

AGAINST THE CURRENT

A SOCIALIST JOURNAL

Protect Our Water — Stop the Pipelines!



**Rebecca Kemble
on Indigenous People's Struggle**

For International Women's Day

♦ FEMINIST ANTI-WAR RESISTANCE, DIANNE FEELEY, LIZ HEE, ALICE RAGLAND

U.S. Politics After the Midterms

♦ KIM MOODY

Negotiations? A Ukrainian Leftist Viewpoint

♦ DENYS BONDAR & ZAKHAR POPOVYCH



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A Letter from the Editors

Women's Rights, Human Rights

AFGHANISTAN. IRAN. POLAND. El Salvador and Nicaragua. Texas, Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi...

These are among the countries and states where ruling authorities take it upon themselves — in a variety of ways along a broad repressive spectrum — to curtail, suppress or outright nullify women's rights if not their basic personhood. The ways and means of these attacks of course vary widely.

They range from legal and official discrimination, to gendered violence perpetrated with impunity, to rape as a weapon as in Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the Ethiopian state's war in Tigray, and more. What's common to each and every case is that degrading women's rights — along with those of queer and non-binary people — is central to reactionary forces' assaults on all human rights.

As for the United States itself, where the battles over abortion and gender are inextricably part of the swirling unresolved political crisis and potential Constitutional meltdown, we'll also look briefly here at some too little-covered facts of how U.S. policies impact the rights and lives of women *outside* this country's borders.

In Iran, the regime is in open warfare against the population. The response to the murder of Mahsa (Jina) Amini has become an uprising against the entire apparatus of the "Islamic Republic." Dictating what women choose to wear is basic to the drive for complete social control of what everyone, especially youth, are allowed to do or dream.

"Women. Life. Freedom!" is a women-led revolution that now engages the struggles of Iran's youth, Kurdish people and strategic sectors of the working class. Will it triumph? Right now there's no way to know. What we can say, even though the murderous brutality of the Iranian theocracy and Revolutionary Guards knows no limits, is that Iran will not return to society's former half-voluntary compliance with the dictatorship.

In Afghanistan, the most vicious elements of the Taliban — who exercise decisive veto power over the regime — seek to nullify the very personhood of women. Deprived of access to university and even high school education, barred from employment in public service or by international aid organizations, they are left dependent or destitute. Among the results this winter are threatened deaths by starvation or freezing of hundreds of thousands of Afghans whom assistance can no longer reach.

This heartbreak and disaster are fairly well-covered in mainstream media. What's too easily forgotten, so all the more important to recall here, is that "liberation" of Afghan women served as a pretext for the U.S. and allied invasion following the 9/11 2001 attacks — after imperialist interventions and rivalries from the 1980s on had already brought Afghanistan to the edge of catastrophe.

The delusion of liberating women — or anyone else — in Afghanistan from above and from outside played no small part in the development of the present tragedy.

In Ukraine, not only are rape as well as mass murders of civilians committed by Russian invading forces. Vladimir Putin himself calls Moscow's war a defense of "traditional values" against such perversions as queer rights and the mythical "dozens of genders" supposedly recognized in the West. Putin's ultra-reactionary ravings are the natural accompaniment to the denial of Ukraine's right to exist, with the genocidal implications of that doctrine. The invaders' rape and massacre perpetrated against the people of Ukraine feed back into the savage escalation of the already intense repression of LGBT people within Russia.

Closer to Home

If the examples of Iran, Afghanistan and Russian atrocities in Ukraine are the most immediately visible cases of the extinction of women's rights and the consequences,

there are plenty of instances closer to our own situation. The point is not to identify the "worst" case — as such comparisons are essentially meaningless — but to examine some common features.

Take Poland, in the heart of Europe: Extreme restrictions on abortion access have been imposed by the rightwing "Law and Justice" party in alliance with the Catholic church. These measures are accompanied — not coincidentally — by severe weakening of the power of the judiciary to limit anti-democratic legislative extremism. That's also occurred in Hungary's self-declared "illiberal democracy" and is now well underway in the Israeli state.

Two-thirds of Polish citizens support abortion rights — very similar to the percentage in the United States. Women-led protests have taken to the streets in large numbers in Warsaw and other cities and towns, but so far failed to overturn the government's measures.

The full toll in women's deaths and permanent injuries remains unknown. Since 2021 at least two women in publicized cases, Anieszka T. and Izabela Sajbor, died after abortion care was denied even though the fetuses were either unviable or already dead.

In Ireland, popular revulsion over the 2012 death of Savita Halappanavar, who was denied a medically essential abortion until it was too late, led to striking the anti-abortion provision from the country's Constitution.

In Israel, tens of thousands are taking to the streets weekly against the ultra-racist governing coalition's move to strip the powers of the Supreme Court. Women's and queer rights are relatively well-entrenched in Israel — for Jewish citizens — and less likely to be immediately on the chopping block.

The first casualties in this case are the already-vanishing shreds of court protection for Palestinians in the occupied territories, and the (limited) civil rights of Arab citizens including their parties' ability to run in Israeli elections (which the Supreme Court has reinstated by overruling bans imposed by parliamentary decrees). There are elements in the "religious Zionism" bloc, however, for whom gender and especially queer rights are blasphemy and ultimate targets for extinction under the "Jewish state."

Central America is a particularly gruesome arena in the women's health battleground. The new government of president Xiaomara Castro in Honduras promised to loosen the country's deadly abortion ban, but hasn't yet succeeded. The situations in Nicaragua and El Salvador are grim: When leftwing governments were in power (the Sandinistas in 1980s Nicaragua, the FMLN party elected in

continued on the inside back cover

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Front Cover: Indigenous Rights demonstration at COP-15 in Montréal.

Above: March to stop Enbridge's Line 5, the black snake that dangerously crosses the Great Lakes.

Back Cover: Dora María Téllez, Nicaraguan historian and freedom fighter expelled from her country.

Rebecca Kemble

Rebecca Kemble

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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Marching for survival and justice at COP-15 in Montréal.

Rebecca Kemble

Lives Yes, Pipelines No! By Rebecca Kemble

THOUSANDS OF MARCHERS braved frigid temperatures and took to the streets of Montréal, Quebec on Saturday, December 10, 2022 in an Indigenous-led march outside the COP 15 Conference on Biodiversity.

They came to demand strong agreements to protect land, water and all who depend on them for life. Among them were several contingents of water protectors working to shut down Enbridge tar sands pipelines that have destroyed land and water across Canada and throughout the Great Lakes region of the United States.

The Interprovincial Pipe Line Company was founded in 1949 and built its first pipeline moving crude oil from Regina, Canada south across the border to Superior, Wisconsin. The company was renamed Enbridge in 1998, and in 2017 completed a merger with Spectra Energy, making it the largest energy infrastructure company in North America.

Enbridge operates over 17,000 miles of crude oil and liquids pipelines and has a stake in more than 193,000 miles of natural gas and natural gas liquids (NGL) pipelines.

Rebecca Kemble is a grandmother and water protector who lives with her extended family on Ho Chunk territory in Madison, WI. As a journalist, she has covered water protection actions against mining and pipelines for over a decade for the Wisconsin Citizens Media Cooperative, Progressive Magazine and Toward Freedom. An elected alderperson on the Madison Common Council from 2015-2021, Rebecca is currently involved with many projects, including the Line 5 Coalition, Madison Mutual Aid Network, Solidarity Economy Principles Project, regional food systems advocacy, worker cooperative development and various media projects.

Based in Calgary, Alberta, Enbridge has more than half of its oil pipelines — 9299 miles — in the United States with 8510 miles in Canada. They produce for export, with large terminals in Texas and others on the east and west coasts of Canada.

Enbridge's expected profits for 2022 top \$15 billion, with \$7 billion paid out in investor dividends. The company continues to attract massive investments: \$3.8 billion in 2022 and over \$10 billion expected for 2024.

Enbridge owns the main pipelines out of the infamous Alberta Tar Sands, and is also involved in transporting oil from fields in North Dakota, and Texas, as well as fracked gas in Colorado and Oklahoma. It owns a significant portion of the Dakota Access Pipeline.

Spills and “Replacement”

The construction of pipelines destroys surface and groundwater, sensitive wetlands and culturally significant lands. And all pipelines spill. In the 16 years between 2002 and 2018, Enbridge pipelines spilled 307 times releasing 2.8 million gallons of oil and toxic fluids.

The largest of these spills was in 2010 when Line 6b seeped over one million gallons of tar sands oil and dilbit into the Kalamazoo River. The still incomplete cleanup has exceeded \$1 billion.

Enbridge has been “replacing” aging infrastructure in the Lakehead System, built 70 years ago, which includes pipelines originating in Alberta and moving through Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Northern Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan and back into Canada in Ontario and Quebec. In reality these are

brand new pipelines, the construction of which has produced enormous damage affecting the homelands of indigenous peoples.

Great Grandmother Mary Lyons of the Leech Lake Band of Lake Superior Chippewa traveled to Montréal to deliver a \$266 billion invoice to Enbridge for damages to the lands, people and water of northern Minnesota in 2020 and 2021 for the construction of Line 3. The day after the march she went to the Enbridge terminal in an industrial area in Montréal with water protectors from Michigan, Wisconsin, New York and Minnesota to deliver the invoice and hold a press conference. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQHWYCuxU6Q>)

While Enbridge calls its pipelines by different names — Lines 3, 93, 5 and 9 — they are in effect one single pipeline carrying tar sands oil and the chemicals that dilute it from Alberta to Montréal, crossing through the United States along the way.

Construction of the Line 3 “replacement” project in northern Minnesota was rushed through in 2020 and 2021, causing massive damage to water and land:

“Permit violations are in the dozens and shoddy construction practices have left a wake of destruction through Minnesota’s most pristine waters, wetlands and wild rice beds. The fact that an aquifer could be breached in January 2021, go unnoticed by regulators for months, and not be repaired until January 2022 shows there has been a complete breakdown of our state’s environmental protections and regulatory system.” (See <https://www.mepartnership.org/line3/aquifer-breach/>)

In order to get this new pipeline (now

called Line 93) built, Enbridge paid over \$8.5 million to local law enforcement agencies to arrest and forcefully remove water protectors from areas in the vicinity of construction activities that were harming aquifers and destroying sensitive wetlands:

“The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission approved this outlandish system that allowed law enforcement agencies to bill Enbridge for any Line 3-related costs. Line 3 critics felt the system biased law enforcement in favor of Enbridge. Law enforcement agencies could bill for routine patrols of Enbridge work sites even if there was no protests going on, or even people present. Law enforcement fell hard on Native American water protectors.” (<https://healingmn-stories.wordpress.com/2022/06/10/final-payout-from-the-enbridge-line-3-public-safety-escrow-account-8-5-million/>)

Over 1000 arrests were made, and while most of the charges have since been dismissed, there are still over 100 people awaiting trial.

Regulatory Capture

Enbridge has written the book on regulatory capture, whereby corporations control the entities that are supposed to be regulating and overseeing their activities. This happened at all levels of state government in Minnesota regarding Line 3 in the permitting process, in the reporting of polluting incidents and accountability for them, in law

enforcement and in the courts.

In Wisconsin they were able to get a law passed that makes it a felony to trespass specifically on pipeline easements. This may be put to the test soon as they are proposing to “reroute” Line 5 for 44 miles around the Bad River Reservation, which lies on the shore of Lake Superior and encompasses 40% of the lake’s wetlands, including many acres of sacred wild rice beds.

The existing pipeline is operating illegally in Bad River territory now, its lease having run out in 2013. Bad River took Enbridge to court, and a federal judge has ruled that Enbridge has been trespassing for nine years. The case is ongoing as the judge decides on damages and on how the pipeline should be removed.

The Wisconsin DNR is now working on an Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed new pipeline, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is conducting an Environmental Assessment as the proposed pipeline will cut through many navigable waterways.

In Michigan, Line 5 crosses under the Straits of Mackinaw, potentially threatening three great lakes: Michigan, Huron and Superior. In 2021 Michigan Governor Whitmer ordered Enbridge to stop operating the pipeline due to the hazard it poses to the waters, but Enbridge has ignored that order.

Apologists for Enbridge in the Canadian government have claimed that a 1977 treaty

between the United States and Canada supersedes any authority a U.S. governor may have. That issue is also being adjudicated by state and federal courts, amidst disputes about which have jurisdiction.

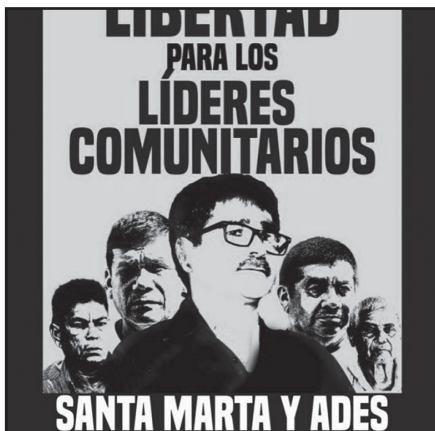
But a multi-billion dollar corporation can afford all these court battles, so long as its oil — and profits — continue to flow.

Water protectors are building solidarity across the colonial borders of the United States and Canada to shut down the pipelines. During a teach-in on December 11 activists and researchers from Quebec, Ontario, Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota shared information and experiences and began to build a cross-border organizing project.

At this moment, Line 5 is the part of the Black Snake that is under active legal challenges and regulatory review. We need President Biden to revoke the permits that allow Enbridge’s pipelines to enter the United States, and the Army Corps of Engineers not to permit any new construction.

We need states to stand up for their water and their people and to hold Enbridge accountable for the damages they’ve created, and overturn the felony trespass and protest laws. We need Justin Trudeau and his ministers to stop shilling for this multinational corporation. But most of all, we need Enbridge to get their pipelines out of the ground. ■

Free Salvadoran Water Defenders!



FIVE PROMINENT WATER defenders in El Salvador were arrested on January 11: Miguel Angel Gamaz, Alejandro Lainez Garcia, Pedro Antonio Rivas Lainez, Arturo Pacheco, and Saul Agustin Rivas Ortega.

Several of the five helped organize the National Roundtable on Metals Mining, honored in 2009 by the Institute for Policy Studies with IPS’s Letelier-Moffitt Human Rights Award.

A call for the Salvadoran government to drop the charges against these activists and release them from prison awaiting trial has been issued by more than 250 organizations

in 29 countries, including the U.S. Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES).

Their January 20 press release states that the arrested individuals “were among leaders of the historic and successful campaign that convinced the Salvadoran legislature to unanimously pass a ban on metals mining in 2017 to save the nation’s rivers.

“Today, thanks in part to its ill-advised embrace of Bitcoin, the Salvadoran government is under enormous pressure to find new revenues. The government is reportedly considering overturning the mining ban and allowing environmentally destructive mining. Environmental and human rights organizations in El Salvador have stated that the arrests are politically motivated as they seek to silence these Water Defenders and to demobilize community opposition at this critical moment.”

The five are accused of an alleged murder more than 30 years ago, during the civil war where 75,000 people died. “Rather than investigate or prosecute those responsible for the dozens of cases of human rights violations and crimes against humanity that members of the Salvadoran military committed against against the Santa Marta community,” the press release states, including the

1980 Lempa River massacre where 30 people were assassinated and 189 disappeared, “the government is now re-victimizing the community by targeting their leaders, who have been outspoken against the policies of the current government.”

Struggles around ecocidal practices of extractivism, as well as toxic dumping and dams, are prevalent across the global South. Under Brazil’s previous Bolsonaro government, they take a deadly turn.

In the early days of Pink Tide South American governments, extractivist policies benefited from high prices that could be used to fund social programs. But without a transition to a new economic model, extractivism continues even after prices plummeted.

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[For background on the struggle, see *Water Defenders: How Ordinary People Saved The Country from Corporate Greed* by Robin Broad and John Cavanagh, 2022.]

Why Abolition Is Only Answer Killings by Police Rose in 2022

By Malik Miah

BLACK PEOPLE ARE 13% of the U.S. population but 24% of those murdered by police. Over 1100 were killed by the police in 2022, an increase from 2021. Yet it is rare that any cop is disciplined or prosecuted.



There are several unusual circumstances in this case. First, the family and demonstrators immediately demanded evidence and videos disproved the police report.

None of the police cams or street lamp camera provided evidence that Nichols was driving recklessly. Nor did they substantiate the claim that

Nichols tried to grab an officer's gun.



Top: Tyre Nichols, above: Keenan Anderson. Family members released these photos of their loved ones. Their crime: driving while Black.

In fact, Congress has opposed mandating data collection, doing the bidding of the pro-gun lobby. But since 2015, Mapping Police Violence has collected data on police shootings and killings across the country. The non-profit research group maintains a database of reported deaths at the hands of law enforcement, including people fatally shot, beaten, restrained and tasered.

The circumstances around the killings remain consistent. Police are basically “bullet proof” from prosecution because the courts and laws protect them when they claim the killing was justified because they “feared for their lives.”

But in 32% of cases last year, the person was fleeing before being killed. They were running or driving away — all cases in which experts say lethal force is unwarranted and also endangers the public.

The Case of Tyre Nichols

According to the first official statement from the Memphis Police Department about the arrest of Tyre Nichols, officers approached Nichols on January 7 to arrest him for a supposed traffic violation, then a “confrontation” occurred, and Nichols ran.

Once they caught up with him, five Black police officers punched, kicked, tasered and pepper sprayed Nichols. He laid in anguish on the ground, crying out for his mother whose home was only 80 yards away.

Nichols was finally taken to the hospital in critical condition and died three days later. Videos revealed such horrific violence unleashed by special police unit that the “Scorpion” team has been disbanded. The five are charged with second-degree murder.

Malik Miah is a longtime activist and ATC advisory editor.

and handcuffed Nichols and sent them to at least six people. Not only are these acts in violation of police protocol, but they show their arrogance.

Second, it is extremely rare for police to be disciplined. But now that they have been charged, several other African American people have come forward and to tell stories about how they were stopped, harassed and beaten. It turns out that two of the five officers had been written up for their brutality.

While it was positive that the five cops were fired and charged quickly, the family's lawyer pointed out that others present have not. The one white officer, who remained with the car, was also fired; seven more are under investigation. For its part, the Fire Department suspended the licenses and fired three EMT workers. But so far only Black officers are facing legal charges.

The Pattern

Those most likely to be stopped and killed are like Tyre Nichols, 29. He worked at FedEx, was an avid skateboarder, an amateur photographer and dad.

He seems remarkably similar to Keenan Anderson, 31, a Black high school teacher pulled over January 3 in Los Angeles. The police body cam footage from the scene shows multiple cops holding him down on the pavement. One officer appeared to hold his elbow against Anderson's neck. As he begged for help, another tased him multiple times, sometimes for several seconds at a time.

Anderson's cousin is Patrisse Cullors, co-founder of Black Lives Matter. She told a *Guardian* reporter that Anderson's death could have been avoided. “It was a traffic accident. Instead of treating him like a potential criminal, police should have called the ambulance,” Cullors said.

“If there was a policy in which traffic stops were met with unarmed professionals who come to the scene to help with whatever situation has happened, that would have prevented my cousin's death. And that would have prevented so many other deaths.”

Ten percent of all those the police kill over the course of a year are initially stopped while driving. In 2020 that meant 86 people. An additional 10% are killed by police who respond to a mental health call; in 2020 that meant 109 murdered.

Questions About Black Cops

Qualified Immunity is the protection for police that makes legal shootings, beating and murder possible. It's why few cops, even those charged, are ever convicted. Congress refuses to pass legislation to remove this protection for police.

What explains the quick response to the five African American cops? The beating was "normal" for police everywhere. Some believe it was because of a Black police chief. Others cited the fear of violent protest.

I believe that it reflects the changing social consciousness in the Black community about cops in general, including Black police. The change is a byproduct of the Black Lives Matter Movement that emerged in 2020 with the murder of George Floyd by cops in Minneapolis.

Nationwide there have been protests against police violence in other incidents, where local police and officials did not release videos of brutality and shooting deaths of Black people.

The deeper questions: Why do police departments set up elite units mainly targeting Black communities? Why was the Scorpion Unit set up in 2021?

"Hunter Dempster, an organizer with Decarcerate Memphis, a group pushing for accountability in the criminal justice system, said on Sunday that his organization has long been warning about the Scorpion team. He said the unit's main mission had appeared to be conducting mass pullovers in poor areas.

"He described the officers in the unit as 'violent bullies' and said many residents had also questioned why the unit often used unmarked vehicles..." (New York Times, 1/29/23)

The Scorpion unit, like other special units, result in overcriminalizing the African American community, especially its youth. But even when the units are disbanded, the cops remain in the department.

In the aftermath of the 1967 Detroit rebellion, which was set off by a police raid on an after-hours celebration, police only intensified their stop-and-frisk policies.

The Michigan Civil Rights Commission and the Kerner Report outlined what needed to be done to end racial profiling and police violence. Instead the police department pushed back and by 1971 set up STRESS (Stop The Robberies, Enjoy Safe Streets).

STRESS teams were undercover for surveillance and decoy operations, supposedly arresting muggers and robbers. Over the next two years, STRESS teams murdered 22 civilians, all but one African American; six were shot in the back.

Opposition to the repressive police grew until a broad coalition organized for the abolition of STRESS. When Coleman Young ran for mayor in 1973 against the then current police chief, he promised to create "a people's police department."

Once elected — one of the first African-American mayors of a major U.S. city — Young abolished STRESS and issued an executive order to recruit more Black officers. At the time Detroit was 45% Black; the police force was 85% white.

The Case of Malice Green

The case of Malice Green, killed by Detroit police just 18 months after Los Angeles cops beat Rodney King, was remarkably similar to the Nichols and Anderson killings.

Green was stopped by an unmarked police car that had been following him. Two plainclothes officers, Walter Buzdyn and Larry Nevers, approached either side of his car; Nevers asked for his driver's license.

According to the police report, Green reached for his glove box, with a "balled fist," Nevers yelled that he should drop whatever he had. The two then jumped into the vehicle and began to beat his hand with their metal flashlights.

As the beating continued, additional uniformed police officers as well as EMS technicians arrived. EMS workers later reported that a uniformed officer pulled Green from the vehicle and hit him. Meanwhile Nevers hit Green in the ribs, at which point Green dropped his car keys and a piece of white paper. He was then handcuffed but suffered a seizure before EMS could treat him.

He was pronounced dead from blunt trauma to the head at the hospital. The police report claimed the officers retrieved four crack rocks and a closed knife.

Detroiters were shocked to discover Nevers had been part of the STRESS unit and one of five named in an excessive force lawsuit that resulted in the death of a 26-year old woman. The city settled the case for \$275,000 but Nevers and the others remained on the force.

In the Green case, Buzdyn and Nevers were convicted of second-degree murder. Later they were retried and resentenced. A third officer was found not guilty.

Some people ask about the role of Black police officers. In the 1960s and 1970s when police forces were mainly white, the community demanded hiring Black police officers, and more Blacks elected to higher office.

I grew up in Detroit during the 1967 rebellion and afterwards, a common demand arose for more community control. Black people have since learned that racial composition does not transform its culture and mission of policing.

Policing was never meant to serve and protect average citizens. It was created to serve and protect the ruling class and its property, and to suppress formerly enslaved people and their descendants, as well as striking workers and protesters.

Black police officers are servants of the same violent racist system as white cops.

Black police officers know when in civilian clothes they are treated like all Black people with racial contempt.

The root of police culture is white supremacy, racism and national oppression. The original sin of the United States, written into the Constitution, is acceptance of slavery (and the extra political power given to slaveholders) and oppression of Black people and other nonwhite populations.

Protests and demands were never directed at white cops alone. The sophisticated awareness of policing was always focused on winning democratic reforms and radical changes to the institution itself.

Memphis makes that clear. Cops are cops no matter their skin color. Police violence reflects the internalization of racist ideology.

What Comes Next

What's ahead in Memphis will be a long road to win some justice. It is not for sure that the five will be convicted. But most people realize that disbanding special police forces and convicting police who brutally beat people is hardly enough.

Just two years after George Floyd's murder, the modest police reforms promised in the wake of his horrific murder have been reversed or stopped as Congress and the Biden Administration have pushed for more funding to police departments.

Clearly the Justice for George Floyd multiracial movement was always about more than getting the white police officers who killed him arrested and prosecuted.

It was about winning legal changes nationally to change policing. Most importantly, the radical wing of the BLM movement continues to demand defunding the police and reimagining how a public security system is forged. The left wing goes further by calling for the system to be abolished.

A new culture is possible only by uprooting the old and creating a new safety force from the bottom up. These are democratic demands that are both immediate and transitional to changing the ruling system itself.

African Americans are smart about racism and white supremacy. Until the civil rights victories in the 1960s, few if any cops were Black. The demand was to change that. Some 50 years later, as Memphis shows, it did not change the police culture and function.

In a lesser-known part of his famous 1963 March on Washington "I Have A Dream" speech, King proclaimed, "We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality."

As long as the police cartel exists and is supported by both major parties, police killing will continue. It took a mass civil rights movement to end legal segregation. The same must happen to abolish policing and the corrupt criminal legal system. ■

On Peace Negotiations Prospects: View from the Ukrainian Left

By Denys Bondar & Zakhar Popovych

INTRODUCTION: THE FOLLOWING article was originally published in *Ukrainian* on November 22, 2022.¹ Subsequent developments have only reconfirmed its arguments.

Recently, it has become a commonplace to cite polling showing the shift in the attitudes of the Russian people against the so-called “special military operation.” In addition, with polls reporting war fatigue among Americans, many left-leaning public figures have predicted that 2023 will be the year of peace negotiations. We believe that this is a deeply misinformed view.

First and foremost, we note that these commentators never mention the opinions of Ukrainians. This confirms that the “anti-imperialism of fools” unfortunately remains the blindfold through which the Russian aggression against Ukraine is viewed.² These “anti-imperialists” not only discredit the essential value of solidarity, but also exclude the Ukrainian people from the most existential question facing their nation since World War II.

An analysis of the war can be, at best, only half accurate if Ukrainian society is ignored, — that is, as “accurate” as random gibberish. Hence, misunderstanding the fundamental nature of this war — an anti-colonial war of national survival — lead to an absurd proposal in such poor taste as the “Christmas ceasefire,” which was somewhat coincidentally (or not?) later declared by the Kremlin but then predictably violated.³

The Left urgently needs a reality check rooted in facts. Fortunately, these are readily available: Many Ukrainian news and polling reports are translated and available in English. Currently, one other gets much higher accuracy and thoughtful analysis from the established news agency like The New York Times, Washington Post, etc.

For example, a recent report in *The Economist* noted: “But a war which revolves around Ukraine’s identity as much as its territory — indeed one which has forged that identity anew, far more strongly than before — has unleashed

Denys Bondar and Zakhar Popovych, members of Sotsialny Rukh (Social Movement) originally wrote this article for their website (<https://rev.org.ua/the-left-view-on-the-prospects-of-peace-negotiations/>). The first publication in English was on the website of Sotsialny Rukh (Social Movement) (<https://rev.org.ua/the-left-view-on-the-prospects-of-peace-negotiations/>). ATC has edited it for the U.S. reader.

forces beyond the control of even Mr. Zelensky, perhaps the most popular leader in the world today.”⁴ This same sentiment was conveyed in our original article.

Additionally, despite Russia’s terror campaign against the civilian infrastructure across the entire country, recent polls report that Ukrainians overwhelmingly reject territorial concessions⁵ and are ready to endure difficulties in the medium term⁶ and would not surrender even if a tactical nuclear weapon was used.⁷

LATELY IN THE West, the sentiment on the prospects of a peaceful end to the war imposed on the Ukrainian people is heard more and more often. But are such negotiations possible, and who would benefit from them? And does Putin actually want peace?

Recently, Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy declared that negotiations on the war’s ending could only take place in public. (Zelenskyy said that he wants the conversation about those solutions to be public rather than take place behind closed doors.)

To this, Putin’s press secretary could only mumble that he could not even imagine such a thing because, in his opinion, public negotiations do not exist at all. It is a precious recognition that negotiations, in the understanding of the current Russian government, can only take place as a continuation of accumulating multi-layered lies. This appears to be the foundation of the public communication strategy of the Putin regime.

A prime example of this strategy was the multi-year production of many implausible but impressive conspiracy versions regarding the murder of 298 people during the crash of flight MH17 which occurred in the air over Ukraine on July 17, 2014.

Based on the open trial results, the Dutch court has established that the crime was committed with the Buk anti-aircraft system, which the Russians illegally brought to Ukraine. But of course, Russian officials have already rejected this court decision. Russian propagandists are preparing to confuse the issue and provide an opportunity for self-justification to those who wish to remain deceived.

What Does Putin’s Regime Offer?

The war very convincingly opened the eyes of Ukrainians to what is the modern Russian state and destroyed any trust in it.

All wars, of course, end with negotiations. Ukraine has always clearly emphasized that it has no intention of advancing toward Moscow and demanding full and unconditional surrender. Moreover, the voluntary withdrawal of Russian troops would preserve the lives of the Ukrainian military and civilian population.

Is this what Putin wants to discuss? Then why not communicate it publicly?

Most likely, Russian authorities are again trying to come up with another combination of lies and manipulations to buy time and calm down the country’s apolitical population, stirred up by the partial September mobilization.

Despite this, one could speculate that some compromises could favor Ukraine under certain circumstances. But compromises are possible only if there are reasons to believe the agreement will be fulfilled. There is no trust in the ruling elites of the Russian Federation.

The same people have already signed such pacts, including the Budapest Memorandum of 1994. Even during the last year, they made promises that were quickly broken: in February, Putin promised that there would be no invasion of Ukraine. In September, he stated there would be no mobilization in the Russian Federation. Recently Putin promised that “Russia is in Kherson forever.”

What Do Ukrainians Want?

Currently, Ukrainians trust their state. The results of the independent Sociological Group annual “Rating” surveys are shown on the figure on page 7. According to its polling, during a full-scale war the share of people who believe the country is moving in the right direction increased from the usual 10-20% over the last decade to 70-80%. This proportion has been higher than 30% only during Euromaidan (2014), and for a short time after Zelenskyy was elected when his efforts to achieve a stable end to the war in Donbas seemed successful.

Currently, there is a consensus in Ukrainian society that to achieve peace, it is necessary to expel the Russian army from the country (by destroying their army if possible), to “demilitarize” the Russian Federation, at least to the point where it can no longer shell peaceful Ukrainian cities and

blackmail us with deprivation from electricity, water and heating.

This is what Ukrainians see as “movement in the right direction.” Everything else is perceived as a deviation from the course. At the same time, according to the Kyiv Institute of Sociology, the percentage of people who believe that Ukraine can agree to some territorial concessions to achieve peace has decreased from 10% to 7% over the past five months.

According to the latest available data, 87% of the population does not want to make any territorial concessions to the Russian Federation.¹ The crucial point is the overwhelming majority of respondents in all regions of Ukraine, including the West, East and South, reject the possibility of territorial concessions to achieve peace.

Moreover, representatives of all major ethnic and linguistic groups are similarly inclined. Even among Ukrainian citizens who identify as “Russian-speaking Russians,” 57% oppose territorial concessions to the Putin regime.² The beginning of the widespread missile attacks on power plants and the associated blackouts appear to have only contributed to strengthening the opinion among Ukrainians that negotiations with the Russians remain pointless.³

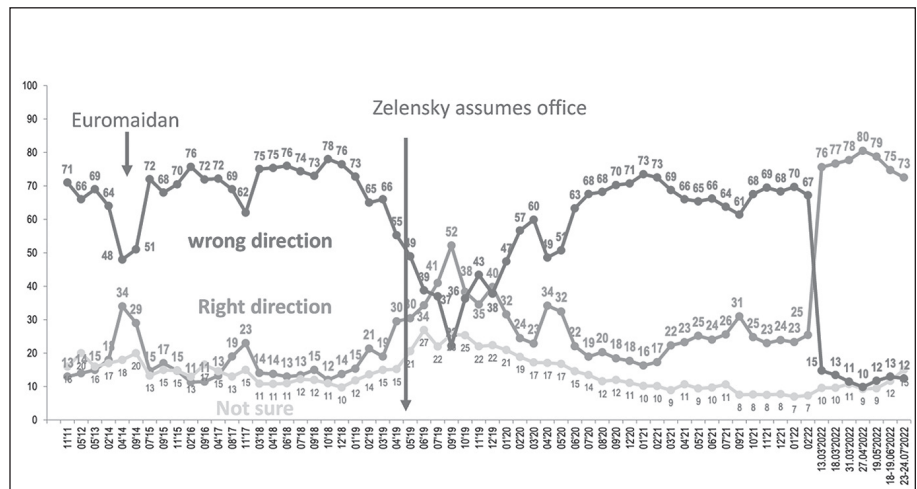
While sociological polls during the war can be inaccurate, they adequately demonstrate the main trends of changes in public opinion.

When Will Ukrainians Agree to Negotiations?

People in the USA, European countries, and the rest of the world who want the beginning of peace negotiations should at least achieve an immediate end to the destruction of Ukrainian critical infrastructure by Russian missiles, and restoration of regular electricity and heat supply to the population. This requires introducing stricter sanctions against Russia, which will reduce its ability to produce such missiles, as well as providing Ukraine with more effective air and missile defense systems, thereby reducing the effectiveness of Russian attacks.

It would be worthwhile to convince the governments of the world to stop buying Russian oil and gas, to provide anti-missile defense systems and at least a couple of thousand industrial-grade electricity transformers to restore regular electricity, water and heat supply (preferably with the repair crews for their installation) instead of wasting time talking about how the world needs to convince Zelenskyy of something.

Only if this is done can we at least hypothetically expect that Ukrainians’ interest in peace negotiations will increase. Zelenskyy and his party may have many shortcomings, but it is clear that they depend upon and very closely monitor public opinion. So, no



In your opinion, in general, things in Ukraine are going in the right or wrong direction?

<https://rev.org.ua/the-left-view-on-the-prospects-of-peace-negotiations/>

matter what happens, the Ukrainian authorities can only agree to such negotiations and peace terms which an actual majority of Ukrainians would accept.

It is necessary to convince the majority of Ukrainians that the negotiations could make sense, in order to convince Zelenskyy to start peace negotiations with the Russians. The best way to do this is to publicly offer at least some clear proposals for such negotiations.

Is Russia ready to immediately cancel the decision to annex Ukrainian territories? Do they want to discuss the withdrawal of troops? If not, it will be challenging to explain to the Ukrainians what else can be negotiated, except for prisoner of war exchanges (which already happen regularly).

If peace talks are possible, they have a chance of public support only if they are held in public. It cannot be ruled out that if the Russians publicly offered to discuss a peace plan that would include the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine and the prospects of restoring the country’s territorial integrity, Ukrainians might agree to such negotiations.

But no proposals that include the withdrawal of Russian troops have been announced at the moment. *De facto*, Russians “offer negotiations” only to delay the Ukrainian counteroffensive until they can rebuild their forces, so it’s unclear what should spark Ukrainians’ interest.

So far, only warlike rhetoric and promises to “achieve the goals of the special operation” at any cost are heard publicly from the leadership of the Russian Federation. The last thing we heard from the Deputy Head of the Security Council of the Russian Federation, D. Medvedev, was a territorial claim to the “Russian city of Kiev.”

At the same time, he called Kyiv citizens who disagreed with his claim “cockroaches,” which suggests associations with the rhet-

oric of the genocide in Rwanda. Of course, the connotation of a Ukrainian genocide, which is being actively formed and institutionalized as a state ideology in the Russian Federation, as well as the rapid decline into fascism. [On the latter point, see “Russia’s Road Toward Fascism?” by Zakhar Popovych in our previous issue, *Against the Current* 222, November-December 2022 — ed.]

Why No Negotiations Now?

To conclude, the responsibility for the fact that peace negotiations are not currently underway lies entirely with the Russian Federation, which has not provided, at least publicly, any proposals that the majority of Ukrainians could even hypothetically accept.

Ukraine did put forward such proposals. Before the massive attacks on Ukrainian civilian infrastructure, Ukraine had publicly announced proposals to the Istanbul meeting on March 29, 2022 which included the withdrawal of Russian troops to the line of February 23 and the postponement of discussion about Crimea and Donbas.

At the same time, the Ukrainian side insisted that all disputes should be resolved through transparent referendums held under the supervision of international observers and after the return of all forcibly displaced persons.

The public response of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Sergei Lavrov, was that Ukraine’s “neutral status” is “conceptually suitable” for them and, at the same time, not a word was said regarding the readiness to withdraw troops.

It seems that the Kremlin does not consider referendums that are difficult to falsify as an option for a possible solution. They still do not perceive Ukrainians as the entity that will make the final decision. It simply does not fit in their heads.

This is the main problem of the prospect of peace negotiations. There is no certainty

that it makes sense to conduct them with the current Russian leadership. There is no certainty that the Russian authorities even understand that Zelenskyy cannot simply sign whatever he wants, and that even Biden cannot force Zelenskyy to sign an agreement that the majority of Ukrainians will not approve.

In October-November, some mediating countries put forward proposals for the possible conclusion of peace on the conditions of withdrawing Russian troops from the South and East of Ukraine, including the Donbas, but postponing the question of the status of Crimea for seven years.

It was proposed for Moscow to stop missile strikes on Ukraine's critical infrastructure to prove the seriousness of its intentions. Russia responded with a massive missile strike during the G20 summit.

After Zelenskyy put forward a possible agenda for negotiations in the form of ten points in his speech at the G20 summit

(and even more so after he announced the demand for public negotiations), any statements by Russian diplomats about the desire for negotiations, not supported by public proposals, can be clearly qualified as lies and manipulation.

Ukrainians want peace, but not another "ceasefire" that will last only until the next invasion. Campaigning for peace is actually being conducted even in mainstream Ukrainian media, but trust in peace negotiations and lasting peace are impossible without public discussion of its terms.

In particular, editor-in-chief of *Ukrainian Pravda* Sevghil Musaeva, a Ukrainian of Crimean-Tatar origin, does not reject negotiations. Even though the postponement of the Crimea decision is a personal matter for her, she calls for the public formulation of fair peace terms because if "Ukrainian society does not feel justice, any agreements are doomed from the beginning."

We, Ukrainian socialists, must now watch

closely so that no one forgets that peace negotiations must be public and only public, and only on terms acceptable to Ukrainians. Only in this way can we count on a just and lasting peace. ■

Notes to Introduction

1. <https://rev.org.ua/liviyi-pohliad-na-perspektyvy-myrnih-perehovoriv/>
2. <https://www.haymarketbooks.org/books/1164-indefensible>
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5. <https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=eng&cat=reports&id=1167&page=2>
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Notes

1. <https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=eng&cat=reports&id=1136&page=1>
2. <https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=eng&cat=reports&id=1133&page=1>
3. <https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=eng&cat=reports&id=1151&page=1>

Demanding Abortion Rights in Russia

[The following is abridged from an article "Russia: Feminist Anti-War Resistance Abortion Rights Petition," February 5, 2023, by Feminist Anti-War Resistance/FAS (Russia) and posted on the website of Europe Solidaire San Frontières.]

"RUSSIANS ARE DYING out," officials and parliamentarians tragically tell us from the rostrum. It would seem, indeed, that the birth rate is not rising, and that in April 2022 Russia recorded its lowest birth rate since 1943-1944. In January 2023, Russian President Vladimir V. Putin even instructed the government "to come up with a way to raise the birth rate as soon as possible" and gave a full two weeks to solve the problem.

But instead of stopping costly and senseless military operations in Ukraine where tens of thousands of Russians are dying, or instead of fighting poverty and developing effective programs to support childhood, motherhood and responsible parenthood, the Russian government together with the Russian Orthodox Church decided to force Russian women "to have at least four children" by various means.

Over the years they failed to figure out how to encourage women to have children and decided to take the most ineffective and harmful route: gradually restricting the right to abortion, making access to it more difficult and threatening to take it out of mandatory medical insurance.

What restrictive measures have already been introduced or are proposed?

• Since 2011, Russian hospitals have introduced so-called "weeks of silence." When a woman applies for an abortion, she is to put off the date of the procedure for a week or more in order to influence her decision during this time. Often the silence delays the

abortion and women have it later — with greater risk to their health, as other types of abortion (up to and including surgery) have to be used if the deadline is delayed.

- Since 2013, Putin has banned abortion-related advertising.
- Since 2016, there has been an amendment that many experts consider inhumane: doctors are required to "show an image of the embryo and its heartbeat during ultrasound" to women who want an abortion.
- The government encourages hospitals to send women to psychologists before having an abortion, or to develop special pre-abortion questionnaires in which women are asked accusatory and abusive questions. Many hospitals are also distributing manipulative pamphlets with misleading information about abortion and its consequences.

All this has one goal — to discourage women, to frighten them and to stimulate their feelings of guilt. Russian health workers in some regions are being trained in "pre-abortion counselling with traditional values in mind," and women at consultations are asked to fill in questionnaires with questions along the lines of "Are you ready for a posthumous encounter with the soul of your child?"

• Patriarch Kirill, speaking in the Federation Council, proposed a ban on abortions in private clinics. He suggests that the increase in the number of illegal abortions (which threatens to increase women's mortality rates) should be ignored.

• The Duma has proposed a ban on online sales of medication for abortion (the safest). Hospitals and pharmacies have been experiencing problems with the availability of oral contraceptives and pills since March.

• In the summer, the State Duma announced a draft law banning abortions under the compulsory medical insurance scheme. Deputy Prime Minister Tatyana Golikova proposed a ban on abortions before the age of 18 without parental consent.

The Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) has proposed to oblige married women to obtain their husbands' consent for abortions. The number of interested statements from representatives of the ROC has generally increased.

For example, Mikhail Vasilyev, rector of the church at the headquarters of the Strategic Missile Forces, suggested a non-trivial solution to the problem of women who do not want to send their sons to die in the war. It turns out that you just need to avoid abortions and have more children — then parting with just one of them will not be so sad!

The State Duma will consider an amendment to prohibit the promotion of "voluntary abortion and the Freudian ideology of the child."

But the truth is that all these measures to restrict the right to abortion will not only fail to bring the Russian government any closer to its desired demographic goals but will also cause undeniable additional harm to Russian women and thus to Russian society as a whole.

Studies prove that the number of abortions has nothing to do with the birth rate: in 20 years, thanks to public awareness and contraception, the number of abortions in Russia has almost halved, but it has not resulted in any demographic growth. Russians are "dying out" not because of abortions, but because of low living standards. ■

Memorializing Sabra and Shatila: Witness, Resilience & Accountability with Rabab Abdulhadi

AGAINST THE CURRENT editors Dianne Feeley and David Finkel spoke with professor Rabab Abdulhadi about her recent experiences and observations on the Palestinian struggle. Dr. Abdulhadi is the founder and director of the AMED (Arab and Muslim Ethnicities and Diasporas) Studies program at San Francisco State University, where she has faced attacks by rightwing Zionist forces and bureaucratic obstruction from the university administration. She began by discussing her most recent trip. Dr. Abdulhadi would like to thank Anais Amer of National Students for Justice in Palestine and Saliem Shehadeh for editing assistance.

Rabab Abdulhadi: Last September, I co-organized with emergent scholars two international conferences and a delegation to Lebanon and Tunisia as part of our multi-year project, Teaching Palestine: Pedagogical Praxis and the Indivisibility of Justice.

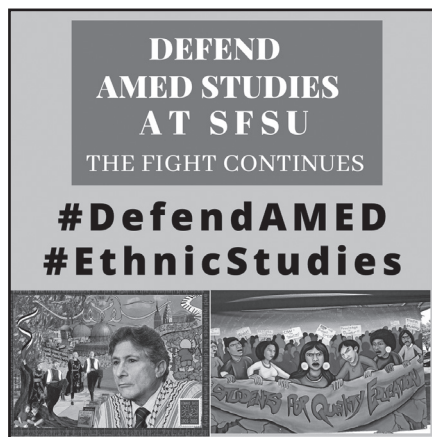
We focused in 2022 on the commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the September, 1982 Sabra and Shatila refugee camp massacres that took place after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the siege of Beirut.

We also commemorated the 20th anniversary of both the Israeli invasion of Palestinian areas under Palestinian Authority (PA) control (at the height of the Aqsa Intifada), the 2002 Jenin massacre and the start of the Apartheid wall. This same year marked the 15th anniversary of the blockade on Gaza and the 50th anniversary of Israel's assassination of the Palestinian organic intellectual Ghassan Kanafani.

Linking these anniversaries together and commemorating them in a contextualized, comparative and historicized analysis that is relevant to the lived realities of marginalized (in this case Palestinian and Lebanese) communities is an essential cornerstone of justice-centered knowledge production and accountability that has been the trademark of Teaching Palestine.

Not unlike other colonial and repressive forces within and outside governments, Israel has historically and continues until this very day to assassinate Palestinian leaders, uproot them from and banish them within their land. For example, last month Israel deported Palestinian lawyer Salah Hammouri from Jerusalem to France.

Comparatively speaking, 2022 was also the 50th anniversary of the Portuguese as-



sassination of African leader Amilcar Cabral. In the United States, COINTELPRO has been exposed in systematic attacks against leaders of the American Indian Movement, Black Panther Party, and the Puerto Rican and Xicano/a movements.

We commemorate these heroes and sheroes, drawing lessons of what it means to deprive movement from leaders and organic intellectuals whose analysis made huge contributions to the liberation movements.

It was a great honor for us to hold the Beirut conference at the headquarters of *Assafir*, the major leftist, anti-colonial and anti-sectarian newspaper, known as “the voice for those who have no voice.”

We were also gratified that the Beirut two-day conference featured a segment of who's who among the Living Archives of Palestinian and Lebanese joint resistance against the Israeli invasion, as well as international witnesses who risked their very lives to defend Palestinian and Lebanese resistance.

We then traveled throughout Lebanon, visiting almost every Palestinian refugee camp that had not been destroyed in one or another Zionist or rightwing attack.

Teaching Palestine and Solidarity in Tunisia

We immediately flew to Tunisia for the second Teaching Palestine symposium, which we held on the eve of the Insaniyyat international conference, organized by several Tunisian and international bodies, including AMED.

A week earlier, our Tunisian keynote speaker, Ghassan Ben Khalifa, was detained

by the authorities who confiscated his files and computer and subjected him to interrogation. Luckily, Ghassan was released just as our colleague, Dr. Oubada Kassab, editor of the social media page of *Al-Adab Journal*, was about to share the link of our petition demanding his freedom.

A founder of the Palestine Solidarity Committee and Tunisian anti-normalization collective, Ben Khalifa has been a leading activist in the struggle of the unhoused and poor people's movement. His keynote address significantly and appropriately connected economic devastation and repression in Tunisia to the struggle for justice for Palestine.

In past ATC issues, including May-June and July-August 2020, we've discussed the genealogy and development of Teaching Palestine. As a pedagogical praxis, we bring together academics and non-academics, students and non-students, to hear from community elders, to whom I've referred to as Living Archives, who pass on Indigenous knowledge often absent from academic studies.

These intergenerational conversations highlight the significance of comparative studies and the indivisibility of justice, while rejecting the exceptionalization of Palestine.

Likewise, following the global pandemic that imposed a virtual conversion of all classroom instruction, we expanded our Teaching Palestine Open Classroom Series. Doing so enabled us to emphasize our commitment to the openness of the classroom both in the diversity of topics we discuss and the comparative critical lens we apply, as well as our refusal to abide by the neoliberal imperative of forcing students to pay for education.

We crafted these multilingual intergenerational conversations, and brought together our students who have not been taught this history. Holding these conversations in Arabic as well as several other languages — English, Spanish or French — challenges and draws attention to the domination and hegemony of colonial means and mediums of communication. Students and youth stepped up and volunteered their time and skills in simultaneous interpretation from Arabic.

As you know, producing knowledge within and outside the classroom has been integral to the framing of teaching Palestine in Palestine, South Africa, Cuba, Vietnam,

Andalucia, and now Lebanon and Tunisia.

Connecting the '68 movements in Paris, Tunisia, Mexico and at U.S. colleges has also been part of this pedagogical praxis. For example, at the World Social Forum in Mexico, we connected the 43 disappeared students from Ayotzinapa with Israeli oppression of Palestinian students, including the use of Israeli spy software, Pegasus and NSO.

Our delegation was hosted by Beit Atfal Assomoud (BAS, or The House of the Children of Steadfastness), its director Kassem Aina, and the amazing women and men in various Palestinian and Lebanese grassroots organizations. Founded by the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW) in 1976 to provide a dignified refuge for orphaned children whose families were martyred in the 1976 Tel Zaatar massacre, BAS now has fully operational kindergartens, schools, vocational and arts centers.

It was such a pleasure to attend a performance of Kamandjati, a full Palestinian Orchestra of more than 50 singers, dancers and musicians ranging in age from seven to 35-year olds. Supported by Italian leftist and trade union organizations, this impressive orchestra and chorus performed songs in Arabic and Italian to mark the anniversary of the massacre. Hearing the beautiful voices of children and youth singing revolutionary songs was truly a display of solidarity and love across borders, languages and cultures.

From Lebanon to Tunisia: Neoliberalism and Devastation

The resilience we witnessed was a radical contrast to the unprecedented devastation of Palestinian and Lebanese impoverished communities along with the growing numbers of refugees and asylum seekers from Syria and other parts of the Third World, especially African and Asian communities.

In both Lebanon and Tunisia, we saw the impact of neoliberal economic policies, devastation and repression and the workings of the police state. It was quite shocking even to those of us who have been following the news on a daily basis.

The economy in Lebanon is devastated. Though I've been visiting since 2000 to interview survivors of the massacre, I have never seen such devastation.

Lebanon used to be the center of banking for the region, particularly for the Gulf states such as Saudi Arabia. Before the Lebanese Civil War, Beirut was labeled as "the Paris of the Orient." That image stood out as an Orientalist trope, before the fierce resistance against the 1982 Israeli invasion and the occupation of South Lebanon (1982-2000) switched Lebanon in the Western imaginary to an "uncivilized" space.

In both Lebanon and Tunisia, boycotting Israel and refusing to collude with the U.S. imperialism and neoliberalism have been intimately connected to international defunding

aid, and intensified "securitized" intelligence sharing and military know-how.

An instant example in Lebanon is that you can't withdraw cash from ATM machines. They don't work anymore. Instead we learned of a new concept called "fresh dollars." This literally means that the U.S. dollar is the only currency available for survival. This applies to professors, engineers or employees of NGOs, who are paid in dollars — they hasten to cash in their paychecks as soon as they receive them. Waiting for even a week or two risks the real possibility that the banks might "run out" of "fresh dollars." "Robin Hood" incidents whereby individuals rob banks at gunpoint to claim their deposits have become frequent occurrences, and at times they're acquitted for just cause.

Unemployment has risen astronomically among Palestinian and Lebanese poor, especially the youth. The proportion is much higher among Palestinian refugees, who are directly impacted by chauvinistic tendencies among Lebanese lawmakers who have banned Palestinians from practicing over 60 professions. Other discriminatory Lebanese laws prohibit Palestinians from inheriting their property to their children.

Basic services, such as water, electricity and sanitation have been either cut back or completely shut off in some neighborhoods. In Palestinian refugee camps as well as in Lebanese poor areas, services are almost non-existent. The sewage system has never been adequate, nor has the electrical grid, since the refugee camps were set up in the early 1950s following the Palestinian Nakba.

Given these conditions, it is not surprising that many people, especially the youth, are trying to migrate to any country through "legal" and "illegal" means.

A major casualty of such economic devastation and chauvinistic Lebanese policies has been education. For Palestinians (as well as other marginalized communities), education has always been a cornerstone of survival and struggle.

Rarely do you talk to a Palestinian anywhere in the world who would not tell you one story or another about elders emphasizing that a college degree is the only passport a Palestinian can carry when faced with Nakba and displacement.

Before the 1982 expulsion of Palestinian fighters from Lebanon, the PLO used to battle UNRWA for better education for children inside refugee camps while simultaneously securing funding and scholarships in Lebanese and other Arab and international universities. However, in the aftermath of the Israeli invasion and the expulsion of the PLO from Lebanon, Palestinian refugees lost their backbone. This is a major context of the Sabra and Shatila massacre.

Undergoing policing by Lebanese state security was a bitter pill to swallow for



Samir, a freed Lebanese prisoner at al Khiam, demonstrates various torture techniques used by the Israeli military and their Southern Lebanese Army collaborators. Teaching Palestine

someone like me, who grew up under Israeli occupation with the emotional and mental scars of military checkpoints and constant surveillance.

I was not naïvely assuming that because these were our Arab siblings we would be treated well — but I was jolted by having to surrender my passport to Lebanese intelligence forces and be investigated by a computer linked to international intelligence agencies before we could enter Palestinian refugee camps still under siege.

My reaction was not dissimilar to visiting South Africa for Teaching Palestine in 2019 and to Brazil for the World Social Forum-Free Palestine in 2012. Viscerally, my body almost remembered the intolerable heat that you experience at the waiting area of Israeli border police when crossing from Jordan to Palestine.

Incarceration and Massacres by Design

We also visited Khiam Prison, set up during French colonial rule of Lebanon and used by the Israeli military and the South Lebanese Army (a puppet militia during the Israeli occupation — ed.) as a detention, interrogation and torture center for Palestinian and Lebanese resistance fighters.

The relationship between Israel and its collaborators in the South Lebanon Army could be approximated to that which the World War II Vichy government in France had with the German occupiers.

Israel bombed Al-Khiam in 2006 to eliminate physical evidence of this torture center, as Samir, a former Lebanese prisoner who guided us through Al Khiam and demonstrated torture techniques, explained to us.

Lebanese resistance prevented Israel from destroying the whole compound. You could still see the cells for women prisoners where many were tortured — as Kifah Afifi described in her oral testimony at the Beirut conference where she was joined by Anwar

Yassine, a Lebanese militant who was tortured in Israeli prisons in Palestine '48 areas.

The most impactful moment of our delegation was the commemoration of the 1982 Sabra and Shatila massacre at the hallowed grounds of the mass graves. The commemoration site exists only because the municipality of Ghubair, a Beirut district run by the Lebanese Hezbollah, built it. When you are standing on it, you're actually standing on top of the bodies of those Palestinian and Lebanese martyrs.

As countless Palestinian survivors have testified, and as tribunals have documented, the massacre lasted for three days. Lebanese rightwing militias allied with, and guided by Israeli forces, the Israeli military turned on floodlights to enable the killing to go on through the night. They were led by the late Israeli war minister Ariel Sharon, who was elected years later as prime minister.

Palestinians and Lebanese were killed by knives, machetes and guns with silencers (to cover up the killing) and dumped into mass graves. News spread partly because butchered bodies began to decompose in the hot September days. This also made it impossible for many relatives to identify their dead.

Forty years later, thousands of "disappeared" remain unaccounted for. Throughout our trip, we heard over and over how there were at least 17,000 Palestinians and Lebanese "missing."

Everyone we met emphasized that "massacres were not accidental." They were speaking about Sabra and Shatila as well as massacres before and during the establishment of the state of Israel. As in other such cases of systematic violence, mass killings are intended to eliminate colonized people and crush their spirit of resistance and defiance.

Israel produced the Cahan report, which cited Israel and Sharon as being indirectly responsible. The reference of Sharon as "the Butcher of Lebanon," which became a rallying cry for Palestinians, Lebanese and their international supporters, is an apt description.

The U.S. government was also culpable. Its special envoy Philip Habib had promised the PLO leadership that Palestinian civilians left behind after the withdrawal of the fighters would be protected. Then the United States (and European countries) withdrew their multinational troops leaving Palestinian civilians defenseless.

Forty years later, there has been no accountability. In fact, some Lebanese rightwing leaders who were allied with Israel and known to have participated in the massacre have made statements contemplating a run for the presidency of Lebanon.

Today, acceptance of the Palestinian narrative and support for Palestine is growing in the same way that people are much more aware of white supremacist structures and

how they are connected to racial capitalism.

Israel and its apologists, along with the U.S. government, are invested in the myth that it was only rightwing Lebanese Christians who sought revenge over the assassination of their leader, Bashar Gemayel. But this does not correspond with the testimonies of survivors of Sabra and Shatila, including medical volunteers at Gaza Hospital, such as Dr. Ben Aloh, Dr. Swee Ang, Dr. Aziza Khalidi and RN Ellen Siegel, who were treating the wounded at the Gaza hospital in Sabra and Shatila, who were treating the injured at the hospital in 1982 in Sabra and Shatila.

Others also testified such as Greek American doctor Chris Giannou, but most importantly it was the Palestinian and Lebanese survivors who witnessed it.

New Israeli Government

Against the Current: *Given the re-election of Benjamin Netanyahu and his extreme ultra nationalist and religious coalition, how will this affect politics in Israel, the West Bank, Gaza and beyond?*

RA: We are witnessing an intensification/escalation of inherent Zionist colonial violence and emerging fascism on a daily basis, which even dominant media cannot ignore. Actually, Netanyahu and what has been described as the far right share the same theoretical and ideological positions. If you recall, in an earlier Israeli election Netanyahu was also employing a dog whistle by urging his support base to vote because "The Arabs are voting in droves."

Itamar Ben-Gvir, the far-right and deeply racist politician who has been named the minister of National Security, has an expanded security portfolio that includes responsibility for border police in the occupied West Bank. Keep in mind, this elected official was convicted by Israel of racist incitement against Palestinians.

Last fall, Ben-Gvir was part of the crowd of Israeli Jewish settlers attempting to forcibly evict Palestinian families in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of East Jerusalem, yelling "If they are throwing stones, shoot them."

From a justice-centered perspective, racial violence has always been at the core of the colonization of Palestine, as of other colonial and settler colonial regimes. However, with the expanding grassroots support for Palestine and its growing social media platforms, racist statements and evidence of Israeli apartheid and colonialism have become much more overt.

When the Israel Knesset (Parliament) passed the so-called "Jewish Nation-State Basic Law" in 2018, this was a triumph for fascist groups and individuals.

This law claims that "the Land of Israel ('Eretz Israel') is the historic national home of the Jewish people, in which the State of Israel was established, and in which the Jew

ish people exercises its natural, cultural, and historic right to self-determination."

It adds that the right to exercise national self-determination in the State of Israel is "solely for the Jewish people."

For example, article 4 states that the official language of the state is Hebrew, demoting Arabic, which was previously a second official language, to an undefined "special status."

Today we witness a more overt license by the Israeli government for violence against Palestinians. This was certainly rubber-stamped by former US President Donald Trump, whose overt hostility against Palestinians was crucial in the act of moving the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, and the expanding influence of Christian Zionism.

Joe Biden is pursuing the same policies of enabling and protecting Israel. During the election campaign, Biden's staff made promises, especially to Palestinian members and activists within the Democratic Party, but his administration has backed off on everything. His administration has reproduced the Israeli narrative and is promoting and legitimizing it.

Where is the Israeli Left?

What's happening to the Israeli left? Larger numbers of Israeli leftists are no longer able to live in such a toxic and racist environment. This is not much different from white South Africans who left under the harsh repression of the apartheid regime irrespective of the privileges they enjoyed while at the same time opposing apartheid. They just couldn't take what it did to them and their families. Here, it's perhaps important to remind ourselves that the ability of Israeli Jews to leave Israel and return is never available to Indigenous Palestinians, given the various built in Israeli laws that are purposefully structured to uproot Palestinians and make their exile permanent.

Israeli anti-Zionist activists were beaten up and arrested during attacks on Sheikh Jarrah Lydda and Acre, but the hegemonic media, especially Israel-protective media, such as the *New York Times*, barely report on Israeli Jews who support and/or part of the Palestinian liberation project.

Another major issue in the dominant U.S. Media coverage on Palestine is that they only rarely talk about Palestinians from other non-Muslim religions or non-religious backgrounds — for example, Shadi Khoury, a Palestinian youth from a very well-known Christian family, who was beaten up, arrested and jailed, then released but placed under house arrest.

Then there are Israeli "leftists" who have moved to the center and more so to the right. In typical colonialist fashion, they blame Palestinians for resisting the occupation.

Every day, we hear about Israeli colonists stealing the farmers' olives, burning the fields

or pulling the trees out, all under the protective eyes of the Israeli military. Sometimes Palestinian farmers are only allowed an hour or two to pick their olives, but when they return the olives may be gone — stolen or burned by settlers.

Meanwhile, settlers are establishing and expanding new colonies. This would have never been possible if it were not for U.S. support. The majority of the world community already recognizes Israel's repression — with increasing numbers of US people at the grassroots, including young Jewish people.

Without the U.S. shield, Israel would not be able to escape being held accountable for its crimes against humanity and violence against Palestinians. Recent reports by Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Israeli B'tselem, Al Haq and others have affirmed what Palestinians have said all along.

A Crisis in Zionism

There is a serious crisis in Zionism. For example, the front page of the *New York Times* recently published an article about how even young Jewish Republicans don't identify with Israel. They do not identify with repression nor with racism.

Despite bullying and “anti-Semitism” smears, Jewish youth increasingly refuse to identify with Israel.

ATC: *When we look at the rightwing Israeli crowds, fascist crowds in Sheikh Jarrah, we see many young people. What does that represent?*

RA: I think that it resonates with what's happening in the United States. Take Charlottesville, or the January 6, 2021 attempted coup. White supremacy, Zionism, and other forms of racism are built on the belief that other people are inferior and don't deserve to live. This is taught and learned by younger generations through both official and unofficial messaging.

Repeating Trump's slogan, “take our country back” (meaning that this is a country for white people) or we want to “make America great again,” the discourse of white supremacist groups is not different from Zionists in Israel. Trigger-happy Israeli soldiers who shoot and kill Palestinians on a daily basis are mostly 18-, 19-, 20-year olds.

By contrast, we also see anti-Zionist Israeli and Jewish youth refusing and resisting this racist ideology and increasingly joining movements for justice. The change on a grassroots level is still not reflected in the superstructure but this is not unusual; we know that it takes time, as we've seen this in movements from Arab revolutions to apartheid South Africa and the Movement for Black Lives.

This struggle is particularly relevant for me as an educator. Every day in the United States, we hear about a teacher being fired, or a school board being attacked by rightwingers under the claim that we must

“protect our way of life.” What's “our way of life” and for whom, and who is outside of it?

ATC: *As a result of what Teaching Palestine and your trips have shown, how does it develop knowledge?*

RA: Teaching Palestine entails centering the voices and lived experiences of the marginalized who bear witness to radical changes taking place. This captures the sense that resilience is a major contributing factor to victories. These reciprocal solidarity trips highlight more than ever the need to seriously commit to justice-centered knowledge production.

Second, it is our responsibility to refuse the neoliberal approaches to education that push graduation rates in order to qualify for state and federal funding at the expense of teaching about Palestine and other struggles for justice. Instead of parroting corporate terms such as “student success,” what's needed is providing the resources to arm neglected students from public schools so they are not left behind in competing with students from elite private schools or wealthy areas.

This requires real commitment and conviction in the purpose of education, and on my own campus, in prioritizing the social justice mission instead of catering to donors' agendas whose goals are to limit or contain criticism of greedy landlords, unrestrained profit making in militarized and securitized industries, funding the police and maintaining the status quo.

But organizing doesn't happen by itself; it happens on different levels. Whether you're talking about the Palestinian economy, or workers' struggle at Google and Amazon, the balance of forces is shifting and opening up new spaces for the masses to organize.

Also, victories that happen in one area or field of organizing feeds into another — it's very encouraging and breeds collective motivation. This is why Palestine Studies has such potential. We produce knowledge for justice, for everyone.

When Palestinians across the board —

whether they are Israeli citizens, living in the '67 West Bank, or in Jerusalem or in Gaza — recently went on strike, many people are not aware that the strike call was initiated in the '48 areas inside Israel. This challenged Zionist narratives that insist on referring to these Indigenous Palestinian as “the Arabs of Israel” in order to erase their Palestinian identification.

This is significant as it signals a new stage in Palestinian liberation in which anti-colonial, anti-capitalist and anti-racist politics and actions are challenging the legitimacy of the corruption of the Oslo team of the historical PLO leadership that has been more in sync with US and Israeli goals than with the majority of Palestinians. This is accompanied by widening grassroots support for Palestine around the world.

Look at the World Football (soccer) Cup games actions led by the Qatari Committee Against Normalization (with Israel). We've also seen it at concerts and major international public events where Palestinian flags are raised on the field and the stands.

This defies the *status quo* notion that athletes are instructed to be “non-political” and instead only focus on entertaining audiences, but there are athletes who identify with movements and find ways to speak out. When the Moroccan team reached the quarterfinal, its members posed for their group photo with the Palestinian flag.

Our responsibility as activists, then, is to pass along our organizing experiences — what we have done well and what we did not accomplish. In other words, we acknowledge both continuity and rupture as we engage in critical thinking as intergenerational conversations.

When we were in Lebanon, young people in the refugee camps were eager to hear about what happened in the '60s, the '70s, the '80s. Why? They want to be able to craft things differently today, they want to have that knowledge to inform the future. There's more willingness to strategize collectively and begin to act together. ■

Palastine Solidarity Activism Under Fire

IN A NEW and dangerous development, Zionist groups are moving more aggressively than in the past to ban criticism of Israel on campuses by deeming it antisemitic. One tactic deployed by such groups is to create “assessment reports” claiming dubiously that Jewish students feel uncomfortable about anti-Zionist activities and that those activities should be prohibited. It conflates antisemitism with criticism of Israel and anti-Zionism more broadly.

San Francisco State University (SFSU), a public university, commissioned, Hillel International and the Academic Engagement Network, two Zionist groups, to conduct the assessment survey, the results of which were published in October 2022.

Why did the administration chose these groups to draft the report and how was it funded? Needless to say, the report has had a damaging impact on Professor Rabab Abdulhadi for her teaching and scholarship on Palestine and her advocacy for the Arab and Muslim Ethnicities and Diasporas (AMED) Studies program at the university.

For further information contact: Steve Roddy, sidingwen@yahoo.com, California Scholars for Academic Freedom (CS4AF); or Harry Soloway, solgant@gmail.com, International Campaign to Defend Dr. Rabab Abdulhadi. ■



Mario Savio speaking during the University of California, Berkeley Free Speech Movement, 1964. The dawn of university real and imagined “golden age.”

Lessons from the 1960s:

Paths to Rediscovering Universities

By Harvey J. Graff

BOTH SCHOLARLY AND popular writing about the experiences, on the one hand, and the short- and long-term impacts, on the other hand, of the 1960s on colleges and universities swing widely and wildly. They range from undiluted praise usually with a paean to a lost golden moment to unrelenting condemnation, with many voices between the extremes.¹

The imperative to draw and act on more accurate historical memory and complicated lessons from the 1960s — what was gained, and what’s been lost — has never been greater than our present moment.

The deluge of historical commentary obfuscates more than it informs. Competing narratives — of rise and fall, constant decline from a mythical golden age of classics and canons, decline and relative rise, and so on — conflict and confuse.

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Let me be clear that I write as a sympathetic fellow participant in campus-based Sixties activism. I was a member of Students for a Democratic Society, National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam, Students for Southern Christian Leadership Conference including marching with a young Jesse Jackson in the streets of Chicago. I “got clean for Gene” McCarthy in 1968, then moved to Toronto for graduate studies in 1970.

I am shaped by those experiences personally, politically, and intellectually. At age 73, I continue to feel its stimuli and its contradictions. Thus, I emphasize the limits of those experiences, and the continuing constructive lessons that few authors who experienced the 1960s or write after the fact recognize.

I argue that we need to embrace and debate “lessons of the Sixties” and grapple with the ways in which the Sixties remain critical elements of “the origins of our own times” for worse and for better. I elaborate on this here, and in *My Life with Literacy: The Continuing Education of a Historian* and selectively in recent essays.²

A Lost Promise?

Historians’ more recent and at least partly documented writings display the problems. In more than 600 pages and more than 100

interviews, Ellen Schrecker’s title, *The Lost Promise: American Universities in the 1960s*, is a giveaway. I find this a selective, sometimes superficial account of certain locations and experiences — repeating more than questioning or challenging the dominant New Left narrative of rise-and-fall.

Far too often, “the promise” is exaggerated in itself and out of its historical context. Simultaneously, its loss is blown out of proportion. Schrecker exaggerates the external attack and immediate decline of universities. But *The Lost Promise* appeals to commentators.³

Commenting on Schrecker but attempting to ask continuing questions, Steven Mintz notes, “For many aging baby boomers and their parents, this country’s golden age does not lie shrouded in a mythic past but, rather, exists within living memory.” I argue that the partly tarnished era also shapes our efforts and structures in facts, myths and aspirations, concretely and ideologically.

The plethora of commentary surprisingly neglects many influences large and small. We ignore them at our loss. We need to make the connections clearer to understand the constant shaping and reshaping of past and present. (My essay benefits from email exchanges with Mintz. I thank my longtime colleague and friend.)

I seek to replace the competing incomplete and distorted narratives by emphasizing the power and accuracy of complex, contradictory shaping forces and contexts. This is the lesson of history and the humanities — old, and their reformations that are central to the 1960s. Those legacies are too often unrecognized. Yet they continue.⁴

Positive and Negative Complexities

Central to this critical awareness is the imperative to dismiss dominating, simplistic, self-serving, ideological and mythological substitutes that hew almost completely to either the negative or the positive. Elements of both demand our attention.

Our understanding today is dominated by, the loss of historical memory that permeates not only scholarship and universities but also politics, economics, and society and culture more generally. It is debilitating, and in its extent today, historically unprecedented.⁵

The competing myths that fill the pages of *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Inside Higher Education*, *Times Higher Education*, *University Affairs*, and *Academe/Blog* were planted in the 1960s. Many of their seeds originated in the years from the 1920s to the 1950s.

These include for example, the “federalization” of research; “massification” especially of public higher education; and gradual integration by race, ethnicity, gender, and religion, unquestionably a major step forward — but also laying the basis for today’s explosive crisis of crushing student debt.

Along with these come stereotypical conflicts of “elites” versus “popular classes,” among them students in four-year and graduate universities and other forms of post-secondary education; and of course, the rise and waves of student activism and radicalism.

Among the persisting, confusing and disorienting myths are the “rise and fall” of the humanities with their (actually never-dominant) great books and canonical general educational requirements; the opposition and competition between a dominating culture of science versus the arts and humanities; and the dating of the challenge of STEM and business to the status of liberal arts and sciences.

Lost in the intersections of mazes are questions of timing, proportions and processes, and the radical exaggeration of the novelty of recent and contemporary problems.

Take a set of interrelated factors. The complex and often contradictory facts that stimulated the rapid expansion of campuses and enrollments began at the federal and then state levels following World War II, including the segregationist GI Bill and state university systems.

By the early to mid-1970s, that led to the over-expansion of systems and campuses, underfunding of students, and over-produc-

tion of PhDs for available positions — especially but not only in the arts and humanities and social sciences.⁶

Historical memory was lost in the confusion of complexity, conflicts, and contradictions. Battles over Great Books and canon do not help. Nor do the sometimes surprising, irrational conflicts over different competing forms of “interdisciplinarity” and “disciplinarity” that continue today from the late 1950s and especially the 1960s and 1970s.

For me and hundreds of other humanists and social scientists, the 1960s and 1970s were a great age of the then “new histories” whose contributions and legacies continue, but are too often un- or under-appreciated. Few graduate or undergraduate programs require or offer courses in the historical foundations of their own fields. That was not true in my student years.⁷

Today’s narratives have no place to recall, or rekindle, in Mintz’s (2022) words, “an unmatched level of intellectual excitement, what with the advent of postmodernism and the new social history and the first traces of cultural history and the new historicism in literature.”

To his list, I add Black, women’s and gender, and ethnic histories and studies, which embodied great excitement, challenge, and hope (despite their partial reintegration into the corporate university model), as well as comparative studies; social science history; and political economy, among others.

When these consequential movements are remembered, it is most often to condemn them ignorantly and fallaciously. Among the best correctives are Joan Scott, *On the Judgment of History* (2020) and John Guillory, *Professing Criticism: Essays on the Organization of Literary Study* (2022).

Objectivity and Advocacy

Lost too is the foundational fact recognized by all great scholars, and a hallmark of the 1960s through at least mid-1970s, that scholarship is inescapably political but not partisan or narrowly ideological.

It is no accident that conservative and rightwing academics immediately indict those with whom they disagree as “political” and therefore biased. They never utter a word about their fellow conservatives who cross the lines of scholarly integrity from Allan Bloom, Thomas Sowell, and Peter Wood to Francis Fukuyama and John McWhorter, the latter featured in the Opinion pages of *The New York Times*. That objectivity and advocacy are not necessarily opposed in fact-based, responsible, and honestly argued scholarship is among the lessons of the 1960s that we lose at irreplaceable loss.⁸

The myth that academic life and public life are oppositional contradicts the very premises and promises of the “world” and

“missions” of scholarship itself.

In 2023, we daily suffer the consequences. One leading example is the recent misconceived conservative campaign to reconquer “presentism” in historical analysis. It is predictably self-contradictory.⁹

In so many ways, we are lost in the incessant storms of academic climate changes with no clear topological or archeological guides, maps, or compasses, to play with rhetorical interdisciplinarity.

A final note falls on education itself, teaching and learning, faculty and students. Part of the narrative is a trope of a relatively short-lived but contradictory “rise” and then steep and prolonged “fall.” This embraces a coming together of some New Left and radical students and some activist and/or sympathetic faculty members, mainly but not exclusively young professors.

The extent of this new intellectual-cum-political collectivity or collaboration cannot be estimated. But it is lost among the combined pressures on faculty including cancellation of contracts and denial of tenure, changing political economic and educational pressures on both students and faculty.

In Mintz’s (2022) words: “As universities grew in size and functions, the student experience grew increasingly impersonal.” The same observation is made for the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, and every decade since, even as enrollment declines now.

Enduring Relationships

My own experience and, as he tells me, Mintz’s differed from this generalization. Close, and for graduate professors and fellow students long-lasting, relationships characterized my undergraduate and graduate years. Not only were professors always available in their offices, some invited students to their homes for informal class gatherings, potluck dinners, wine and cheese socials, and dinners with their families.

These relationships existed relatively independently of politics, ages and ranks. My undergraduate advisor, a formal, moderately conservative New Englander not only invited me to be his teaching assistant for course credit when all his doctoral students were researching their dissertations in Europe; he volunteered to nominate me for fellowships and awards.

We spent hours in his office with the (then print-only) American Historical Association Guide to Departments searching for potential graduate programs. My wife and I lunched with his family in London several years later on our first visit when he served as academic advisor to the U.S. Cultural Attaché.

I had many more experiences that combined the professional, the personal, and the intellectual. I not only baby-sat for fair pay for my graduate advisor, for several years, we

played squash and shared the sauna afterward weekly. We had collegial conversations.

Midway through my graduate program, he and his family became my wife's and my close friends, a relationship that continued until his death. Never did it compromise his unwavering commitment to constructive critical intellectual engagement and personal professional support.

He was not alone. The future first woman president of Smith College, Jill Ker Conway, with whom I took a doctoral seminar and who also co-taught my wife in the first course on the history of women offered in Canada, often took me to lunch. She and her husband shared home-cooked dinners in our graduate student tenement apartment. We remained in close connection with them until their deaths. At 95, her co-instructor Natalie Zemon Davis emails me almost every week.

These were all elements of the transitional, transactional, and transformational university cultures — plural — of the late 1950s into the 1970s. They combined my experiences with my somewhat older professors and advisors. We were not alone in this.

For the next five decades, I did my best to continue their examples in diverse university environments and cities. Those aspects of the 1960s persist. But so too do increasing pressures for students and universities to choose between “earning” and “learning,” and sit namelessly, unmotivated in larger lecture halls.

Those are also lasting legacies. That pedagogical “plague” now joins with remote instruction on Zoom and platforms like Minerva to overdetermine and minimize the “college experience.” The latter is now little more than a marketing slogan. ■

Notes

1. The spectrum of veracity and ideology is suggested by recent volumes like Ellen Schrecker, *The Lost Promise: American Universities in the 1960s* (2021) or John Thelin, *Going to College in the 1960s* (2018), or Sixties-dominated personal accounts like Mickey Flacks and Dick Flacks, *Making History! Making Blintzes: How Two Red Diaper Babies Found Each Other and Discovered America* (2018) and Paul Lauter, *Our Sixties: An Activist's History* (2020). More historically contextual are relevant chapters in Lewis Siegelbaum, *Stuck on Communism: Memoir of a Russian Historian* (2019) and my own *My Life with Literacy: The Continuing Education of a Historian* (2023). For a short sketch, see Steven Mintz, “How the 1960s Created the Colleges and Universities of Today,” Higher Ed Gamma Blog, *Inside Higher Education*, June 22, 2022 or Paul Mattingly, *American Academic Cultures* (2017). Clark Kerr, architect of the modern University of California, largely excises the 1960s on his system's campuses in *The Great Transformation in Higher Education, 1960-1980* (1991). The right wing ranges less widely but crosses its own ideologically-riven spectrum from William Buckley's contemporary commentaries to Allan Bloom's stylized stereotyping in *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students* (1987) to the illogical and fact-free rants of self-promoter Dinesh D'Souza. (See <https://dineshsouza.com/>)
2. “Academic collegiality is a contradictory self-

Nicaraguan Political Prisoners Freed, Deported

ON FEBRUARY 9 the unexpected happened! The Ortega-Murillo regime released 222 political prisoners, stripped them of their Nicaraguan citizenship and put them on a plane bound for Washington, D.C. They had no idea where they were going.

Bishop Rolando Álvarez, who had been under house arrest, refused to board the plane. Tried the following day, he was sentenced to 26 years in prison for being a “traitor to the homeland.” He, the first Nicaraguan bishop to be imprisoned in history, and nearly 100 Nicaraguans living in the country were also stripped of their citizenship.

The political prisoners are a diverse group of Nicaraguans, representing former FSLN political leaders, human rights defenders, students, journalists and even businessmen. Held under harsh conditions, the prisoners represented a range of political voices who opposed the repressive regime. The majority were sentenced for crimes of “treason,” “conspiracy to undermine national integrity” and “spreading fake news” at trials where evidence was fabricated. At least one historic FSLN militant, Hugo Torres, died in prison a year ago.

The *New York Times* speculated that the regime's decision to release the prisoners and force them into exile will restart relations with Washington. However, according to *The Dispatch*, the weekly English-language newsletter published by *Confidential*, Daniel Ortega, in an hour-long speech, offered a different explanation. Maintaining that he and Rosario Murillo, his vice president and wife, hatched the plan, they have no expectation that Washington will lift any sanctions. Still, it is clear that arrangements were choreographed with the Biden administration, which provided the plane.

Rounding up all oppositionists after the 2018 mass demonstrations demanding an end to the authoritarian regime, the government has succeeded in terrorizing the population while also causing many to leave the country, both for political and economic reasons. Over 1400 civil society organizations have been forced to close. Many of the internationalists who supported the FSLN in the 1980s publicized these cases and raised money for the needs of the prisoners as well as for their families.

One of the prisoners about whom solidarity supporters were most concerned was Dora María Téllez, who had been confined for more than 600 days to a cell so dark she could barely see the palms of her hand. The former guerrilla leader and historian was wearing sunglasses when she emerged from the plane. Despite the physical consequences of a 21-day hunger strike she was in good spirits. When *Confidential* director Carlos F. Chamorro asked for details of her arrest — when a deployment of police raided her home and kicked in the doors — she quipped, “I don't know who they thought they were going to capture. Maybe Chapo Guzmán?”

She remarked that “Ortega lost his battle against the political prisoners.” She intends to take some time to heal but sees her job as “standing up for Nicaragua, in the recovery of our freedoms and our rights.” — Dianne Feeley and David Finkel

- serving myth,” *Times Higher Education*, Feb. 10, 2022; “Collegiality needs a reboot,” *Times Higher Education*, Mar. 7, 2022; “Ignore the books: there is no single Big Problem with higher education,” *Times Higher Education*, Apr. 2, 2022; “Myths Shape the Continuing ‘Crisis of the Humanities,’” *Inside Higher Education*, May 6, 2022; “Universities are not giving students the classes or support they need,” *Times Higher Education*, May 17, 2022; “How Young People Have Changed,” Letter to the Editor, *Inside Higher Education*, Aug. 4, 2022; “Recreating universities for the 21st century without repeating the errors and myths of the 20th century?” *Busting Myths*, Columbus Free Press, Aug. 7, 2022, “On teaching and learning/Learning in teaching,” *Inside Higher Education*, Nov. 23, 2022.
3. See for example, non-historian Jennifer Ruth's uncritical yet revealing essay review of her sometime co-author's book, “What Happened? Higher Education in the Long Sixties,” in *Academe*, Spring 2022, 52-54, and historian Steven Mintz, “How the 1960s Created the Colleges and Universities of Today,” Higher Ed Gamma Blog, *Inside Higher Education*, June 22, 2022.
 4. See for example my *Undisciplining Knowledge: Interdisciplinarity in the Twentieth Century* (2015); *Searching for Literacy: The Social and Intellectual Origins of Literacy Studies* (2022); Mattingly, *American Academic Cultures*, Ch. 15, and references cited in all three.
 5. See the author's “We live in unprecedented times, but not for the reasons that the media or politicians tell us,” forthcoming; and his recent articles “Myths Shape the Continuing ‘Crisis of the Humanities,’” *Inside Higher Education*, May 6, 2022; “Universities

- are not giving students the classes or support they need,” *Times Higher Education*, May 17, 2022; “The persistent ‘reading myth’ and the ‘crisis of the humanities,’” *College Composition and Communication* (2023); and “The inseparability of ‘historical myths’ and ‘permanent crises’ in the humanities,” *Journal of Liberal Arts and Humanities*, 3, 9 (Sept. 2022), 16-26.
6. For example, my own students and younger colleagues are surprised to learn that there were almost no jobs for new PhDs in the mid-1970s or that undergraduates faced pressure to enroll in Engineering and Business in the late 1960s and 1970s. For some young white male scholars like me, the consequences of our commitment to affirmative action and equity were also among the reasons why I taught for decades at two new state university campuses in Texas.
 7. See the author's *Undisciplining Knowledge*, *op. cit.*; “The Shock of the “New” Histories,” Social Science Histories and Historical Literacies,” Presidential Address, Social Science History Association, 2000, *Social Science History*, 25, 4 (Winter 2001), 483-533; “The ‘problem’ of interdisciplinarity in theory, practice, and history,” *Social Science History*, special 40th anniversary issue, 40, 4 (Dec., 2016), 775-803; *Searching for Literacy*.
 8. See the author's “The best scholarship is political but with no ideological stamp,” *Times Higher Education*, July 26, 2022.
 9. See, for example, the author's “Myths Shape the Continuing ‘Crisis of the Humanities,’” “The Review: What Are Historians Good For?” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, June 27, 2022, and links therein.

Before and After Roe: Scary Times, Then and Now

By Dianne Feeley

TWENTIETH-CENTURY PRE-ROE America was a scary world for women. Pregnancy and childbirth were destiny. When I was in college in the late 1950s a sociology professor remarked that a woman wasn't fully a woman until she became a mother.

Historically, what made U.S. reproductive health care different from England, for example, is the rise of doctor-centered care and the 1873 Comstock Law. That federal law forbade distribution of obscenity through the mail, interpreted to include information on preventing or ending pregnancies.

Terminating pregnancy before "quickening" was common and legal until the latter part of 19th century America. The professionalization of medicine altered that reality.

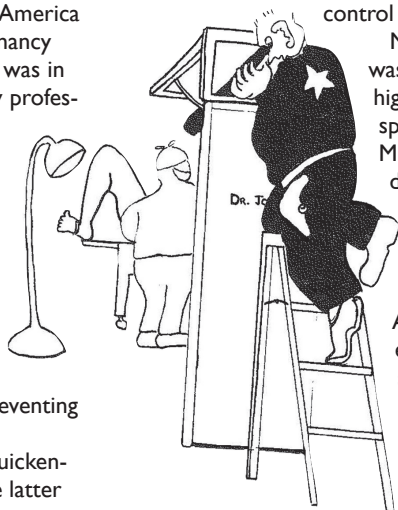
Medical groups campaigned against midwives, claiming they were the source of unsafe abortions and their patients *unmarried*. Combining sexual impropriety with abortion, the medical profession stamped out midwifery and drove abortion underground.

By the early years of the 20th century, Margaret Sanger, a visiting nurse, was haunted by her inadequate response to a working-class woman. Exhausted by pregnancies and having self-aborted, the woman asked what could be done to prevent another child. Sanger replied she should have her husband sleep on the roof.

After the woman's death, Sanger began to search for an answer. Other women, including socialists such as Dr. Antoinette Konikow, were advocating "voluntary motherhood." Above all this meant challenging the Comstock Law, which blocked information about human sexuality even from doctors. The growing movement demanded access to a range of safe reproductive services including birth control, abortion and childbirth.

Originally a radical, Sanger moved rightward, opposing abortion and embracing eugenics as a science. By the 1920s the feminist vision of "voluntary motherhood" was overwhelmed by eugenics, which linked birth

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The D.A.'s Peepng Tom. Feminist cartoon from Patricia T. Maginnis, The Abortee's Songbook, 1969.

control to state policy. Motherhood was touted as the highest goal for respectable women. Meanwhile those deemed "unfit" were sterilized, often without their knowledge. Although the extent of forced sterilization is difficult to uncover, the state of California has admitted to sterilizing 20,000 people between 1909 and 1979.

In addition to state institutions, individual doctors made the decision to perform sterilizations on mostly poor women of color and those considered mentally deficient. While Fannie Lou Hamer was having surgery to remove a uterine tumor, a white doctor performed a hysterectomy on her without her consent. Other women of color could only find a doctor willing to deliver their child only if they agreed to have their tubes tied.

Meanwhile white and wealthier women who needed to control their fertility had to jump through hoops to be sterilized. Because these women often had a family doctor willing to help them, they were more often able to obtain an abortion or to be approved for sterilization. Women of differing classes and races were treated differently but none were to make their own decision.

This historically biased class, race and gendered system of reproductive health care functions to police women's bodies.

In the repressive atmosphere of the 1950s, a few doctors who performed abortions were arrested, convicted, jailed and barred from practice. It was a powerful warning and drove abortion further underground. Yet more women were working fulltime outside their homes and needed greater control over their pregnancies.

By the 1960s, it was estimated that 1.2 million women were having "illegal" abortions each year. Hospitals were forced to set up septic abortion wards for the thousands who suffered complications; it was estimated that annually at least 200 women died. Shockingly, New York City abortion data for 1951-62 revealed that the death rate actually doubled over the 11 years.

The risk of dying was closely related to poverty and racism, with Black women dying at four times the rate of white women. Yet when the procedure was performed in a hospital, the mortality rate was lower than for childbirth. (Reagan, 210-215)

From Reform to Repeal

By the end of the 1950s, both women and some physicians demanded state reform. Within 20 years model legislation allowing medical boards to approve "therapeutic" abortions on a case-by-case basis passed in 13 states. (Interestingly enough, several are states that today ban abortion.)

Based in San Francisco, a key activist, Patricia Maginnis, moved from supporting reform legislation to opposing *all* abortion laws. By 1965 her organization, the Society for Humane Abortion (SHA), concluded: "A decision to obtain an abortion should be treated just as any other surgical procedure, as a private matter between a patient and her physician." (Reagan, 221)

As part of the reform movement, a number of Protestant and Jewish religious leaders set up referral services and raised money so women could obtain abortions outside the country. For its part, SHA not only enabled 12,000 women to obtain safe abortions, but regulated the abortionists. It asked those whom it helped to write to their representatives demanding repeal of the laws.

By insisting that the person who needed the abortion, not the physician or some "expert," was the central actor and spokesperson, Maginnis and SHA helped shape the rise of second-wave feminism.

By 1968, Chicago Women's Liberation, an organization including radical and socialist feminists, began helping friends find a physician willing to perform abortions. This then led to their developing an abortion referral service.

Like SHA, they insisted that the doctor treat patients respectfully — as they would have wanted to be treated. They also asked women what they could afford and attempted to negotiate fees. But given how few doctors were willing to risk illegality, the activists — who have come to be known as the Jane Collective — eventually learned how to perform the procedure themselves.

This also gave them control over how patients could be counseled and more flexibility in financing the operation. Even after a police raid in May 1972, the collective continued to carry out 100 abortions a week.

Speakouts and Street Actions

In early 1969, New York State held a hearing to determine whether the abortion law should be reformed and invited 15 “experts” to testify. The list consisted of 14 men and one woman — a nun.

The National Organization for Women and radical collectives decided to picket, with seven individuals agreeing to challenge the biased testimony. After one witness suggested that abortions be permitted for women with four children, Redstockings activist Kathie Sarachild stood up and shouted, “Alright, now let’s hear from some real experts — the women.”

She urged the law’s repeal. Then Ellen Willis began testifying. Unable to re-establish its control, the committee quickly moved into executive session.

Inspired by their successful action, Redstockings decided to hold a speakout where women could talk about their abortions. Here was a case where the personal became political! This first speakout attracted an audience of 300; the speakout has become an important tool in the reproductive rights struggle. (Echols, 141-142)

Redstockings also worked with others to build marches in support of repealing the abortion law. In early 1970 the collective joined the coalition, People to Abolish Abortion Laws, which held a march in support of a class-action lawsuit to overturn the New York law. Five thousand demonstrated!

The two-pronged approach of a legal challenge backed by a militant march had the desired effect. While the year before, the state legislature had not been interested in changing the law, now they realized the law would be overturned. Legislators moved to decriminalize abortion through the 24th week of pregnancy. Unlike similar legislation passed that year in Alaska, Hawaii and Washington, New York had no residency requirement. The law went into effect July 1, 1970.

Less than two months later, in response to Betty Friedan’s call “to get out of the kitchens and into the streets,” there were marches all over the country in celebration of the 50th anniversary of woman’s suffrage.

The demands were for free, communi-

ty-controlled 24-hour childcare centers, free abortion on demand, no forced sterilization, and equal opportunities in jobs and education. The largest action was in New York City, where an estimated 50,000 triumphantly marched down Fifth Avenue.

Immediate Impact

A New York City report at the end of the first year of the new law revealed that 168,000 abortions had been performed. The majority of the patients were less than 13 weeks pregnant; 60% were non-residents. Among residents, more than half were African American or Puerto Rican women.

More than half of the residents were already parents, compared to only a third of the non-residents. While complications were higher for later abortions, deaths for all pregnancies (whether abortion, childbirth or stillbirth) declined 37% over the previous year. (“Legal Abortion 1970-1971 — The New York City Experience,” by David Harris, Donna O’Hare, Jean Pakter and Frieda G. Nelson, <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/pdf/10.2105/AJPH.63.5.409>)

Although the New York legislature did not repeal the law that regulated abortion as the movement demanded, statistics established the safety of legal abortion. Its data prepared the way for the U.S. Supreme Court decision two years later.

In 1971 an organizing committee of what would become the Women’s National Abortion Action Coalition* held a conference and called for a national demonstration in Washington DC. It organized local chapters, reached out to women internationally, sponsored meetings, held speakouts and supported class-action suits in various states.

WONAAC publicized the case of Shirley Wheeler, who was convicted of having an illegal abortion. For her two-years’ probation, Wheeler was given the choice of either marrying her boyfriend (it was against Florida law until 2016 for an unmarried couple to live together) or living with relatives in another state. (Since she was legally married, she had to move.)

Roe v. Wade and the Reaction

As WONAAC was organizing a tribunal to hold officials accountable for keeping abortion illegal, the *Roe v. Wade* decision was announced on January 22, 1973. It rolled out a tri-semester formula in which the Court attempted to balance a pregnant woman’s right to privacy with the state’s interest in potential life.

While ruling that the pregnant person had a right to determine whether to continue the pregnancy, *Roe* also opened the door to regulations, particularly as the pregnancy progressed.

From the moment of legalization, the

number of women suffering complications from abortion surgery declined; hospitals were able to close their septic wards. But they didn’t expand their facilities to accommodate those seeking abortion. Instead they left that to clinics, which have become targets for the right wing.

During the summer of 1973, the media broke the story of Minnie Lee and Mary Alice Relf (who were 12 and 14) from Montgomery, Alabama. African-American sisters taken from their home and sterilized in a federally funded family planning clinic.

Although activists knew that sterilization abuse existed, this story blew the issue out into the open. The Third World Women’s Alliance, Committee Against Sterilization Abuse, Committee for Abortion Rights and Against Sterilization Abuse (CARASA) and the New York City NOW chapter worked to publicize the issue and demand passage of informed consent legislation.

Meanwhile, politicians of both parties busily passed laws to restrict abortion. The two earliest pieces of federal legislation were the Helms Amendment (1973) that blocked U.S. aid to international health agencies if they promoted abortions or performed them, and the Hyde Amendment (1977) that denied Medicaid funding to low-income women needing an abortion.

Throughout this period there was a flowering of women of color organizations. In the fall of 1973 the National Black Feminist Organization held a successful conference and went on to build 10 chapters. (The Boston chapter, finding NBFO too mainstream, resigned to become the Combahee River Collective.)

Traditionally, organizations collaborated on building larger demonstrations and meetings, as in the case of defending Boston-based Dr. Kenneth Edelin, an African American physician. In 1975, he was convicted of manslaughter for performing a legal abortion. (His conviction was overturned on appeal.)

Another example of coalition actions was one against Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Joseph Califano, who defended passage of the Hyde Amendment, when he spoke at the NYU Law School. A march of several thousand stretched around the entire block where the law school stood.

Post-Roe Bans and Resistance

Despite the hundreds of state laws that limited access to abortion from the *Roe v. Wade* decision to *Dobbs*, the vast majority of pregnant people who needed abortion have been able to secure them. But these limits were increasingly burdensome and costly.

The Turnaway Study — which compared 1,000 women who had an abortion with 1,000 who brought unwanted pregnancies

*The Socialist Workers Party was a driving force in building WONAAC. Although I was an SWP member during this period, I was active in the NYC NOW chapter but helped out on some WONAAC projects.

to term — found the latter had four times greater odds of living below the federal poverty line. They also had a greater risk of continuing to live with an abusive partner. (<https://www.ansirh.org/research/ongoing/turnaway-study>)

Since the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* decision, almost half the states have sharply limited access or outright banned abortion. This includes most of the South and much of the Midwest.

But given that every referendum on the ballot since the *Dobbs* decision has supported access to abortion, the right wing is somewhat divided about how to consolidate their victory. Yet their quarrel over whether to ban abortion “from the moment of conception” or to allow exceptions in cases of “rape, incest or the health of the patient” is much ado about nothing. (“Abortion Bans Have Exception; Few Are Granted,” by Amy Schoenfeld Walker, *New York Times*, 1/22/23)

Their debate reminds me of the “reform” ’60s legislation. *No supporter of reproductive rights should be taken in by this attempt to win public opinion and hide the reality.*

What Has Changed

There are *significant* differences between the fight for bodily autonomy today and the one waged 50 years ago:

First, sex education is more widely available and contraception is not only for those with a marriage license. (However, rightwing legislators have written unscientific “information” into the script doctors are supposed to read to patients before they sign the required consent form.) Even with greater access to contraception, there will continue to be a need for abortion. One out of four pregnant people have an abortion over the course of their reproductive lives.

Second, with the development of medical (pharmaceutical) abortion, these represent the majority of all U.S. abortions. Trained personnel (not necessarily a physician) can meet with the patient in person or over the internet and provide instructions.

The use of telemedicine, or ordering mifepristone and misoprostol and self-administering the pills by following written instructions, makes abortion 14 times safer than childbirth. While rightwing legislatures or courts will try to ban this procedure, interfering in the U.S. mail is a federal crime.

Third, abortion procedures are legal and available in half the country. While it is outrageous that someone would have to leave their state to secure an abortion, if necessary it can be done. The National Abortion Fund exists to help with expenses. A few states have allocated some abortion funding for non-residents and written shield laws to protect personnel from being sued in another state.

Fourth, reproductive rights cannot be reduced to one procedure or one issue. It is a



1971 Women's Abortion Action Committee demonstration, Austin, Texas. Howard Patrick

fight for bodily autonomy.

Second wave feminism never struggled around a single demand, although it might seem so in retrospect. Usually access to abortion was combined with a demand against forced sterilization and quality child care available to all.

Activists then and now are driven to ask: *Why do we have higher maternal death rates and higher infant mortality rates than other industrialized countries? Why are people from communities of color disproportionately effected?*

Today Black women are three times more likely to die from a pregnancy-related cause than white women; the rate of infant mortality for Black infants is more than twice as high as for white infants.

The answer is rooted in a double whammy: lack of a quality, publicly funded U.S. health care system and institutionalized racism. Social programs other countries have, including paid parental leaves and low-cost or free day care, are non-existent here.

The campaign to add the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution was another overarching issue. Facing rightwing opposition, feminists challenged society's gendered assumptions.

Many of the issues discussed and debated then remain burning issues today, including

domestic violence, date rape and sexual harassment at the workplace.

Fifth, second wave feminism had some understanding of the discrimination that Black, brown and Native American women faced. It is important to acknowledge that Black and Latina women were part of the movement then, both in organizations such as NOW, in collectives and in coalitions.

One of the most important writings from that period is Francis M. Beale's 1969 pamphlet “Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female.” This outlined the particular ideological forces Black women faced. Treated as “the slave of the slave,” Black women were medical guinea pigs, often sterilized, suffering high death rates. At the same time, both conservative and nationalist men expected women to play “supportive” roles.

That is, women of color not only faced double discrimination socially but were also double burdened by having to dispel assumptions from their own communities.

Black feminist theory has continued to grow through vibrant women of color health networks and Third World women's organizations. The result, is both more awareness of institutional racism and greater theoretical clarity about how race, class and gender interact on each other.

Sixth, as reproductive justice is about the fundamental right to bodily autonomy, we need to defend transgender rights from the fierce attack the right wing has launched.

While 25% of the younger generation identifies as gender fluid, rightwing politicians seek to police the lives and bodies of those who identify as transgender. Bodily autonomy is a fundamental right.

Seventh, a principle of the movement for reproductive justice is that those who need reproductive rights must be central actors in the struggle.

The struggle for bodily autonomy opens up a discussion about how people live our lives. For socialists who demand a world where human beings can live without exploiting others and in harmony with our environment, this is a struggle with revolutionary implications. ■

A Short List of Readings:

- Alice Echols, *Daring to be Bad, Radical Feminism in America 1967-1975*, University of Minnesota Press, 1989.
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Should Socialists Care About Adoption? #Adoption Is Trauma AND Violence

By Liz Hee

NATIONAL ADOPTION AWARENESS Month, aka NAAM, is a month for adopters, agencies, and Child Protective Services to promote adoption as an act of love. On the first day of NAAM 2022, adopted people on social media across the globe started the month by introducing the hashtag #AdoptionIsTraumaAND.

This was a “by us, for us” campaign with the goal of “shared language, different ways of thinking about adoption and other systems of family separation, and connecting them across other struggles for liberation.”

The campaign came out of a growing community of self-identified adopted and fostered abolitionists with shared analysis of the violence of systems of family regulation and policing. While adopted and fostered (also self-identified as “former foster youth”) people have advocated for adoption and foster “care” to be recognized as a trauma, this campaign aimed to move community conversations and organizing beyond individual experiences.

Throughout the month, the #AdoptionIsTraumaAND campaign identified adoption as violence, colonial, racial capitalism, commodification, ableist, cis-hetero-patriarchal, policing, and genocide. These implications indicate a growing analysis of adoption that has the potential to shift toward an analysis of systems of exploitation and oppression more broadly.

The socialist framework of internationalism from below offers a helpful starting point from which such an analysis could be further developed. Socialism itself, however, as a political ideology and practice, lacks a critical approach to adoption. This article seeks to demonstrate why a critical approach to adoption matters for an international socialism from below.

A Critical Approach to Adoption

Dominant narratives, mainstream media, and invested actors continue to extol adoption as a form of “family creation based in love instead of biology.” However, reducing one’s understanding of adoption to the prac-

Liz Hee engages with and supports various socialist and abolitionist spaces mainly through art. She creates visual notes of what she’s learning and shares them on Instagram at @lizar_tistry.

tice of raising a non-biological child ignores how the institution of adoption is a specific system based in violence, inequality, and the commodification of children.

In contrast to the idea that adoption is a form of expansive kinship that challenges nuclear family norms, its institutionalization is constitutive of the historical construction and privatization of the family as developed under class society.

At the start of the 20th century in the United States and Western Europe, and continuing today throughout the world, so-called progressive reforms have proposed fostering and adoption as the solution to indentured labor and institutionalization of children.

While such reforms are intended to provide children with the loving care of “home life” (declared the “highest and finest product of civilization” by the first White House Conference on Children in 1909), they rather expose the violent contradictions of creating a family through the destruction of another, as well as acting in the “best interests of the child” while upholding property rights to children. (<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED078896.pdf>)

In the United States, the modern history of fostering and adoption is inseparable from the oppression of women and birthing people, the genocide of Indigenous peoples and eugenics, slavery and the destruction of Black families, and Christian supremacy, white saviorism, and U.S. imperialism. (See references to books that discuss this.)

Beyond its historical context and development, the ongoing practice of adoption as an institution is questionable at best, from the transnational and geopolitical, to the interpersonal and individual. Today, the violent trauma of adoption has been well-documented by adopted people and researchers.

In addition to the tragic stories that make headlines when an adoption “goes wrong,” such as abuse and secondary abandonment, adopted people and researchers have identified common themes around identity and grief regardless of whether the adopted person had a “good” or “bad” experience.

While the physical separation and loss of heritage is a traumatic violence in itself, it is compounded and prolonged by practices like sealed records, name changes, and erasure of the first/biological parents from the birth

certificate. The profit-oriented and geopolitical agendas of nation-states and private actors continue to operate on scales of violence and coercion in the name of family creation, the affective outcomes of which are often unconsciously internalized within the adopted person.

Adoption, and thus the adopted person, is a site of constant violence that inhabits and exposes many of the most devastating aspects of global capitalism.

Why It Matters

The socialist movement’s lack of a critical analysis of adoption has resulted in defaulting to mainstream acceptance of it at best, and actively promoting it at worst. For example, the Fourth International’s 2003 World Congress statement “On Lesbian/Gay Liberation,” asserts that “[we] are in favor of the right of all people to be able to adopt children or gain custody of children.”

At first glance, this is a statement in defense of equal rights for Lesbian and Gay peoples. Such a position should be indisputable and it is not my intention to challenge it generally. However, the specific invocation of the right to adopt requires further investigation.

While socialism neglects adoption as a site of violence and struggle, it has a history of challenging parental property rights to children. In line with this tradition, the 1979 Fourth International’s “Socialist Revolution and the Struggle for Women’s Liberation” statement demands “the abolition of all laws granting parents property rights and total control over children.”

This position against parental property rights, however, is in contradiction with the above statement supporting the “right to adopt,” as adoption itself upholds and further enshrines parental property rights.

Adoption itself is a manifestation of the family’s contradictory position as both a site of love and resistance that must be protected, and a site of violence that must be abolished. This contradiction is evident across struggles against systems of family policing and regulation.

For example, the Supreme Court is currently reviewing *Haaland vs. Brackeen*, a case in which adopters Chad and Jennifer Brackeen seek to overturn the Indian Child

Welfare Act (ICWA) on the grounds of racial discrimination against their ability to adopt a Navajo child.

ICWA is a federal child welfare policy that prioritizes placing children in child welfare proceedings in the care of extended family or tribes on the basis of tribal sovereignty. It effectively limits the child welfare system's jurisdiction while leaving its existence unchallenged.

At the same time, a growing number of people are demanding the abolition of the child welfare system writ large and its targeted destruction of Black families and communities. One of the main demands of this movement is to end the termination of parental rights, which has been used to legally sever the ties between Black parents and their children so that they are "free" to be adopted.

Thus this demand itself presents the contradiction of defending parental rights to children while also seeking to abolish a system of family policing. Similarly, the movement to abolish the child welfare system presents a contradiction in its position to protect ICWA.

The movements to Protect ICWA and Abolish CPS (Child Protect Services) are just two examples of the ways in which adoption is a site of contestation that requires navigating the contradiction between the family as a site of resistance and the family as a site of oppression. A critical approach to adoption exposes these sites as points from which to build solidarity across various struggles.

Further evident in the ways adoption is consistently used

to uphold certain political agendas, such as white nationalist attacks on abortion and claims of a "domestic infant supply" problem; Texas Governor Greg Abbot's attack on trans people and his executive order to report children accessing gender affirming healthcare to Child Welfare Services; and the transfer of children from sites of climate disaster and war via adoption, as seen with U.S. citizens adopting Haitian children and Russians adopting Ukrainian infants.

The socialist tradition of approaching material contradictions through a dialectical lens is uniquely positioned to engage adopted and fostered people with a growing critical approach to adoption in a way that centralizes experience and knowledge to "draw adequate conclusions for action." (Mandel, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/mandel/1983/03/vanguard.htm>)

In turn, such centralization and collaborative work is essential for a more expansive understanding of how socialists can address in both theory and practice the contradictions between demanding the right to adopt and demanding the abolition of property relations to children, and more broadly, the contradiction of the family itself. ■

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ALLIED MEDIA CONFERENCE 2020

ADOPTION & FOSTER CARE ABOLITION

Dream Mapping

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As adopted & formerly fostered people, we call for envisioning a world of liberatory kinship & community-based care, drawing from & connecting to other abolition movements.

Commonly socially accepted as altruistic, post-racial, multicultural, even radical

Displacement & Commodification

ADOPTION & FOSTER CARE SYSTEMS & PRACTICES THAT STRUCTURALLY RELY ON EXPLOITING & REINFORCING EXISTING INJUSTICES & OPPRESSIVE CONDITIONS IN ORDER TO STAY IN BUSINESS

Characteristics:
 HETEROSEXISM
 PATRIARCHY
 REPRODUCTIVE OPPRESSION
 ABLEISM
 CHRISTIAN SUPREMACY
 WHITE SUPREMACY
 IMPERIALISM & COLONIALISM
 CAPITALISM & NEOLIBERALISM
 AUTO-NORMATIVITY
 ACROSS PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INDUSTRIES

WAYS TO KEEP FAMILIES TOGETHER
 SELF-DETERMINATION FOR ADOPTED & FORMERLY FOSTERED PEOPLE
 LIBERATORY FORMS OF KINSHIP

CRITICAL RESISTANCE'S DEFINITION OF THE PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX (PIC) GUIDES OUR UNDERSTANDING OF:
 THE ADOPTION & FOSTER CARE INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX AS OVERLAPPING INTERESTS OF GOVERNMENT & INDUSTRY THAT USE SURVEILLANCE, POLICING, COERCION, SOCIAL STIGMA, & FAMILY SEPARATION, AS SOLUTIONS TO ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, & POLITICAL PROBLEMS.

AND CRITICAL RESISTANCE'S DEFINITION OF ABOLITION AS A VISION & STRATEGY WITH THE GOAL OF ELIMINATING IMPRISONMENT, POLICING & SURVEILLANCE & CREATING LASTING ALTERNATIVES

deeply rooted history
 MUMIA ABU JAMAL
 RUTH WILSON GILMORE
 ASSATA SHAKUR

ANGELA DAVIS
 MARIAME KABA

Why here? Why now? Why us?

Solidarity as Practice
 Collective Liberation & Healing
 Coalition Building
 practicing radical love & kinship
 collective, community-based forms of care & kinship

IT'S OUR RESPONSIBILITY AS ADOPTED & FOSTERED PEOPLE TO WORK IN SOLIDARITY TO WORK IN SOLIDARITY WITH BLACK LIBERATION, INDIGENOUS SOVEREIGNTY, FREE PALESTINE, ABOLISH I.C.E., FREE THEM ALL, MOMS4HOUSING, & MANY MORE.

ART BY @LIZAR..TTSTOLY

Visual notes of the "Dream-Mapping Adoption and Foster Care Abolition" panel presented at the 2020 Allied Media Conference by Benjamin Lundberg Torres Sánchez, Emily Ahn Levy, Genevieve Saavedra, Liz Latty, Suzi Martinez Carter, Schuyler Swenson, and Mariama J. Lockington.

Abolition. Feminism. Now. By Alice Ragland

Abolition. Feminism. Now.

By Angela Y. Davis, Gina Dent, Erica R. Meiners, and Beth E. Richie

Haymarket Books, 2022, 250 pages, \$16.95 paper.

IN *ABOLITION. FEMINISM. NOW.* Angela Y. Davis, Gina Dent, Erica R. Meiners, and Beth E. Richie make a compelling case for a feminism that is fundamentally inclusive, intersectional and abolitionist, and an abolitionist movement that is fundamentally feminist.

The four feminist authors have extensive experience with prison abolition and academic research on justice and liberation: Angela Y. Davis, Professor emerita of history of consciousness at the University of California Santa Cruz and prominent writer activist, and speaker; Gina Dent, associate professor of feminist studies, history of consciousness, and legal studies and longtime prison activist; and Erica R. Meiners, author and professor of education and women's studies at Northeastern Illinois University.

The book is divided into three main chapters following the introduction: "Abolition," "Feminism," and "Now." Each section delves into the importance of becoming comfortable with nuanced and complex ways of thinking about abolishing police, prisons and the overall justice system, in favor of life-affirming systems.

The authors challenge theories that examine feminism and abolition as separate, unrelated or even incompatible, and offer ways that the two movements are not only intertwined, but necessarily a part of each other — in order to radically transform society into one that neither perpetuates individual or systemic violence nor requires incarceration.

The authors describe feminist abolitionism as a "dialectic, a relationality, and a form of interruption: an insistence that abolitionist theories and practices are most compelling when they are also feminist, and conversely, a feminism that is also abolitionist is the most inclusive and persuasive version of feminism for these times." (2).

They use the term "abolition feminism" to show that the two concepts are inextricably

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Authors, clockwise from top left, are Angela Davis, Gina Dent, Beth E. Richie and Erica R. Meiners.

bly linked, not just accessory to each other: "abolition is unthinkable without feminism and our feminism unimaginable without abolition." (168)

Providing Context

The authors provide thorough historical contextualization and blueprint for understanding and embodying abolitionist feminism and feminist abolition.

As calls to defund the police, to stop mass incarceration, and to replace these institutions with systems to remove conditions resulting in unmet social needs, global economic devastation, intimate and societal violence continue to get louder, this book is required reading to understand the interconnectivity of these issues.

At the same time, as calls to end sexual violence and intimate partner violence carry on, the necessity of an abolitionist framework that does not rely on the carceral state to correct the issue is made clear.

The authors concisely conceive what abolitionism should and can look like from a feminist framework while teaching readers a thing or two about what abolitionism actually is. Here are my top three takeaways from *Abolition. Feminism. Now.*

1) *Feminist abolition requires solutions to gender-based violence not dependent upon the carceral state.*

Mainstream anti-violence interventions

and organizations, the authors argue, have relied too heavily on the carceral state to solve the problem, harming women and communities of color in the process. When feminism and anti-violence advocacy lacks an intersectional analysis of power, organizations tend to rely on incarceration and other forms of state punishment to solve the issue of gender-based violence.

For women and communities of color, contact with the system can produce irreparable harm "because systemic racism drives the criminal legal system." BIPOC women have largely been left out of the survivor narrative; some survivor advocacy organizations have even come out to say that they do not support the defunding of the police because policing makes it safer for survivors of gender-based violence.

As the authors explain, when viewing these broad and uncritical claims from the perspectives of women and nonbinary people of color, the criminal system is "not only not protective for those survivors who are not part of the mainstream, it also endangers them." (81).

2) *Abolition feminism does not advocate for the use of policing or prisons to protect victims of gender-based violence.* Instead, it recognizes intimate violence as a microcosm of macro-systems of violence rooted in capitalism, imperialism, patriarchy and other forms of oppression.

When these systems of oppression remain intact, interpersonal violence naturally results. The violence of policing and prisons are not an adequate solution to a problem that is much deeper than individuals behaving badly.

Recognizing that accountability for gender-based violence is still necessary, as is the abolition of prisons, the authors state that abolition feminism:

“demands for intentional movement and insightful responses to the violence of systemic oppression. . . We are clear that organizing to end gender violence must include work against the prison industrial complex — against border patrols, against the incarceration of disability, against the criminalization of radical democratic protest — and as centrally, for mutual aid, cop-free schools, reproductive justice, and dignity for trans lives.” (4)

Abolition is about more than just getting rid of prisons.

“Abolition, as a tradition, a philosophy, and a theory of change, moves away from a myopic focus on the distinct institution of the prison toward a more expansive version of the social, political, and economic processes that defined the process within which the imprisonment became viewed as the legitimate hand of justice.” (50)

The authors make clear that abolition is not just about getting rid of prisons or police. That's a common misconception that has been perpetuated by politicians, including those who are socially liberal. Calls to defund the police are condemned by people across the political spectrum.

What's important to understand is that abolition is not just about “tearing things down.” It's also about rebuilding systems and

institutions that provide safe, livable conditions while addressing community harm without the use of police or prisons. Rather than reactionary and punitive attempts to correct social ills with police and prisons, abolition focuses more on prevention (of poverty, systems that cause violence, lack of education and healthcare, basic needs not being met, etc.).

It's important to understand this, because when some people hear defund the police or stop mass incarceration, their minds go straight to a completely lawless society descending into chaos because nobody is there to “keep people in check.”

But using funds that are currently spent on maintaining the highest incarceration rate in the world and militarizing the police, and redirecting them to high quality education, housing, healthcare and other programs that uplift a society and provide basic needs would reduce the need for policing and incarceration.

Abolition focuses on the root causes that result in contact with the criminal justice system instead of reactionary policies reforms that ultimately do not get to the root of social issues.

Beyond Reform

3) *We must continuously reject reform as a satisfactory solution to systemic issues.*

Reform will never be enough to end deeply embedded systems of violence. As the authors assert,

“Training police to do restorative justice work is not abolition. Hiring more women to be prison wardens is not feminist. Building a new transgender wing or pod at an immigration prison

is not abolition . . . None of these reforms work to dismantle, or even address, the harms that are used to buttress the carceral state, including forms of gender and sexual violence.” (154)

Too often, reforms within the criminal legal system are cloaked behind radical-sounding language, but this only makes state violence more palatable to more people. Organizations and movements have the potential to be co-opted or neutralized by the dangling carrot of reform.

The authors argue that reforming the system or persecuting individual wrongdoers has done little to end state violence, gender or sexual violence as a whole. And changing laws is important, but not enough. Radical transformation is needed to even begin to fathom a violence-free world — and the authors acknowledge that there is no readily available blueprint for that.

Just as changing legislation is necessary but not sufficient, meeting the urgent needs of survivors is necessary, but it must happen alongside organizing for structural solutions.

The authors advocate for an embrace of responses to meet immediate needs while maintaining a broader focus on systemic change. This sums it up:

“Abolition feminism does not shy away from contradictions, which are often the spark for change. Holding onto this bothland, we can and do support our collective immediate and everyday needs for safety, support, and resources while simultaneously working to dismantle carceral systems.” (5)

Abolition. Feminism. Now. reminds us to be both urgent and focused, action-oriented and rigorous, and of course, abolitionist and feminist. ■

Heading for the Ditch? By David Finkel

THE REPUBLICAN PARTY clown car in Congress lurches from one outrage to the next, partially mitigated by its absurdity and incompetence — but potentially risking a collision course with the ruin of the U.S. economy and financial calamity.

Following the midterm election results, it becomes more clear by the week that the Democrats are the “responsible” political party — responsible, that is, to capital and the U.S. ruling class. While the Biden administration handles affairs of state from the Ukraine war to inflation to whatever was in the Chinese balloon, the Republican House majority passes resolutions to abolish the IRS and open any number of meaningless “investigations” into third-rate questions.

In the real-world United States, more than 30 million people in 32 states will face cuts, beginning in March, in SNAP (food stamp) benefits that were enhanced during the COVID emergency. At a time when food costs are 10 percent higher than a year ago, a family of four would lose around \$328 a

month, and vulnerable elderly recipients could have monthly benefits reduced from \$281 to as little as \$23.

While hunger looms for millions, COVID continues to claim between 450 and 500 lives every day, of whom only 16% were fully vaccinated.

As the Republicans give thanks every day for the gift of Hunter Biden's laptop, Democrats are reciprocally grateful for the existence of George Santos — the twin distractions who keeps on distracting.

Where matters get less funny comes in late spring or early summer, when the Treasury runs out of maneuvers to avoid default after exceeding the current \$31 trillion cumulative “debt ceiling.” (If you don't know, the peculiar institution of the debt ceiling dates from the 1917 Second Liberty Bonds Act, when the wartime Congress said government borrowing could not exceed a legislatively set limit, and took its more or less present form in the 1940s.)

Failing to raise the debt ceiling (to allow

government borrowing to pay for already approved expenses) would collide with an Article IV constitutional provision guaranteeing “the full faith and credit” of the United States government. There are ideological fanatics who consider the debt ceiling an opportunity to impose a requirement for a balanced budget, something the United States has had for exactly two years of its history, from 1835 to 1837.

A U.S. government default, even the threat of it, represents an unthinkable catastrophe on multiple levels. The “responsible” rightwing Senate minority leader Mitch McConnell says it cannot happen. House speaker Kevin McCarthy, who owes his tenuous position to the far right lunatic faction of his caucus, insists that raising the debt ceiling must be “negotiated” with savage social spending cuts — and more tax cuts for the rich.

At some point, the clown car will collide with the real needs of capital. Stay tuned and hold onto your wallet. ■

Stuck in the Mud, Sinking to the Right: 2022 Midterm Elections

By Kim Moody



Whatever the general rate of turnout, Black voters came out at a lower rate than whites. <https://jimwestphoto.com>

IT'S GRIDLOCK. SPECIFICALLY, it's still a right-versus-center impasse, but with a shift to the right. Trump/MAGA forces dominated the Republican primaries but stumbled in the November 2022 midterm elections.

After spending a lot of energy and money fighting their own tiny left flank in the primaries, the Democratic Party centrists lost the House by nine seats and barely held the Senate. This they saw as some sort of victory, since the party in the White House traditionally loses seats in Congress in the midterm. Many of those who voted Democratic were concerned by the threat to reproductive rights, voting rights, and more than a little whiff of fascism.

Their choice was a defensive one. Turnout was lower than in 2018 at about 45-46% compared to 50.3%. While some states with close contests such as Pennsylvania, Georgia, Maine and Oregon had higher than average turnout which helped the Democrats, in most states Democratic turnout was down

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while Republican turnout was up, as is often the case when the other party is in the White House.

As a result, in the midterm elections over three million more people voted Republican than Democrat. Having legislated their best but lacking a positive program sufficient to deal with the multiple crises affecting the vast majority, the Democrats' last line of defense was to outspend their Republican rivals.

In the end: a country stuck in the mud and sinking to the right at an unprecedented cost.

Massive Expenses

While ideology mattered, the entire election process was driven by vast amounts of money deployed with ideological precision within and between the two major parties. An estimated \$16.7 billion was spent on federal and state elections, \$8.9 billion of it on Congressional candidates, parties, and political committees — 38% of that from the richest one percent of donors. This compared to \$5.7 billion for the 2018 congressional midterms and \$3.9 billion in 2014.

Behind this money stands a ruling class divided in partisan and ideological terms, but united in the limits to which the wealth of capital and the resources of government are to be used to alleviate the plight of the majority facing cost-of-living, housing, climate, energy, reproductive and healthcare crises, on top of the social wreckage of decades of neoliberal policies from both parties.

On November 8, Republican candidates picked up 14 House seats from the Democrats for a net gain of 12, five of whom were endorsed by Trump. This brings the House balance to 213 Democrats to 222 Republicans. With a slim majority of nine, this was still less than the 20-or-more seat majority the Republicans expected to win.

While MAGA conspiracy theories and the "Big Lie" hurt some Republicans, the evidence is overwhelming that money rather than bold ideas from Democrats was a major factor in diminishing the anticipated "Red Wave."

The vast majority of House seats are "safe" for one party or the other, so the election outcome was decided when the Democrats minimized their losses in the general election by holding 25 of 37 highly competitive "battleground" seats. There they defeated nine of 11 Trump-backed Republican challengers along with 16 "normal" Republicans.

In every case but one the Democrats outspent their Republican opponents. Sixteen of these winning Democrats were part of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee's (DCCC—"D-Triple C") Frontline program that "provides Democratic Members of Congress from potentially competitive seats the resources to execute effective reelection cam-

paigns.” That is to say money, advertising, campaign pros, etc. for candidates in vulnerable districts.

The DCCC also targeted five candidates as part of its “Red to Blue” program to flip Republican seats for special funding. In these campaigns three Democrats and two Republicans won “with most of the winners leading in fundraising.”

In addition, a week before the general election the DCCC put out a “Red Alert” for five vulnerable candidates, three of them Frontline members, adding an additional \$3.9 million to \$6 million to each campaign. Millions more in “outside” money also boosted these five candidates at the last minute, putting them among the top 30 “outside” spenders by both parties in all House contests. Thus, each of these five Democrats “out-raised their Republican challengers and won.”

Altogether, the DCCC outspent its Republican counterpart, the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC), \$324,132,497 to \$262,222,093. So even if some Trump-backed candidates were their own worst enemy, money made the difference in beating back all varieties of Republicans. In Senate races it was even more disproportionate as the Democrats raised a total of \$819,362,242 compared to the Republicans’ \$681,062,468 by the end of the election cycle.

The all-important Georgia Senate race and runoff between Raphael Warnock and Herschel Walker, became the most expensive race. It reached \$380.7 million by late November with outside groups splurging \$146 million over the entire general election. The last week alone \$54 million was spent on ads.

Altogether, Warnock outspent Walker 3-to-1 through mid-November. As the *New York Times* put it, Trump’s “hand-picked candidate, Herschel Walker, was outspent and out-matched.”

In addition to Warnock defending a highly competitive Senate “battleground” seat, three Democrats — Mark Kelly (AZ), Maggie Hassan (NH), and Catherine Cortez Masto (NV) — also outspent their Republican opponents by tens of millions. In another key Senate race, the only one in which a Senate seat changed parties, John Fetterman (noted for his proletarian Carhartt outfits and populist style), out-raised Trump-favored Mehmet Oz by \$56.7 to \$40.4 million.

Warnock’s election gave the Democrats a one seat majority in the Senate, but Krysten Sinema’s switch from Democrat to independent muddies the situation somewhat even though she says she will not caucus with the Republicans.

Over the whole election cycle, big business and the wealthy played a major role in funding candidates, parties, and Super PAC “outside” spending, the latter of which came to about \$1.3 billion in 2022. As we saw above, contributions from the top one percent of all political donors accounted for 38% of the total. Business individuals and PACs alone gave somewhat more directly to Democrats than Republicans: \$1,027,082,361 compared to \$931,954,716 during the whole cycle.

The largest single source of business money by far is the securities and investment industry, which favored Democrats over Republicans by \$141,282,772 to \$106,254,713 as of late October. The big earners and PACs of those Wall Street bottom feeders, the private equity and hedge funds, contributed \$347.7 million with the largest amount going to “outside” spending during the primaries alone. Over the past few years this “industry” has split its direct contributions between the two parties with Democrats coming out slightly better on av-

erage over time.

Three of the top recipients of this financial sector largess in the 2022 cycle have been the familiar Democratic duo of Senators Krysten Sinema (now a declared Independent) (\$312,825) and Joe Manchin (\$369,251), along with their sometimes leader, sometimes enabler, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (\$1,228,307). In exchange this trio helped strip the Inflation Reduction Act of a provision to close a tax loophole on financial sector interest.

The Primaries: Party & Money

The political character of the midterm general election, that is the choices to be available to voters in November, were determined by an even smaller electorate during the primaries that ran from March through September. Greasing the rails on both sides of this seven-month exercise in minority rule were expenditures of \$4-5 billion, disproportionate amounts of it directly or indirectly from that even smaller wealthy top one percent of the population.

In recent primary elections, party organization as well as vast amounts of money have come to play a central role in determining outcomes. As a recent edition of the major textbook on congressional elections summarized today’s contests, “Both Senate and House election patterns confirm that the United States has entered an era of nationalized, polarized, party-centered politics that is very different from the candidate-centered world of the 1970s and 1980s.”

Furthermore, as one of the few book-length studies of primaries put it, “Contrary to previous assumptions, parties are not impartial bystanders, but rather key players that influence the primary process and outcome.” This has been characterized by both direct intervention and the acceleration in money raised and spent by both parties in the primary season, as well as by candidates and allied “outside” interests.

The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC), for example, which raises money for and intervenes in House campaigns, saw its spending through June of each midterm primary election cycle escalate from \$75.3 million in 2014 to \$116 million in 2018 and \$139 million in 2022 with four months to go to the general election. The figures on midterm primary season in Table I illustrate the acceleration of spending.

Table I
Candidate, Party & Super PAC Primary Spending
House & Senate 2014-2022*

Source	2014	2018	2022
Candidates**	\$764,127,942	\$1,112,397,336	\$1,747,827,420
Party**	\$569,824,837	\$686,005,440	\$1,092,619,324
Super PAC	\$224,358,732	\$390,213,795	\$815,779,703

Source: Federal Election Commission: Congressional Candidate Table I; Party Table I; PAC Table I.

*Figures are for election cycle of 18 months from January of prior year through June of election year, covering over half the primary period.**Democrats and Republicans only.

This increase in money embodies yet another of the many current attacks on democracy. First, it protects incumbents who were able to out-fundraise challengers by over 9-to-1 in 2022 — and indeed, not including incumbent v. incumbent races due to redistricting, only 10 incumbents lost their primaries this year: two Democrats and eight Republicans.

Money tends to win elections generally and force all can-

didates to emphasize fundraising and increase dependence on media purchases (the “air war”) as opposed to grassroots participation (the “ground war”) in campaigns. This emphasis also increases the role of highly paid elite professional campaign consultants, who do most of the ad buying and now dominate most campaigns.

One estimate by the ad tracking firm of AdImpact shows that spending on ads alone in Congressional campaigns through July of each election cycle has tripled since 2018, increasing from \$410 million to \$1.2 billion in 2022.

By the eve of the November election, party committees such as the DCCC and NRCC alone had spent \$272 million on ads across all media in the last eleven months of the 2022 election cycle. The major party-allied Super PACs splurged \$693 million on ads over that period, with Republicans leading by about \$100 million.

Although money from individuals plays a large role, only about 20% of all such contributions in the 2022 primary season came in the form of small contributions of \$200 or less. Just 41 of the 741 candidates for the House and Senate races tracked by OpenSecrets.com who raised \$100,000 or more (anyone in the running) received more than half of their funds from small donors (through October). Here Republicans actually outnumbered Democrats 21-to-19 along with one third-party candidate.

Wealthy donors provided hundreds of millions. Among the top 100 individual donors who contributed \$2 million or more in this election cycle as of September 2022, 49 gave to Democrats, 50 to Republicans, with one only to unspecified “outside” committees.

The Primaries: Democrats’ War on the Left

Given their addiction to wealthy donors and financial bottom feeders, it is not altogether surprising that the Democrats’ party apparatus and centrist leaders spent their primary campaigns in open warfare on the small cohort of left progressives who fought to gain ground in Congress.

However, identifying genuine left progressive Democrats (for lack of a better term) is difficult since although a small subset identify as democratic socialists, the term “left” is generally avoided as a public self-description while the label “progressive” is more often displayed than practiced in Democratic circles.

While left progressives tend to be defined by support for policies such as Medicare-for-All and the Green New Deal, they are sometimes divided on attitudes toward Palestinian liberation and Israeli apartheid policies and the Boycott, Divest, Sanctions (BDS) movement, funding for police, and matters of legislative compromise and tactics.

Thus, in estimating the success of this left cohort I will characterize left progressives to those endorsed by either Bernie Sanders, the Justice Democrats, and/or Our Revolution. Most were self-styled progressives, while two, Summer Lee (PA) and Greg Casar (TX), identified themselves additionally as democratic socialists — although Casar was not endorsed by his own Austin, Texas chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) due to his opposition to BDS.

Although incumbents’ ability to retain their seats held up in the 2022 primaries, there was a larger-than-usual number of retirements. Additionally, 33 Democratic open-seat primary contests (those with no incumbent) and one newly created

district (NC 14) considered “Solid Democratic” which provided a greater opportunity for new candidates to win.

Altogether, not including left progressive incumbents such as those in “the Squad” and eliminating duplicate endorsements, the above-specified endorsers backed three outsider candidates for Senate (all by Sanders) and 23 for the House in the 2022 primaries. Two of the Sanders-endorsed Senate candidates won — one a challenger, the other in an open seat contest.

Of the eight House candidates who challenged a sitting incumbent, only one (Jamie McLeod Skinner in Oregon) won. Of the 15 who fought open seats, nine succeeded. Altogether in the House primaries 10 left progressives won and 13 lost.

Due in part to extensive redistricting, as well as aggressive mainstream opposition, three incumbent left progressives — Marie Newman (IL), Mondaire Jones (NY), and Andy Levin (MI) — were defeated by moderates in incumbent v. incumbent primaries. In the general election, three of the 10 left progressives who won their primaries (Odessa Kelly, Michelle Vallejo, and Jamie McLeod-Skinner) were defeated, for a net gain in the 118th Congress of four.

Almost all the successful left progressives in the House come from safe deep blue, mostly urban districts so that they posed no threat to the Democrats’ slim House majority going into the general election. Nor could their potential numbers actually threaten the centrist domination of the party in the House or Senate. Yet the party and its close well-to-do allies poured money and resources into stopping even this trickle of left-wing representation.

That the party sees such intervention as its right was made clear in 2018 by the press secretary of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, the party’s main vehicle of intervention, who told *Vox* “We have been clear all cycle that we reserve the right to get involved in primaries to ensure that there is a competitive Democrat on the ballot in November.”

Sean Patrick Maloney, head of the DCCC and a member of the centrist New Democrat Coalition (NDC) in the House, repeated this “right” early in 2022 election cycle when he said, “the DCCC is prepared to protect our majority by recruiting compelling candidates...” — that is, centrists. Ironically Maloney himself, the consummate centrist, lost in November.

Democratic Party intervention in the primaries can be seen in two major forms: defense of centrists and conservatives and defeat of left (and not so left) progressives. In addition to substantial aid in the form of millions in paid-for ads and other media and tech services for preferred candidates, the DCCC targets candidates through its above-mentioned Frontline program for those considered vulnerable in the general election.

The point of this is to protect incumbent moderates who, in the centrist imagination of the DCCC leadership, are considered more likely to win in the general election in potentially competitive districts. Many of these are suburban districts central to the Democrats’ strategy for holding on to the House.

Of the 39 candidates chosen for the 2022 Frontline program, 25 were members of either the centrist New Democrat Coalition or the conservative Blue Dogs House caucuses. Only five were members of the Congressional Progressive Caucus (CPC), one of whom was also a New Democrat. None, of

course, were left progressives.

More down and dirty was the use of semi-official and allied PACs and Super PACs to fight progressives even when they were in safe districts. One new addition to the party's arsenal of internal protection was the Team Blue PAC.

This semi-independent PAC is led by Hakeem Jeffries, Chair of the House Democratic Caucus; Josh Gottheimer, a member of both the NDC and Blue Dogs, and Terri Sewell, another New Democrat. Jeffries is a nominal member of the CPC, but as Chair of the Democratic House Caucus is a consistent supporter of centrist incumbents. He is now the successor to Pelosi as party Caucus leader.

Team Blue was formed to support “members of the House who are facing strident electoral challenges” in their primaries, including from “extremists and other outside forces...” —and as Jeffries told *Rolling Stone*, to protect from distortions of the incumbents' record by the “hard left.” That is the term he used to describe democratic socialists when he told *The Atlantic* “there will never be a moment where I bend the knee to hard-left democratic socialism.”

Team Blue is funded by corporate PACs including: the National Association of Realtors; American Financial Services Association; the Council of Insurance Agents & Brokers; New York Life Insurance; UnitedHealth Group; Comcast; UPS; and several others.

In the 2022 cycle Team Blue PAC endorsed and contributed to 25 candidates, 14 of them New Democrats. In particular four incumbents faced primary challenges from the left. These included Shontel Brown (OH), who beat Sanders' campaign co-chair Nina Turner by nearly two-to-one; Donald Payne, Jr. (NJ), who won by 84% against Imani Oakley (backed by the Black Lives Matter PAC); Dina Titus (NV), who defeated Sanders' 2020 state co-chair Amy Vilela by 82%; and Danny Davis (IL) who beat Justice Democrats' candidate Kina Collins 52 to 45%.

A new like-minded “dark money” group, the Opportunity for All Action Fund run by Clinton-Obama-DCCC veterans and located in the office of the Pelosi-associated House Majority PAC, is heavily funded by Michael Bloomberg and other media and hedge fund bosses. It spent \$764,412 on outside support for Davis, Payne, and Titus. Altogether it spent just over \$1 million in outside money, most of it on ads favoring moderate Democrats.

In 2022 there has also been an escalation of party-connected, big-donor Super PACs that specifically oppose those they regard as too progressive. They include LinkedIn billionaire Reid Hoffman's Mainstream Democrats; crypto-billionaire and Biden-supporter Sam Bankman-Fried's Protect Our Future (until his crypto fund FTX collapsed late in the primaries); and American Israel Public Affairs Committee's (AIPAC) United Democracy Project, directed specifically at defeating Democratic progressives who are critical of Israel. These Super PACs have backed mainstream Democrats against relatively more liberal challengers in Ohio, Pennsylvania, Oregon and Texas.

When necessary, top Democratic leaders weighed in directly on the side of moderates and conservatives. The most outrageous of these interventions was that of Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Caucus Chair Hakeem Jeffries who actively supported Blue Dog, anti-abortion, pro-gun Rep. Henry Cuellar (TX) against Jessica Cisneros who was backed by Sanders, Jus-

tice Democrats, and Our Revolution.

All but a handful of self-identified progressives in the House refused to buck the leadership and back Cisneros. Cuellar won the primary runoff by fewer than 300 votes. And so, the Democratic Party leadership and its funding allies, having stemmed the trickle of left challengers, entered the general election in full centrist armor with lots of money.

“Red Ripple:” Dollars and the Donald

The big surprise of the 2022 midterm election was that the Democrats didn't do as poorly as expected and the much-predicted “Red Wave” turned into a ripple, albeit a significant one.

The Republicans lost two governorships to the Democrats and lost all its contests for Attorneys General — positions that would have given them greater ability to restrict voting rights. In addition, the Democrats gained full control of three more states bringing the division to 17 to 22 Republican-controlled states.

Trump-endorsed candidates did well in the primaries where his hardcore base formed a higher percentage of voters. According to Ballotpedia in the primaries Trump made a total of 240 endorsements in federal and state races with a success rate of 92%.

In House contests, he endorsed 172 candidates of whom 160 went on to the general election. Of these midterm election Trump endorsees, 123 were sitting incumbents — only one of whom lost in the general election. An additional 37 ran in open seats or as challengers, 14 of whom lost bringing the total of defeated Trump House favorites to 15.

Since the Republicans lost in 196 districts where there was an opposing major party candidate, this was not itself decisive. Crucially, however, as noted above, 25 Republicans (nine of them Trump-backed) losers, went down to defeat in the 37 highly competitive “battleground” districts that played a central role in the outcome of the November election. So MAGA defeats played a significant role in damming the Red Wave and minimizing the Democrats' losses in the House, but less so than “normal” Republican losers.

Once again money appears to be central to these outcomes. The Democrats defended their seats in competitive districts including the 37 “battleground” by spending their opponents significantly. As *Politico* noted in the third quarter of 2022, the Democrats outspent Republicans in 50 of 65 more broadly defined competitive House seats — “in many cases by two-to-one margins.”

A major difference between Democratic and Republican funding is that Republicans have drawn more heavily on a handful of billionaires. In addition, a couple of large “outside” money sources controlled by party leaders contributed heavily: notably in House campaigns from the Congressional Leadership Fund which spent over \$100 million after Labor Day in the final months of the general election — over twice that of the Democrats' comparable House Majority PAC.

This kind of outside money goes to ads for or against candidates rather than directly to the favored candidates themselves, who have no control over their content. Much of the Republican anti-Democrat ad tsunami was directed at suburbanites focused on crime — as usual, a code word for race.

This worked particularly well in mostly blue “downstate” New York. As the *New York Times* reported, “from Long Island



Ilhan Omar (Democrat from Minnesota), a progressive critic of Israel, stripped of her seat in the House Foreign Affairs Committee in a partisan payback by Speaker Kevin McCarthy.

to the Lower Hudson Valley, Republicans running primarily on crime swept five of six congressional seats.” These five Republican victories were enough to flip the House.

The Democrats, while also drawing heavily on the wealthy, have relied more on fleshing out their party apparatus and candidate campaign coffers, particularly in competitive districts. By the end of the general election, Democratic House candidates had raised \$921,570,715 compared to \$890,054,946 for Republicans.

Particularly important in terms of timing, House Democrats outraised Republicans over the summer as 61 Democrats pulled in more than \$1 million apiece on average from July through September, compared to only 34 Republicans.

In terms of the important House party committees, as of late October the DCCC had outraised the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC) \$324,132,497 to \$262,222,093. Altogether Democratic party committees at all levels outraised Republicans by \$218 million.

To a greater extent than the Republicans, the Democrats appear to have concentrated more of these vast amounts of money on party interventions in key competitive race — for example, those Frontline candidates and in the 37 “battle-ground” districts — while Republican billionaires spent huge amounts of outside money on negative ads against Democrats in select races such as those in suburban New York. So to a considerable extent, the Democrats blunted the Red Wave with money beating both Trump-endorsed and “normal” Republicans.

Democrats’ Shrinking Voter Base

A deeper look at the voters in the general election, however, spells further trouble for the Democrats and their centrist leaders — old and new. If the exit polls are at all accurate, the party of moderation saw still more erosion in its voter base.

The diverse and class-divided Latinx vote continued to move away from the Democrats. In the 2018 midterm Latinx/os cast 69% of their votes for Democrats and 29% for Republicans. In 2022 it was 60 to 39% — a major shift. For Black voters, the party’s most loyal core, the drift went from 90% Democratic in 2018 to 86% in 2022 — 83% according to AP VoteCast.

There was not only a shift in the Black vote, but a drop in the rate of turnout in relation to whites as well. Looking at the

available data, the *New York Times*’ election data wizard Nate Cohn argues that in this midterm whatever the general rate of turnout, that of Black voters was below that of whites.

He writes, “the Black population share was below the national average in virtually all of the key districts and Senate contests.” Black voter share fell particularly low in North Carolina, Louisiana, and even Georgia where it averaged 26% below white turnout (as of the November election).

This appears to have changed in the Georgia Senate runoff between Sen. Raphael Warnock and his Trump-backed challenger Herschel Walker. Warnock’s urban Black backers showed up in larger numbers in early voting with Blacks composing 32% of early voters compared to 29% in November. In the end it was still a fairly close race with Warnock’s 51.4% to Walker’s 48.6%.

Nevertheless, nationally according to some polls whites accounted for 72% of all voters in 2018, but 73% in 2022 even though population trends are strongly in the opposite direction. In general Cohn suggests “the distinct possibility that the Black share of the electorate sank to its lowest since 2006.” He also speculates one factor is that among Black activists, who might mobilize Black voters, there are “doubts whether the Democratic Party can combat white supremacy.”

Astoundingly, given the initial impact of the *Dobbs* ruling, even the women’s Democratic vote share fell from 59% of women voters in 2018 to 53% in 2022.

More generally, looking at a state-level data Cohn concludes “In state after state, the final turnout data shows that registered Republicans turned out at a higher rate — and in some places a much higher rate — than registered Democrats, including in many of the states where Republicans were dealt some of their most embarrassing losses.”

Just as House majorities are won or lost in a relatively small number of competitive districts, so are they won by swaying independent voters. The defeat of those and other Republicans was due in large part to independents repulsed by MAGA-extremism swinging to Democrats to a greater degree than usual.

In the Senate race with John Fetterman, for example, Republican Mehmet Oz lost the independent vote by 19 percentage points, whereas the spread is usually more around five points one way or the other. Thus, it seems likely the Democrats have become even more dependent on independents in general elections.

In terms of income, even among the poorest voters with family incomes below \$30,000 there was a move away from Democrats from 63% in 2018 to 54% this year. Indeed, the Democrats lost ground among all those with family incomes below \$100,000, which would certainly include many working-class voters, but they held steady at 47% to the Republican’s 51% of those from \$100,000 to \$200,000 in both years, according to the exit polls.

Reflecting the lower turnout in class terms, voters in 2022 were both slightly wealthier and more educated. Contrary to the assumption of a massive proletarian MAGA vote, these factors also helped the Republicans. The percentage of voters with family incomes above \$100,000 increased from 33% in 2018 to 37% of all voters in 2022, while those with incomes above \$200,000 rose from 9% to 10%. The proportion of those with a college degree increased from 41%

to 43%.

Republicans increased their proportion of voters among those making \$200,000 or more from 52% in 2018 to 58% in 2022, according to exit polls. This points to the limitations of the Democrats' strategy of appealing to wealthier suburbanites, as the suburban vote went 52% for the Republicans in 2022 compared to 49% for both parties in 2018. The New York suburbs were a demonstration of this.

Thus, the Democrats have lost voters among both relatively poorer working-class people and well-to-do suburbanites as well as among Blacks, Latinas/os, and women. Clearly neither money nor moderation, much less running on Biden's record, can save the opportunist political center from itself as it faces a Republican Party in which the extreme battle the merely ultra-conservative.

The poet W.B. Yeats famously wrote, "Things fall apart, the centre cannot hold...The best lack all conviction, while the worst are filled with passionate intensity." The Democratic centrists, hardly the best but certainly lacking conviction, could do no more than minimize their own defeat in the House at the hands of the "passionate" right.

Party leaders were so pleased they had defied tradition and cut their losses that today they offer even more centrism as they reorganize the House caucus and maintain the political status quo.

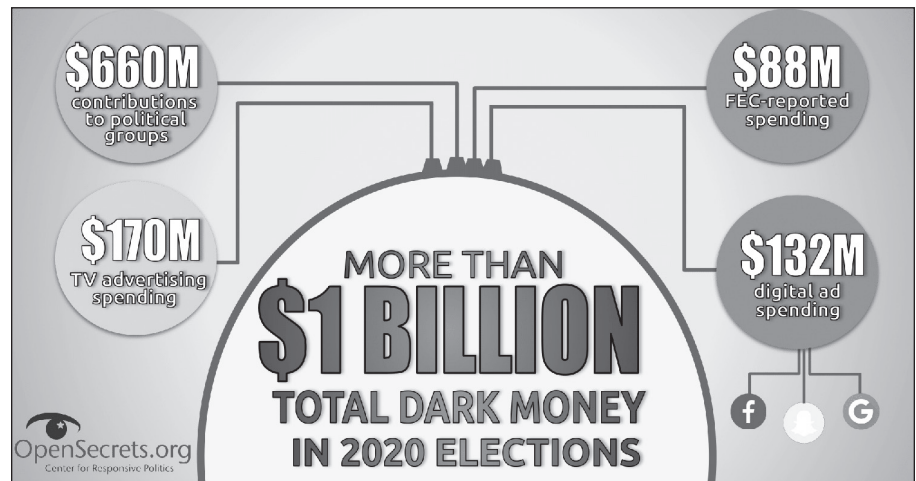
Deprived of the Speakership, Nancy Pelosi graciously stepped down — though by no means out. By unanimous vote of the Democratic caucus (Squad and all), in her place and in her shadow as Democratic House Minority Leader will be Ha-keem Jeffries, the first Black representative to head the caucus. Jeffries, however, is also the militant defender of the party's political centrists whom we met above as head of the anti-left Team Blue PAC.

Gone as chief of the DCCC is New Democrat and promoter of "compelling (centrist) candidates" Sean Patrick Maloney, who outspent his opponent 5-to-1 but lost his redistricted seat when Republican billionaires swamped him among the suburbanites of the Lower Hudson Valley with \$8 million in Super PAC money in fearmongering ads on crime.

Lined up to replace Maloney at the head of this third-of-a-billion-dollar party campaign funding and intervention machine are fellow New Democrats Ami Bera, who chaired the 2022 deeply centrist Frontline program, and Tony Cardenas, whose top contributions come from the AIPAC, BlueCross/BlueShield, AT&T, and California energy giant PG&E.

The DCCC top position, which was previously elected by the caucus, will now be appointed by caucus leader Jeffries. New faces, big bucks, old politics. In the Senate, it will be old faces, money, and politics as Chuck Schumer continues as leader with some changes in the old faces in his leadership team.

Across the aisle in the House, Trump-endorsed Representatives form a huge block in the Republican Conference — although some are already distancing themselves from "the Donald." The non-MAGA party establishment and a growing number of office holders are organizing against the Trumpites



in their midst and seeking an alternative to a Trump presidential campaign among the merely ultra-conservatives — the most likely is vote-getter and rival faux-anti-establishment poseur Florida Governor Ron DeSantis.

Still, it is too early to write off a viable Trump candidacy and even more MAGA violence. A late November *Politico*/morning consult poll showed Trump 15 points ahead of DeSantis among Republicans and Republican-leaning independents.

Not only is the sitting head of the Republican National Committee, Ronna McDaniel, a Trump loyalist, so are all those challenging her for the top spot in the post-election leadership brawl. And, apparently, MAGAmaniacs now dominate most state parties as well. So whether free citizen or convict, Trump and Trumpism remain in the picture.

What is clear is that the majority of the residents of the United States, and for that matter, the world, will face more crises, devastation, wars, racism, and collapsing living standards as the legislators at the center of the American empire engage in gridlock and the political impasse they and their wealthy funders have created and are incapable of breaking.

The shattering of gridlock is a task that falls to those organizing and striking at Amazon and Starbucks, railroad workers demanding the right to strike, union members confronting cautious leaders, those in the streets against police violence and climate destruction, and the millions who suffer from the calculated neglect or fanatical intent of politicians. It will have to come from below and outside the halls of Congress, state legislatures, and city councils in the streets and workplaces across the country as anger turns into action.

In the wake of the election, the Biden administration and almost all the Democrats in Congress joined in the further undermining of democracy and the defense of capitalist authority when they imposed a settlement that railroad workers fighting for safe and decent working conditions had voted in their majority to reject, thus negating the workers' democratic right.

In their anger at both political parties, the rank-and-file organization Railroad Workers United not only called for "a unified and powerful labor organization" but pointed to a long-range way out of the impasse by suggesting that perhaps the time had come for, "a political party that will better serve the interest of not just railroad workers but all working-class people." ■

Note: Footnotes are available on the ATC website edition of this article.

REVIEW

Radical Memory and Mike Davis' Final Work: **Whose Dreams? Whose History?** By Alexander Billet

Set the Night on Fire

L.A. in the Sixties

By Mike Davis and Jon Wiener

Verso Books, 2021, 800 pages. \$24.95 paperback.

ANSWERING A QUESTION for the *Los Angeles Review of Books* in 2012, Mike Davis was asked "Title of the book you're probably never going to write, but would kind of like to get around to?" Davis responded, "Setting the Night on Fire: L.A. in the 1960s."

A decade later Davis is dead, felled by cancer late last year. But the book about setting the City of Angels ablaze is, thankfully, on bookshelves.

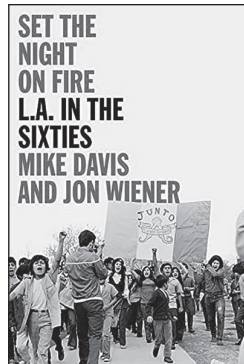
It comes with a slightly different title, and was written with collaborator, fellow historian and KPFK broadcaster Jon Wiener. But as a literary swan song, one could do a lot worse than this thorough, 800-page *magnum opus* on how the revolutionary period of the 1960s wound through the sprawling mutant city that is Los Angeles.

Mike Davis, as any of his readers will know, had a fascination — sometimes affectionate, sometimes morbid — with the metropolis of his upbringing. Little wonder why Los Angeles, along with southern California more generally, is a region famously difficult to draw a bead on, a place of sharp contradictions, wild fantasies and bloody histories further complicated by both its role in the colonial formations of American capitalism and its self-professed role as dream factory to the nation and the world.

The sunshine beckons in a region like this, imploring us all to spend our lives getting tan and learning to surf. Only after we learn that American surf culture was essentially popularized by a gaggle of Malibu Nazis — the kind who would burn swastikas into their board fins and terrorize Gidget's Jewish immigrant father at night — do we start to ask whose dreams the factory is most concerned with.

It's this dialectic, between fantasy and history, between "sunshine and *noir*," per Davis' famous formulation in *City of Quartz, Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (1992, Verso republication 2018), that animates Los Angeles.

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Climate change made the weather and wildfires of California more erratic. And 2005's *The Monster at Our Door* already chronicled with such precision the release of deadly pathogens by capital's destruction of the planet that many could glibly, but plausibly, say that Davis predicted the Covid-19 pandemic.

[An extensive tribute by Bryan Palmer to the life and work of Mike Davis appeared in our previous issue, ATC 222, November-December 2022 — ed.]

History, Prediction and Rebellion

Marxism, as a system of thought that fancies itself a science, has little to do with prophecy, at least in any sense decorated with mystical, new age crap. Mike Davis was without any doubt a Marxist, indeed one of the most rigorous and creative of his generation.

Those who wondered how he could predict the future often failed to ignore that his method was merely that of any good historian: looking at the past. The wonder and outrage he provoked mostly came from the understanding that history isn't just about the past, but rather how its frictions with the present can create the future.

It is fitting then that Davis did get to write a book like *Set the Night On Fire*, the book he never thought he'd get to write. Davis and Wiener's collaboration on the book was a tight and thorough one, seeking to draw together countless disparate stories and figures into a metanarrative of a metropolis rocked by uprising.

According to the book's editor Andy Hsiao, Davis primarily focused on the stories of Black and Brown resistance that provide the book's backbone, while Wiener — most recognized for getting his hands on John Lennon's long-hidden FBI files — wrote the

City of Quartz brought Davis the attention, particularly after the 1992 Rodney King uprising. Its followup *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster* (1998, Verso republication 2022) gained increasing attention as climate

change made the weather and wildfires of California more erratic. And though the two edited each other's work along the way, it is nonetheless impressive how effortlessly one's contribution plays off and compliments the other's.

The result is remarkably dynamic. Again, this is a book primarily of history, but of history so vivid that we cannot help but see its events as unfinished and bound to re-emerge.

Yes, the vignettes that make up the chapters of this book provide plenty of familiar episodes. The 1965 uprising against police racism in Watts serves as a divider of sorts, a before-and-after for the radical 1960s. Likewise for the massive March 1968 Chicano student walkouts in East L.A., which seemed to be a moment when the radicalism of the city's decade crystalized.

The murder of Black Panthers Bunchy Carter and John Huggins on the UCLA campus is also covered, as is the rebellion among Chicano high schoolers in East L.A. And of course the movement against the Vietnam War plays an increasingly crucial role in the book's narration.

These are the moments and movements that just about anyone who knows the broad strokes of Los Angeles history will recognize. Or at the very least, they're the kind that are likely to have plaques commemorating them, peppering the city from Garfield High to Westwood.

Even these retellings reveal new narratives, though. Davis and Wiener clearly refute the idea that the rebellions of the sixties were just a student thing, more the result of youthful excess than the depredations of racism, empire and capitalism.

This narrative has always failed on its own terms as it is completely unable to explain the rise of groups like the Black Panthers, Brown Berets, or other avowedly revolutionary socialist organizations rooted in decidedly non-academic milieus. Further, as the authors argue, those L.A. campuses most activated during that era tended to be the more working-class in student body composition: L.A. City College, East Los Angeles College, Valley State, and so on.

Reconsidering Watts, Wiener and Davis point out that during those six nights when Black residents battled with cops and the National Guard in 1965, the unrest spread

well beyond the neighborhood's frontiers, reaching into Pasadena, Long Beach, and even into some parts of the San Diego area.

Indeed, one thing that becomes clear in the first section of *Set the Night on Fire* is in contradiction to another misconception about the 1960s: that the Civil Rights movement by and large didn't concern itself with what took place north of the Mason-Dixon or west of Texas.

Los Angeles, in fact, had some of the worst segregation of schools, housing and employment outside of the U.S. South, and many of the racist incidents recounted against Black homeowners in white neighborhoods could just as easily come out of Alabama or Mississippi.

Most racists could count on a blind eye from William H. Parker, the drink-sodden sadist who was Chief of the Los Angeles Police Department for more than fifteen years.

Parker serves as avatar for L.A.'s particular iteration of American racism in much of the book, and rightly so. This was, after all, a man who ordered officers to spy on Angelenos participating in the Freedom Ride, terrorized the Black Muslims, and allowed the John Birch Society to infiltrate his department's ranks.

It was clearly necessary that organizations like the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) had such active chapters in Los Angeles.

The People, the Movements

Then there are the people, the movements, the events, that have no plaque and don't make it into most general Los Angeles histories. It is often overlooked, for example, that the protests against police raids at the Black Cat Tavern — then a well-known gay bar in L.A.'s Silver Lake neighborhood — predated the Stonewall Inn rebellions by more than two years.

Most histories of the antiwar movement tend to similarly ignore its early years in groups like Women's Strike for Peace, whose Los Angeles chapter was its most militant and left-wing, even sending representatives on solidarity trips to Hanoi.

Other stories provide neglected context for some of modern life's more ubiquitous images. *LOVE*, the four letters stacked on top of each other, one of the most recognized works of the pop art era, showing up in sculptures in city squares around the country and on U.S. postage stamps, was painted by Sister Corita Kent.

This Catholic sister and art teacher was, through the 1960s, increasingly allied with the Civil Rights and antiwar movements, as many of her works from that decade reflect. It seems far-fetched to those of us so used to the Catholic church as a bastion of reaction, but this was a time when many rank-

and-file clergy were swayed by the times.

The widening gap between them and the most stubbornly conservative sectors of the Catholic hierarchy came to a head when Sister Corita's order, Sisters of the Immaculate Heart, was broken up by the right-wing Archbishop of Los Angeles, James McIntyre, who despised her art and her politics.

Aided by in-depth research and breezy storytelling, these kinds of revelations fill *Set the Night on Fire*. Some are downright humbling. How many of us, even those of us proud in our knowledge of left history, can claim to know much about the radical Asian American publication *Gidra*? Or the full-on cultural renaissance that flourished in Watts in the uprisings aftermath, culminating in "L.A.'s Black Woodstock," the Wattstax music festival?

If the similarities between Angeleno racism and the rhetoric of Old Jim Crow perennially raise their head, then the good news is that resistance to it can almost always be expected.

How many have heard of the radical left weekly *L.A. Free Press*, which managed to pull in a quarter-million readers every week?

Would we be willing to believe that such a rag published the likes of Susan Sontag, Allen Ginsberg, Jean-Paul Sartre and Herbert Marcuse, and sponsored free concerts from Frank Zappa and Ramblin' Jack Elliot, all while simultaneously boosting the antiwar, feminist, and Black Liberation movements in its pages?

Then, Now and Sowing the Future

These are the kinds of stories that move most of us into wide-eyed wonder when we first learn of them. "How can we remake that now?" is the inevitable, impatient refrain. When they don't, the frustration mounts, compounded by the sights of a growing unhoused population in the tens of thousands and a Southern California wildfire season that gets worse every year.

The map of Wiener and Davis' Los Angeles could not feel further from what we see in front of us on the streets of East Hollywood, Crenshaw, or Downtown L.A. today. But then, no American city — with the possible exception of Las Vegas — seems to have such a haphazard approach to its own landscape, such wanton disregard for its true history, as Los Angeles.

But then, as always, there are cracks. *Set the Night on Fire*'s epilogue is called "Sowing the Future." Wiener and Davis, clinging hard to their faith in future generations, ultimately leave the interpretation and applicability of their book's events up to the readers.

This of course is not to say they aren't

fiercely partisan in delineating where and how the events of the sixties matter. To them the most profound echo is to be found in the ties between labor and community that emerged during the Los Angeles teachers' strike:

"(T)he 2019 teachers' strike was perhaps the most dramatic example of the renewal of activism. A coalition of the classroom and the community, it focused on the same issues of overcrowded schools and educational disinvestment (now aggravated by the drain of resources to charter schools) that contributed to the student uprisings in 1967-69. Moreover, thousands of the Latino students who boycotted classes and joined teacher picket lines were proudly aware that they were following in the footsteps of Sal Castro, Gloria Arellanes, Bobby Elias, Carlos Muñoz and all the others who had made time stop in March 1968."

We might add more recent examples. L.A. has an impressive tenants' movement, capable of making life difficult for slumlords and successfully fighting evictions. The unionization drives at Starbucks have found their way to Los Angeles, as has the Amazon Labor Union to the warehouse in nearby Moreno Valley.

The same Hollywood Boulevard once again stacked with cheap *tchotchkes* designed to make a quick buck off tourists was, just two years ago, choked with fifty thousand Black Lives Matter protesters. If the similarities between Angeleno racism and the rhetoric of Old Jim Crow perennially raise their head, then the good news is that resistance to it can almost always be expected.

Last year's leaked tapes of L.A. City Council members coordinating to gerrymander council districts and using explicitly racist speech provoked a strong backlash; hundreds of protesters invaded city council meetings demanding their resignation. Some resigned, others didn't, though the furor also buoyed insurgents' city council campaigns.

After the votes were counted, a police abolition activist and longtime hotel union organizer — both members of Democratic Socialists of America — had beaten entrenched incumbents backed by the local Democratic machine. Whatever the pitfalls of electoral politics, and there are many, there is a clear hunger in the city for real, substantial change.

This, setting aside all other embellishments and praise, is what Mike Davis knew how to illustrate.

He had no time for the idea that the staid, sometimes moribund, often imposing artificial environments of American life — the houses and freeways, the studios and office buildings, the myriad segregations *de jure* and *de facto*, the wheres and hows of our lives — are somehow immovable. Far from it, they are moved by history. The next question, persistent as ever, is whose history. ■

REVIEW

A Revolutionary's Story By Folko Mueller

In the Radical Camp

A Political Autobiography 1890-1921

By Paul Frölich

Haymarket Books, 2021, 270 pages, \$30 paperback.

I WOULD ASSUME that most readers, if you are familiar with the author's name at all, know Paul Frölich as the author of a Rosa Luxemburg biography. His most famous publication by far, it is a wonderful and very personal account of Rosa that has certainly withstood the test of time.

I first read that book as a young man in Germany, still trying to find my true political home. I knew little else about Paul Frölich, other than what appeared in the liner notes of the Luxemburg biography — that he was a founding member of the German CP (KPD) and later of the Communist International (Comintern).

This memoir will fill in many blanks, in particular regarding his early years and first political involvement. However, anybody hoping to learn more about Frölich's more mature years within the Party, the factional struggles of the early to mid-1920s and his Comintern years, may be disappointed. The book ends with a chapter on the *März Aktion* or March Action of 1921, the mistimed communist uprising that ended up being a significant setback for the Party and the workers' movement in general.

The editor, Reiner Tosstorff, himself well known in German leftist and academic circles for his numerous essays on the Spanish Civil War and particularly the POUM, mentions that the period from mid-1921 to mid-1924 was originally supposed to form the final part of Frölich's memoirs.

Apparently, it was also planned to highlight the effects of the internal struggle ensuing in the USSR in 1923 on the international communist movement. Unfortunately, this was never realized. As Tosstorff points out in his excellent introduction, we don't really know why Frölich ended his autobiography where he did.

Nonetheless, this is still a most valuable historical document: an eyewitness account from a leading Communist Party member who lived through an important and volatile epoch in Germany. He went through the whole left odyssey from a Social Democratic upbringing to joining the *Internationale Kommunisten Deutschlands* (IKD — via the

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Paul Frölich, revolutionary and writer.

Bremer Linksradikalen), to KPD (via the Spartacus League) to expulsion and joining the newly founded KPO (Communist Party — Opposition) to founding the SAP (Socialist Workers Party).

The impulse for writing the autobiography came from the International Institute of Social History which, shortly after it was founded in 1935, contacted well-known former Communist party members in different countries to submit essay-length memoirs. The idea was to document reports of actual events and internal party affairs that were either suppressed or falsified by the official Stalinist machine.

In the turmoil of the World War II years, all copies of Frölich's manuscript were lost or forgotten. While the IISH founder and director, Nicolaas Posthumus was able to move the most valuable archives to London before the pending German invasion of the

Netherlands in 1940, the remainder ended up in Nazi Germany.

Frölich himself was forced to flee from his exile in France, where he wrote the manuscript, to the United States where he lived as an émigré for a decade from 1941 on. His own copy was lost and it was only in 2007 that the IISH rediscovered their manuscript.

Childhood and Political Formation

Frölich's political memoirs start with his childhood in Leipzig where he was born on August 7, 1884. Leipzig is located in Saxony, which was the most highly industrialized area of Germany at the time. The city grew from about 150,000 inhabitants at the time of Frölich's birth to 500,000 inhabitants at the turn of the century.

With a growing working class, Leipzig developed into somewhat of a stronghold for the young Social Democratic Party. It struck roots in Protestant areas such as Saxony, as opposed to highly industrialized Rhineland or Upper Silesia where workers were more likely to follow bourgeois parties with strong Catholic ties, such as the *Zentrumspartei*.¹

Frölich's parents were heavily involved in party work, so much so that all their "daily affairs at home turned around the party." His father, like so many of his social-democratic comrades of the time, was an autodidact, and managed to become a middle-rank party official heading up the Leipzig East district of about 500 members. His mother was active in the "trade association" before she started having 11 children but stayed active with internal party affairs.

As a child Paul was involved in underground party activities such as illegal leafletting, which invoked in him "a romantic magic of conspiracy." Around the turn of the century, Frölich joined the workers' movement in his own right. He became a member of the *Leipziger Arbeiterverein*, the local workers' association.

While having the appearance of a strictly educational organization, it was in reality "a thinly disguised school of political struggle... and the most vigorous battles over party theory and tactics were conducted." Frölich paints an intimate picture of the debates between Lassalleans and Marxist as well as the struggle against reformism in general.

During this time, Frölich also came in touch with Russian emigres and socialist students and learned about the 1905 Russian revolution. In 1908 he joined the *Leipziger*

Volkszeitung, a party organ, as a journalist apprentice, where he first met Karl Radek.

Another fascinating detail of the Leipzig chapter of his memoirs is his description of the “Corpora,” a secret organization within the SPD which was a legacy of the illegality of the anti-socialist law days.

Frölich describes it as “the real party machine. All questions that arose within the Leipzig workers’ movement were dealt with here, and for the most part decided without contradiction. Naturally party questions above all.”

Frölich tried to democratize the secret organization by suggesting the replacement of the old guard with an elected membership but found fierce opposition. This ultimately motivated him to move to Hamburg.

Hamburg and Bremen Years

Frölich arrived in Hamburg in October 1910 and continued his profession as a journalist for the local party paper, *Hamburger Echo*. While he enjoyed reporting on the struggles in its Altona district, where dock and industrial workers were concentrated, Frölich saw the petty-bourgeois nature of both the editorial staff at the *Echo* and party employees. Not surprisingly, almost all of them ended up in the social-patriot camp after the outbreak of World War I.

As a young reporter, Frölich came increasingly into friction with his editor. Unwilling to report on routine municipal news, he wanted to reveal the dreadful housing conditions in the poor districts.

When invited to join the editorial team of the *Bremer Bürgerzeitung*, he did not hesitate. At first enjoying the greater journalistic independence and political freedom he had as an editor working at a paper with a radical line closer to his own, he soon encountered deep factional battles. Frölich came to count on the backing of radical leftists including Karl Radek, Anton Pannekoek and Johann Knief, a former teacher and musician in charge of music criticism for the paper, who would become his best friend.

Yet Frölich was “completely unprepared” for the unanimous support of the war loan vote of August 4, 1914 by the entire SPD *Reichstag* group. He was unable to find an explanation for this “incomprehensible renunciation” by the SPD deputies. It was only when he received a letter from Radek that he learned about the internal discussions leading to this disaster.

Radek wanted Frölich and Knief to launch a struggle against the official party line but it was too late. Both were called up during the very first week of war. Immediately engaged in propaganda activity, Frölich was discharged as permanently unfit the following year. He was called back up in 1916 as a clerk, for the “paper war” as he called it.

During this time Frölich was able to

attend the Kiental conference, sometimes also referred to as the Second Zimmerwald Conference. This was a meeting of antiwar socialist groups and individuals similar to the original conference of the previous year. Here Frölich got to know Lenin, initially forming a not so favorable impression of him.

November 1918 and Aftermath

During the revolutionary events of 1918, Frölich was in Hamburg. The main leaders of the Hamburg left were a rather interesting pair, Heinrich Laufenberg and Fritz Wolffheim. Both could be considered council communists with certain anarchist leanings. But after the founding of the German Communist Party (KPD), the two were expelled. They moved on to become founding members of the ultra-leftwing KAPD (Communist Workers’ Party of Germany).²

Frölich dedicates an entire chapter to this forced split in the still young KPD, a split he had tried hard to prevent.

While Frölich’s recollections of the revolutionary period are confined to his experience in Hamburg, some of the general conditions as well as the composition of the Workers’ and Soldiers’ Council were not unlike those in other large German cities.

Hamburg’s local Workers’ and Soldiers’ Council, for example, consisted of 15 workers and 15 soldiers, plus three representatives each of from the SPD, USPD (independent Social-Democrats), Left Radicals (predecessor of the Communist Party) and trade-union federation. This body of 42 people was the governing body of greater Hamburg and according to Frölich exercised “*de facto* dictatorial power.”

Like in most cities across Germany, the council reign in Hamburg ended on January 20th, 1919.³ This came one day after the general national election for parliament, which was in turn triggered by the defeat of the misnamed Spartacus Uprising or January Battles.⁴

Just two days after the Bavarian soviet republic was established, Frölich arrived in Munich. However it seems to have been doomed from the start:

1) The SPD, who initially made a declaration in favor of the soviet republic, almost immediately betrayed the USPD and CP by either not participating or worse, trying to launch counterrevolutionary attacks from an old remnant government position in the town of Bamberg.

2) The soviet republic had no organ of real power. The police force was under counter-revolutionary control and had not been abolished. Not enough workers were armed, apart from a couple of CP-controlled factories.

In the end a massive offensive by the *Freikorps* (Republican militias) put an end to the republic in May of 1919. Almost all of the

leaders were killed, as well as around 600 additional revolutionaries and civilians.

The fact that many leaders were of Jewish origin, such as Ernst Toller, Erich Mühsam, Gustav Landauer, Eugen Leviné and Tobias Akselrod, was used by the rightwing militias to sow antisemitic propaganda, ploughing fields that fascists would harvest soon after.

Frölich openly admitted his mistakes, writing:

“At that time I had tactical ideas for which the description ‘ultra-left’ that has since been applied is not correct, yet that were too radical and showed a lack of real judgement of the conditions of the struggle. I was the representative of the left current.”

Kapp and March Action 1921

The last couple of chapters of Frölich’s memoirs deal with one episode that highlights the enormous strength of the German working class, while the another resulted in resounding defeat.

The first was the Kapp Putsch, an attempted coup against the Weimar Republic coalition government by ultra-reactionary forces on March 13, 1920. The coup failed within four days, because the unions’ call across the spectrum from SPD to KPD workers for a general strike.

Twelve million workers answered the call, paralyzing the country. At the time of the putsch, Frölich was in Frankfurt. He describes how the workers spontaneously took over the city even before the general strike was called. The police were too scared to come out of their barracks, commenting “There were no members of our party involved. There were no military leaders.”

But this victory led to strategic miscalculation in the March Action of 1921. The error arose partially out of an exaggerated sense of power that came from defeating the putschists and reinforced by the unification of the left USPD and KPD, resulting in a Unified Communist Party (VKPD) of some 400,000 members.⁵

Aware of the distress their Russian comrades were under — and under Comintern pressure — the party leadership felt ready to go on the offensive. They called a general strike and armed skirmishes broke out in different parts of the country. But the uprising was crushed by the German army (*Reichswehr*) and militia units. Frölich admits that he, together with the rest of the leadership, misjudged the situation entirely. He writes:

“(W)e overestimated the tensions, did not see the inhibiting factors, and particularly failed to recognize the possibility of a compromise in foreign policy.... I myself favored an offensive policy from the start... I failed to recognize as a general strategic lesson the necessity of a retreat or escape in a dangerous situation; this would only be brought home to me under to me under

the pressure of very harsh facts...”

Learning from History

Frölich's political memoirs should not only be of interest to scholars of German political history of the beginning of the 20th century but revolutionary socialists in general. While some basic knowledge of Germany's political landscape and its different parties and groups at the time certainly helps, it is nonetheless an extremely accessible book with an almost anecdotal style.

We can count ourselves lucky that this interesting historical document, written by a key protagonist, has been recovered and published in English. If we do not want history to repeat itself, we should learn from it in order to prevent making similar strategic mistakes.

There is no self-aggrandizement here, no whitewashing or alteration of historical events. Unlike “official” anecdotes by CP members from that time, the book has not been subject to the Stalinist treatment of falsification or any cult of personality.

It is a very open and honest account with a fair amount of self-critique. Frölich finds plenty at fault in his and other leading members' stands and actions around the Munich Soviet and March Action, for example.

The ending feels a little abrupt, no doubt because it was still a draft and he intended to write well beyond the events of 1921. While at times overzealous in his approach, Frölich was a genuine and unwavering fighter for the cause of the German working class.

Not a mere history book, this political

autobiography is a torch passed on to us. It is up to us not to let this passion for revolution be extinguished. ■

Notes:

1. Frölich does mention that in Leipzig the “*Deutsch-katholiken*” a German-Catholic sect not to be confused with the Catholic Church proper played quite an important role in the local workers' movement. This is, however, due to the fact that it was Catholic in name only and in actuality a freethinking organization founded by Robert Blum, the German democratic politician and revolutionary who actively participated in the “*Märzrevolution*,” the uprising of 1848.
2. The KAPD (Communist Workers' Party of Germany) was an ultra-left split off from the mainstream CP, founded April 1920 in Heidelberg. The party soon splintered further, with individual remnants surviving until 1933, when the Nazis wiped them out. Frölich lamented this split from the KPD and dedicated a chapter to it in his book.
3. One notable exception is the Munich Council Republic which also grew out of the November uprisings but was not declared until April 7th, 1919.
4. The Spartacus Uprising was neither initiated by the Spartacist Group nor the Communist Party, but was triggered either spontaneously or through an agent provocateur. It consisted of a general strike and armed struggle in Berlin (January 5th through January 12th of 1919). The build-up that sparked these events was the dismissal of the Berlin Police President Emil Eichhorn, a member of the Independent Social Democrats (USPD), by the Council of People's Representatives led by Friedrich Ebert on January 4, 1919. Eichhorn had been appointed by the first Council of People's Representatives. This formed part of an overall strategy by Ebert to successively replace USPD members by MSPD (majority SPD) members. This resulted in the USPD no longer regarding it as a legitimate interim government. The underlying cause was the conflicting political aims of the groups involved in the November Revolution. The MSPD leadership around Ebert, Scheidemann and Noske aimed for a rapid return to “orderly conditions” via the elections to the National Assembly. The USPD, parts of labor, and the Revolutionary

Representatives as well as the KPD wanted the continuation and safeguarding of their revolutionary goals (socialization, disempowerment of the military, dictatorship of the proletariat). They interpreted Eichhorn's dismissal as an attack on the revolution.

5. The right-wing of the USPD dissolved itself back again into the SPD (majority Social Democrats).

Further Reading:

There are a number of books and biographies covering the events Frölich witnessed. I will focus here only on the ones that are either written in English or have been translated (at least in an abridged version).

For further reading on the period of Frölich's childhood and political formation, I recommend August Bebel's memoirs *Aus meinem Leben*. I believe the full text was translated and available in different tomes in English at some stage, but most are now only available as used. However, there is a recent edition of the first part put out by Franklin Press as *Bebel's Reminiscences*.

An invaluable resource in English regarding the emerging split between reformists and revolutionaries within the SPD around the time of WW I is Carl E. Schorske's *German Social Democracy 1905-1917: The Development of the Great Schism*. Sebastian Haffner's *Failure of a Revolution: Germany 1918-1919*, is a brilliant account of the treacherous counterrevolutionary actions by the social democrats in power at the time. The original German title is more aptly called *Treason*.

For a deep dive into this important period in German and world history, I highly recommend Pierre Broué's *tour de force, The German Revolution, 1917-1923*.

For further reading on the Zimmerwald (and Kiental) conferences, *War on War* by R. Craig Nation and published by Haymarket Books is a solid resource in English.

Several protagonists of the Munich soviet have written memoirs. One autobiography is Ernst Toller's *Eine Jugend in Deutschland*, somewhat awkwardly translated into *I was a German*, available from Kessinger Publishing. Toller, of course, briefly headed up the first (non-CP-dominated) Munich soviet republic; one entire chapter is dedicated to that experience.

Victor Serge's dispatches from Germany on behalf of Comintern's *Inprekorr*, collected under the title *Witness to the German Revolution* and published by Haymarket Books are also well worth a read. They cover the year 1923, which was the last year of revolutionary upheaval in Germany.

“Predictable, Inevitable, Irreversible”: The Horror in Occupied Palestine

IN THE FIRST six weeks of 2023 alone, Israeli forces and settlers killed 50 Palestinians, including 11 children. Last year was the deadliest for Palestinians in the occupied West Bank since 2004, and 2023 will surpass it — indeed these figures will be outdated before this issue of *Against the Current* reaches our readers.

Jonathan Kuttab is a passionate voice of nonviolent resistance and founder of one of the distinguished human rights organizations (Al-Haq) declared “terrorist” by the Israeli government. Kuttab comments on the ascendancy of Itamar Ben-Gvir, a convicted anti-Arab terrorist in his own right, open advocate of mass expulsion and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from Israel as well as the Occupied Territories, and now minister of police in the new governing coalition:

“*This openly unabashed, fascist racism makes many friends of Israel totally uncomfortable, creating for them a crisis of conscience. Yet, it must be declared that Ben Gvir's election is not a sudden or recent development. It is predictable, inevitable, and irreversible.*” (<https://www.fosna.org/the-fosna-blog/inevitable>)

In the face of an accelerating emergency, the U.S. administration does nothing beyond statements of “deep concern,” which JVP Action (the political action arm of Jewish Voice for peace, states “are meaningless in the face of the Israeli government's rapidly escalating state violence against Palestinians living under occupation and siege.”

Routinely, the Israeli military raids refugee camps (Jenin, Nablus etc.) on grounds of seeking “terrorist cells,” the “proof” of which in each case is dozen or so Palestinians left dead. Soldiers and settlers seize and destroy villagers' homes, fields and irreplaceable olive trees. Naturally, the response will be desperate militant actions by Palestinian youth, as tragic as they are futile.

The real meaning of the Biden administrations' “deep concern” is shown by its actions. The new U.S. embassy under construction in Jerusalem occupies land confiscated from Palestinian owners, including some U.S. citizens — one among multiple examples of ignoring explicit U.S. legislation on foreign expropriation of U.S. citizens' property when it's done by the state of Israel.

In a particularly grotesque show of subservience to Zionist pressure, the State Department has withdrawn the nomination of James Cavallaro to serve as an independent (i.e. not a U.S. government representative) member of the Interamerican Commission on Human Rights — a body that deals with western hemisphere, not Middle East issues.

The reason: Cavallaro's previous tweets on the apartheid characteristics of the Israeli occupation, and the undue influence of AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) on U.S. policy.

As if to prove the latter point, State Department spokesman Ned Price lectured that calling Israel's actions “apartheid” is completely contrary to U.S. policy — a true enough statement, never mind the massively documented findings of Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, B'Tselem and other expert investigators. Indeed, the deadly hypocrisy, double standard and cowardice of Washington's enabling of Israeli apartheid is itself “predictable, inevitable” and — without sustained grassroots political pressure — “irreversible.” ■

REVIEW

A Big Book for Volcanic Times: **James P. Cannon, Life and Legacy** By Paul Le Blanc

James P. Cannon and the Emergence of Trotskyism in the United States, 1928-38

by Bryan Palmer

Leiden/Boston: Brill Publishers, 2021, 1208 pages; \$445 hardback.

Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2022, \$65 paperback.

WHAT JUSTIFIES A book of 1200 pages, which is only the second volume of the biography of someone generally seen as an obscure figure on the far left of the political spectrum? Is this a case of sectarian iconography gone mad? Is it an example of a scholar who has done an enormous amount of research but is not in control of his material? I don't think so.

The answer: we are not dealing with a book. Between the covers of this volume are six books: (1) a continuation of Bryan Palmer's biography of James P. Cannon in a key decade of his life; (2) a history of the first 10 years of U.S. Trotskyism; (3) a history of the social and political dynamics of the class struggle in the United States from 1928 to 1938; (4) a study of the world Communist movement through the prism of U.S. radicalism; (5) a critique of the historiography on the previous two topics; (6) the articulation of a general orientation for revolutionary activists.

Each of these carefully researched six "books" provide thoughtful analyses with attention given to their interrelationship with each other. Understanding this makes it easier, I think, to make one's way through and engage with this massive volume.

Palmer himself defines his outlook in the Preface, elaborating on four propositions:

"First, this history reveals the red thread of continuity between early 20th-century radicalism native to the USA — epitomized by the Industrial Workers of the World and a segment of the Left Wing of the Socialist Party — and the Communist movement inspired by the Russian Revolution. ...

"Second, Cannon's life is a repudiation of the idea that American communism was always, and

Paul Le Blanc is on the editorial board for the Verso edition of the Complete Works of Rosa Luxemburg, and with Helen C. Scott has edited its soon-to-appear fifth volume. His most recent book — Lenin: Responding to Castastrophe, Forging Revolution — is due to be published by Pluto Press in September.

could only be, dominated by slavish adherence to Moscow's directives. ...

"Third, Cannon's history in the late 1920s and 1930s, when engaged with substantively, suggests that writing on the Communist Party must confront Stalinization, which qualitatively transformed the nature of life in what was a leading United States organization of the ostensible revolutionary left. ...

"Fourth, and finally, a study of Cannon in the years 1928-38 establishes that when revolutionaries adhere to principled politics, even in difficult circumstances, it is possible to make considerable headway. ..."

The book contains six large and complex chapters, sandwiched between a substantial introduction, which establishes the themes that await the reader, and a conclusion.

The first chapter provides a detailed account of the early beginnings of U.S. Trotskyism in the form of the Communist League of America (CLA), with attention to initial gains and also to the explosion of Stalinist violence against CLA public meetings and those distributing CLA literature.

Depression, "Entrism" and Splits

The second chapter deals with the first incredibly difficult years of the Great Depression, fruitless appeals for Communism's Stalinist mainstream to reform itself, and debilitating factional conflicts within the CLA. The third covers the revitalization of Trotskyist forces brought on by renewed class struggle of the 1930s, combined with a decisive break from the Communist mainstream generated by Stalinism's inability to play any positive role in preventing Hitler's rise to power.

The fourth chapter covers, in considerable detail, the decisive role of CLA members in leading the 1934 Minneapolis Teamsters Strike to triumphant victory (also covered in Palmer's earlier study, *Revolutionary Teamsters*).

In the fifth chapter, Palmer, tracing an international orientation of Trotskyist forces to connect and in some cases merge with radicalizing forces on the Left, covers the fusion of the CLA with A.J. Muste's American Workers Party, and then the Trotskyists' entry into, experience within, and tumultuous expulsion from Norman Thomas's Socialist Party of America.

Palmer covers this ground in greater

depth and detail than ever attempted before, and he comes to conclusions that challenge the most common narrative.

"A balanced assessment of the actual strengths of the Socialist Party and how its fractured factions responded to Trotskyism's political challenges, reveal complexities not always evident in the usual castigations of ultra-left, sectarian 'splitters.'

"Trotskyists did not so much 'wreck' a Socialist Party as provide a mirror into which its staid leadership looked, only to find its image shattering as a consequence of it being forced to confront left-wing criticisms and take responsibility for its actions in stifling them administratively."

Cannon himself believed the entry would before long culminate in such a split, yet ironically, Palmer observes, Cannon nonetheless insisted "that entryists engage in the hard work of building the Socialist Party, conducting themselves as dedicated workers in the mass mobilizations of 1936-37" — an orientation he himself carried out in California, where he was then based.

Such an approach helps explain why many rank-and-file Socialist Party members decided to go with the Trotskyists when their own leaders decided to expel "the Trotskyite wreckers."

Popular Front and Purges

The sixth chapter overlaps with this "entrism" period, dealing with many substantial occurrences of 1936-37. One development was a shift in the policies of the international Communist movement toward what was dubbed the Popular Front — the effort to build an alliance of Communists and liberal capitalists to block the growth of fascism and defend the Soviet Union.

At the same time, Stalinism turned increasingly murderous toward revolutionary dissent (both actual and potential).

The Moscow Trials accused Trotsky of collaboration with imperialism and Nazism while putting dozens of old Bolsheviks in the dock to confess to fictitious crimes before their summary executions; tens of thousands more were sent to deadly forced labor camps.

Within the Spanish Civil War between forces of the Left and the Right (1936-39), Stalinists sought to impose their class-collaborationist policy while dealing brutally with

those on their left flank. Palmer documents U.S. Trotskyist responses: challenging Popular Frontism; establishing an authoritative commission headed by philosopher John Dewey to examine and debunk the Moscow Trials; and defending the Spanish Revolution.

In addition, he focuses attention on substantial Trotskyist activity among teamsters, autoworkers and maritime workers. The book's conclusion describes the 1938 birth of the Socialist Workers Party and the formal crystallization of the Fourth International.

This book is an irreplaceable resource for anyone seriously interested in working-class history and labor struggles in the United States, in the complexities of U.S. Communism, in the history of the Trotskyist movement, and in struggles for a better world.

Palmer's scholarship is meticulous, thoughtful and balanced. Even where one disagrees with his judgments and conclusions, his work on Cannon and the Trotskyists is a necessary reference point.

For example, my own understanding of issues of the African American experience and struggles for Black Liberation is grounded in analyses advanced by C. L. R. James, George Breitman and Leon Trotsky — all of whom embraced the notion of “self-determination” and respect for the orientation of Black nationalism.

Palmer is critical of that current of thought, adhering to a perspective that he and others have labeled “revolutionary integrationism.” But his extensive and rich discussion of the question, providing a splendid survey of the contending positions and sources, will be valued by anyone seriously engaged with the matter.

Cannon in the Revolutionary Tradition

James P. Cannon was a founding member of the U.S. Communist Party. While his 19th century childhood in the American heartland was reminiscent of Mark Twain's stories of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn, his youth and young adulthood involved an immersion in the Socialist Party of Eugene V. Debs and “Big Bill” Haywood's Industrial Workers of the World.

A key leader of the early Communist Party in the United States, he labored to draw its various elements together into a vibrant and effective revolutionary collective force within the working class. As international Communism of the 1920s experienced a transition from the leadership of V.I. Lenin to domination by Joseph Stalin, Cannon faced an accumulation of bureaucratic and authoritarian obstacles that undermined the efforts of U.S. revolutionaries.

Finally, he was expelled for opposing what he perceived as the bureaucratic tyranny of Stalinism, adhering instead to the “Bolshevik-Leninist” and revolutionary-democratic



The young James P. Cannon.

program of Leon Trotsky. For the rest of his life, Cannon was a leading figure in the American Trotskyist movement, and in the global network of revolutionary socialist groups gathered under the banner of the Fourth International.

The outstanding Marxist writer Harry Braverman, who broke from his mentor in the 1950s, in 1976 memorial remarks vividly described Cannon's impact on him and other 1930s radicals:

“He spoke to us in the accents of the Russian revolution and of the Leninism which had gone forth from the Soviet Union in the twenties and the thirties. But there was in his voice something more that attracted us. And that was the echoes of the radicalism of the pre-World War I years, the popular radicalism of Debs, Haywood, and John Reed. And he spoke with great force and passion.”

(Braverman was a member of a minority expelled in 1953 from the Socialist Workers Party. His writings are available at: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/braverman/index.htm>, though he is best known for his 1974 classic study *Labor and Monopoly Capital*.)

Seen by many as “the grand old man of American Trotskyism,” Cannon has been denounced and dismissed by many others as narrow, sectarian, factional — an example that serious radicals should not follow. This volume will further stir such controversies but it seems to me that it is destined, as well, to advance scholarship and thinking on a variety of important questions.

While this book is so massive as to place it beyond the reach of many, the person of Cannon is by no means beyond reach. When functioning well, Cannon is an exemplary revolutionary — but beset by terrible personal crises and sometimes debilitating flaws. (Left-wing novelist James T. Farrell, in what is considered to be a literary reference to Cannon, sardonically quipped that he would

have been “the Lenin of America if he hadn't drunk whiskey.”)

Yet we can also see continuing efforts to be the best he could be and to work with others in fighting effectively for a better world. This may draw some not initially so inclined into appreciative engagement with this book and Palmer's first volume, *James P. Cannon and the Origins of the American Revolutionary Left*.

Palmer quotes the pioneering historian of U.S. Communism Theodore Draper, who distinguished Cannon from many other Communist leaders of his generation because he “wanted to remember” the ideals and commitments of the early movement. “This portion of his life still lives for him because he has not killed it within himself.”

Some of the young Communists who rallied around Cannon as he first advanced the views of Trotsky's Left Opposition — Max Shachtman, Martin Abern, Albert Glotzer — were responding to such qualities.

“In the early period of the fight it seemed to me that Jim had now ‘arrived,’” Glotzer commented. “There grew up in the various sections of the groups in the country a real respect for him because he took this line and gave leadership to it during the early struggles. This awakening manifested itself at the May conference” that brought the Communist League of America into being.

Difficult Times

Such positive feelings quickly turned to exasperation as Cannon seemed, more often than not, missing in action precisely when the new movement so badly needed him, displaying traits of demoralization and withdrawal hardly befitting the revolutionary leader his young comrades had taken him to be.

A convergence of problems bore down on the 40-year-old revolutionary which his younger comrades could not fully comprehend. There was, of course, the brutal fact of being cut off from the relatively small but vibrant Communist movement that he had helped to build and lead from 1919 through the 1920s, and the sense of loss and failure that this inevitably entailed.

There was also the devastating personal economic impact of the Great Depression. This was felt more keenly because it interwove with difficulties and responsibilities from an earlier marriage, including children who were emotionally and economically dependent on him.

His life partner Rose Karsner — a dedicated revolutionary activist in her own right — suffered a mental breakdown in this period. Overwhelmed, he took to drink. “Cannon's bouts with the bottle also fueled resentments, if only because they contributed to his abstentionism,” Palmer notes. He elaborates:

“Cannon’s counterparts, most emphatically Max Shachtman, sustained the Left Opposition during their mentor’s personal retreat, but they lacked both compassion and understanding of Cannon’s situation. They clung tenaciously, if sadly, to a resentful and ultimately vindictive dismissal of Cannon’s appropriateness as the League’s leader, even as a vital contributor to a collective leadership. Unable to separate personal grievance from political criticism, and prone to cultivate the factionalism of cliques and personal sociability networks, Shachtman and others came to be blinded by their arrogance. A certain learnedness around questions of theoretical and international issues cultivated in them a sense of superiority over Cannon.”

Some continued to rally to Cannon, and a split seemed immanent in 1932-33. In the factional atmosphere, Palmer argues, Shachtman and the others tended to forget “what had attracted them to Cannon in their days in the Workers (Communist) Party: His undeniable abilities as a workers’ leader capable of appreciating and reading the pulse of American working-class militancy, intervening in class struggles to advance revolutionary politics, and extending the best that comrades had to offer, even as those talents sometimes reached past his own in specific areas.”

Even from afar, Trotsky was able to perceive the strengths of both Cannon and Shachtman, as well as their underlying shared commitment to Bolshevik-Leninist principles. He threw his considerable authority on the scales of unity, powerfully facilitating the decision of Cannon and Shachtman to work together, effectively and fruitfully, from 1933 to 1940.

One looks forward to the projected final volume of this project, which will likely be as large as the first two, covering an incredible range of developments from 1938 to 1974. Throughout that period, Cannon remained true to his early revolutionary commitments, providing much of interest for consideration by young rebels of the twenty-first century.

Relevance for Today and Tomorrow

It’s worth asking why the study of a long-gone Leninist party-builder might find a readership among volatile layers of radicalizing youth. Half a century ago, sophisticated literary critic Philip Rahv wrote about the mass movement of young activists arising in the late 1960s:

“Historically we are living on volcanic ground. ... And one’s disappointment with the experience of the New Left comes down precisely to this: that it has failed to crystallize from within itself a guiding organization — one need not be afraid of naming it a centralized and disciplined party, for so far no one has ever invented a substitute for such a party — capable of engaging in daily and even pedestrian practical activity while keeping itself sufficiently alert on the ideological

plane so as not to miss its historical opportunity when and if it arises.” (See Philip Rahv, *Essays on Literature and Politics, 1932-1972*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1972, 353.)

As young Communists in 1934, Rahv and William Phillips had been editors of *Partisan Review*; influenced by Trotsky’s critique of Stalinism, they relaunched it as an independent and influential cultural publication in 1937. It became increasingly de-radicalized by the 1950s, but in the 1960s Rahv himself swung leftward before his untimely death, helping start a new journal, *Modern Occasions*.

Increasingly volcanic decades of the 21st century have led to ongoing radicalization, generating mass struggles of young activists. At first, the dominant left-wing influence was that of anarchism. Yet accumulating disappointments convinced many that something more was needed.

There was a massive popular response to the openly socialist appeals of Bernie Sanders’ Presidential campaigns, at the same time putting considerable wind in the sails of the once tiny but suddenly huge Democratic Socialists of America (DSA).

Here too there have been accumulating disappointments. Sanders’ socialism adds up to the moderate welfare-state program associated with European Social Democracy, yet even this is compromised by his commitment to the pro-capitalist Democratic Party.

Similarly, DSA gives greater attention to campaigning for the election of Democrats than to mass struggles of social movements. Rahv’s appeal for “a centralized and disciplined party” of revolutionary action still resonates.

A late-in-life interview provided Cannon an opportunity to share thoughts revealing some of his own hard-won insights:

“A revolutionist’s spirit and attitude is not determined by the popular mood of the moment. We have a historical view and we don’t allow the movement to fade away when it runs into changed times, which can happen as we know from experience.”

He emphasized a key element in the struggle to create a society of the free and the equal:

“People must learn how to work together and think together so that the work and thought of each individual becomes a contribution to the whole.”

What was needed, he added, was not “one person who becomes a one-man leader but a group of people who combined their talents as well as their faults and make a collective leadership. That’s what we need everywhere.” (*James P. Cannon, A Political Tribute*, including five interviews from the last year of his life, New York: Pathfinder Press, 1974, 27, 18, 44)

Reflections on the Author

The work of Bryan Palmer — Professor Emeritus at Trent University in Ontario

Canada — has, over the past five decades, influenced the fields of labor history, social history, discourse analysis, communist history, and Canadian history, as well as the theoretical frameworks surrounding all of these fields.

A recent volume of excellent essays assessing his remarkably wide-ranging work, titled *Dissenting Traditions*, is available online. (Sean Carleton, Red McCoy, and Julia Smith, eds. *Dissenting Traditions: Essays on Bryan D. Palmer, Marxism, and History*, Edmonton: Althabasca University and Canadian Committee on Labour History, 2021, <https://read.aupress.ca/projects/dissenting-traditions>, from which all following quotes are taken.)

Relevant to this volume and to his other contributions is the apt point made in *Dissenting Traditions* by Chad Pearson:

“Palmer’s work is a refreshing alternative to much mainstream scholarship. It teaches us a great deal: the value of working-class combativity, the explanatory power of Marxism, the limitations of institutional liberalism and social democracy, and the impossibility of genuine emancipation under capitalism.”

Two of Canada’s outstanding labor-scholars — Sam Gindin and the late Leo Panitch — have hailed Palmer, despite certain disagreements, for his “commitment to developing historical materialism and the high quality of research and sophisticated writing that has underpinned his recovery of working-class history in all its richness and flaws.”

They add: “In this respect, Palmer’s concern as a historian to recover and analyze the cultures of resistance that working people have developed in the course of practicing class struggle from below is not only a remarkable achievement of scholarship but also retains great contemporary relevance.”

This recalls the approaches of two activist-scholars who have profoundly influenced Palmer — E.P. Thompson and Leon Trotsky.

This leads us to the comments of two of the most insightful and incisive British historians on Communism, John Mcllroy and Alan Campbell, who deliciously comment that “Stalinism was as different from socialism as the hippopotamus from the giraffe.”

Commenting on the first volume of the biography we are considering here, they had this to say:

“Innovative employment of an eye-opening swathe of sources and deft analytical fusion of protagonists and context and circumstances rendered James P. Cannon and the Origins of the American Revolutionary Left, 1890-1928 an achievement as biography and history.”

They add: “It stands as a rebuke to those who dismiss history written from the revolutionary viewpoint of its subjects.” The book we are considering here is very much in that vein. ■

REVIEW

Low Blows:

The World of Professional Boxing

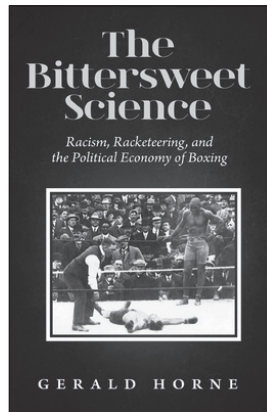
By John Woodford

The Bittersweet Science:

Racism, Racketeering and the Political Economy of Boxing

By Gerald Horne

International Publishers, 2021, 329 pages, \$15 paperback.



THERE ARE FEW people on earth better qualified than this reviewer to assess Gerald Horne's fact-jammed examination of the U.S. boxing industry and a few of its foreign tributaries.

That's not bragging. It's more of a confession that I've seen at least ninety-five percent of the televised boxing matches from the dawn of TV on, and most of the contests I've missed were pay-per-view specials that were not rebroadcast free.

My father and his brothers and sisters were all fight fans, so as early TV broadcasts expanded from Friday Night Fights to Wednesday and then even Monday Night Fights, I had plenty of family company throughout the '50s.

The rise of heavyweight king Joe Louis, the Brown Bomber, had spurred our addiction for the sport, as it had for millions of Black Americans.

I remember weeping as I listened to the radio broadcast of Rocky Marciano knocking out an aged and broke Joe Louis in October 1951, when Joe was well past his prime and in need of a payday to meet federal tax bills.

Boxing had been televised for only two years then, having debuted in January 1949 in Chicago, right across Lake Michigan from our home in Benton Harbor, Michigan. My father had films of most of Louis's fights, and so I'd seen the champ often on our home screen.

One of my father's friends in medical school at Howard University was the brother of John Henry Lewis, one of Joe's "bum-of-the-month" opponents, whom Joe knocked out in January 1939. Furthermore, my father sometimes served as the fight physician for local amateur bouts, and I accompanied him at ringside on several occasions.

Years later I met not only Joe Louis

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himself, when he was in the early stages of dementia, but also his ex-wife Marva Spaulding and his son Joe Louis Barrow Jr., aka "Punchy," and daughter Jacqueline Barrow. Louis greeted me, "Hey, you look just like my son Punchy."

Blow by Blow

I say all this to advise the reader that if you are not similarly

steeped in the glory and gore of this blood-sport, you will likely not go the distance with Horne's blow-by-blow, round-by-round account of, as he puts it, the "racism, and profiteering, exploitation and corruption in the sport that is boxing."

Horne, who holds the Moores Chair of History and African American Studies at the University of Houston, has meticulously documented those same forces and patterns in the U.S. film, aviation and music industries, as well as in organized labor struggles.

His almost three dozen other books range over the globe and deep into centuries of struggles for national liberation, social democracy and economic justice. *The Bittersweet Science* contains the results of Horne's combing of numerous archives, biographies, autobiographies and studies devoted to boxing.

He traces the early segregation and desegregation of the sport from the late 19th century on, highlighting the recurring rise and fall of Great White Hopes to demonstrate the manly traits once conceived to be embodied in boxing.

Horne follows the money throughout the book, acknowledging the financial opportunities, both the legalized and the downright criminal varieties — the latter being quite the larger force — that accompanied the sport from its beginning.

Following the Money

Crooks, politicians, journalists and regulators on state boards have cooperated with one another, and also ordered or condoned mayhem and murder of rivals, throughout boxing's history.

They have done so, Horne shows, be-

cause boxing has enriched promoters and the cities and states where they operate. When city or state officials decide to clean up the sport, the promoters threaten to move their game elsewhere, and sometimes do, playing states, courts and municipalities against one another for the tax monies derived from the fighters' labors.

Thus every major "crime family" pops up regularly in this volume because boxing "was just a part of the conglomerate that also controls many labor unions and related industries such as construction, shipping, garment, garbage disposal."

All these "revenue streams" serve as laundering facilities for dirty money bubbling up out of the sewers swelled by our nation's "casino magnates."

Fixed fights; bribing of referees, judges and state boxing commissioners; "promoters" who conspire with one another to cheat the fighters they "own" under contracts they've devised; violent gangland methods familiar to anyone who's seen movies about boxing methods — it's all laid out here in unrelenting, if often confusing or tedious, detail.

In short, boxing provides Horne and his readers with another way to understand both the systemic, harmful operations of capitalism while also suggesting ways to mitigate, combat or overcome the damage.

In boxing's case he recommends federal oversight, unionization of the workforce, safety measures such as requiring larger gloves and protective headgear, pension and health-care benefits, and strict taxing of boxing revenues to help pay for such measures.

I think *Bittersweet Science* would have been a better book if Horne had marshaled his evidence and focused his argument on what measures reformers ought to take today. Perhaps the chapters could have been organized so as to address each of the problem areas requiring the reforms I've mentioned.

Problematic Sources

The book is somewhat of a data-dump, owing, I'd say, to Horne's having been ill-served by his editors. Sloppy, misleading references and a dizzying jumping back-and-forth chronologically, not only from paragraph to paragraph but often within a paragraph, confound the reader hoping to

continued on page 40

REVIEW

A Powerful Legacy of Struggle

By Jake Ehrlich

“Revolutionaries, resistance fighters and firebrands.

The radical Jewish tradition.”

— Janey Stone. (<https://marxistleftreview.org/articles/partisans-and-revolutionaries-resistance-fighters-and-firebrands-the-radical-jewish-tradition/>)

AMONG PROGRESSIVE JEWS in the United States, there is something of a reawakening of historical memory.

In 2014 Rachel Cohen maligned “The Erasure of the Jewish-American Left” in a *Medium* article of the same name, stating for example, “While most Jews today know The Jewish Daily Forward used to be published in Yiddish — many are unaware that it was a self-proclaimed leftist paper, proudly backing the Socialist Party for thirty-five years.”

Today, however, it is common for progressive Jewish organizations with considerable bases — like Jews For Racial & Economic Justice in New York or Bend The Arc nationally — to invoke broad-stroke histories of Jewish activism, from the American labor movement, to the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left.

Many are familiar at least in passing with Emma Goldman and her quip about dancing in the revolution. They might know a thing or two about the Yiddish-speaking political formation known as the Jewish Labor Bund, which rejected the colonial state-building aspirations of Zionism, but sought to maintain Jewish cultural particularity rather than assimilate into transnational communism.

As progressive Jews come to increasing involvement in the work of racial justice, immigrant rights, prison abolition, labor organizing and other causes, it’s natural that such histories of Jewish activism surface.

And as the unjust and violent occupation of Palestine by the Israeli state continues, it’s understandable — and commendable — that activists search for models to inform the development of their non-/anti-Zionist political identity.

This history, however, is not commonly referenced with much specificity. Here’s where Janey Stone’s treatise *Revolutionaries, resistance fighters and firebrands: The radical Jewish tradition* provides granularity, detail and first-hand accounts to a broad cross section of Jewish working-class activist history. It’s a supplement published by the Australia-based

Marxist Left Review affiliated with Socialist Alternative (AU) [not related to the U.S. group of the same name — ed.]

The text challenges Zionist historiography of Jewish passivity in the face of persecution, but its significance extends beyond that — more than just a scholarly corrective, it’s a political intervention.

In *Revolutionaries*, Jewish radicals today are equipped with an understanding of history that will strengthen their — our — efforts to build a mass radical Jewish culture outside of the extant communal infrastructure, which is controlled in large part by philanthropists, federations and other bourgeois forces.

Stone’s intent is to craft an activist counter-narrative to mainstream approaches to Jewish history. She rejects both the “lachrymose conception of Jewish history” that sees Jews as victims of superstition and relentless persecution, and the subsequent Zionist narrative that promotes separatist colonial nationalism as the viable response.

Historical Memory and Meaning

The book has predecessors, but this slim volume’s assembly of diverse sources is worthwhile. Stone’s account spans time and space from the Russian Empire to Britain and the United States, from around the 1880s and culminating in the eve of World War II in 1939.

What I found particularly commendable is her focus on not just the grand and pivotal moments of Jewish activism (e.g. the 1902 Koshers Meat Boycott, or the 1909 “Uprising of the 20,000” general strike in New York, or the heroic anti-Nazi resistance in Warsaw), but the fits and starts that characterize everyday struggle.

We learn of strike efforts that fail more often than they succeed; demonstrations whose number of attendees may seem paltry to us; campaigns that falter. It’s actually these accounts that I feel are so essential for activists of today to read, when our social movements and leftist organizations face all-too-familiar fits and starts of energy and stagnation.

As tempting as it is to think of our current situation — either as a historic boiling point, or a (pre)revolutionary moment — we may be better served to adopt a more tempered view of struggle — seeing ourselves not necessarily as ushers of an approaching denouement, but instead as nodes along a winding, gnarled chain of activism.

The journey passes through wildcat strikes in Bialystok, the Bund’s role in organizing the first congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, the formation of the United Hebrew Trades in America in response to the nativism of the American Federation of Labor, and beyond.

Some of this, to be sure, is the story of a Jewish working-class movement whose base was ultimately destroyed by Nazism and Stalinism. Yet the cultivation of such a view of history, seeing ourselves as inheritors of “the radical Jewish tradition” can be inspiring and necessary, especially in times of morass.

In cataloging Jewish resistance to various forms of exploitation and domination, *Revolutionaries* seeks not only to provide historical corrective — to stress the self-determination of Jewish subjects as agents, not mere victims — but to challenge the Zionist exaltation of insularity and ethnocentrism over intergroup cooperation and solidarity. Stone writes:

“All Zionists treat Jews, to some degree, as a single body, distinct and separate from non-Jews. A major theme of this study is how class divisions within the Jewish community meant that workers had very different interests from those of their Jewish bosses; solidarity between Jews and non-Jews contributed to success in working-class struggles, including the fight against anti-Semitism.”

“Theodor Herzl, the founder of Zionism, argued that anti-Semitism was inherent in non-Jews and could not be fought. By contrast, the socialist response to anti-Semitism was that it could be fought, along with other forms of oppression and racism, and that the struggle of the working class to overthrow capitalism brought with it the best possibility of creating an equal society. This combination of class struggle, solidarity, socialism and the fight against oppression is the story of the radical Jewish tradition.” [Introduction, between notes 11-12]

Mythology of Unity

That Jews do not constitute a homogeneous mass should be obvious, but this false idea continues through this day, with representatives of the State of Israel and major Jewish communal organizations claiming to act in the interests of “the Jewish community,” as if such a singular entity exists. References to an imagined unity elide material differences of wealth, class, intra-Jewish identities (histories of discrimination against “Ostjuden,” the Jews of Eastern Europe, by Central and Western European Jews; against

Jake Ehrlich is a Jewish cultural worker, musician, synagogue employee, and socialist based in Detroit. He is a member of *Solidarity*.

Mizrachim and Sephardim by Ashkenazim; against Jews of Color by white Jews, etc.), conflicting political commitments, and more.

The construction of a singular “us” against all of “them” has been deployed to tamp down and delegitimize internal conflict, as Stone notes was the case in pre-revolutionary Russia:

“In small workshops, both the bosses and the workforce were Jewish, and this had been the basis for a particularly insidious form of super-exploitation — it was easy to appeal to the belief in a common interest when everyone attended the same synagogue and lived and worked apart from the non-Jews in separate Jewish quarters of the towns.” [Note 20]

She goes on to note, citing the scholar Ezra Mendelsohn, that in contexts where Jews and non-Jews worked together for Jewish factory owners, the bosses deliberately sought to fuel tensions between Jews and Christians to stymie worker organizing:

“A Jewish factory owner in Bialystok ‘used all his eloquence to arouse a strong hatred on the part of the Christians for the Jews’ to prevent them joining together in a strike, while, in Łódź, a boss in a sock-making shop ‘instigated the Christians against the Jews and fomented quarrels between them one factory owner argued: ‘we must hire people, especially Christians, who will be able to give a good lesson to those strikers rising against their employers.’” [Notes 55-56]

The appeal to cooperative unity and the active foment of its opposite go hand in hand, as will be familiar to today’s workers in corporations and non-profit organizations alike, where the bosses remark that “we are all family,” while consulting with union-busting firms and preparing to recruit scabs.

Updates on the UAW

A REPORT BY Barry Eidlin on the powerful University of California graduate students’ and postdocs strike is posted on the ATC website: <https://againstthecurrent.org/>

Shortly before or after this issue reaches our readers, the results of the runoff election for top UAW officials will be known. Counting of members’ mail ballots begins March 1 in the contest between presidential candidates Ray Curry, the incumbent from the Administration Caucus, and Shawn Fain backed by Unite All Workers for Democracy (UAWD). Analysis will be published on our ATC website.

Later in March the UAW Bargaining Convention will take place in Detroit. Will a new leadership be able to confront the multiple tiers the last contracts ratified? ■



“Abolish Child Slavery” banner, New York May Day parade, 1909.

For Zionists, whose political aspirations are essentially realized with the establishment of Jewish statehood, there is no need to resolve or transcend such tensions between Jews and non-Jews. It is not only convenient but strategic to exacerbate them, as the Jewish bosses described above and the early architects of Zionism like Herzl well understood.

For those of us whose ideal of a better world involves something other than an ethnostate, however, it is imperative to articulate alternatives. Rather than appealing to the inevitably-conservativizing notion of “Jewish unity,” we ought to echo those Jewish socialist forebears who, as Stone notes, *“...[tried] to replace the tradition that all Jews were brothers with the new idea of class solidarity. They argued that ‘Among us workers there exists no difference between a Jew and a Christian, we advance hand in hand against our oppressors’ and the wealthy Jews ‘have their own God; their money, their capital, is their god,’ whereas ‘our God [of the workers] is [class] unity.’”* [Note 58]

“Polarization” is much maligned in today’s mainstream liberal discourses within and beyond Jewish communities, but we need only to turn to this history to see its strategic value.

Power of Solidarity

A noteworthy aspect of this history is its numerous accounts of solidarity between Jews and non-Jews. These are not always neat and tidy — such as when starving Jewish immigrant strikers on London’s East End received a donation of £100 from dockers participating in the Great Dock Strike of 1889, despite the antisemitism of dock leader Benjamin Tillet, who considered Jews “the dregs and scum of the continent.”

They nonetheless serve as potent inspiration for inter-community organizing. Rudolf Rocker, a non-Jewish German anarchist who spoke Yiddish and became a premier organizer in the East End in the early 20th-century, stands out.

In 1912, when the (non-Jewish) tailors of London’s West End went on strike, Rocker and his comrades urged at a mass meeting that the (Jewish) East Enders not just express statements of support, but go on strike as well. Eight thousand Jewish tailors enthusiastically agreed.

Supported with supplies from local Jewish bakeries and cigarette-makers, and funding from benefit performances held at Yiddish theaters, the strikers struck for about a month and won every demand they articulated, including — against all odds — the recognition of their union.

Energized by this victory, the Jewish workers mobilized to support an ongoing strike among the largely Irish Catholic dockworkers, contributing supplies and monetary donations and, famously, welcoming more than 300 dockers’ children into their homes for lodging and sustenance.

Years later, in the famed 1936 “Battle of Cable Street,” when Oswald Mosley attempted to march 3,000 of his British Union of Fascists through the East End and were met by some 100,000 antifascists (and 10,000 police officers, providing Mosley’s men protection), it was Irish dockers who served as the vanguard.

Stone quotes Max Levitas, a Jewish communist who had grown up in Dublin, who said:

“We knew the Irish would stand with us. When [the dockers] went out on strike in 1912, it was a terrible time. Jewish families took in hundreds of their children. They were starving. We knew [the Irish dockers] wouldn’t forget. They wanted to repay the debt... There were huge crowds, the dockers were shouting: ‘Come on lads, we’re going to go out and stop them! They want to march, we won’t let them!’” [Note 278]

Stone’s work is filled with similar anecdotes that should be part of the toolbox of Jewish organizers and activists alongside our standard fare invocations of *tikkun olam* (the mandate to “repair the world”) and the social justice messages of the biblical Prophets.

We should know and transmit the story of how Eleanor Marx (daughter of Karl) experienced an increasing identification with her Jewish heritage (Karl’s parents had converted to a rationalist Lutheranism, though both of his grandfathers — Eleanor’s great-grandfathers — were rabbis).

Through working with the Jewish immigrants of London’s East End, Eleanor went so far as to proclaim “I am a Jewess” in response to the Dreyfus affair in 1894, and to march alongside the socialist “sweatshop poet” Morris Winchevsky, proclaiming to him that “We Jews must stick together.”

Though Rocker and E. Marx are examples of non-Jewish involvement in Jewish affairs, they prompt us to consider how we as contemporary Jewish activists may show up “as accomplices, not allies” (*IndigenousAction* zine) with similar solidarity in movements led by others.

Alternative Institutions

Relevant to Stone’s interest in counter-narrative is the fact that Jewish radicalism was tied to and supported by alternative institutions that nurtured a counter-culture. The Berner Street Club (1885-1892) and Jubilee Street Club (1906-1914) in London provided vital hubs for not just organizing, but education, arts and social life. About the latter, Stone writes:

“During strikes, it served as an organising centre but was also open at other times. It offered a bar (non-alcoholic) and food; dances, plays and concerts; chess competitions; and English lessons. Lectures on political and cultural topics, which were not restricted to Jewish themes or authors, opened the eyes of many workers to the wider world. Importantly, the club was open to all, Jewish and non-Jewish. It attracted the young... and old, the political and apolitical, the informed and ignorant.” [Note 151]

In cataloging Jewish resistance to various forms of exploitation and domination, Revolutionaries seeks not only to provide historical corrective — to stress the self-determination of Jewish subjects as agents, not mere victims — but to challenge the Zionist exaltation of insularity and ethnocentrism over intergroup cooperation and solidarity.

The “informed” in attendance sometimes included figures of renown: an account from a club volunteer describes the presence of a “small, intense man who sat alone” drinking Russian tea at Jubilee Street — Lenin.

Deliberately radical in orientation, these venues were sites where the workers’ movements could expand beyond economism, and engage in discussion and practice of alternative social mores, including gender egalitarianism, atheism, and “free love.” Such alternative institutions played an essential role in the proliferation of radical ideas

among the working class, both Jewish and non-Jewish.

(A stellar contemporary example of such a project is Glasgow’s Di Roze Pavé/Pink Peacock, a small “queer, yiddish, anarchist café & infoshop in glasgow’s southside,” whose fare is priced at “pay-what-you-can down to £0.”)

The contents of *Revolutionaries* should render it a lasting feature on the bookshelves of today’s Jewish left. But as Stone’s conclusion notes, “This is not a history of Jews, but a history of a section of the international working class that struggled for a better world on the basis of class and the fight against oppression.” [Conclusion, before note 395]

Indeed, I consider this recommended reading for activists of all stripes. Though there is a bit of “inside baseball” with detailed references to Jewish and socialist movement history, the prose is on the whole concrete and easily digestible, with compelling quotations throughout.

These are stories that need to be told. We must read and transmit them, as we play our part in carrying forth this “radical Jewish tradition,” from one generation to the next. ■

Low Blows: The World of Professional Boxing — continued from page 37

make sense of this heavily narrated path through a complicated history.

In multiple places, the text tantalizes the fight buff with an assertion that can’t be traced to a source in the index or bibliography. In the chapter “Gangster’s Paradise” one reads of Joe Louis:

“He ‘inadvertently’ broke the leg of Lena Horne, the progressive chanteuse, which raised troubling problems about his ongoing problems with women.”

Where did that “inadvertently” come from? Where did the injury happen and under what circumstances?

The book offers no answers, and the reader is left to assume that it came from Library of Congress files covering the investigation of Black promoter Truman Gibson.

(Gibson wound up taking the rap in a 1961 federal corruption trial along with out-and-out gangsters who were his co-defendants. Gibson had been the front man in extensive TV boxing endeavors along with his Chicago “partners” James Norris and Arthur Wirtz, two billionaires who escaped prosecution. The lesson Horne draws from Gibson’s story, and several similar ones, is that even when Black people benefit from succeeding in criminal enterprises, and even if they donate some of their earnings to civil rights causes, when they get caught they’re still subject to more severe penalties than whites.)

Later, in a discussion of the State of New York’s efforts in 1974 to combat boxing corruption and protect fighters from avoidable injuries, Horne says:

“By 1974, Albany was facing a problem that had dogged the sport ever since it had attained a veneer of legality decades earlier. The august New York Times had editorialized in favor of banning the sport. Regulators argued that ‘during the three years prior to the enactment of the Walker Law which restored boxing legally in 1920, 35 ring deaths occurred’ at a time when ‘bouts were held clandestinely in barrooms and on barges and the bodies of boxers were found in the river, on hospital steps and in alleys.’”

What circumstances surrounded the Walker Law? I wondered. What did it say? The footnotes and index provide no information, and I can only guess that it had something to do with New York Mayor Jimmy Walker who, Horne mentioned 200 pages earlier “was reported” as “not allow[ing] a mixed bout in his bailiwick,” meaning a bout between Black and white fighters.

Heart of Darkness

Supplying fight fans with opportunities for quibbling and nit-picking, for wallowing in trivia, is no mean achievement in this day and age, when the sport again seems to be circling the drain. I’m grateful to Horne for providing us with many such opportunities.

Besides, the wonderful tidbits he offers,

like the following about the “informal pugilist” Norman Mailer, more than make up for the irritations inflicted by the text.

It was October 1974, and the famed author was in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (then Zaire) to cover the “Rumble in the Jungle” between heavyweight champ George Foreman and Muhammad Ali, who would confound his bigger and stronger foe via his masochistic “rope-a-dope” defense, and then knock him out.

Mailer’s “journey to the heart of darkness apparently stirred darker impulses within him,” Horne writes, and he continues:

“This was during a time when the very term ‘Black Power’ seemed to spur a severe bout of angst among certain Euro-Americans, as if they were jolted back to the early days of settler colonialism, when they were perpetually besieged.

“Pretentiously referring to himself in the third person, the logorrheic Mailer — whose father had decamped to South Africa before arriving in the U.S. — revealed what he should have kept hidden: ‘he no longer knew whether he loved Blacks or secretly disliked them.’ His purpose in the Congo was ‘not only... to report on a fight but to look a little more into his own outsized feelings of love and — could it be? — sheer hate for the existence of Black[s] on earth.’”

Gerald Horne finds many a gem in his secondary sources, and when he does, he always knows how to mount it just right. ■

REVIEW

A Timely Classic Revisited: **War and an Irish Town** By Joan McKiernan

War and an Irish Town

By Eamonn McCann

First publication Pluto Press, 1974.

Chicago: Haymarket Books edition, 2018,
\$20 paperback.

“WE’RE GONNA WALK on this nation, we’re gonna walk on this racist power structure, and we’re gonna say to the whole damned government — ‘STICK ‘EM UP MOTHERFUCKERS.’”

WITH THIS QUOTE from a film of the Black Panthers, Eamonn McCann, launches the Haymarket edition of his classic study of Derry and the North of Ireland Troubles, *War and an Irish Town*, taking us back to those heady days when so much change not only seemed possible, but likely to happen.

This is an especially timely reissue when the question of a united Ireland is again on the table.

Those in Derry that 1968 night cheering the Black Panthers’ words shared a common goal: the fight against inequality and repression, whether on the streets of Derry or Chicago where Black activists were “then under murderous assault by the feds and local police forces across the US.”

In those years, from Vietnam to Yugoslavia, Chicago to Mexico and many other places, the world was filled with students, workers, communities fighting back. McCann argues that “Each upsurge of struggle sent out a flurry of sparks which helped ignite struggle elsewhere.”

He situates The Troubles in the North of Ireland in this time of international struggles. Those who were there for those struggles should read this latest edition, with a new introduction by the author, to reconsider what happened and why we did not win. Those who were too young at the time can read about those exciting times and what lessons can be learned for the future.

Background to the Long Conflict

“The Troubles” refer to the 30-year conflict which ended in 1998 after 3500 people were killed in a very small area, in what

Joan McKiernan has been a socialist activist in both the United States and Ireland.



was the longest conflict in modern European history. To understand The Troubles, we need to look at the role of British imperialism.

While the English had been invading Ireland for centuries, it was with the plantation of Ulster from 1609 to 1690 that a permanent colony was established in the northeast section

of Ireland. England brought settlers from Protestant Scotland as a defense against attacks by its Catholic enemies in Europe. Ireland was the backdoor to England, and so it was fortified against foreign enemies, whose numbers would be swollen with Irish freedom fighters.

This was the same period when England, was conquering and colonizing other areas around the world, such as Jamestown in 1619 and Plymouth, 1620-1691. The fate of the Indigenous people in these lands was similar — loss of life, land, language and culture.

The indigenous Irish, Catholics, were banished to the west of Ireland with restrictions on their language and religion and became dependent on tenant farming. Indigenous peoples in America fared much worse, killed outright, loss of all their land, banished to the west, consigned to concentration camps, and still fighting for their rights.

It took many uprisings in Ireland until in the early 20th century, the War for Independence was successful to a point in ousting the British from most of Ireland.

The Republican movement, consisting of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and its political wing, Sinn Fein, which led the struggle for independence, had to concede to the terms of the Treaty of 1921, which left the six northeastern counties with their Protestant majority in British hands. The island was partitioned, dividing the working class, political groups, everything.

The driving force of the colonization of Ireland as well as the Americas was the eco-

nomical interest of British capitalism. Similarly, McCann points out, both Irish and British capitalists were content with partition as it benefitted the economic interests of both groups. But for the people living in the North, particularly Catholics, it was dismal.

The Unionists, who supported the union with Britain, built a “Protestant state for Protestant people.” Catholics faced discrimination in every aspect of society. But the Protestant working class did not do well either. With a divided class, the Protestant workers’ bosses were able to easily show you are doing better than they are, despite your own poverty and poor conditions.

While there were occasional, but tepid, efforts to raise the issue of rights for Catholics, their politicians focused on arguments for a united Ireland. It was not until the post-World War II British welfare state opened the educational route to middle-class professional opportunities for Catholics that challenges to the system began.

In the early 1960s, middle-class Catholics, doctors, teachers, nurses and other professionals, began to research the extent of inequality and raised the issue of civil rights. This led to marches, campaigns and open opposition to Stormont, the Protestant-dominated government in the North.

From Civil Rights to War

War and an Irish Town tells the story of the author’s experience growing up in Catholic Derry, the North’s second city, living under Protestant/unionist domination.

Eamonn McCann was already a socialist activist when civil rights campaigns started up and he and a few friends initiated the campaign in Derry. They organized the first major march in Derry on October 5, 1968, often cited as the day The Troubles started.

Because there were threats of loyalist counter marches, the government banned the planned march and the major civil rights organization also tried to get the march cancelled. So, it was left up to McCann and his group to organize the march.

When the marchers, about 400 in number, started off, they were brutally beaten by the police (pictured on the cover of the book). Three British Members of Parliament were in attendance and beaten.

All this was filmed by a crew from RTE, Irish national television. The brutality of the

police was broadcast to the world. What is amazing is that people in the South, the 26-county Irish Republic, were astounded. "We did not know," they said, though the South is just a few miles, or even less, away from the place where the attack took place.

Similarly, in Britain it was an article, "John Bull's Other Island" by Mary Holland in the *Observer* (March 6, 1968), which revealed the intense level of discrimination and bigotry that existed in one section of the United Kingdom.

Now, over 50 years later young people in the South still don't seem to know much about The Troubles. Partition has been very effective in separating people on this small island. When journalist Ed Moloney's film on the Troubles, *Voices from the Grave* was shown on RTE, numerous viewers asked, "Is that what it was all about?"¹

McCann's reissued book will hopefully fill the gap that still exists on this important period in the history of struggle against inequality and repression. Other issues addressed in this edition include the outcome of the campaign around Bloody Sunday, the Good Friday peace agreement (GFA), and the issue of a United Ireland.

The campaign for civil rights was short-lived. It met with total opposition from the North's government and the dominant unionist/protestant majority, which refused to allow any reforms.

In August 1969 the British government sent its troops into the North, basically to rescue the failing government there. The army's brutal incursions into Catholic working-class areas led to the creation of the Provisional Irish Republican Army (Provos). Initially a defense force protecting Catholic areas, it eventually became as McCann describes, "the most effective guerilla army of the twentieth century, they managed marvelously to frustrate the designs of British governments."

One of the worst British army atrocities was Bloody Sunday, January 30, 1972 when British paratroopers (commanded by the current British monarch) opened fire on unarmed civil rights marchers in Derry. Despite 50 years of tribunals, campaigns and protests, McCann concludes, "The full truth about Bloody Sunday remains to be told."

The pursuit of that truth will shortly be curtailed. The British government is about to pass a "Troubles Legacy and Reconciliation Bill" to limit criminal investigations, legal proceedings, inquests and police complaints about Troubles-related deaths.²

The bill, already passed by the House of Commons, will provide effective amnesty for

those accused of killing or maiming people during the Troubles, including the commanders of those paratroopers who killed 14 people on Bloody Sunday.

GFA and its Results



The Troubles officially ended with the signing of the peace agreement called the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) following cease-fires by the Provos and loyalist paramilitary groups, and negotiations among the Irish and British gov-

ernments and all the major parties in the North, facilitated by the U.S. government.

The GFA's main substance was to restore Stormont, the Protestant-dominated Northern Ireland parliament, suspended under British direct rule, but on a power sharing basis. It set up a government which copper-fastened the sectarianism of the northern state.

The power sharing plan recognizes two groups — Nationalist and Unionist. A representative of each section would become first and deputy first minister. Only representatives of those two communities can participate in significant votes. There is no space for others, labor or greens or women.

And, of course, it provided that Northern Ireland "will remain part of the United Kingdom" until most of the people north and south, in separate referendums, decide otherwise.

McCann poses the question, why did the Provos settle for so little? Everything they had fought for, an end to Stormont and a united Ireland, was denied, but they got a seat in the new governing body. "The GFA was a poor return for the investment of pain endured and inflicted by members of the IRA."

He points out that the civil rights demands had mostly been met by the time the GFA negotiations took place. "The IRA campaign had been fought under false colors," referring to its focus on the demand for British withdrawal.

McCann also argues that the "peace process was a bottom-up phenomenon" since the working class "had no stomach for the continuation of the slaughter."

I see little evidence for this view of events. On the contrary, the move to a peace process was driven by the leader of the IRA. In the early 1980s, in an interview for an oral history project, Republican leader Gerry Adams pointed to the electoral success of the Official Republican movement

and explained to me that "that is where we should be."

That goal of moving to politics was documented in Ed Moloney's *A Secret History of the IRA*.³ The stated IRA goal of a united Ireland had to be put aside; the GFA facilitated that.

McCann argues that the IRA lost the war, but won the peace, as they successfully entered the new government, which he concludes was pre-programmed to deadlock.

That is exactly what is happening now. While Sinn Fein is now the largest nationalist party and the largest party in the North, its representative Michelle O'Neil ought to be First Minister. However, the leading unionist party, the Democratic Unionist Party, is refusing to take its seat as Deputy First Minister, leaving the North without a functioning administration.

Aside from the DUP's objection to sharing power with the "shinners,"⁴ they have an ongoing dispute over the handling of border customs. This flows from the Brexit decision by the UK, leaving a tangled mess over handling the border between the North of Ireland and the Irish Republic, which belongs to the European Union. Loyalist paramilitaries are protesting the plan to have custom stations in Belfast rather than on the land border with the Republic.

A United Ireland?

With the rise of the Provos as the central force of resistance against the British state, partition and a united Ireland became more important as a focus of the struggle. McCann argues that the inevitability of the rise of the Provos and the issue of the partition of Ireland is due to the "British ruling class and their agents in Ireland" who refused to agree to any civil rights reforms.

He explains that none of the civil rights campaigners, particularly on the left, wanted to raise partition. Any hint of challenging partition meant agreeing to join the southern state, an option that would be rejected by the dominant Unionist community, as well as by many Catholics at the time.

So, as with the civil rights demands, McCann describes the left folding into the mass of moderates in the civil rights movement. They did not distinguish themselves politically from middle class groups, but they were more militant in demanding a fair share of jobs and houses.

McCann explains that to Protestant workers, that meant a zero-sum game that meant Protestants should get less. He points out that no group campaigned for an increased share of the pie for all workers, calling for an increased number of jobs and houses for all.

Who Are Our Friends?

One important lesson McCann draws is that campaigners should understand

who your friends are. He cites numerous examples of campaigns that held back their demands because it might upset powerful people or the “other” community.

No one raised any problem with American imperialism when Bill Clinton came to Belfast and was cheered on the Republican stronghold of the Falls Road.

Republican leaders always told us, don’t raise women’s demands. They must wait, as they would say “The fight for a united Ireland comes first.” It is a good thing that women did not wait.

The kowtowing of Irish politicians in the White House every St. Patrick’s Day is an annual embarrassment. Former IRA leader Gerry Adams wanted to go there even when Trump took over the presidency. McCann reports that he did not get invited.

One of the examples McCann cites is the occupation of the Derry Raytheon arms plant, which was producing arms used by Israel against Lebanon in 2006. McCann and others were arrested. But political organizations like Sinn Fein, which claim to be anti-imperialist, refused to participate because it might alienate American business interests.

Mike Rubin, 1944-2022 — continued from page 44

- *Socialism from below*: The emancipation of the working class can only be accomplished by the working class, with control over society’s key institutions organized democratically from the ground up.

- *Independent political action*: Engaging in electoral action and mass action in the interests of the “have-nots,” counterposed to the interests of the capitalist class and its political representatives, the Democratic and Republican parties. Historically conceived as calling for a working class “labor party,” it was adapted by Hal Draper and others in 1967-68 to advocate for the more cross-class Peace and Freedom Party, and eventually by many (including Mike) to embrace the Green Party. Adapted or not, Mike remained fiercely opposed to working in or supporting candidates of the Democratic Party.

- *The “rank and file” approach to labor organizing* — organizing “rank and file reform caucuses” fighting against the bosses, bureaucratic “business unionism,” and for better wages and working conditions.

Over time, the framework was modified as certain points such as anti-racism were made concrete:

- *Support for emerging liberatory movements* (which took clearer shape, pushed by emerging forces — e.g. the 1968 Peace and Freedom Party/Black Panther Party alliance; support for women’s liberation)

- *“Socialist regroupment”/united front/building coalitions* — I think that the key influence on Mike’s views here was the American

McCann concludes that “in every struggle for liberty and justice, we are weakened when we shape our strategy to keep powerful interests inside.” Capitalism “is the source of all our woes,” and socialists need to focus on internationalism and organizing from below. Because “those who run the world in the interests of the rich are organized across countries and continents, so must opponents of capitalism be if we are to confront them in appropriate array.”

Today, the issue of a united Ireland is back on the agenda. And once again, it is being treated in the most spurious way, ignoring the facts of the North where most people want to stay in the UK citing the National Health Service and UK economic support as positive reasons for staying.⁵

The fight for a united Ireland can only be won in the context of an overall struggle for equality and liberation for all the people on the island, that would work to overthrow the capitalist system in the North and South.

In 1974 McCann discussed the failure of the left during the Troubles, insisting that “we need a movement without any illusions in any section of the bourgeois class.” He

socialist and teacher unionist Steve Zeluck.

- *Ecosocialism/“System Change Not Climate Change”* — the essential need for environmental action now, with the conviction that only a revolutionary reorganization of society could solve the existential crisis posed by global warming / climate change.

Mike’s was steadfast, I think, because he really believed in all of the above — and had the courage of his convictions and would always stand up for what he believed.

That’s why he’d make nearly every meeting and every demo of consequence. It’s why this guy, who couldn’t be coaxed into taking a walk for exercise under any circumstances, would show up in howling storms to march through the streets of Oakland or San Francisco. You could count on it.

And because he would be there, Mike became an indispensable cog in Bay Area organizing. Community activist Orlando Johnson, one among many fellow political organizers, recalls being introduced to Michael and Jan in 2001 by Wilson Riles, “going to pick up voter guides at their home over the years,” and in 2012 “getting advice on Theresa Anderson running for City Council at Large and being a Green Party member.”

Mike earned the respect of many who didn’t share all of his beliefs, facilitating coalition and united front work. He also convened Bay Area Solidarity meetings, making sure there were both reports on activist work and educational. Mike was always there, and he will continue to be there in spirit. Mike Rubin presente! ■

argued for a movement that would deal with the national question, discrimination, sectarianism, and the divided working class.

To do that, he looked to the working class. “Either British imperialism or the Irish working class will win. There is no other force in Ireland with a potential for power.” He concluded that his book was a contribution to the discussion of how to build the necessary revolutionary party to work for the overthrow of the parasitic capitalist class.

Over 50 years later, we still are discussing how we can build that revolutionary party. The lessons and experiences in this book are relevant and necessary for socialists today.

This new edition is timely given the challenges that we face, including the movement of so many into middle-class electoral politics, dropping the focus on workers’ power and class politics. Most stark is the current refusal by so many on the left to support the right of self-determination for the Ukrainian people in their struggle against the imperialist Russian onslaught.

That right to self-determination was widely supported and so important for many previous struggles, such as Vietnam, Yugoslavia, and Ireland. Authors of a recent article in *Foreign Policy in Focus*, concluded their examination of the left response to Vietnam and Ukraine, “As the left did in nearly all earlier cases of struggles for colonial liberation, so in this one too it should stand with the liberation movement.”⁶

Just as the left from around the world supported our shouts of Troops Out Now in Belfast and Derry, they should be joining the demand for Russian troops out of Ukraine. That right and the struggle against imperialism continues to be tested in so many areas of conflict today — such as Palestine, Ukraine, Yemen, Syria.

We need a renewed focus on capitalism as the cause of the increasing inequality, the ecological threat to the planet, indeed, all the disasters in the world. As McCann argues, there is no force other than the working class that can overthrow capitalism. A return to the goal of revolutionary socialism is sorely needed in the world today. ■

Notes

1. *Voices From the Grave*, documentary (2010) IMDb.
2. A Bill to address the legacy of the Northern Ireland Troubles and promote reconciliation by establishing an Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery, limiting criminal investigations, legal proceedings, inquests and police complaints, extending the prisoner release scheme in the Northern Ireland (Sentences) Act 1998, and providing for experiences to be recorded and preserved and for events to be studied and memorialized.
3. Ed Moloney, *A Secret History of the IRA* (London, Penguin Books, 2007).
4. A common nickname for members of Sinn Fein.
5. Katy Howard and Ben Roshier, *Political Attitudes in Northern Ireland in a Period of Transition* (Research Update 142) June 2021.
6. Stephen R. Shalom and Dan LaBotz, “What are the Lessons of Vietnam for Ukraine Today?” *Foreign Policy in Focus* January 23, 2023

Mike Rubin, 1944-2022

By Jack Gerson

MICHAEL RUBIN DIED peacefully on December 17, 2022 at his Oakland home, at the age of 78. He is survived by his wife Jan Arnold and their son David Rubin, an assistant professor of physics and cosmology at the University of Hawaii.

For more than 50 of those years, Mike Rubin was active in the Bay Area left:

- In socialist groups: the Independent Socialist Clubs (ISC) and its successor, the International Socialists (IS), from the late 1960s to the mid-1970s; Workers' Power (from the late 1970s to the mid-1980s); and Solidarity, since its founding in the mid-1980s.

- In labor, as a shop steward active in the SEIU reform movement, a delegate to the Alameda County central labor council, and a participant in numerous labor antiwar and strike support coalitions.

- In the electoral arena, where he was active in the Peace and Freedom Party from its founding in 1968 until about 20 years ago, when he became an active member of the Alameda County Green Party.

- In the environmental movement, where he was active in System Change Not Climate Change and was one of the founders of the Bay Area ecosocialist committee.

I've known Mike Rubin since 1968. For several years in the 1980s, I co-owned a two-family house near Oakland's San Antonio Park with Mike and Jan. Perhaps that's why I've been asked, here and elsewhere, to say or write some words in Mike's memory. I want to thank the editors of *Against the Current* for asking me to do so.

Although Mike was neither a good public speaker nor a writer, he made a mark such that his death was noted, and mourned, by many of what's left in this dwindling left. [A few of the articles reporting on Bay Area activism can be found under his name on the ATC website. — ed.]

Early Life and Politics

Born August 31, 1944, in Newark, New Jersey (also Jan's hometown), Mike grew up in Phoenix, Arizona, where his family moved

Jack Gerson is a writer and retired Oakland public school teacher and former Oakland Education Association executive board and bargaining team member. Bill Balderston and Jan Arnold provided additional background on Mike Rubin's life and work.



At a 2012 Oakland Green Party celebration, with Jan and Mike on the right.

Orterio Johnson

when he was six years old. He recalled, "In 1960 when I was in high school, during the elections one Irish kid, and me, were the only Democrats. Everyone else in my high school was for Nixon."

In college at the University of Arizona in Tucson, where I joined the Young Democrats (1963), "I had gotten involved in the Civil Rights movement. By 1965 there was a CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) chapter in Tucson and I was a nominal member."

In Mike's account, "I moved left in series of well-demarked steps; I was a liberal, then a left-liberal, then a radical, then I met the Left...The first Leftists I met were the Communist Party. They tried to recruit us but they didn't interest me, because what they were pushing was where I was leaving. The line of the Communist Party was, and still is, for that matter, that we should all be Democrats. I was leaving the Democrats.

"After college I signed up as a VISTA volunteer. (That was called 'the domestic Peace Corps.')

Activist Commitments

"The Baltimore Committee to End the War in Vietnam was a sort of united front of leftists, and Hopkins SDS. While in Baltimore I met the Independent Socialist Club. I said 'This is for me,' and I joined in the spring of 1967." Shortly afterward, Mike moved to the

Bay Area. He and Jan began dating in 1976.

I first encountered Mike Rubin at a San Francisco Peace and Freedom Party meeting in the summer of 1968. Mike stood at the door silently, holding a copy of the ISC newspaper in front of him. Those meetings, at that time and place, were crawling with flamboyant individuals vying for recognition. Mike got little attention and few takers. He rarely spoke at the meetings. But meeting after meeting, he was always there.

In the late 1960s, many of us believed that the mass movements would, one way or another, lead to sweeping social change: vast improvements in material well-being, and giving people far more control of society and their lives. But as the movements receded in the '70s and '80s, as millions of activists returned to everyday life — families, careers, climbing corporate ladders.

Mike stayed the course, while most of the more prominent folks drifted away. What distinguished Mike was an enduring belief in core principles from the 1960s ISC/IS, as broadened and somewhat modified over time and in practice.

I think that those core beliefs were (I am not in full agreement with some of these — especially on electoral politics — but this isn't about me):

continued on page 43

El Salvador in the '90s after the civil war), they failed to take anti-abortion laws off the books.

Nicaragua today is ruled by the rightwing presidentialist dictatorship of Daniel Ortega (see “Repression Continues to Grow in Nicaragua” by William I. Robinson, *ATC* 222) and El Salvador by the reactionary government of Nayib Bukele. Women in El Salvador who suffer miscarriages are subject to prosecution and up to 30-year prison terms, provoking widespread outrage. Not coincidentally, under this repressive regime, water protectors are also being prosecuted (see page 2 of this issue).

The Not-“100% American” Scene

In our own partially democratic country called the United States of America, a woman’s right to control her own body is constrained legally by the state she lives in, practically by her county of residence — where abortion care may be unavailable even if legal — and financially by her capacity to travel if she needs to gain access beyond state lines.

The long, instructive and often heroic struggle for abortion rights and expanded other essential rights and services — against racist sterilization abuse, for adequate paid parental leave and free quality childcare, for birth control and sex education — is discussed by Dianne Feeley in this issue of *Against the Current*. Much of that feminist liberation agenda remains unfulfilled, of course, especially in the era of neoliberal “free market” dogma, falling real wages and stagnant living standards, and capital’s assault on labor rights and unions.

Following the Supreme Court *Dobbs* ruling, the right wing aims to hurl women back to the age when unwanted pregnancy, or a pregnancy with complications, meant terror. Where they control state governments, attempts to criminalize medical (pharmaceutical) abortion, out-of-state travel for abortion access, even contraception, are on their agenda — along with ever more vicious assaults on trans youth, banning books and education on Black history and U.S. racism, and other malicious mischief.

What often gets less attention than it deserves is the international impact of the United States’ reproductive rights battleground. “A half-century-old U.S. law is stripping women of rights they are legally entitled to in their home countries,” writes Anu Kumar (“Why is America Preventing Legal Abortions in Ethiopia?” *The New York Times*, 10/23/22)

The reason is a particularly vicious 1973 post-*Roe* backlash legislation known as the (Senator Jesse) Helms Amendment, appropriately carrying the name of its sponsor, one of the most racist as well as misogynist politicians in our recent history. It prohibits U.S. foreign aid funding for “abortions as a method of family planning.”

Under a restrictive interpretation that goes beyond even the language of the amendment, Kumar explains, the law “instead incorrectly has been applied as an outright ban on all abortions.” It has also been interpreted to mean that clinics receiving U.S. funding cannot even mention abortion. And even though only U.S. funding is directly affected, in many poor and rural regions “the complication of securing other funding that could be used for abortions is too difficult, which means the entire health facility simply does not offer abortions at all.”

The heavy hand of these restrictions is felt all the

more strongly because U.S. funding of family planning overseas amounts to 40-50% of the global total. In Ethiopia, Anu Kumar reports, her organization IPAS (Partners for Reproductive Justice) states that “the United States funded about 30 percent of total family planning foreign aid in Ethiopia from 2018 to 2020, but that funding is spread among more than 45 percent of health facilities in the country.”

Such is the case for example at the Shekebedo Health Center in southwestern Ethiopia, a country where abortion is legal. The Center’s partial funding by the U.S. Agency for International Development “has stopped the clinic from offering abortions to Ethiopian women.”

The global harm is enormous, says Kumar: “In countries that accept U.S. family planning aid and where abortion is legal under some circumstances, *more than 19 million unsafe abortions occur annually — more than half of the global total*” (emphasis added) — resulting in complications including deadly ones like sepsis that claim some 16,000 women’s and girls’ lives annually.

The alternation of U.S. presidential administrations, with Republicans applying more restrictive and Democrats more liberal directives, makes it even more difficult to implement coherent policies.

This is blood on the hands of the U.S. Congress, the grotesquely mislabelled “pro-life” movement, and the executive branch, including president Biden, who at least “could issue federal guidelines to clarify that Helms permits U.S. funds for abortion care in cases of rape, incest and life endangerment” and “ensure that clinics in countries where abortion is legal understand that U.S. rules allow them to offer abortion information and counseling.”

To see what difference a sane and decent policy could produce, consider the case of Benin, an African nation where the number of botched abortions declined after access to abortions was broadened (Elian Peltier, *The New York Times*, 11/13/22).

While most countries in Africa restrict or ban abortion — South Africa, Mozambique, Cape Verde and Tunisia being among the exceptions — the tide there is slowly turning toward abortion rights, despite fears that the overturn of *Roe* in the United States may hold it back.

It’s important to say here that the very real authoritarian menace globally and in the United States, with all the murderous attacks on women’s lives, LGBTQ people and (especially in dozens of U.S. state legislatures) transgender young people, is only one side of the picture. Victories are being won, whether large (as in Ireland, Mexico, etc.) or more modest as in U.S. state ballot referenda.

Most important of all is that everywhere, the fight is on — women along with queer and trans people will not quietly accept oppressors’ and cynical politicians’ denial of their humanity, dignity, agency and rights. The movements are decisive: When the targets of oppression stand up for themselves, they attract allies and solidarity, and their struggles cannot be pushed back into isolation, silence and shame — as so many generations of women have suffered undergoing forced birth or deadly illegal abortions.

The lesson everywhere is that women’s rights, gender and trans rights, queer rights are human rights. They rise or fall together. In a world of rising authoritarian rule and rightwing menace, “*Women. Life. Freedom!*” means all of us. ■

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DORA MARÍA TÉLLEZ, veteran Sandinista fighter and Nicaraguan historian, is among 222 political prisoners of the presidentialist Daniel Ortega dictatorship who were suddenly freed, stripped of their citizenship and deported without notice. The regime has summarily stripped another 94 Nicaraguans of their citizenship.

Read our coverage on International Women's Day in this issue, stay informed with your subscription to *Against the Current*, and follow us at <https://againstthecurrent.org/>

