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SocialistViewpoint

★ The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it. —Karl Marx ★

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2023 VOL. 23 NO. 1



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Kevin Cooper's Message from Death Row in Solidarity with Mumia Abu-Jamal

Before this land became a country, Africans came here in chains, against their will, as an enslaved people in 1619. They were also an innocent people.

Ever since then, we, the descendants of those people, have had to fight for our human rights while living under the constant threat of death and imprisonment, while at the same time dreaming about this thing called "Freedom."

No one knows better than our cultural brother and comrade in struggle—Mumia Abu-Jamal.

It's with this historical understanding that we fight for, stand with, and support Mumia.

We did so yesterday. We do today, and we will continue to do so as long as it takes to free him.

In struggle and solidarity from Death Row at San Quentin Prison, I'm Kevin Cooper.

Mumia Abu-Jamal Legal Update

On December 16, 2022, Judge Lucretia Clemons of the Philadelphia court of Common Pleas withdrew her October 26, 2022, ruling upholding the conviction of innocent prisoner, Black liberation leader and renowned journalist, Mumia Abu-Jamal. She has ordered both Mumia's defense and District Attorney Krasner's prosecution to conduct a full investigation of all the evidence in this case—most

of which has been suppressed or hidden away for four decades. She will issue her ruling in 90 days.

This reprieve represents a positive, hopeful sign that Mumia's struggle for freedom is ongoing and the international movement to free him must redouble all our efforts to do that.

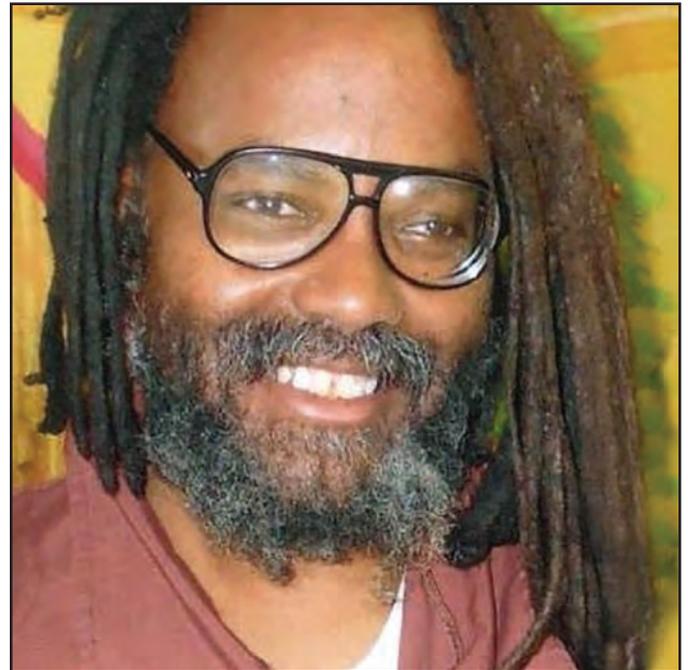
—The Editors

Kevin Cooper is an innocent man on San Quentin's Death Row in California. He continues to struggle for exoneration and to abolish the death penalty in the whole U.S. Learn more about his case at: www.kevincooper.org

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San Quentin, CA 94974



Kevin Cooper



Mumia Abu-Jamal

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We're Much Better Than We Look Under Capitalism

BY BONNIE WEINSTEIN

Anyone reading the newspapers or watching the news on TV every day can't help but get depressed—wars, pandemics, inflation, mass murders and environmental destruction are a part of everyday life.

We are taught that these things have always existed in one form or another and always will be a part of human nature. And further, that that's why it's necessary to have a hierarchy that rules—a superior class of people in control of the police, the military, and the government. This is the capitalist class—the owners of the means of production and the overseers of the working class who create the wealth in the first place. Without this hierarchy, they say, the world would be in chaos.

But the truth is, it's capitalism—an economic system that places the rule of the wealthy elite over the masses of humanity, by the threat of death and the destruction of the planet itself—that breeds the chaos and violent competition and conflict in the world today.

From the times of outright slavery to the wage slavery of modern capitalism, the wealthy elite have held the power of life and death over the masses to command us to do their bidding—even as cannon fodder for their wars—any and everything that they require in order to preserve their control over the wealth that the working class produces. Our share of the pie is determined by how hard we fight the capitalists for it.

The mindset of war

In a December 11, 2022, major *New York Times* expose of the Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (J.R.O.T.C.), in an article titled, "Thousands of Teens Are Being Pushed Into Military's Junior R.O.T.C.," by Mike Baker, Nicholas Bogel-Burroughs and Ilana Marcus:

"While Pentagon officials have long insisted that J.R.O.T.C. is not a recruiting tool, they have openly discussed expanding the \$400 million-a-year program, whose size has already tripled since the 1970s, as a way of drawing more young people into mil-

itary service. The Army says 44 percent of all soldiers who entered its ranks in recent years came from a school that offered J.R.O.T.C. High school principals who have embraced the program say it motivates students who are struggling, teaches self-discipline to disruptive students and provides those who may feel isolated with a sense of camaraderie. It has found a welcome home in rural areas where the military has deep roots but also in urban centers where educators want to divert students away from drugs or violence and toward what for many can be a promising career or a college scholarship. ...Of the textbooks obtained and examined by *The Times*, one from the Navy states that a U.S. military victory in Vietnam was hindered by the restrictions political leaders had placed on the tactics the military could use. That hawkish interpretation of the war fails to account for the fundamental problem that many civilian textbooks point out: the lack of popular support among South Vietnamese for their government, which was America's chief ally in the war. ...A Marine Corps textbook describing the 'Trail of Tears' during the 1830s fails to mention that thousands of people died when Native Americans were forced from their lands in the southeastern United States. ...Sylvia McGauley, a former high school history teacher in Troutdale, Oregon, said she was troubled when she found that the J.R.O.T.C. textbooks being used at her school were teaching 'militarism, not critical thinking.'"

How astounding is it that J.R.O.T.C. can claim that military training is somehow non-violent? And that being trained to follow the chain of command, *i.e.*, following orders, leads to cooperation, camaraderie, and critical thinking!



At South Atlanta High School, the principal decided several years ago to start all freshmen in J.R.O.T.C. Credit...Zack Wittman for The New York Times

A companion piece titled, “J.R.O.T.C. Textbooks Offer an Alternative View of the World,” by Mike Baker and Nicholas Bogel-Burroughs published the same day describes a J.R.O.T.C. textbook regarding female cadets:

“A Marine Corps textbook tells female cadets that, in uniform, they should wear lipstick and shape their hair in an ‘attractive feminine style.’ In an era when women are fully integrated into combat jobs, an Army textbook details how men should not sit ‘until all the ladies at his table are seated.’ It recommends that men help women sit down. ‘If a lady leaves the table at any time, the gentleman who seated her rises and assists with the lady’s chair,’ the book says.”

So, when women all over the world are fighting for our rights to equal pay, control over our own bodies, equal access to jobs, housing, and education, J.R.O.T.C. teaches young women to be submissive and young men to expect it.

Capitalism vs. socialism

Marx and Engels, Lenin and Trotsky and all socialists had quite a different view of human nature. They looked at things from an entirely different perspective. They looked at wars, pandemics, mass murders, environmental destruction, and inflation as the inevitable result of class oppression—the rule of the rich over the poor—capitalism. They conclude:

- Inequality and oppression are not states of nature.
- Bigotry—racism, sexism, classism—helps preserve capitalist oppression by placing one section of the working class on the side of our own oppressors and in opposition to our own common interests as workers and humans.
- And finally, we, the working class, the majority, have the capability to change the world profoundly and democratically by taking the control of the means production away from

the capitalist minority and put it into the hands of the majority—to produce according to what we all need and want—not for the private profit of the few.

Organizing for a socialist future

The ideas of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky have been around a long time, and they are even more relevant today.

Ironically, those who adhere to these ideas—who have read the contributions these founders have made—are more isolated than ever.

The ravages of modern capitalism have succeeded in tearing socialist groups apart and pitting us against each other. Any genuine cooperation as occurs from time to time in the antiwar, anti-racist or anti-sexist movements soon dissolves into warring factions among the groups with the goal of “owning” the movement.

This is an adaptation to capitalist-political dictatorship that is counter to socialist democracy and equality.

As a result, the vanguard of the working class—those of us who have been fighting for socialism for our whole lives—are fragmented into tiny grouplets that can’t cooperate in defense

of our own human rights and, ultimately, in defense of all life on earth.

Things that can be done

We have more capabilities of world communication that the founders of the socialist movement could have ever dreamed of. And, we have, in our ranks, all the skills necessary to use these avenues of communication to organize ourselves into an international, revolutionary socialist party of the working class—a party that can build democratic workers organizations powerful enough to end capitalism and embark on a new, socialist society based upon equality, justice, freedom and democracy for all.

Socialist Viewpoint

Our magazine tries to present as many articles as possible from various radical groups here and around the world that uphold the principles of revolutionary socialism based upon its founders, Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky.

We encourage meaningful, democratic discussion among groups to develop a program for unity and solidarity with the goal of cooperation and organization to end capitalism and build a socialist world.



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For a New Internationalism

BY DAPHNE LAWLESS

We reprint this article from Fightback. Fightback describes itself as a Trans-Tasman socialist media project united around these principles: economic and social justice, transnational solidarity, radical democracy, popular science, ecosocialism, anti-fascism and indigenous-led constitutional transformation (specifically in Aotearoa/New Zealand and Australia.)
—The Editors

1-Once again, against campism

“...the metaphor that the world is divided into several military ‘camps,’ with the largest being the Western camp led by the United States. Therefore, any government which disagrees with American foreign policy—no matter how oppressive to its own people, or however wedded to neoliberal market economics—can be supported. These governments are even called ‘anti-imperialist’—as if there were only one imperialism, that of the Western bloc.”¹

These politics have led a significant section of the activist Left—in Australasia and elsewhere—to endorse the Syrian state’s brutal crushing of the democracy movement; to support

Chinese suppression of protests in Hong Kong and attempted genocide of Uighurs; and, most recently, to defend Russia’s incompetent but still deadly military intervention in Ukraine. Or, alternatively, to conduct a shamefaced “what about” defense of all those actions—even if they are bad, so the line goes, Western imperialism is always the central issue. Therefore, any uprising or struggle against a State which poses as hostile to the USA/“the West”

**...we maintain that—
despite its pretenses at
being “anti-colonial”—
campism is itself actual-
ly a disguised form of
Western chauvinism...**

must be assumed to be part of Western imperialism’s schemes, if not an outright CIA plot. Therefore, we must support “the other guys”—whatever their brutal track record or antipathy to basic human rights, let alone socialism.

Campism, we believe, is based on a fatal misconception about how the global order works. That misconception is that Western imperialism is the basis for global capitalism, rather than the other way around. Once you believe that, then it follows that weakening Western imperialism—towards some kind of capitalist “multipolarity,” with Moscow or Beijing getting the upper hand over Washington, London and Brussels—is the necessary precondition for pushing back against capitalism. Which means judging every single struggle by whether “the West” supports it—if so, we must be against it. As British-Lebanese journalist Joey Ayoub puts it: “The term anti-imperialism became a shorthand for people who actually mean multipolarity. They’re not against imperialism. They just want other powers to do that.”²

This sophisticated geopolitics often fails to convince, due to basic human empathy for the oppressed and suffering. The more degraded campists are then forced to resort to what experts in domestic violence call DARVO—Deny, Attack, Reverse Victim and Offender.³ This aims to counteract the impulse to solidarity by portraying the apparent victims of violence as in fact the bad guys. Hence, fighters for a Free Syria become “ISIS-like head choppers,” who gassed their own children to make Russia look bad. Ukraine is not a country with an ugly Nazi subculture—like almost all capitalist nations—but an actual Nazi state which wants to exterminate all Russian-speakers (whose president, interestingly, is a Russian-speaking Jew).⁴

The disinformation required to maintain this bubble of “alternative facts” is readily supplied by Western activists and journalists (and the occasional rock star) who identify as Left-wing, but who—like their counter-



Anti-authoritarian forces have organized their own international units within the Territorial Defence Force of Ukraine. Image from Resistance Committee.

parts on the Trumpist or anti-vaxxer Right—happily use faked evidence, bad logic, the war propaganda of non-Western authoritarians, or outright smears to support their predetermined geopolitics of “West always to blame.” The campist Left have developed a media culture which resembles nothing less than the “information bubble” in which the Trumpist right or anti-vaxxers live. Journalism from outside the bubble is rejected as “MSM/state lies,” while non-Western state media and shadily-funded attack websites such as *The Grayzone*, *Global Research* or *MintPress* are taken as trustworthy sources.

The predominance of these beliefs—and the unwillingness to openly debate them—led *Fightback* to withdraw from the *Organise Aotearoa* project.⁵ But contrary to what those not familiar with the activist-Left subculture might suppose, these beliefs are not restricted to those who self-identify as Marxist-Leninists, or even “tankies⁶.” They are the common sense of many veterans of the progressive Left in this country, especially those grouped around *The Daily Blog*—for example, veteran activist John Minto or former Alliance MP Matt Robson—or this country’s major Left-wing podcast, 1 of 200.⁷

In contrast, *Fightback* believes that solidarity with all the oppressed and deprived is not only a moral duty, but the basic step in building a global movement to replace capitalism and imperialism. This requires us to see things from the point of view of those struggling for their lives and freedom, not from the viewpoint of which imperialist team might score points. In this sense, our job is not so much to oppose Russia, certainly not to back “the West,” and not even to support “Ukraine;” but to help Ukrainians resisting genocide—and indeed, to oppose their own government when it claws back their rights. We support the Ukrainian struggle despite the Zelensky government and the fascist

fringe represented by the Azov regiment, just as we support Palestinian struggle despite the reactionary agenda and anti-Semitism of Hamas. Our solidarity lies always and everywhere with the people whose lives and dignity are under attack. Accordingly, *Fightback* has given material aid to leftist and anti-authoritarian militias resisting Russian aggression, rather than to Ukrainian state forces.

...solidarity with all the oppressed and deprived is not only a moral duty, but the basic step in building a global movement to replace capitalism and imperialism. This requires us to see things from the point of view of those struggling for their lives and freedom, not from the viewpoint of which imperialist team might score points.

We do not accept the argument that it is “colonialism” or “white saviourism” for activists in the Western states to do anything but oppose “our own state.” On the contrary, we maintain that—despite its pretenses at being “anti-colonial”—campism is itself actually a disguised form of Western chauvinism. How else can we describe refusing support to the oppressed fighting back against their oppressors, unless they can be seen to benefit the Western left in its struggle against “its own” ruling class? How else can we describe Ukrainian socialists who defend their right to receive arms (from whatever source) to defend their

lives and homes being called “imperialists” or even “Nazis” by well-fed American socialists?⁸ Quite apart from being morally repulsive, this tarnishes the reputation, not only of the Western left, but of the very concept of socialism itself, in the eyes of oppressed and exploited people worldwide. What are Ukrainians under fire supposed to think, when reactionaries like Boris Johnson come to their aid, while socialists like Jeremy Corbyn try to “both-sides” the conflict, and excuse Russia’s destruction and pillaging as something that NATO made them do?

We understand that one imperialist power will only help those oppressed by another if by doing so it furthers its own selfish interests. But we do not consider these inter-imperialist wranglings to be the central issue. We do not assume the right to tell any peoples in struggle what forms of help they are permitted to receive, if they want our own support; we might of course warn them that Western help always comes with strings attached, but they usually already understand that. We reject the campist attempt to pretend that the kleptocrats in Moscow or the bureaucrats in Beijing are allies of the oppressed of the earth—just as we reject its liberal/neoconservative flipside, the belief that Washington bullets and Brussels banks will bring global freedom.

2. What kind of international?

Socialist “internationalism from below” aims to build direct solidarity between the struggles of the working classes and all the oppressed in all countries, on the understanding that replacing this global system requires global co-operation. Given this, the role of activists from the richer imperialist countries is to use their privilege to advocate for, work with and materially help those who are up at the “sharp end” of oppression and exploitation. Which leads to the more important question—what does this actually mean, in practice?

“Internationalism” is one of those buzzwords which virtually everyone on the activist Left will say they agree with. And going back to the International Workingmen’s Association of Marx and Engels (the “First International,”) this has meant some kind of formal structure which binds together socialist and working-class organizations in various countries. Such organization—if properly constituted—can have benefits on both practical and ideological levels. On the practical level, stronger organizations, or those in richer countries, can materially support organizations with greater needs, while the inevitable tendencies of bigger/richer organizations to center themselves or their own viewpoints can be corrected from the periphery.

On the ideological level, meanwhile, the appeal of combining forces across the globe for research, debate and theory is obvious. An organization which is small and isolated on its local political scene can get great sustenance not just from being able to call upon the literary and theoretical resources of larger co-thinkers overseas, but from practical friendship and moral support. And all this is much more important in the era of instantaneous global video communication. If Marx or Lenin could do it when the mail from France to Germany took two weeks, why can’t we do it now?

But all this assumes that the International is truly democratic and horizontal. It is far too easy—regardless of whether there is a formally constituted international structure or not—for the biggest or richest organizations, or even a majority of the global tendency—to dictate terms to weaker organizations which need support, thus replicating the structures of imperialism within the socialist movement itself. The classic example of this is the Third International, set up after the Russian Revolution, whose member Communist Parties were forcibly transformed into a network of puppet orga-

nizations promoting the USSR’s increasingly cynical foreign policy. Modern Western campists also use their greater wealth and resources to override voices from the periphery who don’t share their own “foreign policy” goals. The so-called “Progressive International, ” set up by a coalition between supporters of Bernie Sanders and Greek socialist politician Yanis Varoufakis, has increasingly been guided by campist politics and apologies for both Russian and Chinese imperialism—leading to the loss of its Polish and other Eastern European affiliates.⁹

Socialist “internationalism from below” aims to build direct solidarity between the struggles of the working classes and all the oppressed in all countries, on the understanding that replacing this global system requires global co-operation.

The last 100 years have given us all kinds of examples of the various ways in which international organizations can become counterproductive. The most familiar to many will be the “sect internationals, ” characterized by agreement on an extremely dogmatic set of political beliefs and top-down discipline—either formally (through some kind of global bureaucracy) or informally (by the bigger groups with “clout” bullying and excluding unruly subordinates.) Other Internationals, in contrast, go so far in the other direction of pluralism that, while the culture of discussion might be rich, collective action becomes impossible, and collective politics dissolve into a mushy “lowest common denominator.”

So, what kind of international do we actually need? I would like to suggest the following principles:

- It needs to be steered by the principles of global anti-capitalism and anti-imperialism. There are no solutions within one country, or which require one nation-state imperialistically dominating others. The goal must be to work towards united global activity. But conversely, member organizations must be working to establish deep roots in their own social struggles and create their own theory based on practice; there is a danger in simply repeating what “the International” says without practical testing.
- It needs to work on the basis of free federation for practical action. Organizations and members join the International freely and can leave freely. The goal of any centralized publication or “political bureau” is to synthesize the lessons of activity on a global basis, rather than to impose a dogmatic line or act as a “general staff.”
- It needs to be characterized by international solidarity. Richer/stronger groups within the International must be prepared to help their sibling groups in need, without attempting to assert ideological or practical hegemony.
- It needs to be able to conduct praxis (activism informed by theory) on a global scale. An International which is not much more than a discussion forum, or an email list might be nice, but is not what we need. The International must be capable of operating a “feedback loop” between globally coordinating practical action, and elaborating theory based on the lessons of that action.

While the anti-imperialist struggle in Ukraine has produced outraged acts of chauvinism and callous power-worship on the Western left, it has also

produced some practical demonstrations of what real internationalism is supposed to look like. The Ukrainian organization Sotsialny Rukh (Social Movement) has emerged as a powerful voice of the Left under fire.¹⁰ They have forged practical ties with socialists, particularly in Europe, who reject campism and offer practical solidarity—such as the European Network for Solidarity with Ukraine, and Razem, the Polish group which left the “Progressive International” in protest at their campist politics.¹¹ The best thing about this practical solidarity is that it overrides questions of “political identity” or theoretical quibbles; Marxists and social democrats alike support the “anti-authoritarian” (anarchist) militias in combat in Ukraine as represented by Solidarity Collectives.

Moreover, even under fire, Ukrainian comrades are adding to our theoretical understanding of how neoliberalism works around the globe. Sotsialny Rukh activist Taras Bilous, for example, has contributed a cutting analysis of the motivations behind the Zelenskyy government’s moves to smash workers’ rights, which traces it to his political movement being backed by Ukraine’s “middle bourgeoisie” who see their interests opposed to the corruption of the traditionally pro-Russian oligarchs—“the millionaires against the billionaires.”¹² Such theoretical work is head-and-shoulders above the vulgar campist narrative which lumps the Zelenskyy government, the IMF and NATO into an indistinct “pro-imperialist camp.”

Still, this practical solidarity needs to be broadened into a political and theoretical vision that can unite the anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist Left across the globe. At the very basic level, the understanding of the bankruptcy of campism that is evident in Ukraine solidarity must be generalized. We have to understand, for example, why even the anti-campist Western Left was more diffident about extending this

solidarity to the struggle for a Free Syria; and conversely, why many Western liberals who fly the Ukrainian flag do not offer the same solidarity to the victims of oppression, military brutalization and dehumanization in Palestine. And past that, we need to be able to generalize to a global program of action which can both inform and be informed by all social struggles.

We need an International. Trans rights, solidarity with the victims of oppression, housing struggle, climate change, war, and fascism—not only are all the dangerous issues facing us globally,¹³ *Fightback* has been attempting to push towards this for a while. Yet our attempts at making international connections so far have either been rejected by prospective partners who were “just not that into us;” or culminated in pleasant email discussions which went nowhere practical. We implore the internationalist socialists and anti-capitalists in Ukraine, Europe, the United States and elsewhere to urgently come together—firstly, for practical solidarity for the struggles in Ukraine and other peoples under attack by Western as well as non-Western imperialism; and building out of that, to share experiences and build infrastructure that could create a new global unity. A global conference of socialist internationalists—online and in-person—might be a good first practical step.

—*Fightback*, December 8, 2022

https://fightback.org.nz/2022/12/08/for-a-new-internationalism/?fbclid=IwAR1PptAzdg_c-LdoVdWXVoq3wTxmwawoRishBfrLzNS5nRn1Djt8D33rdvY

1 <https://fightback.org.nz/2015/11/05/against-campism-what-makes-some-leftists-support-putin/>

2 <https://twitter.com/joeyayoub/status/1576109854732603392>

3 <https://dynamic.uoregon.edu/jjf/defineDARVO.html>

4 The most ironic feature of the campist Left is that many of them are dogged supporters of the Palestinian struggle—while using exactly the same rhetorical tropes to dehumanize Syrians, Ukrainians, Uighurs, etc., in struggle, that Israel uses against Palestinians. For example, insipid appeals for “peace,” which would simply mean the aggressor dictating terms to their victims, are clearly scorned by campists when it refers to Palestine—who then turn around and say exactly the same thing about Ukraine.

5 <https://fightback.org.nz/2020/01/20/fightback-withdraws-from-organize-aotearoa/>

6 Tankie is a pejorative label for leftists, particularly Stalinists, who support the authoritarian tendencies of Marxism–Leninism.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tankie>

7 Co-founder of 1 of 200 Branko Marcetic is the author of a series of articles in *Jacobin* which argue for the West to abandon support for Ukraine (and Taiwan), which have led him into ridicule and contempt from Ukrainian (and Taiwanese) leftists. Co-founder Kyle Church has expressed solidarity with Marcetic’s line on social media.

8 See thread starting at:

<https://twitter.com/VlStarodubtsev/status/1577800105238863872>

9 <https://tendancecoatesy.wordpress.com/2022/03/01/progressive-international-splits-over-russian-imperialist-onslaught/>

10 <https://rev.org.ua/sotsialnyi-ruk-who-we-are/>

11 <https://commons.com.ua/en/yak-inozemni-livi-dopomagayut-ukrayini-u-vijni/>

12 See thread starting at:

<https://twitter.com/ahatanhel/status/1569954564895375360>

13 See reporting on fascist internationalism: <https://againstthecurrent.org/towards-the-brown-international-of-the-european-and-global-far-right/>



Exiled Russian Activist Challenges Pacifist Approach to Ending War on Ukraine

ASHLEY SMITH INTERVIEWS LOLJA NORDIC

Russia's war in Ukraine is intensifying. In response to victories on the battlefield won by Ukrainians this fall, Russia has responded by launching a wave of missile and drone attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure throughout the country. As a result, over 15,000 Ukrainian civilians had been killed or injured by early October, and another 1,043 by early November. Despite this state terrorism, Ukraine has continued to put up a valiant resistance to invasion and occupation.

Faced with a failing war, Vladimir Putin's regime has conscripted hundreds-of-thousands of men into his armed forces and deployed them to his frontlines. That, in turn, has triggered a rise in antiwar resistance in Russia. In an exclusive for Truthout, Ashley Smith interviews Lolja Nordic from the Russian activist organization Feminist Antiwar Resistance about the movement against Putin's regime and its imperialist invasion of Ukraine.

Lolja Nordic is an anarcho ecofeminist, antiwar activist, and artist from Saint Petersburg, where until recently she

organized for gender equality, human rights, and climate justice. She is a coordinator of Feminist Anti-War Resistance, a group created in February 2022 to protest the war in Ukraine. Since January 2021 Lolja has been facing political repression, arrest, and threats for her activism. In March 2022 she had to flee Russia and continue her work in exile after becoming a suspect in a "phone terrorism" criminal case, which was fabricated by the Russian secret police to put pressure on several antiwar activists.

One of our most important new initiatives is collaborating with different decolonial antiwar movements organized by Russia's ethnic minorities and Indigenous people.

Ashley Smith: What is the nature and root of Putin's invasion of Ukraine? Why did he launch it and what are his war aims?

Lolja Nordic: Putin actually started the war back in 2014 when he annexed Crimea. He just escalated it in February. His reasons are clear, and he has repeated them over and over. He has a very colonial mindset; he opposes any country in the post-Soviet space gaining its independence. He has ambitions to rebuild the old empire.

He considers Ukraine to be a part of Russia and will not allow it to exist as an independent country. He denies it is a nation, rejects its right to self-determination, and refuses to acknowledge Ukrainians' agency and subjectivity.

After Ukraine's Maidan uprising in 2013-2014 that drove Russia's corrupt ally, Viktor Yanukovich, from power, Putin feared that the country was slipping out of his control. So, over the last eight years he has deployed troops to Ukraine, backed up the so-called People's Republics in Donetsk and Luhansk, and plotted to carry out the colonial seizure of the whole country.

Putin's imperialism flows from his abusive, toxic, and patriarchal worldview. You can hear this in how he speaks about Ukraine. His language is identical to how rapists and abusers talk about their victims.

Ashley Smith: The Ukrainian resistance has scored a wave of victories and forced Putin to conscript hundreds-of-thousands of people. What impact have Russia's military defeats and the mobilization had on Russian society?

Lolja Nordic: The defeats and mobilization have forced the war into the middle of Russian society. Men are being called up and deployed in large numbers and against their will. Almost



Lolja Nordic at a street protest action against gender-based violence. November 25, 2021, Saint Petersburg, Russia. SOTA (SOTAPROJECT.COM)

every family in Russia has a loved one that could be forced to fight in Ukraine.

This has triggered broader questioning of the war. Before the mobilization, conservative Russians could believe Putin's claim that it would not affect your life. They had supported Putin for years based on his promise of stability and his claim that without his rule there would be chaos.

That is no longer credible. Hundreds-of-thousands of people have fled the country to avoid conscription and repression, others have gone into hiding; some conscripted men even committed suicide or died in suspicious circumstances at the training camps; large numbers have been deployed in battle, and many are already dying at the front. People are beginning to realize that Putin's regime is the source of instability and chaos.

That does not mean everyone who is against the war or mobilization has become an antiwar activist. Putin retains a base, especially in the elite but also among broader sections of the population. But now there is much more questioning and that has given space for more resistance to Putin and his war.

In February and March there were daily antiwar protests in cities all over Russia. The regime crushed them with harsh repression, arresting more than 16,000 people by June. By October this number had risen to 19,000. Many activists were tortured and some even raped.

Putin immediately criminalized all expressions of antiwar opposition. You can get arrested for posting the word "war" or even for wearing clothing with the colors of the Ukrainian flag. This repression drove protests for the most part off the streets.

Most Russian people are not wealthy, many are struggling on low wages and find it difficult to meet their basic needs. So, they are reluctant to risk the safety of their families or lose their jobs by openly opposing the war when faced with possible arrest, fines, and torture.

But the mobilization triggered another wave of protests. The most significant ones were in Republics like Dagestan and Sakha (Yakutia) where women led marches against conscription. This took incredible bravery, because in regions like Dagestan protesters face even more severe repression than people do in cities like Moscow or St. Petersburg. For over a decade, Russia has carried out mass repression and counter-insurgency to impose its rule in Dagestan.

But protests are not the only form of antiwar resistance. Thousands of Russians are involved in the grassroots networks to provide humanitarian aid to Ukrainians who have been abducted and forcefully relocated from Ukraine to Russia. Those networks also help them flee from Russia across the border back to Ukraine or into Europe.

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There is also a large partisan movement made up mostly of anarchists. They have been disabling railway lines to disrupt the transport of military vehicles and weaponry to the front. They have thrown Molotov cocktails to set fire to military offices all over the country on weekends when no one was inside with the aim of slowing conscription.

Ashley Smith: What has your organization Feminist Antiwar Resistance been doing to build opposition to the war? What specifically feminist arguments do you stress in your organizing?

Lolja Nordic: For feminists worldwide, war is one of our central issues.

We see how all kinds of violence are interconnected, including militaristic violence. War has its roots in patriarchal culture, its oppressive structures, and systemic violence. So, when Putin ordered the invasion of Ukraine, we decided to unite different feminist groups from all over Russia and from other countries to form Feminist Antiwar Resistance.

It is a horizontal network with groups and activists both inside and outside Russia. We have a lot of different campaigns to confront the regime and weaken Russia's war machine. We have organized many street protests and actions since February 24. When the mobilization was announced, we worked with a youth-led democracy group, *Vesna* (Spring), to call demonstrations throughout the country.

Together with *Anti-job* and *Antivoenny Bolnichny* (Antiwar Sick Leave)—two organizations which fight for labor rights in Russia—we built a project called Anti-War Fund that provides help to workers whose labor rights were violated because of their antiwar activism. This is important because many people are threatened with getting fired illegally for being spotted at protests or just posting antiwar content online. To build a sustainable antiwar movement we need to support these kinds of workers with free legal help and protection, so it would be more difficult for the bosses and companies to pressure and silence them.

We built our own network of volunteers providing humanitarian aid to Ukrainian refugees in Russia. We started a hotline where antiwar activists can get urgent, free psychological help. We provide counseling and advice to people who face all sorts of risks. We organize help to political prisoners and help activists find temporary hiding to escape repression.

One of our goals is to break through the regime's propaganda both online and offline. We have established Feminist Antiwar Resistance social

media on *Telegram*, *Instagram*, *Facebook*, and *Twitter* as a form of digital resistance and launched a printed newspaper that exposes the reality of this horrific imperialist war.

We produce a newspaper called *Zhenskaya Pravda* (Women's Truth). It looks like an ordinary local free newspaper, but it's filled with antiwar articles. We disguise it like that so it could be spread widely in different public spaces in Russia. Anybody can print it at home and spread it secretly at campuses, malls, community buildings, *etc.*

Often, we design our posts as memes or jokes to go viral, reach a broader, conservative, or apolitical audience. But once you dig into them you can find the information and arguments against the regime and the invasion.

One of our most important new initiatives is collaborating with different decolonial antiwar movements organized by Russia's ethnic minorities and Indigenous people. They have been fighting to protect their culture and fight for their independence. We are working with them to give them a platform to give voice to their struggle.

Ashley Smith: Russian forces in the occupation have suffered enormous casualties. Is there any resistance to the war developing in the Russian troops?

Lolja Nordic: There are signs of this beginning. A lot of people who were conscripted are really angry. They were not adequately trained, did not have adequate equipment, and were just sent to the front lines. Many of them posted videos expressing anger over these conditions. Some groups of conscripted soldiers have staged protests and sabotage at the training camps.

At this point, we don't know if this is leading to large-scale resistance within the Russian troops. There is no transparency of what is happening at the front inside the Russian army and soldiers who try to sabotage, or desert face the risk of being executed at the front by their own commanders.

But we do know that people are sabotaging Russia's war just by refusing conscription either by fleeing the country or going into hiding. Some people don't look at it that way, but I do.

Anything that weakens the Russian army is helping Ukraine win. People refusing conscription deprives Russian imperialism of foot soldiers. However, conscious, or not, that is part of the antiwar resistance.

Ashley Smith: Given the setbacks Russia has suffered, Putin has turned to state terrorist attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure to break Ukraine's will to fight. What is Putin's strategy now?

**Our task is to stop the
aggressor. That means
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ing solidarity with
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Lolja Nordic: It's really hard to get inside Putin's head. To be honest, his assessment of the war and therefore his strategy is a bit delusional. He does not get accurate reports from his underlings.

So, he can't really come up with an effective strategy. Everything about this war demonstrates his strategic incompetence from the initial failed siege of Kyiv to the defeats Russian forces are experiencing now.

Faced with these setbacks, Putin is now using tactics he used in Chechnya and Syria—massacring civilians, blowing up apartment buildings, and destroying civilian infrastructure like water and electric plants. He doesn't care about human lives in Ukraine or in Russia. He's sacrificing us all for his imperialist ambitions.

We endured this in Russia through his 22-year reign. He's launched war after war from Chechnya to Georgia to Syria and now Ukraine. None of this

has benefitted anyone but his regime and its cronies. Ordinary Russians and Putin's international victims have paid the price with their lives and livelihoods. His regime is a terrorist state.

But the governments in Europe that now denounce Putin are hypocrites. Many of them up until February met with him at summits, shook his hand, and some, especially among the far-right elite, spoke about him as a strong leader and somehow part of the opposition to the U.S. They did this while they knew that he was murdering independent journalists, killing his political opponents, and jailing and torturing Russian activists.

European activists and leftists, as well as those in the U.S., have to criticize their own governments for enabling this regime to rule. European states, even now in the midst of this war, are still financing Putin's military machine with every payment for Russia's fossil fuel exports.

Ashley Smith: In the West, many pacifists have argued for an immediate ceasefire and a negotiated settlement. What are the problems with such calls?

Lolja Nordic: It is absurd to demand that an occupied country stop fighting for its liberation and essentially give up its land for peace. It's the same as telling a victim of violence to not resist a person who tries to abuse, rape, or murder them. Why would we tell that to Ukrainians?

Our task is to stop the aggressor. That means first and foremost building solidarity with Ukraine and its people. They have been screaming for help for months. They don't have enough weapons to fight against Russian aggression. They don't have defensive weapons to protect their citizens from missile attacks. They deserve all the military and financial help to liberate their country.

Instead of putting demands on Ukraine to stop fighting, we should be

focused on doing all we can to weaken Russia's war machine. If we are disturbed by global militarization, we should be first of all focused not on the question of whether it's good to provide weapons to Ukraine, but on how to demilitarize and weaken the Russian army, how to put pressure on those countries that have been providing weapons to Russian soldiers or equipment to Russian police to beat and arrest protesters. To begin with, countries should stop financing Putin's war and reinforcing the Russian military by buying Russian fossil fuels.

Ashley Smith: Where do you think the war and the resistance to it are headed? What should we expect in the short, medium, and long term?

Lolja Nordic: It is very difficult to predict. There are just too many variables. What I do know is that we have to keep building the resistance to the regime in Russia and it is a lot of work. We need to build and enlarge grassroots horizontal networks of resistance to cover the whole country, provide mutual aid and sustain it.

We need to expand the number of people who are aware, ready to act, and trained to co-organize so we are prepared to act fast in critical moments. We need international solidarity with Ukraine against this war. We need international solidarity with people who are fighting Putin's regime in Russia.

In Russia, we are fighting for a future free of Putin and his oligarchs and their militarism. That future will be one where women, queer people, ethnic minorities, Indigenous people and working people can all live together in peace and with equal rights.

—*Truthout*, November 13, 2022

<https://truthout.org/articles/exiled-russian-activist-challenges-pacifist-approach-to-ending-war-on-ukraine/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=a6e66f49-1678-4ed6-a00f-460c6cf4f749>

Revolutionary Struggle in Iran

Conspiracies, enemies, and friends

By MICHAEL BARKER

Millions of Iranians are fighting for their lives and their futures as part of a revolutionary wave that has the potential to overthrow the Islamic dictatorship that has dominated their lives since 1979. As one author put it, this mass movement sweeping across Iran “is about much more than the abolition of misogynistic dress codes: it is about equal rights, full autonomy over one's own body, access to jobs, healthcare, and an independent life. It is about abolishing all repression and the security apparatus—from the morality police to the Revolutionary Guards. From the corrupt mullahs to the violent police.”

And it is during critical historical moments like these that a democratically informed Marxist analysis can provide a vital means of helping guide social struggle so that it can achieve genuinely emancipatory goals. Yet it is also a time when some self-described socialists and anti-imperialists will seize upon the opportunity to propagate the nonsensical notion that “the enemy of my enemy is my friend.”

Dirty money and a riot button?

Of course, Iran's latest outbreak of popular struggle is widely understood to have been precipitated by a needless act of state-violence, that is, the killing of Jina (Mahsa) Amini (on September 16). And it is beyond doubt that the huge working-class response to this murder did not suddenly materialize out of no-where, as it was informed by years of resistance to the Iranian regime. But this is not how some conspiracists, or the Iranian state itself, like to present this uprising. Instead, what we can see in some more reactionary (and politically incoherent) quarters is a paranoid attempt to pretend that this revolutionary upsurge has simply been manufactured by foreign imperialist elites from the West.

The day after Jina's death, *Al Mayadeen*—a media outlet that is well-versed in transmitting Iranian state propaganda—informed the world, that based on the Iranian state's release of some CCTV footage, that they could affirm that there was no evidence that



Photo by Artin Bakhan

the state had murdered Jina. Their article explained that Jina was “never assaulted, beaten, or abused, and the proof was CCTV footage that slammed western reports as fake and fabricated.”

Since then, *Al Mayadeen*, much like the Iranian state, have been pretending that the entire uprising is actually a Western plot, with their first article outlining this nonsense being published on September 28 as “Dirty money: Meet the U.S. agent driving the CIA-led riots in Iran.” Apparently, the revolutionary struggle is being directed by the CIA and groups like the National Endowment for Democracy, and as such represents the “largest color revolution attempt in recent Iranian history:” a pernicious lie that is now being propagated by at least two Left-leaning and influential Western academics, these being David Miller and Jeremy Kuzmarov.

David Miller’s own dangerous contribution to this misinformation offensive was published by *Al Mayadeen* on October 6 as “Pressing the ‘riot’ button in Iran: The U.S. and Zionist role.” In this article Miller attempts to justify his argument by asserting that one of the reasons why the U.S. has pressed the “riot” button is because of the Iranian government’s “steadfast support for the Palestinian liberation movement and the axis of resistance more widely.” In a subsequent debate broadcast on *Red Line TV*, Miller reiterated this non-Marxist, anti-working class argument when he said “what we face here, in geopolitical terms, is the squashing of one of the key elements of the resistance against U.S. imperialism in the world.”¹

Jeremy Kuzmarov’s own confused addition to this debate was subsequently made in *CovertAction Magazine* (where he acts as their Managing Editor) and was titled “Is the CIA supporting another color revolution in Iran—like the one that installed the shah in 1953?” (October 10). Kuzmarov’s piece however was slightly more nuanced than those that have

been promoted by *Al Mayadeen*. “As in other ‘color revolutions,’” he writes, “legitimate grievances can be easily exploited by outside forces and protests can quickly become violent and dominated by extremists bent on regime change.” Yet Kuzmarov wrongly concludes that the Iranian people’s memory of the U.S.-backed overthrow of their democratic government in 1953 means that ultimately their protests will subside. As he observes:

“In spite of mounting inflation and divisions over the hijab policy, the regime of the Ayatollahs will likely endure, however, because Iranians know their history.

“They remember the brutality of the U.S. installed Shah and the CIA’s overthrow of Iranian democracy, and understand how Western imperialism weakened and humiliated many Middle Eastern countries before—and will do it again—as always under the phony veneer of advancing women’s and other human rights.”²

The CIA and “democracy”

Here there can be no doubting that the U.S. ruling class doesn’t have the best interests of the Iranian people at heart when they fund Iranian groups to further their imperial intrigues. But this does not mean that the ongoing struggles of ordinary Iranians has been manufactured by foreign elites. The anger being expressed on the streets can be fully accounted for by the despotic actions of their own Islamic regime.

Besides the U.S.-backed *coup* of 1953, many Iranians will remember the Iran-Contra scandal of the 1980s, that is, when their own Islamic state was working in cahoots with the CIA and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). This point was touched upon by Kuzmarov in an article that he published earlier this year wherein he wrote: “A secret arm of the NED headed by Oliver North used \$4.5 million in ‘assets’ to help the Nicaraguan Contras—right wing-

paramilitaries intent on sabotaging the socialist Sandinista government that came to power in a 1979 revolution and then won 1984 elections.” All true: and although Kuzmarov goes on to refer to the funding that the NED provided to “Islamic fundamentalists” in Afghanistan, he fails to highlight the role played by the Iranian state in aiding the U.S. in Nicaragua in what became known as the Iran-Contra scandal.

Nevertheless, one Iranian scholar who has written extensively about Iran’s troubled history, with a strong focus on the 1953 *coup*, is Ervand Abrahamian. Writing in 2007 about then-ongoing meddling of the American government in Iranian politics, Abrahamian chose, arguably wrongly, to play down the political implications of such foreign interventions. He explained:

“Another misperception in Washington is that somehow Iran is like Eastern Europe or Serbia, that the regime can be overthrown through destabilization and regime change. Some crazy people in Washington have been running workshops in the Persian Gulf trying to train Iranians on how to demonstrate, as if the Iranians need someone to teach them how to demonstrate. The idea that Iran is somehow like Poland or Serbia or Ukraine is bizarre. The whole history of the country and the experience are so different.

“The U.S. Congress has recently given \$85 million to Iranian dissidents to destabilize the regime. All this does is fuel the Iranian perception that the U.S. is not really interested in negotiations; they’re only interested in the overthrow of the regime. But they’re not actually worried about the \$85 million. For the Iranians, that’s seen as money down the rat hole. Iranian emigres might take advantage of this, but it’s certainly not going to cause a problem in Iran.” (Targeting Iran, pp.100-1)³

In reading this overly simplistic (liberal) argument, it is important to point out that Abrahamian—for different reasons to Kuzmarov—misunderstands the corrosive impact that such “democratic” meddling can exert on the building of genuinely democratic political alternatives. This is because the main logic behind such U.S.-backed interventions is not to control or manufacture mass movements against foreign countries, but instead to undermine the growth of socialist alternatives to capitalist oppression. This is achieved by providing funding to groups that are amenable to ‘regime change’ solutions that sustain capitalism.

A warning to revolutionaries

In trying to understand the “democratic” interventions undertaken by imperialist financiers, over the past two decades I have written a number of articles examining the activities of the National Endowment for Democracy and its related cohorts—with one of my latest contributions being “How to start a revolution... or not.” Many of these articles have been widely read by those on the Left, and one of these pieces was even referenced in Kuzmarov’s own 2022 outline of the NED’s history; an article that I had first published in February 2011 so as to forewarn Egyptian activists about the U.S. governments efforts to interfere in their revolutionary struggles.

Unlike Kuzmarov, in my 2011 article which was titled “A warning for Egyptian revolutionaries: Courtesy of people power in the Philippines,” I made it very clear that revolutionary upsurges are not made in America. I did however argue that the NED “has assumed a pivotal position in defusing revolutionary movements all over the world,” hence the urgent need for revolutionary movements to be aware of the NED’s anti-democratic activities. (One Iranian scholar who participated in the 1979 revolution who has penned

a related study of how foreign funding agencies work to undermine progressive social change is Shahrzad Mojab, see “Women’s NGOs under conditions of occupation and war.”)

...the main logic behind such U.S.-backed interventions is not to control or manufacture mass movements against foreign countries, but instead to undermine the growth of socialist alternatives to capitalist oppression. This is achieved by providing funding to groups that are amenable to ‘regime change’ solutions that sustain capitalism.

Yet while foreign funding of political groups, individuals, and NGOs, can all contribute towards the undermining of more political cohesive (ideally socialist) revolutionary movements, in many cases it has been the lack of a clear socialist program for struggle, emanating from the groups themselves, that has limited the emancipatory success of such movements. Indeed, many of these political shortcomings can be traced to the toxic role of Stalinism; but others on the Left have at times served to mislead revolutionary uprisings in other ways, like through the romanticization of armed insurrections (as inspired by Che Guevara.) This is not to say that state oppression and funding of alternative political groups has not played an important role in derailing socialist struggle, but it remains vital for us to understand the internal problems of

past socialist struggles if we are to ever to succeed in eradicating capitalism on a global scale.

Failures on the Left

In the case of Iran, the limitations of prior socialist movements were outlined in Ervand Abrahamian’s 1982 useful book *Iran Between Two Revolutions*. In a detailed discussion of the 1953 overthrow of the radical nationalist government of Mohammad Mosaddegh—a *coup* that was overseen by British and U.S. intelligence agencies in coordination with military officers—Abrahamian highlights the serious weaknesses of the then popular communist movement which was organized as the Tudeh Party.

To cut a long story short, when Mosaddegh first came to state power in 1951 the Tudeh press “constantly portrayed Mossadeq as a feudal landlord, a devious old-time politician, and a stooge of the United States.” This overt display of ultra-leftism acted to distance the Tudeh Party from the millions of workers moving into struggle alongside Mosaddegh, and contrasted sharply with their previous position of following the (equally mistaken) Stalinist strategy of aligning themselves with Iran’s national bourgeoisie.⁴ (The Tudeh’s ultra-leftism was adopted in 1948 and was only reversed during the July uprising of 1952.)

British and American elites then had a field day in exploiting the misleadership provided to Iran’s powerful socialist movement by the Tudeh, which combined with the indecisive middle-class nature of Mosaddegh’s government, only enhanced the ability of the imperialist powers to reinstate the oppressive regime of the shah—a despotic regime which was then only overthrown in 1979. This all had tragic consequences for ordinary people, and sadly, as Abrahamian elaborates in *The Coup: 1953, the CIA, and the Roots of Modern U.S.-Iranian Relations* (New Press, 2013):

“The coup’s most enduring influence is on collective memory. It not only further intensified the paranoid attitudes already prevalent in the political culture but also brought the United States into the picture. Politically conscious citizens—irrespective of ideology—were now more than ever before convinced that real power lay in ‘hidden hands’ and that the figures visible on the national stage were mere ‘marionettes’ controlled by ‘foreign strings.’”

Such understandable, if politically problematic paranoia was echoed amongst the newly installed regime, and:

“On his deathbed, the shah claimed that the CIA, together with MI6, had engineered the 1979 revolution on the grounds that the whole enterprise would have been too complex for the KGB. ‘Who,’ he asked rhetorically, ‘paid for the demonstrations dotted with black and blond manes, rarely found in Iran?’”⁵

So, it makes sense that in the run-up to the 1979 revolution that this paranoia was also fueled by the SAVAK—the shah’s brutal secret police. Thus, shortly after mass protests began spilling onto Iran’s streets (around November 1977), propagandists in the employ of SAVAK had begun circulating conspiratorial leaflets “accusing... lawyers and [human rights] writers of being stooges of American imperialism.” Propaganda that took place even though the shah maintained the full open support of the U.S. government until as late as November 1978!⁶

By late 1978 the revolutionary forces taking control of Iran’s streets had then only been emboldened by the murderous response of the shah to their blossoming protests and strikes. But partly owing to the ideological failures of Iran’s diverse socialist groups, it was not the Left, but the Ayatollah Khomeini himself who ultimately succeeded in posing as the only real anti-imperialist in town. To many people, “in a decade notorious for cynical, bland, corrupt, defeatist, and

inconsistent politicians, Khomeini appeared to be thoroughly sincere, defiant, dynamic, consistent, and, most important of all, incorruptible.”⁷

...it remains vital for us to understand the internal problems of past socialist struggles if we are to ever to succeed in eradicating capitalism on a global scale...

A Socialist alternative to the anti-imperialism of fools

In many ways the socialist groups active in Iran during the 1970s unwittingly emulated the mistakes that had been made by the Tudeh during Mosaddegh’s short time in power. Tragically, instead of raising principled opposition to Khomeini most revolutionaries simply tail-ended the religious leader. As Abrahamian explained:

“In denouncing the regime, Khomeini promised to liberate the country from foreign domination; extend freedom to all political parties, even ‘atheistic’ ones; guarantee the rights of all religious minorities, except those of the ‘heretical’ Baha’is; and bring social justice to all, particularly to the bazaaris merchants, the intelligentsia (rushanfekran), the peasantry (dehqanan), and, most mentioned of all, the dispossessed masses (mostazafin). These promises, especially the populist and anti-imperialist themes, succeeded in winning over a wide range of political forces, from the followers of the late Ayatallah Kashani and remnants of the Feda’iyan-i Islam at one end of the spectrum, to the Liberation Movement and the National Front at the center, and to the Tudeh, Mujahedin, and the Marxist Feda’i at the other end of the spectrum.”⁸

For the many groups on the Left their mistaken approach is well described as the “anti-imperialism of fools” as Tariq Ali correctly observed in his important 2002 book, *The Clash of Fundamentalisms*, as the “familiar images [of revolutionary struggle] deceived many, especially leftists and liberals in Iran and elsewhere.” This is a good point, but here it is also important to observe that at the time of the 1979 revolution Ali himself had been a member of one of the many socialist groups that had played its own small role in misleading so many people.⁹

On the other hand, Socialist Alternative, the Marxist political group of which I am a member, while not having a base in Iran during the 1970s, was still able to articulate the fundamental problems confronting the Iranian Left, whether that be their adoption of urban guerilla warfare (as popularized in Latin America and by Ali’s own group) or the Left’s coying up to the Ayatollah Khomeini. Therefore, on February 9, 1979, in an article titled “The Iranian Revolution,” Ted Grant (a leading member of the Militant which was a forerunner to Socialist Alternative) explained that...

“...the main preoccupation of the Communist Party has been to climb behind religious reaction and the Ayatollah in demanding the setting up of some sort of ‘Democratic Muslim Republic.’

“But it is not only the Iranian Communist Party which has shown a feeble reaction in Iran during the course of recent events. The ultra-left sects have also played, as usual, a negative role. Some of them have given sympathy and support to the ‘revolutionary’ students in Iran.

“But revolutionary students in Iran were not directed either towards the working class, or to formulate a program for working class action, but on the contrary were told by the sects to turn to the impotent methods of individual terror. As always with the sects they regard-

ed the working class as impotent, ignorant, illiterate and utterly powerless to change the relationship of forces which existed in Iran.”¹⁰

Tragically these revolutionary problems still exist today. This helps to explain why some on the so-called Left—a good example being provided by the academic researcher David Miller—can, on the one hand, overstate the influence of the U.S. government’s “regime change” apparatus, while simultaneously promoting the nonsense that the Iranian state is essential to the people’s fight against imperialism. This view is of course not limited to Miller and represents a long-standing and deluded current that has run through parts of the Left for all too long. This type of mistaken analysis ignores the powerful history of mass struggle that continues to inspire working class movements across the world. But if anything, as another more contemporary author has observed, “The Iranian revolution [of 1979] taught a historic lesson: that socialists cannot select their allies on the basis of ‘my enemy’s enemy is my friend.’ The rise of the reactionary political Islam in recent decades is a proof of this.”

Michael Barker is the author of *Under the Mask of Philanthropy* (2017).

—CounterPunch, November 3, 2022

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2022/11/03/revolutionary-struggle-in-iran-conspiracies-enemies-and-friends/>

1 David Miller is a regular contributor to Chris Williamson’s current affairs show, *Palestine Declassified*, a program that is hosted by *Press TV*—which is a conspiratorial propaganda outlet run by the Iranian regime. On October 9 Miller was one of two *Al Mayadeen* writers featured on Williamson’s show discussing the uprising in Iran (see “Israel and Mahsa Amini deception.”) Another commentator who has recently starred on *Press TV* to discuss the CIA’s role in Iran is the senior editor of the right-wing antisemitic media outlet *Veterans Today* (see clips here: “Riots in Iran: Another CIA coup attempt?” as featured on *Press TV*’s *Spotlight show* on October 3).

2 Jeremy Kuzmarov is the author of four books that scrutinize various aspects of US power. In the acknowledgements section of his most recent book, *Obama’s Unending Wars: Fronting the Foreign Policy of the Permanent Warfare State* (Clarity Press, 2019), Kuzmarov thanks “Peter Dale Scott, the guru of deep politics who advised a young graduate student to ‘read everything’ with a critical but open mind no matter what the background or viewpoint of the author.” This is fine advice, but it appears that in contrast to the good analysis presented in his first two books, Kuzmarov is not just reading everything, but is also incorporating knowledge gained from extremely unreliable sources which he does when he accuses the NED of funding Uyghur terrorist groups in China. Authors he quotes to back up this claim include a book written by the far-right conspiracist Webster Griffin Tarpley titled *Obama: The Post-Modern Coup* (Progressive Press, 2008), and conspiratorial articles authored by Tony Cartalucci and Wayne Madsen. Another right-wing NED-obsessive who Kuzmarov cites regularly throughout his *Obama* book is F. William Engdahl and his deeply paranoid book *Target China: How Washington and Wall Street Plan to Cage the Asian Dragon* (Progressive Press, 2014). Among the bizarre accusations made in *Target China* are that AIDS is not real and that Hong Kong’s Umbrella Revolution was “planned in Washington” by the likes of the NED — apparently in the same way that the CIA orchestrated the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests. Here it is important to highlight that in Kuzmarov’s generally well-received third book, *Russians Are Coming, Again: The First Cold War as Tragedy, the Second as Farce* (Monthly Review Press, 2018) while the book does provide much useful analysis it has major shortcomings. Thus, in the opening chapter, Kuzmarov promotes the overstated regime change arguments held by the once well-respected journalist Robert Parry. Thus, Kuzmarov writes: “Robert Parry of *Consortium News* suggests that the broad demonization of Putin has set the groundwork for a potential ‘regime change’ and program of isolation designed to punish Putin for blocking American machinations in Syria and Iran and to ensure control over the Eurasian heartland. The first phase of this plan was the [2014] Ukraine coup where Victoria Nuland ‘was caught on an unsecure phone line telling U.S. Ambassador Geoffrey Pyatt’ how they ‘would “midwife” a change in government that would put Nuland’s choice . . . in power.’” (pp.30-1) In an earlier dissection of such confusing NED-related narratives (see “Misreporting Ukraine: The scourge of conspiracies) I explained how, “The substitution of such conspiratorial nonsense as a progressive alternative to the even more nonsensical output of the mainstream media is inexcusable.”

3 Abrahamian concludes his book, *The Coup: 1953, the CIA, and the Roots of Modern U.S.-Iranian Relations* (New Press, 2013) by suggesting: “The paranoid style [of the Iranian regime] reached a new peak in 2009. When more than two million took to the streets to protest the rigging of the presidential elections, the regime’s automatic reaction was to hold show trials and accuse opposition leaders of plotting a ‘velvet revolution’ in the style of the ‘colored’ ones that had recently swept through Eastern Europe. They were accused of working in cahoots not only with the CIA and MI6 but also with an elaborate international web, including the *BBC*, the *Voice of America*, Columbia University, Harvard University, the Hoover Institution, the Ford Foundation, PEN, Freedom House, Chatham House, the Council on Foreign Relations, and, of course, the omnipresent and ominous Soros Foundation.”

4 Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p.322. Following the Tudeh’s Second Party Congress (which was held in April 1948), it is worth noting that despite the communists’ huge successes in building upon growing working-class militancy the Tudeh now “worked to form a broad alliance of antiroyalist forces and to regain the freedom to create mass organizations, especially trade unions. Thus they espoused support for liberal democracy in general and for the Iranian constitution in particular. They stressed that the CCFTU [Central Council of United Trade Unions] was a nonpolitical organization separate from the Tudeh. And they shunned street demonstrations, industrial strikes, and other direct confrontations with the state.” (*Abrahamian, Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p.315) The following year the Tudeh Party then moved to embrace their ultra-left policies which put them in opposition to Mosaddegh’s efforts to nationalize their country’s oil industry. Reflecting upon this political failure some years later, a leading communist who was active during this time (Iraj Iskandari) explained how: “During the struggle for the nationalization of the Iranian oil industry we did not support Mossadeq, who undoubtedly represented the interests of the national bourgeoisie. We thought along these lines: Mossadeq is fighting for the nationalization of Iranian oil, but the American imperialists are backing his movement, which means that they are guiding it. And so, we drew the incorrect conclusion that the communists should not support the nationalist movement.” Iraj Iskandari, “What do we mean by the national bourgeoisie?”, *World Marxist Review*, September 1959, quoted in *Abrahamian, Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p.323.

5 In the dark years between 1953 and 1979, the shah was backed to the hilt by his ruling-class admirers in the West, while the Tudeh Party,

informed by dictates from their ultimate political masters in the Soviet Union, dropped any ambitions of overthrowing the shah. It is important to note that the shah's regime had "systematically destroyed all secular opposition parties. Whereas the clergy were permitted to go to the poor, the opposition parties were constantly prevented from establishing any form of labor unions, local clubs, or neighborhood organizations. Twenty-five years of repression placed a heavy handicap on the secular opposition." Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p.536.

6 Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p.505, p.508, p.523. It was only at this late stage of the revolutionary struggle that Western intelligence agencies were belatedly reporting to Washington that the shah's days were now coming to an end. As Abrahamian wrote: foreign intelligence agencies now explained that "the shah could not possibly survive, and that the West could work with Khomeini, since the latter was deeply anticommunist in general and anti-Russian in particular. For his part, Khomeini began a propaganda campaign against the left. He claimed that the Tudeh was cooperating with the shah, accused Marxists of wanting to stab Muslims in the back, and denounced Russia as a greedy superpower. He also declared that once the shah was overthrown Iran would become a reliable oil supplier to the West, would not ally with the East, and would be willing to have friendly relations with the United States." (p.524)

7 Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, pp.531-2. "On January 27-28 [1979], twenty-eight people were killed in Tehran protesting the closure of the airport to prevent Khomeini's return. And on February 1, some three million turned out into the streets of Tehran to hail Khomeini's triumphant return. Khomeini, the prophet and strategist of the revolution, had come home to take personal command of his revolution." (p.526)

8 Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p.532. In another telling twist, the Tudeh party, "which for thirty-eight years had opposed armed adventures, changed policy in mid-January 1979." (p.528)

9 Tariq Ali, *The Clash of Fundamentalisms* (Verso, 2002), p.130. Ali had been active in the Fourth International between 1968 and 1981. For internal criticism of the leadership of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International in Iran, see Saber Nikbeen's 1983 document "Revolution and counter-revolution in Iran: A Marxist view." "[A]mong the foreign Left scholars who sympathized not just with the Iranian Revolution but with Islamic discourse and the anti-imperialist, anti-systemic or post-modernist character of the new regime were Michel Foucault, Ernest Mandel, Immanuel Wallerstein, Nikki Keddie, Eqbal Ahmad, and Anouar Abdel-Malek." Val Moghadam, "Socialism or anti-imperialism? The Left and Revolution in Iran," *New Left Review*, November/December 1987. For a more detailed

discussion of the Left's shortcoming, see Azar Tabari and Nahid Yeganeh's *In the Shadow of Islam: The Women's Movement in Iran* (Zed Press, 1982); and also see Peyman Vahabzadeh's review of Ali Rahnama's book, *Call to Arms: Iran's Marxist Revolutionaries* (OneWorld, 2021); and my chapter "Black power philanthropy" in *The Givers That Take* (2021).

10 In another article published by the *Militant* in July 1979, Bob Labi added: "Not one of the main 'left' organizations were prepared or able to give a socialist lead [to the revolutionary uprising]. The Tudeh ('Communist') party trailed behind Khomeini, urging him to join with them in a 'United Popular Front'. The 'Marxist' guerrilla group, the Fedayeen-e-Khalq, while putting forward general 'leftist' slogans did not advance any rounded out socialist program and petitioned Bazargan for a place in his capitalist government! The Islamic based Mojaheddin guerrilla leader Massoud Rajavi went further when he said that 'ownership by industrialists faithful to the nation was in no danger'. In reality, the policies of all these groups have trailed behind the masses demands, which have forced Khomeini to go further than any of these tendencies called for after the old regime's collapse." Bob Labi, "Iran: New stage in the Revolution," *Militant International Review*, July 1979. Written in the heat of the struggle, Ted Grant's February 1979 article still maintained a hope that any Islamic government that came to power would be short-lived, a point made when he wrote: "Support for Khomeini will melt away after he forms a government." But this proved to be false, and shortly after assuming power Iran was dragged into the devastating Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) that the new Islamic regime was able to use to consolidate its grip on state power. On the roots of this new war, Tariq Ali explained: "The West had not favored a direct military intervention, but it was irritated by the destabilizing effects of the Tehran regime. It turned to an unfriendly neighbor. Saddam Hussein was regarded as a semi-reliable relay in a volatile region. Internally he had helped to wipe out the Iraqi Communist Party and marginalized the more radical elements in the Ba'ath. He was happy to talk business with the United States and Britain. Since the fall of the shah, he had begun to receive most-favored-nation treatment from Washington and London." *The Clash of Fundamentalisms*, p.138.



Women's Movement in Iran Has Already Secured a Major Victory

By ZAN IRANI

As a feminist friend from Iran tweeted recently, the women's movement in Iran has already secured a major victory. Women in Iran will never again be ignored or underestimated. They have undeniably staked their claim to equal rights, inspiring many others to rise despite years of crushing repression and oppression. This is no small feat and an essential condition for any truly revolutionary movement. Through their struggle, they have also sparked a feminist transnational awareness that promises a new solidarity that crosses class, racial and religious boundaries.

Iranians around the world are sharing an unprecedented moment of national pride in solidarity with the uprising for freedom and justice in Iran. Entering its sixth week of sustained confrontation with the security forces of the Islamic Republic, the protests continue unabated while the death toll rises. This spontaneous grassroots uprising was set in motion by the death of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Kurdish woman who died after her arrest by the "morality police" for not observing a government-mandated Islamic dress code. Since late September, the uprising has grown from militant street protests led by young women to widespread national demonstrations.

Large student demonstrations in Tehran and many other cities have been met with arrests and bloody reprisals. University students have a long history of anti-dictatorship, anti-imperialist struggle in Iran going back to the months following the 1953 *coup d'état* against the nationalist government of Mohammad Mossadegh. December 7 marks "Student Day" commemorating the killing of three Tehran University students during protests against then-Vice President Richard Nixon's visit to Iran in that year. Students have remained at the forefront of opposition to the

Islamic Republic as witnessed during the militant and widespread 1999 student protests and again in 2009 during the Green movement. The current uprising includes elementary and high school students as well. The violent response by the authorities to their participation has alarmed the international community.

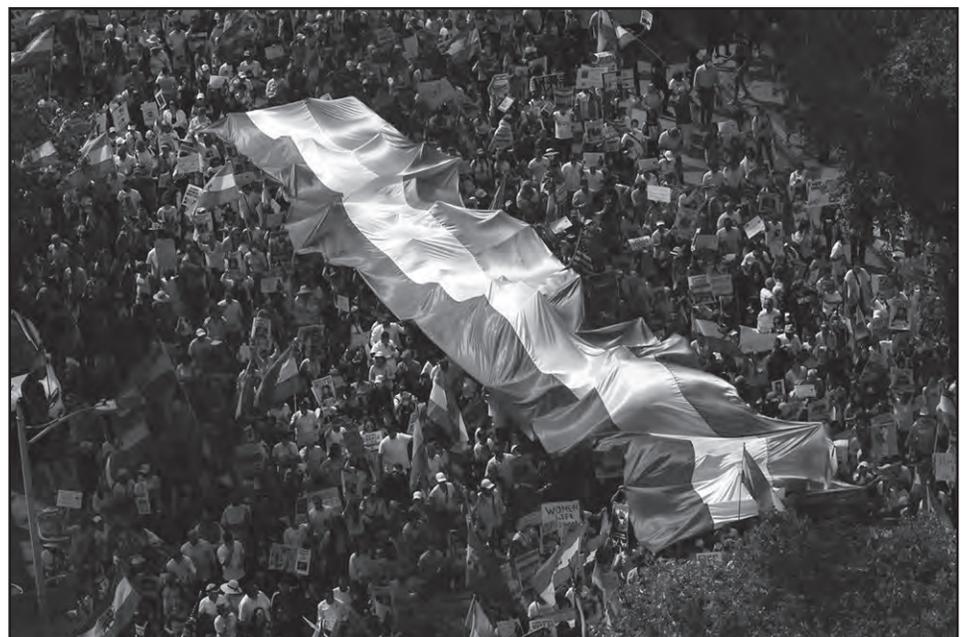
...worker strikes in different industries including oil and petrochemicals has also brought the uprising to a new level...

News of worker strikes in different industries including oil and petrochemicals has also brought the uprising to a new level, one that poses a deeper threat to the stability of the government. While reliance on oil has decreased in recent years, it remains a major source of government income.

As in the 1979 revolution, the mobilization of workers in the oil industry is seen to be crucial to the success of the current uprising, both because of the economic impact it will have, and the influence it will have on workers in other sectors to strike as well.

Why people are risking their lives

Why are people risking their lives on the streets of Tehran and dozens of other cities across the country despite a relentless crackdown by Iran's brutal security forces (police, plainclothes "Basiji" paramilitary, the army, and the powerful "Sepah" or Revolutionary Guards?) "Woman, Life, Freedom" (Jin, Jiyan, Azadi), a slogan that originated in the Kurdish national movement and has been the movement's rallying cry from day one, was first raised in protests in Saqqez, in Iranian Kurdistan (Mahsa Amini's hometown.) It is attributed to Abdullah Ocalan, one of the leaders of the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party), who placed women at



Thousands of Iranian Americans and others, carrying the Iranian flag, march in solidarity with women-led demonstrations in Iran, in downtown Los Angeles, California, on October 22, 2022.

the center of the Kurdish liberation movement. During the recent uprising, it has united women and men, old and young, across class, religious and geographic boundaries around three major shared hardships: increasing violence against women, deteriorating living conditions, and an oppressive lack of personal and civil freedoms. Other chants like “Death to the Dictator” and “Down with the Islamic Republic” focus on the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and the regime itself, and clearly signify a call for a political revolution, reminiscent of the sentiment toward the shah in 1979.

The Iranian protest song “Baraye” (“For”) by Shervin Hajipour captures the country’s nascent revolutionary movement in its fullness. Hajipour, who was arrested soon after his song became the anthem for the movement (he has since been released,) collected the hopes and sorrows of Iranians expressed on hundreds of different social media posts. From these he composed and set to music a simple but emotional inventory of the many motivations behind the freedom movement in Iran. It is not surprising that a campaign on TikTok urging users to submit the song for one of the Grammys’ new special merit awards resulted in the song receiving over 83 percent of the 115,000 nominations.

The song Baraye, suggests the breadth and depth of the movement as

well as common concerns shared by many people inside and outside of Iran: for women’s rights, personal freedoms of choice and expression, the shame of poverty and social injustice, the destruction of the environment, endangered species, animal rights, students’ rights, children’s rights, corruption, political prisoners, gender rights, and for a peaceful, ordinary life free from anxiety and sleeplessness!

Like so many Iranian emigres, I do not wander far from my cellphone these days, making sure to be available if friends or family from Iran should call. And I am incessantly summoned by notices to check my email and other messaging and social media accounts. There are times when it is overwhelming, and I want to stop, try to go back to normal life, but then the urgency of it all hits. After nearly 44 years of living under one of the most repressive regimes in history, the people of Iran have once again risen in anger, against all odds, this time led by young women and men who are armed with the barest means of self-defense but filled with unbound courage and hope. And all they ask of us is to keep their voice alive, to garner support from the world community, to hold the Islamic Republic regime accountable for its past and current abuses of human and civil rights.

Time is of the essence and questions keep me up at night. Will there be greater bloodshed tomorrow? Will the government succeed in cutting off the country completely? Will foreign powers, overtly or covertly, intervene and try to install a friendly alternative rather than respecting the aspirations of those struggling on the ground? How long can this popular-grown movement survive without a cohesive leadership?

Government uses preventative detention

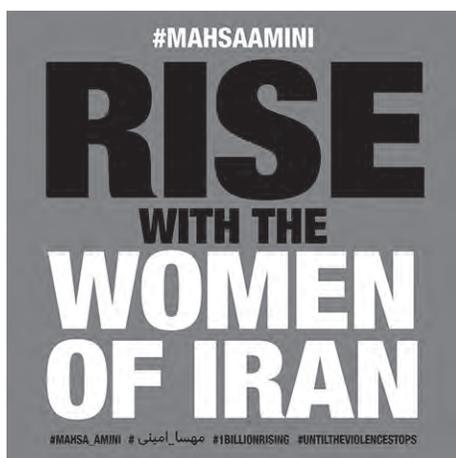
The hope is that the movement will be able to quickly mature—organize, educate, mobilize—before the government or outside forces can defeat it. There is no single individual or party that is leading the movement today. Instead, we are learning through social media of new student, worker, and neighborhood-based “coordinating” committees and councils. Hoping to prevent any potential leadership from emerging, scores of activists, many of whom come from existing grassroots organizations, were “preventatively” detained in early October, joining other labor leaders, women’s rights activists and others already in prison before the uprisings.

Despite the very real possibility that it may have to retreat due to increased repression by the government’s security forces, as others have in the past (most recently in 2019,) this movement, led by women, is more inclusive than those that came before it. Most importantly, different nationalities (from Kurdish, Turkish, Arab and Baluchi areas) have joined the movement in solidarity. We can also take heart in the incredible resourcefulness of the movement, the creativity of young people who use social media and the internet as important organizing tools, and the growing participation of workers and professionals.

Time is of the essence. Raise your voice, “baraye” women and the freedom movement in Iran.

—*Truthout*, October 26, 2022

<https://truthout.org/articles/womens-movement-in-iran-has-already-secured-a-major-victory/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=9894e9eb-c35c-44a8-b176-f03d7d063b5f>



Strike Wave Rocks Britain

Unions confront the cost-of-living crisis

By Marcus Barnett

In Britain today, anyone asking a worker about the direction the country is headed will be unlikely to receive a printable answer.

Stumbling from crisis to crisis, the country is on its third prime minister of the year. Energy bills have skyrocketed by 96 percent since last winter, and rent has shot up by as much as 20 percent, while inflation—which currently stands at 12.3 percent—has been predicted to rise as high as 18 percent by the first few months of 2023.

This is happening in a country which was the first in Western Europe to register 200,000 deaths from the coronavirus and has already been subject to brutal austerity measures that have wrecked the social fabric. An analysis by the Trades Unions Congress (TUC, the British equivalent of the AFL-CIO) released earlier this year found that British workers earned £60 (\$70) less per month in real wages in 2021 than at the start of the financial crisis in 2008—the longest wage slump since the Napoleonic Era.

Where employers have offered any wage increases to combat inflation, they have still represented significant pay cuts in real terms. Not that the same rules apply to them; while pay offers to workers have generally veered between two and six percent, the average pay of an Financial Times Stock Exchange (FTSE) 100 chief executive shot up 23 percent this year, with record bonuses being dished out. (The FTSE 100 is made up of the largest companies on the London Stock Exchange).

**“Spit on your own and
you can’t do anything.
Spit together and
you can drown the
bastards.”**

One such recipient was Philip Jansen, the CEO of BT Group, Britain’s largest provider of internet and phone services. BT reported £1.3 billion in

profits this year, while Jansen netted a £3.5 million pay package—a 32 percent increase. He now makes 86 times more than the average BT employee.

Yet after six brief meetings with representatives of the Communication Workers Union (CWU), Jansen called off discussions and unilaterally imposed an insulting £1,500 (\$1,770) increase to annual base salaries—which amounts to a pay cut in real terms for the company’s 40,000 call center workers and field technicians. The call center workforce is paid so poorly that some have become increasingly reliant on workplace food banks.

Another was Simon Thompson, CEO of Royal Mail Group, the UK postal service (which was privatized a decade ago under the Conservative-Liberal coalition government.) In June, Thompson—who earns £62,750 a month—awarded himself a “short-term” bonus of £142,000. Shortly afterwards, the company informed its 115,000 workers it would be unilaterally raising wages by just two percent—



British postal workers picketed outside a Royal Mail delivery office in Fulham on October 25, one of hundreds of pickets across the country. Next up are strikes on Black Friday and Cyber Monday, the busiest online shopping days of the year. Photo: CWU

a drastic pay cut in the context of the country's cost-of-living crisis. That's despite Royal Mail workers generating record annual profits of £758 million for the company.

Strike wave

Unsurprisingly, both BT and Royal Mail workers voted to strike in huge numbers over the summer, with one postal ballot registering a 97.6 percent yes vote with 77 percent turnout. That's the biggest mandate for industrial action since the implementation of the anti-labor 2016 Trade Union Act, which requires 50 percent turnout for a strike vote to be considered valid.

So did the 40,000 rail workers of the Rail, Maritime, and Transport Workers (RMT). Their fight against pay cuts and layoffs has been given a great boost by Mick Lynch, the union's unpretentious and quick-witted general secretary, whose media appearances have gained mass popularity. Lynch called a Tory member of parliament a "liar" 15 times in three minutes, told a House of Lords member criticizing him that "I don't even know who you are," and accused a news presenter of "entering the world of the surreal" for implying that RMT members might provoke picket line violence.

As the months go on, these workers have been joined by other sections of the working class involved in their own disputes. Recently, national votes for strike action have been won by 70,000 University and College Union members and 100,000 civil servants belonging to the Public and Commercial Services Union. Most dramatically, the 465,000 nurses of the Royal College of Nursing—the largest nurses union in the world—have voted to strike for the first time ever.

And the coming months will see many other workers, from firefighters and teachers to food standards enforcers and nuclear weapons staff, weighing up whether to down tools in defense of their living standards.

"Declaration of war"

Already, some strikes are showing results. Unite, the second-largest British union, led by the combative Sharon Graham, has engaged in relentless guerrilla warfare against regional bus companies, local councils, and multinational corporations. Members in transport, airports, and local councils have fought inspirational battles featuring mass picketing and occupations of council buildings.

In July, check-in staff and ground crew members of Unite and the GMB (General, Municipal, Boilermakers' and Allied Trade) union won a 13 percent raise after threatening to shut down Heathrow Airport. In a series of strikes from September through November, Liverpool dockers won up to 18.5 percent.

Ideas like capping the wages of top management and workers being able to hold no-confidence votes on their bosses now enjoy majority support.

Many major disputes have taken a less satisfactory turn, however.

In the case of the postal workers, after a series of extraordinarily popular strikes, union leaders accepted a request to meet with company bosses in September in hopes of resolving the dispute. As they sat down, they were told that managers across the country were being briefed about plans to "modernize" the company. They were handed two letters: the first informed them that Royal Mail was planning to withdraw from all agreements with the union, and the second discussed establishing a new relationship in which the company would no longer negotiate but merely "consult" the union.

Communication Workers Union (CWU) General Secretary Dave Ward called it "the biggest attack on workers and their shop floor representatives that this union has ever seen." The union's national executive voted for another 19 days of strikes.

Management attempted to call the union's bluff, offering a derisory seven percent pay increase over two years, in exchange for the closure of mail centers and the introduction of owner-drivers into the Royal Mail. Such a move would pave the way towards turning Britain's postal service into an Uber-style delivery system.

The CWU doubled down, condemning the "declaration of war" on postal workers and reaffirming its commitment to striking on Black Friday and Cyber Monday, the busiest online shopping days of the year.

Soon after, Royal Mail management finally offered serious negotiations through an independent conciliation body funded by the government. Rail employers and BT bosses reached out for similar negotiations. Many suspect that the employers' resolve may be cracking under unexpectedly significant pressure from unions.

"The working class is back"

The widespread perception is that working people are being laughed at by employers who are gifting themselves cartoonishly extravagant payouts while workers suffer profoundly from the rapidly escalating cost of basic necessities. Meanwhile, the government looks on and does nothing.

As Ward of the CWU put it, British business is in a "moral crisis." Ideas like capping the wages of top management and workers being able to hold no-confidence votes on their bosses now enjoy majority support.

Even as Britain edges toward a situation that one government minister likened to a "*de facto* general strike," the response of the ruling right-wing

Tories has been typical pig-headedness. Instead of addressing the obvious problems giving rise to such an exceptional moment, they are trying to further curtail the power of the unions—who already operate under some of the most restrictive conditions in Europe—by legally enshrining a “minimum service level” in the event of transport strikes.

Lynch denounced the move, telling a crowd in October that it would mean “workers being conscripted against their will to fight against themselves.” The TUC is challenging it in court.

But it seems unlikely that opposition will end there. The union movement’s heightened militancy has afforded it a social standing it hasn’t enjoyed in decades. While the Labour Party offers milquetoast solutions to the cost-of-living crisis and displays outright confusion over whether it backs striking workers, the unions are setting the agenda of opposition and articulating the

national mood in a far clearer manner.

Enough is Enough—a coalition of unions, soccer fan groups, socialist members of Parliament, tenant organizations, and the publication *Tribune*—has gained nearly a million supporters, mobilizing people beyond the “usual suspects” to collect donations for strikers and food banks, throng picket lines, and rally against the state of Britain in places often untouched by protest. There is no doubt that if the Tories or employers like Royal Mail want to push their attacks, this power will be fully utilized to defend the RMT, CWU, and other unions.

Ultimately, the situation is still volatile and unpredictable. But one thing is undeniable: in Britain, millions of people now feel emboldened to challenge a social structure that expects them to live worse lives, working harder and harder for people who have never had it better. The workplace has been redis-

covered as a battleground, and more people than at any time this century are recognizing their collective strength.

At Enough is Enough’s October day of action to support striking rail and postal workers, several banners across Britain displayed the immortal words of the RMT’s late leader Bob Crow: “Spit on your own and you can’t do anything. Spit together and you can drown the bastards.”

No matter what happens in the coming months, millions of people will continue to take those words to heart. In the words of current RMT leader Mick Lynch, “the working class is back.”

Marcus Barnett is the associate editor of Tribune and an employee of the Communication Workers Union in the U.K.

—*Labor Notes*, November 18, 2022

<https://labornotes.org/2022/11/strike-wave-rocks-britain-unions-confront-cost-living-crisis>

No U.S. Intervention in Haiti!

BY ASHLEY SMITH

Once again, the U.S. and other imperialist powers are threatening military intervention to impose “order” on Haiti’s spiraling economic, social, and political crises. They claim they are responding to the call for international forces from Haiti’s *de facto* prime minister and president, Ariel Henry, to repress gangs blocking access to gas and water terminals in Port-au-Prince.

But Henry does not represent the Haitian people. He was not elected, but selected to be president by the U.S. Henry only retains power based on Washington’s support and is opposed by the vast majority of the country’s population for very good reason. At the behest of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), he has pushed through neoliberal economic “reforms,” including the end of fuel subsidies that have

further impoverished the country’s working class and peasantry.

Henry has called for U.S. intervention to defend such policies and repress popular resistance and gangs that have emerged out of the crisis within Haitian society. Already, Washington and its so-called Core Group, comprised of the U.S., Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Spain, the European Union, the United Nations, and the Organization of American States, has secured the passage of one UN resolution, which imposes sanctions on one purported gang leader and former police officer Jimmy “Barbecue” Chérizier, paving the way for another resolution that would authorize the deployment of non-UN military forces to Haiti.

While any interventions would be dressed up in humanitarian language,

the U.S., other great powers, and their proxies offer no solution to the crisis in the country. Indeed, as their history of interventions as well as present policies attest, they are at the root of Haiti’s problems. Asking them to solve those problems is like asking arsonists to put out a fire they set and continue to stoke.

Imperialists against the free Black republic

The U.S. and other imperial powers have been Haiti’s overlords and oppressors since the country’s victorious revolution that overthrew France’s colonial regime and its slaveholding ruling class, finally establishing itself as a free Black republic in 1804. France, Britain, and Spain all tried to retake the country with military invasions, which Haiti repelled, and France only recognized its independence on the condition that it repay the

slaveholders for their lost “property,” trapping the country in debt ever since.

The U.S. did not even recognize Haiti’s independence until the southern slavocracy was overthrown in the U.S. Civil War. After that, however, Washington’s only concern with Haiti was imperial—making sure that no other state infringed on its hemispheric hegemony and that it controlled the country’s government and reaped the profits from its economy.

In pursuit of those aims, the U.S. repeatedly intervened in the country, culminating its invasion and occupation of the country from 1915 through 1934, during which it installed handpicked leaders, created the Haitian Army, and repressed liberation fighters. During the Cold War, it backed the brutal father-son dictatorship of François “Papa Doc” and Jean-Claude “Baby Doc” Duvalier as its counter-revolutionary ally against Cuba in the Caribbean.

Under Baby Doc, the U.S. imposed a neoliberal structural adjustment plan that wrecked peasant agriculture and opened

the country up to multinational corporations that super-exploited the country’s urban working class. It backed the dictatorship’s army, police, and infamous death squad, the “Tontons Macoutes,” which together killed as many as 60,000 Haitians in enforcing an economy of sweatshop underdevelopment that reduced Haiti to becoming the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere.

In the face of such brutal repression and impoverishment, however, the Haitian masses rose up. They organized a mass insurrectionary movement called Lavalas and overthrew Baby Doc in a successful political revolution that eventually led to the first free and fair election in the country’s history. The movement brought liberation theologian Jean Bertrand Aristide into office as the country’s president.

Coups, occupation, and unnatural disaster

Rather than support his plans for democracy, social reform, and development, the U.S. aided and abetted a *coup* in 1991 and tolerated its regime

for three years. The U.S. only reversed its policy when resistance within the country mounted and the flight of refugees, who President Bill Clinton jailed in the thousands in Guantanamo and Florida’s Krome Detention Center, threatened regional stability.

The U.S. invaded Haiti and imposed a UN occupation. They restored Aristide to power on the condition that he obey neoliberal edicts for economic “reform,” surrender his lost years in office, and step down in 1996. But Aristide and his successor Rene Preval partially resisted, and when Aristide was elected again in 2001 his administration demanded reparations from France for the original debt it imposed on Haiti. In response, George Bush Jr., in collaboration with Canada and France, carried out a second *coup*, abducting and deporting the elected president into exile and eventually to South Africa.

Bush imposed order through the UN, which occupied the country in various guises from 2004 until 2019. The occupation became an international scandal, with UN forces repressing the democratic resistance, exploiting impoverished women in the sex trade, and introducing cholera—a disease previously unknown in the country—killing an estimated 10,000 people.

The U.S. and its Core Group backed a succession of increasingly illegitimate and unpopular governments that followed their neoliberal dictates. In the process, they incapacitated the Haitian state, privatizing its state industries and social services and turning the country into what activists call a “Republic of NGOs,” whose patchwork charity could never replace the state in meeting people’s needs.

The only state institutions the U.S. has supported are the repressive ones. With the old Haitian Army long gone, having been abolished by Aristide, the U.S. and its collaborators have poured money into the Haitian police to repress desperate people.



The Battle of Vertières was the final battle of the Haitian Revolution that overthrew France’s colonial slavocracy and established Haiti as a free Black republic. Photo credit: Cap-Haitien, Wikipedia Commons.

All of this has made the country vulnerable to a succession of “natural” disasters, from the horrific earthquake in 2010, which killed hundreds-of-thousands of people, to a series of hurricanes that swept the country over the last decade, yet another earthquake in 2021, and then the COVID-19 pandemic. Without a functioning state, regulated infrastructure, social safety net, or a functioning healthcare system—all the result of imperialist intervention—the country has been thrust into an unending political, social, and economic crisis.

All of this has reduced the Haitian working class, urban poor, and peasantry to destitution. Nearly 60 percent of the population live in poverty, 30 percent are food insecure, and 50 percent lack access to sanitary water. Washington, which rules over the richest country in human history, is directly responsible for these horrific conditions.

U.S. policing their crisis

The U.S. under the Obama, Trump, and now Biden administrations have backed a succession of corrupt right-wing governments from that of Michel Martelly to Jovenel Moïse, who was assassinated in 2021. Since then, the U.S. has backed the selected but unelected Prime Minister and *de facto* acting president Ariel Henry.

Without a legitimate elected government and with Haitian society wracked by social and economic crises, popular anger has exploded in waves of protest, calling for Henry to step down. At the same time, these conditions have driven waves of Haitians to flee the country as they have since the earthquake.

While Biden has renewed Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to those that fled to the U.S. after the earthquake, he has enforced a brutal border regime against newly arriving Haitians as well as all other migrants, even going so far as to use Trump’s Title 42 ban on admissions during the pandemic. Those policies produced the horrific scenes of desper-

ate Haitians on the U.S.-Mexico border being chased, arrested, and brutally beaten by the Border Patrol.

It also produced far less publicized atrocities such as the U.S. Coast Guard intercepting Haitian migrants at sea before they could even get to shore. Conclusively demonstrating Biden’s callous disregard for Haitian lives and human rights, his administration has deported and repatriated 20,000 migrants, including some who have not lived in the country for over a decade, into horrific conditions and without any support.

In Haiti, as the country descends into chaos entirely caused by the imperialist powers, the private and state leaders have turned to gangs to protect their political and economic rule. Other gangs have arisen within impoverished cities and the countryside, mainly in the form of mafioso-like “protection” rackets, with some like Chérizier claiming to lead a revolutionary political project.

Chérizier’s forces have blockaded gas and water terminals at Port-au-Prince’s main port, demanding that Henry step down. As a result, Haitians are facing skyrocketing gas prices and lack of access to potable water, triggering a new outbreak of cholera in the country.

Other Haitian political and civil society organizations have come together in the Montana Accord, demanding that Henry step down and new elections be held to provide Haitians the ability to democratically choose their own government. Some on the Left worry that the U.S. may try to use this formation to manipulate Haitian politics to secure an outcome in its interests. As a result, Aristide’s party Fanmi Lavalas has pulled out of the Accord.

For reparations and Haitian self-determination!

For now, the Biden administration has seized on the crisis provoked by Chérizier’s shutting down of the port to

orchestrate yet another imperialist intervention in Haiti. While they justify their push with supposed concern about Haitian lives, security, and well-being, no one should take such claims at face value.

In reality, the U.S. and its Core Group are motivated by imperialist aims—shoring up the Haitian state and its police forces, orchestrating a political resolution on their terms, repressing popular resistance, arresting some though not all gangsters, and above all else stopping the flow of migrants into the U.S. Haitians know that. That’s why they are protesting against intervention in the streets of Port-au-Prince.

The U.S. offers no solution for Haiti save repression. The international Left, unions, and Haiti solidarity activists must unite and oppose any political, economic, and military intervention orchestrated or subcontracted by Washington. Instead, we must demand that they and their proxies stay out of Haiti and allow its people to determine their own destiny.

Most importantly, we must call for the imperial powers including the UN to pay at least \$21 billion in reparations to Haiti for their imperialist crimes against the country. Freed from Washington’s boot on their neck and with that money, Haitians would finally have the chance to rebuild their country in their interests.

This piece first appeared at The Tempest.

Ashley Smith is a socialist writer and activist in Burlington, Vermont. He has written for various publications including Harper’s, Truthout, Jacobin, and New Politics.

—CounterPunch, November 2, 2022

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2022/11/02/no-u-s-intervention-in-haiti/>

How it Feels to Visit an Apartheid Country

BY PHILIP WEISS

Everytime I visit Israel and Palestine, I come home so struck by the injustice that I say to myself, well, you are a writer, you should be able, in 1000 words or so, to convey the enormity of what you have seen so that the system falls apart like a house of cards for an American reader. This is my latest effort to do just that.

The main impression I had on this visit, is the feeling of Separation. I was bowled over by how separate the Israeli Jews are from the Palestinians, and the huge efforts undertaken to prevent mixing of cultures. When you go through the airport or West Jerusalem or Tel Aviv, you feel like you are in a city in Eastern Europe. I saw no men in the airport in traditional Arab dress. I saw a few women wearing the hijab. You don't see many Arabic signs. You don't see displays of Arab crafts or furnishings, you don't see the sights and smells of Arab markets or streetlife. No, the Zionists brought their own society to the Middle East.

All the time you are here you reflect that you are plunk in the middle of the "Arab world." Not long ago, the culture here was largely Muslim. A few decades ago, you could catch a bus from Jerusalem to Damascus, or Beirut, or Cairo, or Amman or Baghdad. Now you can't do any of that. Jerusalem has been declared the "eternal capital of the Jewish people," and there are high walls topped

Jerusalem has been declared the "eternal capital of the Jewish people," and there are high walls topped by concertina wire to separate it from the Arab masses.

by concertina wire to separate it from the Arab masses. A historic Palestinian

neighborhood was bulldozed so that Jews could sanctify the Western Wall, *ala* the Vatican. And even liberal Zionists idealize this separation. The late novelist Amos Oz said that Jews and Palestinians need a "divorce" and separate houses, and he is a hero to J Street and Americans for Peace Now.

Israel really has established an outpost of civilization, as it conceives these matters, in a very traditional colonial mindset.

Any time you cross over into that other world, you must go through militarized checkpoints, and the culture is entirely different. The roads are narrower, the signs are mostly in Arabic. Many people wear traditional dress, and the street life strikes this foreigner as Arab.

Colonization in an anti-colonial era

The amazing thing about Israel is that it has pulled off colonization in an anti-colonial era. But I am not trying to analyze it, just to convey the feeling. It feels weird and unfair that the Zionists have imposed this order, and they understand this. They know it's unfair, and so there are guns everywhere and the voters have lately elevated a racist fascist, Itamar Ben-Gvir, because Israelis know that Palestinians don't like being a subject people, so they must preserve the order through brute force and power politics. You see the brute force all around. All the young soldiers on the buses or in the roads with their guns dangling at their sides. They're not here for the Syrians or the Egyptians or the Jordanians, or Iraqis, Israel's enemies of old. No, they're here for the Palestinians on the other side of those concrete walls, because Palestinians resist the whole idea of a "Jewish state."

As you would too if it were established in your city.



Riding the train to Haifa earlier this year, Tom Dallal made this photograph of the soldier opposite him with his gun pointed at Dallal's genitals. (C) Tom Dallal

The racial profiling is rampant before your eyes. I sauntered through Damascus Gate at midnight. The young Palestinian just behind me got stopped by soldiers demanding his I.D. card.

Of course, Israelis speak of what a bad neighborhood they live in. The only answer to that propaganda is that if you throw people out of their houses and off their land and live there for 75 years without any gesture to make things right, no you just keep on taking their property, I promise you—you will live in a bad neighborhood.

Here is a simple proof of the unfairness. Everyday Palestinians in Israel and the occupied territories use money on which is imprinted the portraits of men who directed their ethnic cleansing and massacres. They travel inside Israel on roads named after these men too. I found this unsettling and embarrassing, being a witness to such humiliation. In talking to Palestinians in Haifa, I caught the name Ben-Gurion Avenue in my throat—I was afraid the mere utterance would damage their dignity.

I often thought about the promotion back in the U.S. of the “startup nation,” with its biotech and cyber industries that are said to help the world. The miraculous startup nation justifies its presence with its material advantages and Nobel Prizes (one Nobelist came to a shiva I attended in Jerusalem) as if that makes its rule acceptable to Palestinians. But of course, it doesn’t. They have fewer or no rights, and it is rubbed in their faces all the time. There is something crude and dispiriting about this; you don’t perpetuate apartheid without consequences to all concerned. The journalist Tom Dallal shared with me this photo of riding a train with a soldier who pointed his gun between his legs the whole time without regarding it as rude or unusual.

When a Palestinian in Ramallah asked if it was offensive to American Jewish visitors to compare Israeli soldiers to Nazis, my colleague Scott Roth shook his

head and said the Holocaust is pertinent. “You can’t build a society on trauma. They built Israeli society on trauma.”

Roth says that Israel brings out the worst in people. He wandered into the King David Hotel lobby one morning and saw a group of American visitors looking at the famous signatures set in tiles in the floor, and one began jumping up and down on Obama’s signature, laughing as she called out expletives. This kind of abuse and invective is normal here. Just look at the picture Itamar Ben-Gvir lately posted of the Palestinian politician Ahmad Tibi wheeling a suitcase in Ben Gurion airport. “Great news. Leave and don’t come back.” (Michael Koplowsky’s translation.)

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You feel that crudeness and the tension. A Palestinian friend told me that when he visited New York recently he experienced visceral shock in a restaurant when he heard a loud Israeli conversation at a nearby table. “There is a word in Arabic that means to feel electrocuted—*batkahrab*,” he said. “These are the same voices that when I usually hear them, they are shouting at me that I have done something wrong.” Yes, young soldiers, barking at my friend, an architect in his 40s.

Feeling electrocuted

You feel the tragedy of it. You observe that Palestinians are human

beings just like anyone with aspirations and dreams and pride and dignity, and yet you see them being put down before your eyes and having to bear it to survive. I keep thinking of a girl of 20 or 21 with earphones and fashionable clothing getting off the bus at Qalandiya checkpoint with her bag over her arm, that said, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam. She reminded me of me and my friends at her age, showing off our taste. But she has no freedom of movement, and no political rights.

That’s my overwhelming sense of this visit. People not very different from me are persecuted at every turn. Many international human rights organizations have now laid out the apartheid argument in systematic legal analyses. I can only tell you about the feeling of it: Everywhere you go these Arab people are to be separated from the Jewish state and their culture erased. The shame I felt as a Jewish person is unquantifiable, and is the reason I will keep doing this work. Jewish values meant one thing when I was raised—“That which is obnoxious to you don’t do to another person,” in Hillel’s words. Or as Americans say, the Golden Rule. That value is trashed everywhere I went in Israel and Palestine.

It can’t last. When you see an unfair arrangement balanced totally on massive military and financial advantage and power politics, but unbearable to the subjugated people, history tells you it can’t last. Even the State Department acknowledges this when they say, “the *status quo* is unsustainable.” When and how it falls who can say. But it can’t last.

Philip Weiss is senior editor of Mondoweiss.net and founded the site in 2005-06.

—Mondoweiss, November 14, 2022

<https://mondoweiss.net/2022/11/how-it-feels-to-visit-an-apartheid-country/>

U.S. Youth Observe Cuba's Elections and Learn About Democracy

BY CALLA WALSH

Cuba held elections for its organs of local government, the Municipal Assemblies of People's Power, on November 27. A delegation of youth from the United States observed the vote first-hand as part of the U.S.-Cuba Youth Friendship Meeting.

Coming from the fundamentally undemocratic U.S. Empire, it was the first time that many participants saw a functional electoral system in which the masses actually participate, and in which the majority truly rules.

We observed voting in La Corbata, a neighborhood in La Habana currently undergoing transformation.

The polling site was inside a newly constructed cultural-technological center, which also houses arts programs, classes, a computer lab, school graduations, and community events.

At first arrival, we were surprised by how efficiently the voting process moved. There were not long lines at the La Corbata polling site, while in the U.S. it is typical for voters—especially in poorer neighborhoods—to wait in lines for hours to cast their ballot.

A local election official explained that all citizens and permanent residents of Cuba are automatically registered to vote at age 16. At 18, they are eligible to be nominated to run as a delegate.

The nomination process happens in the weeks leading up to the election. Between October 21 and November 18, more than six million voters—73 percent of those eligible—attended the neighborhood assemblies for the nomination of candidates.

**Moreover,
the community can
recall their
representatives at
any point once their
terms begin.**

Nominees are chosen by local community groups, including the Committees in Defense of the Revolution, the country's largest mass organization, with more than 8.4 mil-

lion members out of a population of 11 million; the Cuban Federation of Women, whose membership includes more than 85 percent of all eligible Cuban women over 14 years of age; and the Communist Party of Cuba.

The Communist Party of Cuba is not an electoral party; it does not “hand-pick” candidates; and party membership is not a requirement to run for office at all.

Before the election, the National Electoral Council goes house to house to verify voters' information. This year, after Hurricane Ian devastated the Pinar del Río province in the east, election officials surveyed people still evacuated or sheltering there to ensure they would have voting access.

Cuban elections are always held on Sundays, so that voters are not restricted by their workdays to participate in democracy.

On November 27, polls opened at 7:00 A.M. and were scheduled to close at 6:00 P.M. The National Electoral Council used the power granted by the Cuban Constitution to extend the polling hours throughout the country for one more hour so that a greater number of citizens could exercise their right to vote.

In the U.S., elections that are scheduled on Tuesdays during work hours—combined with the inaccessibility of polling sites, strict ID requirements, racist voter intimidation, and a general lack of civic education—impede most of the working class from participating.

The U.S. pushes the falsehood that Cuban elections are “not competitive.” In reality, every Cuban municipality must have at least two to eight candidates running, in order to ensure that voters have a choice. In La Corbata, three candidates were running, all of whom were women.



Cubans voting in municipal elections in La Habana on November 27, 2022.

Competitiveness in U.S. elections has continued to plummet as corporations expand their monopoly over our ostensible democracy, or rather, oligarchy. In the November 2022 midterms, less than eight percent of U.S. Congressional districts were considered competitive.

When Cuban voters enter the polling station, they confirm their voter information, receive a ballot with straightforward instructions, and fill it out in a booth. Then, they place their ballot in a box guarded by local elementary school students.

Youth have always worked at the forefront of the Cuban Revolution, so it is a very honorable role for them.

Any citizen can assist in the public vote-counting process. Official results are reported the same day—unlike in the U.S., where it takes weeks or even months to tally votes, despite being one of the richest countries in the world, with access to much more advanced technology than blockaded Cuba.

If no candidate receives over 50 percent of the vote, the election moves to a runoff the following Sunday. This will be the case in 925 of Cuba's municipalities after the November 27 elections.

Moreover, the community can recall their representatives at any point once their terms begin.

Another key difference between U.S. and Cuban elections is that in Cuba, there is no "traditional" campaigning. The community-nominated candidates cannot spend any money on campaigning, but they are still accessible to voters to discuss any issues.

Candidate biographies, highlighting their experience serving the community and their membership in different organizations, are posted outside of the polling place.

Voters make an informed decision based on the candidates' genuine qualifications, not on flashy campaign mail-

ers or attack ads made by Super PACs.

As a result, the energy at the polls was completely different than what is typical in the U.S., where crowds of campaign volunteers or paid workers gather outside holding signs, passing out literature, and urging voters to support their candidates.

Political violence often escalates outside of polling sites in the U.S. During the 2022 midterm elections, there were even armed militias intimidating voters at ballot drop boxes in some states.

In the U.S., and all capitalist "democracies," elections are determined by the amount of money invested in a campaign, which buys advertisements, mailers, staff, and other resources to reach likely voters.

The Communist Party of Cuba is not an electoral party; it does not "hand-pick" candidates; and party membership is not a requirement to run for office at all.

A record-breaking \$9.3 billion was spent on federal elections during the 2022 U.S. midterms.

Political campaigns in the U.S. more closely resemble reality TV shows—sensational, polarizing, and completely divorced from the material issues at hand.

North Americans' shallow conception of democracy contributes to their confusion about the Cuban system. Some believe ridiculous anti-communist propaganda claiming that Cuba is staging its elections or paying actors to tell us lies.

As I wrote in *Multipolarista* in May, it is easier for many North Americans to believe that Cuba is lying about their

democratic achievements—free healthcare and education, guaranteed housing and employment, constitutionally enshrined anti-racism, and gender equality—than to come to terms with the fact that our own government is choosing to deny us those same rights.

The far more advanced character of Cuban socialist democracy is exactly why the U.S. is so intent on obfuscating and blockading Cuba's reality. Their example shows us what is possible.

For more than 60 years, a small island of 11 million people has resisted the biggest, most violent empire in history. If a true workers' democracy can be realized 90 miles from our shores, it can be realized here too, and in every corner of the world.

—Sheerpost, December 4, 2022

<https://sheerpost.com/2022/12/04/us-youth-observe-cubas-elections-and-learn-about-real-democracy/>

The community-nominated candidates cannot spend any money on campaigning, but they are still accessible to voters to discuss any issues.

Rail Workers Shafted Again

BY PATRICK MAZZA

Imagine having no set schedule at your workplace, and instead having to report to work within two hours of receiving a call from your employer. You could be working 12-hour days for weeks before your next day off.

If you happen to be sick, you still better report in or lose wages. If you are injured on the job, you may be inclined to cover it up because your employer will do everything in their power to put the blame on you. If there are unsafe working conditions, you better keep your mouth shut, because if you speak up your employer is going to look for a pretext to fire you.

Those are the conditions under which railroad workers live, and the backdrop of the current labor dispute in which workers once again were shafted. This time it was by the Biden Administration and Congress, which just voted to forbid railroad unions to strike, and imposed a settlement that unions had voted against. An overwhelming majority on both sides of the

aisle voted days before a cooling off period ended, which could have resulted in a strike during the holiday shipping period. The politicians said they feared damage to the economy. They had another option to extend negotiations another 60 days but voted it down.

...the railroad industry is making record profits. In 2001 the four major railroads had profit margins around 15 percent. By 2021 that soared to 41 percent. Railroads are the most profitable industry in the U.S.

Though the settlement does provide a 24 percent wage increase over five years,

that pales in comparison to inflation running around double that rate. Meanwhile, the railroad industry is making record profits. In 2001 the four major railroads had profit margins around 15 percent. By 2021 that soared to 41 percent. Railroads are the most profitable industry in the U.S. Though it actually carries less freight than a few years back, the ultra-concentrated industry has monopoly pricing power in many parts of the country. And it has cut workforces to the bone. Class One railroads, on which most freight is carried, cut 45,000 workers or 29 percent of jobs over the last six years. This combined with new scheduling techniques has led to supply chain bottlenecks over recent years, as well as an overworked labor force more prone to injuries and sickness.

The denial of a union demand for seven days paid sick leave is at the core of the current labor dispute. Railroads were unwilling to give up the estimated \$321 million it would cost each year, less than two percent of their profits. Congress voted for a separate bill to provide that leave, but it did not gain enough Senate votes to reach the 60 votes needed to stop a filibuster. The bill was a fig leaf to cover Democratic Party politician betrayal of the unions because it was obvious a separate bill would go down to defeat. It was of a piece with Democrat politician backstabbing that goes back to 1990s free trade agreements that undermined the working class, setting up the current reactionary backlash.

“This one-two punch from the two political parties is despicable,” said Jason Doering, general secretary of Railroad Workers United. Rail has no industry union, so RWU acts as a bridge between the craft unions that represent rail workers. “Politicians are happy to voice platitudes and heap praise upon us for our heroism throughout the pandemic, the essential



nature of our work, the difficult and dangerous and demanding conditions of our jobs. Yet when the steel hits the rail, they back the powerful and wealthy Class One rail carriers every time.”

Working on the railroad

Back in the middle of the last decade I was working on the railroad. Not literally, of course, but I was drawn into involvement with railroads through both engaging in a tripod blockade of an oil train at BNSF Everett, Washington Delta Yard, and co-authoring *Solutionary Rail—A people-powered campaign to electrify America’s railroads and open corridors to a clean energy future* with Bill Moyer. As executive director of Backbone Campaign Bill had pulled together a team of rail experts to look at options for rail’s future. The project and book were intended to provide railroads with alternatives to the bulk coal and oil shipping that I and many others were protesting.

Those projects drew me into contact with rail workers and labor leaders who related the kind of horror stories that opened this article. One was Ron Kaminkow, then RWU general secretary. RWU was a member of the Solutionary Rail team, and our book carries his own personal experience working as a brakeman.

“[You] get a call, usually two hours before scheduled on-duty time. You’re expected to be rested, sober, and ready to take that call, day or night, and report to the on-duty location within two hours, and be ready to work for up to 12 hours. The call could come at midnight tonight, then 3:00 P.M. the next day, 8:00 A.M. after that...never knowing when you’ll be called, when you’ll finish, how many hours you can rest, or when you’ll return home. You’re working and resting around the clock; it’s completely unscheduled.

“Railroad companies want you to believe they’re interested in safety. From the company’s perspective, accidents and injuries are the result of

workers’ behaviors. Workers know they’re caused by hazards like fatigue, short staffing, task overload, excessively long and heavy trains, poor lighting, uneven walking surfaces, and faulty equipment. The railroad shifts the blame for accidents and injuries from the carrier to the workforce, from hazards to behaviors. They blame worker behavior for every accident.”

Jen Wallis, who worked as a switchman and conductor, was injured in 2008 due to actions by an inexperienced engineer. It took a year before she could return to work. She filed a claim against the railroad after retaliating against her for reporting the injury. She won her case but was left with only a pittance, and lost her home in the process.

“When rail workers get injured, the company says we did something wrong. Compensation is based on our liability versus the company’s liability. Naturally, the company prefers to lay most of the liability on us... Because the system punishes workers for accidents, people who get injured on the job will say that they did it at home, so they don’t lose their jobs. They’ve created such a chilling effect that workers are afraid to report injuries or hazards, so how does this make for a safer workplace? Those of us who decide to fight give up our privacy, and we experience retaliation.”

Wallis added, “I stay with this job because I love the work and camaraderie. It takes a certain kind of person to do this—a person willing to be on call 24/7, miss birthdays or anniversaries. We endure harassment from management. Your whole family must sacrifice.”

Solutionary Rail made RWU’s fair deal for rail labor part of its vision:

- Bargain in good faith with the unions and share the wealth.
- Establish real safety programs focused on hazard elimination, as opposed to “behavior-based safety” programs that shift the blame for accidents and injuries onto workers.

- Preserve and protect the established minimum of two-crew members on every train crew, to avoid stress, information overload, and the absence of back-up in emergencies.
- Recognize the need for paid sick time for train and engine service personnel, a practice that has come to most industries.
- Put an end to crew fatigue by providing scheduled days off, as opposed to unlimited on-call requirements to which workers are now subject.
- Stop the use of invasive and intimidating technology such as inward-facing cameras.
- Stop excessive discipline and firings.

A new track for rail

The Solutionary Rail team looked to rail’s phenomenal potential for providing fast freight service and high-speed passenger rail, displacing much truck, car, and plane travel with a form of transportation that uses energy far more efficiently. Electrified rail powered by renewables could offer those services with minimal climate pollution, while rail corridors could provide transmission links between cities and remote wind and sun resources.

The great obstacle to this vision is the railroads themselves. They want to emphasize bulk commodity and container trains while sluffing off less profitable mixed freight to trucks. They grimace in horror at “passengerization” of their lines, and resist the upfront investments needed to electrify them, even though long-term costs would be lower. In all these cases, the obstacle is the same, a shareholder value mentality that puts prime emphasis on short-term profits. Since 2010 the top four railroads have paid out \$121 billion in dividends and stock buybacks, compared to \$17 billion from 2001-8. For the whole industry the payout since 2010 is \$196 billion.

Thus, under the current pattern of ownership, it is unlikely that anything like the Solutionary Rail vision could become reality. More and more, people are being driven to the conclusion that the railroads must be nationalized. There is a powerful case. Monopoly pricing power is pushing shipping costs through the roof while service deteriorates and long-term investments in rail infrastructure suffer for the sake of the quarterly bottom line. Not to mention the horrendous conditions for the people who have to make it all work.

The Staggers Rail Act of 1980 is widely regarded as a lost opportunity. In response to widespread railroad bankruptcies as they faced new competition from highways and aviation in the 1970s, the Staggers Act deregulated the railroads. It was a revolution which eliminated one of the earliest federal regulatory systems, that was created by the 1887 Interstate Commerce Act. The door was opened for the radical consolidation which has created today's rail oligopoly, with BNSF and Union Pacific dominating the western U.S. while CSX and Norfolk Southern rule the east.

Many believe that the Staggers Act should have instead been the occasion for nationalization, at least of the lines if not the operators. Rail is, after all, a vital public utility, and it is clear that the bottom-line orientation of private ownership works against railroads realizing their full public benefit. Notably, this includes the failure to provide a near-zero climate pollution option for transportation. In addition, by pushing mixed freight onto trucks, which cause most road damage, the rail industry is leaching off of public transportation infrastructure. For railroads to reach their full potential, public ownership is required.

RWU endorsed the concept in October. "RWU supports the public ownership of the rail infrastructure of the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, to be operated henceforth in the public interest, placed at the service of the people of

all three nations...RWU urges the rail union leadership of North America to take a similar stand, thereby providing the leadership necessary to see such a proposal through to fruition."

"On-time performance is in the toilet, shipper complaints are at all-time highs," RWU argue:

"Passenger trains are chronically late, commuter services are threatened, and the rail industry is hostile to practically any passenger train expansion. The workforce has been decimated, as jobs have been eliminated, consolidated, and contracted out, ushering in a new previously unheard-of era where workers can neither be recruited nor retained. Locomotive, rail car, and infrastructure maintenance has been cut back. Health and safety have been put at risk. Morale is at an all-time low. The ongoing debacle in national contract bargaining sees the carriers—after decades of record profits and record low Operating Ratios—refusing to make even the slightest concessions to the workers who—contrary to what the Class Ones may state—have made them their riches."

For railroads to reach their full potential, public ownership is required.

RWU concluded, "Since the North American private rail industry has shown itself incapable of doing the job, it is time for this invaluable transportation infrastructure—like the other transport modes—to be brought under public ownership."

The crucial role of labor struggles

Some of the greatest labor struggles in U.S. history took place around the railroads. The Great Railroad Strike of 1877 nearly shut down the country, as did the Pullman Strike of 1894. Today, even as much high-profile labor orga-

nizing has moved to service industry outfits such as Starbucks and Amazon, the struggle by rail workers for humane working conditions has brought focus back to labor's traditional base. Because transportation jobs could not be shipped overseas, labor has retained a strength in that sector it has lost in other industries.

Restoring labor's strength in all sectors is crucial to creating a just society. The decline of labor has been accompanied by the rise of radical wealth and income inequality, and has fostered the growth of right-wing politics. Labor serves the broad interest of people, while business in the end serves the bottom line. That's just the nature of a profit-driven system. So, looking at rail as an example, everything management is doing has an internal logic, while the negative social and environmental impacts are shoved onto others.

The Democrats, in their long undermining of labor, down to the strike ban just passed, are cutting their own throats. In the recent vote they should have at least gone for the negotiations extension rather than trying to cram a settlement workers voted against down their throats. Reducing their labor base puts Democrats increasingly under the thumb of corporate donors, who will push them to serve that business bottom line. We need the counterbalance of labor to get anything close to a just and sustainable society.

And we need a strong labor and social movement to make the kind of profound changes needed to overcome our mounting and interlocked crises of climate and social justice. Railroad nationalization is a prime example. The latest labor struggle underscores the need to put railroads on a new track, as well as our economy and society as a whole. We need to put the public interest in the engineer's cab.

—CounterPunch, December 6, 2022

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2022/12/06/rail-workers-shafted-again/>

Rail Contract Shows Unions Need New Leadership; Workers Need Our Own Party

EDITORIAL BY WORLD-OUTLOOK

At the “urgent appeal” of President Biden, the U.S. Senate voted 80-15 on December 1 to impose a contract settlement previously rejected by four unions representing a majority of railroad workers and by thousands who voted “No” in eight other unions. The House of Representatives approved a similar measure, which Biden swiftly signed into law on December 2.

A separate bill would have added seven days paid sick leave to the new national rail contract. It was no surprise that it failed. Biden firmly opposed any changes to the contract that his administration brokered in September on the eve of a national strike deadline.

Rail workers are angry and frustrated by this outcome. Rank-and-file rail workers refused to accept Biden’s deal that top union leaders claimed was the best contract possible. The ranks of the unions spoke out, explained the intolerable conditions of work and life they face every day, and won support from millions of working people.

Editorial

Without rank-and-file resistance, no resolution on sick pay would have been considered. Without rank-and-file resistance, those brutal conditions would have remained unknown to other working people.

Biden led the way

On the day Biden demanded action by Congress to prevent railroad workers from exercising their democratic right to strike, he piously insisted he was “a proud pro-labor president.” Actions, however, speak louder than words.

Such sanctimonious posturing by politicians was on full display. While 52 senators voted for the bill to provide paid sick leave (knowing it did not have the 60-vote supermajority needed for passage—an anti-democratic

Senate rule enjoying bipartisan support,) 80 backed the imposition of the contract and banning a strike, as did the large majority of the House.

That the issues involved in this contract battle were placed front and center in U.S. politics is an achievement of the rank and file of rail labor.

Again, Biden took the lead. At a White House news conference, “Mr. Biden bristled at a question about why he had not insisted on more paid leave for rail workers in the deal, saying that he had ‘negotiated a contract no one else can negotiate,’” reported the *New York Times*.

Wyoming Senator Cynthia Lummis and North Dakota Senator Kevin Cramer, both Republicans, made this absurd and pretentious argument: “It is

in the best interest of all parties that the railroads, not Congress, work through issues such as paid leave directly with their employees.” They then voted for Congress to settle all the issues in favor of the rail barons! Any rail worker could have told them the railroads stubbornly refused for over two years to “work through issues such as paid leave directly with their employees.”

“This one-two punch from the two political parties is despicable,” said Railroad Workers United (RWU) general secretary Jason Doering. (RWU is a rank-and-file group that brings together members of all rail unions.) “Politicians are happy to voice platitudes and heap praise upon us for our heroism throughout the pandemic, the essential nature of our work, the difficult and dangerous and demanding conditions of our jobs. Yet when the steel hits the rail, they back the powerful and wealthy Class One rail carriers every time.”

Top union officials responded differently. In a servile statement, SMART



Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) rail worker monitors departure of freight train in Illinois. After President Biden and Congress undemocratically imposed an antilabor contract on rail workers, banning a strike, the future depends on the actions of the union ranks.

TD, which represents conductors and others, said, “While it is unfortunate that our members were not able to approve the agreement in which they work under, we thank the President, House Speaker, Senate leadership, and Cabinet members for their support at the negotiating table and on the floor of Congress in an attempt to achieve more for our members.”

Unfortunate? No, outrageous. Support? No, stabbing workers in the back, or, more accurately, showing rail workers the Democrats’ true colors.

The future depends on the union ranks

The rank and file of rail labor has demonstrated—as another top union official was forced to acknowledge—they are “engaged and enraged” by the intolerable working and living conditions they face as a result of the rail carriers’ endless drive for more profit.

Top officials of the twelve rail unions did not organize and mobilize that rage through the union structures that only exist thanks to the dues paid by the rank and file. Rather than oppose the utterly inadequate Biden “compromise,” they hailed it. They told the union membership they had done the best they could. In so doing, they served the interests of the employers rather than their members. They acted as lieutenants for big business.

There can be little doubt that tens-of-thousands who rejected the contract—and thousands of others who may have voted for it, resigned that it would be imposed no matter the vote results—thought differently.

Rail-worker resistance shattered the carriers’ plans for business as usual at contract time. That the issues involved in this contract battle were placed front and center in U.S. politics is an achievement of the rank and file of rail labor. What has been accomplished so far can be built on as workers find the ways and means to take control of our unions

and use them as they were intended, to better our lives. That includes bringing forward new union leadership from the ranks that will stand up resolutely to the carriers and the government.

It is not only new leaders but new strategies that are required if future battles are to be won. The unions must end the reliance on “friends of labor” among Democrats and Republicans that characterizes the approach of virtually all top union officers and that has failed so miserably. Instead, we need independent action by the ranks of the unions that appeals for solidarity from working people and extends the same to others in struggle.

No one will “grant” rail workers the right to strike. That right will need to be taken by united labor action when workers are strong enough to stand up to and challenge government dictates and anti-labor laws like the Railway Labor Act.

That includes reasserting the right to strike. That right—collectively withholding our labor to compel an employer to improve wages, benefits, and working conditions—is a basic democratic right. No member of Congress stood up for that right. They have not done so in the past, and we can’t expect them to do so in the future.

No one will “grant” rail workers the right to strike. That right will need to be taken by united labor action when workers are strong enough to stand up to and challenge government dictates and anti-labor laws like the Railway Labor Act. Although it was many years ago, rail labor

has a proud history of such united action—from the rail strikes that launched a great labor uprising in 1877, to the 1894 Pullman Strike by the American Railway Union led by Eugene Victor Debs.¹

In more recent history, it took many years of agitation and protest for women to win their right to vote in 1920. The rise of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in the 1930s was marked by sit-down strikes and other forms of militant labor action across the United States; it was not legal then to occupy factories, but workers did it anyway. In the 1950s and ’60s the movement for civil rights defied—through powerful mass action, independent of the Democrats and Republicans—and succeeded in overturning an entire web of undemocratic laws denying Black equality.

The ranks of rail labor, like the entire working class, need to find our way back to those traditions of solidarity and struggle.

In its statement on the “one-two punch” dealt to rail labor, RWU raised two additional ideas. *World-Outlook* believes they deserve the consideration of all working people.

“This fight for justice will continue in the coming months and years,” wrote the RWU. “The rail carriers are too powerful and are a scourge to the national economy,” explained RWU steering committee member Paul Lindsey. “They need to be taken into public ownership and run in the interest of workers, shippers, passengers, and the nation, not a handful of wealthy stockholders.”

RWU organizer Ron Kaminkow added, “We have been played for well over a century by politicians and union officials alike...perhaps the time has come for railroad workers to push for a unified and powerful labor organization of all crafts, together with a political party that will better serve the interest of not just railroad workers but all working-class people.”

World-Outlook agrees. A labor party based on revitalized unions led by the rank and file and independent of the employers and their parties—the Democrats and Republicans—would advance those interests.

—*World-Outlook*, December 3, 2022

<https://world-outlook.com/2022/12/03/rail-contract-shows-unions-need-new-leadership-workers-need-our-own-party/>

1 On December 1, Railroad Workers United published a 1914 essay by Debs—at that time also the best-known leader of the socialist movement—titled, “Revolt of the Railroad Workers.” RWU noted, “The essay featured here outlines the railroad workers’ struggles of the various crafts at that time, and their discontent with the railway bosses together with the ineffective craft union system and the lack of solidarity, unity, and leadership. Today’s readers—over 100 years later—might be astounded at the similarities to today’s issues and struggles that confront railroad workers!” The Debs essay can be read here:

<https://files.constantcontact.com/38adf15f301/c818e8f5-efc5-4350-b6bb-43b426ecb192.pdf>

“They need to be taken into public ownership and run in the interest of workers, shippers, passengers, and the nation, not a handful of wealthy stockholders.”

Rail Scabbing and the Accountability of “Our” Electeds

The Democratic Socialists of America caboose

By ANDY SERNATINGER

December 8, 2022—Congress’s intervention into negotiations between rail unions and the railroad companies in order to prevent a strike has become a flashpoint for organized labor in North America. The affirming votes from Democratic Socialists Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Cori Bush, Jamaal Bowman, and others in “the Squad” is now a major controversy in labor/left circles—and it creates more problems for the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). This should have been an easy test to pass—Support rail workers’ right to use the strike weapon and continue the fight for a fair contract, or back their bosses’ and Biden’s effort to force them to accept a bad deal. In choosing the latter, DSA “electeds” have rekindled the debate over

what actions should be a line in the sand for the new socialist movement.

The rail dispute

Negotiations between the railroad companies (“National Carriers’ Conference”) and the rail unions (“United Rail Unions’ Coordinated Bargaining Coalition”) hit a wall in the late summer when the railroad companies refused to make any movement on the unions’ key demand: sick days.

Twelve unions represent railroad workers, who bargain together for one agreement with the rail companies. The rails are governed by the Railway Labor Act (RLA), not the National Labor Relations Act that private sector workers generally fall under. The RLA gives the President and Congress pow-



Railway Workers United

ers to intervene directly in the negotiations and ultimately decide on labor agreements in rail and air traffic.

In July, the companies refused to move on sick days (railroaders get zero sick days currently) and the negotiations started to break down. President Biden used his power under the RLA to force a 60-day “cooling off period” before the dispute escalated, creating the potential for a strike. Biden then assembled a Presidential Emergency Board (PEB) to mediate and make a recommendation to the negotiating parties. That process did not end with any additional sick days. The Teamsters, to whom the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division (BMWED) and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen (BLET) are affiliated, issued a statement celebrating the intervention of Biden and the PEB. (Historically, the position of labor is against state intervention in contract negotiations.)

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After another cooling off period, the unions began voting on the contract in November. The unions vote separately. Two of the larger unions were the last to vote earlier last week, resulting in four unions voting down the deal, and ultimately the majority of rank-and-file workers did not accept it.

On Monday, November 28, Biden announced that he was asking Congress to force the rail unions to accept the deal through legislation this week, in order to avert a strike. Simply put, Biden sided with the rail companies. Any further collective bargaining would be off the table, and of course if workers struck, they would now do so illegally.

Democrats, The Squad, and DSA

A socialist position is that it is a basic human right to withhold your labor, to strike. Any law that infringes upon that right should be opposed. Any socialist politician should be expected to observe this principle.

In this regard, DSA issued a pretty good statement:

“Any member of Congress who votes yes on the tentative agreement is siding with billionaires and forcing a contract on rail workers that does not address their most pressing demand of paid sick days. Democrats claim to want to save democracy. There’s nothing more democratic than workers having a say over their own lives. By refusing to side with workers and respect their vote to reject a bad deal, the Democrats will create an opportunity for the Right to fill that void with false promises and further drive working people from politics during particularly crucial moments.”

But within hours of DSA issuing the statement, every DSA elected in the House (save Rashida Tlaib) voted in favor of imposing the contract; they did exactly what DSA was denouncing. They had a rationale of course: The Congressional Progressive Caucus had a separate bill that would legislate seven sick days (fewer than the 15 sick days rail workers demanded,) so they claimed they had to vote in favor of forcing the agreement to then get the amendment considered. Two separate bills, one forcing the contract on the unions and the other legislating sick days, were sent to the Senate.

AOC’s justification for her vote was that she was following the wishes of the unions. Considering that the majority of union members had just voted against the contract, this meant that she sided with union leadership who wanted to avoid further negotiations and a strike.

Joe Burns, author of *Class Struggle Unionism and Reviving the Strike*, called bullshit on the maneuver:

“If the national Democrats truly wanted the railroad workers to have sick leave, why would they not have put it into one bill with the anti-strike legislation? The answer is clear, because they wanted the path to be clear for the Senate to block the strike but not approve the sick leave. Having separate bills would mean the anti-strike legislation would still go through.”

If you truly believed in getting sick leave for workers, wouldn’t you put it in the same legislation?

But within hours of DSA issuing the statement, every DSA elected in the House (save Rashida Tlaib) voted in favor of imposing the contract; they did exactly what DSA was denouncing.

Separating the bills was the same shell game they played with Build Back Better: separating reforms progressives wanted from the base bill to give the appearance of movement but ensuring that they failed.

On Thursday, the Senate then voted 80-15 to impose the contract (ten of those voting against were Republicans,) and 52-43 for the sick days—which failed, requiring a three-fifths majority. Biden signed the strike-breaker bill into law on December 2, with no added sick leave.

DSA’s rail problem

This creates a problem for DSA. It isn’t a crisis for the organization, because the root issue, the role of socialist elected officials and their relationship to the organization, had already been played out and resolved with the Bowman Affair last year.

The stakes of that debate were about whether elected officials had any expect-

tation of upholding the organization's positions, and whether they were free agents or representatives of DSA. It caused a general organizational crisis that was only resolved by the National Political Committee rejecting any consequences for Bowman without discussion and, instead, disciplining the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions Working Group.

The unions vote separately. Two of the larger unions were the last to vote earlier last week, resulting in four unions voting down the deal, and ultimately the majority of rank-and-file workers did not accept it.

Elected officials, like Jabari Brisport, Tiffany Caban, and AOC intervened, signing petitions against discipline for Bowman or lobbying DSA's National Political Committee (NPC) directly. The question was explicitly posed, "Do Comrades Cross Picket Lines?" Defenders of Bowman said of course it would be unacceptable to cross workers, but one year later they are unconditionally defending "their" electeds. Following the Bowman Affair, the NPC promised greater accountability with a "Socialists in Office" committee, but after this vote, it's plainly a Potemkin village.

The result of the Bowman crisis was that there was no accountability for the "electeds." The membership instead was punished, the NPC became wildly dysfunctional, and the organization lost the confidence of many members. There is not a 1:1 correlation, but in one year DSA has lost 12,000 members. Whatever the official positions decided by the 2021 Convention, the policy is

unconditional support for Democrats.

The rail dispute is the continuation of this logic in DSA. This should have led to a full-blown crisis, and though there is some worthy discontent, there's not much expectation that the NPC will do anything. Some chapters and organizations are explicitly distancing themselves from these "democratic socialist electeds" for voting to break a strike. But there's no halfway between unconditional support of a politician and enforcing basic expectations. Sticking with the politicians, who in turn followed Biden, means that DSA presents no alternative to this move by the Democrats, and the only real dissent comes from the far right.

The actual problem for DSA National is that the leadership is faced with the dilemma of having taken a (good) position that was directly contradicted by politicians they've tied themselves to.

There are three possible ways they could respond:

1. Do nothing and pretend they never said anything that might embarrass "their" electeds.
2. Try to save face with the politicians and release something saying they're disappointed but ultimately support the Squad or try to reframe the issue and say that the DSA politicians aren't the problem here—basically, they'd roll back their earlier statement.
3. Point out that AOC, Bowman, Omar, Bush *et al.* scabbed on the unions, and pursue some genuine consequences to rectify the issue. They could even get crazy and include some organizational censure or discipline.

The first position would have been ambiguous about DSA's position towards the electeds. The second would appease the politicians who they may have offended by drawing a line on strike-breaking. The third would hold the posi-

tion and take it to its logical conclusion.

Their approach? #2.

"We are proud of DSA member Representative Rashida Tlaib's vote against the TA and for sick days. Any vote by Congress to impose a bad contract on workers sides with the boss and contradicts democratic socialist values. We disagree and are disappointed with the decision of DSA members Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Representative Cori Bush to needlessly vote to enforce the TA."

The new statement reaffirms the value of the Squad and diminishes votes for strikebreaking to disagreements. This is to say, there will be no consequences.

The remaining question for the Left is whether support for DSA, however critical, is also unconditional. If not, then which conditions are tolerable, and which have gone too far? Organizations come and go. It's really worth asking whether those who remain are throwing good money after bad.

—*Tempest*, December 8, 2022

<https://www.tempestmag.org/2022/12/the-dsa-caboose/>

A socialist position is that it is a basic human right to withhold your labor, to strike. Any law that infringes upon that right should be opposed. Any socialist politician should be expected to observe this principle.

Hall of Shame of U.S. Weapons Sales

Joe Biden, the National Security State, and arms sales

By WILLIAM HARTUNG

Here's a seldom commented-upon reality of this century and this moment: the United States remains the number-one arms-exporting nation on the planet. Between 2017 and 2021, it grabbed 39 percent of the total global weapons market and there's nothing new about that. It has, in fact, been the top arms dealer in every year but one for the past three decades. And it's a remarkably lucrative business, earning American weapons makers tens-of-billions of dollars annually.

It would be one thing if it were simply a matter of money raked in by the industrial half of the military-industrial complex. Unfortunately, in these years, U.S.-supplied weaponry has also fueled conflicts, enabled human-rights violations, helped destabilize not just individual countries but whole regions, and made it significantly easier for repressive regimes to commit war crimes.

At first glance, it appeared that Joe Biden, on entering the White House, might take a different approach to arms sales. On the campaign trail in 2020, he had, for instance, labeled Saudi Arabia a "pariah" state and implied that the unbridled flow of U.S. weaponry to that kingdom would be reduced, if not terminated. He also bluntly assured voters that this country wouldn't "check its values at the door to sell arms."

Initially, Biden paused arms deals to that country and even suspended one bomb sale. Unfortunately, within eight months of his taking office, sales to the Saudi regime had resumed. In addition, the Biden team has offered arms to a number of other repressive regimes from Egypt and Nigeria to the Philippines. Such sales contrast strikingly with the president's mantra of supporting "democracies over autocracies," as well as his reasonable impulse to supply weapons to Ukraine to defend itself against Russia's brutal invasion.

The last president who attempted to bring runaway U.S. weapons trafficking under some sort of control was Jimmy Carter. In 1976, he campaigned for the presidency on a platform based, in part, on promoting human rights globally and curbing the arms trade. And for a period as president, he did indeed suspend sales to repressive regimes, while, in that Cold War era, engaging in direct talks with the Soviet Union on reducing global arms sales. He also spoke out eloquently about the need to rein in the trade in death and destruction.

However, Zbigniew Brzezinski, his hardline national security advisor, waged a campaign inside his administration against the president's efforts, arguing that arms sales were too valuable as a tool of Cold War influence to be sacrificed at the altar of human rights. And once that longtime ally, the Shah of Iran, was overthrown in 1978 and the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979, all talk of controlling the arms trade went out the window.

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The Biden record: why not restraint?

What accounts for Joe Biden's transformation from a president intent on controlling arms sales to a business-as-usual promoter of such weaponry globally? The root cause can be found in his administration's adherence to a series of misguided notions about the value of arms sales. In a recent report I wrote for the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft on the U.S. approach to such exports, I lay out those notions fully, including lending a hand in stabilizing key regions, deterring Washington's adversaries from engaging in aggression, building mean-



Missiles by Keith Roper is licensed under CC BY 2.0 / Flickr

ingful military-to-military relationships with current or potential partner nations, increasing this country's political and diplomatic influence globally, and creating jobs here in the United States. In the Saudi case, Biden's shift was tied to the dangerous notion that we needed to bolster the Kingdom's supposedly crucial role in "containing Iran"—a policy that only increases the risk of war in the region—and the false promise that, in return, the Saudis would expand their oil output to help curb soaring gas prices here at home.

Such explanations are part of an all-encompassing belief in Washington that giving away or selling weaponry of every sort to foreign clients is a risk-free way of garnering yet more economic, political, and strategic influence globally. The positive spin advocates of the arms trade give to the government's role as the world's largest arms broker ignores the fact that, in too many cases, the risks—from fueling conflict and increasing domestic repression elsewhere to drawing the United States into unnecessary wars—far outweigh any possible benefits.

An arms clients hall of shame

There are numerous examples, both historically and in the present moment, of how this country's arms sales have done more harm than good, but for now let's just highlight four of them—Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Nigeria, and the Philippines.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has spearheaded a horrifying and disastrous seven-and-a-half-year-long intervention in Yemen that has killed thousands of people through indiscriminate air strikes on civilian targets ranging from hospitals, water treatment plants, and factories to marketplaces, weddings, and even a funeral. In all, that conflict has caused an estimated nearly 400,000 deaths, in large part due to a Saudi-run air-and-sea blockade that has impeded importing food, medical supplies, and fuel. The overwhelming

presence of U.S.-supplied aircraft, bombs, missiles, and other weaponry in that military campaign has led many Yemenis to view it as an American war on their country, spurring resentment and potentially damaging future relations throughout the region.

Unlike in Ukraine, where the Biden administration has helped a country defend itself against a foreign invasion through the provision of arms and intelligence, in Yemen it could help stop the killing tomorrow simply by cutting off arms, spare parts, and help in the maintenance of weapons systems. Such pressure would push the Saudi regime to definitively end its destructive air strikes and its devastating blockade of that country, while potentially encouraging the launching of good-faith negotiations to end the war there.

U.S.-supplied weaponry has also fueled conflicts, enabled human-rights violations, helped destabilize not just individual countries but whole regions, and made it significantly easier for repressive regimes to commit war crimes.

Egypt

When it comes to Egypt, the Biden administration has offered more than \$6 billion in weaponry so far, including missiles, helicopters, and transport planes. All of that is going to the regime of Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, who is widely regarded as the most repressive leader in that country's history. The el-Sisi government has gunned down demonstrators in the street, locked up thousands of political prisoners, and run a scorched earth counterinsurgency cam-

paign in the northern Sinai desert that has killed innocent civilians and driven thousands of people from their homes.

Nor are such systematic human rights abuses counterbalanced by "strategic" benefits of any obvious sort. Quite the opposite. The el-Sisi regime has taken numerous positions contrary to Washington's interests. These have included supporting the Assad regime in Syria, aiding rebel forces fighting the internationally recognized government in Libya, backing antidemocratic military leaders in Sudan, and building military ties with Russia through arms sales, military exercises, and a security agreement. Congressional representative Tom Malinowski (D-NJ) hammered home this point several years ago, saying, "In exchange for the favors that Egypt gets from the White House, they don't actually do anything for us. This is not a situation where we are trading off human rights for something that advances the U.S. national interest. Egypt... contributes nothing to the goals of peace and security... [U.S. arms transfers] do absolutely nothing to benefit Egyptian security or ours."

Nigeria

Last April, the United States offered attack helicopters worth \$997 million to Nigeria, marking the latest stage in the warming of relations between the two countries that began early in the Trump years.

The Nigerian military, however, has committed torture on a massive scale while targeting thousands of civilians in an ongoing campaign against the terrorist group Boko Haram and its local offshoots. As Human Rights Watch has reported, there is a "reasonable basis to believe" that Nigerian security forces have committed crimes against humanity. Amnesty International reported that 10,000 civilians died between 2011 and 2020 from extreme neglect in prisons run by Nigeria's military. And far from reducing terrorism, such conduct has further destabilized significant parts of

the country, stoking opposition to the government, and making it easier for terrorist groups to recruit and operate. Earlier this month the security situation in Nigeria had deteriorated so badly that the Biden administration ordered the family members of U.S. diplomats to leave Abuja, the capital, due to a “heightened risk of terrorist attack.”

The Philippines

U.S. arms transfers to the Philippines are of particular concern. The United States supplied or offered billions of dollars’ worth of small arms, attack helicopters, and other weapons systems to the regime of former president Rodrigo Duterte, a government notorious for murdering and imprisoning thousands of civilians, as well as key human rights and democracy activists, under the guise of fighting a “war on drugs.” The sales were made as part of Washington’s anti-China containment strategy, even though the Philippines offers little value on that front.

It remains to be seen whether the new president, Ferdinand Marcos, Jr., an ally of Duterte who took office in May 2022, will pursue different policies. But as Center for International Policy analyst John Edward Mariano pointed out recently, Amnesty International, and other impartial analysts “predict continued human rights abuses and democratic backsliding.” In response to the situation in the Philippines, congressional representative Susan Wild (D-PA) has introduced the “Philippine Human Rights Act,” which would cut off military aid to the regime until it has taken concrete steps to prevent future human-rights abuses.

Companies cash in

While the humanitarian consequences of U.S. arms sales may be devastating, if you happen to be a major weapons maker like Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Raytheon, or General Dynamics, the economic benefits are enormous. Weapons systems built by

those four companies alone have figured in more than half of the \$100 billion-plus in major arms offers made since President Biden took office.

While those firms prefer to pose as passive beneficiaries of carefully considered government policies, they continue to work overtime to loosen restrictions on weapons exports and expand the number of countries eligible for such equipment and training. To that end, those four giant firms alone routinely donate millions of dollars to key members of Congress, while employing 300 lobbyists, many of them drawn from the ranks of the Pentagon, Congress, and the National Security Council. Once on board, those retired generals, admirals, and other officials use their government contacts and inside knowledge of the arm-sales process to influence government policies and practices.

U.S.-supplied weaponry has also fueled conflicts, enabled human-rights violations, helped destabilize not just individual countries but whole regions, and made it significantly easier for repressive regimes to commit war crimes.

A particularly egregious and visible example of this was Raytheon’s effort to pressure Congress and the Trump administration to approve a sale of precision-guided munitions to the Saudis. A former Raytheon lobbyist, Charles Faulkner, worked inside the State Department to keep the Saudi arms pipeline open despite that country’s bombing of civilian targets in Yemen, and then Raytheon’s former CEO, Thomas Kennedy, even went so

far as to directly lobby Senate Foreign Relations chairman Senator Robert Menendez over Saudi arms sales. (He was rebuffed.) But the most spectacular lobbyist for the Saudis was, of course, President Trump, who justified continuing arms sales to Riyadh after the regime’s 2018 murder of U.S. resident, Saudi journalist, and Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi this way:

“\$110 billion will be spent on the purchase of military equipment from Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, and many other great U.S. defense contractors. If we foolishly cancel these contracts, Russia and China would be the enormous beneficiaries—and very happy to acquire all this newfound business. It would be a wonderful gift to them directly from the United States!”

In fact, neither Russia nor China would be able to replace the U.S. as Saudi Arabia’s primary arms supplier any time soon. The Kingdom is so reliant on American equipment that it might take a decade or more for it to rebuild its military around weapons supplied by another nation.

In reality, expansive as American arms sales to the Saudis are, that \$110 billion figure was a typical case of Trumpian exaggeration. Actual sales during his term were less than one-third of that, and jobs tied to those sales in the U.S. were similarly far less than President Trump claimed. The figure he liked to throw around—500,000—was at least 12 times the actual one. Still, the damage done by the weaponry his administration rammed through Congress for the Saudis has been incalculable and can’t be measured by the dollar value of any particular sale.

The Raytheon lobbying campaign was extraordinary primarily because its details became public knowledge. But count on one thing: similar efforts by other military-industrial corporations surely take place behind closed doors on a regular basis. One precondition for reducing

dangerous arms deals would have to be reducing the political power of the major weapons-producing companies.

Pushing back against America's arms sales addiction

In 2019, spurred by Saudi actions ranging from the war in Yemen to the Khashoggi murder, both houses of Congress voted down a specific deal for the first time—\$1.5 billion in precision-guided bombs for Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern clients—only to have their actions vetoed by President Trump. Successful votes to end military support for Saudi Arabia under the War Powers Resolution met a similar fate.

The recent Saudi decision to side with Russia on reducing global oil output has reinvigorated such Congressional efforts. A new Yemen War Powers Resolution co-sponsored by Representatives Pramila Jayapal

(D-WA) and Peter DeFazio (D-OR) has more than 100 backers in the House, while a parallel measure co-sponsored by Senators Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), and Patrick Leahy (D-VT) has been proposed in the Senate. Meanwhile, Senate Foreign Relations Committee chair Robert Menendez (D-NJ) has called for a hold on most arms transfers to the Saudi regime, while Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) and Representative Ro Khanna (D-CA) are seeking a one-year suspension of Saudi sales as leverage to force that country to reverse its decision to warm relations with Russia and end its intervention in Yemen. Such efforts will face a far tougher road in a Republican-controlled Congress, so time is of the essence.

Success in reining in Washington's arms-sales addiction will, at the very least, require a major campaign of public education. Too few Americans

even know about their nation's role as the world's largest weapons trader, much less the devastating impact of the arms it transfers. But when asked, a majority of Americans are against arming repressive regimes like Saudi Arabia and consider arms sales to be "a hazard to U.S. security."

Still, until there is greater public understanding of the humanitarian and security consequences of what the government is doing in our name, coupled with concerted pressure on the Biden administration, the national security state, and the weapons makers, the arms trade is likely to continue full speed ahead. If so, those companies will remain in weapons heaven, while so many people on this planet will find themselves in a hell on earth.

—TomDispatch, November 17, 2022

<https://tomdispatch.com/corporate-weapons-heaven-is-a-hell-on-earth/>

Pandemics are Prosperity, Sickness is Health, Ignorance is Strength

DR. NAYVIN GORDON

July 2, 2022, *The New York Times* printed an article entitled "New York City Quietly Drops Color-Coded COVID Alert System, as Cases Rise." *Channel 7 News* in the San Francisco Bay Area announced on July 16, 2022, that BART, (Bay Area Rapid Transit) will remove mask mandates in two days while concluding with the comments that COVID-19 cases were on the rise in the Bay Area.

The mass media is delivering the message—it is business as usual, let COVID-19 spread, and science and rationality will be dismissed.

Will the next headlines be—"Fire Stations Close as the Fire Season Intensifies," or—"Water Restrictions Removed as the Drought Worsens"?

The most dangerous variant of COVID-19 rapidly spreads around the globe in a new and deadly wave, while judges and politicians, having no license to practice medicine, are determining public health policy.

A virus that can be eliminated will deliberately not be eliminated.

We are being asked to accept the irrational as rational and have reached

a time of political decay where the people have been abandoned.

The message is clear:

Pandemics are prosperity,
Sickness is health,
Death is life,
Ignorance is strength.

Is it?

Are we?



(Shutterstock)

Climate Disaster of the Anthropocene: Is There Hope for the Human Race?

BY CHRIS KINDER

“Already it’s a different planet.”

That is the first sentence in the first one of two articles on the climate change situation by David Wallace-Wells in the *New York Times* magazine of October 30, 2022; this one titled “Envisioning Life After Climate Change.”¹

Wallace-Wells says that more than one trillion tons of carbon produced by human activity is now suspended in our atmosphere. He reports that “not very long ago,” scientists predicted a four-to-five-degree Celsius increase in average global temperature as a result of that. But “thanks to a global awakening,” he says predictions now are

“between two and three degrees” (35.6-37.4 degrees Fahrenheit) increase.

Is this what a “global awakening” can achieve? And is this supposed to be an optimistic outlook?

The Wallace-Wells’ “Awakening”

Wallace-Wells gives us some details about how the installation of solar and wind power is proceeding at a much cheaper price than originally expected. I would add that public recognition of the problem has grown fast, and many dedicated non-profit outfits are working on solutions. That is well and good, as far as it goes, but nevertheless Wallace-Wells’

description of what the planet is actually in for with a two-degree increase is still shockingly horrific.

Note first of all that Wallace-Wells picks a two-degrees Celsius increase in the global average—rather than the two to three-degree estimate from the “global awakening”—for his description of what we are in for. Also note that a two-degree increase is well above the hoped-for goal of only a 1.5-degree increase this century set by the Paris Agreement of 2015 by 2030, and which climate entities such as the Conference of Parties (COP) have been hoping for until recently.

Carbon infestation of the atmosphere

And we must note as well that the planet’s temperature has already been compromised by an increase of 1.2 degrees Celsius since the beginning of the industrial age in the mid-1700s. This is the result of carbon infestation of the atmosphere increasing from about 280-parts-per-million (ppm) to almost 420 ppm in 2021.² This amount of carbon in the atmosphere is the highest in human history, which is bad enough, but that is just the beginning.

Both the amount of carbon in the atmosphere, and the heating that it creates, are on a very sharp upward curve, which shows no sign of leveling off. But the COP annual meetings, and analysts such as Wallace-Wells, speak as though they expect the two-degree increase to be the limit for the century. Do they really think that will somehow be the limit of global warming? Carbon in the atmosphere is still climbing year by year, and even if it slows down, the amount that is up there will be there for thousands of years, and the consequences of that are horrific in planetary history.



“I know there are a shit ton of whining do-gooders who won’t shut up about how we’re killing the planet, but, for fucksake, I’d love to hear them admit just once how stunningly beautiful that is.”

A bleak future

Even with just a two-degree Celsius increase in average global temperature, the picture for the planet is not good. Here is what Wallace-Wells predicts: more than 10,000 plant species will lose their habitable area, and animals will be migrating to northerly areas that likely will not be ready for them. (The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports in a study that one half of the studied species have moved already.) This animal migration will cause “at least 4,000 spillover effects,” such as more viruses—Covid-19 being just one (current) case. Many areas will dry out from heat caused fires, and one-hundred-million “Americans”³ will experience 125 degrees Fahrenheit for some days every year, which will make outdoor labor impossible.

Wallace-Wells continues: More than three billion people live in highly vulnerable areas and that “mass climate migrations will become a fact of life.” At two degrees Celsius, it could be tens or hundreds-of-millions of people on the move. He reports that two degrees Celsius “will require a near-total transformation of all the human systems that gave rise to warming: energy, transportation, agriculture, housing and industry infrastructure.”

How is this to be addressed?

This is certainly a bleak picture, and not a bad beginning analysis, but Wallace-Wells leaves completely unaddressed the two crucial questions: how, and by who is this massive problem going to be addressed? And what are the prospects for human life if and when the temperature sails beyond two degrees Celsius?

On the first point, Wallace-Wells hints—just hints—that this problem won’t be addressed by the capitalist system in power today. Regarding the mass-migration issue, he reports that a new book by Gaia Vince, *Nomad Century*, suggests that a massive influx of migrants from southern regions heading north should be greeted

humanely by extending citizenship to migrants in an “overall human flourishing.” Right. Wallace-Wells admits that “a bleaker future is easier to imagine!”

The threat of fascism

But this just touches on the real problem. Look at how countries today are moving to the right, in part a response to migrants that are already flooding to the northern areas all over the world. Hungary is now captured by a near-fascist autocracy which has put up a fence against migrants and refuses to let them in. The tyrant, prime minister Orban, was recently welcomed in a visit to Texas, which is notorious for sending horse-mounted thugs to attack and stop migrants trying to cross the Rio Grande River. The chances of refugees from Central America entering the U.S.—the government which is the cause of the destruction of the states they come from, and of the migrants being essentially homeless—is nil.

The idea that any capitalist-imperialist regime—the U.S. leading the pack—could do a complete makeover of all the interlocked industries which have been poisoning the atmosphere for two hundred years in a short enough time to put a stop or even a slowdown of planet-wide warming, is ridiculous

How is a state like the U.S., ruled by capitalist moguls, and now infected by a fascist movement—the only weakness of which is the lack of a unified Nazi party—expected to deal with

massive migrations or with any other aspect of the climate change threat? As with the U.S.’s criminally inhumane treatment of border-crossing refugees, the prospects under both capitalist parties are all negative.

A capitalist solution?

The capitalist class rules most of the world with one goal in mind: increase their profits and their power. They do not care who rules a country, as long as their administration—two capitalist parties or the fascists who have now infiltrated the Republican Party—serves the rule of capital. The idea that any capitalist-imperialist regime—the U.S. leading the pack—could do a complete makeover of all the interlocked industries which have been poisoning the atmosphere for two hundred years in a short enough time to put a stop or even a slowdown of planet-wide warming, is ridiculous, laughable, idiotic—words escape one. Only a social revolution that overthrows the capitalist ruling class has that chance, but we need it now.

Wallace-Wells takes the viewpoint that the “awakening” to the danger of climate change on the part of government, some capitalist start-ups and non-profit citizen action gives us a big enough escape hatch to hold the damage to two degrees Celsius this century. And while this is basically a fairy tale, there is some note-worthy action being taken.

Green groups slam Biden’s bill

There is a certain divide on the fringe, but within the system. Some capitalists are investing in green energy, like wind and solar, while others are doubling down on fossil fuels. This “debate” is seen in the recent climate bill included in President Biden’s watered down “Build Back Better” bill, the “Inflation Reduction Act.” The bill includes measures to lower prescription drug prices, help pay for health insurance, and “the biggest U.S. investment ‘by far’ in climate change.”⁴

But this “biggest investment so far” is full of holes, according to Green Groups in an article, “Fossil Fuel Side Deal for U.S. Slammed by Green Groups.”⁵ First of all, the bill would provide for faster approvals for fossil fuel projects, including the infamous Mountain Valley natural gas pipeline in Appalachia, promoted by Senate Democrat Joe Manchin. Manchin’s approval was critical to getting this bill through Congress.

Manchin’s side deal infection

This “side deal” also delivers a range of permitting reforms for large infrastructure projects, such as limiting the length of environmental reviews, centralizing the power to approve projects to just one government agency, identifying priority energy projects to be fast-tracked, and reining in the length of court challenges. *Reuters* quotes Jean Su, the energy and program director for the Center for Biological Diversity, saying in an emailed statement that “The price to be paid for Manchin’s vote looks more and more like an oil and gas wish list.” Su also said, “This backroom deal threatens communities, while shunting aside state and tribal input.”

Reuters also reports that, “An oil and gas industry source, who did not want to comment publicly, said the sector applauded efforts to streamline permitting.” I would add, based on my own brief familiarity with Appalachia as a youth, that this pipeline project, over hills and valleys of very beautiful country, would be a disaster in its placement there. And it would be a bigger disaster waiting to happen, given the leaks to which these pipelines are all so susceptible. Also note that under Biden’s climate bill, sites of government-owned lands that are scheduled for green energy development (wind, solar) would be required to accept drilling projects for fossil fuels as well, all of which effectively cancels out this “climate bill.”

Get rid of fossil fuels? When?

The basic point of any climate measure today should be to add to a movement to get rid of fossil fuels that should have been seriously fired up back in the 1990s. The fact that a real campaign to get rid of fossil fuels has been essentially ignored is shown, for one instance, by a short piece buried on the back pages of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, sourced from the International Energy Agency, that says that renewables will “overtake coal as the largest source of electricity generation by early 2025.”⁶ 2025 for a report we should have heard about in the 1990s? Call it outrageous, but it really is just one more indication that climate change, which is already on a serious roll forward, will not be stopped by humans under capitalist domination, period. And that is a very dangerous prospect for the entire world, indeed.

Climate change is the biggest challenge now that human beings have faced since the onset of the last ice age, which reduced our population to a very few survivors.

What is really going on with fossil fuels now is that the corporations are on a well-organized fight back against climate measures to save themselves by making enough money now to survive their inevitable demise. The U.S. sanctions against Russia, which has massive reserves and sells its oil relatively cheaply, have allowed Western oil moguls to skyrocket prices, as well as prompting the E.U. to impose a limit on prices for Russian oil. These huge price hikes have led the U.S. to attempt to scale back sanctions on Venezuela and allow Chevron to resume refinery operations there. This promotes a

chuckle by progressives about the U.S. getting tangled up in the web of its own sanctioning policies, but the overall situation is far from comical.

Oil corporations go on the attack

Oil moguls have resorted to an outright attack on sustainable energy through agencies such as the Texas Public Policy Foundation. This “non-profit” organization, heavily funded by oil companies, is pouring those funds into a lawsuit filed by fishing companies in Massachusetts to block the nation’s first offshore wind farm. The fishers themselves feel that the necessary turbines and underwater cables “could interfere with the harvesting of squid, fluke and other fish,” according to a *New York Times* report.

While the fishers’ problems with this could probably be resolved through compromise measures, the same oil-backed organization has sucked this suit into its camp better than a predator shark could imagine. This same agency campaigned to keep open one of the biggest coal-fired power plants in the West, in Arizona. And in Texas, these sharks “crafted the first so-called ‘energy boycott’ law to punish financial institutions that want to scale back their investments in fossil fuel projects, legislation adopted by four other states.”⁷ Any questions?

Humans are in the crosshairs

At this point in time, the human race, and most other animals on this planet, are in the crosshairs of climate change, with barely the beginning of a fight-back. As we have seen, the amount of carbon in the atmosphere is increasing annually, and there is no reason to assume that this will not continue. Fossil-fuel capitalists are in an unchecked offensive against the climate solutions that are on the table so far. And the source of the problem—capitalist domination of the economy and society itself—is not about to be overthrown by a worker’s revolution, let alone by the

meager reformist “solutions” that attempt to “pressure” the capitalist overlords to do what is necessary.

As a long-time Trotskyist communist, I find it very hard to say that the prospects for development of a worker’s party that could overthrow capitalism in time to be able to get a handle on climate change are next to none. That is not to say that we should give up in this effort to build for a revolutionary solution! Nothing like that at all. But the fact is that we—and our younger comrades—will face a very different world much sooner than we like. We need to be aware of what we are facing, which starts with a much hotter world.

Our entire epoch is threatened

For this, we must look at earlier times when there was as much CO₂ in the atmosphere as there is now. Our epoch, the Holocene, and the preceding epoch, the Pleistocene—essentially the same time as the Stone Age, or Paleolithic—comprise the Quaternary Period, which started about 1.8 million years ago. In the Pleistocene epoch, the amount of carbon in the atmosphere varied from about 500 parts per million (ppm) down to 385 ppm. The temperature varied from about 22 degrees centigrade to 13 degrees in the later years of the Stone Age. That is hot.⁸

It is important to note that measurement of global average temperature today is much more sophisticated than measurements estimated for prehistoric times. Today’s measurements are based on the land and ocean values, which of course gives a much lower number than just what we experience on land. Prehistoric measurements are based primarily on tree rings and ice cores. This, I think is enough for us to assume that these ancient values are a valid comparison to what we experience now.

Global temperature is going up

We must now discern from the evidence that the global temperature is going to rise well above what it is now.

We must also assume that with all this carbon in the atmosphere, ocean temperature will also rise, more slowly, but with horrific results. These include the rising of ocean levels by 20 feet (from a Greenland melt) to over 40 feet when all of the Southern ice cap overflows into the sea. Death of all coral reefs will continue, and that will destroy about 25 percent of human food sources. Famines and mass migrations will increase way beyond the ability of capitalist states and imperialists of the north to deal with. This could lead to several possible outcomes: fascist mobilizations to slaughter migrants, complete breakdown of nation states in southern regions, and breakdowns of imperialist nations themselves.

Let us not stop now!

All of these crises could lead to the rich elite deciding that it’s everyone for themselves. And for the rich, assuming their money is still worth anything, that could mean the establishment of private walled retreats in more northern realms, such as the Canadian north and Siberia, guarded by hired fascist militias. How they would supply themselves with energy and resources is anyone’s guess, but do not dismiss this

as a likely possibility. We are in an age of rapid environmental change that is not going away with the Band-Aids so far presented, in between the wars that is. Think worst case analysis. We have faced it before.

Climate change is the biggest challenge now that human beings have faced since the onset of the last ice age, which reduced our population to a very few survivors. But the Homo species has survived for two million years. Let us not stop now.

1 David Wallace-Wells is a columnist and opinion writer for the *New York Times*, and the author of *The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming*.

2 Data as reported on the *climate.gov* website

3 “Americans” means inhabitants of the two continents and Central America. I mention this because too many people refer to “Americans” as just referring to the citizens of the United States of America.

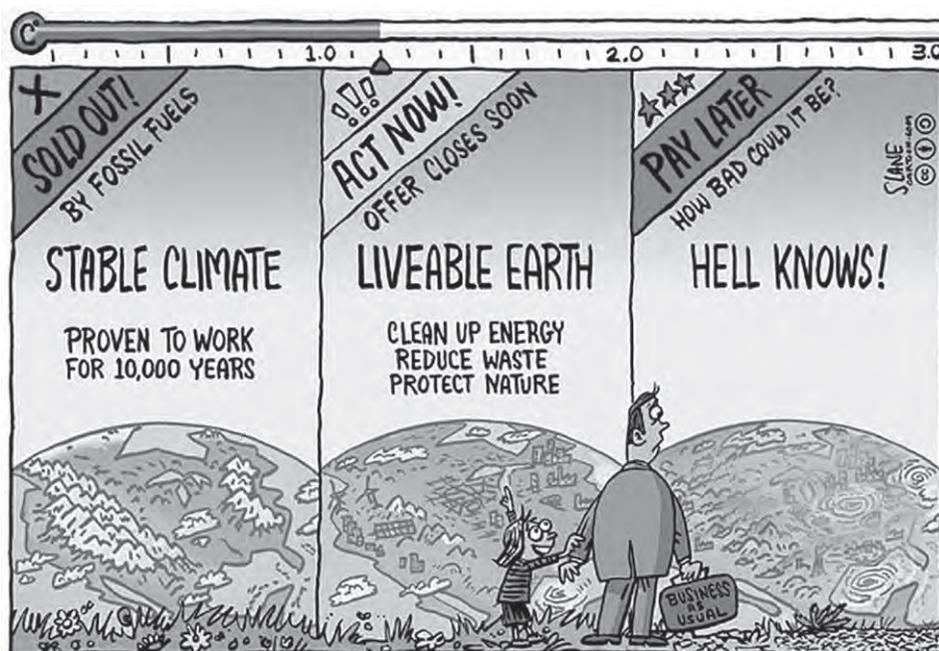
4 Washington *AP* report by Lisa Mascaro, August 16, 2022

5 Article by Nichola Groom, *Reuters*, August 2, 2022.

6 *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 7, 2022.

7 “Offshore Power Finds Rich Foe In Oil Country,” David Gelles, *New York Times*, December 4, 2022.

8 Information from Pan Terra Inc, at Worldwide Museum of Natural History, *wmnh.com*.



Carbon Billionaires

The investment emissions of the world's richest people

By JESSICA CORBETT

With the United Nations Climate Change Conference underway in Egypt, Oxfam on November 7, 2022, released a report highlighting how billionaires' investments produce massive amounts of planet-heating emissions that must be reined in to ensure a habitable planet.

The group's analysis—Carbon Billionaires: The Investment Emissions of the World's Richest People—reveals that the investments of 125 billionaires emit 393 million tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) each year, or the same as the entirety of France.

Putting that figure into an individual context, the report explains that the annual average tops 3.1 million tons of CO₂e per billionaire—or over a million times higher than the 2.76 tons that is the average for people worldwide who are in the bottom 90 percent.

“These few billionaires together have ‘investment emissions’ that equal the carbon footprints of entire countries like France, Egypt, or Argentina,” said Nafkote Dabi, climate change lead at Oxfam, in a statement. “The major and growing responsibility of wealthy people for overall emissions is rarely discussed or considered in climate policymaking. This has to change.”

Dabi declared that “these billionaire investors at the top of the corporate pyramid have huge responsibility for driving climate breakdown. They have escaped accountability for too long.”

“Emissions from billionaire lifestyles, their private jets, and yachts are thousands of times the average person, which is already completely unacceptable,” she noted. “But if we look at emissions from their investments, then their carbon emissions are over a million times higher.”

The report similarly stresses that “by looking at how the richest behave as investors, we can demonstrate not just their role as consumers of carbon but also their role as wealth holders who own, control, shape and financially profit from production processes that release greenhouse gases (GHGs) into the atmosphere.”

“Ordinary citizens often do not have a lot of control over their energy choices, particularly those in low- or middle-income groups. Poor public transport options can mean that people are forced to drive to work, for example,” the document points out. “In contrast, investors can choose where they put their money.”

“They can choose to put it into fossil fuel industries or other highly pol-

luting activities, or into the activities of other corporate actors that are clearly failing to do enough to reduce their carbon emissions,” the report continues. “The decisions that investors make now can potentially determine our emissions for decades to come—for instance, bad decisions on infrastructure investments can commit us to high levels of GHGs far into the future.”

According to Oxfam: “24 percent of billionaire investments in our sample are in the consumer discretionary sector, with 18 percent in consumer staples and 11 percent in financials. In terms of high-polluting industries, seven percent of investments are in energy and seven percent in materials. By comparison, energy corporates make up 4.7 percent of the S&P 500 and materials make up 2.5 percent.”

The document further notes that “there is one renewable energy company in our sample.”

Climate scientists along with energy, health, and policy experts continue to stress the need for governments across the globe to swiftly and dramatically strengthen plans to cut GHG emissions, especially if there is any hope of meeting the 1.5°C Paris agreement target.



Delegates arrive at the COP27 climate conference in Egypt's Red Sea resort city of Sharm El-Sheikh on November 7, 2022.

A highway to climate hell

Speaking from the COP27 summit in Sharm El-Sheikh on November 7, 2022, U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres warned that “we are on a highway to climate hell with our foot on the accelerator” and advocated for “greater urgency, stronger action, and effective accountability.”

Dabi argued that “we need COP27 to expose and change the role that big corporates and their rich investors are playing in profiting from the pollution that is driving the global climate crisis.”

“They can’t be allowed to hide or greenwash,” she said. “We need governments to tackle this urgently by publishing emission figures for the richest people, regulating investors and corporates to slash carbon emissions, and taxing wealth and polluting investments.”

Oxfam estimates that worldwide, a wealth tax on the ultrarich could raise \$1.4 trillion annually to go toward helping nations of the Global South adapt to a climate emergency that they largely did not create but which is disproportionately affecting them.

“The superrich need to be taxed and regulated away from polluting investments that are destroying the planet,” Dabi said, also urging governments to put in place “ambitious regulations and policies that compel corporations to be more accountable and transparent in reporting and radically reducing their emissions.”

“To meet the global target of keeping warming below 1.5°C,” she concluded, “humanity must significantly reduce carbon emissions, which will necessitate radical changes in how investors and corporations conduct business and public policy.”

—*Common Dreams*, November 7, 2022

<https://www.commondreams.org/news/2022/11/07/single-billionaire-produces-million-times-more-emissions-average-person->

Greenland is Worse Than Ever, Much Worse

BY ROBERT HUNZIKER

A new study finds Greenland’s ice sheet thinning much further into the ice sheet core than previously thought, 100 miles inland. (Source: S. Khan, *et al*, “Extensive Inland Thinning and Speed-Up of North-East Greenland Stream,” *Nature*, November 9, 2022)

The implications are extremely concerning and far-reaching especially for sea level rise. It is a significant development that will prompt climate scientists to recalculate global warming’s impact.

In that regard, some facts are worth repeating. Here’s one that cannot be told often enough because of the gravity of its implications for the 130 coastal cities of the world each with over one million residents: During the 1990s Greenland and Antarctica combined lost 81 billion tons of ice mass per year on average. A decade later, during the decade of the 2010s, the ice mass loss increased six-fold to 475 billion tons per year on average. (Source: “Greenland, Antarctica Melting Six Times Faster Than in the 1990s,” *NASA*, March 16, 2020)

It should be noted that it takes billions upon billions of tons of melted ice to move sea levels appreciably up, which does give some pause to any immediacy of cities overrun by gushing water. Yet, what if 475 billion tons per

year becomes much more than that?

Additionally, rehashing one more relevant stat, according to John Englander, the sea level expert par excellence: “If we only melt five percent of global glacial ice, it’s ten feet of sea level rise.” But, how long does it take to melt five percent? Nobody knows for sure, but it’s most likely well beyond 2100. What about only two percent? Again, nobody knows.

By now readers of articles like “Greenland is Worse Than Ever, Much Worse” must be getting accustomed to negative reports of climate change getting worse over time. In fact, relentlessly year-by-year it gets worse, never better. It’s like a terminally ill cancer patient knowing what to expect: Every checkup gets worse. Greenland just got an eye-opener!

Why

There’s a good reason for why climate change continually gets worse. It’s failure by the leaders of the world to react to years and years and years of climate scientists’ warnings, starting in the 1980s with Dr. James Hansen formerly Director of the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies: “Global Warming Has Begun, Expert Tells Senate,” splashed onto the front page of *The New York Times*, June 24, 1988.



Greenland, Image by Tina Rolf.

The needle to fix the climate change imbroglio has not budged since well before Dr. Hansen's speech to the U.S. Senate. Fossil fuels still account for 80-90 percent of energy use, same as 50 years ago! Moreover, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA) fossil fuel companies plan on \$1.5-trillion spending for new production. That's a lot of future CO₂. And, in certain quarters, coal is picking up steam again. These are the direct sources of CO₂ spewing into the atmosphere, prompting a big question for the 21st century: What's gonna stop the onset of runaway global warming?

As it happens, new studies bring new insight to prior studies. For example, previous studies of the Greenland ice sheet studied the edges of Greenland to look at active melting. Whereas, this new Khan study is drawn further inland, more than 100 miles inland, discovering thinning ice never before seen.

"What they found was alarming: thinning from Greenland's coast stretched back 200 to 300 kilometers (125 to 185 miles)...what we see happening at the front reaches far back into the heart of the ice sheet, said Shfaqat Abbas Khan in a press release about the study, published in *Nature*.... the new model really captures what's going on inland, the old ones do not...you end up with a completely different mass change, or sea level projection." (Source: Shfaqat A. Khan, *et al*, "Extensive Inland Thinning and Speed-up of Northeast Greenland Ice Stream," *Nature*, November 9, 2022)

The principal area studied, known as the Northeast Greenland Ice Stream (NEGIS) covers approximately 12 percent of the ice sheet. The thinning is estimated to add 13.5 to 15.5 millimeters to sea levels over time, which is equivalent to the contribution of the past 50 years. More to the point, according to the scientists: "The NEGIS could lose six times more ice than existing climate models estimate."

Thus, it's getting worse, much worse, six-times worse than previous studies. Six-times is really a lot, off the charts.

Warm ocean currents that absorb over 90 percent of planet heat cause the inland disturbances. In 2012 the floating extension of NEGIS collapsed, an event that accelerated ice flow and triggered rapid ice thinning, spreading upstream by over 100 miles—one has to wonder if the integrity of the entire ice sheet is more compromised than ever before?

An article in *Space.com* commented on the new finding: "Greenland's largest ice sheet is thawing at a much higher rate than expected, a new study has revealed, suggesting it will add six-times more water to the rising sea levels than previously thought. And the trend may not be limited to Greenland, scientists worry." (Source: "Sea Levels Might Rise Much Faster Than Thought, Data from Greenland Suggest," *Space.com*, November 9, 2022)

Repeating that prior statement "And the trend may not be limited to Greenland, scientists worry." Probably points a finger at Antarctica, where recent research has identified similar warm underwater currents eroding the base of ice sheets, for example, Thwaites glacier West Antarctica, the widest glacier on the planet: Under the ice the geological structure of Thwaites is "a recipe for disaster." Until only recently, Thwaites had not measurably changed since it was first mapped in the 1940s. All of that has changed now that global warming has intervened. It's what's happening hidden underneath that spooks scientists: "Ocean water well above melting point is eroding the base of the ice." (Source: Ted Scambos, lead principal investigator for the Science Coordination Office of the International Thwaites Glacier Collaboration (SCO project).

Profound changes

Even more alarming: The Khan study discovered that accelerating melt continued throughout the winter of 2021 and the summer of 2022, which were unusually cold in Greenland, suggesting

the thinning/melting process is impervious to temperature changes on surface.

According to Eric Rignot, professor of Earth System Science at the University of California, Irvine, co-author of the paper: "We foresee profound changes in global sea levels, more than currently projected by existing models."

Comments from leading climate scientists like Rignot saying the study represents "profound changes in sea levels" should alert world leaders to take action to convert fossil fuels to renewables, posthaste.

The Khan study was released as the world met in Egypt for COP27, seeking solutions. Based upon multitudes upon multitudes of climate change issues throughout the world maybe the delegates should extend their stay by several months or maybe even by one year just to go thru reams of demanding issues. Two weeks of COP27 can only scratch the surface of so many pressing issues that threaten our continuance.

Hopefully, COP27 does initiate real breakthrough enforcement mechanisms that compel countries to meet net zero by 2030, if that is soon enough, but if history is a prologue to results, don't hold your breath. Instead, it's prudent, in fact real smart, to make plans to adapt to fierce and fiercer climate change as well as much higher sea levels sooner rather than later.

The Khan study unfortunately comes on top of a chilling statement by the world's leading Greenland expert as mentioned on a *Radio Ecoshock* interview October 26, 2022: Luke Kemp: Climate Endgame: "Greenland ice expert Jason Box warns Earth is already committed to at least another foot of sea level rise from Greenland no matter what we do."

Robert Hunziker lives in Los Angeles.

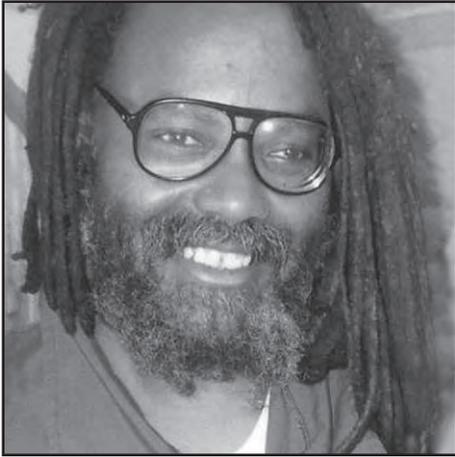
—*CounterPunch*, November 18, 2022

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2022/11/18/greenland-is-worse-than-ever-much-worse/>

Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!

INTERNATIONAL UNION OF PAINTERS AND ALLIED TRADES, LOCAL UNION No. 10 RESOLUTION

OCTOBER 19, 2022



Mumia Abu-Jamal

Whereas Mumia Abu-Jamal, the most prominent political prisoner in the United States, has been defended by the trade unions internationally; and

Whereas Mumia Abu-Jamal, a former Black Panther, writer, and president of the Philadelphia Association of Black Journalists, is renowned around the world for standing in solidarity with workers in struggle while on death row, and for his critique of the ravages of capitalism and worker exploitation, racist repression, and imperialist war; and

Whereas he is innocent of the charge of killing a police officer, and was framed up and sentenced to death in 1982 by a racist judicial system, without any corroborating physical evidence on false testimony by coerced witnesses who said Mumia Abu-Jamal was not the shooter; and

Whereas the courts have kept Mumia Abu-Jamal behind bars despite the sworn confession of another man, Arnold Beverly, that he, and not Mumia, shot the police officer; and

Whereas Mumia Abu-Jamal's 1982 trial before a racist Judge Albert Sabo, known for sending more men to death row than any other judge in the United States, stated during Abu-Jamal's trial that he was going "to help them fry the [N-word]."; and

Whereas Mumia Abu-Jamal remained on death row for nearly 30 years, saved from execution in 1995 and 1999 by international mass protest supported by trade unions, including the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, with West Coast ports shut down and teachers in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil participating in a state-wide work stoppage; therefore

Be it resolved that IUPAT Painters Local 10 demands immediate freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal and calls for a policy of working-class struggle through agitation, publicity, protest, and continued coordinated workers action on a national and international scale to free Mumia Abu-Jamal. IUPAT Painters Local 10 calls on workers of all countries to use their power to free our brother Mumia Abu-Jamal.

International Union of Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT) Painters Local No. 10

Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU) #11/AFL-CIO



Judicial Persecution Corrupts the Case of Mumia Abu-Jamal

BY LINN WASHINGTON

Philadelphia Common Pleas Court Judge Lucretia Clemons is the latest addition to an odious list of appellate court jurists who craftily construct legal barriers specifically to bludgeon evidence that undermines the corrupted conviction of Mumia Abu-Jamal, the acclaimed writer/activist who millions worldwide consider a “political prisoner.”

The 1982 conviction of Abu-Jamal, for killing a Philadelphia policeman, arose from gross violations of “international standards that govern fair trial procedures...” according to a seminal study on Abu-Jamal’s case released in February 2000 by Amnesty International. AI is the prestigious, Nobel Prize-winning human rights monitoring organization.

Judge Clemons, an African American, continues the peculiar appellate court practice of whitewashing wrongs that deny Abu-Jamal his constitutional fair trial rights.

As that Amnesty study noted, the “politicization” of Mumia Abu-Jamal’s case “may not only have prejudiced his right to a fair trial but may now be undermining his right to fair and impartial treatment in the appeal courts.”

Judge Clemons, during an appeal proceeding in October 2022, released a 31-page “Notice of Intent to Dismiss” Abu-Jamal’s latest appeal. That appeal is perhaps the last appeal he can file.

Clemons’ “Intent” ruling wraps fictions with legalese to justify her rejection of Abu-Jamal’s appeal. The reply to Clemons’ intended ruling from Abu-Jamal’s lawyers reminds her that some of her legal reasoning is “precisely the approach” that the Pennsylvania Supreme Court and the United States Supreme Court have both “deemed incorrect.”

A unique aspect of Judge Clemons’ engagement with Abu-Jamal’s appeal is her rejection of extraordinary evidence

documenting disturbing wrongdoing during Abu-Jamal’s 1982 trial for the murder of Officer Daniel Faulkner.

This extraordinary evidence that Clemons finds “unpersuasive” includes rare documentation of both racist procedures the trial prosecutor used during jury selection and improper inducements prosecutors provided two prime trial witnesses. One item in that extraordinary evidence is a handwritten note from one of those prime witnesses to the trial prosecutor demanding the “money” that witness said the prosecutor promised him.

Fair trial rights, for example, bar prosecutors from purchasing testimony. Fair trial rights also bar prosecutors from racist jury selection practices.

Judge Clemons, consistent with prior appellate practice to block Abu-Jamal appeals, has declared intent to disregard the fundamental fact that fair trial rights require prosecutors to disclose evidence favorable to a defendant.

Philadelphia prosecutors failed to follow that requirement in the Abu-Jamal case by withholding that extraordinary evidence for over 36-years.

Clemons cavalierly whitewashes this outrageous failure by prosecutors. She contends Abu-Jamal was not “prejudiced” either at trial or during subsequent appeals because prosecutors improperly withheld evidence of obvious improprieties against Abu-Jamal.

The fact that prosecutors withheld favorable evidence from defense lawyers for over 13,000-days should be an automatic basis for a new trial—a proverbial no-brainer. However, Judge Clemons intends to reject Abu-Jamal’s request for a new trial seeing no legal unfairness in prosecutors withholding that evidence for over 21-million minutes.



Truly unique context of this extraordinary evidence Clemons' stated she is prepared to dismiss is that Philadelphia's current District Attorney personally discovered it. DA Larry Krasner found six boxes of Abu-Jamal case documents stashed in a storage closet while exploring the physical layout of DA's office one month after his November 2018 election.

Krasner's discovery of those six boxes came shortly after the DA's Office told another judge hearing an Abu-Jamal appeal that all material about Abu-Jamal's case had been given to Abu-Jamal's defense team.

While Abu-Jamal's defense argues evidence in those six withheld boxes constitute a "watershed revelation" Judge Clemons deems that evidence irrelevant, essentially old wine in a new bottle that prior appellate rulings rejected.

Consider Judge Clemons' posture on one document in those six boxes. That document is handwritten notes by the trial prosecutor where that prosecutor placed a big 'B' by the names of potential Black jurors and a big 'W' by potential white jurors. Prosecutors employing race as a criterion in jury selection is forbidden by the Pennsylvania and U.S. supreme courts. For decades, Philadelphia prosecutors denied any improprieties in Abu-Jamal's jury selection citing a lack of conclusive evidence of any impropriety that the handwritten notes now provide.

Clemons blasted Abu-Jamal's defense for not probing the trial prosecutor on his jury selection rationales during a mid-1990s appeal hearing.

But, as noted in Abu-Jamal's reply to Clemons, defense lawyers could not have questioned the trial prosecutor on those handwritten notes because prosecutors improperly withheld those notes from the defense. Abu-Jamal's reply stated there was no notice before January 2019* that the trial prosecutor in 1982 "took jury notes showing he was tracking jurors by race." (*January

2019 is when the DA's Office released those six boxes of documents to Abu-Jamal's defense team.)

Clemons made an astoundingly absurd assertion in her "Intent" when she declared that either Abu-Jamal or his trial lawyer could have easily observed "with their own eyes" the prosecutor making those improper racial notations during jury selection. Clemons' assertion ignored the virtual impossibility of someone sitting at the defense table during a trial being able to see exactly what someone wrote on a note pad at the prosecution table located at least five feet away from the defense table.

Judge Clemons—in her "Intent"—rejected holding an evidentiary hearing where she could hear testimony to determine for herself the veracity of claims by the DA's Office, thus resolving factual disputes.

Clemons, for example, doesn't see a need to hear prosecutors explain their claim that the demand for "money" from their prime trial witness was not payment for his testimony. Prosecutors claim the demand for money in that withheld note related to wages that witness said he lost due to testifying at trial.

Clemons claimed the jury would have still convicted Abu-Jamal even if they knew about that demand for money. Clemons conveniently omits contextual facts like the jury never learned that witness thought the trial prosecutor would get his driver's license restored that was revoked due to a DUI conviction.

Because of rulings by the bigoted, pro-prosecution trial judge, the jury never knew that this witness was on probation for firebombing a school and was driving a cab without a valid driver's license when he claimed he saw Abu-Jamal shoot Faulkner. Driving on a revoked license could have led to the revocation of that driver's probation sending him to prison for that firebombing. Abu-Jamal's lawyers contend

the driver tailored his testimony to save himself from possible imprisonment.

Another document contained in those six withheld boxes is a report filed by a police officer that exposed improprieties by police related to that cab driving witness. This police officer filed that report less than ninety minutes after Faulkner's murder. The report stated police commanders told that officer to "ride over to Homicide with a cab driver."

Since that cab driver said he witnessed Faulkner's murder after he parked his cab behind Faulkner's patrol car, police violated their crime scene investigation protocols which forbid removing vehicles relevant to an investigation.

That cab is not shown in any of the official police crime scene photos. And, that cab is not shown in photos taken by a freelance news photographer who arrived at the crime scene ten minutes after Faulkner's fatal shooting and before police crime scene investigators.

No other prosecution witness testified to seeing a cab behind Faulkner's patrol car.

This failure of prosecution witnesses to place a cab behind the patrol car included the only other prosecution eyewitness who claimed that Abu-Jamal killed Faulkner. That witness, a prostitute, claimed she was standing a few feet from where the cab driver testified that he was parked.

If police allowed the cab driver to drive himself to the interview by Homicide detectives, as confirmed in that policeman's report, then police tampered with the crime scene. Tampering with a crime scene is another valid reason for granting Abu-Jamal a new trial.

That cab driver, years after the trial, told defense investigators and reporters that he did not park behind Faulkner's patrol car. This witness said he did not see who shot Faulkner. Those statements to investigators and

reporters contradict the cab driver's trial testimony. Those statements constitute additional evidence of the need for a new trial that Judge Clemons and other jurists have dismissed.

Those six withheld boxes also contained alarming evidence of leniency prosecutors extended to their second eyewitness. That prostitute said she witnessed Faulkner's shooting while standing on a corner a few feet from the crime. This prostitute and the trial prosecutor each told the trial jury there were no deals for her testimony. Yet, days after the jury convicted Abu-Jamal, prosecutors dropped a series of criminal charges pending against that prostitute.

Judge Clemons asserts that the jury would have convicted Abu-Jamal even without the eyewitness testimony of the cab

driver and the prostitute—the only two witnesses to testify that Abu-Jamal shot Faulkner. However, Abu-Jamal's reply to Clemons' "Intent" disputes her assertion.

The "cumulative effect of a promise of money to one crucial witness and of leniency to another would have undermined the reliability of the investigation and discredited the government's methods in assembling the case," the reply states.

Abu-Jamal, imprisoned since his December 1981 arrest, has authored/co-authored over a dozen books, created over a thousand commentaries, learned to speak two foreign languages, plus earned college and graduate degrees. Further, Abu-Jamal's claim of innocence has garnered support from several governmental bodies from Europe to Japan.

Amnesty International, in that 2000 study, stated "the interests of justice would be best served by" granting Abu-Jamal a new trial."

Pennsylvania's Code of Judicial Conduct states the judiciary "plays a fundamental role in ensuring the principles of justice and the rule of law."

Judges who have constructed legal barriers to block Abu-Jamal's appeals disregard a Conduct Code warning that "public confidence in the judiciary is eroded by improper conduct..."

—*This Can't Be Happening*, November 20, 2022

<https://thiscantbehappening.net/judicial-persecution-corrupts-the-case-of-mumia-abu-jamal/>

Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!

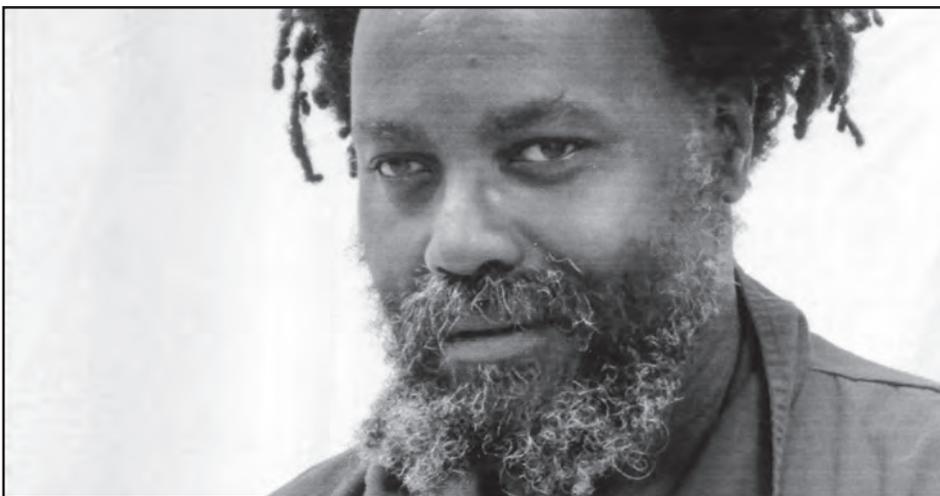
SPEECH BY ELIOT LEE GROSSMAN¹

Oakland, California, October 26, 2022—Prize-winning journalist and ex-Black Panther Mumia Abu-Jamal was framed up and sentenced to death for the murder of a white police officer in Philadelphia in 1981. Mumia is innocent, but he was convicted and sentenced to death in a trial presided over by a racist judge, the "Honorable" Albert

Sabo, who was overheard by a court stenographer saying, "Yeah, and I'm going to help 'em fry the nigger." Mumia's trial was nothing more than a legalized lynching in which every one of his constitutional rights was violated. Mumia narrowly avoided execution when we convinced a federal judge to overturn his death sentence in 2001 and that deci-

sion was later affirmed on appeal. But Mumia has remained in prison ever since, sentenced to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole.

We are here today to show our support for Mumia when his case is, once again, at a critical moment. Today in Philadelphia a judge in Pennsylvania's Court of Common Pleas held a hearing to decide whether or not to grant "progressive" D.A. Larry Krasner's Motion to Dismiss Mumia's 6th Post-Conviction Relief Act Petition in which Mumia's lawyers argued that his conviction should be overturned because of recently discovered evidence which proves that Mumia did not receive a fair trial for two reasons: (1) The prosecutor offered a bribe to one of the two purported eyewitnesses, Robert Chobert, to testify that he saw Mumia shoot the police officer when Chobert did not even see the shooting; and (2) The prosecutor used his peremptory challenges during jury selection to



Mumia Abu-Jamal, 2019.

remove African-American jurors from the jury because of their race.

Although the D.A.'s arguments in support of the Motion to Dismiss were illogical, dishonest, and unpersuasive, the judge announced her intention to grant the D.A.'s motion and dismiss Mumia's most recent Post-Conviction Relief Act petition. Mumia's attorneys have 20 days to file more legal arguments to try to convince the judge to change her mind while the D.A. has 20 days to file additional arguments to support the judge's tentative opinion.

It is highly unlikely the judge will change her mind, given that she presented the attorneys for both sides with a 31-page tentative opinion in favor of dismissing Mumia's petition, but this will not discourage us. We will continue and intensify the struggle to free Mumia! The judge's decision will be appealed, and the struggle will continue!

The newly discovered evidence

What is the "recently discovered evidence" which proves that Mumia did not have a fair trial, but which the judge today refused to consider? It is two documents found in six boxes of prosecution files from Mumia's trial which were hidden in a warehouse for used office furniture for the last 40 years but were found recently by Krasner who had to turn them over to Mumia's attorneys in response to a formal "Request for Production of Documents" during the discovery phase of litigation over Mumia's previous post-conviction petition, Petition #5.

Petition #5 was granted by Judge Leon Tucker, one of the few African-American judges in Pennsylvania, who ruled that Mumia could relitigate the issues previously rejected in Mumia's four appeals to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court from denial of his four previous Post-Conviction Relief Act petitions because Justice Ronald Castille, who was Head D.A. at the time of Mumia's direct appeal from his conviction and death sentence, exhibited an appearance of bias against Mumia.

But "progressive" D.A. Larry Krasner appealed Judge Tucker's decision and the appellate court overruled Judge Tucker on the ground that Mumia's petition was "untimely" despite having been filed within the time period established by Pennsylvania's Post-Conviction Relief Act. This was just one more example, like today, of the courts bending over backwards to misinterpret their own laws in order to keep Mumia's frame-up in place.

Mumia's trial was nothing more than a legalized lynching in which every one of his constitutional rights was violated.

What are the two documents that prove Mumia didn't get a fair trial, but which the judge today refused to consider? The first is a letter from Robert Chobert to the prosecutor, dated one week after Chobert finished his perjured testimony, asking when he would be paid the money he was owed. Think about it: Chobert actually sent a collection letter to the prosecutor for the bribe he was promised. Under the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Brady v. United States* the prosecutor was required to turn that letter over to Mumia's defense attorney at trial so he could use it to cross-examine Chobert and challenge his credibility.

Had this been done, as it should have been, the jury would have found Mumia "not guilty," because the other supposed "eye witness," sex worker Cynthia White, contradicted herself several times when she testified and, 20 years ago, another sex worker, Yvette Williams, came forward and provided a statement under oath that she was in jail with Cynthia White at the time of Mumia's trial and White admitted to

her that she did not even see the shooting, but the cops were forcing her to lie that she saw Mumia shoot the police officer or they would send her to state prison for years on her many open prostitution cases. Yvette Williams swore that when police detectives came to talk with White in jail, they gave her contraband including syringes and a mysterious white powder. I wonder what that white powder was?

Racial jury selection

The second document the judge today didn't even want to look at is the notes the prosecutor took during jury selection in Mumia's trial in which he noted the race of some of the jurors by writing the letter "B" after some of their names and the letter "W" after other names. This proves the prosecutor was deciding to remove certain jurors from the jury because they were Black and, in fact, the prosecutor removed 11 African-Americans from Mumia's jury in violation of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in the case of *Batson v. United States*.

Under the Brady and Batson cases the evidence from those two documents should have required the court to overturn Mumia's convictions, but "progressive" District Attorney Larry Krasner, rather than letting Mumia have his day in court so the merits of his attorneys' arguments could be considered, told the judge to throw the petition into the judicial trashcan because there are supposedly other possible "innocent" interpretations of Chobert's letter and the prosecutor's jury-selection notes. But even if that were true, which it is not, that would be a reason to have a hearing on the merits of the issues rather than refuse even to consider them.

Mumia's supporters are demonstrating in Philadelphia and other cities today to support Mumia and we are here today in solidarity with them and to join in their demands: Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! We need to organize more demonstrations in Philadelphia, the

Sixty Years Behind Bars

Ruchell “Cinque” Magee is the longest-held political prisoner in the United States

BY COALITION TO FREE RUCHELL MAGEE

State of Pennsylvania, here in the Bay Area, and throughout this country and the world to demand that Mumia’s conviction be overturned and he be freed. Protest demonstrations are just a beginning. We need to call on the unions in this country to take a stand like the International Longshore and Warehouse Union did one day in 1999 when it closed down all ports on the West Coast and made one demand: Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!

We need more unions to stage political protest strikes that can build that momentum toward a general strike to demand: Free Mumia Abu-Jamal and all political prisoners who are victims of the class war in this country by the 1 percent against the 99 percent!

While we must continue to support Mumia’s fight for freedom in the courts, we should have no faith that he will obtain justice from the judges of the ruling class unless and until they are forced to do justice by the organized power of the working class!

Workers of the world, unite! Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!

1 This speech was delivered by Los Angeles attorney Eliot Lee Grossman at a rally in support of Mumia Abu-Jamal on October 26, 2022 at the Federal Building in Oakland, California, organized by the Labor Action Committee to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal and endorsed by ANSWER Coalition, Mobilization to Free Mumia, Workers World Party, Peace and Freedom Party, Freedom Socialist Party, and the Oakland Educational Association. Mr. Grossman represented Mumia from 2001 through 2003 with Chicago attorney Marlene Kamish, British Barrister Nick Brown, Philadelphia attorney J. Michael Farrel, and Legal Assistant/Community Organizer Tracy Kostenbader. Mr. Grossman has practiced law for 44 years. He has taught at Peoples College of Law in Los Angeles, the University of California, Irvine, and the University of the Americas and the United States International University in Mexico City. He is an Academic Member of the Permanent Seminar for Chicano and Border Studies, an interdisciplinary research center of the National Institute of Anthropology and History in Mexico City.

Editor’s note: I visited Ruchell Magee in the California Medical Facility state prison in Vacaville, in September 2022. His spirit and determination to win his freedom is strong. He is dedicated to the struggle to expose the racist conviction and excruciating prison time he has endured for such a long time. We reprint here information about Ruchell’s history, his case, and his struggle from the website of the Coalition to Free Ruchell Magee (www.freeruchellmagee.org)

—Carole Seligman

Ruchell Magee was born an only child on March 17, 1939, in the small town of Franklinton, Louisiana. Across the Deep South, Jim Crow laws, white supremacist lynchings, KKK terror, segregation, and legal bias against Black people were common. In 1955, at the young age of 16, Ruchell was accused of aggravated attempted rape due to his relationship with a white girl in KKK territory. For context, Emmett Till was lynched, mutilated, and murdered in August 1955 for allegedly whistling at a white woman. Magee was given a completely bogus trial with an all-white jury who sentenced him to eight hard years in the notorious Angola State Prison, a former plantation. In 1962 the state deprived him of his inherited property and ordered that he leave Louisiana and go to Los Angeles.

Ruchell was finally allowed to leave Louisiana’s dungeons in 1963, so he headed to Los Angeles for a fresh start. Only six months later, Ruchell and his cousin Leroy were arrested as they sat with a man named Ben Brown in Brown’s car. Brown told police a far-fetched tale that Ruchell and his cousin had kidnapped him in a dispute over a \$10 bag of weed, even though the cousins didn’t even have the car keys.

Injustices only beginning

As the police arrested him, they beat him so badly that he had to be hospitalized for three days, but the injustices were only beginning. The racist Superior Court of Los Angeles County railroaded him with the trumped-up charge of kidnapping to commit robbery. There was extreme malpractice from both the prosecutor and the defense attorney, which came to a head with Magee’s lawyer pleading him guilty without his consent. Ruchell was unjustly imprisoned with a seven-years-to-life sentence for this alleged crime.

Cinque

Ruchell strived to develop his mind in prison, where he learned the rich traditions of African history and liberation struggles. He took on the name “Cinque” because he felt a connection with the African freedom fighter Cinqué, who led a rebellion on the slave ship *La Amistad*. Magee won himself a second trial by pointing out that his indictment was improperly joined with his cousin’s case (among other improper acts.) In 1965, Magee unfortunately faced the same judge that bound and gagged him in the first trial for making lawful objections. In Ruchell’s own words, the second trial “used fraud to hide fraud,” upholding the conviction and shooting his trial down.

Magee had gained a reputation in the prison system as a people’s lawyer by doing work like filing a lawsuit for the wrongful death of prisoner Fred Billingsley, who was beaten and tear-gassed to death in his cell in the San Quentin State Prison in February 1970. Ruchell’s work helped lead to a large settlement for the Billingsley family.

A freedom try

After seven years of torture in California's prison system, he took an opportunity for freedom when it came to him. On August 7, 1970, Ruchell Magee and William Christmas were among the witnesses for the trial of James McClain, who was on trial for assaulting a guard after the brutal Billingsley murder. Jonathan Jackson, the younger brother of prisoner and Black Panther Party Field Marshal George Jackson, attempted to free his brother and the rest of the Soledad Brothers by taking control of the courtroom in Marin County Courthouse. Jonathan announced that he was taking over and offered weapons to Magee, Christmas, and McClain. Even though he wasn't aware of the plan at its start, he knew that this could be his last chance to escape slavery and get the world's attention on his unjust conviction.

San Quentin prison guards arrived and opened fire on the group as they left the building, killing Jackson, Christmas, McClain, and a judge while critically wounding Ruchell and a prosecutor.

Ruchell continues to fight for his liberation while simultaneously fighting to expose the corrupt judicial system. He would have never been in the Marin County Courthouse courtroom if he received a fair trial in his 1963 case. Even throughout decades of abuses and injustices, Ruchell has continuously offered his support as a people's lawyer for other prisoners.

Ruchell urgently needs public support in 2023, especially because of his factual innocence, his age of 84-years-old, and the risk of COVID-19 in California's wretched prisons. He currently has motions in the legal system—a request to Governor Gavin Newsom for commutation in California and a hearing in the Supreme Court. Ruchell was scheduled for a parole suitability hearing in July 2021, where he was again denied.

In Ruchell's own words, "Slavery 400-years-ago, slavery today. It's the

same but with a new name. Whether it was Africans fighting captivity in Africa, or Africans fighting captivity in California, oppressed people have the right to rebel!"

"Once the facts can be clearly established and shown to the people where these dogs are practicing slavery under the color of law, then this automatically requires a special investigation by the

people to look for themselves. They will find that these judges are criminals." — Ruchell Cinque Magee

www.freeruchellmagee.org

Write to:

Ruchell Magee #A92051

C.M.F. T-123

P.O. Box 2000

Vacaville, CA 95696



Ruchell "Cinque" Magee is the longest-held political prisoner in the United States
Ruchell Magee and Carole Seligman

Solitary Torture in Virginia

BY KEVIN “RASHID” JOHNSON

In 2011 the United Nations declared solitary confinement to be torture and that it should not be used for longer than two weeks. The next year I was transferred out of state after spending 18 years in solitary confinement in Virginia’s prisons myself—14 years of which I spent in Virginia’s notoriously racist and abusive supermaxes, Red Onion State Prison (ROSP) and Wallens Ridge State Prison (WRSP).

I had become a thorn in Virginia’s side by co-founding outside support groups for prisoners and resisting and exposing abuses in its prisons with published reports and articles, including about the abuses of solitary.¹

After I was sent into “domestic exile” and amidst an international movement exposing and challenging the widespread abuses of long-term solitary in U.S. prisons, Virginia came under increased public and legal scrutiny for

its own abusive long term solitary practices at ROSP and WRSP, by both outside advocates and victimized prisoners.

Virginia’s fake reform of solitary confinement

In response Virginia Department of Corrections (sic!) [VDOC] officials moved to disguise but not end the continued use of solitary confinement. They created an arbitrary phase system to create the false appearance on paper of giving prisoners opportunities to participate in programs and be released to general population after brief periods.

To further disguise the continued solitary nature of their segregated housing units, they euphemistically called them Restorative Housing Units (RHUs) instead of what they actually are—solitary confinement. In the RHUs prisoners still spent months to years sitting idle and isolated. Public

protests of this continued use of solitary confinement persisted², and several of its victims who suffered this torture and psychological injury brought a federal class action lawsuit against it, styled *William Thorpe v VDOC*. This lawsuit has not gone well for Virginia officials.

On June 15, 2021, the court found against Virginia officials that the so-called RHU step down program described in the lawsuit was unconstitutional and abusive and still constituted solitary confinement.³ It is apparent that Virginia won’t win this case.

Virginia retaliates against its solitary confinement litigants

In turn, VDOC officials have retaliated against the prisoners who sued them. After spending over two decades in solitary, the lead plaintiff, William Thorpe, was interstate transferred to the Texas prison system, which is known by the courts for its culture of extreme abuse by officials, targeted especially at prisoners who litigate. As the Texas federal courts have long acknowledged:

“[Texas Department of Corrections (TDC)] officers routinely harass and punish those prisoners whom they perceive as litigious. These inmates, known as ‘writ writers,’ are earmarked by TDC officials as troublemakers and are constantly hounded wherever they go within the prison system. Their persistence in legal activity can cause them to lose even minor comforts or privileges which TDC prisoners are otherwise capable of enjoying.

“Practices designed to retaliate against writ writers have ranged from the overt to the subtle, from the imposition of inconveniences to the perpetration of violence.”⁴

I can also attest to the inhumane conditions inflicted on Texas prisoners



(Shutterstock)

in general and against those who litigate in particular, since this was one of the very prison systems that Virginia officials exiled me to and about which I wrote many articles.⁵

Another prisoner plaintiff in the Thorpe lawsuit is Peter Mukuria, who is a comrade of mine and fellow leading member of the Revolutionary Intercommunal Black Panther Party (RIBPP). Mukuria was interstate transferred earlier this year to the Maryland prison system from ROSP. After suffering continued harassment by at ROSP, in Maryland he was set up by guards and thrown in solitary confinement, which was exposed and, following public protest, rescinded. Then efforts were made to harass him and block his family and fiancé from visiting him. Upon his transfer, Virginia officials vandalized and destroyed all of his personal property, including his legal materials related to the solitary confinement lawsuit. They are now attempting to negotiate reimbursement for his belongings.

Another prisoner plaintiff to the Thorpe lawsuit named Kevin Snodgrass, who is presently confined with me in solitary at Sussex 1 State Prison (S1SP), has also been targeted. I personally witnessed the recent retaliation he's faced.

In early October 2022 he was moved to general population against the warden, Kevin McCoy's wishes, and initially placed into a cell with a compatible cellmate. Moments after the move, Kevin's cellie was ordered to pack his belongings to be relocated to make room for another prisoner to be moved in with Kevin. The cellie protested but was told he was not assigned to the cell, although he'd been housed there for three weeks. He was forced to move under threat of disciplinary action. Kevin felt something was amiss.

Another prisoner, Kenneth Hunt, a known snitch, was immediately moved in with Kevin. Not long after, there was an altercation and the snitch requested

protective custody. During the altercation the informant revealed to Kevin that just before moving into the cell, he was propositioned by a lieutenant named Green under the warden's directions, to set Kevin up to be put in solitary in exchange for certain perks, but that he wasn't going to do it. He did in any case give a statement against Kevin to have him convicted of a disciplinary infraction for assault on Hunt. Kevin is now back in solitary confinement for that incident that was set in motion by S1SP officials, the warden no less.

The attorneys who are representing the men in the Thorpe lawsuit spoke to Kevin recently and informed him that they had been attempting to communicate with him and all the other prisoner plaintiffs to the suit by phone for over a month but had been blocked by prison officials. They reported that, like him, all the other plaintiffs have been targeted with retaliatory abuses.

The retaliations faced by the plaintiffs to the Thorpe solitary confinement lawsuit are typical. When the pigs are subjected to exposure and face even the smallest accountability for their wrongs, their response is never to acknowledge and correct their wrongs. They act instead to retaliate against those who bring their wrongs to light. Yet they are only too fond of preaching to those they hold in captivity for supposed breaking laws that we must learn to be

responsible for our wrongs. The typical hypocrisy of Amerikan democracy.

Dare to Struggle Dare to Win!
All Power to the People!

Note: A fundraising campaign is underway to acquire the services of an attorney to represent Kevin "Rashid" Johnson's struggle for medical care, which the prison is not providing.

Here is the donation link at Cash App: \$KlassStruggle

1 See, for example, Kevin "Rashid" Johnson, "Amerikan Prisons Are Government Sponsored Torture" (2007), <http://rashidmod.com/?p=113>; Kevin "Rashid" Johnson, "Abu Ghraib Comes to Amerika: Torture Unit Under Construction at Virginia's Red Onion State Prison" (2010), <http://rashidmod.com/?p=119>; Kevin "Rashid" Johnson, "Under New Administration Torture Unit Closes Then Reopens at ROSP, and Prison Abuse on the Rise" (2011), <http://rashidmod.com/?p=317>, etc. Many of these articles have been printed in *Socialist Viewpoint*.

2 See, report "Activists Campaign to end Solitary Confinement in Virginia," which has been aired on PBS several times

<https://vpm.org/news/articles/30403/activists-campaign-to-end-solitary-confinement-in-virginia>

3 *Thorpe v VDOC*, 2021 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 112284 (W.D. Va., June 15, 2021)

4 . *Ruiz v Estelle*, 503 F. Supp. 1265, 1369 (S.D. Tex. 1980)

5 . See my website, <http://www.rashidmod.com>, Section on Texas Department of Criminal Justice



Perpetuating Wage Slavery and Manufacturing Artificial Desires

BY KEVIN “RASHID” JOHNSON

Introduction

Wage labor is slavery. To illustrate the point, let's compare chattel slavery and wage labor.

The point of chattel slavery, which was an economic system, was to exploit the labor power of the slaves for the “owner's” profit. Capitalism, which is also an economic system, exploits the labor power of the worker (or proletariat) for the boss's profit.

On the plantations of Amerika's old South, chattel slaves performed back-breaking labor for their “owners,” planting, tending, and harvesting cash crops, raising livestock, clearing forests, building homes, estates, government structures, and so on. Everything that the slaves produced the owner claimed as his own, used to sustain himself and his family, and sold the surplus at a profit to become wealthy.

The chattel slave was deemed to be property (chattel) and could own nothing. So, the owner provided for the slaves' maintenance, giving them just enough shelter, food, clothing, medical care, and entertainment to

keep them physically and mentally “fit” to continue working to enrich the owner. The expenditures given for the slaves' upkeep were mere crumbs taken from the vast amounts of resources the slaves produced with their labor power that was taken by the owner.

The entire point of ads or advertising is to create demand among the workers to keep them locked in a cycle of buying up useless things they otherwise would not want.

The slaves never needed the owner to survive, but rather it was actually the owner who lived and profited off the slaves. It was outright robbery. So, the owner had to keep the slaves uneducated, deceived and indoctrinated into believing that they needed and could not survive or have an organized society without him and his system of rank exploitation, and that the owner was entitled to subjugate, use, and profit off of them in this manner. An entire system of laws, cultural norms and prejudices were manufactured to justify, enforce, and perpetuate these productive relations.

Of course, many slaves still recognized the injustice of their horrible abuse and rebelled, and therefore had to be compelled to accept it by the most brutal violence, dehumanization, and terrorism.

Wage labor is slavery

Wage labor (or wage slavery) operates much the same as chattel slavery, but because the wage slave is not “owned” by anyone, the trickery that

keeps them tied to the capitalist system is more subtle.

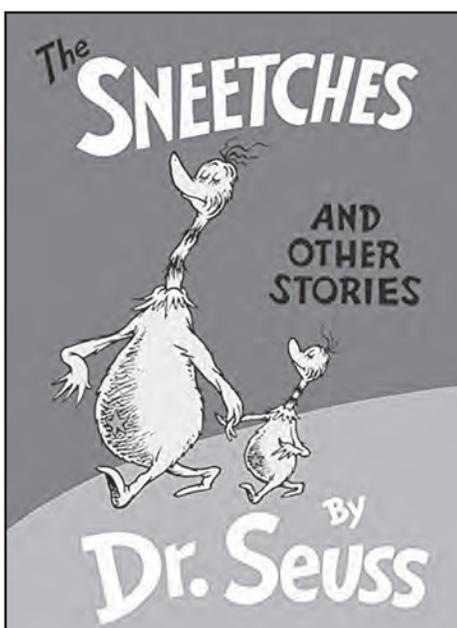
Instead of an owner, the wage worker has a boss. Because the slave was the owner's property, like a car, the owner cared to some degree about the maintenance of the slave to keep her/him in working condition. But because the boss has no such connection to the worker, and the worker can be dismissed and immediately replaced from the unemployment line should they fall ill or become unfit to work, the boss doesn't care about the worker's health or wellbeing.

And whereas the slaver assumed responsibility for his slaves' health and upkeep to keep them fit to continue working, under capitalism the boss pays the worker a small wage (at far below the actual value of the goods and services that the worker's labor produces,) which the worker must use to buy their own food, clothing, shelter and entertainment. In the case of both slave and worker, their basic needs are met with crumbs taken from the huge amount of wealth they create with their hard labor that is stolen by the owner and boss.

In that the worker is paid only enough to temporarily meet their needs, they must return to the job and sell their labor power to the capitalist bosses day after day for their entire lives in order to live and survive.

As in chattel slavery, under capitalism the tools, factories, offices, land, and goods produced by the worker, and indeed the entire system of production, are “owned” by the boss who sells the products that the workers produce at their actual value and pockets the profit.

Also, like chattel slavery, the worker doesn't need the boss to survive, but rather it is the boss who lives and profits off the workers. Capitalism is also outright robbery. So, the capitalist class



keeps the workers and all of society miseducated, deceived and indoctrinated into believing that the capitalist system and its rank exploitation is the best of all possible worlds; and that the ruling class is entitled to subjugate, use, and profit off the workers in this manner. The entire system of laws, cultural norms and prejudices were manufactured to justify, enforce, and perpetuate these productive relations.

Like the chattel slaves, workers have often been seen through the exploitation of the capitalist system and rebelled. Therefore, throughout its history capitalism has had to fight against workers to force and trick them into accepting their exploitation and to counter their recognizing and rebelling against it, especially in a unified and organized manner.

So, by comparison, we see that chattel slavery and wage slavery operate almost identically, with the main distinction being that one form of exploitation ties the laborer to the system by ownership while the other does so through a wage.

Creating wants through inventing fads

A principal trick used by the capitalist class to tie workers to this system has been to manipulate them into desiring and buying back useless products that they are compelled to produce but that they would not otherwise want. This is accomplished by their creating fads, status symbols, and styles, and advertising them to the masses so they will desire them; but the only way they can obtain these items is by selling their labor power, or otherwise hustling in the underground economy, to obtain money with which to purchase them. The entire point of ads or advertising is to create demand among the workers to keep them locked in a cycle of buying up useless things they otherwise would not want. This keeps them psychologically tied to the capitalist system and the wage.

This scheme was often used to trick freed chattel slaves into returning to

labor for their old enslavers under much the same conditions as before the slave systems were supposedly abolished. One example occurred when Britain tricked the newly freed Blacks of Jamaica back into slavery. The process also illustrates how capitalism is truly a system of slavery in which workers are tricked into believing their labor is given freely and fairly compensated, and how creation of fads and ads are used to trick (actually, brainwash) the masses into accepting and perpetuating their own enslavement and competition among themselves.

We don't need capitalism or its status symbols and fads! We need freedom!

England frees and re-enslaves Jamaica

During the early 1800s slave uprisings swept the Caribbean, like the Christmas Revolt in Jamaica in December 1831. Many of those revolts found inspiration in the successful overthrow of slavery in Haiti by armed slaves (1791-1803). With the example of Haiti, the waves of revolts convinced the various European countries that the days of slavery in the islands were numbered. So, they devised to voluntarily abolish the old slave systems, while scheming to trick the Black workers to continue laboring for them “voluntarily” under much the same conditions. A similar trick was played when Europe gave up many of its colonies in Asia and Afrika in the 1950s-1970s.

Jamaica is illustrative, because Britain's plots to re-enslave them were debated and recorded in the British Parliament. The method the Brits settled on was to manipulate the newly freed Jamaicans into desiring British luxury items which they could only acquire by purchasing them with

British money. And making the only way they could obtain British money was by returning to work on the old sugar and coffee plantations for a wage.

But the conversion to wage slavery wasn't entirely “voluntary.” The Brits also devised to prevent the newly freed Jamaicans from settling on the open land, which provided all the resources needed to survive and thrive, with fruit trees, fishing, fertile land, and natural abundance right at hand. So, the British had the island's governors institute laws to close the land off from open settlement by the newly “freed” slaves.

These plots to “create wants” for British goods and close off the land to recapture Jamaican labor after the abolition of slavery in the 1800s are documented in Thomas Holt's book, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1838*, (see esp. pages 44-73.) For example, on June 10, 1833, as the Brits were phasing out chattel slavery in Jamaica, British Parliamentarian Rigby Watson expressed (p. 54):

“To make them labor, and give them a taste for luxuries and comforts, they must be gradually taught to desire those objects which could be attained by human labor. There was a regular progress from the possession of necessities to the desire of luxuries; gradually came, among all classes and conditions of men, to be necessities. This was the sort of progress the negroes had to go through, and this was the sort of education to which they ought to be subject in the period of probation [after emancipation].”

Another member, John Daughtrey added (p. 71):

“Every step they take in this direction is a real improvement; artificial wants become in time real wants. The formation of such habits affords the best security for negro labor at the end of the apprenticeship.”

And they prevented the newly freed slaves from settling on available fertile

land to compel them to go back to work on the plantations (p. 73):

“Early in 1836, Lord Gleneig [the Colonial Secretary] forwarded to all the West Indian governors a dispatch addressing one of these policy problems. He began by noting that during slavery, labor could be compelled to be applied whenever the owner desired. Now, with the end of apprenticeship, the laborer would apply himself only to those tasks that promised personal benefit. Therefore, if the cultivation of sugar and coffee were to continue, ‘we must make it the immediate and apparent interest of the negro population to employ their labor in raising them.’ He was apprehensive about their ability to do this, repeating the now familiar maxim that given the demographics patterns of former slave colonies such as Jamaica—‘where there is land enough to yield an abundant subsistence to the whole population in return for slight labor’—blacks would not work. ‘Should things be left to their natural course, labor would not be attracted to the cultivation of exportable produce....’ Gleneig went on to prescribe the means by which the government would interdict these natural proclivities. It was essential that the ex-slaves be prevented from obtaining land.”

Chasing Sylvester

In a less sophisticated way I became aware of this scheme of inventing and inducing people to follow styles at a very young age, with the result that I was never one to chase fads. I have a Dr. Seuss books to thank.

I was always an avid reader. My earliest years were spent living on and learning the streets (I began leaving home at a very young age) and reading. I enjoyed literature, history, culture, and such. Fiction and children’s books didn’t hold my attention. There was one exception however—a Dr. Seuss book, called *The Sneetches*, which actually became one of my favorite reads. I still remember the story today.

This book gave me my first insights into how chasing fads is a trick to keep people in constant competition with one another and wasting their time and money on meaningless items that they’ve been tricked into believing they want or need.

The sneetches were these creatures, some of whom had a star on their bellies while others didn’t. In sneetch society stars were a status symbol. Those with stars set themselves apart from those without stars, and with snobbish airs regarded themselves as better than the no-star bellies. They had gatherings and play events that those without stars were excluded from. The no-star bellies were left to feel dejected and inferior.

Along came this guy named Sylvester McMonkey McBean who has this machine that could put stars on the bellies of sneetches who didn’t have them, making them now part of the stylish crowd. He charged three dollars a pop to allow starless sneetches to have stars applied. Suddenly those who didn’t have stars before were equals to those who did and could now enjoy the status and privileges of star belly society. This provoked resentment among the original star bellies who wanted to remain a select society.

So, Sylvester schemed to play the sneetches even further to continue enriching himself at their expense. He did this by telling them that plain bellies were the new style, and for ten dollars each his machine would remove the stars. So, droves of sneetches reversed course eagerly rushing to pay Sylvester to remove their stars.

This drove the wedge of resentment and competition even deeper which Sylvester continue to exploit. He began telling them that star bellies were now in style, then plain bellies, alternating back and forth, so that all day long the sneetches ran chaotically back and forth spending their money to have stars applied then removed until ultimately all their money was gone. At

that point Sylvester packed up his machine and departed.

Only then did the sneetches realize that they were all equals and had been played. That they’d been tricked into chasing meaningless fads and status symbols that were invented and changed at the whim of someone whose aim was to enrich himself at their expense.

I noticed the exact same sneetch behavior in the world all around me: people chasing meaningless luxury items and constantly-changing fads and status symbols that they otherwise had no need of or desire for. Items they only knew about and wanted because they had been told by ads on television and billboards that they should want them. I called this behavior “chasing Sylvester,” the very behavior that continues today with people desiring and spending their money on brand name shoes, cars, rims, clothes, tech devices and so on. Styles that change every few minutes to keep the demand alive.

To invent the desire for these things is the role and function of ads and marketing propaganda we see everywhere, day in and day out. They appear everywhere, constantly changing fads, styles, and status symbols (the more expensive the items the greater the status value) promoted for our consumption through ads on social media platforms, imbedded in apps, on our communication devices, televisions, literally everywhere. In this way the masses are manipulated into accepting wage slavery and every type of hustle (often socially harmful and deadly hustles,) in order to keep acquiring material things they are told they should want but that they would not otherwise know existed nor want.

It’s a world-reaching industry manned by conniving Sylvesters, who have the people obsessed with generating and wasting wealth to obtain meaningless objects that go out of style and become worthless trash almost as soon as they’re bought. Only to be replaced

by something else that they are told is the newest fad they've just got to have. While, as with the re-enslavement of Jamaica, the masses cannot seize land to live in genuine freedom.

This is what socialist revolution aims to overthrow. Revolution is all about the workers taking ownership of the productive system; of the land, factories, equipment and machinery, the means of producing what society needs to survive, and themselves owning all the products and wealth that they produce with their labor. It's like the chattel slaves overthrowing the slave system and taking ownership of the plantations, the crops, and all the products and wealth that they produced with their labor. The slaves then have the power and choice to produce what they actually want and need free of coercion by owners.

This is what the owners and bosses have always feared most, because they live and grow rich off the labor of the slaves and workers. And it is why they've always demonized, misrepresented, and suppressed slave revolts and communist revolutions.

We don't need capitalism or its status symbols and fads! We need freedom!

Dare to Struggle Dare to Win!

All Power to the People!

Write to Kevin "Rashid" Johnson:

Kevin Johnson #1007485

Sussex 1 State Prison

24414 Musselwhite Drive

Waverly, VA 23891

Visit Rashid's website at:

www.rashidmod.com

Should the U.S. End Life Imprisonment Without Parole?

BY STEPHEN ROHDE

As the movement to end the death penalty in the United States gains momentum—two-thirds of the states (36 out of 50) have either abolished capital punishment or conducted no executions in at least ten years—serious attention is being paid to Life Imprisonment Without Parole (LWOP), which is on the books in every state, except Alaska. In the 27 states that have retained capital punishment, the only alternative sentence is LWOP.

Is it inhumane, cruel, and unusual to sentence someone to prison for the rest of his or her life without any possibility of being released, especially when the inmate has exhibited genuine remorse and has demonstrated the capacity to lead a productive and law-abiding life outside prison? As with other features of the U.S. criminal legal system, there is much we can learn from countries that have abolished capital punishment, in terms of how they apply alternative forms of punishment.

Life Imprisonment With Parole (LWP), where release is routinely considered by a court, parole board, or similar body, is the most common type of life imprisonment in the world, according to research conducted by Dr. Catherine Appleton and Professor Dirk van Zyl Smit of the Life Imprisonment Worldwide Revisited project at the University of Nottingham (on which the data in this article is based.) In 144 of the 183 countries (79 percent) that were identified as having formal life imprisonment, there is no LWOP; there is always some provision for release, even for the most heinous crimes.

The U.S. is an outlier. More than 50 percent of all prisoners serving LWOP around the world are in the U.S. Twenty-two U.S. states even impose LWOP for non-violent offenses. While

LWOP has been abolished in most European countries, it has recently been adopted in India and China, both of whom also have the death penalty. That is the company the U.S. keeps.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child expressly prohibits LWOP for children. Although every other country in the world is a signatory to the Convention, the U.S. is not. On the contrary, the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that LWOP may be imposed on children in "very exceptional" cases, provided there is some kind of review from time to time.

Appleton and van Zyl Smit have also gathered data on statutory minimum terms in 98 countries where LWP is imposed. The average minimum was 18.3 years. 29 countries (30 percent) set their minimum period at 25 years or more while in almost half (46 percent) the minimum period was 15 years or less.

According to Appleton and van Zyl Smit, research shows the severe psycho-



(Shutterstock)

logical and sociological damage caused by a life sentence, with inmates describing “a tunnel without light at the end” and “a slow, torturous death.” LWOP prisoners express a profound and growing sense of loss and loneliness and the realization that many family members will most likely die while they are in prison. To add insult to injury, since LWOP prisoners will never be released, they are deprived of any rehabilitative opportunities, leading to sheer hopelessness and mental deterioration. In the U.S., many LWOP prisoners, including children, are denied access to educational and vocational training, based on the maddening premise that they are beyond redemption.

Recidivism rates

Meanwhile, a growing body of evidence from different countries indicates that recidivism and re-arrest rates among released life-sentenced prisoners are low compared to other released prisoners. Research examined by Appleton and van Zyl Smit shows that very few released life-sentenced prisoners commit further crimes and that, despite facing significant barriers, they are able to resettle successfully, especially when they are provided with programs and supervision in the community that support new non-criminal, pro-social identities, a strong sense of self-efficacy and responsibility, and a determination to succeed.

A UN report in 1994 concluded that life imprisonment should be “imposed only when strictly needed to protect society and ensure justice, and...only on individuals who have committed the most serious crimes.” It noted that “it is essential to consider the potentially detrimental effects of life imprisonment.” The report proposed that countries should provide a possibility of parole for all persons sentenced to life imprisonment, including those convicted of murder.

In 2013, the European Court of Human Rights held that it is a violation

of human dignity to deny life prisoners any prospect of release or review of their sentence. The three applicants in the case of *Vinter v. United Kingdom* were each convicted of murder in the UK and were sentenced to “whole life,” that is LWOP. They argued that their sentences were inconsistent with Article 3 of the European Convention of Human Rights which provides that “no one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.” While the lower court held life imprisonment was justified by the legitimate goals of punishment and deterrence, the Court’s appellate Grand Chamber held (by 16 votes to one) that an irreducible life sentence may infringe Article 3 since the review of a sentence is necessary because the grounds for detention (punishment, deterrence, public protection and rehabilitation) may change during lengthy imprisonment. The Grand Chamber noted the support in European domestic and international law for a guaranteed review within the first 25 years of a sentence.

The ruling noted that a prospect of release is necessary because the weight of European and international law supports the principle that all prisoners, including those serving life sentences, be offered the possibility of rehabilitation and the possibility of release if rehabilitation is achieved. Drawing on these sources, the Grand Chamber concluded that it would be a violation of human dignity to detain someone without any chance of release.

One commentator indicated that the *Vinter* decision “catalogues a global consensus on the proper goals of detention. Among many citations to international documents, the Grand Chamber referred to Council of Europe materials, the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). From these it evidenced a consensus in international law that the rehabilitation of offenders

should be a key aim of penal detention.” Reducibility does not mean that a life sentence must actually be reduced when a prisoner remains dangerous. But it violates human dignity to deny life prisoners even a faint hope of release.

Article 10(1) of the ICCPR states that “All deprived of their liberty shall be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person,” and Article 10(3) states that the purpose of the penitentiary system is the “reformation and social rehabilitation” of prisoners. It indicates that every prisoner should have the opportunity to be rehabilitated back into society and lead law-abiding and self-supporting lives, even those convicted of the most serious offences. Similarly, Article 110(3) of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court does not allow LWOP sentences, and instead calls for a mandatory review of life sentences after 25 years. The United Nations Handbook on the Management of High-Risk Prisoners underlines the need to approach the management of dangerous or high-risk prisoners in a positive, humane, and progressive manner.

At a regional level, the Council of Europe has been the most active body in developing recommendations for the treatment and management of life and long-term prisoners. It states that the aims of life and long-term prison regimes should be (1) “to ensure that prisons are safe and secure places for these prisoners and for all those who work with or visit them;” (2) “to counteract the damaging effects of life and long-term imprisonment;” and (3) “to increase and improve the possibilities for these prisoners to be successfully resettled in society and to lead a law-abiding life following their release.”

It is high time the U.S. seriously examine the widespread use of LWOP through the lens of the humanitarian principles of international law which recognize the transcendence of human

Continued on page 65

Secret Power: The War on *WikiLeaks*

BY OWEN BOWCOTT

When the *WikiLeaks* founder Julian Assange was dragged out of Ecuador's London embassy in handcuffs three years ago, he was clutching a book given to him by the Italian investigative journalist Stefania Maurizi.

Gore Vidal's *History of the National Security State* argues that America's "military-industrial-security complex" exploits fear of the enemy in order to generate vast state subsidies. The Australian reinforced the message by shouting: "UK must resist."

Maurizi had brought the volume to help the fugitive Assange keep his mind active during the six years and ten months he spent inside his cramped diplomatic sanctuary. It was one of many visits she made.

A journalist with a math degree, she has written about cryptography. Her first contact with *WikiLeaks* was in 2009 when she received a call in the middle of the night asking for help verifying and interpreting a leaked audio file which hinted at Italian state-mafia deals during a rubbish collection crisis.

The following year Maurizi met Assange in Berlin. She had gone to talk to *WikiLeaks* about their Afghan War logs which contained secret files detailing Italian military participation in the war. Assange had flown in from Stockholm where Swedish police had just opened an investigation into allegations against him of rape and sexual molestation; his luggage had gone missing when he arrived in Germany.

Her book, *Secret Power*, is a passionate and well-paced defense of *WikiLeaks* and Assange published as the 51-year-old continues to resist extradition to the United States. If convicted of offences under the U.S. Espionage Act, he faces prison sentences of up to 175 years.

This is not the first book about *WikiLeaks*, but it is a comprehensive

account—enlivened with eyewitness reporting—which follows the twists and turns of Assange's life, *WikiLeaks*' revelations, media fallings-out, the Swedish criminal investigation, court hearings, surveillance of his embassy bolt-hole (hide-out), alleged plots to kill him and detention in Belmarsh high security prison.

CIA rendition

The narrative is bolstered by historical asides on such diverse matters as the first publicly available email encryption programs, Assange's conviction in 1996 for hacking—he was fined \$2,100 (Australian)—and the Guantanamo Bay detainee held because he lost a village lottery. The whistleblowers Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden inevitably feature prominently.

One well-chosen example is the February 2003 rendition of the imam Abu Omar. Snatched off a Milan street in daylight, he was first taken to an American air base in Aviano, near Venice, then removed to Egypt where he was subjected to torture involving, he later said, sexual assaults and electric shocks.

Despite 26 U.S. citizens, many of them CIA agents, eventually being convicted for their part in the abduction, none have ever been returned to Italy to serve any of their jail sentences. Some were even pardoned by Italian presidents.

That pattern of immunity from serious punishment for senior officials has been all too frequently repeated. When the U.S. General David Petraeus gave his lover and biographer eight notebooks full of classified material from his Afghan campaigns, he reached a plea bargain resulting only in two years' probation and a \$40,000 fine.

Demonization

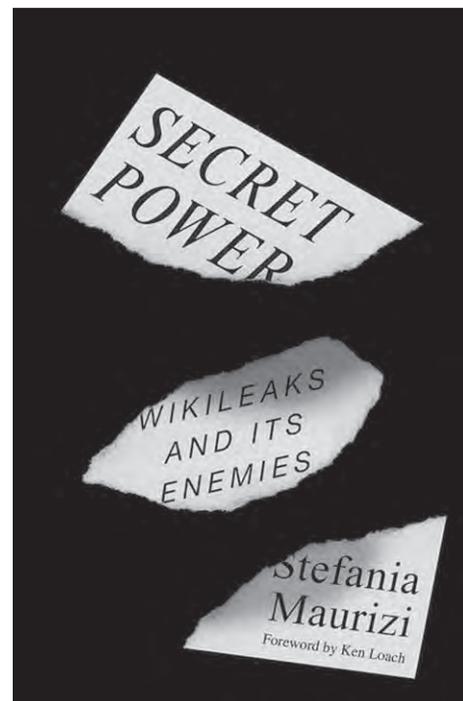
By contrast the pursuit of Assange has involved "demonization" of the Australian, according to Maurizi who catalogues

repeated attempts to destroy *WikiLeaks* that have allegedly gone as far as plans to kidnap and murder its members.

Accusations that *WikiLeaks* has put lives at risk by publishing leaked military and diplomatic documents have, she suggests, been a way of distracting the public from revelations about killings carried out by U.S. troops.

Maurizi, who works for the Italian newspaper *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, has for the past seven years also been waging a solo freedom of information (FOI) battle seeking to establish why the sexual assault allegations against Assange were stalled at a preliminary stage for so long.

She submitted FOI requests in Sweden, Britain, the USA and Australia requesting files on the legal investigation and correspondence between prosecutors in the four countries.



Secret Power
WikiLeaks and Its Enemies
By Stefania Maurizi
Foreword by Ken Loach
Translated by Lesli Cavanaugh-Bardelli
Pluto Press

Sweden—the first country, in 1766, to pass freedom of information legislation—was the most responsive. The documents she obtained showed that the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) in London had advised against questioning Assange in the UK, suggesting it would be better to interview him once he was returned to Stockholm. With Assange resisting extradition that effectively created years of legal paralysis.

Maurizi had to appeal to an information tribunal and contribute to costs out of her own pocket in order to extract relevant files from the CPS. Many, it turned out, were heavily redacted; other key exchanges between London and Stockholm had been deleted.

The tribunal eventually rejected her appeal for more documents but, significantly, did describe *WikiLeaks* as a media organization—a journalistic status that U.S. prosecutors refuse to acknowledge. The Swedish investigation was only finally dropped in November 2019.

Prosecutors said that, although the complainant's evidence was credible, after nearly a decade the witnesses' memory had faded. Assange always denied the allegations against him.

The blame for unedited documents being inadvertently released online in 2011, Maurizi maintains, lies with others. Her experience of *WikiLeaks*, she says, was that they checked and authen-

ticated documents before publication. And it was a *WikiLeaks* editor, Sarah Harrison, she points out, who rescued Edward Snowden from Hong Kong and the threat of U.S. prosecution.

This book provides fresh insights into a ferociously complex and controversial saga. After more than three years in Belmarsh prison, Assange has lodged an appeal against the decision approving his removal made by the former Home Secretary Priti Patel. The legal and political fight continues.

—*Declassified UK*, November 1, 2022

<https://declassifieduk.org/secret-power-the-war-on-wikileaks-book-review/>

Response to Brittney Griner's Capture Is an Indictment of the Right and the "Left"

BY DAVE ZIRIN

Update: Brittney Griner was released December 8, 2022 and is now home.
—*The Editors*

I am deeply disturbed by the response to my recent column about what we know about the abhorrent prison conditions that Brittney Griner is enduring in a labor camp in Mordovia, Russia. While the article garnered attention to her plight, there

were two trends on the right and among some supposedly on the left that speak to how toxic and enraging our political world has become. Part of the problem is my own naivete in thinking that the idea of an Olympian in a penal colony for nine years just might create unity across the political spectrum. There are points of unity, all right, but nothing like what I expected.

The right's response made clear to me that racism, sexism, and homophobia have become the new patriotism. I was bombarded with messages that praised Russia and Vladimir Putin for having these "tough on drugs" laws (as if Griner's nine-year imprisonment doesn't have far more to do with hostage diplomacy and Russia's war on Ukraine than with a vape cartridge). I was repeatedly told that because Griner used to take a knee during the national anthem, she is somehow not worthy of our support and our care, that she hates "America" so she shouldn't count on "America" to fight for her freedom. And then the barrage of racism, sexism, and homophobia was more than I have received for any article in years of doing this work. It's been staggering. But this is their patriotism: the freedom to hate others and mock others' agony. There is also—and we underestimate how widespread—a cult of Putin on the right where they venerate his perceived masculinity, his anti-gay laws, and his control. They see him as the icon of a global authoritarian



United States women's basketball star Brittney Griner looks down during the national anthem before a game against Canada at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games.

movement, and they would sooner chew glass than criticize him in the name of a Black, queer woman. And what a condemnation of the Republican party that they would sooner earn points with Nazis than be part of calling for the freedom of not just Griner but also Paul Whelan, another American in a Russian jail.

Shame on me for thinking in this period of fascistic right-wing confidence that the response would be anything else. But the response that has been even more jarring is from people putatively on the left. It doesn't feel right to say that they are on the left; they're more like smug shitposters with a repellent left-wing moralism. These are people who think that any call for Griner's freedom is really about demonizing Russia and that any demonization of Putin only benefits U.S. imperial and NATO imperial aims. Here is Putin, the valentine of the Nazi right, and we have people who claim to be on the left who are *de facto* offering support for Griner's nine-year labor camp imprisonment.

Then there are the people who say that the people calling for Griner's freedom are at best ignorant of how terrible prison and drug laws are in the United States and are at worst providing cover for the War on Drugs in the U.S. Forget, for a moment, that Griner's plight could help build an international movement for prison abolition and eradication of the drug war. Their argument seems to be that by calling for Griner's freedom, we are

There is no politics more basic than solidarity with the imprisoned.

giving prison conditions in the United States a pass. They say, "Now do Alabama," as if we aren't. They say, "Now do our drug laws," as if we do not. It's incredibly insulting, especially to the WNBA players who did so much in 2020 to raise public awareness about racial inequity and police violence.

They have gone from social justice heroes to dupes, just for calling for their friend's freedom.

Meanwhile as these awful politics thrash around Griner like she's some kind of culture war *piñata*, we still have Cherelle Griner, Brittney's wife, in pain over Brittney's endless imprisonment. We have Cherelle relaying Brittney's fear that she will be forgotten. Brittney Griner must remain in our thoughts, but how she is remembered matters as well. There is no politics more basic than solidarity with the imprisoned. There is no politics more obvious than solidarity with someone in conditions of 16-hour workdays, beatings, and torture, and—reflecting the Russian state—an environment notoriously racist and homophobic. If we can't get this right, God help us.

—*The Nation*, November 29, 2022

<https://www.thenation.com/article/world/brittney-griner-russia-putin-right-left/>

Continued from page 62

dignity and the capacity for rehabilitation in every person, including those who have committed heinous crimes. Just as the U.S. is finally beginning to see the flaws and cruelty of executions, it cannot ignore the inhumanity of the "slow, torturous death" of life imprisonment without any hope of release.

—*LAProgressive*, November 11, 2022

<https://www.laprogressive.com/prison-reform-2/end-life-imprisonment-without->



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Note to Readers:

Socialist Viewpoint magazine has been edited and distributed by revolutionaries who share a common political outlook stemming from the old Socialist Workers Party of James P. Cannon, and Socialist Action from 1984 through 1999.

After being expelled from Socialist Action in 1999, we formed Socialist Workers Organization in an attempt to carry on the project of building a nucleus of a revolutionary party true to the historic teachings and program of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

What we have found is that our numbers are insufficient for this crucial project of party building. This problem is not ours alone; it is a problem flowing from the division and fragmentation that has plagued the revolutionary movement in capitalist America and the world since the 1980s.

What we intend to do is to continue to promote the idea of building a revolutionary Marxist working class political party through the pages of Socialist Viewpoint magazine. We continue to have an optimistic outlook about the revolutionary potential of the world working class to rule society in its own name—socialism. We are optimistic that the working class, united across borders, and acting in its own class interests can solve the devastating crises of war, poverty, oppression, racism, sexism and environmental destruction that capitalism is responsible for.

We expect that revolutionaries from many different organizations, traditions, and backgrounds will respond to the opportunities that will arise, as workers resist the attacks of the capitalist system and government, to build a new revolutionary political party. Just as we join with others to build every response to war and oppression, we look forward to joining with others in the most important work of building a new mass revolutionary socialist workers' party as it becomes possible to do so.

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The Oppressed Need Justice, Not Charity

BY EUGENE V. DEBS

This is the season for “charity” rehearsals. The “charity” ball and “charity” banquets are now all the rage.

The other day—or night, rather—a lot of high-toned women at Chicago, half-naked, and covered with ten million dollars’ worth of diamonds, danced the “grizzly bear,” the “turkey trot,” and the “bunny hug” with their male escorts, at what was called the “charity ball of the smart set.”

This vulgar exhibition and others like it outrage every sentiment of true charity. The gang of parasites that cavorted about on this occasion were wholly absorbed in displaying their “charms” and outrivalling one another with blazoned jewels and crass ornamentations, and there was not a thought of charity nor charitable impulse in the whole affair. They “licked-up” more champagne than the net proceeds amounted to.

Think of one set of human beings dancing with glee and filling themselves with champagne, wine, and truffled tidbits because another set of human beings is starving for the want of bread!

And this is “charity” from the point of view of the class who live out of the sweat and misery of the victims upon whom they bestow it.

Think of Jesus Christ, who “had nowhere to lay his head,” looking upon such a scene! What would He say if told that the “grizzly bear” was being danced by half-nude women and the champagne guzzled in his name, and to feed his sheep? If he did not rebuke such mockery and scourge the bacchanalian revelers from the scene, he must have changed mightily from what he was in Jerusalem twenty centuries ago.

To give the proceeds of such an affair to the hungry and naked is not a charity. It is the extreme opposite of

charity and is as discreditable to those who give as it is to those who receive.

Such perversion of charity follows the denial of justice. As long as one set of human beings own the means of life and another set of human beings depend upon them for a chance to get a living, one set will be sated and the other starved, the more of this so-called “charity” that is dispensed the worse it will be for all concerned.

In thinking of the abuses to which this word is subjected, I feel moved to paraphrase Madame Roland: “O, Charity, what crimes are committed in thy name!”

There is something radically wrong in a society in which the few have to dance periodically because the many are starving perpetually.

The relation to those who dance sustain to those who starve precludes all possibility of true charity.

I want no dude to dance in a dress coat that I may eat.

To be fed that way paralyzes the moral fiber and destroys self-respects.

What the poor need is that the rich shall get off their backs, and then they

will not have to go to the trouble of dancing at “charity” balls to feed their victims. But that is exactly what the rich will not do, and, therefore, the poor the world over, are preparing to unload.

And this is the significance of the labor movement and of the agitation of the working class in every nation on earth.

There is a mighty change impending, and when this change has taken place and society is rightly organized and social righteousness prevails “charity” balls and “charity” banquets will be unnecessary and unknown.

Speech given by Eugene V. Debs in 1913, about why the charity balls of the rich will never deliver justice for the poor. Debs was a labor organizer and Socialist Party candidate for U.S. president five times between 1900 and 1920.

—Jacobin, November 29, 2022

<https://jacobin.com/2022/11/eugene-debs-criticism-charity-inequality>

1 Marie-Jeanne ‘Manon’ Roland de la Platière, born Marie-Jeanne Phlipon, and best known under the name Madame Roland, was a French revolutionary, *salonnière* and writer.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madame_Roland



Charity ball, 1929. (National Photo Company Collection / Library of Congress via Wikimedia Commons)



"I know there are a shit ton of whining do-gooders who won't shut up about how we're killing the planet, but, for fucksake, I'd love to hear them admit just once how stunningly beautiful that is."

Read *Climate Disaster of the Anthropocene: Is There Hope for the Human Race?* on page 42



Photo of Ruchell Magee with Carole Seligman. Read *Sixty Years Behind Bars: Ruchell "Cinque" Magee is the longest-held political prisoner in the United States* on page 54.



Demonstration to free Mumia Abu-Jamal. Read *Judicial Persecution Corrupts the Case of Mumia Abu-Jamal* page 50.

On the Front Cover: A rally at Grand Central Station in solidarity with rail workers. Photo by @railroadworkers. Read *Rail Workers Shafted Again* on page 30.



Attention Prison Mail Room:



Prisoners retain their free speech rights under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. That means you cannot legally suppress the expression and consideration of ideas. Prison walls do not form a barrier separating prisoners from the protection of the Constitution, according to the *Turner v. Safley* ruling. [482 U.S. 78, 107 Sct 2245 (1987)] If you exclude printed matter on an improper basis, or give a false pretext or rationale for its exclusion, because of the ideas expressed in it, you are breaking the law. The prisoner denied access to material he wants to read can bring a civil rights lawsuit against you with cause for seeking punitive damages. In the case of *Police Department Chicago v. Mosley*, 408 U.S. 92, 95, 92 Sct 2286, 2290 (1972) the court found that "[A]bove all else, the First Amendment means that government has no power to restrict expression because of its message, subject matter or content."