328 pages,
hardback \$45

The Loneliness of the Black Republican

By Leah Wright Rigueur

Princeton University Press, 2014, 432 pages,
paper \$24.95

IT BEGAN WITH “Blacks for Trump” signs at rallies during the presidential campaign. More recently it was Kanye West’s bizarre October 2018 performance in the Oval Office. This was followed, a couple of weeks later, by what was billed as the largest gathering of young Black conservatives ever assembled at the White House.

African Americans who align themselves with the Republican Party and the broader conservative movement are back in the news like gale force winds responding to changes in atmospheric, and political, pressure. While some commentators expressed surprise or even shock in the face of these media storms, for some of us, this feels like *deja vu* all over again.

Every so often, the nation has the opportunity to rediscover Black conservatives. The Obama White House never witnessed a gathering of the kind and scale of the conservative student organization Turning Points USA’s Young Black Leadership Summit, which attracted 350-400 attendees. But TPUSA’s communications’ director Candace Owens exaggerates its “revolutionary” significance.

The 29-year old social media phenom is the new darling of the Right for her willingness to mock the demands of Black Lives Matter, denounce feminism, and defend powerful men. She seems to relish her new-

found role as mediator and translator of “heretical” ideas for young Black millennials and others who are, in her words, “conservative curious.”

But Owens is only the latest in a long line of spokespeople to use their “unique” status as Black and conservative to propel their political careers and to prove their value to the Republican Party and the broader movement. They are called upon to continually denounce the majority of African Americans who are supposedly “shackled” to the Democratic Party — a rhetorical move that transforms the staunch and persistent unpopularity of the GOP for Black voters into a virtue to be celebrated, as opposed to a problem to be addressed and overcome.

The Contemporary Black Right

In Owens’ clever hashtags like #Blexit predicting and urging a Black exodus from the Democratic Party, one can hear a much brasher and far less conflicted version of Clarence Thomas’ well-known 1987 Heritage Foundation speech. Therein he bemoaned the lack of “room in the inn” of the political establishments on both the Left or the Right, and bewailed the concomitant loneliness of Black conservatives.¹

“The Left exacted a high price for any black who ventured from the fold,” Thomas said. He also characterized the “general attitude” of conservatives toward Black conservatives as “indifference,” with only minor exceptions, and explains that it was made clear that, “since blacks did not vote right, they were owed nothing.” This was exacerbated, he continued, by “a certain exclusivity” of membership in the conservative ranks, which he expresses in the phrase “if you were not with us in 1976, do not bother to apply.”

For African-American conservatives the litmus test was fairly clear, according to Thomas: “You must be against affirmative action and against welfare. And your opposition had to be adamant and constant or you would be suspected of being a closet liberal. Again, this must be viewed in the context that the presumption was that no black could be a conservative.” (Quoted by Fields, 76)

But is this really still the case? Are Black

conservatives still lonely? After all, there have been dozens of African American Republicans elected to political office, including Mia Love (the first Black woman Republican elected to Congress), who recently lost her seat; appointed to political positions (Clarence Thomas and Ben Carson among them); and promoted through media outlets, including Paris Dennard, the Black Trump translator required to perform herculean tasks during and after the 2016 election.

Moreover, for nearly the entire first decade of the 21st century — years when the Secretary of State was first Colin Powell (2001-2005) and then Condoleezza Rice (2005-2009) — Black Republicans were the face of American power in the world.

True, only 8% of African Americans voted for Donald Trump in 2016, which is more than Romney in 2012 (6%), but much less than the 11% garnered by George W. Bush in 2004. Go back even further in time and the percentage goes up, especially B.R. (Before Reagan); in 1972 as high as 18%.

These numbers are only for presidential contests; state and local elections are even more politically heterogeneous. Which is to say: Black Republicans are not exactly political unicorns. They have histories.

Three recent books on African Americans and the GOP help us to better understand the terrain of Black Republicans in the United States and to look beyond the (social) media glitz and glare. Two treat the question historically, and one surveys the contemporary landscape.

Drawing on a range of first-person accounts and interviews, *Black Elephants in the Room* explores what Corey D. Fields, author and professor of Sociology at Georgetown, characterizes as the “Unexpected Politics of African American Republicans.” “Unexpected” strikes me as a more generous and more accurate word than “oxymoronic,” yet still connotes that we have a hard time simply taking their existence at face value.

This book provides a fascinating look at the contemporary Black Right from a multifaceted and polyvocal perspective. It also offers a much needed focus on “non-elite” African-American Republican activists “across multiple political contexts.” (202)

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Fields argues that we ought to give the precinct captain and the head of the local Republican club equal time with nationally prominent figures like Candace Owens and Clarence Thomas. This approach produces a nicely textured analysis of a wider cast of characters.

Color-blind vs. Race Consciousness

While tracing important differences among Black Republicans — primarily the tensions between those who adopt a “color-blind” politics versus those who are “race-conscious” — Fields is primarily concerned with the work that they do to link their understandings of Black identity to conservative political behavior.

Both groups, he argues, are inexorably bound to race and “The Race” with each taking different routes to what they believe is in the best interest of Black people.

Fields finds those African-American Republican activists who adopt the view that race does not and should not matter to be the most committed to the GOP “party line” on policy issues, especially affirmative action, welfare and other forms of “governmental dependency.”

They tend to construe Blacks in general as suffering from a host of social pathologies and to hold them at arm’s length, stressing instead the importance of individualism and individual initiative.

It’s not that they reject being African American, but they do not see their racial identity as absolutely central to how they define themselves. They also want to move beyond the “victimhood” status associated with group identity politics, and insist that de-emphasizing race (and racial discrimination) is essential to understanding the causes of and seeking solutions to issues that disadvantage African Americans.

In contrast to this color-blind approach, Black Republicans who adopt a race-conscious framework are much more comfortable, Fields finds, with “racializing seeming race-neutral social policies by asserting their

appeal in terms of how they will put black people on the path to middle-class success.”

Their goal is always middle-class success, never structural transformation. “Policies are perceived as ‘good,’” he continues, “when they work toward improving the lot of blacks and uplifting the race.” (130)

Often drawing on older traditions of Black nationalism and uplift, members of this camp have a closer and more positive sense of identification with Black communities. And while they pursue policies and initiatives that are invariably conservative and aligned with the GOP, race-conscious activists can easily find themselves at odds with both their color-blind counterparts and the Republican Party at large.

Fields is less attuned to differences based on ideologies, such as libertarians versus religious and cultural conservatives, or to differences based on gender and social class. Instead, he uses the study of Black Republicans to explore sociological claims about African American attachment to racial identity and to “illustrate how racial identity animates the political behavior and experiences of African Americans within the Republican Party.” (9)

Indeed the book is as much about race as an identity and a “cultural object” as it is about political belonging. And for African-American Republicans as a group, political belonging is dramatically shaped by uneasy, contentious relationships with African Americans who are not conservative and with Republicans who are not Black.

Echoing Thomas’s 1987 speech, Fields provides a nuanced depiction of the ways in which white Republicans and the party apparatus select for success (and access) among African-Americans activists “who have a particular way of talking about black people and their problems — specifically, one that fits with what white Republican power brokers want to see in office and on stage.” (201)

Because his book is about race and racial identity and not about politics, Fields is scrupulously agnostic when it comes to any particular policy debate and takes great pains to avoid judgement on the efficacy of being Black and conservative. But at times one can detect a critical tone about the degree to which white Republicans demand that “their Blacks” speak in the language of the pathologies of Black people and to stress an individual, race-neutral politics that would not require the party to change.

Color-blind African-American Republicans are more at home with this part of the party line, and seem to delight in attacking their liberal and Democratic coun-

terparts for remaining on the “plantation” of the Democratic Party. For race-conscious Black Republicans who adopt what Fields describes as “Black Power through conservative principles,” the unwillingness of the GOP to adjust its views and to do targeted outreach to Black communities is the major barrier to increasing the numbers of African-American Republicans.

After reading *Black Elephants*, it’s hard not to think that if Black Republicans remain lonely, then much of the blame ought to be laid at the doorstep of the GOP and the Republican National Committee (RNC).

The GOP in Historical Perspective

Instead of asking why there are so few Black Republicans, a better set of questions might be why the Republican Party, from the 1970s onward, has had such a hard time courting larger numbers of African American voters. To answer this question sociology needs to concede the ground to history.

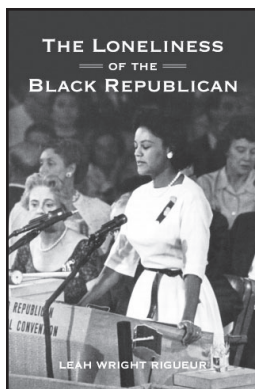
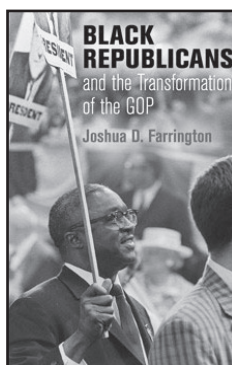
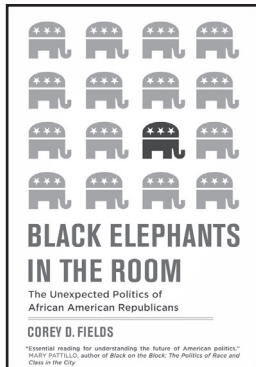
Black Elephants provides a good historical overview of the relationship between African Americans and the GOP from its early days as the Party of Lincoln, tracing the shifting patterns before, during and after the realignment in the 1930s as Black voters began to turn in significant numbers to the Democrats. Fields writes:

The African American Republican activists I spoke with were quick to remind me that the current state of relations between blacks and the Republican Party represents a stark departure from the GOP’s historical origins. For those outside of the party who question their policies, they present Republican history as proof that Republican politics can be compatible with black identity. For those within the party, history is used by today’s black Republicans to make claims on material and symbolic resources by recalling a time when blacks were a key constituency and the party was committed to having blacks as full-fledged participants in charting the direction of the GOP. (34)

If it’s hard to be a minority within a minority, being a (Black) minority within a predominantly white party is no bed of roses, especially when that party refuses to take its own history seriously. This probably has something to do with why better histories are being written by those who do not share the GOP’s ideological predisposition.

These better histories, I’d argue, demonstrate the degree to which the “loneliness” of Black Republicans is a historically contingent phenomenon, created in large part by fights within the GOP itself. The works by historians Joshua Farrington (*Black Republicans and the Transformation of the GOP*) and Leah Wright Rigueur (*The Loneliness of the Black Republican*) bring these experiences into historical perspective.

Both books cover the period from roughly 1936 to 1980, or from FDR to



Reagan. Farrington extends the story of Black Republicans a bit further back in time with a richer history of interracial “Black-and-Tan” organizations in the U.S. South and a closer explication of Black Republicans throughout the Eisenhower years of the 1950s.

Both see three major waves of thought and action. The first coincides with the New Deal and the growing realignment of Black voters away from the GOP and toward the Democrats, starting in 1936 and continuing through the early 1960s. As late as 1962, Rigueur reminds us, nearly a third of Blacks voted Republican in the presidential and midterm elections.

The second wave coincides with the passage of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts, on the one hand, and with the GOP’s decision to nominate Barry Goldwater, on the other. This was also a period, as Rigueur details with the power and precision of years of archival research, that many Black Republicans turned to state and local politics hoping to duplicate the electoral success of Edward Brooke of Massachusetts.

In 1966 Brooke became the first African American popularly elected to the U.S. Senate and by so doing “reinvigorated the idea of pragmatic politics for black Republicans.” (Rigueur, 10) Brooke deserves to be better remembered; both authors, but especially Rigueur, do yeoman service in bringing him to life on the page.

The third wave coincides with the transformation of the civil rights movement and the growing popularity of Black Power in Black communities and fear of the same in white ones. It also embodies what Rigueur characterizes as the “confusion of the 1970s.”

During this period Black Republicans were increasingly shunned by the White House and turned instead to the Republican National Committee (RNC) as a vehicle to push the party toward reforms and away from the death grip of radical conservatism. They enjoyed relatively few successes and suffered a series “colossal failures.”

With the election of Reagan in 1980, where both books bring their histories to a close, we witness the eclipse of Black Republicans and the ascendancy of Black Conservatives. “Their failure to permanently reshape the GOP is not just their own,” Farrington argues, “it is the story of moderate Republicanism in postwar America.” (234)

These books take a wide-angle view of Black Republican activism operating simultaneously on the national, state and local levels. Both Rigueur and Farrington write about their contributions to both the Republican Party and to the civil rights movement, noting that waves two and three coincide with the passage of major pieces of civil rights

legislation. Taken together, these histories serve up scores of stories of partisan fluidity and the struggle to inculcate a two-party political strategy in African-American political culture.

Farrington is much more insistent on the distinction between Black Republicans and Black conservatives. He writes, “Paying particular attention to the voices and actions of black Republicans — most of whom openly objected to the ideals and strategies of the post-World War II conservative movement — this book treats them as savvy political operators who used their partisan political affiliation to advance the goals of the civil rights movement.” (5) His insistence on this point contributes to the clean and crisp analytical framework he deploys to narrate this crowded and complex history.

The need to drain away some of the complexity of this topic might help to explain why the authors do not confront the question of evangelical Christianity, though for Farrington and Rigueur this is also a product of their decision to bring their histories to a close in the late 1970s and to focus on Republicans as opposed to conservatives. Since the Black Christian Right assumes a much bigger role in the 1980s as part of the conservative network operating in and around the GOP, this makes sense. This absence is more surprising in Field’s book, however.

Traditional Republicans versus Conservatives

Rigueur and Farmington both also help us to understand how anomalous is our own political moment in which the African-American vote has become nearly monolithic precisely because one party in a two-party system came to offer so little of value to Black voters.

Both equate this situation with the (far from inevitable) domination of white conservatives within the GOP after the mid-to-late 1960s. But if Farrington is stronger on the earlier period and the rise of Black Republicans, then Rigueur is slightly ahead on the story of their failure, in the latter period, to maintain their position within the GOP. It is a poignant story and Rigueur deftly captures the hint of pathos.

By 1976, as Clarence Thomas suggests, the die was cast and the ascendancy of Reagan four years later ushered in a new era of Black conservatism. Thereafter, it became strikingly difficult for more traditional Black Republicans to find meaningful purchase within the party. American politics has been impoverished by this increasingly stark reality.

The problem is not that African Americans vote Democratic in such solidly large numbers, but that the other party in our two-party system has struggled mightily

(or not) to offer a viable alternative. Oddly enough, it was the Reverend Jesse Jackson who made one of the most compelling pleas to the party leadership to reverse its course and restore the lost prominence of Black Republicans in GOP leadership positions.

In 1978 Jackson addressed a special meeting of the Republican National Committee. “Black people need the Republican Party to compete for us so that we have real alternatives for meeting our needs,” he told the assembly.

He called for an increase in Black Republican leadership, and chided them for not putting Ed Brooke on the ticket for vice-president in 1976. And he argued that an “all-white Republican national, state and county leadership apparatus designing a strategy to win black voters will not work.” (Quoted in Rigueur, 261)

Blacks stayed within the Democratic Party despite its rampant racism in the 1930s and 1940s, and moved the party in a more progressive direction, one that responded to the needs of African Americans and other minorities as well as women and workers. Could contemporary Black Republicans do the same with more future success than in the past?

Where to Go?

Time and again the GOP has at least recognized that the demographic handwriting is on the wall and heralded the need to become a more diverse party — most recently in the 2013 “Republican Autopsy” produced after the stunning defeats in the 2012 election cycle. The RNC has not been fully able to extend a hand without shooting itself in the foot, however. And while one can admire Candace Owens’ pluck, berating Black voters will not do the trick.

There is no reason to equate the ideologies and strategies associated of the Black Right with free and independent thinking as opposed to the majority of African Americans.

To judge a viewpoint as superior simply because a minority ascribes to it is not logical. The members of the Flat Earth Society are not to be heralded as visionaries — unless and until they are able to demonstrate the viability of their perspective. #Blexit will have to wait until the Grand Old Party of Lincoln does better than “what do you have to lose?” as a strategy to bring African American voters into its fold.

In the meantime there is plenty of space, open and waiting, to the left of the Democratic Party. African-American voters, always loyal to the promise of racial democracy in America, deserve to partake of a full, rich, diverse political spectrum. ■

Notes

1. Thomas, “No Room at the Inn: The Loneliness of the Black Conservative,” reprinted in *Policy Review*, Fall 1991.

Apocalypse of Our Times

By John Woodford

Apocalypse of Settler Colonialism:

The Roots of Slavery, White Supremacy and Capitalism in Seventeenth-Century North America and the Caribbean

By Gerald Horne

New York: Monthly Review Press, 2018,
260 pages, paper \$25

AN APOCALYPSE IS “damage on an awesome or catastrophic scale,” and Gerald Horne traces the transcontinental social devastation wrought in the 17th century both by the usual-suspect perpetrators — slave traders and owners — and by their unindicted co-conspirators, champions of mercantile and political freedoms in the British Isles and prerevolutionary American colonies.

Horne, professor of African-American history at the University of Houston, is an unusually multifaceted scholar, not only a historian but also a lawyer, and the prolific author of some 30 books. In this work he argues that profit lust and racist ideology linked — and still link — the seemingly contradictory impulses of reactionaries on one hand and champions of democratic freedoms on the other.

In his powerful introduction to this book of eight chapters (all densely packed with facts, figures and footnoted source material), Horne trumpets the book’s theme in a moving exordium, in classical rhetorical terms, that swells with the power and felicity of a Bach prelude:

The years between 1603 and 1714 were perhaps the most decisive in English history. At the onset of the seventeenth century, the sceptered isle was a second-class power but the Great Britain that emerged by the beginning of the eighteenth century was, in many ways, the planet’s reigning superpower. It then passed the baton to its revolting spawn

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the United States, which has carried global dominance into the present century.

What a delicious and potent pun: its “revolting spawn”! Yes, there was revolution, more than one — and in their wake were revoltin’ developments!

Horne shows how the 17th century antimonarchists (who became successful king-beheaders in 1649 under Oliver Cromwell in what was soon afterwards to become Great Britain in 1707) and the monarchists who reinstalled a king in the Glorious Revolution of 1688, were united by their desires for freedom. But freedom to do what?

The ascendant merchant class wanted the freedom to seize, sell, displace and enslave millions of human beings in Africa, Asia and the Americas. A chief target and casualty over the course of both of those upheavals was the Royal African Company, the main corporation through which the monarchy had dominated the slave trade.



In 1831, after leading a slave rebellion, Nat Turner was captured and hanged.

Colonial Expansion and Rivalries

The leading American revolutionaries of 1775 followed a similar pattern because, in Horne’s view, the colonial elites were motivated less by the desire to build a democratic republic and carry forward the humane aspects of the Enlightenment than by a desperate and daring greed. Most wanted to seize control of and expand the slave trade, and to end the British regime’s regulation of how much American Indian lands they could take by force.

The British throne (i.e., the merchants

and Parliament now propping up the figurehead) had been striving to monopolize both of those Big Business endeavors by constraining colonial competitors. The metropole wanted to keep Britain great; the Americans wanted the latitude to prosper in “free trade.”

Horne shows how these transformations were embedded in a world of colonial expansion marked by pandemics of devastating wars embroiling England, Spain, the Netherlands, Portugal, France, the Ottoman Turks, Russia, Sweden, Denmark, Poland, Ukraine, Austria, North Africa, West Africa, Indigenous America and more.

Indeed, the climactic, bloody birth of capitalism out of feudalism in the 17th century saw no more than ten years of relative peace. The impact on Britain was typical:

A quarter or perhaps even a third of the adult male population may have been in arms in the British Isles during this period. Casualties were astronomical, higher as a proportion of population than the catastrophic figures of the First World War. The figures for Scotland in the 1640s were even higher and those of Ireland higher still.

Horne tracks how the global power struggles between and within kingdoms and empires segued into colonialism and into forms of forced labor that crystallized into racialized slavery, and also into religious and racist justifications for the seizure of the lands of indigenes.

While continually warring among themselves, predatory European states were unified in their focus on plundering African societies in search of free labor to extract raw materials, raise various valued crops and maximize manufacturing and trade advantages.

Gilded Myths and Ugly Realities

Throughout *Apocalypse of Settler Colonialism*, Horne foreshadows the ways in which the gilded myth of the origins and goals of the American Revolution of 1776 — the banal blandishments of the ways in which America Is Great, then or now — blind many people to the ugly underlying realities that mark the 1600s.

Time and again he points out that it was not just Southerners who amassed wealth via slavery, but also the richest res-

idents of New England, New York and Pennsylvania.

The wealthy and powerful opportunists of the 17th century developed an ideology and legal system that protected slavery by supplanting the previously reigning religious divisions within West European societies with a more broadly unifying notion of “whiteness” — a category that included not just feuding Protestants and Catholics but also, though to a more porous extent, wealthy Jews and Muslims.

England’s takeover of Jamaica from the Spanish in 1655 and ouster of the Dutch from Manhattan in 1664 provided tactical models that the American Colonists followed in the 18th century.

In both instances, Horne shows, whiteness was used to unite hitherto hostile factions of European elites and to offer sustenance and prospects for economic security, if not advancement, to indentured “whites” and “white” workers who had tended to become rebellious in the colonies, and to align sometimes with Africans and Indians along class lines.

This era saw the emergence of laws barring “whites” from meeting or marrying members of the population assigned to the bottom castes. Becoming an armed servant or overseer with material and social benefits was an offer most European settlers couldn’t refuse if they wanted to avoid poverty, prison or banishment to even harsher environments.

Once enlisted in the settler-colony project, whether directly in the capture and control of slaves, and whether willingly or simply to avoid worsening of the conditions of their own bondage, “whites” were conditioned to new ways of thinking about the world and their place in it.

The process has taken a devastating psychic toll on the Europeans who were incorporated into the “white” project. Some have been desensitized from identifying with the pain and suffering of the “other.” Some are gripped by fears and hatred resulting from their realization that the “other” may pose a justly vengeful threat to their own well-being.

Horne lifts his eyes from the past on regular occasions to tie the experiences of 17th-century “whites” to the political behavior of their generational offspring 300 years later:

Out of this crucible [i.e. being transformed from conscripted dissidents to “overseers or soldiers” to keep Africans and indigenous peoples in check — JW] emerged the renewed and more toxic racial identity that was “whiteness,” which also involved an alliance among Europeans of various class backgrounds, all bound by petrified unity in reaction to the prospect of a slave rebellion that would liquidate them all.



America’s origins, rooted in colonialism, slavery and genocide against Native people.

... This noxious cross-class unity, in other words, metastasized as it traversed North America, where it became unified by the prospect of excluding, if not plundering, those not inducted into the hallowed halls of whiteness, a trait manifested as recently as November 2016.

Problematic Judgment

Despite, however, the meticulous evidence Horne presents that affords a deeper understanding of the underbelly of advances in individual rights, working-class organization and political participation, his concluding analysis addresses none of those achievements.

Horne has compiled a powerful and convincing indictment in “Apocalypse Now,” the book’s last chapter, but when he assumes the role of judge in the case, I find his assessment unsatisfactory. Readers hoping for insights into how they might build a more just and humane society here in the USA or anywhere else won’t get much help.

Let me first declare that I find the notion that the experiences of any human group — regardless of ethnicity, nationality, religious affiliation, gender identity or race — destine them for a uniquely apocalyptic suffering or divinely conferred greatness, to be morally toxic and analytically myopic.

This sort of mythic delusion can be useful in uniting groups, to be sure, but it lays the seeds for new forms of bias, disunity and discord. This credo colors my disappointment in Horne’s closing analysis when he writes:

Fortunately, the world has changed and the room for maneuver for white supremacy and capitalism in the United States is not as capacious as it was in North America and the Caribbean in the seventeenth century. This raises the distinct possibility for a decisive turning of the tide against this malignant force at some point in the twenty-first

century. [Emphasis added — JW]

“This malignant force:” The referent is ambiguous. The term seems to apply to “white supremacy and capitalism,” but the grammatical force centers on “the United States” and the commentary that follows supports the feeling that it is the United States itself that is demonized in Horne’s apocalyptic vision.

He says that overcoming “this malignant force” in a timely fashion will “require at least an acknowledgment” (he doesn’t say by whom, but by implication we and they somehow know who they are) that the “great leap forward for those Europeans who were enriched” through settler colonialism constituted “nothing short of an apocalypse” for “Africans and the indigenous.”

I don’t think requiring Euro-Americans to utter some sort of confession of guilt, and/or proof of what many today call “wokeness,” can advance coalition-building in a progressive cause. It amounts to a hazing initiation.

Stances that presume moral superiority can cause a reverse effect — resentment and opposition — in those who are targeted. An unenforceable call for some sort of recognition of apocalyptic suffering inflicted by one’s own group is only doubling-down on a bet that playing an ace victim card will win out in a game of identity politics.

It was and is, after all, an identity con game that has wovened destructive “white” alliances Horne shows to have been so damaging not only to the interests of exploited Africans and indigenous people in this hemisphere but also to their potential “white” allies.

Should Americans, presumably “white” ones, be called upon (and by whom?) to confess that their national creation myth ignores the country’s foundation in slavery

and dispossession? Undergoing even that therapy would offer little to them in Horne's counseling, because even if they do "confront the ugly reality" of *What Has Made/Makes America Great Again*, he says that that insight would "induce persistent sleeplessness interrupted by haunted dreams."

So they're damned if they fess up to the "malignancy" and damned if they don't.

Where to Find Allies?

Returning to history from his prophetic incantation, Horne finds that two world-historic events have undermined that "malignant force" now more openly revealed to be the United States itself.

The first such event was the "general crisis of the entire slave system ... ignited" by the Haitian Revolution of 1791. (Whether the Haitians' victory was indeed the key to ending legalized slavery and undermining white-supremacist ideology in the Western Hemisphere is debatable; if it really fomented a "corollary crisis for white supremacy," as Horne asserts, the Haitians have wound up in an unenviable situation.)

The second such event, Horne continues, was the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, which led to the rise of the Soviet Union as a rival of the MFing (Malignant-Forcing) United States.

The USSR thrust "the question of class onto center stage," Horne notes, and "reflexively" helped to "erode the capitalist world's maniacal obsession with race."

Furthermore, Moscow's ascendance as a pole organized around a different sort of political economy "forced Washington to work out an entente with China some four odd decades ago."

The rise of China, "this sprawling nation led by a communist party," has placed it "in the passing lane" in its race with the USA, Horne concludes, and in doing so China poses a crisis "for all aspects of the hydra-headed monster that arose in the 17th century — white supremacy and capitalism not least."

As with the significance that he loads onto the Haitian Revolution, here too I am leery of his assumption that the American public now being ripped off by the super-rich "One Percenters" would come out better if they were traveling along in that passing lane in the car China is driving. (China's car is running right over union organizers, free speech champions, religious dissidents, environmentalists, ethnic minorities, women's groups et al.)

Horne maintains that those Americans who are struggling in the USA today against "nefarious domestic trends" — especially those who are "descendants of enslaved Africans and dispossessed indigenes" — would be "better served by spending less time debating with the American Civil

Liberties Union about the 'rights' of fascists and more time conversing with actual allies in Beijing, Moscow, Havana, Brussels, Pretoria and elsewhere."

Huh? Bypass anyone and everyone in Washington DC altogether? Forgo domestic politics? And how "actual" are those putative allies? I think it is to our peril to ignore the struggle over the rights of those labeled fascists.

Once we supplant the Trumpite reactionaries with a better set of politicians, we will foul our own nest if we say that those we label as "fascists" have no rights. If we weaken our Bill of Rights to destroy our political opponents, we will merely furnish future governments not to our liking to use the same tactics against us.

We already are seeing how the Trumpites have seized and expanded upon some questionable methods of the Obama administration. We must not just "go high when they go low," as Michelle Obama has noted, we must also make people understand why this must be so.

Horne says that the aim of those Americans most damaged by the manifold injustices in our nation's past should be to work toward a "massive program of reparations that — I trust — will accelerate in coming decades."

Accelerate? That program hasn't even pulled out into the slow lane, let alone into that passing lane. The question of reparations is but one of the political issues in the cart, but what's needed first is finding a horse to pull it. Progressive political organizations need to figure out how to connect and grow so we can put our political representatives in office.

Reparations and other corrective measures will have to be worked out in an appropriate agenda. Regardless of how such arrangements may come about, African Americans will have to have a lot more on their minds and in their sights than reparations.

The Importance of Movements

Horne's powerful survey of the complex political and military conflicts of the 17th century world — particularly his tracking of the recorded legal, punitive and ideological evidence of racialized oppression wrought by settler colonialism and the slave trade — actually undercuts his "apocalypso"-exceptionalist argument.

He shows why our country and world face a number of greed-caused ailments and challenges, but he ignores or slights progressive movements. In several places in this book he constructs a straw man of progressives or radicals whom he chastises roundly but doesn't identify.

He accuses them — presumably scholars, textbook writers and that sort — of deny-

ing or ignoring the ugly aspects of the forces that gave rise to the Enlightenment and to the American Revolution. He describes them only generically as "radicals," "progressives," contingents of "the left."

True, in 1688 and again in 1776, the rallying cry of "freedom" and liberty" often masked a drive for economic gain to be amassed by slavery and by displacement of American Indians. And yes, Puritans were as much involved as Planters. But are we to put blinders on and assume that that is the sum total of what "liberty" and "freedom" meant to any and all who sought to break away from England?

The campaigns of revolutionary democrats like Thomas Paine or of the abolitionists in the 19th century are almost entirely absent from this book. Only abolitionist Senator Charles Sumner is permitted an appearance, with his observation from 1853 concerning the enslavement of whites on the Barbary Coast of Africa:

New Englanders being enslaved by Africans seemed to do little to sour these settlers on enslavement; to the contrary it seemed to ignite an opposing reaction. ... [Sumner] railed against this "inconsistency" among Euro-Americans: "using the best of their endeavors for the freedom of their white people" but busily enslaving others. He declaimed, "Every word of reprobation which they fastened upon the piratical slaveholding Algerians" somehow "return[ed] in eternal judgment against themselves."

This book contains no other reference to the inspired, sustained and courageous progressive movements not only among American revolutionaries but also later among "white" abolitionists, war resisters, anti-colonialists, civil rights campaigners, trade union organizers, defenders of the rights of Asian and Latino immigrants and citizens, feminists, anti-monopolists, ecologists and the like.

The hard truth is that no minority nationality of 10-20% can make a revolution on its own. Coalitions and alliances are needed, and political ideologies and programs need to help support or open the way to such formations. And that means engaging with as many of those who call themselves "white" as possible, and fostering respect, cooperation, fairness and good will towards one another on a humanistic basis.

The greatest contribution Horne has made in his delineation of the "apocalypse" is his richly documented refutation of the notion that our country's past furnishes examples of how America can be Made Great either Again or Soon.

Looking back at the precolonial, pre-industrial societies in Africa, the Americas, Asia or Europe will furnish few models for celebration or imitation. Violence, repression and injustice were everywhere. We've got to move ahead and make our own way. ■

Colorblind Law — NOT

By Dianne Feeley

The Color of Law:
A Forgotten History of How
Our Government Segregated
America

By Richard Rothstein
New York: Liveright Publishing
Corporation, 348 pages, paper \$17.95,
cloth \$27.95

CONTRARY TO VARIOUS U.S. Supreme Court rulings that side-stepped or outright denied the role of local, state and federal governments in imposing racial segregation in America, *The Color of Law* recounts the many ways that bias has been, in fact, state sponsored. In a dozen chapters Richard Rothstein outlines the particular mechanisms that prevented African Americans from exercising their constitutional rights. Although his focus is housing segregation he discusses how that in turn leads to school segregation.

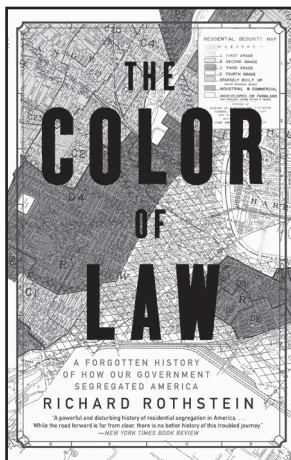
Segregation has impoverished African-American communities, often confining them to the most toxic and air-polluting areas. Housing stock is older and the infrastructure less maintained. As a result, African-American children develop major health problems, particularly high rates of asthma and lead poisoning.

Whether the lead is absorbed through water pipes or through peeling lead paint, it attacks the developing brains of the youngest and most vulnerable. Yet these children then attend segregated schools, where the handicap of impoverishment is reinforced.

This two-step process of segregated communities and segregated education deprives African Americans of resources available to most white working-class families. It cuts them off from the informal networks through which people learn about job opportunities and prevents them from building up the wealth that working people accumulate through their housing.

Rothstein points to the reality that the median white household wealth is 90% greater than Black household wealth. This means that African-American families have less ability to borrow from their home equi-

Dianne Feeley is an activist in Detroit Eviction Defense and an editor of ATC.



ty in emergencies, whether to tide the family over during layoffs or to weather medical catastrophes. In the 2008-09 economic crisis Black families disproportionately lost their homes.

Segregation by State Action

In the preface Rothstein states that “Residential racial segregation by state

action is a violation of our Constitution and its Bill of Rights.” (viii) He cites the Fifth Amendment, which prohibits the federal government from treating citizens unequally, as well as the post-Civil War era Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments. Additionally, with the passage of the 1866 Civil Rights Bill, Congress outlawed actions that were a characteristic of slavery, such as racial discrimination in housing.

Due to the severe effects of segregation, Rothstein argues, “desegregation is not just a desirable policy; it is a constitutional as well as moral obligation that we are required to fulfill.” (xi) In his epilogue the author refutes Chief Justice John Roberts’ remark that residential segregation “is a product not of state action but of private choices, it does not have constitutional implications.” Flowing from Roberts’ statement is the conclusion that government remedies are out of the question.

Rothstein maintains the opposite is true: “Residential segregation was created by state action, making it necessary to invoke the inseparable complement of the Roberts principle: where segregation is the product of state action, it has constitutional implications and requires a remedy.” (215)

If African Americans, at least since the Civil War, were guaranteed these rights, how could odious laws and practices that enforced housing segregation flourish, North and South? Through specific cases, Rothstein outlines the various ways. These include local zoning laws, construction of segregated public housing, the federal requirement

prohibiting mortgages in integrated neighborhoods, and the approval of restricted covenants.

Several chapters build Rothstein’s case that the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) — created by Franklin Roosevelt in 1934 — played a huge role in not only promoting systematic “redlining” but also in financing white developments such as Levittown.

In fact, the book’s cover reproduces a color-coded map similar to those created for every U.S. metropolitan area for a New Deal housing agency. These maps were to aid assessing the risk of a homeowner’s possible mortgage default.

In 1935 the FHA produced an *Underwriting Manual* instructions for outlining the process of evaluating mortgages. The maps were colored green to represent a white middle-class area while red was considered a “risky” neighborhood. Rosenfeld comments, “A neighborhood earned a red color if African Americans lived in it, even if it was a solid middle-class neighborhood of single-family homes.” (64)

Each chapter begins with a photograph or advertisement that illustrates the role the government at one level or another played in segregated housing. This includes a 1941 photograph of a wall constructed by a developer in Detroit who wanted to build whites-only housing but was forced by the FHA, in order to obtain financing, to delineate the area from nearby African-American housing. (The wall still stands today, although it has been painted with murals. And since Detroit is 82% Black, the housing on both sides is now occupied by African Americans.)

VA Segregation Schemes

Following World War II, the newly established Veterans Administration (VA) began guaranteeing mortgages to returning veterans. It followed the FHA housing policies; by 1950 the two federal agencies underwrote half of all new mortgages. They also were the gold standard for banks and insurance companies.

Levittown with its 17,500 homes could only have been built with the pre-approval of the FHA. Rothstein details what pre-approval meant — reviewing and approving design specifications, use of construction

materials, proposed sale price for two-bedroom homes with no down payment, neighborhood zoning restrictions (no commercial or industrial sites), and “a commitment not to sell to African Americans.”

In fact, “The FHA even withheld approval if the presence of African Americans in nearby neighborhoods threatened integration.” (71)

Similarly, Metropolitan Life Insurance Company built New York City apartments such as Parkchester (12,000 units) and Stuyvesant Town (9,000 units) for whites only with state and city cooperation. In fact, to build Stuyvesant Town the city had to condemn and clear an 18-square block integrated neighborhood. It transferred the property to the insurance company, which also won a 25-year tax abatement. Forty percent of those evicted were Black or Puerto Rican; many were only able to find segregated housing elsewhere.

Public Housing, A Tool for Segregation

Rothstein reviews the history of U.S. public housing, which was first built to alleviate the housing shortage during World War I. At that time 83 projects in 26 states housed 170,000 white workers and their families, excluding African Americans.

In the early days of the New Deal, the Public Works Administration (PWA) expanded the program and opened it to Black families, but only under segregated conditions. Of the PWA’s 47 projects, 17 were assigned to African Americans, two dozen reserved for whites only, and six were complexes with separate buildings for white and Black families.

The Color of Law points out that the real estate industry was always bitterly opposed to public housing. Once the housing shortage eased, white families, able to obtain mortgages in the post-World War II era, could move to the more spacious suburbs.

Further, the real estate lobby was suc-

cessful in having federal and local regulations set strict upper-income limits for families in public housing. Under the new regulations, previous low-rise, scatter-site, well-maintained public housing patterns were transformed. By the late 1960s this housing was “a warehousing system for the poor.”

Rothstein concludes the chapter on public housing with the comment: “We can only wonder what our urban areas would look like today if, instead of creating segregation where it never, or perhaps barely, existed, federal and local governments had pushed in the opposite direction, using public housing as an example of how integrated living could be successful.” (37)

Fighting for Integrated Housing

While noting that individual prejudice does exist, Rothstein maintains that the state had an obligation to resist such views but instead “endorsed and reinforced it, actively and aggressively.” (216) The author cites several cases where a union, a church, a civil rights organization or even a progressive developer supported Blacks in their attempt to secure housing.

For example, the case of Ford workers in the UAW local in Richmond, California outlines both the union’s determination to secure integrated housing and government opposition. In the 1950s Ford closed its plant there, moving to a new facility in Milpitas, 50 miles south. Union leaders met with Ford executives and negotiated an agreement to transfer all 1,400 workers, including 250 Blacks.

Milpitas residents responded by passing an ordinance allowing only single-family homes. Developers then got approval from the FHA to build inexpensive single-family homes. *But the approval was contingent on prohibiting mortgages to African Americans.*

The union then asked the American Friends Service Committee to help the chair of the local’s housing committee find a

developer willing to build integrated housing. After locating four possible sites, only to be outfoxed through the quick adoption of new zoning laws, the developer gave up. A second developer proposed building two segregated projects — the white one in a suburban area and the nominally integrated one in a heavily industrialized area.

Given the possibility of housing near to the plant, even if segregated, union members debated whether to accept the proposal, voting to adopt a policy that it would only support integrated housing. Many Blacks who transferred to the Milpitas plant drove back and forth to Richmond every day until the late 1960s, when a rising civil rights movement changed the dynamic.

Although some of Rothstein’s stories end in success, all had to overcome governmental policies. Woven through the chapters is the story of how individuals, Black and white, and the organizations they turned to, fought for integrated housing. But detailed plans were blocked by the FHA and VA.

Rothstein also discusses various court challenges beginning in 1883, when the U.S. Supreme Court rejected the argument “that exclusions from the housing market could be a ‘badge or incident’ of slavery” under the Thirteenth Amendment. It would take a 1968 Supreme Court decision to reject that 1883 interpretation. Although the 1968 Fair Housing Act determined that racial discrimination in housing is unconstitutional, enforcement has always been weak.

The author concludes with a list of specific things that could have been done: telling developers they could only have FHA guarantees if they built integrated housing, refusing to endorse restrictive covenants, denying licenses to real estate agents who attempted to impose segregation, opposing segregated schools, enabling equal access of African Americans to labor rights, and so on.

He also offers a few suggestions regarding what can be done today. Frankly I fought his suggestions too mild, but Rothstein’s bedrock principle is that affirmative programs are needed to tear down the walls that condemn a sizable proportion of Black and brown people to inferior education and housing.

He remarks that “segregation can give whites an unrealistic belief in their own superiority.” (196) Realizing that the task of reversing segregation and inequality is difficult, Rothstein maintains that we must recognize what has been done and accept responsibility for change.

Even if many of the laws and racist practices are known to the reader, *The Color of Law* is excellent in telling concrete stories that summarize a history of discrimination that must be understood in order to be transformed. ■

Our Fall-Winter Fundraiser

As this issue goes to press, the fundraising appeal for *Against the Current* has passed the 50% threshold of our \$5000 goal. The time frame, as we explained in our annual letter to subscribers, runs through the expanded holiday season from Halloween through America’s (more or less secular) midwinter festival, Super Bowl Sunday (February 4).

Our readers’ generous contributions greatly help to keep the magazine sustainable and affordable. Many thanks to those who’ve already donated! If you haven’t yet done so, you can mail your check to:

Against the Current
7012 Michigan Avenue
Detroit MI 48210

This is tax-deductible if paid to Center for Changes, which publishes *ATC*. Or go online to www.solidarity-us.org/donate and specify *Against the Current* as the purpose of your donation. As our letter explained, for a donation of \$100 or more you’re entitled to a book of your choice (contact cfc@igc.org for specifics).

We look forward to a dynamic and challenging year for socialist politics in 2019. Thanks again from the *ATC* editors and staff!

REVIEW

A Revolutionary Detroit Memoir By Dan Georgakas

What My Left Hand Was Doing

By Joann Castle

Against the Tide Books, 2018, 334 pages, paper \$22

JOANN CASTLE'S MEMOIR chronicles how a white, working-class mother of six children evolved into a revolutionary socialist involved with the Black Liberation movement. Her title comes from Walter Benjamin writing about the inadequacy of "competence" versus the strengths of improvisations. Benjamin concluded, "All decisive blows are stuck left-handed."

Castle was brought up as a Catholic by conservative Irish-German parents. Three days after her high school graduation, she got a job in the personnel department of Ford Motor where she met Don Castle, her future husband. They lived in Taylor Township, which she describes as a predominately "redneck" community with little sympathy for nearby Detroit.

Although her parents were hostile to Blacks, the teenaged Castle had been inspired by the militancy of Rosa Parks and horrified by the murder of Emmet Till. These feelings inspired activism when the impact of Vatican II was brought to Detroit by 35-year-old Father William Cunningham, a powerful speaker with a commanding presence.

Castle writes she was "transfixed" by Cunningham's vision of a society with equal rights for all and greatly affected by the murder in Alabama of civil rights activist Viola Liuzzo, a fellow Detroiters. Don Castle also responded positively to Cunningham's activism.

Through church retreats and related community activism, she came to know Blacks living in Detroit. During her sixth pregnancy, the opportunity arose to buy a large house in a majority-Black area of Detroit.

The Castles had been in their new home for only a few months when the Great Rebellion of 1967 erupted. Castle captures the bewilderment of those days and the fears she felt. Rather than considering white flight when the Great Rebellion subsided, the Castles focused on how to heal their wounded city.

Dan Georgakas is co-author of Detroit: I Do Mind Dying and My Detroit: Growing up Greek and American in Motor City.



Joann Castle opening a book club meeting, 1970.

avoid and what positions she must advocate. She increasingly resented the paternalism and authoritarianism of the Church and ultimately found it was unbearable.

The Church's birth control restrictions were especially troubling. She concluded, "My church has misused me as a human being." Her husband, however, remained comfortable with patriarchal Church practices. She writes with sadness, "I gave up my religion and unconsciously I began to tear at the remaining ties that bound me to the last part of my old self: marriage." This led to a divorce.

Activist Organizer

These opening chapters of Castle's memoir are invaluable to anyone wishing to organize urban whites raised in a conservative tradition. There is no hallelujah moment, decisive incident, or physical violence at play, only humanistic reactions to actual events in the city and nation.

In Part 5 of her memoir, Castle encapsulates for would-be organizers what she has learned about organizing, but the meat of the book is her account of her own emotional and intellectual responses to events as they unfolded.

While working in the Catholic milieu, Castle met Sheila Murphy, whose parents were leaders of the local branch of the Catholic Worker movement. Murphy was a pivotal figure in the West Central Organization that was dealing with a myriad of social issues. Although Murphy was ten years her junior, Castle identified with her political activism and states that Murphy was "a major transformative force in my life."

Castle soon found the Church hierarchy good on promises of aid but poor on delivering it, sometimes even mismanaging poverty funds. She became resentful when told what people and groups she must

Two years after the Detroit Rebellion, James Forman, working with the League of Revolutionary Black Workers and other groups, issued a *Black Manifesto* asking religious institutions to atone for their past racism by paying reparations to militant Black organizations.

Half a million dollars was eventually raised. A portion of those funds went to Black Star, the publishing unit of the League headed by Mike Hamlin, one of the League's founders. During meetings regarding the *Black Manifesto*, Castle met Hamlin, whom she would later marry.

Another major organizing initiative project in 1970 was the founding of the Control, Conflict, & Change Book Club (CCC) under the leadership of Castle and Murphy. The CCC was launched as a joint project by the League and the Motor City Labor League, an allied organization of white radicals, as an educational forum primarily for whites who wanted to know more about the League and the Black liberation movement. No one anticipated that 350 people would show up for the first meeting.

Each CCC session featured a lecture on a book (sometimes the speaker was the author) followed by small discussion groups, usually led by a member of the League. Local radical writers such as George Rawick were presenters, as were national personalities such as David Dellinger and Jane Fonda. The first book chosen, at the suggestion of Mike Hamlin, was *The Man Who Cried I Am* by John Williams.

Castle excels at capturing the nuts and bolts of organizing. She is candid about the problems as well as the successes of an amazingly successful project. A major crisis developed in 1972 when Castle came into conflict with Murphy, who was in a relationship with attorney Ken Cockrel, another League founder.

With the League beginning to crumble, Murphy wanted CCC and the Motor City Labor League to support Cockrel's plan to engage in local electoral politics. Castle opposed the change in strategy. The end result was the dissolution of the CCC.

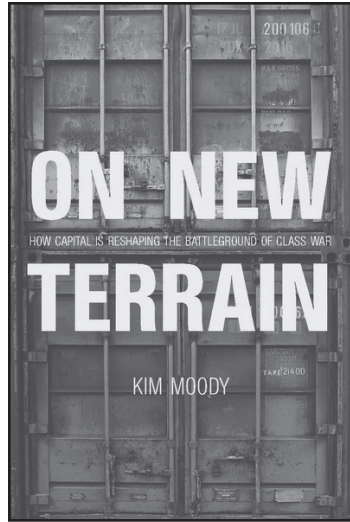
Castle was not directly involved in *Black Manifesto* activism, but due to Forman's association with Hamlin, he and his family moved into her home. She writes appreciatively of Forman's historic contributions to the movement. Forman was an intellectual

continued on page 34

REVIEW

Class War on New Ground By Barry Eidlin

On New Terrain:
How Capital is Reshaping the Battleground of Class War
By Kim Moody
Haymarket Books, 2017, 308 pages,
paper \$18, ebook \$9.99



SOCIALISTS ARE IN a hurry these days. With the idea of socialism catching on among a widening swath of the U.S. population, and class conflict showing signs of heating up there can be little time for idle talk. Rather, there is an urgent need to diagnose the current political and economic situation, identify what is new and what is not about that situation, and propose a strategy for the way forward based on the diagnosis.

This is exactly what Kim Moody sets out to do — and largely accomplishes — in his latest book, *On New Terrain*. Rather than ease the reader into his argument with the customary quirky anecdote, Moody gets straight to work on page one, deftly sketching in a terse, three-page introduction the broad strokes of the political and economic challenges facing today's working class.

He then lays out his plan of attack for the rest of the book: 1) assesses how the US working class has changed since the 1970s; 2) assesses how capital has changed, and the challenges and opportunities this has created for working-class resistance; and 3) assesses how U.S. politics has changed, and what this portends for a revival of class politics. The result is a clear-eyed, tightly-argued account of how capitalism has changed, and what this means for the future of class conflict.

Few are better positioned to offer this analysis. Through more than five decades of engaging and analyzing left and labor movements, Moody has developed a keen Marxist analytical eye. From his early days in Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), to his time as a socialist labor activist and founder and director of *Labor Notes* magazine, to his role as an author of several

Barry Eidlin is a member of Solidarity and an Assistant Professor of Sociology at McGill University. His book Labor and the Class Idea in the United States and Canada is published by Cambridge University Press (2018).

books on the changing working class, Moody has consistently advanced a perspective that offers sober analysis without succumbing to defeatism.

The thread tying his work together is a persistent focus on movement building and worker self-activity. While he never sugar-coats the structural obstacles that workers face, the constant renewal and reinvention of

working-class resistance allows Moody to stave off cynicism.

In *On New Terrain*, a key part of Moody's analysis involves challenging many of the commonly-held shibboleths about the so-called "new economy" and "new world of work." Key among these are the supposed rise in precarious work and technological change. (See for example his article "Is There a Gig Economy?" in *Against the Current* 197 — ed.)

Through careful analysis of available statistical data, Moody cuts through the conventional wisdom, showing that work casualization has not increased nearly as much as often proclaimed, and that precarious work is an enduring feature of employment relations under capitalism. To be sure, apps may be making it easier for some people to find temporary work, but this is merely the latest iteration of an enduring trend.

What *has* changed, Moody argues, is something more fundamental: the rate of exploitation. Simply put, capital has gotten better at squeezing more work out of every minute of every work day.

Some of this has come from new technology, which has served to intensify work as well as replace workers. It has also happened through more banal methods like shortening break times. But much has come through a combination of speedup and job standardization known as "lean production." While this began in the auto industry, it has since spread across all sectors of the economy, including service jobs in health care, education, and retail.

This work reorganization has given

management much more control over the workplace, giving them the power not only to intensify work, but to keep wages and benefits in check. The result has been a massive income transfer from workers' wages to corporate profits — often referred to with the more neutral-sounding "growing inequality" — while making work harder and less stable for almost everyone.

New Class Composition

What's also changed is the composition of the working class. Although the stereotypical white male blue-collar worker may be less prevalent than in the past, he has been joined by legions of women and workers of color.

Many work in care industries, tasked with jobs once done in the home, for free, often by women. Others work in the rapidly-expanding transportation and logistics sector. Still others do proletarianized white-collar work in offices, call centers, hospitals, and retail. This group comprises roughly two-thirds of the U.S. workforce. If we add their non-working family members and the unemployed, they make up fully three-quarters of the U.S. population.

The working class is still the overwhelming majority — but it looks different than it did a few decades ago.

It is also located in different places than it used to be. The large urban factories of yesteryear may be gone, but have been replaced by highly concentrated work settings like hospitals, call centers, and office towers. Factories are moving to rural areas, while massive logistics hubs ring the suburbs around major cities.

This job relocation is itself a consequence of the massive concentration and centralization of capital over the past four decades. Waves of mergers and acquisitions have consolidated major industries like auto, steel, transportation, media, entertainment, travel, food service and health care. Driven by an imperative of "maximizing shareholder value," these companies are also capital-intensive, squeezing every penny out of their investments.

This creates both challenges and opportunities for labor. The downside of work intensification, wage stagnation, and increased corporate power, is well-known.

But as Moody points out, there are upsides: Workers tend to be grouped in more integrated, capital-intensive workplac-

es, linked together by potentially vulnerable supply chains. This creates new opportunities for leverage. Similarly, corporate consolidation along industry lines means that organizing particular employers can have effects across entire industries.

Labor's Challenges

The question is whether or not workers have the capacity to take advantage of these opportunities. Here there are grounds for skepticism.

U.S. unions have struggled to adapt to this new terrain, adopting defensive strategies like agreeing to concessions and trying to “partner” with management in an ever-failing effort to save jobs. They too have consolidated, with the idea that “bigger is better.” More far-seeing elements pursued innovations like “neutrality agreements” that pressured employers to bypass union elections and bargain directly, but these have achieved limited success.

Missing from these strategies, Moody argues, is a focus on rebuilding labor's ultimate source of power: its membership. Indeed, many official revitalization strategies like mergers and negotiating neutrality agreements have drawn attention away from member mobilization in favor of leadership- and staff-driven research and negotiations.

Strikes have largely disappeared, even though some groups of workers have shown that militant action can still win gains.

Much of this is a consequence of the model of postwar business unionism, which largely eliminated the “militant minority” of shop-floor leadership that formed labor's backbone for much of its history. It also instilled a bureaucratic culture within labor that has proven difficult to dislodge.

Nonetheless, Moody sees in today's rumblings the seeds of “a wave of rank and file rebellion” that shares more of a common program for transforming labor than the previous upsurge in the 1960s and '70s. Their focus on workplace-based organizing and direct action, while far from a sure-fire recipe for success, is a necessary component of any labor turnaround.

But labor's challenges are not limited to the workplace. Capital's reorganization of production has accompanied and been abetted by its reshaping of the political realm. The accession of Trump, a billionaire real estate developer, to the presidency is but the latest chapter in this broader story.

Central to that story is the growth and corporate takeover of state-level government. As state legislatures became more professionalized, fulltime bodies, they became a target for business, which played states against each other in an ever-intensifying search for tax breaks and other incentives.

At the same time, more state legislatures were taken over by committed rightwing ideologues, who use the fiscal crisis created by corporate giveaways to implement austerity measures, cutting social programs and public sector jobs, all while attacking teachers and public sector unions as the source of the states' financial troubles. Together with union decline and a rightward drift at the federal level abetted by Republican and Democratic administrations alike, workers' political voice has been muffled.

Changing The Democratic Party?

But what of the Democrats? Leaving aside its corporate wing, is it not possible for activists to take over parts of the party organization and pull it in a more leftward direction? This indeed has been the goal of several generations of activists, whose efforts have consistently come to naught. Is there reason to think that things could be different this time around?

Moody is skeptical. While the structure of the Democratic Party gives the appear-

ance of a “hollow” organization ripe for takeover, the reality is that much of the formal organization is hollow precisely because it doesn't matter. What does matter for the party is its fundraising apparatus and its ability to serve as a source of jobs.

The professionalization of politics over the past several decades has meant the disappearance of the smoke-filled rooms and machine politics of the past. But in its place has not come a more responsive, representative Democratic Party. Instead, it has become a “professionalized, well-funded, and elite-run multitermed conglomerate with a permanent bureaucracy at its core.” (130)

That structure is much less permeable, while also being necessary for any candidate to have much hope for winning office. Meanwhile, more centralized control of legislative caucuses means that even those few leftwing candidates who can run the gauntlet and win office still face tremendous obstacles to moving any kind of left political agenda when they enter the legislature. The result, as Moody sees it, is a Democratic

A Revolutionary Detroit Memoir — *continued from page 32*

and a visionary. But in Detroit he did not do well with the rank and file. This led him to become divisive and erratic, and sloppy about security in her home. She found it necessary to ask him to leave.

Partnership and Tensions

Mike Hamlin became chairman of the Black Workers Congress (1971-1973), a national effort to mobilize Black workers originally conceived by the League. During this period, Castle believes the FBI's COINTELPRO program, aimed at infiltrating and wrecking radical movements influenced the decline of the BWC, which became very sectarian and destructed through a series of political purges and splits.

Castle does not dwell at length on the “white wife” controversies of the period, but just telling her own story reveals the tensions of the times. Although she was disowned by her parents who would not accept her marriage to a Black man, Hamlin's family was welcoming.

Some male and female Black radicals were unhappy with leaders pairing with white women. Far more serious was the social segregation in most of the city. Her children, however, would become close with their Hamlin-Castle siblings. One reason the children were so accommodating was that

although Castle was always frank with them about her political positions, she accepted but never demanded their participation.

In the early 1970s, Castle was hired by Metropolitan Hospital, where she would remain for 23 years. She began her community health experience in the emergency room. She writes of her efforts to improve patient care and to upgrade working conditions of health workers, an example of a revolutionary socialist still making an impact after the peak of the movement had passed.

More about Hamlin's continued radical activism in Detroit would have been welcome, but Castle keeps the focus on her activities, satisfied that before his death in 2016, Hamlin published his own memoir: *A Black Revolutionary's Life in Labor: Black Workers Power in Detroit* (Against the Tide Books. 2013).

The longterm perspectives of Hamlin and Castle are summed up in Castle's account of a dinner with a former deeply committed activist who felt the movement had lost on every front. He believed nothing had changed and lamented giving his best years to hopeless causes.

Hamlin responded by speaking of being raised in a sharecropper's shack in a very segregated Mississippi and how Black consciousness had been profoundly altered since those times. Social changes had not been sufficient, but he thought enormous change had occurred in the every day life of America. Hamlin's final judgment was, “Everything we did mattered.” Castle offers an often poignant account of what some of those actions entailed. ■



Party “cul-de-sac.”

Is there a way out? If there is, Moody argues that it must start with “sustainable, dense, overlapping grassroots networks capable of bringing companies, industries, and cities to a halt when needed to disrupt “politics as usual.” Simply put, “without social upsurge in the cities there can be no electoral breakthrough.” (165, 167)

Problems of Resistance

On New Terrain offers a provocative, thoughtful analysis of how capital has reshaped the political and economic terrain over the past several decades, and how this changes the tasks faced by those who seek to challenge capital’s rule.

Clearly, those tasks are daunting. But they are not impossible. Moody’s analysis shows how the very processes that have consolidated capital’s power have also created points of contradiction and crisis. These in turn create new openings for organized resistance.

If there is room to challenge Moody’s analysis, it is precisely in his assessment of these openings. Here I see him at times too sanguine, and at others too pessimistic.

In the “too sanguine” department, take for example his discussion of logistics.

Aside from the oft-mentioned point that tightly-integrated supply chains create possible “chokepoints” in the global circulation of capital, Moody argues that they have also created new concentrations of workers in strategic locations, particularly in the suburbs surrounding Chicago and Los Angeles, and stretching along the New Jersey Turnpike.

This is certainly true. But Moody underestimates the gap between the potential and realization of this new source of worker power. Part of this, as Moody knows well, has to do with the multiple layers of contractors and sub-contractors that organize and atomize the logistics workforce. These types of challenges are common to many organizing campaigns and far from insurmountable, but any discussion of organizing logistics must confront this head-on.

Another part of Moody’s underestimation has to do with eliding the divide between cities and suburbs. He often speaks of “metropolitan areas” or distribution centers “in or adjacent to” such areas. (60) This makes sense when contrasting logistics to manufacturing, which has often relocated to rural areas — but it ignores the political and geographic space that separates cities and suburbs.

At a basic level, the location of logistics hubs well outside city limits imposes large time and transportation costs on those city workers who can make the commute, while fragmenting workers gathered from a wide swath of surrounding communities.

Further, the fragmentation of the U.S. political system means that there is little coordination across city and suburban governments, and the latter tend to be more conservative than the former. This limits opportunities for community-based political organizing.

These challenges have confronted those who have tried to organize logistics workers for the past few decades, and their limited success so far suggests that the challenges persist.

Possible Political Openings

More generally, though, Moody has an astute analysis of the political challenges that workers face, as explained in part 3 of the book. The problem, as he recognizes, is that examples of the kind of organizing that might overcome these challenges are few and far between.

He points to some positive cases at the municipal level, like the Richmond Progressive Alliance in California, the (now-defunct) Lorain Independent Labor Party in Ohio, or United Working Families in Chicago. Meanwhile, he is critical of most other efforts, including most notably the Bernie Sanders-affiliated Our Revolution, the New York-based Working Families Party, and other efforts to pull the Democratic Party leftward.

To a large extent this problem is not of Moody’s making. Rather, it is a function of what remains a constrained U.S. political landscape. Nonetheless, Moody is too pessimistic in his assessment of that landscape. Specifically, he misses an opportunity to engage more fully with the complex challenges that socialists face in the electoral arena today.

Certainly, his criticisms of efforts to reform the Democrats are warranted and backed up by a century of failed attempts to do so. Likewise, as limited as they are, it is important to highlight the few local success stories, even if they are not sufficient for the kind of thoroughgoing political revolution he wants.

Still, it is hard to shake the sense that something different is going on in the post-2016 election world. As Moody observed while writing the book, the post-election explosion of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) has been a watershed event for the Left. Now with well over 50,000 members, it is the closest thing to a mass left force that the United States has seen in decades.

While there must be many caveats in considering DSA’s rise and longterm prospects, it is symbolic of a broader left shift in US politics. Policies once considered beyond the pale, like a \$15/hour minimum wage, Medicare For All, and a federal job guarantee are now considered mandatory starting points for all 2020 Democratic Party presi-

dential contenders.

Beyond Sanders, a small crop of self-identified “democratic socialists” are running for office and winning. Socialism as an idea is being taken more seriously, and enjoys broader public support than it has in decades.

These are positive developments for the left. Even if these policies and the idea of socialism risk getting watered down, the mere fact that they are part of mainstream political discourse is promising. We are far removed from the days when labeling an idea as “socialist” was enough to remove it from the realm of acceptable debate. It is hard to imagine that these developments would have been possible without Sanders and others running as socialists on the Democratic Party ballot line.

Does this mean that Moody’s sophisticated and very concrete analysis of the obstacles of working within the Democratic Party is off-base? Far from it. But it does call for a serious reckoning with the tension between this analysis and the hard fact that these political campaigns within the Democratic Party are expanding the audience open to socialist ideas and helping to build socialist organization. Moody’s analysis, as incisive as it is, falls short of that strategic reckoning.

This is a small criticism of a masterful and much-needed book. For those readying themselves for battle on the new terrain of capitalism today, one would be hard-pressed to think of better preparation than this. ■

#KeepSiwatuFree

CONVICTED FOR POINTING her unloaded and registered gun at a woman who rammed her car while her two-year old was inside, Siwatu-Salama Ra was received a mandatory two-year sentence March 1, 2018 for felonious assault — apparently the jury did not believe she was frightened by the incident.

Given that Siwatu was six months pregnant, the defense sought to delay the sentence until after the birth of her child. The judge refused to delay, pronounced the sentence, and she was taken immediately into custody.

In October a judge heard Siwatu-Salama Ra’s plea for a release on bond pending the outcome of her appeal — and denied it. However an appeals court vacated the decision the following month and Judge Donald Knapp finally ordered her released on a \$15,000.

While home with the infant she delivered while in prison and reunited with her husband, daughter and mother, Siwatu must wear an electronic bracelet. Both Siwatu and her mother are movement activists in Detroit, and have been warmly embraced. Fundraising to #KeepSiwatuFree is underway. ■

REVIEW

Snoops on the Loose:

The FBI in Ecuador

By Kenneth Kincaid

The FBI in Latin America: The Ecuador Files

By Marc Becker

Duke University Press, 2017, 336 pages,
paper \$26.95

MARC BECKER'S *THE FBI in Latin America: The Ecuador Files* is a fascinating account of U.S. involvement in Ecuador during the World War II years. It adds an important dimension to our understanding of U.S. interventions in Latin America, which are so much better known in the cases of coups and destabilization efforts of the Central Intelligence Agency (Guatemala, Brazil, Chile etc.). Further, it shows the strong historical continuity in U.S. actions in Latin America, going back well before the onset of the Cold War.

In 2013, while conducting research at the National Archives and Records Administration in College Park, Maryland on social movements in Ecuador, Becker chanced upon a box of files titled "FBI in Ecuador." What he found was a historian's dream: A little known chapter in the history of U.S.-Latin American relations was at his fingertips. Moreover, the documents corresponded to one of the most important political developments of 20th century Ecuador, the Glorious Revolution.

This indeed was the discovery of a lifetime. What makes *The FBI in Latin America* an extraordinary work, additionally, is that it draws from Becker's extensive knowledge of Ecuador's social movements and political left, accrued through decades of research, meshed with the new material gleaned from boxes of FBI documents. The result is a carefully written study of U.S. efforts to stay abreast of political and economic developments in the smallest republic of the Andes.

This book does not yield big surprises when it comes to U.S. intervention in Ecuadorian politics. There are no cloak and dagger accounts reminiscent of CIA operations. However, the book does make clear what the U.S. concerns were, and how Ecuadorian leftists were aware of an FBI presence that might be working in tandem



American left, the agents were ideologically blinded.

Convoluted History

The history of the FBI in Latin America dates back to 1917 when the then Bureau of Investigation (BOI) was one of five U.S. institutions maintaining surveillance in Mexico.

In 1940, against the backdrop of World War II, the FBI inaugurated the Special Intelligence Service (SIS). This agency's mission was to "engage in foreign intelligence surveillance in the Western Hemisphere and 'other specially designated areas'" and to share that information with the State Department, military and FBI. (20)

While the SIS began modestly with 12 agents in nine countries, by 1942 there were as many as 360 agents throughout Latin America. Ecuador had 10 agents: two undercover agents in Guayaquil, three in Quito, two undercover special agents in Quito, two representatives at the U.S. Embassy in Quito and a radio operator in Quito. (34-5)

The decision to station FBI agents in Ecuador originally stemmed from U.S. concerns over the spread of fascism in the Western Hemisphere. When the fascist threat in Ecuador failed to materialize, FBI agents recalibrated their surveillance practices to report on the activities of the Ecuadorian left. (35)

Here Becker shines as his expertise on this Andean country's political left allows him to critically examine the FBI's reports.

One observation that Becker makes early on, calling into question the quality and veracity of the field reports, is that most agents had minimal language skills or under-

standing of South American politics and culture. Indeed, many of their early reports were simply reproduced from Ecuadorian newspapers.

Another aspect of the book, which one cannot help but notice, is the FBI ineptness in carrying out field work. When trying to understand the shades of the Latin

standing of South American politics and culture. Indeed, many of their early reports were simply reproduced from Ecuadorian newspapers.

Along with the agents' limited cultural and linguistic skills were their political arrogance and short-sightedness. For Becker, the Bureau's propensity for misreporting events reflected either lack of knowledge or bias and most certainly demonstrates a limited utility of these documents.

Just as revealing as who the FBI investigated was who it failed to investigate. Not only did the company ignore Indigenous people and Afro-Ecuadorians, its surveillance of Ecuadorian women reflected a bias that permeated the Bureau.

Becker points out of the prominent female leaders of the Communist Party, a group that included Nela Martínez, María Luisa Gómez de la Torre, Dolores Cacuango and Tránsito Amaguaña, only Martínez, who was also a *suplente* (or alternate) deputy in Ecuador's National Assembly, "received any significant attention" from the FBI.

Even the Bureau's reporting on her was "partial and problematic." When Martínez became the first woman ever to be seated as a deputy in Ecuador's Congress, the FBI failed to acknowledge the feat, and even stated that she "did not participate in the Assembly." (78)

Much of the FBI surveillance took place during World War II. As such, the pendulum of U.S. concern swung from fascism to different shades of communism.

Becker's section on Trotskyism is particularly illuminating — not because of what the FBI discovered, but rather because of the bureau's efforts to brand Trotskyists as close kin to fascists. The FBI's wrong-headed logic was based on the Ecuadorian Communist Party's willingness to support the Allies and the Soviet Union during World War II. The Trotskyists rejected such an alliance, holding steadfast to their conviction that the allies were capitalist and imperialist and only global revolution would bring about worker liberation. For the FBI, the label "Trotskyist" held a derogatory connotation, reserved for a factional opposition. (92)

With the FBI in the field, the Ecuadorian left often found itself measuring its actions in response to U.S. policy and, more specifically, FBI surveillance. On the one hand, as

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part of the global Popular Front, Ecuador's Communist Party sought alliance with Allied powers during the WWII years; on the other, the party emerged as a nationalist force leading criticism against the government's resolution in 1943 of a border dispute with Peru. It also asserted its strong opposition to U.S. bases at Salinas and the Galápagos Islands.

Repression and Intimidation

One of the book's more illuminating sections appears in the "Labor" chapter, where Becker provides an in-depth account of a labor conference that never took place.

Following a visit to Ecuador by Mexico's prominent labor leader Vicente Lombardo Toledano in October 1942, plans for a national labor congress in March 1943 began to take shape. The goal was to create a regional chapter of the Confederation of Latin American Workers.

Originally the conference had the support of the Ecuadorian President Carlos Arroyo del Río, but quickly lost it. At first Conservatives and the President billed the congress as an opportunity for manual workers to have their concerns heard. Labor leaders, however, saw this more idealistically as a way to unify various sectors of the country's working society. The President, sensing danger in that, withdrew his support and, even worse for labor's interests, authorized police repression.

International labor leaders such as Lombardo Toledano and Rodriguez from Bolivia were denied permission to enter or were detained and later deported. Ecuadorian leftist leaders, such as Pedro Saad, had their speeches canceled and were arrested.

In this chapter the FBI documents demonstrate their value. Reporting on Pedro Saad's release from prison after serving almost three months for supporting the unauthorized and unrealized convention, an FBI agent discloses Saad's communications with other Communist Party members. In particular the agent reported on Saad's desire to discontinue celebrations on his behalf because they ran the risk of exposing

other party members to intelligence operatives or other authorities.

Becker cannot help but mention the irony of having FBI documents report that a central concern of one of Ecuador's leading leftists was being the target of surveillance. The FBI's intimate knowledge of the Ecuadorian Communist Party's concerns leads Becker to comment, "The FBI seemingly had access to precisely the information that the communists did not want either the Ecuadorian government or the U.S. government to have. How, then, did FBI agents gain access to this information?" (119)

Becker finds the answer, in part, in the Society of Former Special Agents of the FBI website. Here he finds a heavily redacted report that nonetheless reveals how the FBI was able to keep such a sharp eye on Saad and other Ecuadorian Communist Party activists. It is clear that the U.S. Legal Attaché had a mole. For the reader, this section is particularly rewarding as Becker publishes the redacted report.

What did the FBI do with the information they gathered? The author makes clear that neither the historical or archival record is helpful in providing clues. Did they act on it in some extrajudicial way? Did they share the information with the Ecuadorian government?

More to Come?

Though this account represents a sampling of what Becker has unearthed in his study, it is significant in revealing the extent to which the FBI was gathering information in Ecuador. Yet not all of the questions have been answered.

Another area where FBI documentation provided Becker with added insight into Ecuador's leftist politics had to do with debates within the Communist Party. Should it join the democratic process in the 1944 presidential election and, if so, who should it support?

The decision made by Ecuador's leftist organizations was to coalesce into the Alianza Democrática Ecuatoriana and present a candidate of their liking. The breadth and depth of the FBI's information about the

motives for leftist support of the ADE candidate José María Velasco Ibarra is reflected in their conclusion that he was a "tool to advance a common agenda." (133)

The events that unfolded in May of 1944, leading to La Gloriosa revolution, draws on Becker's considerable expertise. He deftly analyzes the flurry of letters submitted by J. Edgar Hoover to the State Department. Some of the information was "neither new nor complete" (141) and by Hoover's own admission had not been verified. Becker points out that actually the same information had been reported months earlier by the U.S. Embassy.

Here the author takes the director of the FBI to task by pointing out how little he knew of Ecuador's (or Latin America's) political history. Not only was Hoover's intel wrong about who the leaders of the revolutionary movement were, but despite the fact that both the U.S. Embassy and FBI field agents assessed that the roots of the uprising were domestic, Washington maintained suspicions that the rebellion had international origins.

In the aftermath of those chaotic days, Hoover issued a letter to the State Department revising his previous analysis. Central to this narrative was the important role that the FBI's radio played in being able to transmit accurate information quickly within Ecuador as well as to the FBI's central offices.

Again, the irony does not escape Becker, who reminds the reader that the radio did not necessarily aid Hoover in the accuracy of his statements. Nevertheless, Hoover's FBI was positioning itself "as a key information broker for U.S. concerns that extended well beyond the original antifascist justification for the agency's presence in the region." (148)

Becker's work is an important contribution to the historiography of U.S.-Latin American relations, groundbreaking in the sense that it puts the FBI (not the CIA) at the heart of the earliest intelligence gathering by an agency of the U.S. government. It also adds another chapter to the history of J. Edgar Hoover's hubris and hunger for power.

The FBI in Latin America provides extraordinary insight into the U.S. concerns about Ecuador (economically and politically) but also raises many more questions, especially regarding FBI's endgame. What was the purpose of acquiring intel?

The answers are not clear. Moreover, there are many incomplete accounts due to redacted material and incomplete archival records. Still, the book provides a framework for future scholarship. Its title suggests hopes that this is only the first of a series of monographs exposing the FBI in other Latin American countries. ■

A SMALL MEASURE of justice in the 2016 assassination of Berta Cáceres, the leading indigenous rights and environmental campaigner in Honduras, was reached on November 29, 2018 with the conviction of several perpetrators of the murder. The Honduran Criminal Court with National Jurisdiction indicated that the crime's "intellectual authors" remain at large.

Sergio Rodríguez, the social and environmental manager of the DESA hydroelectric company, "used a network of paid informants to monitor Berta's movements, while DESA's former security chief, retired military officer Douglas Bustillo, recruited the top-ranking special forces intelligence officer, Major Mariano Díaz, and a criminal cell he managed to carry out the murder." (ghrc-usa.org, November 29, 2018)

Berta Cáceres is among dozens of murdered human rights activists since the U.S.-supported 2009 coup that returned Honduras to the rule of death squads in the service of multinational capital, and drug cartels that terrorize the population, sending tens of thousands fleeing northward. Her organization COPINH was not allowed to participate in the trial as victims of targeted assassinations. Real justice remains to be done.

REVIEW

Breaking the Impasse By Donald Greenspon

Cracks in the Wall Beyond Apartheid in Palestine/ Israel

By Ben White

Pluto Books, 2018, 208 pages, paper \$15,
ebook \$7.50

BEN WHITE'S NEW book *Cracks in the Wall* is on first impression a bleak account of the factual and political situation in Israel/Palestine. Yet in view of "cracks" developing among Israel's traditional supporters and Palestinians' growing militant and nonviolent resistance to Israel's hard right policies, White optimistically envisions a just solution to the conflict. Those cracks in the pro-Zionist consensus are the heart of what the book is about.

Ben White is a freelance journalist, writer, and human rights activist in Britain specializing in Palestine/Israel. In addition to *Cracks in the Wall*, he has written three other well received books on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: *Israeli Apartheid: A Beginner's Guide*, *Palestinians in Israel: Segregation, Discrimination and Democracy*, and *The 2014 Gaza War: 21 Questions & Answers*.

The author begins by describing Israel as a "single apartheid state," in the sense of a system of entrenched racial oppression, both in law and in practice, with different sets of rules governing the dominant and subordinate populations. (There are differences of course with the specific South African case, where the economy rested critically on Black labor, but White doesn't discuss these distinctions.)

White starts his chapter on "Self-Determination, not Segregation" with a 2007 quote from former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert: "If the day comes when the two-state solution collapses, and we face a South African style struggle for equal voting rights, then, as that happens, the State of Israel is finished."

White describes 2017 as a year of infamous anniversaries: 120 years since the first Zionist Congress when the Jewish population in Palestine was only 4%, 100 years since the Balfour Declaration of 1917 which gave British support for a Jewish "homeland" in Palestine, 70 years since the UN Partition Plan of 1947 when Palestinian Arabs still accounted for two-thirds of the population,

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and 50 years since the six-day war of 1967 which has led to the longest military occupation in modern history.

In 2017, the 50 year-anniversary of Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, there were 400,000 settlers in the West Bank and 200,000 in East

Jerusalem — all illegal under international law. This settler population has doubled since the 1993 Oslo Accords that were supposed to lead to an independent Palestinian state. In fact, during the two terms of the Obama Administration, the settler population in the West Bank increased by more than 100,000.

White describes the political situation in Israel/Palestine as an "impasse" with Israel's maximum settlement offer being less than what the Palestinians could conceivably accept and also much less than international law requires. The current Netanyahu government wishes to maintain the status quo of creeping annexation and at the very most allow a demilitarized Palestinian "state minus" leaving Jerusalem the "undivided capital of Israel."

Israeli politicians to Netanyahu's right favor formal annexation of some or all of the West Bank where Israel incorporates Palestinian land and resources, but not its Palestinian inhabitants. Israeli "moderates" favor separation of Israeli settlements, leaving non-contiguous Palestinian lands as essentially Bantustans.

White next traces the historical support for Israel among Western European and North American Jews. While most of these Jews still define themselves as Zionists, support for Israel is no longer a great unifier but has rather now become a divisive force within these populations. Although most people believe that all or most Jews were political Zionists, White reminds us that historically this was not the case.

Left-wing Jewish socialists, such as the Bund, believed in the integration of the

Jewish and non-Jewish working class in the communities where they both lived. Jewish liberals believed in integration of Jews with non-Jews, living with equal political rights. They saw Zionism as giving aid to antisemites who accused Jews as traitors whose ultimate goal was to form their own separate nation.

White points out that political Zionism was also opposed by religious Jews, both Reform and Orthodox. To the Reform Jews, Zionism was in conflict with their ethical values of Judaism. To the Orthodox, God alone could initiate an "ingathering of exiles." The rising tide of antisemitism diluted opposition to political Zionism amongst all of these groups but although they adapted to the reality of Israel, their opposition never faded away.

Fragmentation of Support

White chronicles the growing fragmentation of Israel's support among European and North American Jews, due in large part to Israel's policies in the Middle East. These include its decades-long post-1967 occupation, its invasions of Lebanon, its violent reaction to the intifadas, its vicious attacks on Gaza, its opposition to the globally popular Iran nuclear deal.

Fragmentation will undoubtedly grow as a result of a couple of events that have happened since the publication of White's book: the 2018 Gaza March of Return where nearly 200 unarmed Palestinian demonstrators have been killed by Israeli snipers; and the Knesset's July, 2018 passage of the "Nation-State law," giving legal supremacy to Jewish citizens of Israel.

In addition to Netanyahu's reign, White sees the Trump era as a catalyst for Jewish political fragmentation and dissent. Trump's blatant Islamophobia, racism, and tepid reaction to Nazi demonstrations and the violence in Charlottesville have produced severe discomfort among American Jews, especially liberals and progressives who start to wonder: "I hate Trump, Trump loves Israel, how can I love Israel?"

Criticism is growing on an institutional level as well. The liberal centrist group J Street, formed as an opposition to the Israeli lobby (i.e. AIPAC), supports a two-state solution — less from respect for Palestinian self-determination and more because it sees Israel's current right wing policies being detrimental to its objective

“security interests.”

The Open Hillel movement started on college campuses, advocating for a dialogue on formerly taboo subjects such as Zionism and the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement. Most important has been the formation and rapid growth of Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP).

JVP stands in solidarity with Palestinian struggles and advocates for full rights and equality for all people in Israel/Palestine. Unlike J Street, JVP supports justice for Palestinians in its own right, not just for concerns for Israel’s security, and the BDS movement which arose from a call by Palestinian grassroots organizations.

In addition to these opposition groups and movements, White aptly describes the shift in U.S. politics, especially within the once unquestioningly pro-Israel Democratic Party. Most notable was the Bernie Sanders presidential campaign: although he’s been only mildly critical of Israel, Sanders’ advocacy for respect for Palestinians an end to America’s one-sided policies set him apart from mainstream politicians.

In a welcome and unusual move, Sanders placed critics of Israel — Cornell West, Keith Ellison and James Zogby — on the

Democratic Platform Committee for the 2016 convention. They proposed first-time language in the platform (unfortunately ultimately rejected by the full Committee) calling for an end to the occupation and illegal settlements in the West Bank.

Another illustration of the divisive trend away from uncritical support for Israel was the battle against Trump’s nomination of David Friedman as the U.S. Ambassador to Israel. Friedman is objectively an extremist who absurdly accused president Obama of being antisemitic, completely rejects the two-state solution, vehemently opposes the Iran nuclear deal, and has gone so far as accused a liberal American Jewish group of being “Kapos” (i.e. Nazi collaborators).

Friedman’s nomination was narrowly approved by the Senate’s Foreign Relations Committee by a 12-9 vote and also barely approved by the Republican controlled Senate 52-46.

Far-Right Sympathies

Democratic Party divisions over Israel were also revealed in Netanyahu’s speech to Congress in March, 2015 in which he advocated rejection of the Iran nuclear deal. Netanyahu’s visit was not authorized by the

Obama Administration, and his speech was boycotted by 50 Democratic members of Congress.

White concludes his discussion of cracks in U.S. support for Israel by referencing a Pew Research Center poll finding that sympathy for Palestinians among millennials (Americans born after 1980) rose from 9% in 2006 to 27% in 2016.

After discussing increasing progressive alienation, White next turns his attention to the far right’s embrace of Israel. This seems a bit ironic, since Zionism at its inception was a cause of the left in the West, for progressive intellectuals such as George Orwell in Britain and Albert Einstein in the United States.

As the full extent of Hitler’s crimes against the Jews became apparent in the wake of World War II, this support became even more pronounced. Progressive moral support for Israel left out an especially salient fact — Israel was not “a land without people for a people without land,” but rather was home for the Palestinians.

As this traditional support erodes, White delineates three reasons for the far right’s support for Israel today:

1) It sanitizes the current and historic far right’s antisemitic movements and traditions;

2) Israel and the far right are perceived to have a common enemy in so-called “Islamic terrorism”;

3) The far right is positively impressed with Israel as a ethno-national state. Richard Spencer, the American “alt right” white nationalist who envisions a white ethnostate in the United States, overtly calls himself a “white Zionist.”

The far right’s embrace of Israel has certainly been heightened in the Trump era. Trump’s former chief strategist and founder of the notorious racist Breitbart News, Steve Bannon, fancies himself as a “brazen Zionist.” Trump’s decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel’s capital in December 2017, while overwhelmingly unpopular worldwide, was hailed by his Republican base, 76% of whom (most notably evangelical Christians) supported this unprecedented move.

Despite the foregoing trend among the right, White optimistically recognizes a trend in the opposite direction. The Trump era is birthing an intersectional solidarity movement among groups opposed to his nativism, racism, Islamophobia, militarism and police brutality. The connection is being made between Trump’s ethno-nationalism and his security state policies and what is mainstream in Israel.

As White points out, this is reflected in the polls in which the younger generation of Jews and non-Jews alike in the United States are alienated from Israel in greater and greater numbers.

continued on page 42

BDS: Repression and Progress

IT WOULDN’T BE surprising for, let’s say, Fox News to fire a commentator for expressing support for the Palestinian struggle. But some fans of CNN, known for its 24/7 denunciations of all things Trump, might be taken aback that a “liberal” media outlet would take such action.

Professor Marc Lamont Hill was abruptly terminated by CNN not for on-air comments but for speech at the United Nations calling for a single democratic state in Palestine “from the river to the sea.” Not only can’t any such idea be discussed on CNN’s airwaves, god forbid, but no one associated with the network can be allowed to utter it in public.

Such paragons of free speech as B’nai Brith International, and the director of Hillel at Temple University, demanded that the university immediately fire him. Professor Hill holds the endowed Klein College Steve Charles Chair in Media, Cities and Solutions at Temple. Although some members of the university’s board and administration joined the chorus of denunciation, norms of free speech and due process — and the firestorm that would meet the attempt to get rid of him — appear to keep his tenured position secure for now.

For further information on this case, see “The Harsh and Unjust Punishment of Marc Lamont Hill” by David Palumbo-Liu, *The Nation*, December 4, 2018. Jewish

Voice for Peace (www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org) is raising funds to publish an ad demanding his reinstatement by CNN.

The vicious attack on Professor Hill follows the actions by the University of Michigan against Professor John Cheney-Lippold and Graduate Student Instructor Lucy Peterson, discussed in depth by Alan Wald in this issue of *Against the Current*.

These assaults, however, are also occurring in the context of significant advances by the BDS (boycott/divestment/sanctions) movement. Students on U.S. campuses are calling on universities to divest from corporations involved in Israel, despite Zionist smear campaigns targeting BDS supporters.

Recently Airbnb decided it would no longer profit from most illegal Israeli settlements on stolen Palestinian land. This followed an international campaign led by the #StolenHomes coalition. The Israeli government threatened retaliation, and in the ultimate absurdity, a group of Americans filed a “civil rights” lawsuit over Airbnb’s action.

There have been other BDS successes, but the so-called Israel Anti-Boycott Act, a piece of bipartisan poison that would flush the First Amendment down the toilet for effective pro-Palestinian activism, is pending in the lame-duck Congress as we go to press. Where is our gridlock when we really need it? — David Finkel

REVIEW

Party for the Revolution

By Michael Principe

Crowds and Party

By Jodi Dean

Verso, 2016, 276 pages, 26.95 cloth

JODI DEAN BEGINS *Crowds and Party* with a vivid personal account of the New York City Occupy movement on October 15, 2011. Thirty thousand people demonstrated in Times Square that day. As police tried to contain the crowd, Occupiers chanted “We are the 99 percent.”

Afterward, a people’s assembly was held to decide whether to move the occupation from Zucotti Park, the home of Occupy Wall Street, to the larger, more centrally located Washington Square Park which was closed for the night. With police moving in and preventing newcomers from entering, each speaker urged the crowd to take the park.

Amplified by the people’s mic, the crowd chanted “We are many. We outnumber them. We can do it. We must do it.” With the crowd increasingly signaling its approval, something happens and everything changes. Dean tells us:

“Then a tall, thin, young man with curly dark hair and a revolutionary look began to speak.

We can take this park!

We can take this park!

We can take this park tonight!

We can take this park tonight!

We can also take this park another night.

We can also take this park another night.

Not everyone may be ready tonight.

Not everyone may be ready tonight.

Each person has to make their own autonomous decision.

Each person has to make their own autonomous decision.

Each person has to make their own autonomous decision.

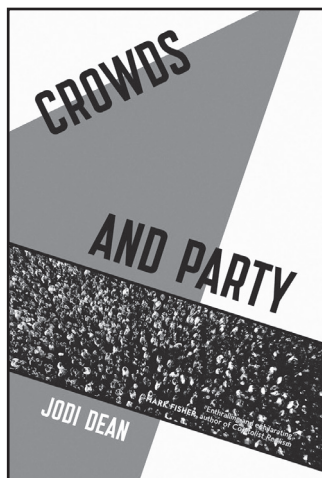
No one can decide for you. You have to decide for yourself.

No one can decide for you. You have to decide for yourself.

Everyone is an autonomous individual.

Everyone is an autonomous individual.

Michael Principe is Professor of Philosophy at Middle Tennessee State University, Chapter Vice-President for United Campus Workers-Communication Workers of America/Local 3865, and a member of the Middle Tennessee branch of Solidarity.



The mood was broken. The next few speakers also affirmed their individuality, describing some of the problems they would encounter if they had to deal with security from NYU or if they got arrested.” (3-4)

What was collective strength and the freedom of the crowd was fragmented and reduced to the autonomy of individual decision. Dean tells us that *Crowds and Party* comes out of this moment of “collective

desubjectivization.”

More broadly, she brings together a number of themes and concepts developed in a steady stream of publications over the last 20 years. These include collective subjectivity, democracy, contemporary capitalism, technologies of communication, psychoanalysis and communism.

In particular, *Crowds and Party* functions to deepen the analysis offered in *The Communist Horizon* (2012), itself a thorough engagement with the theoretical framework(s) leading up to and emergent from the important series of conferences dubbed “On the Idea of Communism” in London (2009), Berlin (2010), and New York (2011) initially inspired by philosopher Alain Badiou’s essay, “The Communist Hypothesis.”

An Emerging Perspective

Emerging from a period beginning roughly in the 1980s in which left-leaning academic political theory was oriented around deconstruction and postmodernism, an emerging group of theorists have explicitly taken up a communist perspective. Dean has become an important North American figure in this context which otherwise mostly includes Europeans.

The reception of Badiou in the English-speaking world is representative of this shift in left academic discourse. While the works of many of his French contemporaries were long ago translated into English, Badiou’s large body of work dating back to the 1960s only began to appear in English around the turn of the new century. Since 1999, however, close to 50 volumes have been published.

The better known Slavoj Žižek, who’s complementary blurbs often grace the back covers of Dean’s work, and about whom Dean has written extensively, is probably the best-known figure in this intellectual milieu.

Dean’s own contributions in this sphere have explored ways in which late capitalism has been reconfigured through changes in communication, commodification, work and exploitation primarily involving the internet, while at the same time theorizing corresponding changes in proletarianization and the potential for revolutionary subjectivity with a special emphasis on the need for some form of communist party.

Especially in *Crowds and Party*, Dean also contributes to a growing literature attempting to theorize the importance of recent large-scale demonstrations, occupations, and riots. Examples include Badiou’s *The Rebirth of History: Times of Riots and Uprisings*¹ and Joshua Clover’s *Riot. Strike. Riot.: The New Era of Uprisings*² in which he states:

Riots are coming, they are already here, more are on the way, no one doubts it. They deserve an adequate theory... a properly materialist theorization of the riot. Riot for communists, let’s say.

By developing the related notion of “crowd,” Dean attempts to provide such a theory. She differs from Clover who embraces something like an anarchist revolutionary sequence: “The riot, the blockade, the occupation and, at the far horizon, the commune.”

This is what Dean would call “the politics of the beautiful moment.” She is closer to Badiou, who argues that riots under the best circumstance are pre-political and require organization by militants who remain true to the riot as historical event.

Badiou, however, rejects the party form as historically exhausted. Dean further distinguishes her position from Badiou and Clover by arguing for the necessity of a disciplined communist party that can be true to the desire of the crowd. In fact, she goes so far as to suggest that the crowd is a necessary condition of such a party.

Rejecting Hardt and Negri’s idea that innumerable, pluralizing local struggles, though lacking a common program, class analysis, or even language, might strike at the heart of *Empire*³, she states, “The new cycle of struggles has demonstrated the political strength that comes from collectivity. Common names, tactics, and images

are bringing the fragments together, making them legible as many fronts of one struggle against capitalism.” (25)

She suggests that the party is the proper mode for this process, spanning “local, regional, and sometimes international levels...parties are carriers of the knowledge that comes from political experience.” Parties fit “issues into a platform such that they are not so many contradictory and individual preferences but instead a broader vision for which it will fight. What is sometimes dismissed as party bureaucracy thus needs to be revalued as an institutional capacity necessary for political struggle and rule in a complex and uneven terrain.” (25-6)

With the notion of “crowd,” Dean points to a wide range of events, including “the Occupy movement, Chilean student protests, Montreal debt protests, Brazilian transportation and FIFA protests, European anti-austerity protest, as well as the multiple ongoing and intermittent strikes of teachers, civil servants, and medical workers all over the world.” (16)

She sees these as the protest of “those proletarianized under communicative capitalism.” Communicative capitalism is Dean’s take on the current phase of late capitalism, where the circulation of data becomes a major source of profit, exploitation, and ideological production.

While this particular classification is probably peripheral to the larger analysis, suggesting that the current situation is unique, Dean employs it to 1) articulate a broadly understood class struggle politics where paid, precarious, and unpaid labor are not treated separately; 2) suggest that class struggle in the current period is not found exclusively in the workplace, i.e. that these crowds and riots do constitute an essential site of class struggle.

Subjectivity and Consciousness

The best and most important parts of Dean’s work involve thinking through ideas of individual and collective subjectivity and their relation to revolutionary struggle and consciousness. We should remember that the preconditions for the development of revolutionary subjectivity are notoriously undertheorized by Marx.

For instance, in *The Communist Manifesto* Marx writes “that with the development of modern industry the proletariat not only increase in number; it becomes concentrated in greater masses, its strength grows, and it feels that strength more.” In addition, he says, “improved means of communication... centralize numerous local struggles.” The rest involves workers recognizing their interests and acting on them.

Of course, the question in the subsequent history of Marxism in theory and

practice becomes: how and when does this recognition occur? Dean points importantly to the idea that in the current period, what Marx called “concentrations” may need to be consciously chosen through gathering, riot or occupation, insofar as capitalism increasingly disperses workers to discrete locations. While workplace struggles remain relevant, Dean clearly downplays them in favor of crowds and riots.

Key to revolutionary subjectivity, for Dean, is a rejection of the idea that political agency is tied to *individual* subjectivity.

The autonomous, choosing individual is, of course, a cornerstone of liberal political theory. She responds: “Liberal political theorists explicitly construe political agency as an individual capacity. Others take the individuality of the subject of politics for granted. I argue that the problem of the subject is a problem of this persistent individual form, a form that encloses collective political subjectivity into the singular figure of the individual.” (73)

While many have seen individual subjectivity as besieged and undermined by contemporary society, Dean asserts provocatively that “The individual form is not under threat. It is the threat.” (57)

Dean also provides a helpful history of “crowd theory,” which emerged in the late 19th century in response to fears generated by the revolutionary crowds of the Paris Commune of 1871. Of particular importance to her is Gustave Le Bon, author of *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*. While noting that Le Bon’s perspective is conservative, racist, elitist and misogynistic, she finds his analysis helpful.

Of special interest here is the notion of association: “Le Bon decries the way association, far more than universal suffrage, is making the masses conscious of their strength.” (94) He is principally concerned that a dangerous and irrational collective subjectivity can emerge through the crowd. The voting booth lacks this potential.

Dean theorizes the crowd both politically and psychoanalytically. She engages Freud’s dialogue with Le Bon in his *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, arguing that Freud individualizes the collective psychology of the crowd: “Collective desire is reduced to an amplification of frustrated individual desire. Forces associated with the crowd become unconscious processes with an individual.” (105)

While psychoanalysis does reject the knowing, reasonable individual of political liberalism, Dean claims that “when the unconscious is rendered as that of an individual, psychoanalysis is drafted into its service as covert support for an individuated subjectivity conceived in terms of a rational and knowable will.” (113)

Crowd, People and Party

Crowds, for Dean, represent the potential for “the people” to emerge. For the actual emergence, though, the party is necessary, i.e. the crowd and its desire must be represented. “The people” are identical to neither the crowd nor the party.

Some on the Left — autonomists, insurrectionists, anarchists, and libertarian communists — so embrace the energy unleashed by the crowd that they mistake an opening, an opportunity, for an end. They imagine the goal of politics as the proliferation of multiplicities, potentialities, differences. The unleashing of the playful, carnivalesque, and spontaneous is taken to indicate political success...they treat organization, administration, and legislation as a failure of revolution, a return of impermissible domination and hierarchy rather than as effects and arrangements of power, rather than as attributes of the success of a political intervention. (125)

As if to implicate both herself and her audience in this sensibility, after noting Kristin Ross’s and the Situationists’ interpretation of the Paris Commune as “an explosion of inventiveness, an experiment in revolutionary urbanism that, for those who lived it, was a fully consummated political experience (not a failed attempt at establishing a new form of working-class rule),” she says: “It’s how we imagine revolution. And it’s what we have to get beyond.” (136-7 my emphasis).

Ultimately, Dean’s take on the function of the party (rather than the argument for its necessity) may surprise many readers. She sees a communist party as essential to developing and sustaining the intense collective subjectivity of the crowd. The party provides an affective dimension.

She writes, “So instead of considering the communist party in terms of ideology, program, leadership, or organizational structure, I approach it in terms of the dynamics of feeling it generates and mobilizes. More than an instrument for political power, the communist party provides an affective infrastructure that enlarges the world.” (210)

Dean invokes psychoanalysis (with special reference to Jacques Lacan and Slavoj Žižek) to think through the emotional needs that can be met through identification with a communist party.

The move to psychoanalysis has been, of course, a common approach to revolutionary consciousness in much of Western Marxism. The difference here is that the earlier approach used psychoanalytic categories *negatively*, that is to explain why the working class did not revolt, accepting the idea implicit in the remarks from the *Manifesto* quoted above that such conscious rebellion *should have followed automatically*.

Dean, on the other hand, sees the party

form as capable of *positively* satisfying the crowd's desire to endure. For Dean, too much discussion of the party leaves out its "affective infrastructure," "its reconfiguration of the crowd unconsciousness into a political form." (217) For Dean, it is the party that ultimately secures a new enlarged subjectivity, providing the grounds for a "practical optimism through which struggles endure."

She describes the party as "a form of organized political association that holds open the space from which the crowd can see itself (and be seen) as the people." (259) Dean provides many examples of former Communist Party members who recall inhabiting enlarged emotional spaces while members of the party.

A meeting at a pub, while not formal, carries immense authority, "transforming a group of people having a pint in a pub into the Communist Party. Their words and actions took on an importance far beyond what they would have been absent the Party." Collective subjectivity exists outside of the crowd. Members experience its reality alone or in very ordinary settings.

Like Falling in Love

What is described here is a kind of collective subjectivity which Dean analyzes

through the Lacanian/Zizekian category of enjoyment (*jouissance*) which she refers to elsewhere as "an excessive pleasure and pain...that something extra that twists pleasure into a fascinating, even unbearable intensity."

She uses love as an example, "falling in love can be agonizing. Yet it is a special kind of agony, an agony that makes us feel more alive, more fully present, more in tune with what makes life worth living, and dying for, than anything else. Enjoyment, then is this extra, this excess beyond the given, the measurable, rational, and useful."⁴

This is what allows people to accomplish things of which they didn't think themselves capable. Politically, the party allows people to see themselves in a new way. People make impossible demands upon themselves, feel guilty when they fail, etc. This is, for Dean, a positive thing, both politically, and for the people involved.

A new way of living and a new conception of living well can emerge through this new collective revolutionary subjectivity. According to Dean, a way of life develops that doesn't seem to make sense if you are not living inside it. An average reader is likely to be both drawn to and put off by this description. Of course, that makes sense

given the particular psychoanalytic lens through with Dean offers her account.

While Dean writes powerfully regarding the role such a party might play in facilitating a new subjectivity, she says very little regarding the conditions for its possible formation. Additionally, since for her crowds, are, at present, a necessary condition of the party, one would like to hear more regarding the conditions for the emergence of crowds.

Jodi Dean's interesting and often controversial contributions to political theory will continue to engender critical discussion. *Crowds and Party* represents a serious attempt to grapple with both the theory and practice of revolutionary change. It is particularly important insofar as it radically challenges the category of the liberal individual in *all* its forms, including within left politics. ■

Notes

1. Badiou, Alain. *The Rebirth of History: Times of Riots and Uprisings*. Trans. Gregory Elliot, London & New York: Verso 2012.
2. Clover, Joshua. *Riot. Strike. Riot.: The New Era of Uprisings*, London & New York: Verso 2016. (See also the critical review essay by Kim Moody, *Against the Current* 194, May/June 2018.)
3. Hardt, Michael and Negri, Antonio. *Empire*, Cambridge, M.A. Harvard University Press, 2000.
4. Dean, Jodi. *Zizek's Politics*, New York & London: Routledge, 2006, 4.

Breaking the Impasse — continued from page 39

Fear of BDS Activism

White devotes the rest of his book to a discussion of the BDS movement, its backlash and his vision for the future. The BDS movement was initiated by Palestinian civil society in 2005, inspired in part by the South African anti-apartheid struggle, with three demands: 1) an end to the occupation; 2) equal rights for Palestinian citizens of Israel; and 3) the right of return for Palestinian refugees.

As BDS is gaining greater and greater international support. Israel and its supporters in the United States and elsewhere have gone on the offensive against the movement. This counterattack attempts to label BDS as being "antisemitic."

As White correctly points out, in basic terms antisemitism is "hostility towards Jews as Jews." The pushback against BDS improperly attempts to conflate criticism of the self-declared Jewish state and Zionism, a political ideology, with hostility towards Jews.

Proponents of the "new antisemitism" doctrine claim that BDS demonizes, delegitimizes and subjects Israel to a double standard. In reality, the BDS campaign is a political tactic designed to bring awareness to what Zionism has meant, historically and in the present, for the plight of the Palestinian people. In fact, far from treating Israel more

harshly, the U.S. and Western governments dole out special favorable treatment to Israel with diplomatic protection and military subsidies.

The Israeli-U.S. offensive against BDS has consisted mainly of legal measures. Most notably, the Israel Anti-Boycott Act (IABA) is designed to prohibit American citizens and companies from participating and supporting boycotts organized by international government organizations such as the UN and EU. It threatens to cut off all federal funds to universities that allow campus BDS activism.

Strongly opposed on First Amendment grounds by the ACLU, the bill and was ultimately tabled in the U.S. Congress in 2017 and its revival in the lame-duck session or next Congress remains possible. Meanwhile, as of July 2017, 21 states have passed anti-BDS laws. In Israel, the Knesset passed a law in 2017 which forbids entry visas or resident rights to foreign nationals who call for the economic, cultural or academic boycotts of either Israel or its settlements.

The anti-BDS offensive shows how fearful Israel is of losing its traditional supporters. Nevertheless, Israel's support among liberals who believe in basic civil and democratic rights is also eroding as "cracks in the wall" become more open.

White concludes by envisioning a new reality — a single democratic state in Israel/

Palestine. Rather than being a sanctuary for the Jewish people, the Israeli ethnostate has not made Jews safer but rather has exposed them to greater danger. Rejection of a "Jewish state" is not a denial of Israeli Jews' rights, but rather a denial of Jewish supremacy.

White points out that international law and conventions and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights can be an important guide in protecting Jewish and Palestinian rights in a future democratic state. According to White, such a state in Israel/Palestine is not a utopian pipe dream.

With expected increasing international support, White believes, the "single apartheid state" that already exists can be transformed into a single democratic state which will be beneficial to Jewish Israelis and Palestinians alike. He cites an April, 2017 poll by the University of Maryland on American attitudes to the Israel/Palestinian conflict, which found that 31% of Americans already support a single democratic state as a just future that the U.S. government should be supporting.

While such a trend in public opinion is encouraging, White's book doesn't really tell us how it would translate into a dramatically new U.S. policy — let alone change the realities on the ground in Palestine. That remains an open question. ■

David McReynolds, 1920-2018

By Jason Schulman

DAVID MCREYNOLDS WAS the first “Old Leftist” I ever met, back in 1996, at one of a number of ill-fated 1990s meetings of representatives of socialist organizations in New York City hoping for some sort of “left unity” around a common project.



Strictly speaking, David wasn’t an “Old Leftist” — that label was affixed to members of the Socialist Party (SP), Communist Party (CP) or the Trotskyist groups of the 1930s and 1940s. David was in between the Old and New Lefts, joining both the SP and the radical-pacifist War Resisters League (WRL) in 1951.

David’s main inspiration was the Communist-turned-socialist-pacifist Bayard Rustin (1912-1987), who by 1949 was the organizer for “race relations” in the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), an inter-faith nonviolent action organization.

David — who refused being drafted into the Korean War and won his case “on a technicality” — began working for *Liberation* magazine in 1957 under Rustin and A.J. Muste (1885-1967), a founder of the FOR (and a former Trotskyist). In 1960 he became a “peace movement bureaucrat,” becoming part of the WRL staff where he remained until retiring in 1999.

David helped Rustin organize the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, organized one of the first draft card burnings, wrote often for the explicitly pacifist *WIN* magazine, and played a major role in important demonstrations against the Vietnam War.

In the early 1970s David’s antiwar Debs Caucus finally split from the Cold Warriors who dominated the re-named SP, the Social Democrats USA (SDUSA), taking the name “Socialist Party USA.” The SPUSA would be David’s primary “socialist home” until 2015, when he resigned, claiming that the party had neither a healthy internal life nor political relevance. He also paid dues to the

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Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) from the 1980s until his death.

But long before 2015, David was the first openly gay man to run for president, on the SP ticket in 1980. He did the same again in 2000, leading to an appearance on Bill Maher’s “Politically Incorrect” show on ABC, winning over much of the audience to Maher’s chagrin.

Ironically, before running for president, David had run for Congress from Lower Manhattan as a candidate of the Peace and Freedom Party in 1968 — when the Party’s presidential candidate was the notoriously homophobic Eldridge Cleaver of the Black Panther Party.

David would again run for office as a Senate candidate for the New York State Green Party in 2004.

Unlike Rustin, who had been “outed” in 1953 via being busted for “lewd conduct” in a parked car with another man, David came out in the pages of *WIN* in 1969. He revealed that he’d been aware of his sexual orientation since 1949, when he began a brief relationship with Alvin Ailey at UCLA, where both men were undergraduates.

Ailey, of course, later became a celebrated choreographer, popularizer of modern dance, and founder of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

Although for a time David was on the editorial board of the “Third Camp” socialist magazine *New Politics* and considered himself a Marxist, his overall political orientation was fairly distant from the heterodox Trotskyism that informed the outlook of *NP*’s founding editors, the late Julius and Phyllis Jacobson.

Undoubtedly this was partly due to David’s anger at having been “burned” by the Jacobsons’ former comrades in the Independent Socialist League (ISL), particularly by its leader Max Shachtman.

The ISL had dissolved their organization and joined the SP as individuals in 1958. David, who was on the left edge of the SP, expected that the ex-ISL members would push the Party to be more radical.

The exact opposite happened, as many “Shachtmanites” — who became the dom-

inant faction in the SP — soon expressed support (“critically,” of course) for the Bay of Pigs invasion, the Lyndon Johnson administration, and the Vietnam War. (Tragically, Bayard Rustin joined this faction, abandoning his socialist pacifism.)

David also believed that the orthodox Trotskyists of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) played a “splitter” role in the anti-Vietnam War movement. So it isn’t that surprising that David decided that “Stalinism versus Trotskyism” was really little more than a remnant of a power struggle between two authoritarian individuals, though he did admire “Shachtmanites” who retained their old political perspectives, such as Hal Draper and others around *New Politics*.

David was a very warm person and was my only connection to deceased figures of the “literary left” such as Allen Ginsberg and James Baldwin. I admired him. Over time, however, it became clear that our outlooks were rather different. His knowledge of Marxist social theory just wasn’t very deep and his understanding of both Lenin and Trotsky (and even his favorite, Rosa Luxemburg) was rather shallow.

It also became clearer to me over time that David wasn’t really a Third Camp type. He told me in an email last year that he was “much more sympathetic to Russia than most” in our democratic socialist milieu. I asked what this meant — sympathy for the Communist Party of the Soviet Union? His response: “Yes and no — it is complicated, like history.”

That’s not the most satisfactory of answers. Furthermore, in another email last year, David stated that “the U.S. must give up its hope of overthrowing Assad” — failing, like so much of the “Western” left, to understand that Trump, like Obama before him, has no interest in Syrian “regime change” (Trump’s crazed “kill them all!” outbursts notwithstanding — he has no intention to overthrow what remains of the Syrian state).

“Seek peace,” David said. I found this glib. Peace under fascism is no desirable peace, and David’s statement struck me as an insult to every democratic revolutionary tortured and/or killed by Bashar al-Assad.

That said, most of the time David was on the right side, and I will miss him. ■

in memoriam



Nancy Gruber, 1930-2018

By Dianne Feeley

NANCY GRUBER DIED July 16, 2018 at the age of 88 in her New York apartment, surrounded by her loving family, from the complications of PSP, a neuro-degenerative disease.

She held degrees in both theater and library science and was literate in various languages. She did research in, and translated from, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian and Russian into English. She donated her time and financial resources to a number of socialist and other radical organizations throughout her life and was a founding member of Solidarity.

Like other radical librarians, Nancy advocated free public access to information and against censorship in all forms. She also supported the independent press and news sources. Active in the social justice caucus of the American Library Association, she also supported the Feminist Press, which republished out-of-print works by women writers.

While volunteering at the Oakland, California research organization the DataCenter, she became an expert on the labor and black liberation move-

Dianne Feeley is an editor of ATC. She could not have written about Nancy Gruber without the aid of Linda Ray, her friend and comrade.

ment in South Africa. In the mid-1980s she went to Paris to help the editorial team of *International Viewpoint*, the Fourth International's English-language publication (now a web-based magazine). She also assisted the editors of *Against the Current* in establishing copyediting guidelines, flying into Detroit for several long weekends.

Nancy entered Stanford University at 16, majoring in drama. As a graduate student she directed the first U.S. production of Brecht's *Good Woman of Szechuan*.

Her marriage to scenic designer James Riley ended in divorce; later she married Samuel Gruber, a leading radical lawyer with whom she was able to share politics, tennis, music and family life. Sam's death from lung cancer, along with the early death of her brother Robert H. Langston, a Marxist philosopher and writer who she claimed was one of the biggest influences on her life, was devastating. She was to marry a third time, to Morton Sobell, with whom she shared a concern for political prisoners and supported abolishing the U.S. system of mass incarceration.

Though living most of her adult life in cities, she loved getting out into the countryside, including a multi-day, llama assisted hiking/camping trip in the Trinity Alps of

Northern California. She was also a world traveler. This included a voyage on a copra freighter from Tahiti to the Marquesas where her daughter Kate, a linguistic anthropologist, did her field work.

After attending the April 2004 march in Washington D.C. for women's reproductive rights, she remarked that the major media barely mentioned the action even though there were over 100,000 people. Due to her failing health, the People's Climate March in September 2014 was the last time she marched. But four years later she attended the March for Our Lives — in a wheelchair.

Her love of languages, knowledge, music (she played both the violin and viola), theater plus her family and friends informed the activities of her life. She had a gift for making friends and had many on both coasts. Although she felt she had been born "too early" in the century, she enjoyed a full, complex personal, social, political and cultural life. To keep sharp she would whip through crossword puzzles and scrabble games and was a lifetime reader and learner.

She wanted to be of assistance by using her formidable talents and intelligence in aiding the movements and institutions dedicated to building a more just and sustainable world. Nancy Gruber presente! ■

desperate journeys to reach Europe or the southern U.S. border. Worldwide there are now some 68 million displaced people, only a harbinger of the hundreds of millions to come as more places become uninhabitable within a few decades (to say nothing of the escalating climate-driven disasters hitting the United States right now).

In the United States as in Europe, the anti-refugee backlash is sickening as well as frightening. If a few thousand families today fleeing drug gangs and death squads can be labeled an “invasion force” threatening U.S. security, can we even imagine what future crises might look like if the anti-immigrant forces aren’t defeated?

Donald Trump is not the cause of these interlocking crises — if only the diagnosis and cure were so simple! — but a half-deranged symptom of a global systemic disease. To be sure, he’s making things worse in his total indifference to friendly regimes’ repression, racism and general brutality. His boasts about “bringing jobs back to America” look hollow enough in the wake of GM’s announcement — and his “Tariff Man” tweets and absurd tariffs on Canadian and European steel and aluminum definitely exacerbated the December stock market plunge — but Trump at his worst can’t be as destructive as neoliberal capitalism itself.

More important, the Trump regime and the assorted rightwing pseudo-populists in Europe have no solutions to the crises that have propelled them into prominence. They offer only false promises that speak effectively to the greed of the super-rich, and to the fears of people whose livelihoods, families and communities are being devastated, but offer no way out. The results of the U.S. midterm elections and the prospects of a revived left are partly a response to that reality.

U.S. Midterms and Socialist Revival

The Democrats’ new majority in the House of Representatives should be seen, we think, as a re-balancing rather than a breakthrough — although significant in that they needed a big voter margin to overcome Republican gerrymandering and racist voter suppression in key states.

Widespread revulsion against Trump was obviously a huge factor, as well as high voter turnout among African Americans, women and the millennial generation. (Had the 2016 election gone the other way, we suspect that two years of a Hillary Clinton presidency would have resulted in a Republican “red wave” taking a stranglehold on both houses of Congress.)

Voter suppression is now a front-and-center issue, including the up-front Republican theft of the race for governor in Georgia. The Republican party today is a far-right-dominated outfit relying on extreme gerrymandering and vote suppression — along with the absurdity of the Electoral College — to hold on to power nationally. In states like Michigan and Wisconsin with incoming Democratic administrations, gerrymandered Republican legislatures in lame-duck sessions are enacting the most outrageous anti-democratic measures to cripple unions and hamstringing the new governors.

Nationally, the emergence of a larger “progressive caucus” including some self-declared democratic socialists, and the higher proportion of women elected to the next Congress, has to be balanced against other realities of the incoming Democratic majority. As Matt Karp incisively notes in *Jacobin* (“51 Percent Losers,” <https://bit.ly/2QIRC7b>), the

strategy that the Clinton campaign foolishly pursued in 2016 — ignoring the working class in favor of that somewhat stereotyped “college-educated suburban women” vote — worked for the Democrats this time in some contested districts, but what flipped one way in 2018 could readily flip back next time.

We won’t predict here what the Democrats will do with their restored powers, or whether and when the Republican leadership and Wall Street might finally turn against Trump. We see two main takeaways from these midterms. First, even if a large minority of U.S. voters are attracted to elements of rightwing authoritarianism and fake populism, the majority didn’t vote for it in 2016, and they’re repelled by it now, including Trump’s ugly anti-immigrant hysteria, mutual admiration with the world’s sordid dictators, and obscene personal, family and regime corruption.

Second, however, the growth of the Democratic Party’s progressive wing does not change the party’s character as an organ and defender of capital and the neoliberal order, nor does it pose a fundamental challenge to its pro-corporate leadership. The white working class vote for the Republicans has actually slipped, but the Democratic leadership has almost nothing to say to them (beyond promises to defend health care).

Challenges for the Left

Whatever agenda the Democrats adopt — whether it’s a halfway positive legislative program, or instead the diversionary empty noise about impeachment — real initiative and a genuine left and socialist revival depends, as always, upon social movements. The defense of immigrants and refugees, of women’s rights and reproductive freedom, of Black communities against rampant police violence, continue to be priorities even if the balance of official political power has become a bit less reactionary.

The looming realities of catastrophic climate change must also be faced directly. Without a clear alternative, people are pushed toward either despair or denial — at the very time when action is most urgently required. The debacle of French president Macron’s gas tax increase shows exactly what *not* to do, by imposing the costs on those who can’t afford it.

But there are new challenges and openings. Think, for example, about the possibility of a genuinely progressive response to GM’s plant closures. If threats of strikes and factory occupations force some corporate concessions, that would be welcome. But what’s needed is a vision that leaps much further ahead — a fight for converting the plants and using workers’ skills to production of desperately needed infrastructure for mass transit and 100% renewable energy within the next crucial decade.

That kind of transformation requires political and legislative action, to be sure — but above all, social mobilization, workers’ control and democratic planning of production, and collective societal concern for the future of threatened working people and their communities. And it’s not only auto, but agriculture and communications and health care and education and so much more, that require equally fundamental reorganization, and not only within national borders but globally.

That’s the vision for a real socialist revival — and it’s the key to overcoming the appeal of capitalist reaction and fake populism with its assorted lies and false promises. ■

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