

**Future of the family**

**Left ecology**

# new **SOCIALIST**

**IDEAS FOR RADICAL CHANGE**



## **The end of 20th century socialism?**

**Indigenous liberation**

**Latin America**

**Anti-Muslim racism & the veil**

**U.S. unions**

**Palestine**



**SUMMER 2007**

**Issue No. 61**

**\$4.95**

**[www.newsocialist.org](http://www.newsocialist.org)**

## EDITORIAL

# Blows to empire in Afghanistan and Iraq

CONTEMPORARY IMPERIALISTS SPEAK THE LANGUAGE OF human dignity, democracy and gender equality while orchestrating devastating wars. The boots of racism and neoliberal capitalist expansion crush basic rights. Recent events highlight the hypocrisy and arrogance of occupiers in Afghanistan and Iraq and open up space for the renewal of anti-war movements on the demand of Troops Out Now!

On April 2, speaking of Canada's relationship with Afghan security forces, federal Public Safety Minister Stockwell Day said, "We've got good confidence levels ... We're seeing an increased understanding and appreciation for human rights." On April 23, an explosive report by *Globe and Mail* reporter Graeme Smith shattered Day's cover-up of the torture and abuse of detainees handed over by Canadian troops to Afghan forces.

Graeme interviewed 30 men captured in Kandahar. The report reads: "Afghans detained by Canadian soldiers and sent to Kandahar's notorious jails say they were beaten, whipped, starved, frozen, choked and subjected to electric shocks during interrogation." Many of those interviewed have never been convicted of any crime.

The report sparked a week-long festival of denial by the Conservatives, who initially held firm to the defence of their Afghan allies. Meanwhile, there were calls for the resignation of Minister of Defence Gordon O'Connor and Amnesty International launched a court challenge to stop Canadian forces from transferring detainees to Afghan jails.

Pulling a page from George W. Bush's play book, Prime Minister Stephen Harper claimed: "The real problem is the willingness of the leader of the Liberal Party and his colleagues to believe, to repeat and to exaggerate any charge against the Canadian military as they fight these fanatics and killers who are called the Taliban. It is a disgrace."

Soon, however, the Conservatives were forced to renegotiate the detainee transfer policy, claiming that the new pact provides checks against torture and abuse. This exposure of abuse by Afghan authorities is extremely important. But the new deal is premised on the idea that Canadian – and other NATO – military contingents are benevolent forces who can be trusted to monitor human rights and democratic norms.

After five and a half years, the authority of the Afghan client regime, and the NATO forces that defend them, barely extends beyond Kabul. The Taliban control large areas of the country as well as small parts of neighbouring Pakistan. Even in many non-Taliban-controlled zones, government officials are resentful of the occupiers and sympathetic to insurgents.

Bloodshed has not reached the astronomical levels of Iraq. But no one bothers to count the Afghan dead. Fifty-four Canadian soldiers have been killed. Suicide bombings are escalating: two in 2003, 21 in 2005 and 136 in 2006.

Meanwhile, repression continues against the narcotics trade which provides one of the only sources of subsistence for many impoverished Afghans. And, in this sea of poverty and war, British writer Tariq Ali reports that corruption grows "like an untreated tumour ... The real estate market in Kabul has reached unprecedented heights as the occupiers and the local enforcers buy up properties and flaunt their affluence under the protection of NATO forces."

Harper's Afghanistan debacle mirrors setbacks to American imperialism in recent years. His drive to push on with the project parallels Bush's desperate adventurism. American elites as well as the US populace recognize Iraq for the disaster it is. *Against the Current* reports: "Within a week of the 'surge,' US helicopters were shot down and a heavily fortified compound stormed by suicide bombers; horrific bombings in Baghdad markets escalated as the local militia, the only force providing some security for the Shia community, went into hiding; at the same time, a Sunni woman told her story of kidnap and rape by militia-infested police—certainly not the first such incident, but the first victim to take it to Arab television."

Iraq's health minister admits that 150,000 civilians have been killed and the British medical journal *Lancet* puts the figure at 655,000. According to a report in the Indian journal *Frontline*, "Some two million refugees have left the country; almost an equal number have become refugees within Iraq; over half of Iraq's 4.5 million children are malnourished; and unemployment stands at over 70 percent."

Meanwhile, on May 4, American analyst Michael T. Klare reported that a US aircraft carrier is fast approaching the Persian Gulf, "where it will join two other US aircraft carriers and the French carrier Charles De Gaulle in the largest concentration of naval firepower in the region since the launching of the US invasion of Iraq four years ago."

There is still time to prevent a war in Iran, and the deepening and prolonging of the occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq. We must not depend on the Democrats in the US, or the Liberals and the NDP in Canada. The acceleration and widening of the anti-war movement at home is a necessary part of the struggle to bring the warmongers to their knees. The setbacks and debacles suffered in recent times provide new cracks in the imperial edifice that we must pry open, hopefully to bring the whole project crashing down. ★

# new★ SOCIALIST

Issue #61 Summer 2007

NEW SOCIALIST offers radical analysis of politics, social movements and culture in the Canadian state and internationally. Our magazine is a forum for people who want to strengthen today's activism and for those who wish to replace global capitalism with a genuinely democratic socialism. We believe that the liberation of the working class and oppressed peoples can be won only through their own struggles. For more information about the publisher of this magazine, the New Socialist Group, please see the inside back cover.

## EDITORS

Todd Gordon  
Clarice Kuhling  
Sebastian Lamb  
Harold Lavender  
Sandra Sarner  
Deborah Simmons  
Jeff R. Webber

## EDITORIAL ASSOCIATES

Richard Banner  
Adam Barker  
Neil Braganza  
Jackie Esmonde  
Susan Ferguson  
Morgan MacLeod  
Toby Moorsom  
Greg Sharzer  
Hamid Sodeifi  
Tony Tracy

## DESIGN

Cover: Greg Sharzer  
Inside: Sandra Sarner  
Cover photo: Egyptian strikers

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of the editors or members of the New Socialist Group.

New Socialist is a member of the CMPA.

Printed at JT Printing, a union shop.



Box 167, 253 College St.  
Toronto, ON M5T 1R5  
416-955-1581  
Magazine@newsocialist.org  
www.newsocialist.org

## ★ LETTERS ★ ..... 4

## ★ FUTURE OF THE LEFT ★

The end of 20th century socialism? .....	Alan Sears	5
Why Ecosocialism today? .....	Joel Kovel	10
Indigenizing revolution .....	Na'cha'uaht	12
Socialism, solidarity and indigenous liberation.....	Deborah Simmons	15
Strategies of the Left in Latin America.....	Claudio Katz	18
Socialist politics and Israel's "right to exist".....	Virginia Tilley	24

## ★ HOMEFRONT ★

Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions against Israel campaign.....	Charuka Kirinde	28
Quebec: Building a common social and political front.....	Bernard Rioux	30
Multiculturalism and anti-immigrant racism.....	Sheila Wilmot	32
The veil and resistance.....	Nadeen el-Kassem	34
Open letter to Clarence Louis .....	Adam Barker	38

## ★ INTERNATIONAL ★

Labour struggles in the US and UK .....	Sheila Cohen	40
---	--------------	----

## ★ CULTURE AND REVIEWS ★

Book review: Another world is possible .....	Gabrielle Gérin	17
Worth checking out .....	Mini-reviews	27
Future of the family .....	Nicole Dzuba	36
Book review: Cops, crime and capitalism .....	Adam Barker	42

## ★ TIME TO ORGANIZE ★ ..... 43

New Socialist magazine welcomes letters.  
Please send to the address or e-mail address above.



# LETTERS

New Socialist magazine welcomes letters.

Please send to the address or e-mail address on page 3

## Runners with a flaming torch

*Edited excerpt of a letter from a warrior's mother to another*

GERONIMO, CRAZY HORSE, TECUMSEH etc. I could go on and on making a list of all our warriors from the past, but the list will never end. Today, warriors are still fighting with different weapons and warriors are yet to be born.

They are like runners with a flaming torch, passing it to each other as they get tired, but the flame gets stronger with knowledge they have learned. They are not going into battle empty handed, for all they have to know is who they are and what has been done to us.

They are “chosen warriors” from the Creator, Grandfathers, and Grandmothers. It is a gift, not a curse. As Parents we have done our part also, passing down our traditions, morals, and beliefs, making strong warriors with our love. It will be torture for us as we don't like watching our children suffer. All we can do is to love them more, pray with them, and pray for them.

It's today's world that “criminalize” our warriors with their laws. We as native people have to bring back our laws, the law that was meant for our people. Today's law doesn't work for our people, it never has and never will. Just think about all the penitentiaries that are packed with First Nations' people. These laws pollute the air, poison the water, cut the trees, not realizing the ripple effect it has on the environment and the living beings around it. Yet they have the nerve to say “what's wrong with these Indians?”

I remember the day when my daughters told me their time of battle had

arrived. Their lives are not going to be normal ones. They will be constantly watched, stalked, and harassed! Maybe at times they will get stabbed in the back by their own people, but that's what it takes when you are “chosen”.

I hope I have shed some light on what our children will be facing. It may sound like a burden and maybe at times it will be. Just think about the big changes that they will make for their people and it will be all worth it. The Creator, the Grandfathers, and the Grandmothers will be there watching and guiding them when we can't be there for them.

In unity we stand  
Piishew (Lynx)  
from the Ojibway Nation

## Unite all forces against imperialism

FIRST OF ALL, LET ME THANK THE SIX signers of the letter, No support to racists, momophones, women haters (NS60 Spring 2007) in response to my article, Resistance in Iraq and Lebanon: which side are we on? (NS59 Winter 2006-07). It is important that socialists with differing points of view have the opportunity to exchange opinions. Your letter deserves a reply and this is a brief effort at one.

It seems to me that the authors fall into a classic trap that turns honest militants into sectarians, sectarians with the best of intentions but sectarians nonetheless. I would like to ask the comrades how their views are implemented closer to home. I assume that they, like I, participate in various solidarity movements—against the war in Iraq, Canadian troops in Afghanistan and opposition to the occupation of Palestine. I support a broad united front approach to this work, where forces come together around a limited series of demands and are free to hold their own views on many other things. I often find

myself around tables and in demonstrations with people who hold diverse views on the world—social democrats from the NDP and members of the Liberal Party, supporters of the existence of a Jewish state in Palestine and women who wear the veil. I have never asked these folks what their opinion is about homosexuality, the rights of women or the rights of workers as a condition for working in the same movement. If we had to agree on a vast series of issues I fear we would not be able to do the work. In choosing speakers – and those whose views I share – fight for a balance between men and women and for a diversity of political positions. But it is not a condition for mobilizing to get Canadian troops out of Afghanistan.

You say, “We urge socialists to orient themselves independently ...” Do you advocate a solidarity movement that is only open to socialists? You say, “As socialists we cannot ally with religious bigots, racists, homophobes and women-hating thugs abroad.” What about at home? What litmus test do you use to determine with whom you ally here? Here and there, we need to unite with all those forces that can inflict a defeat on imperialism, whatever else we disagree with them on. That unity in action is the best way to promote exactly what you call for: “national dignity and democracy.”

I hope this moves our discussion forward.

Regards  
A. Soodanim



Hezbollah youth

# The end of 20th century socialism?

By ALAN SEARS

IT IS POSSIBLE TO ARGUE THAT THE PROJECT OF 20TH century socialism in the Canadian state has basically come to an end.

Socialism is currently so marginal within political and social life that we are, in practical terms, starting over. Through much of the 20th century, socialism had a genuine presence in political discussion and debate, in activist mobilizations, in cultural life, in the labour movement, in certain working-class neighbourhoods, in the media and through publications. Socialism was a real reference point, even for those who fought against it.

Now, socialist ideas have little currency and socialists have very limited influence on the direction of struggles. The presence of socialism has shrunk so much that there can be only the most limited continuity between the next Left and the last one. This situation poses two major challenges for those of us interested in revitalizing socialism. First, it is important to ask how did we get to this point, and whatever happened to 20th century socialism? Second, we need to discuss and debate the extent to which the next socialism should be built on the model of the last one.

The focus here is on Canada outside Quebec as the integrated struggles for national liberation and socialism have had quite a different rhythm within Quebec. Certainly the emergence of the left party Québec Solidaire indicates a somewhat different situation for socialist organizing in Quebec at the present time.

## 20TH CENTURY SOCIALISM

THE FORM OF 20TH CENTURY SOCIALISM GELLED LARGELY in the aftermath of the revolutionary wave of 1917-26 that ended World War I. This wave included the first successful workers' revolution in history (Russia, 1917), as well as uprisings and insurgencies that spanned the globe, from Shanghai to Winnipeg, from Berlin to Seattle. At this high point of struggle, the key lines of demarcation between various forms of socialism were clarified.

It is impossible to do justice here to the complex development of 20th century socialism, so I will attempt only a very brief sketch. This period saw the socialist movement divided between reformists, who sought change through the existing structures of the capitalist state, and revolutionaries, who sought to overthrow that state and replace it with new forms



LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA

Crowd outside old City Hall during the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike: Part of the international revolutionary wave of the early 20th century.

of working class self-rule. The revolutionaries divided out between Stalinists who defended the bureaucratic regime in the Soviet Union, anti-Stalinists who argued that a counter-revolution had removed the working class from power there, and anarchists or left communists who argued that the Russian working class had never properly taken power as the Bolshevik project was simply creating new forms of domination.

The organizational and political forms established in the wake of this revolutionary wave remained key reference points for socialists throughout the 20th century. There were two more massive waves of struggle that swept across much of the globe in the 20th century, one in the 1930s-1940s and a second in the 1960s-1970s. There were some important changes over time, such as an emphasis on rural insurgency that emerged in the Chinese Revolution and elsewhere in the Global South. Still, many of the key navigational tools used by socialists to make sense of the changing terrain of struggle in capitalist society through the 20th century developed out of the revolutionary wave that began in 1917.

Now the 20th century socialism that emerged out of those historical experiences is close to disappearing as a political force in the Canadian state outside Quebec. While it is impossible to examine the state of global socialism more broadly in the context of this article, I would further argue that this marginalization of 20th century socialism is not

---

*Alan Sears is the author of *Retooling the Mind Factory* and a frequent contributor to *New Socialist*.*

limited to the Canadian state, even if there is great unevenness in the bigger picture.

### **SOCIALISM AND THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF DISSENT**

ONE OF THE KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF 20TH CENTURY socialism, in the Canadian state and elsewhere, was to play a role in the development of an infrastructure of dissent through which oppressed and exploited groups developed their capacities to act on the world. The ability to dissent is built as the working class and oppressed groups establish new repertoires of thought and action, both individually and collectively. As mobilization happens, activists seek greater understanding of the way the world works to guide their actions and establish new ways of organizing themselves to increase the effectiveness of their struggles.

A great deal of this dissent capacity builds up through the rhythm of struggle, as militancy itself probes the fundamental power relations in society. One learns a great deal about the role of the state when the police attack your protest or picket line. However, there is a lot to learn as the working class moves from outrage to challenging for power, whether at the scale of a single workplace or a whole state. Activists become hungry for deeper analysis of the way the world works and how change might happen.

The infrastructure of dissent provides a means to develop collective capacities for memory (reflection on past struggles), analysis (theoretical discussion and debate), communication (outside official or commercial channels) and taking action. This does not replace the learning that occurs directly through personal experience of struggle, but complements it by adding a breadth and depth that take us beyond our own horizons. In short, it means in every struggle we do not need to relearn from scratch the way the system works or how to fight it.

Through the 20th century in the Canadian state, the infrastructure of dissent has included everything from informal networks in neighbourhoods and workplaces through to formal social and political organizations. Key components of this infrastructure have included informal community groups in certain working-class neighbourhoods and in workplaces, radical oppositions within trade unions, various cultural activities, political organizations grounded in ethnic affinities, radical gathering places ranging from bookstores to bars to labour temples, left-wing books, bookstores and publications, women's, queer, indigenous and anti-racist groups, groups organized around national liberation and various kinds of socialist organizations.

At the present time, this infrastructure of dissent is very weak. The movement for global justice in the late 1990's and early 2000's began to rebuild this infrastructure, but was cut short by the political shifts since September 11, 2001. The projects of rebuilding the infrastructure of dissent and revitalizing socialism are integrally connected.

### **THE POLITICS OF FULL CITIZENSHIP**

SOCIALISM THRIVED THROUGH MUCH OF THE 20TH CENTURY as part of the infrastructure of dissent thrown up by a series of interconnected struggles through which working-class people and members of other excluded groups sought to obtain basic social and political rights. These rights could be summarized as "full citizenship", meaning not only formal enfranchisement (winning the right to vote), but also a wide range of legal, workplace and social rights including national liberation from colonialism, social services, legal collective bargaining and human rights protection.

As the system of capitalist states emerged globally, most of the population was excluded from any meaningful form of citizenship, including the right to vote and a variety of workplace and social rights. Most of the population was excluded through the absence of democratic institutions, limitations on the right to vote, the absence of worker rights in the workplace, the lack of any forms of social policy to connect

*One of the key accomplishments of 20th century socialism was to play a role in the development of an infrastructure of dissent.*

citizens to the state and the brutal regimes of colonialism that oppressed and excluded virtually the entire population of the Global South.

It required tremendous mobilization for colonized peoples, workers, women, people of colour, lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender people, and others to win basic rights. As these previously excluded groups fought their way in, they demanded a broader conception of citizenship that included certain human, social and workplace rights, ranging from human rights protection to collective bargaining rights, from access to education to social programs in such areas as health, housing and welfare. Struggles in the workplace for basic organizing rights, better conditions and a shorter working week were connected to struggles for the franchise, access to education and improved social services and benefits.

The horizons of these great struggles were not limited by the confines of fuller citizenship. Radicals often linked the battle for fuller rights within capitalism to the struggle for a socialist society. Reformists often saw the right to vote as a fundamental precondition for a democratic transformation from a capitalist dictatorship over the economy to a more

just socialist society. Revolutionaries saw the potential in every mobilization for new forms of struggle and a much more wide-ranging transformation.

The standard story we tend to hear in school and through the media is that citizenship and social rights were granted from above by enlightened policy-makers, such as Prime Minister Mackenzie King in Canada and President Franklin Roosevelt in the US. In fact, neither citizenship nor workplace rights nor national liberation were granted without hard struggles that mobilized millions on a range of fronts, whether that meant work stoppages, protests or armed struggles.

### **THE POST-WAR SETTLEMENT**

IN CANADA, THE 1930S-1940S WERE A CRUCIAL PERIOD IN the struggle for fuller citizenship. Basic collective bargaining rights were recognized as industrial unions were organized in many key sectors (such as auto and steel). The foundations of many social welfare programs were established, access to education was increased and rudimentary elements of human rights protection were introduced. The consolidation of these rights was partly made possible by the long boom, which created general conditions favouring capitalist profitability from the 1940s through to the early 1970s. These conditions of sustained profitability put employers in a position to grant workers concessions that are much more difficult to make in situations of economic crisis.

The victories of the 1940s were won through tremendous mobilization, over a long period, from the 1930s anti-poverty movements through to the militant struggle to win union rights in the face of intransigent employer opposition. The peak of militancy in this period included strikes in Windsor (1945) and Hamilton (1946) that inspired widespread mobilization and incredible solidarity in those communities.

In the wake of those victories came a rapid depoliticization of society. Some of the most powerful forces in the working class won key demands that in effect made them full citizens, through legalized collective bargaining, new social programmes and new access to the market as consumers due to wage increases and job security.

These gains were real, but they were distorted by the unequal character of capitalist society. The genuine gain of union recognition went along with a framework of legalized collective bargaining that enhanced the bureaucratic nature of trade unions. New labour laws put union leaderships in the position of policing their own members. The automatic dues check-off (Rand formula) that went along with these settlements helped weaken the shop steward structure (stewards are workplace union representatives) that had been crucial to active mobilization in the workplace, as previously shop stewards had been responsible for collecting dues from members.

The steward structure was also weakened by changes in

the workplace in such industries as auto. Management used technological change and other forms of restructuring to create work processes that were less susceptible to direct action by workers on the shop floor. The 1940s shop steward often acted as an organizer of direct action at the shop floor level, using slow downs or work stoppages to ensure problems were addressed. Over time, changes in production methods, the legal framework and union practices shifted the focus away from direct shop floor action toward grievance procedures and collective bargaining. This happened at different paces in different industries.

There were also important changes in working-class life, brought about in part by the improvements in the standard of living associated with the union victories of the 1940s. Key sections of the working class gained access to automobiles, suburban home ownership and new forms of leisure such as television sets. Workers could move farther away from their workplace, and so the old neighbourhoods and the (generally masculine) forms of leisure such as taverns often associated with those communities began to fade.

Struggles for fuller citizenship within an unjust and inequitable capitalist system often produced new divisions. Certain sections of the working class gained a great deal from these victories, while others benefited little. Women, for example, gained much less than men from new welfare state programs that were based around an assumption of a household based around a male breadwinner and a wife who did unpaid work in the home. Some workers won important gains in wages, job protection, vacation time and benefits, while others gained very little.

At its core, citizenship itself is based on the exclusion of non-citizens and those with limited rights. The rights of some must always be measured against the exclusion of others – indigenous peoples, migrants, and others without full rights in society. Citizenship rights are therefore inherently divisive, even if they are won through mobilization and solidarity. They can reinforce lines of privilege and inequality within the working-class movement.

The ruling class mounted a counter-offensive against this wave of radicalization, both contributing to and building on the depoliticization of the working class and other movements in the aftermath of key victories. The Cold War anti-Communist witch-hunts were a key part of a counter-offensive aimed at rolling back the radicalism of the working-class movement. In the name of “national security,” civil servants were fired for political activism, people perceived as lesbian or gay were hounded out of their jobs, and radicals were blacklisted out of any presence in popular culture. Within the unions, there was a parallel move to drive out the Left and to strip dissidents of their rights. This weakened socialist organizations and other elements of the infrastructure of dissent.



Anti-World Bank, World Trade Organization graphic from the global justice movement of the late 1990s.

## THE 1960s AND 1970s

THE IMPETUS FOR THE NEXT GREAT WAVE OF MOBILIZATION, in the 1960s and 1970s, came largely from those who were still excluded from full citizenship: the Québécois, indigenous peoples, women, lesbians and gays, young people and people of colour. It was crucially inspired by anti-imperialist solidarity with the people of Vietnam.

This mobilization also ignited a new labour militancy, to a large extent radiating out of Quebec, where workplace activism and the struggle for national liberation tended to come together. The militancy of postal workers in Quebec in 1965 played a crucial role in igniting the activism that would lead to widespread unionization in the public sector and new dimensions of worker activism.

The 1960s and 1970s saw a resurgence of socialist organizing that launched a new Left and revived elements of the old. The “New Left” was often highly critical of existing so-called “socialist” societies, and brought with it a new emphasis on democracy, participation and the liberation of previously excluded groups including women, Québécois, people of colour, students and young people, indigenous peoples, lesbians and gays. The “Old Left” that revived in this period included the pro-USSR Communist Party, the social democratic left, Maoist and Trotskyist formations.

The old and new Lefts were not mutually exclusive. The New Left was often influenced by long-standing socialists or by their offspring—“red diaper babies.” Some of the older Left, for example certain Trotskyist groups, were highly influenced by the politics of the New Left.

The militancy of the 1960s and 1970s repoliticized society. In workplaces, on campuses, in newly established queer and women’s spaces, in militant anti-racist organizations, in music and in popular culture, radical ideas were highly vis-

ible and many began to understand their position in society in political terms. The parameters of the political were expanded in this period, with such slogans as “the personal is political” which in its first incarnation meant that we could not overcome our everyday problems without combating the unequal power structures of the greater society.

As after World War II, employers and the state met the mobilizations of the 1960s and 1970s with a combination of concessions and counter-offensive. This wave of mobilization saw many real gains, some of which were won as the ruling class counter-offensive was underway in the late 1970s or early 1980s. These included pay equity, broader human rights protection, paid maternity leave and the right to refuse unsafe work along with a substantial expansion of social programs, health care and increased access to education

## COUNTER-OFFENSIVE

THE END OF THE LONG BOOM IN THE EARLY 1970s contributed to spurring the ruling class into a counter-offensive. Employers and the state went on the offensive to drive up profitability by clawing back worker rights and restructuring production. The introduction of wage and price controls in 1975 was one of the key markers of the new ruling-class offensive in the Canadian state. Despite impressive resistance, including a massive one-day protest strike on October 14, 1976, the offensive began to have bite. It took many attempts and a variety of strategies, worked out in Canada and globally, to wear down the opposition and begin to remake the workplace and society. Ultimately, these strategies tended to converge on ideas of neo-liberalism and lean production.

Lean production describes a process of reorganizing workplaces around a less secure, more polarized and increasingly self-disciplined workforce. Many of the key elements of lean production were developed in the Japanese automobile industry and generalized from there through the auto sector. Now, these management strategies have spread much further than manufacturing, influencing the organization of retail, office, health, social service and education workplaces.

The spread of lean production has included many features designed to weaken union activism and shop floor power. Team concept work organization and strategies of continuous improvement are designed specifically to implicate workers in management, downloading certain responsibilities to enforce new kinds of self-discipline. Many of the temporary and part-time workers in the increasingly polarized workforce are not organized, leaving unions representing a shrinking number of ever less-secure full-time workers.

Neo-liberalism is the political twin of lean production, using social policy to create the population required for conditions of lean production, oriented evermore towards the market to meet needs and fulfill desires. The only way to stay alive in a neo-liberal society is to sell your capacity to



work in exchange for wages that can be used to purchase goods. Deep cuts to health, education and social programs have reduced or eliminated supplements and alternatives to the wage. Neo-liberalism has pushed commodification, the transformation of things, services and capacities into market goods for purchase, ever deeper into our daily lives.

Neo-liberalism and lean production have rolled back many of the social rights associated with winning fuller citizenship. However, we have not yet seen a repoliticization of society. Indeed, it is a central goal of neo-liberalism to depoliticize society, making it seem that the market determines everything and that politics is irrelevant. Of course, underlying this apparent market domination is a brutal use of state power in immigration controls, policing and imprisonment to eliminate alternatives to wage labour (such as squeegeeing car windshields), stifle dissent and reinforce the vulnerabilities of the disadvantaged.

At the present time, there is a remarkable political consensus about the inevitability of neo-liberalism and lean production that ranges from the Tories to the NDP. Globally, New Labour in Britain has been a pioneer in the re-engineering of social democracy to fit with neo-liberalism, though apparently more radical formations like the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa and the Workers' Party (PT) in Brazil also fell in line.

This depoliticization of society and weakening of the infrastructure of dissent produces a dumbing down of political discussion and debate. With few issues of substance in play, the media tend to reduce politics to coverage of personalities and empty soundbites. This does not begin with the media, but with the shrinking of the sphere of politics and the weakening of collective means of communication, analysis and mobilization.

Neo-liberalism and lean production have contributed to further changes in working-class life. The intensified commodification associated with neo-liberalism has replaced more community-oriented forms of leisure (concerts, bars, parks) with more privatized forms (each household member having their own television, mp3 player, and computer). Public space is being squeezed out by privatization, for example as shopping streets are replaced by private malls. An infrastructure of dissent historically founded in part on informal networks and public space has less soil in which to thrive.

At the same time, overwork in paid and domestic labour reduces the opportunity to participate in political life. Many people are working longer hours in paid work while the reduction of state services is downloading a great deal of care-giving responsibility into the household. Hospital cutbacks, for example, dump people who are ill or recovering into households where they need a great deal of care. This increasing work time makes it harder for everyone, and particularly for women, to make time for activism.

Finally, it is crucial to understand the ways that these processes of restructuring are made to appear normal by divisions within the working class so that the marginalization of some seems natural. People living in poverty, and particularly those who need social assistance, have been stigmatized and brutalized by neo-liberal social policy. This poor-bashing only works because solidarity has declined to the extent that many employed working-class people see their own needs and those of people living in poverty as counterposed.

The increasing polarization of the workforce has also been naturalized through racism and sexism. The most vulnerable sections of the workforce are disproportionately made up of women and people of colour, and often specifically women of colour. The lack of outrage about increasing social polarization, increasing poverty, downloading of responsibility onto the household and the proliferation of insecure, low-wage jobs is partly because the substandard condition of women and people of colour is still widely accepted as inevitable.

### **THE BEGINNING OF A NEW SOCIALISM?**

THE END OF 20TH CENTURY SOCIALISM IS NOT JUST AN ORGANIZATIONAL low point resulting from a lull in struggles. It represents, at least in the Canadian state outside Quebec, the exhaustion of a particular historical phase of socialist organizing oriented around a specific set of political coordinates (the Russian Revolution), emancipatory projects (full citizenship), regimes of work organization and ways of life for working-class communities.

The future of socialism is a genuinely open question, as it is now in such a marginal state that sustainability is not a sure thing. It is a crucial time to investigate the extent to which the model of 20th century socialism fits the current ways of life, regimes of work, emancipatory projects and political coordinates of the working class and oppressed groups.

The movement for global justice that was cut short in the wake of September 11, 2001 showed that radical renewal could lead to the development of new forms of infrastructure of dissent and raise new challenges for socialist organizing. Coming out of this experience, there is every reason to believe that building genuine and effective solidarity between the included and excluded segments of the working class will be a huge issue in rebuilding radicalism, demanding a serious integration of anti-racist, feminist and queer liberationist perspectives into the project of revitalizing socialism.

Marxism provides crucial tools for making sense of the changes that shape the terrain of socialist organizing, helping to clarify the continuities and discontinuities brought about by processes of capitalist restructuring. These tools need to be used in a way that is open to the future, not assuming that the key questions have already been answered, open to the past, not closing the door on the immense historical experience of struggle of the past century. ★

# WHY ECOSOCIALISM TODAY?

BY JOEL KOVEL

**H**omo sapiens has been contending with its effects on nature since Paleolithic days and the first great extinctions wrought by hunting bands. But it was not until the 1970s that we began to talk about a great ecological crisis threatening the future of the species. The modern environmental movement was born in that moment, with its Earth Days, green parties and innumerable non-governmental organizations signalling that a new, ecologically aware age had arisen to contend with the planetary threat.

The optimism of those early years has now faded. Despite certain useful interventions like greater recycling of garbage or the development of green zones, it is increasingly apparent that the whole mass of governmental regulations, environmental NGO's and academic programs has failed to check the overall pace of ecological decay. Indeed, since the first Earth Day was proclaimed, the breakdown in crucial areas such as carbon emissions, the loss of barrier reefs and deforestation of the Amazon basin has actually accelerated and even begun to assume an exponential character.

How do we explain this grim fact, the awareness of which should inspire the most vigorous efforts to go beyond the limits of present-day environmentalism? Perhaps Margaret Thatcher should be heeded here. In the later years of the 1970s, the very decade that was to usher in the environmental era, the Prime Minister of the UK announced the rise of "TINA," the acronym for her slogan "*There Is No Alternative*" to the given society, and certainly no alternative of the sort envisioned by the first wave of environmentalists.



What had happened was that environmentalism had missed the point, and was dealing with external symptoms rather than the basic disease. Thatcher did not spell it out in detail but there is no mistaking what she had in mind and stood for: There was to be no alternative to *capitalism* – to be exact, the born-again, harder-edged kind of capitalism which was being installed during the 1970s in place of the welfare-state capitalism that had prevailed for much of the century. This shift was a deliberate response to a serious accumulation crisis that had convinced the leaders of the global economy to install what we know as neoliberalism. Thatcher was emblematic, along with US president Ronald Reagan, of its political face.

Neoliberalism is a return to the pure logic of capital; it is no passing storm but the true condition of the capitalist world we inhabit. It has effectively swept away measures which had inhibited capital's aggressiveness, replacing them with naked exploitation of humanity and nature. The tearing down of boundaries and limits to accumulation is known as "globaliza-

tion," and is celebrated by ideologues like Thomas Friedman as a new epoch of universal progress borne on the wings of free trade and unfettered commodification. This *blitzkrieg* or bombardment simply overwhelmed the feeble liberal reforms which the environmental movements of the 1970s had helped put in place in order to check ecological decay. And as these movements have had little or no critique of capital, they drift helplessly in a time of accelerated breakdown.

Thus it is time to recognize the utter inadequacy of first-wave environmentalism's basic premises and forms of organization. There is a certain urgency to this recognition, for nothing less than profound and indeed unprecedented changes in human existence are forewarned by the ecological crisis. And that this path has now opened before us can be attributed to capital itself, which places us on a track to ecological chaos. While there are many complexities corresponding to capital's responsibility for the ecological crisis, there is but one overriding tendency: capitalism requires continual growth of the economic product and since this growth is for the sake of capital and not real human need, the result is the continual destabilization of an integral relationship to na-

---

Joel Kovel's two most recent books are *Overcoming Zionism (Between the Lines)* and *The Enemy of Nature (2nd edition forthcoming 2007, Zed)*

ture. The essential reason for this lies in capitalism's distinctive difference from all other modes of production, that is, that it is organized around the production of capital itself—a purely abstract, numerical entity with no internal limit. Hence it drags the material natural world, which very definitely has limits, along with it on its mad quest for value and surplus value, and can do nothing else.

We have no choice about the fact that the ecological crisis portends radical change. But we can choose the kind of change, whether it is to be for life or death. As Ian Angus puts it in his listserve, *Climate and Capitalism*, the choice is simple enough: “EcoSocialism or Barbarism: There is no third way” (To learn about and/or join this list, contact Angus at [ecosocialism@gmail.com](mailto:ecosocialism@gmail.com)).

This is a paraphrase of the great Rosa Luxemburg's saying of the early twentieth century, that the real choice before humanity was between “Socialism or Barbarism.” This is quite true. The failure of the socialist revolutions (both immediately as in the case of Luxemburg and the Spartacist uprising in Germany, and later with the failure of the other socialisms of the twentieth century, especially those organized around the USSR and China), has been a condition for the present triumph of barbaric capitalism, with its endless wars, nightmarish consumerism, ever-widening gap between rich and poor—and most significantly, ecological crisis. So the choice remains the same, except that capitalist barbarism now means ecocatastrophe. This is because the capacity of the earth to buffer the effects of human production has become overwhelmed by the chaos of its productive system. Any movement for social transformation in our time will have to emphasize this issue, for the very notion of a future depends on whether we can resolve it or not.

For this reason, a socialism worthy of the name will have to be ecologically – or to be more exact, “ecocentrically” – oriented, that is, it will have to be an “ecosocialism” devoted to restoring the integrity of our relationship to nature. The distinction between ecosocialism and the

“first-epoch” socialisms of the last century is not merely terminological, as though for ecosocialism we simply need worker control over the industrial apparatus and some good environmental regulation. We do need worker control in ecosocialism as we did in the socialism of the “first epoch,” for unless the producers are free there is no overcoming of capitalism. But the ecological aspect also poses a new and more radical issue that calls into question the very character of production itself.

Capitalist production, in its endless search for profit, seeks to turn everything into a commodity. Only in this way can accumulation continuously expand. By releasing us from the tyranny of private ownership of the means of production, socialism, whether of the first-epoch variety or as ecosocialism, makes it possible to interrupt the deadly tendency of cancerous growth, which is effectively driven

***We have no choice about the fact that the ecological crisis portends radical change. But we can choose the kind of change, whether it is to be for life or death.***

by the competition between capitals for ever greater market share. But this leaves open the question of just what will be produced, and how, within an ecosocialist society.

It is plain to see that production will have to shift from being dominated by exchange – the path of the commodity – to that which is for *use*, that is for the direct meeting of human needs. But this in turn requires definition, and in the context of ecological crisis, “use” can only mean those set of needs essential for the overcoming of the ecological crisis—for this is the greatest need for civilization as a whole, and therefore for each woman and man within it.

It follows that human beings can only flourish in circumstances in which the damage to nature that capital has wrought is overcome, as for example, by ceasing to

transfer carbon to the atmosphere. Since “nature” is the interrelated set of all ecosystems, production within ecosocialism should be oriented toward the mending of ecosystemic damage and indeed, the making of flourishing ecosystems. This could entail ecologically rational farms, for example, or – since we ourselves are natural creatures who live ecosystemically, in communities – ecologically directed human relationships, including the raising of children, the relations between genders and indeed, the whole spiritual and aesthetic side of life.

This article is far too brief to allow the development of the facts of ecosocialism. But from what has been said so far it should be apparent that in talking of ecosocialism we are saying much more than that our economy or technology must change. Ecosocialism is no more a purely economic matter than was socialism or communism in the eyes of Marx. It needs to be precisely the radical transformation of society – and human existence – that Marx envisioned as the next stage in human evolution. Indeed, it must be that if we are going to survive the ecological crisis. Ecosocialism is the ushering in, then, of a whole mode of production, one in which freely associated labour produces flourishing ecosystems rather than commodities.

Most definitely, this discussion of alternatives raises far more questions than it answers, which is itself a measure of how profound the ecological crisis is. What, after all, would life look like if we stopped pouring carbon into the atmosphere and allowed the climate ecosystem to re-equilibrate, that is, be healed? How, really, are we to live fully human lives in harmony with nature given the tremendous horrors built into our system of society? There is no certainty of outcome. But there is one certainty we have to build: *there must be an alternative.* ★

There will be a meeting to found an International Ecosocialist organization this coming October 7th in Paris.

Please contact Joel at [jskovel@earthlink.net](mailto:jskovel@earthlink.net), or Ian Angus at [ecosocialism@gmail.com](mailto:ecosocialism@gmail.com) for further information.”

# INDIGENIZING REVOLUTION

*Restoring balance to our theories and strategies for social change*

BY NA'CHA'UAHT

The idea of revolution and immediate change is appealing, especially considering the horrendous living conditions endured by a majority of indigenous people in this country. Yet despite the need for immediate action to better the lives of indigenous people, leaders of modern indigenous resistance movements find themselves – counter-intuitively perhaps – facing the reality that substantive change will take a considerable amount of time. Indigenous activists are refocusing their attention on local, fundamental issues, while attempting to remain true to their indigenous philosophical roots.

While classic socialist notions of revolution are appealing, like their liberal-democratic counterparts they are rooted in Eurocentric political, social and economic worldviews. Indigenous resurgence is more than just the elimination of poverty or the improvement of any number of the socioeconomic indicators. Yes, indigenous people want to be healthy and happy, but not at the expense of losing who they are as a people. Of course, ideas that conceptualize indigenous resurgence are diverse, but most indigenous people express a desire to preserve and perpetuate their unique languages, cultures and ways of living.

In his most recent book *Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*, Kanien'kehaka scholar and activist Taiaiake Alfred calls for indigenous people to move away from materialist and individualist state-centric engagements, and re-embrace their traditional values and principles. In dealing with the issue of violence, Alfred writes, "How you fight determines who you will become when the battle is over."

---

*Na'cha'uaht (Cliff Atleo, Jr.) is the son of a Nuu-chah-nulth father and a Tsimshian mother. He is a former member of the disbanded West Coast Warrior Society and is currently attending the University of Victoria.*

**"A true revolution is spiritual at its core; every single one of the world's materialist revolutions has failed to produce conditions of life that are markedly different from those which it opposed."**

Identifying the core issue of ends-means consistency, Alfred calls for the employment of a variety of strategies, including what he calls non-violent creative contention. He further states, "A true revolution is spiritual at its core; every single one of the world's materialist revolutions has failed to produce conditions of life that are markedly different from those which it opposed." This critique can be seen not simply as abandoning all the ideals of revolution, but perhaps indigenizing them.

True indigenous resurgence is about restoring balance. Any Eurocentric solution, no matter how well-intentioned, is bound to fail. It is important to recognize certain unique indigenous worldviews and philosophical perspectives here. Bearing in mind that indigenous communities and cultures across the Americas are far from homogenous, there are some commonalities that are worth mentioning. A common principle amongst indigenous peoples is that of interconnection; indigenous worldviews see all creation as connected and interrelated. Recognition of this is manifested in indigenous ways of living in balance with the environment.

## CO-OPTATION

After a legacy of displacement, dispossession, devastating diseases, and state-led attempts at cultural erasure and assimilation, indigenous people have had to deal with an imposed form of gover-

nance – that of the Indian band council. These extensions of the federal government have ranged from ineffective liberal democratic regimes that lack popular legitimacy at the least, to unaccountable and corrupt authoritarian regimes at the worst. Even communities that manage to liberate themselves from the confines of the Indian Act and negotiate their own self-government agreements are forced to accept democratic constitutions that are not rooted in indigenous principles or values. Taiaiake Alfred identifies the mainstream strategies of political and legal engagement as "aboriginalism," and sets out a compelling case not only of their futility, but of the very dangerous ways in which they promote assimilation.

Indigenous peoples must be able to choose how they govern themselves. For indigenous peoples it is a fundamental right, as well as a responsibility. This concept of responsibility that places indigenous people as stewards of the land has largely been lost in the debates and negotiations. Adopting the rhetoric of rights and engaging with the colonial political and legal institutions on their own terms are a significant departure from indigenous worldviews and philosophies. This is why narrowly focused, state-centric initiatives have proven largely unsuccessful.

Politically, some argue that progress has been made. While the \$5 billion Kelowna Accord has been abandoned by the federal Conservative government, the provincial Liberals in British Columbia continue to move ahead with their \$100 million New Relationship initiative. Pre-

mier Gordon Campbell surprised many with his about-face on “treaty” negotiations and unexpected efforts to accommodate First Nations in British Columbia with a series of social and economic policy shifts.

But co-optation will not come easily. The community rejection of the Lheidli Teneh Final Agreement by a vote of 123-111 on March 30 is sending shockwaves throughout the BC treaty establishment. After 14 years of negotiations and hundreds of millions of dollars of accumulated debt, the BC Treaty Process has yet to produce a single ratified agreement – the Nisga’a negotiations predated the formal BC Treaty Process and their agreement was concluded outside its domain. Two other agreements will soon face community referendums: Tsawwassen and Maa-nulth. Both will face considerable community opposition, especially in the wake of the Lheidli Teneh rejection and overall dissatisfaction with inflexible government mandates, ongoing resource extraction, and continued community poverty.

Endeavours to obtain justice in the Canadian courts have proven equally disheartening. Aboriginal law and the concepts of aboriginal title and rights began to take shape with the Calder decision – the first modern recognition of the idea of aboriginal title in Canadian common law – in 1976. While the Supreme Court of Canada ruled against Frank Calder and

the Nisga’a Nation on a technicality, aboriginal law and rights rhetoric had found a venue—and a seemingly inexhaustible supply of lawyers willing to take on cases. After the 1982 repatriation of the Canadian constitution and the inclusion of section 35.1, which recognized “existing Aboriginal and treaty rights,” aboriginal law and its practitioners gathered momentum that continues unabated.

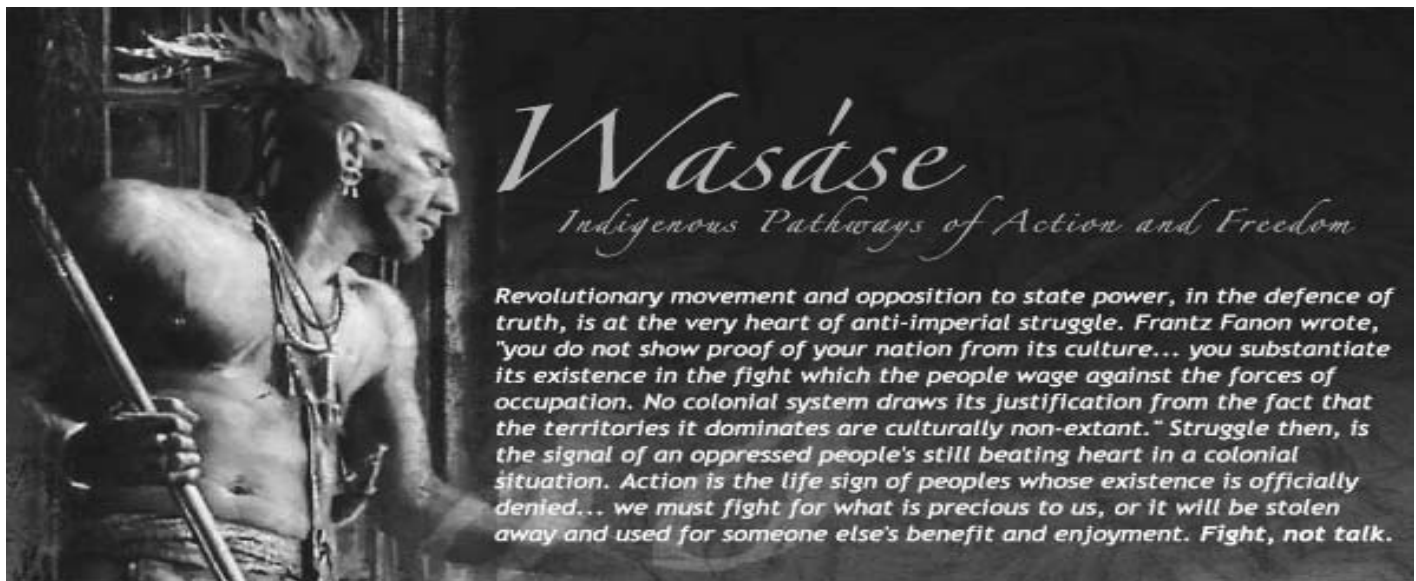
In cases like Sparrow, Gladstone, Marshall, Haida, Taku, and Delgamuukw the courts have been notoriously vague in their rulings about the nature and scope of aboriginal title and rights. What they have not been vague about is the unsailability of Crown title and jurisdiction. Delgamuukw, often heralded as a victory for indigenous people, confirmed aboriginal title but only as a “burden” on Crown title. To top it off, Chief Justice Antonio Lamer provided a veritable grocery list of reasons for “justifiable infringement” of aboriginal title that all but rendered the recognition of it useless. Both negotiations and the courts have proven time-consuming, expensive, and have produced dubious results at best.

### **A COMMUNITY-CENTRED APPROACH**

Political and legal efforts to achieve reconciliation are mostly disappointing and somewhat esoteric to average community members. So what are the alternatives? Many young indigenous activ-

ists struggle with how best to lead their communities, often responding to the dire need for change with elitist revolutionary ideas. In contrast, Nicole Cross, a 22-year old Nisga’a woman, believes that the consciousness and awareness of the common people is where we must focus our efforts. Consistent with Frantz Fanon’s belief that action occurs most often amongst those with nothing to lose, Cross advocates a broad community-centered approach to organizing. Seventeen-year-old Dustin Rivers of Skwxwú7mesh also believes that community resurgence cannot merely be an elite-led process.

Jessica Wood, a young Gitxan mother, believes that our politics must be more inclusive, suggesting that indigenous communities have become increasingly divided – especially on the basis of gender. Possibly one of the most devastating and divisive strategies employed by colonial authorities was the implementation of the overtly sexist provisions of the Indian Act. Prior to an amendment in 1985 that allowed for a limited recovery, the legislation granted “Indian status” to non-indigenous women who married indigenous men, and stripped it from indigenous women who married non-indigenous men. In many cases non-status Indians were required to leave their home communities and fend for themselves in urban centres often under conditions of isolation and poverty. The legacy of this community fragmentation is no more



*Wasáse*  
*Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*

*Revolutionary movement and opposition to state power, in the defence of truth, is at the very heart of anti-imperial struggle. Frantz Fanon wrote, "you do not show proof of your nation from its culture... you substantiate its existence in the fight which the people wage against the forces of occupation. No colonial system draws its justification from the fact that the territories it dominates are culturally non-extant." Struggle then, is the signal of an oppressed people's still beating heart in a colonial situation. Action is the life sign of peoples whose existence is officially denied... we must fight for what is precious to us, or it will be stolen away and used for someone else's benefit and enjoyment. Fight, not talk.*

HTTP://WASASE.ORG

evident than in the national disgrace that is the reality of Canada's more than 500 missing and murdered indigenous women.

If the restoration of balance is intrinsic to community resurgence rooted in indigenous principles however, then restoring balance to indigenous gender relations must be a priority. After years of public and police apathy, community activists and concerned family members have worked hard to focus attention on the issue of violence against women, especially in places like the Downtown Eastside in Vancouver where countless indigenous women have been lost and forgotten by most.

A central theme of the Nuu-chah-nulth Stop the Violence Movement is the restoration of hope. In May 2006, a handful of young Nuu-chah-nulth people, with the support of respected elders, embarked on a 10-day journey that would take them to all 15 Nuu-chah-nulth communities on Vancouver Island. Their concern was domestic violence, and their message was simple: Indigenous people must stop the violence in their communities, a manifestation of anger turned inward. Men and women need to stand together, restoring balance and bringing dignity again to the people.

Organizers worked outside the state-sponsored band council system, choosing instead to recognize the traditional Nuu-chah-nulth Ha'wiih (hereditary leaders), and when possible observe all pertinent cultural protocols. Given the positive responses from the communities, organizers have decided to make the Stop The Violence Movement an annual event. This year participants plan to travel to all the major urban areas where more than 65% of Nuu-chah-nulth families reside to continue sharing the message of love, concern, and hope.

## RESISTANCE

Community people young and old are saying, "no," and "enough." One of the most common criticisms levelled at indigenous dissidents is that it is not enough to merely say "no." It is as if one is unable to articulate a comprehensive al-

ternative, one is not deserving of a public opinion. Grassroots community members often feel intimidated by the legal and political jargon prevalent in current indigenous politics and negotiations. With the immense pressure to plug-in, buy-in, go shopping, go to school, go to work, pay the bills, and "just do it," and assimilate into the Canadian state politically and economically, many believe that for the time being it is enough to just say no.

In this view, resistance precedes resurgence. Uruguayan writer, Eduardo Galeano writes in his book, *We Say No*, "By saying no to the devastating empire of greed...we are saying yes to another possible America...In saying no to peace

## While addressing the most urgent needs of today, we must also begin planting the seeds for tomorrow.

without dignity, we are saying yes to the sacred right of rebellion against injustice...By saying no to the freedom of money we are saying yes to the freedom of people: a mistreated and wounded freedom, a thousand times defeated...a thousand times arisen." Indigenous activists in Canada, while focusing their efforts locally, are mindful of allies abroad, and like their Zapatista brothers and sisters in Mexico, also say "Ya Basta!"

What is the future of indigenous resistance, and why is resistance specifically, an important element to the overall project of indigenous resurgence? Perhaps Sub-Comandante Marcos, spokesperson for the indigenous Zapatista uprising in Mexico, states it most eloquently in *Our Word is Our Weapon*, "For everyone, everything, nothing for ourselves."

In explaining why the Zapatistas use the weapon of resistance, Marcos further states, "From the beginning of our uprising, they have offered us everything to get us to sell ourselves, to surrender...But we chose not to sell ourselves, we chose

not to surrender." The Zapatista movement and its most recent incarnation, the Other Campaign, epitomize a non-state-centric, anti-neoliberal approach to indigenous community resistance and resurgence.

Are the Zapatista lessons relevant to Canada? For the Zapatistas, their poverty is integral to their strategy. It is a weapon. In Canada widespread indigenous poverty is a reality. But there is also a burgeoning indigenous elite that has grown to lead the mainstream political and legal engagements with the state. Such a vanguard-led approach, whether from the left or the right, will be problematic and susceptible to co-optation.

## SEEDS FOR TOMORROW

For the time being perhaps it is enough to say enough. Resistance may be the order of the day. But like all truly indigenous movements, the current movement must connect to the next movement, and the next, and the one after that. While addressing the most urgent needs of today, we must also begin planting the seeds for tomorrow. And here I am reminded of my nieces and nephews, and our future generations. It is more than just a cliché. Cycles of violence, depression, poverty, and cultural devastation are broken inter-generationally. As we overcome our trauma and grief through the generations, so must we rebuild our strength and dignity through the generations.

My nephew Kashus will be two years old in August. He is the son of my sister, a strong, compassionate, wonderful woman and her husband, a man of immense character, respect and a true warrior at heart. When Kashus was a few months old, my sister sent me a photograph of him lying in his crib with his right hand balled into a little fist raised in the air defiantly. I have the picture in a frame on my bookshelf and every time I look at it I am reminded of my commitment to him and my family. Tsimshian/Cree activist and performer Skeena Reece is known to have coined the phrase, "We must raise the next generation on truth." In itself, this is an act of resistance and resurgence. ★

# Socialism, solidarity, and indigenous liberation

BY DEBORAH SIMMONS

In Canada, a new radical movement of indigenous people is emerging that refuses to be co-opted by the “aboriginalist” policies of the state. This movement aims to resist the destructive, corrupting and oppressive aspects of the system that has been imposed on indigenous peoples since the arrival of the Europeans. At the same time, the new radical indigenism reaffirms and renews the positive aspects of the sovereign societies that existed on this continent before colonization. Inherent in this strategy is a strong sense of autonomy. Indigenous people are responsible for making their own revolution, in their own way.

Given the undeniable fact of radical indigenous autonomy, and given the often shameful record of top-down versions of socialism that claim to have a monopoly on solutions to the “Indian problem,” it would seem that socialism has nothing to contribute to the project of indigenous liberation beyond unconditional solidarity. This is the perspective promoted by Queen’s University scholar Richard JF Day, whose book *Gramsci is Dead* draws on a certain anarchist tradition and on French philosopher Michel Foucault in arguing that there is a kind of totalitarian impulse in all global strategies for social transformation.

The example of indigenous movements is important for Day, since these movements affirm alternative local modes of resistance that are truly “indigenous” to local history and culture, and thus exist outside the box of any universal theories or strategies. Insofar as they are specific to the diverse experiences, cultures and histories of the plurality of indigenous peoples, Day would define these movements as “non-hegemonic.”

## GROUNDLESS SOLIDARITY

Day more broadly celebrates movements that are rooted in autonomy, de-

colonization and what he calls “affinity.” His examples of such projects include “*asambelistas* in Argentina, Landless People’s Movement activists in South Africa, Zapatista villagers in Chiapas, Mohawk warriors within/against North America, squatters in London.” The “affinity” based strategy builds upon the experience of the global justice movement that crystallized in Seattle (1999), Montreal (2000) and Quebec City (2001). In contrast to Day’s view, “vanguardist” strategies requiring an elite minority that must win over the ma-

**Radical indigenous activists are now critically reflecting on the history of social movements, and particularly indigenous movements and modes of governance, in order to develop an effective strategy for achieving social change.**

jority to their superior ideas, Day defines affinity as a “groundless solidarity” that permits rebellion through a multitude of perspectives, strategies and tactics—a “decentralized network of alternatives.”

Day argues that the reform versus revolution debate among socialists is actually imprisoned within a sealed logic of domination. Struggles for reform demand recognition of individual rights from the state, and this demand in itself tends to reinforce the role of the state. Revolu-

tionaries seek to overthrow or seize the state, and thereby substitute one form of domination for another.

“The idea of revolution is what I call ‘pushing the button,’” Day has said in an interview with Edmonton’s indie mag *Vue Weekly*. “If I could push the button – and for starters, I wouldn’t – but if I could, I’d expect that, the day after, somebody would start setting up a state, or a corporation, and someone else would say, ‘Those people with brown eyes aren’t as good as us; they should do the work for us.’ It would all begin again; it’s perpetual, it’s endless, and this is why the idea of the revolution is to be gotten rid of – it makes us too lazy, because we think that domination is done with, and it never will be.”

## A CONTEMPORARY STRATEGY FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

Radical indigenous activists are now critically reflecting on the history of social movements, and particularly indigenous movements and modes of gover-

nance, in order to develop an effective strategy for achieving social change. The special Indigenous Resurgence issue of *New Socialist Magazine* (#58) published last fall (available at [www.newsocialist.org](http://www.newsocialist.org)) represents an important contribution to this discussion.

In their article, Taiaiake Alfred and Lana Lowe point to the transience of the pan-indigenous Red Power movement as a critical weakness. This is in contrast to the traditionalist warrior societies, which

---

*Deborah Simmons lives and works in Denendeh – the Northwest Territories. She is a member of the New Socialist Group.*

are locally rooted. The latter strategy is exemplified by the Stop the Violence campaign in Nuu-chah-nulth territory. In the words of activist Chiinuks, “We realized, through the help of many good women and elders, that we couldn’t simply ‘drop-in’ to communities, expect to adequately address a problem, and then immediately move on to the next ‘issue’ or community.”

The editorial by Taiaiake Alfred and

Glen Coulthard asserts that the radical indigenous Wasáse movement and New Socialist “share in common the belief that an essential challenge of indigenous self-determination is the question of how to stop, roll back and dismantle capitalism.” We also share an understanding of the need for autonomous organizing of oppressed people, and the need for rootedness and long term commitment to local struggles.

Socialism does not make history, people and social movements do. In fact, socialist ideas have repeatedly been shaken up by the reality of the social movements that spring from the struggles against capitalist exploitation and oppression. We have much to learn as history unfolds, and this learning will take place through activism, dialogue and debate. We owe a particular debt to indigenous peoples, who throughout the inhumane and environmentally destructive history of capitalism have shown that there are alternative ways of organizing society. This was the basis for Karl Marx’s fascination with indigenous societies—in particular the society of the Iroquois—during the last years of his life. This egalitarian and democratic people provided him with insights into the concrete possibility of a free society.

Socialists should be absolutely committed to developing, in both their theory and their activism, strategies that might shed light on the long term possibility of radical social transformation—revolution. True, there is no push-button short cut to this, and socialists will not be the vanguard leading the unenlightened masses to victory. There is no fixed formula for dismantling capitalism; neither is there a crystal ball in which a fixed model for a future revolutionary society is inscribed. The socialist method is much more difficult and complex, bringing analysis of history and of systematic patterns at a global scale to bear on the shifting and diverse local realities of human resistance and rebellion. This is the essence of strategic thinking, which moves beyond anger and spontaneous rebellion to carefully calculated long-term planning.

In this sense, our solidarity with radical indigenous movements is by no means “groundless,” based on a merely conjunctural affinity or instrumental convergence. As Alfred and Coulthard put it, “Solidarity is hard work. It requires a great deal of critical self-reflection and commitment to action.” Solidarity is both a strategy for winning battles against the depredations of capitalism, and it is a laboratory for the longer-term goal of revolution. For socialists, solidarity is both a means and an end in the project to transform society. ★

## IS GRAMSCI DEAD?

The title of Richard JF Day’s book *Gramsci is Dead* refers to the purported death of the concepts of dominance or “hegemony” and revolutionary “counter-hegemony” developed by the Italian theorist Antonio Gramsci. As a university student in Turin, Gramsci was stirred to political activity by the workers struggles he saw around him. He joined the Italian Socialist Party in 1913, and became a supporter of the workers councils that spontaneously emerged during a series of mass strikes in 1919 and 1920. He eventually became critical of Stalin in 1926, but was imprisoned by Mussolini’s fascist regime in 1926. His health ruined by harsh prison conditions, Gramsci died in 1937 after only three years of freedom.



Gramsci’s perspective was forged during a period of major social upheaval: mass strikes, the hope of radical social change represented by the early days of the Russian revolution, the later betrayals of Stalinism and the brutal defeat of radical social movements by fascist reaction. The question of how to challenge the dominance of the capitalist state (or in Russia, its mirror image the Stalinist state), was a matter of life and death.

For Gramsci, solidarity is forged through the battle of ideas combined with the experience of collective struggle. Far from being about the domination of the many by an elite few, solidarity involves intensive dialogue among the exploited and oppressed. According to Gramsci, “all men [sic] are intellectuals,” and no one has a monopoly on correct ideology: “The mode of being of the new intellectual can no longer consist in eloquence, which is an exterior and momentary mover of feelings and passions, but in active participation in practical life, as constructor, organizer ‘permanent persuader’ and not just a simple orator.”

The concept of ideas forged through dialogue provides an important tool for understanding the ways that distinct social movements can develop an understanding of their intersecting interests, and build strength through strategic solidarity in struggle. This is radically distinct from the systematic deceptions imposed upon us by the ruling classes and the capitalist state. Perhaps Gramsci is not dead after all!



## BOOK REVIEW

# Uniting hearts and minds

ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE: GLOBALIZATION  
AND ANTI-CAPITALISM

BY DAVID McNALLY

2ND EDITION, REVISED AND EXPANDED

ARBEITER RING, 2006

REVIEWED BY GABRIELLE GÉRIN

In the course of my life, I have come across a few books, poems and speeches that have made me live intense moments of intellectual excitement, with my heartbeat accelerating, my eyes or ears opening wide and my mind racing. I like to call the feeling in these moments “euphoria.” The words before me seem almost familiar, perfectly expressing an understanding I have felt as true but hadn’t digested or translated into words. Growing and learning as a young activist was made possible by such moments; they completed the consciousness of my heart with a consciousness of the mind.

I first read David McNally’s *Another World is Possible* in 2005, after having participated in two events that radically transformed me as a person and formed me as an activist: the 2005 World Social Forum and the two-month Quebec students’ general strike. It felt like euphoria all along. In very simple and human language, the book helped me clarify my understanding of the world, which I had felt a deep need for in the course of struggle, discussion and learning. My heart felt light because I knew the book would be an empowering tool, not only in making sense of the world but also in changing it.

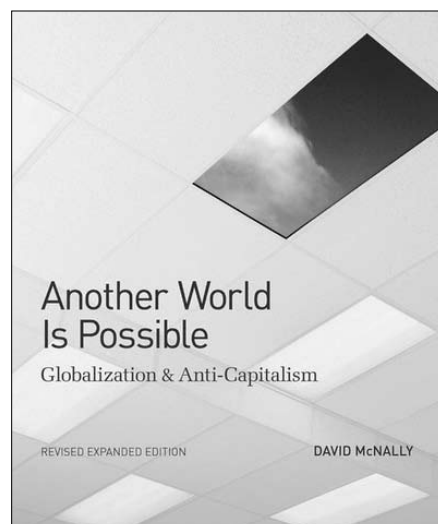
McNally’s book seemed designed for young activists like me who were born out of “anti-globalization” struggles. See-

ing the mobilization wave crashing on the shores of 9/11, the repression that followed and the reconfiguration of social forces since 2001, McNally prepared this revised edition to identify new challenges and sources of hope for the Left.

McNally starts with a brilliantly popularized Marxist analysis of the globalization process. He places this process within capital’s drive to violently commodify resources and labour power, reinforcing its power through class exploitation and gender and racial oppression. In doing so, he demonstrates that this process is in no way natural and has always been met with resistance. History is not driven by competing moralities but rather by struggle between social forces with opposing material—and human—interests and needs.

McNally’s book is rich with much needed references to peoples’ history (for example, the shocking account of the colonization of the Americas), providing the inspiration and references that are especially lacking for today’s young activists. It is also incredibly rich with the words of participants in struggles the world over and throughout history. The thorough research into various struggles, helps us feel the pulse of contemporary global resistance to capitalism.

One of the book’s greatest strengths is its thoroughly inclusive approach; it speaks to all struggles and reaches to all those engaged in them, whatever their level of political awareness and radicalism. This is because McNally puts the radicalism of the heart at the centre of the analysis. It is this radicalism, expressed in



all refusals to comply passively with oppression, exploitation or commodification that provides the necessary fuel for revolutionary struggle. This struggle must be built through a radicalization of minds and the democratic empowerment of the masses. McNally stresses the need for an inclusive, revolutionary anti-capitalist vision and mass-based, democratic organization from below for these struggles to develop their revolutionary potential.

In times like these when the radical left can feel isolated and pessimistic, the book reminds us that hope lies wherever there are struggles against oppression and wherever the vision of an alternative develops. It also reminds us that, at heart, our task is to be providing empowering analysis, strategy and organization. Strategic thinking cannot develop in an office, outside of struggles. There, it is of almost no use, loses touch with the reality and humanity of social forces at play and faces the great danger of losing the optimism that develops with the contact of rebel hearts.

In a context where reformist institutions dominate social movements, when struggles and demands appear fragmented and when the new generation of activists born in the struggles of the turn of the century seem more keen on a “lifestyle” type of activism rather than on mass political organization, this book gives us reasons for hope and calls us to action. It is a powerful reminder that history is made when hearts and minds unite. ★

---

Gabrielle G erin is a student at York University who is currently organizing the first Quebec Social Forum and is also involved in *Presse-Soi- -gauche*, a weekly Qu b cois left news website.

# Strategies of the Left in Latin America

BY CLAUDIO KATZ

*Editors' note: This is a challenging theoretical text available for the first time in English. Claudio Katz' interventions in the thriving debates on the future of socialism in Latin America have been much discussed in the magazines, journals and websites of the left throughout Latin America and Spain. In providing a translation of Katz' most recent contribution, New Socialist is attempting to introduce to North American readers a taste of the character of discussions around building a socialism for the twenty-first century currently taking place on the ground in Latin America. The editors added the explanatory footnotes to the original text.*

**T**HE CALL TO BUILD SOCIALISM OF THE 21ST CENTURY has re-opened the strategic discussion on the Latin American left. Once again characterizations of socialism and courses of action are being analyzed to advance the socialist objective. This reflection includes six large themes: material conditions, relations of social forces, social subjects, popular consciousness, institutional frameworks and the organization of the oppressed.

## MATURITY OF THE PRODUCTIVE FORCES

THE FIRST DEBATE TAKES UP ONCE AGAIN A CLASSIC CON-  
versy. Have the forces of production in Latin America matured sufficiently to begin an anticapitalist transformation? Are the existing resources, technologies and qualifications sufficient to open a socialist process?

The countries of the region are less prepared but more urgently in need of facing up to this change than are the developed nations. They endure nutritional, educational and sanitary disasters more intense than those in the advanced economies, but have weaker material resources with which to solve these problems. This contradiction is a consequence of the peripheral character of Latin America [within the global economy – ed.] and its resulting agrarian backwardness, fragmented industrialization and financial dependence.

On the Left there are two traditional responses in the face of this situation: to promote a stage of progressive capitalism or to initiate a socialist transition adapted to the regional insufficiencies. In a recent text we have expressed various arguments in favour of the second option.<sup>1</sup>

But another equally relevant debate centres on the opportunities of each course. After a traumatic period of economic depression and banking collapses, Latin America is going



2002 road blockade of the piquetero movement in Argentina.

through a phase of growth, increasing exports, and recomposition of business profits. One could object that in these conditions, no collapse justifying anticapitalist transformation is foreseeable.

However, the socialist option is not a conjunctural program to overcome recessionary cycles and in this respect strictly differentiates itself from Keynesianism.<sup>2</sup> It aims to overcome the exploitation and inequality that characterize capitalism. It seeks to do away with poverty and unemployment, to eradicate environmental disasters, to put an end to nightmarish wars, and to stop financial cataclysms.

This polarization is taking place in the current Latin American conjuncture. The increase in profits and consumption of the comfortable sectors contrasts with terrifying indices of misery. These calamities – that become more visible in the peaks of economic disaster – justify the battle for socialism. The situations of collapse do not constitute the only apt moment to eradicate the system. The anticapitalist turn is an

---

*Claudio Katz is an economist at the University of Buenos Aires, a researcher with Conicet, and a member of Economistas de Izquierda, Economists of the Left, in Argentina.  
Translation by New Socialist editor Jeffery R. Webber.*

- 1 Claudio Katz, "Socialismo o Neo-desarrollismo" [Socialism or Neo-Developmentalism], available in Spanish at: [www.lahaine.org](http://www.lahaine.org), 1-12-06, or [www.rebellion.org](http://www.rebellion.org), 1-12-06.
- 2 Keynesianism refers to the reformist economic theory of John Maynard Keynes. It was most influential between the end of the Second World War and the 1970s.

## No socialist revolution coincided with the zenith of an economic crisis.

### The majority of cases erupted as a consequence of war, colonial occupation or dictatorial oppression.

open option for an entire period and can begin in whichever conjuncture of the cycle. The experience of the twentieth century confirms this fact.

No socialist revolution coincided with the zenith of an economic crisis. The majority of cases erupted as a consequence of war, colonial occupation or dictatorial oppression. In contexts of this kind the Bolsheviks took power (in Russia), Mao imposed himself on China, Tito won Yugoslavia, the Vietnamese threw out the United States and the Cuban revolution triumphed. Most of these victories were completed during the full postwar boom; that is to say during a stage of record capitalist growth. No automatism links, therefore, the debut of socialism with economic collapse. The miseries that capitalism generates are sufficient to support its reversal, in whatever phase of the periodic fluctuations of this system.

One objection to starting socialist processes highlights the impediments created by globalization. It is argued that the current internationalization of capital makes an anticapitalist challenge in Latin America impractical.

But where exactly is the obstacle? Globalization does not constitute a barrier for a project of universal scope, such as socialism. The overflowing of borders extends the imbalances of capitalism and creates better objective bases for a socialist transformation.

The presentation of globalization as a stage that makes alternative models impossible is a tributary of the neoliberal vision which proclaimed the inexistence of alternatives to the rightist model. But if one discards socialism for this reason it is also necessary to reject whatever Keynesian or regulated capitalist alternative. It is inconsistent to argue that the totalitarianism of globalization has buried the anticapitalist project, but tolerates interventionist forms of accumulation. If it has shut out all options for socialism there are also no openings for neo-developmentalism.

However, in reality globalization does not constitute the end of history and all alternatives remain open. It is merely that a new period of accumulation began, sustained by the recomposition of profits at the expense of the oppressed and by transfers of major international imbalances to the weakest

economies. These regressive media give new life to the necessity of socialism as the only popular response to the new stage. It is the only exit which can remedy the instabilities created by the expansion of global capital in a framework of nation states, and in the face of tensions generated by the overflowing of financial speculation, imperialist polarization and the divorce between markets and technological advance.

### WHAT IS THE CORRELATION OF FORCES?

THE PRE-EMINENCE OF RELATIONS OF FORCES FAVOURABLE to the oppressed is a condition for socialist change. The popular majority cannot prevail over its antagonists of the dominant classes if it faces a very negative balance of power. But how do we assess these parameters?

The correlation of forces is determined in Latin America by the positions gained, threatened or lost by three sectors: the local capitalist classes, the oppressed masses and American imperialism. During the 1990s a massive global offensive of capital over labour was consummated on a global scale. The initial Thatcherite forcefulness of this broadside has decreased, but it left behind an adverse general climate for workers on an international scale. What happened in Latin America?

The capitalists of the region actively participated in this attack, but ended up suffering various collateral consequences from the process. With commercial opening they lost their competitive positions and with the de-nationalization of the productive apparatus they gave up their defences against their external competitors. Later, the financial crisis thrashed the establishment and took away their direct political presence. As a consequence the right has been left in a minority and centre-left governments replaced many conservatives in the management of the state (especially in the Southern Cone).<sup>3</sup> The capitalist elite are no longer able to fix the agenda of the entire region with impunity. They have been affected by a crisis of neoliberalism that could result in the structural decline of this project.

The regional relation of forces has also been modified by massive popular uprisings, which in South America precipitated the fall of various heads of state. The rebellions in Bolivia, Ecuador, Argentina and Venezuela have had direct repercussions on the dominant classes as a whole. They challenged business aggression and in many countries imposed a certain accommodation with the masses.

The combative impulse is very unequal. In certain nations popular protagonism is visible (Bolivia, Venezuela, Argentina, Ecuador), while in others an ebb in the tide prevails as a consequence of deception (Brazil, Uruguay). A new development is the awakening of worker and student struggles in countries that lead in neoliberal ranking (Chile), and in nations overwhelmed by social abuses and hemorrhages of

3 The Southern Cone refers to Argentina, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay.

migration (Mexico). The correlation of forces is extremely varied in Latin America, but a general trend of popular initiatives is reaffirming itself throughout the entire region.

At the beginning of the 1990s American imperialism launched a politics of recolonization in its backyard through free trade and the installation of military bases. This panorama has also changed. The original version of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) failed because of conflicts between globalized and dependent corporations in internal markets, clashes between exporters and industrialists and extensive popular rejection of the project. The counteroffensive of bilateral trade agreements that the US Department of State has launched does not compensate for this setback.

The international isolation of Bush (electoral collapse of the Republicans, failure in Iraq, loss of allies in Europe) has closed the space for unilateralism and spurred the resurgence of geopolitical blocs adverse to the United States (such as the Non-Aligned countries). This American retreat is sharply reflected by the absence of military responses to the challenge of Venezuela.

The correlation of forces has registered, therefore, various significant changes in Latin America. The dominant classes no longer count on the neoliberal strategic compass, the popular movement has recuperated its street presence, and American imperialism has lost capacity of intervention.

### **DIVERSITY OF SUBJECTS**

THE ACTORS OF A SOCIALIST TRANSFORMATION ARE THE victims of capitalist domination, but the specific subjects of this process in Latin America are very diverse. In some regions indigenous communities have occupied a leading role in the resistance (Ecuador, Bolivia, Mexico) and in other areas peasants have led the resistance (Brazil, Peru, Paraguay). In certain countries the protagonists have been formal urban workers (Argentina, Uruguay) or precarious informal urban workers (Venezuela, the Caribbean, Central America). The new role of indigenous communities and the weaker role of factory unions stand out. The multiplicity of sectors reflects the differentiated social structure and political particularities of each country.

However, this diversity also confirms the variety of participants of a socialist transformation. As the development of capitalism expands the exploitation of waged work and collateral forms of oppression, the potential actors of a socialist process are all the exploited and oppressed. This role does not fall exclusively on the waged workers who directly create business profits, but to all the victims of capitalist inequality. What is essential is the convergence of these sectors in a common battle, which unfolds around ever-changing focal points of rebellion. Victory depends on this action against an enemy who dominates by dividing the popular camp.

In this struggle certain segments of waged workers tend

Bolivian miner working under brutal conditions: the state-employed miners have led important demonstrations against the Evo Morales government demanding that the mining industry be nationalized and placed under workers' control.



to play a more central role because of the place they occupy in the vital branches of the economy (mining, factories, banks). Capitalists profit from the privations of all the dispossessed, but their profits depend on the direct labour force of the exploited and from profit which is made specifically from certain activities.

This centrality is verified in the current conjuncture of economic revival, which tends to recreate the significance of waged workers. In Argentina unions are reclaiming their pre-eminence in the streets, in comparison with the role played by the unemployed and the middle class during the crisis of 2001. In Chile the strikes of the miners are playing a leading part, in Mexico certain unions are establishing a role, and in Venezuela the centrality of the petroleum workers since their battle against the coup attempt (in 2002) persists.

### **PROBLEMS OF POPULAR CONSCIOUSNESS**

THE ERADICATION OF CAPITALISM IS A PROJECT ENTIRELY dependent upon the level of consciousness of the oppressed. Only these convictions can direct a process of popular struggle toward socialism.

The primitive vision of this development as an inevitable transformation of history has lost intellectual consensus and political attractiveness. No pattern of historical evolution of this type exists. Socialism will constitute a voluntary creation of the vast majorities or it will never arise. What occurred under "real socialism" illustrates how terrible it is to substitute popular determination with the paternalism of bureaucrats.

But the consciousness of the oppressed is a sphere subject to sudden changes and is conditioned by the experience of struggle. Two opposing forces influence its development: the learning that the oppressed assimilate in their resistance

against capital and the dejection which is generated by stifling work, anxiety for survival and daily alienation.

The inclination of waged workers to question or accept the existing order stems from the variable results of this conflict. In certain circumstances critical vision predominates and in other moments resignation prevails. These attitudes depend on many factors and operate on very distinct generational perceptions of capitalism. For example, contrary to the 1970s, the bulk of contemporary youth grew up without expectations of better jobs or education, observing exclusion, unemployment and inequality as normal facets of the functioning of the system. With this new outlook of the existing order, the new Latin American generation has taken up again the bellicosity of its predecessors.

But specifically socialist consciousness does not depend only on the predominant image of capitalism. On this level conclusions drawn from the class struggle and the impact provoked by key international events are more important. These milestones determine the extent of certain “average degrees of socialist consciousness,” that translate into levels of enthusiasm toward or disillusion with the anticapitalist project. The victories achieved in Russia, China, Yugoslavia, Vietnam or Cuba brought about a positive socialist perception that was not shattered by the numerous defeats that also occurred in those periods.

The current Latin American generation did not come of age as did their parents in a context marked by great triumphs. This absence of a successful anticapitalist reference – close to their immediate experiences – explains their greater spontaneous coldness toward the socialist project.

The biggest differences between the current period and the era of 1960–1980 are situated more on the level of political consciousness, than on the terrain of the relationships of social forces or change in popular subjects. It is not the intensity of social conflicts, the disposition of struggle of the oppressed or capacity of control of the oppressors which has changed substantively, but rather the visibility of and popular confidence in a socialist model.

The collapse of the Soviet Union caused a crisis of international credibility of the socialist project which has conditioned the action of the left. Latin America was not an exception, but the effective scope of this impact has been more limited in the region. The Latin American left had already traveled a great distance from the Soviet model before the collapse of the “socialist camp” and its dejection was due more to the inheritance left behind by the dictatorships, the failure of *Sandinismo* or the blockade suffered by the Central American insurgency.<sup>4</sup> Also on this level, the survival of the Cuban revolution functioned as a counterweight.

In any case the climate of disappointment was gradually replaced by an impulse to rebuild the emancipatory program. The advance of antineoliberal consciousness is illustrated in the forceful rejection of privatizations and deregulations (much greater than that observed in other regions, such as Eastern Europe). A rebirth of anti-imperialist consciousness is also taking place without the regressive components of ethnicity or religion that prevail in the Arab world.

However, the anticapitalist connection is the great missing link in this anti-neoliberal and anti-imperialist drive. This deficiency has curbed until now the radicalization of popular consciousness and therefore it is important to debate the socialism of the twenty-first century, a discussion initiated by the Bolivarian process (in Venezuela). This ideological reconstruction is possible because of the presence of many features of continuity on the left, which has suffered fewer fractures than in other regions. Neither the collapse of the historic political identity of the workers or the distancing from the left that occurred in various Eastern European countries is notable.

## THE CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

THE LATIN AMERICAN LEFT FACES A RELATIVELY NEW STRATEGIC problem: the stabilization of constitutional regimes. For the first time in the history of the region the dominant classes manage their governments through non-dictatorial institutions, in almost all the countries and after a significant period. Neither economic collapses or political crises or popular insurrections altered this form of government.

The return of the military is for the most part a discarded hand for the hemisphere’s elites. In the most critical situations presidents are replaced by other leaders with some type of civic-military interregnum. What is discarded for now is the reinstallation of dictatorships to fight fragmentation from above or rebellion from below.

The current regimes are not real democracies but rather plutocracies in the service of capitalists. The institutions of this system have served to perpetuate social abuses which many dictatorships would not even have dared to suggest. These aggressions diminished the legitimacy of the system, but did not lead to a popular rejection of the constitutional regime equivalent to that suffered by the old tyrannies.

This change in the rule of capitalist domination has contradictory effects on the action of the Latin American left. On the one hand it amplified the possibilities of political action in a context of public freedoms. On the other hand the stabilization of parliaments, parties and functionaries offered capitalists more political security and growing confidence in their business affairs.

4 Sandinismo refers to the ideology and practice of the Sandinista revolutionary government of Nicaragua, in power 1979–1990. The Central American insurgencies referred to here were the unsuccessful revolutionary guerrilla wars waged in Guatemala and El Salvador in the 1980s.

A system which reduces and at the same time consolidates the power of the oppressors represents a great challenge for the left, especially when this regime is for the most part perceived as the natural mechanism for the functioning of any modern society.

This last belief is encouraged by the right – which has grasped the usefulness of conducting their political activity within the constitutional context – and by the centre-left – which preserves the status quo under progressive masks. Both stoke false electoral polarizations in order to present the simple alternation of figures in power as meaningful change.

The current example of this complementariness is the “modern and civilized left” that arrived in government with Lula (Brazil), Tabaré (Uruguay) or Bachelet (Chile), in order to perpetuate the supremacy of the capitalists. However, other situations are more problematic because institutional continuity was broken with fraud (Calderón in Mexico) or presidential resignations (Bolivia, Ecuador, Argentina).

In certain situations these convulsions concluded with the reconstruction of the bourgeois order (Kirchner in Argentina), but in other countries the crisis resulted in the unexpected entrance to government of nationalist or reformist presidents, who are rejected by the establishment. This is the case of Chávez (Venezuela), Morales (Bolivia) and probably Correa (Ecuador). These results have been the consequence of the non-institutional character the crises and insurrections in these nations initially assumed.

In these processes the electoral terrain has shaped up to be an area of struggle against reaction and a point of support for coming to terms with radical transformations. This conclusion is vital for the left. For example, since 1998 all of the elections deepened the legitimacy of the Bolivarian process in Venezuela and transferred to the ballot box the defeat dealt to the right in the streets. The electoral sphere and the victories of mobilization complemented one another.

The constitutional setting significantly altered the framework of action of the left, which for decades had been accustomed to confronting a dictatorial enemy. The battle within these systems is not easy because institutionalism functions with permanent pretences of reproducing the existing order. Therefore it is necessary to combine direct action with electoral participation. For this path, times of arising popular power – which every revolutionary process requires – and the maturation of socialist consciousness – which to a certain degree is processed through the constitutional arena – complement one another.

## MOVEMENTS AND PARTIES

POPULAR CONSCIOUSNESS TRANSLATES INTO ORGANIZATION. The grouping together of the oppressed is indispensable

to creating instruments of an anticapitalist transformation, since without their own organisms the exploited cannot initiate an alternative project for society.

Movements and parties constitute two forms of contemporary popular organization. Both options perform an essential role for the development of socialist convictions. They reinforce confidence in self-organization and develop bases of collective functioning of popular power for the future.

Movements sustain immediate social struggle and parties fuel more developed political activity. Both instances are necessary to facilitate direct action and electoral participation. However, this complementariness is frequently questioned. There are exclusive advocates of movements and of parties.

But these objections only invalidate the actions of certain parties and not the general function of these structures, which are irreplaceable for acting on the political level. No emancipatory project can progress exclusively on social terrain, or dispense with the specific platforms, the links between demands and strategies of power, which party organizations provide. These groupings contribute to overcoming the limitations of a spontaneous rebellion. The party facilitates the maturation of an anticapitalist consciousness, which does not emerge abruptly from protest action and which requires differentiating struggle for improvements under capitalism and the battle for socialist objectives.

The disqualification of parties is as inadequate as the vice of superiority that some organizations on the left still exhibit. They maintain the old vanguardist conception, act with iron verticalism and reward themselves with permanent self-proclamation. This cult of the organization leads to sectarian practices and a quest for hegemony in all social movements.

This form of political action feeds itself from the small-group *caudillista* tradition, or the tradition of strong-man, top-down leadership. In some countries this behaviour also expresses persistent bad habits from an organizational culture built during decades of clandestine action and antidictatorial resistance. In the current framework of public freedoms and party competition the confused character of this conduct is patently obvious. Those who maintain these practices can thrive, but they will never lead a socialist transformation.

## REFORM AND REVOLUTION

MATERIAL CONDITIONS, CORRELATION OF FORCES, SOCIAL SUBJECTS, popular consciousness and popular organization shape the hexagon of themes that surround the strategy of the left. The postulated programs connecting action, conviction and proposals in a socialist sense depend on these six foundations.

However, rarely are these components coincidental. Sometimes the maturity of material conditions does not converge with the correlation of forces, with the protagonism of social

subjects or with the aptitude of the political context. Less common still is the connection of these elements with the level of organization, consciousness and popular leadership required for an anticapitalist project. The strategy of the left is a search for paths to overcome these discordances and the analytical distinction of six great questions aiming to facilitate this analysis.

The biggest problem is situated in the links that connect these pillars. The routes to follow are extremely varied because the universalism of the socialist program is not synonymous with uniformity. The experience of the twentieth century has illustrated how the bases of this process combine together in differentiated forms in each country. It has also been confirmed that the temporary nature of a socialist debut differs significantly between accelerated insurrectional conclusions (Russia) and prolonged confrontations of dual power (China, Vietnam).<sup>5</sup> There are two grand responses—traditionally counterposed—to the dilemmas created by this disconnect between components of socialist change: reform and revolution. The first path promotes combining the disarticulated elements through a progression of social improvements that reinforce the positions of the workers and consolidate their political weight, institutional presence and organizational force.

But these reforms – which are feasible under capitalism – do not accumulate and are not irreversible. Sooner or later their consolidation (or deepening) clashes with the rule of profit and suffers employers' abuse which provokes major conflicts. In these circumstances the consequent popular response demands advancing toward socialist change.

Reforms are only valid as a link in the struggle for socialism. The absence of this perspective leads to the abandonment not only of an anticapitalist future, but of the improvements themselves. It's incorrect to attempt first the "resolution of immediate problems" in order to "discuss socialism later." If capitalism could structurally solve those problems socialism would be unnecessary.

The second idea of socialist change promotes revolution and rejection of reforms. It calls for overcoming the disconnection between objective and subjective conditions through action which articulates the peaks of the crisis of capitalism with the disposition of struggle of the masses and socialist convictions. However, this connection is not so easy, even when there occur conjunctures close to the Leninist model of a revolutionary situation ("those from above can no longer continue dominating and those from below play a leading role in a historical eruption").

In South America we have observed in the last several

years various circumstances of this type without any socialist result. Crisis of hegemony or authority of the dominant classes (loss of consensus and leadership capacity in Gramscian terms) converging with the revolt of the subaltern classes is not enough.<sup>6</sup> Socialist maturity requires a prior process of learning which is not improvised in the expeditious path toward power. That preparation includes social achievements and democratic conquests that are obtained through reforms. This last term is not a bad word, nor is it situated in the antipodes of revolution. It is a useful instrument to gradually develop the revolutionary leap forward, building bridges which move the oppressed closer to the socialist goal.

A combination of reform and revolution can enable the link between immediate conquests and radical ruptures with capitalism. The first type of achievement is indispensable for creating popular power and the second for defeating an enemy that will not renounce its privileges.

To connect reform with revolution is the way to adapt the correlation of forces and popular action with the possibilities of anticapitalist transformation in each country. But it is necessary to replace the old counterposing of both roads with their confluence.

## **OPTIMISM AND REASON**

TO DISCUSS STRATEGIES PRESUPPOSES SEARCHING FOR a guide for inspired action in past experiences, but always remaining open to new circumstances and experiences. This inquiry includes unprecedented hypotheses and no simple calculus of models to repeat.

The strategy of the left includes a liberated dimension that cannot be found in other political formations. It raises humanist objectives associated with a communist horizon which no bourgeois current can offer. But the credibility of these goals depends on the behaviour of its organizers and this conduct presupposes an attitude of spontaneous resistance to inequality and intuitive rejection of injustice.

The function of strategy is to transform indignation in the face of misery and solidarity with the oppressed into rational projects. And this development demands intellectual bravery to face up to the thorniest and most unpleasant problems. If there is no disposition to tackle the difficulties, the roads to socialism will invariably remain blocked.

The current Latin American conjuncture invites renewing strategic controversies on the left with frank, open and respectful debates. It is the moment to adopt the achievements and weigh the limitations with an enthusiastic and critical attitude. Both positions contribute to forging reasoned optimism which the battle for socialism demands. ★

5 Dual power refers to an unstable and unsustainable period of a revolutionary situation in which popular institutions of the exploited and oppressed emerge alongside and in opposition to the existing institutions of the state.

6 Antonio Gramsci was an Italian Marxist who developed the most influential Marxist theory of hegemony.

# SOCIALIST POLITICS AND ISRAEL'S 'RIGHT TO EXIST'

## Probing a strange alliance

BY VIRGINIA TILLEY

In all its variations, socialist theory has an inherent advantage in analyzing the conflict in Israel-Palestine. Yet this strength can become a disadvantage. Its principal strength is its concern with global capitalism, which makes easy what other perspectives find difficult: that is, identifying the conflict's glaring imperialist and settler-colonial character.

The history of Israel-Palestine is indeed a veritable pageantry of neo-colonial and imperialist western interventions, from the nefarious Balfour Declaration and the Sykes-Picot Agreement through the "special relationship" between the US and Israel today (with ongoing European complicity). Much of the obvious racism associated with the conflict can also be understood through this lens, which clarifies how its geopolitics reflects a Western Orientalism that serves imperialist agendas. Today, classic Orientalism has evolved into neo-colonial arguments about an East-West "clash of civilizations" or phantom enemies like "Islamofascism." But the spirit and goals of this new rhetoric are the same as the old: conquest, oil, trade routes, manipulation of compliant local elites and military hegemony.

Still, this lens does not explain much about the internal character of the conflict: for example, it doesn't explain why Zionist doctrine mandated ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians rather than allowing what was, originally, a mostly western settler movement to incorporate the indigenous people as a cheap native labour force. And indeed, too many leftists remain cloudy about how to understand the ethnic nationalism of

political Zionism. We see this confusion especially in their striking failure to recognize and endorse the only solution that is both consistent with socialist ideals and capable of creating a stable peace: a unitary democracy.

Instead, the majority of leftists still endorse "the vision of two states, Israel and sovereign, independent, democratic and viable Palestine, living side-by-side in peace and security" (to quote the odious Road Map) on the confused premise that this "balanced" position is both fair and consistent with progressive socialist values. When they are confronted with the obvious obsolescence of the two-state solution – Jewish settlements and the Wall running rampant across the West Bank countryside, reducing the Palestinian state to a chopped-up Bantustan – we find leftists holding to the two-state solution anyway, partly by reiterating the standard, knee-jerk objection to a one-state solution, "the Jews will never accept it."

This unique leftist passivity to "Jewish" views (demonstrably not held by all Jews) is bewildering precisely because leftist sensitivity to imperialism is so keen. Where else do leftists routinely accept, as an immovable political fact, the wishes of a settler society to deny



Jerusalem, January 2007: life under Israeli Apartheid

citizenship to the native people? Within the orbit of leftist thought, "the Jews will never accept it" is as nonsensical as "the whites will never accept" black rule in South Africa. One does not ask settler-colonists whether they want to share their state with the native people; one explains to them that they must do so and then tries to further and smooth the inevitable path to democracy. Yet, regarding Israel-Palestine, many leftists have inexplicably privileged Jewish rejection as enjoying some mysterious moral standing that excludes Israel from such universal standards of justice and equality.

Many explanations for this exceptional treatment can be offered. I discuss several in my book, but I will just point out two obvious ones here because they are more specific to socialist politics. The first is the ambivalence about ethnic nationalism that is endemic to socialist political theory. The second is the thoughtless acceptance of the long-standing yet entire-

---

*Dr. Virginia Tilley is a US citizen and former professor of political science, now working as a senior researcher at the Human Sciences Research Council in South Africa. She is author of *The One-State Solution: A Breakthrough for Peace in the Israeli-Palestinian Deadlock* (2005) which explains why the one-state solution is inevitable and argues why it is feasible. She can be reached at [tilley@hws.edu](mailto:tilley@hws.edu).*



ly fictional notion that Israel is indeed, at root, a progressive, socialist or proto-socialist society, with which the left is in solidarity or at least sympathetic.

### **THE LEFT AND ISRAEL: AMBIVALENCE AND ETHNIC NATIONALISM**

The problem of ambivalence stems from an inherent weakness in leftist politics regarding the politics of culture and ethnicity generally. Ethnic politics have always been problematic for leftist movements because they arise and persist from social forces that have only conditional relationships to class and that, in their behaviour and tenacity, often contradict the class-centric assumptions and predictions of leftist theory. Rather than deal seriously with this conundrum, however, leftists have too often resorted to insisting that ethnic identities are mere spin-offs of class dynamics – e.g., inventions by capitalist classes to preclude working-class solidarity or false consciousness instilled in the masses by their own self-serving ethnic entrepreneurs.

In trying to coordinate with indigenous movements in Latin America, for example, leftist ideologues were infamously slow to recognize the specifically cultural needs and agendas of native peoples, tending to insist on the primacy of working-class alliances well into the 1980s. Openly challenged by the wave of indigenous mobilizations in the 1980s and 1990s, whose intellectuals denounced the clear inadequacy of a purely class-based approach to indigenous dilemmas, leftist progressives eventually came to see ethnicity as a potentially liberating identity discourse through which cultural groups could mobilize, reclaim power and construct a new politics of equality. Hence ethnic nationalism – in which peoples identified by race and culture seek to seize their own state from imperialist or colonial ethnic others—can be endorsed by leftists as liberating, even if the ethnic premise itself is considered fundamentally flawed.

This contingent view of ethnic nationalism – it is okay as long as it is leading to socialism – has been linked to an ambivalent relationship to nationalism

itself. For example, leftists may deride first-world nationalisms as the “mere tool of the whole committee of the [national] bourgeoisie” or view the nation-state as a hegemonic global system launched and defended by global (i.e., non-nationalist) capital in the name of its own ruthless interests. Yet, they may also endorse third-world nationalisms as the essential (if hopefully temporary) anti-imperial instrument for the liberation of oppressed peoples from precisely those global imperialist forces. In these struggles, liberation movements adopt the terms of the oppressor to redignify and mobilize the oppressed identity and develop a liberating discourse. For example, African decolonization struggles were celebrated as black liberation from

*It has become unacceptable, in today's world, to create a state that legally privileges one ethnic group over others.*

global capitalist exploitation, but they were also assumed to be admissible primarily as an essential stage in the epic progress toward world socialism, which would culminate ultimately in the dissolution of all states. Even pan-Arabism, under Egyptian President (1956-1970) Gamal Abdel Nasser, could be celebrated as anti-imperialist and redemptive.

As a result, it is possible for leftists to see Israel simultaneously as the nefarious tool and ally of western colonialism and as the essential expression of “the national liberation movement of the Jewish people.” In this dualistic view, a Jewish liberation movement has been led astray only by global forces, while Zionism’s abuses of the Palestinians are tragic accidents of geography – i.e., one national liberation movement happened to conflict with another in the same territory. The solution is to provide both “peoples” with states. The essential legitimacy of Zionism, in this model, is not questioned, as Jews are deemed to deserve a

state. The Holocaust narrative and the deeper history of Jewish suffering from Christian-European anti-Semitism here casts Jews as the colonized, stateless people, warranting their “decolonization” through self-determination and creation of an “independent Jewish state.” Thus a settler-colonial project has seized the legitimacy of the colonized.

It is not so surprising that a settler society would do this. European settlers in North America and South Africa did the same, in claiming a divinely granted indigeneity (Chosen People doctrines) in order to assume the mantle of a liberation movement as they expelled or killed the native peoples. What is notable, regarding Israel, are leftist failures to identify and denounce a manoeuvre so transparently specious. Aside from anti-Arab racism (always a problem), this error can be traced to the failure to differentiate between ethnic liberation and the political exigencies of territorial statehood.

Today, the “nation-state” formula does not assume that each ethnic nation has, or should have, its own territorial state. The world has thousands of ethnic groups and obviously each of them cannot have its own state. Moreover, the late-nineteenth century notion that nation-states represent nations defined by a common ethnicity (culture, race, spirit) fell to ruin in World War II, when ruthless projects to craft mono-ethnic states resulted in dreadful sins: ethnic cleansing, ethnocide, forced population transfer, even genocides. Hence the “nation-state” formula after World War II shifted to assume that everyone within a state’s territory comprises its nation and all citizens must be accepted as equal nationals. In France, for instance, every citizen is “French” by virtue of his or her citizenship, no matter his or her religion or ethnic background.

Of course, the real picture is more complicated. All nation-states grapple with ethnic notions and problems of assimilation, difference and prejudice. Complications arise especially from the tension between genuine democratic demands and the rights of minorities. That is, states may legitimately develop laws designed to represent the cultural inter-

ests of most citizens – e.g., by inscribing the majority religion into the constitution or basic law – but not in ways that create bias against other citizens. (For example, the United Kingdom is legally associated with the Episcopal Church, of which the Queen is the head; yet British law prohibits legalized bias against non-Episcopalians and other religions are practiced freely.)

Many nations retain tensions about sustaining their ethno-nationalist character (as France's notorious obsession with the French language attests) and may express this nervousness in immigration and naturalization policies. But once people become citizens, they are legally equal. And no state today seeks to defend its ethnic character to the point of excluding whole portions of the territory's native population from citizenship. Except Israel.

In short, it has become unacceptable, in today's world, to create a state that legally privileges one ethnic group over others. What was formerly considered romantic nationalism is now called "racism." And Jews have no more right to an ethnic state than anyone else. Jews may work to create a state in which the laws are favourable to values and practices understood as "Jewish," but they cannot create a state in which non-Jews lack rights to practice different social values or have equal access to the state's resources, like land and public funding. Especially, a Jewish state cannot legitimately expel and exclude the native population of the country. Certainly, it should not be supported for having done so.

### **THE MYTH OF ISRAELI SOCIALISM**

The second error is the assumption that Israel itself is somehow a leftist-liberal democracy, whose success in consolidating peaceful existence is therefore a sympathetic goal for leftist progressives. It is one of the marvels of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that Israel has successfully projected the entirely unsubstantiated idea that it is actually a socialist society driven to militarism and nasty practices like torture and censorship only by its tragic geographic circumstances (that is,

its location in a "sea" of reactionary Muslims).

This myth takes its kernel of truth from an atypical thread of early Zionist history. In the early twentieth century, some socialist Jews of the Second Aliyah brought their dreams for a utopian socialist society to Palestine by inventing experimental communist communities. These efforts obtained much of their allure by fusing socialist utopian visions with Judaic enlightenment values. This socialist element never represented more than a tiny fraction of Zionists in Palestine, but over time, the concept of a politically progressive Jewish mission became important both to justifying and to denying Zionist projects of ethnic cleansing.

For instance, the Sabra ethos, which imagines the native-born Israeli Jew as the robust gun-toting socialist, combines the Jewish idea of escaping the earlier, passive Jewish stereotype of urban ghetto or east-European shtetl with the Soviet-socialist ideal of the "New Man," freed of stultifying old-world cultural and mental strictures and restored through manual labour to a liberating and purifying relationship with the soil. This national-liberation icon then makes both ethnic and socialist sense of a militarized Israel, which defends Jews and progressive values as a package.

Similarly, the Jewish "light unto nations" biblical concept, cynically appropriated for Jewish state-building in order to attract western-educated Jews to the Zionist enterprise, became fused with "vanguard" notions of an ideal socialist society that can demonstrate progressive democratic values to the world. This enlightened (and foggily divine) mission then serves Zionism by explaining the otherwise confounding fact that Israel remains in a permanent state of hostilities with the Arabs. Rather than offended by settler-colonial brutalities, Arabs are just innately hostile to progressive values, so Israel is only fulfilling its "light" or "vanguard" mission by holding them at bay.

This entire picture is, of course, a galloping myth. Leftist visionaries were quickly eclipsed and absorbed by the ra-

cial-nationalist leadership of Ben Gurion and the Jewish Agency, who entrenched ethnic cleansing of "Arabs" as a pillar of modern Zionism. Not that these visionaries disappeared entirely. The formation of Israel required an uneasy deal with progressive-liberal Jews, Orthodox religious Jews, militarized nationalists, and refugees from European pogroms, wars, and Nazi genocide to consolidate the essential nationalist coalition. But the result of this deal was not a progressive socialist society. It was a state that assumed a righteous liberal veneer as it continued the Zionist program of the 1940s: expulsion of the native people, ethnic prejudice, military aggression and a myriad of sins (torture, extrajudicial imprisonment, rampant censorship, land expropriation, crop destruction) associated with war and the military occupation of Palestinian land.

### **GLARING CONTRADICTIONS**

Many Israelis sustain the conceit that the progressive veneer is the real Israel, despite these glaring contradictions of modern Israeli life. Some believe Israel went tragically wrong only in 1967, when it occupied additional territories. The ethnic cleansing of 1948 and 1967 is either forgotten entirely or justified by the exigencies of wars cast as arising from irrational Arab hostility. But the actual existence of Israel was built from prejudice and through mass cruelties. Its dilemma is becoming increasingly comparable to apartheid South Africa: oppressive, secretive, surviving on censorship, repression, while lying to its own citizenry, under siege in a hostile region and suffering from crumbling morale.

Is this the state that has a "right to exist"? Is this the liberation movement of the Jewish people that must command the world's respect? Is its survival essential to peace in the region – or is its survival the guarantor of continuing war? No ethnic state has avoided the pitfalls of ethnic cleansing and oppression. No matter what bundles of myths and rationalizations are deployed to defend its exceptionalist claim to ethnic statehood, Israel will not escape that trap just because it was set up for Jews. ★

# WORTH CHECKING OUT

Mini-reviews: on this page, you will find suggestions for good reading, listening and watching. This time, we present recommendations for a book and a music CD.

## Democracy at Risk

*BUSH VS. CHAVEZ: WASHINGTON'S WAR AGAINST VENEZUELA*

BY EVA GOLINGER

IN SPANISH. NOT YET AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH.

CARACAS: MONTE AVILA EDITORES, 2006

Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez should be the most politically secure head of state in the Western hemisphere. He has held office since 1998, having won three presidential elections by impressive margins; thousands of his supporters risked their lives to reverse a U.S.-backed coup in 2002 and he easily triumphed in a recall referendum in 2004.

However, as Eva Golinger shows with sobering and devastating detail in *Bush vs. Chavez*, the Bush Administration exhibits neither scruple nor restraint in its iron determination to destroy democracy and socialism in Venezuela. Through the National Endowment for Democracy, the U.S. lavishes cash and counsel on thoroughly discredited opposition groups obsessed with restoring traditional oligarchic dominance. Through the ill-named Albert Einstein Institute, the U.S. supplies direction and likely arms to Colombian paramilitaries who cross the Venezuelan border to kill campesinos (farmworkers) who have incurred the wrath of anti-Chavez oligarchists and to plot the assassination of Chavez himself. The current U.S. Ambassador to Venezuela openly champions the independence of the oil-rich prefecture of Zulia, leading Golinger to speculate plausibly that the U.S. military buildup in the neighbouring Dutch island of Curacao may be a prelude to the occupation of Zulia and the eventual invasion of the country. As these machinations proceed, a relentless

vilification campaign provides covering fire: known falsehoods are circulated through the national and international press, many of which are disproved by internal documents of the U.S. government which Golinger obtained through the Freedom of Information Act.

A particularly revealing instance of the ingenuity and cynicism of the anti-Chavez campaign examined by Golinger concerns the claim that Chavez is linked with drug traffickers. Throughout the Chavez years, Venezuela has had an impressive record of seizing illegal drugs. But it became apparent in 2005 that the U.S. agency "assisting" the Venezuelans in the control of the drug trade was in fact sabotaging Venezuelan anti-drug operations. The Chavez government understandably expelled the agency and the unsurprising result was an increase in Venezuelan drug seizures. The astounding U.S. government response was to denounce the expulsion of its saboteurs as evidence of Venezuela's lack of co-operation in the war against drugs.

The advances towards popular democracy, socialism and regional integration in Latin America in the past decade have been impressive and encouraging. Golinger's work reminds us that every inch of the political terrain is constantly contested by a powerful, resourceful and pitiless empire. ★

Reviewed by Roger Milbrandt  
University of Alberta

## Redcat and Lefty

*MY NAME IS BUDDY*

BY RY COODER

MUSIC CD: NONESUCH RECORDS, 2007.

This concept album by American guitarist singer-composer Ry Cooder is set in the dust bowl era and has a clear working-

class theme. In "Cat and Mouse," Buddy learns a valuable lesson about solidarity from Lefty who tells him, "We are many, Buddy, they are few ... They'll tell you lies to make you doubt your fellow man, like cats and mice just can't get along. It soothes the bosses, Buddy, and it serves them fine 'cause it keeps us working folks from being strong." In this parable, Buddy (also known as red cat) is a cat and Lefty is a mouse and the two pop up in songs throughout the album.

"Strike!" tells about a miners' strike for better pay and safer conditions and their confrontations with police. And since the cops have been ordered to "get all the reds off the street," red cat ends up in jail along with the miners. The comic song "J Edgar" tells about a pig who "hoovers" up everything on the farm, the moral of the story being that no-one is safe from "J Edgar Hoover."

So if you like American roots music including blues, bluegrass and gospel sounds – some serious, others lighthearted – I highly recommend this album. ★

Reviewed by Sandra Sarner



Redcat as Leadbelly

## COALITION AGAINST ISRAELI APARTHEID

# Boycott! Divestment! Sanctions!

BY CHARUKA KIRINDE

June 2007 marks the 40th anniversary of Apartheid Israel's 1967 war of aggression and subsequent military occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip and the Syrian Golan Heights. The assault consolidated the Zionist movement's hold over the whole of historic Palestine and its total control over the region's indigenous population. Backed by a steady flow of US tax dollars, Israel has continued to brutalize the Palestinian population and deny it the fundamental rights to self-determination, sovereignty and the right of return – with a system of Apartheid similar to that in South Africa prior to the early 1990s.

In 2006 alone, 700 Palestinians were killed. There are currently 10,000 Palestinian political prisoners incarcerated within a sprawling network of Israeli military prisons where torture is routinely practised. Since 1967, over 600,000 Palestinians have passed through these jails, torture and detention centres. In the same period, over 12,000 Palestinian houses have been demolished by the Israeli military, leaving over 70,000 homeless. Millions more are ghettoized in their towns and villages, surrounded by settlements, checkpoints and the ever-expanding Apartheid wall. Another five million refugees – the world's largest refugee population – are literally locked out of their homeland without the possibility of return.

Since the election of Hamas in January 2006, a policy of deliberate starvation of

---

*Charuka Kirinde is an activist and a member of the Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid.*

the Palestinian population – with Canadian government complicity – continues unchecked as poverty and unemployment reach unprecedented levels. After the imposition of sanctions on the Palestinian Authority, one of Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's main advisers, Dov Weisglass, noted that the sanctions regime is: "... like an appointment with a dietician. The Palestinians will get a lot thinner, but won't die."

### CALL FOR A GLOBAL CAMPAIGN

In the summer of 2005, over 170 Palestinian civil society organizations

launched a consolidated call for a global campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) targeting Israeli Apartheid. The call was made in response to the progressively deteriorating situation in Palestine. It is the most significant document issued by the entirety of organized Palestinian resistance, representing major organizations of Palestinians living in the 1948 and 1967 occupied territories, as well as in exile.

The Toronto-based Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid (CAIA) was formed in January 2006 in response to this call. The Palestinian anti-Apartheid movement is a growing, global movement supported by networks of activists, trade unionists, political parties, regional governments, faith organizations, environmentalists, cultural workers, academics, student groups, and other long-standing Palestine solidarity organizations. The movement has spawned strong campaigns from South Africa to England, Ireland and Palestine.

In Canada, CAIA (pronounced



Pasted smile intact as she tried to appear unshaken, Heather Reisman resorted to shutting down a recent event featuring Ralph Nader at the flagship Indigo store in Toronto when CAIA activists challenged her on her support for the Israeli military. Reisman refused to answer questions and, surrounded by her entourage, abandoned the meeting she was hosting. For video coverage of this event and more on the Chapters-Indigo boycott campaign, see [www.caiaweb.org](http://www.caiaweb.org).

“kaya”)—has developed into a wide network of concerned individuals and organizations spread across Toronto. This has inspired similar organizing in other cities, including Montreal, Vancouver, Victoria and Winnipeg. CAIA recognizes Israeli Apartheid as one element of a system of global Apartheid and stands in solidarity with all oppressed peoples across the world, with a particular emphasis on struggles for indigenous sovereignty here on Turtle Island (indigenous name for Canada).

Currently, CAIA is mobilizing in support of the most recent call issued by the Active Steering Committee of the Palestinian BDS campaign to mark the 40th anniversary of the occupation this June. A national Day of Action has been organized on June 9th, targeting a boycott of the Chapters and Indigo bookstores whose majority shareholders, Heather Reisman and Gerry Schwartz, actively support the Israeli military. The June 9th action is a continuation and escalation of the boycott campaign against Chapters and Indigo initiated this past fall. The aim of the boycott is to force Reisman and Schwartz to cut all financial ties to “Heseg—Foundation for Lone Soldiers.”

The Heseg Foundation distributes three million dollars in scholarships to former Israeli “lone soldiers.” These are individuals who have no family in Israel, but decide to travel there to join the Israeli military. At any time there might be 5,000 “lone soldiers” in the Israeli military, working in various capacities including in combat units. As soldiers, they participate in a military that operates checkpoints that restrict Palestinian freedom of movement, enforces the occupation of Palestinian land, and has a documented history of human rights violations.

CAIA is using the boycott as a regular education tool around Israeli Apartheid. Raising awareness about the nature of Israeli Apartheid and about how people contribute to it by buying products from Chapters-Indigo is crucial to CAIA’s work. Working with allied groups, such as the Jewish Women’s Committee to End the Occupation (JWCEO), weekly

*CAIA recognizes Israeli Apartheid as one element of a system of global Apartheid and stands in solidarity with all oppressed peoples across the world, with a particular emphasis on struggles for indigenous sovereignty here on Turtle Island.*

informational pickets have been organized outside Chapters-Indigo stores in Toronto. Similar pickets have been established in other Canadian cities.

#### LONE SOLDIER SUPPORTERS

Besides Schwartz and Reisman, Heseg’s board of directors also includes notorious Israelis holding high-ranking positions in the Israeli military. Among these is Major General Doron Almog, who in 2005 narrowly escaped arrest in Britain as a war criminal thanks to a tip by British officials. Almog was in charge of the Israeli Military Southern Command when a one-ton bomb was dropped on a house in Gaza, killing 14 civilians, 9 of them children.

Other notable figures on Heseg’s board include Shabtai Shabit, former head of the Israeli foreign intelligence, the Mossad, and Lieutenant Colonel Mike

Hartman, who heads the marksmanship and sharpshooters division of the Israeli military. This shameful association of Chapters-Indigo with one of the world’s most atrocious militaries has a very fragile base of public support. These ties must be exposed to those genuinely concerned with human rights and social justice.

Controversy is steadily intensifying around Canada’s Israel-Palestine policies, with government support for Israel—and rejection of Palestinian rights—far out of step with popular opinion. Whether or not the shifts in Canadian government policy toward overt pro-Israel partisanship can be consolidated, there is no question that there will be a backlash against Chapters-Indigo for its role in this partisanship.

Boycott, divestment and sanctions formed a critical part of global efforts to end South African Apartheid. They were an expression of popular refusal to participate in and sustain the structures of racial discrimination and oppression. It was widely seen as morally repugnant to be openly associated with South African Apartheid. Today we have an opportunity to once again be part of a global movement for justice. This open support for one of the ugliest vestiges of overt, colonial-era racism in the guise of liberty must be ended. ★

**new** ★  
**SOCIALIST**  
IDEAS FOR RADICAL CHANGE

**SUBSCRIBE TODAY**

	CANADA	US
1 year	\$20	\$25
2 years	\$35 (save \$5)	\$45 (save \$5)
3 years	\$50 (save \$10)	\$65 (save \$10)
Supporting	Add \$20	

INSTITUTIONAL & OVERSEAS INTERNATIONAL \$50/year  
ALL PRICES IN CANADIAN DOLLARS

SEND CHEQUES TO: **NEW SOCIALIST**  
Box 167, 253 College Street  
Toronto, Ontario M5T 1R5

[www.newsocialist.org](http://www.newsocialist.org)

# Building a common political and social front

BY BERNARD RIOUX

Quebec's popular and working classes have faced several defeats throughout the past few years. The Canadian capitalist class, helped by federalist and nationalist politicians in Quebec, has succeeded in imposing free trade agreements and increasingly aligning Canadian politics with those of the US government. The Conservative Party's victory has allowed the latter to raise military expenditures, to engage Canada in imperialist adventures such as the one in Afghanistan, to reduce environmental policies to close to nothing by withdrawing support for the Kyoto Accord, and to launch an attack on women's organization.

In Quebec, Charest's Liberal government has opened breaches in trade union rights by adopting laws that put new obstacles in the way of unionization attempts; it has imposed working conditions that intensify work in the public sector; it has encouraged privatization and public-private partnerships in the education and health sectors; it keeps trying to develop the energy sector in a polluting way while hiding its real intentions behind false pretences.

More dramatic even, the manufacturing sector is paying the price of a savage and unbridled globalization process. Entire segments of the production apparatus that workers have put into place are being destroyed, while workers are forced into unemployment. Trade unions are weakened while the bosses try to impose their agenda by any means; it is now frequent to see big corporate bosses demanding wage cuts and the deterioration of health and safety conditions at work.

---

Bernard Rioux is a member of Québec Solidaire and Gauche Socialiste.  
Translation by Gabrielle Gérin.

Despite numerous mobilizations and important mass actions organized against policies put in place by the Charest government, the trade union movement has not used strategies that could have forced the government to back off and business to stop demanding cut-backs.

## STRATEGIC BREAKDOWN FOR THE UNION MOVEMENT

The trade union movement is experiencing a strategic breakdown: its organic division between a great number of competing organizations makes it difficult for the latter to build their unity through action. Furthermore, the trade union movement has no relay on the political terrain and has been living, for decades now, in a state of dependence towards the Parti Québécois, while the PQ has evolved towards increasingly clear neoliberal positions. With the PQ's crippling drift towards the right, it is now more than ever time to put an end to this dependence.

This internal division and the absence of a political party capable of clearly and autonomously expressing workers' inter-

ests leads to the trade union movement's incapacity to really take on the demands of the unorganized sectors of the population. Moreover, the latter can witness the weakening of the trade union movement as well as the poor results obtained by its collective action. This is why the union movement does not appear as an attractive reference anymore for other layers of working people, including the middle class. This situation has opened a considerable terrain for a neoliberal politician like Mario Dumont of the Action Démocratique party [now the official opposition in Quebec's National Assembly – NS] who, assisted by the capitalist mass media, has offered demagogic solutions to the problems experienced by the unorganized sectors of the population.

## RECONFIGURATION OF CLASS RELATIONS

The redefinition of the party structure in Quebec hence mirrors a political reconfiguration of class relations, including with the Canadian capitalist class. This process is far from complete, and its evolution will largely depend on the possibility for Québec Solidaire's political left [Québec Solidaire is the left-wing party formed in February 2006; see coverage in issues 56 and 59 of *New Socialist* at [www.newsocialist.org](http://www.newsocialist.org)] to engage in a vast debate with social movements: this debate must address the pertinence of building a large militant party, present not only on the electoral terrain but also on that of social struggles of all scales, in order to oppose a common social and



CSN

Members of the Quebec labour federation, Confédération des Syndicats Nationaux

political front to the pernicious effects of the globalization process within the territory of Quebec.

To speak of the relationships between the political left, social movements and the workers' movement, to determine what part each must play, to underline the connections they must develop and maintain: these are the debates we must engage in now. Social movements (the women's movement, the environmental movement, the student movement, the anti-war movement, the global justice movement, etc.) and the trade union movement are facing a new phase of the neoliberal offensive. It is therefore urgent for these movements to go beyond fragmented and immediate struggles and to define more clearly than ever their transition to political action – where the respect of every movement's autonomy, democracy from below, and the rejection

of hierarchical principles will serve as foundations for a new politics.

Québec Solidaire's electoral campaign has allowed it to use many electoral tribunes to present progressive options and alternatives to the politics of business, the dominant class and the governments that serve them. We can only take our hats off to this constructive campaign, which has not finished producing significant effects on the Left in Quebec.

#### **A LARGE CONVENTION?**

But the trade union, feminist, youth and popular movements are already organized on a massive scale in Quebec: most of these structures have existed for a long time and are recognized as legitimate organizations by non-dominant social sectors. The construction of an alternative political party therefore must acknowledge such a situation and facilitate the

opening of a large debate involving all of these social forces. This is why we think Québec Solidaire must favour the convocation of a large convention of reflection and orientation, called on the initiative of trade union organizations and other representative social movements.

This convention should help us feel the pulse of the present situation, develop a relatively common understanding of it, and act as a political interlocutor in a society where the urgent task is to move beyond present divisions in order to group all progressives into a constant and irresistible force. A first moment in this collective reflection is right ahead: at the end of August (23rd-26th), the first Quebec Social Forum will take place in Montreal. Organized by a large coalition of social movement organizations and activists and supported by Québec Solidaire, this event is an opportunity for the radical Left to open a large debate on the necessary politicization and unification of social movements from below. ★

---

**The trade union movement has not used strategies that could have forced the government to back off**

---

For coverage in French, see these websites:  
[www.lagauche.com](http://www.lagauche.com); [www.pressegauche.org](http://www.pressegauche.org)  
[www.quebecsolidaire.net](http://www.quebecsolidaire.net);  
[www.forumsocialquebecois.org](http://www.forumsocialquebecois.org)

# Multiculturalism, racism and horny young men: can you make the connection?

BY SHEILA WILMOT

Lately there's an ebbing and flowing panic in mainstream press and public discourse that's tying together cultural identity, religious freedoms and, well, horny boys ogling women in body suits. Such is the xenophobic paranoia these days that all of these things have become so ridiculously yet often threateningly intertwined.

Ultra-orthodox Jewish leaders at a Montreal synagogue not so long ago had a dust-up with the YMCA next door to it. The "problem" was that women exercising were being seen by young men in their place of worship. The initial mainstream debate centered on whether seeing women on the stairmasters infringed on "religious freedom" rather than on the question of why, these boys who couldn't stay away from the windows, are different from any other boys of their age, in terms of their sexual curiosity and their apparent lack of need to learn any social responsibility in how they express it.

Apparently linked (in the mainstream press and public conversation) to this "minority rights" issue is that of the young hijab-wearing soccer player who got booted off the pitch in Quebec for her head scarf. It was a discretionary decision of the referee, who said her clearly form-fitting scarf was "unsafe," and sent her off. Never mind that the international soccer umbrella organization FIFA has no such rule. Never mind that we've been through this before with Sikh men and their right to wear turbans. Also never mind that her whole team – hijab-less as they were – walked off the field with her. This 11-year-old "minority" was not going to play ball

---

*Sheila Wilmot is an organizer and writer in Toronto.*



Quebec, March 2007: Teammates walked off the pitch in disgust with the referee and in solidarity with Asmahan Mansour (back row, centre) when she was ejected from a soccer game for wearing her hijab.

that day. Even more recently, five young women in Montreal were kicked out of a tae kwon do tournament for the same reason. And yet another young Muslim woman in Montreal, who also covers, is not going to be allowed to continue at her job—her employer fired her when she refused to de-scarf.

At the end of the day, all these events are publicly getting linked together through the general topic of the "problem" of multiculturalism for immigrant "integration" and, more specifically in Quebec, "reasonable accommodation" of so-called minorities. If I have to link these three incidents at all, I would say it's more of a "majority-rights issue"—that is, that of women's freedom to work and play without individual men and/or male-dominated organizations getting in our faces, monitoring and controlling what we wear—whether it's too little, or too much. Since women are the global majority, an anti-racist feminist perspective would bring something interesting to the discussion of these issues.

At the end of the day though, in public discussion, while there's a sensitivity to the orthodox leaders at the synagogue, the gym-going women's individual rights and freedoms prevail. But, why not so for the soccer-playing women? Because a racist analysis is prevailing, smuggled

in under a concern for the apparent excesses of multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism has had different forms throughout the West in the past four decades. Canada has a positive global reputation for having a particularly inclusive, welcoming version of the ideas, policies and practices that define the multicultural reality. Some of this reputation is deserved as the form it took in the 70s and 80s did create some breathing space—emphasis on some—for people of colour from racism. But much of this reputation is part of a national mythology, creating a race relations piece that fits lock-and-key with the apparent Canadian national identity of a kinder-gentler-peace-keeping-polite-aren't-we-nice country.

What is this 'thing' called multiculturalism these days? From the start, multiculturalism has been just as much about food, dance and apparently living in harmony through these cultural pursuits, as it has been about facilitating business access to global commercial relations. It's supposed to be something for everyone. It tends though to be, at the end of the day, not so much about bringing the kind and gentle, rainbow of Canadian people together, as it is about specifically categorizing people of colour into designated groups, reifying cultural and



social distinctness, and thereby structurally separating a brown “them” (whether they are recent migrants or not) from an implicitly white “us.” Such structural separation includes very material limitations to basic needs such as decent, affordable housing, and sufficient, safe employment.

Currently, two thirds of Canada’s population growth comes from immigration and it is projected to be the only source by 2030. The ruling class peddles this fair nation to migrants as the place to come for jobs and the good life knowing full well some will be primarily filling part-time, low-waged service jobs. This hypocrisy extends to requiring such landed immigrants to have post-secondary education, professions, high level English or French language skills, and money. Being cheated in the immigration process, then not having sufficient work or adequate housing – I’d call those major systemically imposed barriers to integration. I’d call that very unreasonable and not accommodating at all.

But that’s not the story we’re getting from the mainstream press and many politicians. In parts of white Quebec society, there’s a veritable hysteria around how reasonable the society must be in its accommodation of “minorities”. Yet, that’s the reasonability test for white Catholic Francophones who make up almost the whole 1,350 population of Herouville and whose city council has banned stoning, female genital mutilation and the hijab!

The Globe & Mail is also onside with the idea that this ‘thing’ called multiculturalism is to be blamed for allowing immigrants to isolate themselves in “ethnic enclaves”, thereby preventing “them” from integrating with “us”. Further, while playing soccer and doing tae kwon do would seem to be pretty good tests of Canadian-ness, immigrants are still apparently failing to integrate by not attending ball games and other similar social activities. When you are categorized as “them,” I guess you just can’t win.

What if we apply some of these integration standards to “us?” Say, for example, to me. While I’ve got no general is-

sue with other people choosing to do so, I don’t attend over-priced ball games. In fact, I don’t buy tickets for any of those big business money-making activities. Not only is it expensive, it just isn’t my thing.

Instead, I hang out in my largely white neighbourhood, doing my own thing. You can find me eating samosas, making mole con pollo, or reading and writing on Saturday nights when well-integrated Canadians are at the theatre, sportsplexes, clubs or wherever they/we are supposed to be to demonstrate being well integrated. I can live as a home-grown white Anglophone with a decent paying job, here in my own urban enclave, somewhat a failure at mainstream social integration. And no one thinks I’m going to blow them up. Or that my reclusive pursuits and occasionally odd social behaviour are a threat

## *From the start, multiculturalism has been as much about facilitating business access to global commercial relations as it has been about food.*

to world security. I just have to navigate an increasingly individualized, privatized and profit-driven society that allows fewer and fewer socially-sanctioned options on how and who we are to be. And, while detesting this, I just get to be; I just get to be left alone.

Never mind our historical and ongoing failure to integrate with the diverse societies that were on this land before our ancestors appeared: without a troubling ethnicity and with a pre-approved, dominant Canadian identity, I am inherently integrated. And this has just about everything to do with racism and the flip side of the coin, the perverse social privilege I’m given through whiteness. It’s about the ongoing white domination of the running of society, of who gets to just be and who must be forced to figure out some way to ‘integrate’, to become one of ‘us’.

So, much more worrisome to the in-

tegrity of Canadian society than this multiculturalism thing is the multi-layered reality of racism. It comes in both generalized and specific forms for people of colour of various (real or perceived) origins. It is deployed on the street, in the press, in the workplace, and through an ever-evolving array of state, market and other institutional practices, policies, regulations and laws. It is the air that people of colour and indigenous people must breathe; it is the social obstacle course they must traverse.

While many progressive white folks are aware of the social problems of racism and whiteness, we are still marinated in white supremacy, the legacy of the White Canada policy and practice of a hundred years ago. We are inculcated with a potent mix of ideas, images and values about how right whites are to be

running things. This happens through the laws and practices deployed by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and it happens in our union locals and community agencies.

It’s hard for the positive bits of multiculturalism to withstand the creep of the anti-terror hysteria that is seeping into every crack of social life. But, if we want us all to get integrated, it’s probably not the pros and cons of this complex set of ideas and practices we need to focus on primarily anyway. Instead, we need to take serious aim at racism, by stopping the ignoring, silencing, suspicion of terrorism, angry treatment when ‘they’ get ‘our’ jobs, cultural romanticization of people of colour, etcetera. And we need to do this both as individuals and in an organized way, white folks, people of colour and indigenous people, continuing the hard work mainly non-white people have been doing for decades. ★

# The veil and resistance

## *Muslim traditionalism, western imperialism and the Left*

BY NADEEN EL-KASSEM

In October 2006, British House of Commons Leader and Labour Party member, Jack Straw, sparked a worldwide debate on the *niqab*, the full veil that exposes only the eyes, which is worn by some Muslim women. Straw revealed in a newspaper article that he had asked a Muslim woman wearing the *niqab* to uncover her nose and mouth during a meeting at his constituency office in Blackburn. He went on to say that full veiling can “make community relations harder” because he could not communicate with someone when he could not see their face. Prime Minister Tony Blair echoed Jack Straw’s sentiments when he commented to the BBC that veils are a “mark of separation” that “make people from outside the community feel uncomfortable”.

Interestingly, Jack Straw’s position in the Muslim community in Britain was not always one of a right wing, reactionary politician making anti-Muslim racist remarks. In the 1980s, Jack Straw was a vocal spokesperson for the right of Muslim and Orthodox Jewish schools to opt out of the state school system and still receive public funds. Like his comments on the *niqab*, his position in support of fully-funded religious education sparked great controversy. At the time he argued that people were opposed to his viewpoint because of their ignorance regarding the position of women in Islam. He highlighted the fact that Muslim women were entitled to property rights centuries before European women. Ironically, his arguments then parallel the criticisms that are being launched against him now.

### ANTI-MUSLIM RACISM

The change in Straw’s approach to the Muslim community highlights two important points. First, it illustrates the great change that has occurred in the perception of the Muslim community



British Labour party MP, Jack Straw: racist remarks a turnaround from earlier viewpoint.

post-September 11 and the resulting barriers to integration of marginalized groups into white, middle-class Britain.

Second, the two positions taken by Jack Straw – one defending the right of Muslims to practice their faith according to their own rules, the other

claiming that these rules pose a threat to Britishness – although apparently very different, are coming from the same perspective. Both positions characterize Muslims, specifically Muslim women, as one homogeneous group, with one unchanging set of rules by which they live.

Racism has long been a key tool used to justify and perpetuate colonialism and imperialism. White, privileged males are treated as the norm from which all others deviate (and thus are “deviant”). Since September 11, there has been a sharp rise in anti-Muslim racism. Recently this racism has manifested itself most dangerously in the form of the ongoing Iraq war. Muslim culture is characterized as one which is not only inherently different from Western culture, but poses a direct threat to it.

### MUSLIM WOMEN AND RESISTANCE

The primary architects of the war in Iraq, George W. Bush and Tony Blair, have both claimed that one of the outcomes of this war will be the liberation of Iraqi women from oppressive, patriarchal Arab and Muslim traditions. Their assessment of Iraqi women as helpless and passive victims of an inherently patriarchal society does not do justice to the reality of a long, diverse and rich history of women’s movements and resistance in the Muslim world.

To take the example of the women’s movement in Iraq, despite all odds, women have been consistently involved in organizing to oppose the regime. Women’s involvement in oppositional activism even goes back to the 1920 revolt against the British occupation of Iraq when women were involved in active combat.

When Saddam Hussein came to power, there was a crackdown on all oppo-

---

*Nadeen El-Kassem is a doctoral candidate at the University of Toronto, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. Her specialization includes women’s NGOs and women’s movements in Iraq, Kurdistan and Palestine. She has worked in the Kurdish Human Rights Project legal department on women’s issues. She is also involved in community activist in her hometown, Toronto.*

sitional activism. The only official voice of Iraqi women was the General Federation of Iraqi Women (GFIW), whose activities were strictly controlled by the regime. Despite this strict control, many women continued to organize against the regime. Many paid a heavy price for their activities – numerous women were imprisoned and tortured and many fled to other countries, where they continue to organize today.

The women's movements in the Muslim world encompass a wide variety of viewpoints depending on context and history, ranging from religious to secular, right wing to left wing, capitalist to communist. It is impossible to lump Muslim women into a single homogenous category. Muslim women as a whole are neither victims of Muslim and Arab patriarchy as portrayed by Jack Straw and others today, nor more liberated than their Western counterparts, as Straw portrayed them in the past.

### **POLITICS OF THE VEIL**

Western imperialists frame Muslim women's resistance as consisting of challenges to Arab and Muslim patriarchy. On the other hand, dominant voices in Muslim communities worldwide (and their "progressive" supporters) see Muslim women's resistance as consisting of challenges to western imperialism. In reality, many Muslim women organizers do not fit either of these models. This is especially evident when it comes to the politics of the veil.

Since September 11, the veiling of Muslim women has become one of the central symbols in the battle being fought between western imperialists and dominant Muslim voices. The type of veil that forms this symbol depends, of course, on regional, historical and socio-economic contexts. In some Muslim communities, wearing the veil is the ultimate symbol of a woman's "Muslimness". Unveiled Muslim women, both secular and practising, are not seen as authentic Muslims by certain members of their communities.

Dominant voices in the Muslim community see veiling as the only acceptable means of women's resistance to western

*Since September 11, the veiling of Muslim women has become one of the central symbols in the battle being fought between western imperialists and dominant Muslim voices.*



imperialism and anti-Muslim racism. Western imperialism and certain progressive voices in the West see unveiling as the acceptable means of resistance to Muslim patriarchy. Neither position grants a voice or legitimacy to women who do not fit within these boundaries or do justice to the diversity of Muslim women in either the Muslim world or in the West. As is illustrated above in the brief description of the women's movement in Iraq, these images conceal the diverse and rich history of feminist, left-wing, secular, anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist women's movements that have their roots in women's struggles throughout the Muslim world, and that have carried over into Muslim Diasporas.

Muslim communities continue to engage in complex debates about what the veil does or does not represent for the Muslim woman. The debate has moved beyond the confines of determining whether or not it is proscribed by Islam.

What these dominant images do illustrate are the boundaries and barriers created by dominant male voices, which dictate what acceptable forms of resis-

tance for Muslim women can be. Both white, privileged males and privileged males in positions of authority in Muslim communities are complicit in limiting the kinds of resistance that are open to Muslim women.

### **HEARING OTHER VOICES**

Many believe that the veil is not a necessary aspect of Muslim women's dress from a religious standpoint. Yet, framing the veil as the ideal symbol of anti-imperialist resistance has further entrenched it as an essential component of Muslim women's identity. This approach, which has been widely adopted by progressives and imperialists alike, is not helpful in understanding the depth of the impact of anti-Muslim racism in Muslim communities and the diverse forms of resistance against it. Rather, we must seek out those voices that have been marginalized by the portrayal of the Muslim community as a homogeneous group, rather than the rich and diverse community that it is.

Try as he might, Jack Straw – whether speaking from the left or the right – cannot speak for Muslim women. ★

# The end of the traditional family?

By NICOLE DZUBA

The “traditional family” has been put to rest. And we should not mourn its passing.

The pro-family pundits that lament its demise are almost certainly referring to the stultifying male-breadwinner family of yore or some more recent variation thereof. This male provider/female caregiver form of family came to life about 200 years ago with the birth of capitalism.

To be sure, it was not completely new. It carried forward patriarchal characteristics of earlier societies. Men remained in charge. But rather than being the bosses of household production, they became the family provider. Men went out to work for wages and women were confined to the domestic duties of the home. The work of women was unseen, unpaid and outside of socialized production. The result was women and their labour were devalued and their oppression was reinforced.

This patriarchal family unit served capitalism well. It was tasked with the responsibility of raising children. The next generation of workers was delivered free of charge to the capitalists. It provided a place where men could have some degree of control over their lives. This helped to compensate for the lack of control they had in the workplace. The family maintained women’s oppression in the home, and this oppression was reproduced in the workforce. Women could be used as a cheap and temporary source of labour when shortages arose, and could be employed to do the low paying jobs that were deemed ‘women’s work’.

By the early 20th century when Russian socialist Alexandra Kollontai was writing about the family, the “breadwinner’s” wage had proven to be insufficient to meet the needs of the family. The

“woman found herself obliged to look for a wage and to knock at the factory door.” Many of these women were married and had no relief from the domestic duties at home. They carried the crushing double burden of full days in the factory followed by evenings of housework and mothering.

## THE NEW FAMILY

Following the Second World War and emergence of women’s liberation struggles, the male-breadwinner institution went into decline. In its place, a variety of family forms have emerged. Many couples often avoid marriage altogether, living common-law or as single parents. Gay men and lesbians have challenged oppressive heterosexual norms and are more out as families and parents. Many women are choosing not to reproduce at all. There are also significant attempts by men and women to break with old gender patterns. For example, it is not un-

common for men to be the primary care givers or to take on household tasks of cooking or cleaning.

These are certainly improvements on the “traditional family” of past, but sexism and women’s oppression has not ended. As women enter the workforce, they become less dependent on men. Even though this has made it more possible to leave or avoid oppressive situations, violence against women remains widespread in our homes and on our streets. This is especially true for indigenous women in Canada. The effects of colonization, racism and poverty make indigenous women five times more likely than other Canadian women to die of violence.

Women continue to carry the double burden of work and home. This is especially true as cuts to health care, child-care and education force women to take on more unpaid work in the home caring for children, the ill and the elderly. Women continue to earn less than men,



International Women's Day, Sydney, Australia, 1980: Women's and gay and lesbian liberation movements of the 1970s challenged traditional ideas about the family.

*Nicole Dzuba is a member of the New Socialist group in Winnipeg.*

making only 80 percent of men's wages for work of equal value. This economic factor plays big in decisions about who will stay home to care for children when childcare is not an option.

Even in its more liberated forms, the institution of the family is not thriving. It is becoming increasingly difficult for the family to provide members with emotional and material support.

A recent Statistics Canada study indicated that working parents are spending less time with family now than they were 20 years ago and that this decline can clearly be attributed to more time spent in the workplace. The entertainment industry and a spiritually empty array of commodities often becomes the substitute for family interaction.

As the challenges for families intensify, so does the pro-family discourse. The religious right for example would have us believe that the social problems of our time are the result of the decline of the romanticized female caregiver family. Their solution is to have it reinstated. Such regressive tactics will not in any way relieve the disparities that wreak havoc on society today. It is clear that pro-family politics such as these should be fought on all fronts.

### **CRITIQUE OF THE FAMILY**

But at this juncture, with overburdened families looking for support and pro-family crusaders rallying the troops for a return to "tradition", it seems critical for the left to dust off its critique of the family. Frederick Engels blew the whistle on it 120 years ago in his book *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. He showed that there was nothing natural about the family and that instead it should be seen as an evolving product of changing historical circumstances. It was not God-given; it was just one of the many ways in which relationships could be organized.

The radical liberation movement within second wave feminism built on this conclusion. They determined that the oppression they experienced in the family and in society at large was inextricably linked to the rise of capitalism. In this

## **By claiming the monopoly on "caring, sharing and loving," the family made it less possible to enjoy meaningful relationships beyond its walls.**

sense, both capitalism and the privatized family were seen as obstacles to women's liberation.

By claiming the monopoly on "caring, sharing and loving," the family made it less possible to enjoy meaningful relationships beyond its walls. Its isolating effects inhibited collective organizing and limited people's capacity to fight for change. The solution, as feminists of the women's liberation movement saw it, was to transform all areas of society and create more liberating ways of organizing relationships and raising children.

Second wave feminism also inspired utopian visions like Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*, which allows us to imagine what human relationships could be like in a radically democratic, egalitarian world. The world she describes is one where gender differences are eliminated along with unneeded gendered language. "He" and "she" was replaced by "per" for person. Homosexual and heterosexual desires were viewed no differently from one another. Parenting was done in groups of three co-mothers, made up of both men and women. Children were not raised in a protected sphere of childhood. Instead, they spent their days engaged in a variety of meaningful activities, where they made important contributions to the common good and cultivated their capacity for self-regulation and decision-making.

Such critical analysis of the family has faded to the point where the legitimacy of the institution is seldom questioned. This is not because it has overcome its failings; much of the critique still applies. The problem is that alternative ways of organizing our relationships remain underdeveloped. This leaves the family as the only place where people can expect to give and receive affection and support.

This is especially true in times of drastic cuts to social services. The family picks up the pieces, reinforcing its status as the sole provider of love and affection and in turn blinds us to its important role in maintaining exploitation. It's not surprising then that the working class supported the institution.

### **BUILDING ALTERNATIVES**

As we respond to the struggles of families today we should be mindful of these contradictions. Movements for change would not do well to attack the family, but should instead be part of a long-term commitment to social transformation that will provide alternatives outside the family. By actively building up other ways in which people can meet their needs, the family becomes less necessary. This means continuing to fight for more and better health services, housing options and childcare facilities that celebrate collective life.

Important to this process will be to expose the resistance of the ruling class to providing any sort of meaningful relief for families, despite their rhetoric to the contrary. Stephen Harper and his conservative government's recently announced "family-friendly" budget provides a good example of this. Their "Working Families Tax Plan" is a promise of financial support for families. Yet the plan provides relief only in cases where taxable income is high enough to make use of it. While high-income Canadian families will enjoy some benefit from these measures, those with low-income will end up with only impressive words that do nothing but affirm their right to continue to take care of themselves.

The future of the family is yet to be determined. But the struggle of women against oppression has left us with a clear sense that true liberation cannot be delivered by the family. This can only come through radical changes in the way we organize our relationships and meet our needs. As Michèle Barrett and Mary McIntosh put it in their account of the *The Anti-Social Family*, the way forward should seek to "transform not the family, but the society that needs it." ★

# OPEN LETTER TO CLARENCE LOUIE

## In danger of mimicking colonial voices

BY ADAM BARKER

Chief Clarence Louie, you certainly are making a name for yourself. You are not only an elected chief of the Osoyoos band in the Okanagan Valley, you are also the band's Chief Executive Officer. Under your direction, the band has financially prospered – a vineyard and winery, and a golf course and ski resort in a popular tourist area will do that – and you have gained massive attention all across Canada, delivering fiery speeches to groups of aboriginal people from the 49th parallel up to the Arctic.

You have even been written about in *The Globe and Mail*, which practically gushed about how your band has risen up from bankruptcy to financial self-sufficiency in five short years under your guidance. You have been lauded for telling indigenous peoples to get off welfare, get in touch with reality, and work hard to break free of poverty. You have “arrived.”

Far be it from me, a settler Canadian, to tell you how to run your affairs. I believe that indigenous peoples can and will solve their own problems, and that we settlers need to clean up our own messes if we want to help. But I just cannot shake the feeling that you are missing something in the path you have defined toward self-sufficiency. You sound too much like the colonial voices that have worked so hard to push your people down.

Chief Louie, you urge indigenous people to work hard and compete in the cut-throat world of finance and economic development. You want indigenous people to get a job, show up on time, and

**I can see why many Canadians find your position admirable – those are the same lessons I was taught growing up about how to be a “good citizen.”**

work extra hours. I can see why many Canadians find your position admirable – those are the same lessons I was taught growing up about how to be a “good citizen.”

I wonder if you are aware of how lacking in compassion and understanding your position is, considering your advice to dissenters is to “Get over it... Get some counselling.” It's not as easy as all that to overcome the structures of indigenous oppression. Little has changed since the days of small pox blankets, missionaries, and violence at the hands of the North West Mounted Police – except that the oppression is normalized and thus less obvious.

### THE PRICE OF CAPITALISM

Participating in the dominant economy does not guarantee any freedom from the ill-effects of an increasingly violent and nihilistic society. For all the “wealth” in Canada and the United States, have we not become some of the most unhealthy people on the planet? Does it not say something disturbing that the much-maligned reserve conditions are not so different from the urban social decay that is so apparent in the United States and

Canada? Why copy Canada's failures?

Even those lucky enough to succeed in the market environment pay a dear price. North Americans work harder, longer, with fewer vacation and holiday days than anyone else in the world (yes, even fewer than in Japan). Oh, there are some ultra-wealthy individuals who are making out quite well from all this, but let us be honest: we cannot all be at the top of the pyramid in this system. Most of us spend our lives labouring for the wealth of others, and get stress, social disconnect, and poor personal health in return. I have to ask, Chief Louie, do you want this for your people?

Do you ever consider why it is that your message is so well-received by the people who run national newspapers and powerful businesses? Perhaps it is because they see in you the sort of thing that colonial elites have been pursuing for years: a man with indigenous heritage and a powerful position among his people, who ultimately wants indigenous peoples to cooperate and obey the same government and corporate systems that murdered, raped, and stole from indigenous peoples for centuries – and in many ways, still do.

In your speeches you tell other indigenous leaders to stop running around fighting hundred-year-old battles. What about the little matter of a golf course

---

*Adam Barker is a settler academic from Haudenosaunee territory; he now lives and works in WSANEC (Coast Salish) territory. He is a recent graduate of the MA in Indigenous Governance Program, University of Victoria, and is an active writer and alt-media junkie.*

and a burial ground in Oka back in 1990? How about the corporate clear-cutting on Nuu-Chah-Nulth territory in Clayquot Sound? Or perhaps the illegal development on Haudenosaunee (Six Nations) land that has resulted in stand-offs and police brutality over the past year? Are these wrongs recent enough for you? Or should the young men and grandmothers who were handcuffed and beaten on the ground in Caledonia go get counselling, as you suggest for the “twenty percent” of indigenous peoples who disagree with you?

### BLAMING THE VICTIMS

Chief Louie, of course you are well-received because your message plays right into the desires of Canadian colonial elites. You wipe the slate clean of the history that makes sense of the present, and in so doing legitimize the authority of the Canadian state, the hegemony of exploitative economics. You justify the belief that the problems in indigenous communities stem from the stereotypes of lazy, regressive indigenous politics. You blame your own people for their on-going oppression.

You see, Chief Louie, while your “pull yourself up by the bootstraps” message certainly appeals to the colonial mental-

**Most of us spend our lives labouring for the wealth of others, and get stress, social disconnect and poor personal health in return. I have to ask, Chief Louie, do you want this for your people?**

ity that so many of us carry, there is just not enough critical analysis and honest reflection in your words for your perspective to serve as a useful plan for the future. It is true that your land, in the beautiful Okanagan, can support a vineyard and winery (to say nothing of making money from alcohol, which is such a widespread problem in so many communities), and a golf course and ski resort (I do wonder if your ancestors can recognize their land underneath those manicured greens). So it might be easy to see the capitalist system as full of hope and opportunity. But who does this opportunity benefit?

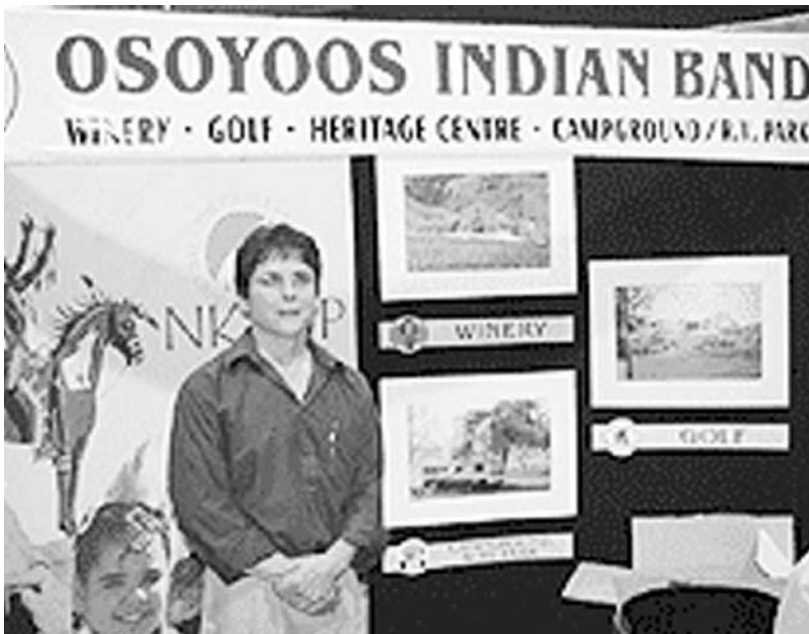
Is it enough to take over the role of colonial governors and merchants and commodify your own peoples’ lands for sale, regardless of the consequences? Colonialism has always been about two goals: acquiring land for the colonizer,

and using that land to turn a profit. Your strategies participate with and enable those goals, ignoring the connections to land that previous generations fought and died for, and that many indigenous people still fight for today. I cannot see this as a winning strategy; I can only see capitulation and collaboration.

Most indigenous peoples have been exiled to lands either remote from the rest of Canadian society, or engulfed by rampant (sub)urbanization. For these communities, the lands of the Osoyoos band might as well be fictional. Others simply cannot conceive of becoming absorbed into the capitalist system. It is environmentally toxic, personally draining, socially isolating and oppressive, and disrespectful towards both the land and the communities which are ultimately dependent on the land for survival.

Perhaps the so-called 20 percent (which you might be understating) of indigenous peoples who disagree with you do not need counselling, and are not simply lazy. Perhaps, like you, they see the value in hard work but do not see the value of assimilation and scant lip-service to an indigenous identity. Perhaps this 20 percent is not obsessed with ancient wrongs, but are grappling with continuing, contemporary issues that you seem all too ready to gloss over.

There are many indigenous people – young and old, of all genders, with or without education, from the cities and from the reserves – who see that the master’s tools have never dismantled the master’s house, and would rather sacrifice the benefits of economic development for the hard yet ultimately more rewarding work of cultural and social resurgence against oppression. ★



Osoyoos Indian Band: participating in the dominant economy.

# LABOUR STRUGGLES IN THE US AND UK

## *Anything in common? Any lessons?*

**SHEILA COHEN**, author of *Ramparts of Resistance*, a recent history of US and UK trade unionism, looks at what lessons might be learnt from the last couple of decades of struggle, victory and defeat.

**U**S and UK? An odd pairing. But the working class in struggle in both countries has had more in common than you might think. In Britain, where even the horrors of Thatcherism have failed to entirely destroy a residual class consciousness, the American labour movement is rarely perceived as anything but a bastion of business unionism; while for Americans the British labour movement is about as invisible as the British prime minister, for all his ineffectual claims to a non-existent “special relationship.”

Yet in my research for *Ramparts*—not to mention my own activity within the US labour movement—I discovered a very different story. American workers, once caught up in struggle, are principled, creative and above all energetic, with a kick-your-ass combativity lacking in the more moralistic atmosphere of British social democracy. And for any North American readers of this article, I would humbly solicit greater awareness of the brave, committed and continuing struggles waged in the pit of New Labourism by an honourable band of British rank and file trade union activists.

### **UNCANNY PARALLELS**

So what, on both sides of the Atlantic, have the last two decades taught us? The 1980s saw uncanny parallels between Britain and America in terms of a series of long, brave but ultimately unsuccessful strikes. Mass struggles like the British 1984-5 miners’ and 1986 printers’ strikes echoed those of the US “P9” meatpackers and International

Paper workers in length, numbers and sometimes desperation. Yet by the end of the decade, an impressive upturn signalled by the Pittston miners’ strike of 1989, which mobilized workers across the US, showed predictions of an “end of history” of workplace struggle to be premature.

And yet, once again in both countries, the 1990s brought similar long and often unsuccessful struggles like the Decatur “war zone” (Firestone tire plant strike) and Detroit newspaper strikes in the US, Timex and the Liverpool dockers in the UK. Indeed, as the 20th century turned into the 21st, the

### **Two key watchwords, and two only: class independence and union democracy**

pattern could be summed up in almost monotonous terms of defeat (Detroit) followed by victory (UPS! Seattle!), apparent lethargy (mid-to-late ‘90s) followed by scorching challenges to the newly-elected Blair’s policy of “fairness, not favours” for unions.

Monotonous, however, it isn’t. Turning to the lessons, perhaps the most crucial has already been pointed out: that there is never, despite appearances, a permanent lull in class struggle. Shown historically over and over, this truth is not only encouraging, but deeply significant for

shaping labour movement strategy.

There are, of course, less positive lessons from the last two decades—otherwise every strike would have been won, Thatcherism would have been crushed, and we would not now be lumbered with the surreal absurdities of “New Labour” or the murderous ineptitude of the Bush cabal. So why did they lose? Leaving aside the huge inequalities in class power (no small matter), the answers are a mixture of leadership cowardice and stupidity, rank and file reformism, and the specific morality of the working class within capitalism.

### **LEARNING FROM HEROIC DEFEATS**

Take the two seminal losses of the mid-1980s, the miners’ strike in Britain and P9 in the US. *Ramparts* shows clearly that in the first case, the strike could have been won on at least two occasions: a simultaneous dock strike in July 1984, and the pit deputies’ action that autumn. In the first case, the union leadership called the strike off at the first hint of trouble by strikebound owner-drivers; in the second, while government chicanery easily ensnared the semi-managerial pit supervisors, there seems to have been no attempt by the miners’ union leadership to persuade them to hold out.

With the 1986 struggle of meatpackers’ P9 local in Austin, Minnesota, the scars run deeper. After refusing to support the P9 strike against wage concessions on the grounds that it broke union “solidarity”—in other words, other locals had been forced to accept pay cuts, so P9 should too—the leadership of the United Food and Commercial Workers eventually placed the P9 in trusteeship and informed the company that the strikers would be restarting work. If this is not an example of the classic bureaucratic “sell-out,” it’s hard to know where else to look.

So the first “lesson” is, yes, good old bureaucratic betrayal. It’s hard to deny

---

*Sheila Cohen is the author of Ramparts of Resistance: Why Workers Lost Their Power and How to Get it Back, recently published by Pluto Press. She is currently working on an update of her 1998 pamphlet, What's Happening?? The Truth About Work...And the Myth of "Partnership."*



that the leadership of the movement, in its continuing anxiety to cosy up to capitalism rather than confront it, has played some part in draining the strength from rank and file resistance.

Yet by no means do all the problems lie with the leadership. Those involved in the kind of struggles which can transform lives and consciousness tend – understandably – to believe in the justice of their cause to an extent which can obscure the vicious tenacity of the enemy. As *Women Of The Waterfront*, supporters of the Liverpool dock strike, wrote, “We firmly believe that we will win this fight because morality and human justice are on our side.” Yet this assumption is, unfortunately, part of the lack of class clarity associated with many defeats.

This is a difficult criticism, as is the further analysis of working-class reformism contained in *Ramparts*. Here the central point that reformism (politics which seek no more than reforms within capitalist society) is pervasive across the labour movement, from the most militant steward to the most hardened bureaucrat, raises the depressing issue that militancy alone is not enough to achieve lasting gains.

## REASONS FOR HOPE

*Ramparts* presents what is ironically a more hopeful perspective in arguing that working-class consciousness more often bespeaks the absence of a coherent ideology than an ardent commitment to reformism. This leaves a space in which the experience of struggle can promote breaks and leaps in consciousness.

As regards the recent history of the labour movement, the lesson might be that gut-level resistance amongst previously “non-political” or even conservative workers contains the potential for a sharper class perspective than is often allowed for by even the most left-wing leaderships. Simply building on what is already there – the kick of resistance to capital—is not a matter of abandoning socialist ideals but of generating activity which can fuse such broader political awareness with everyday strategy and tactics in workplaces.

So what goes wrong? This is where the a complex analysis of “trade union bureaucracy” can come into play through examining the *process* behind the well-trodden path from militant to bureaucrat, which constantly removes union representatives from their class roots.

The institutionalization inherent in trade unionism generates the tendency for even the most militant of worker representatives to put the needs of “the union” – the structure of organization and negotiation – before those of the members. Such dynamics, and the associated “blame the members” syndrome, are only too familiar within the movement. But they

---

In 1995, 2,000 members of the Newspaper Guild of Detroit went out on strike to protect their union contract. Workers fought long and hard but did not have the support of their union for the tactics necessary to halt production and win the battle.

contain within them, routinely, the seeds of union atrophy.

It may seem bizarre to present the lessons of mass struggles and defeats like those of the 1980s and ‘90s in terms of the apparently parochial issue of accountability to union members and their interests within the workplace. But that, essentially, is what trade unionism and, yes, what class struggle is about. And this crucial principle – member-led direct democracy within the union – stands side by side with the equally crucial requirement of class independence. Despite all the bravely-fought battles of the 1980s and ‘90s, it was deference to management mantras of “competitiveness” and adherence to forms of co-operation and “partnership” which undermined the gut resistance from the roots to the attacks of capital.

So, two key watchwords, and two only: class independence and union democracy. If it’s that simple, why haven’t we done it? A major component in the answer is neglect of a crucial constituency: the already-existing layer of committed activists within the movement.

This army of shop stewards, departmental reps, branch (local) secretaries and the like are already in place. Not only are they in unions, they help organize them. Not only do they look after their members, they *are* the members – they work alongside those they represent. Not only do they lead struggles, large and small, against capitalism, they are often aware and supportive of broader social movements – yes, really.

It is this layer of activists that hold the key to putting the lessons of the last two decades – and those before them – into effect. Workplace activists are the closest we’ve got to a leadership which is not only an advanced section of the working class, but is actually a part of that class. And it is this in-class leadership which can most benefit – and most benefit the rest of us – by learning the lessons of class independence and trade union democracy.

Maybe that way, we’ll have a non-“treacherous” leadership in place when the next upsurge comes around. ★



JIM WEST, DETROIT

## BOOK REVIEW

# Police actions: who is targeted, who benefits?

**COPS, CRIME AND CAPITALISM**  
BY TODD GORDON

HALIFAX: FERNWOOD PUBLISHING,  
2006

REVIEWED BY ADAM BARKER

"IF YOU HAVE DONE NOTHING WRONG, then you have nothing to fear." This patronizing response to an ever increasing police-enforced ordering of Canadian life is all too familiar. Thankfully, Todd Gordon in *Cops, Crime and Capitalism* engages seriously with this shallow thinking and returns a raft of questions.

Through a theoretical reframing of the state and capitalist economics and a shrewd analysis of applications of law, Gordon identifies who benefits and who is targeted by police action and anti-crime legislation in Canada. He explodes accepted notions of police as good guys who catch criminals, law as something that protects citizens, and the liberal lie that everyone is equal before the law.

Gordon begins his analysis by moving past simplistic or reactionary critiques of the "failure" of the law to illuminate a deeper motivation behind the clashes between police and groups like squeegee kids and indigenous communities. He argues the Canadian state and the logic of exploitative capitalist economics are inseparable; state mechanisms for law creation and enforcement are guided by overarching support of capitalist accumulation, necessitating repression of both workers who threaten profits, and problematic "others" who defy the sys-

---

*Adam Barker is a settler academic and recent graduate of the MA in Indigenous Governance Program, University of Victoria.*



tem. Policing, he writes, "has evolved historically into the key means by which the state produces the working class and responds to its day-to-day struggles against social order."

Gordon notes that Foucauldian predictions of widespread, technological policing that treats all people equally and generate docile, self-policing subjects, while reducing the role of the state in maintaining order, have never existed. It's almost possible to hear him scratching his head, wondering what world these theorists are discussing. Perhaps the "techno-fetishism" he identifies as informing such theory blinds some of its proponents; more likely, the racial and gender groups most directly affected wield a similarly small amount of power in the Ivory Tower as they do in the court room.

Parts of Gordon's analysis are somewhat problematic; for example, while acknowledging the state exists in a dynamic relationship with challengers to established order, he discusses indigenous experiences of law and order in Canada almost exclusively from an Open Marxist perspective. While he is correct in noting indigenous peoples provided challenges to the state and capitalism – and acquiring indigenous land and labour have been key goals of colonial expansion – Gordon

does not engage with the experiences of colonialism that fall outside his theoretical framework (such as indigenous experiences with missionaries, who were often in competition with both government and business for the "souls" of the community).

Further, while Gordon demonstrates one goal of capitalist production – to create a predictable, orderly, sober, hard-working population – has been increasingly reflected in state actions, it's unclear whether he is claiming this is an essential element of the state, and as such, if enforcement of capitalist oppression is an essential duty of the police. While his argument holds for Canada, similar police and military repression in both pre-capitalist and later communist or totalitarian states raises the question: is capitalism the problem, or is the issue a deeper, hierarchical drive for domination that can be manifested in many regimes?

Regardless, Gordon's identification of the interrelation between the desires of capital production and the power of the state is prescient in the Canada context. Perhaps the strongest sections of Gordon's book are his in-depth analysis of the economic history and correlated rise of a law-and-order agenda in Canada, United States and Britain. His portrayal of economic dynamics is balanced, well documented, and he is relentless in criticizing the powerful in their drive to take advantage of working classes. His detailed look at how the law affects immigrants is particularly refreshing. 9-11, he notes, "does not represent a watershed in policy implementation. More accurately, it expedited processes that were already underway." These processes include the use of fear tactics and selective immigration.

This is one more reason why books like this are incredibly important for Canadians: they remind us how our political and economic privilege is founded upon state-sanctioned oppression, coercion and exploitation of indigenous peoples, women, immigrants, and even the panhandlers and squeegee kids who simply want to live life differently than the way prescribed by capital and state rationale. ★

# TIME TO ORGANIZE

Branches and members of the New Socialist Group are active in a number of cities. Call for information about our activities.

**VANCOUVER** Box 4955, Vancouver, V6B 4A6  
vancouver@newsocialist.org

**EDMONTON** 780-451-3103 or  
edmonton@newsocialist.org

**TORONTO** 416-955-1581  
toronto@newsocialist.org

**WINNIPEG** 204-775-0265  
winnipeg@newsocialist.org

**HALIFAX** halifax@newsocialist.org

**For all other areas** nsg@newsocialist.org  
416-955-1581  
Box 167, 253 College St.  
Toronto, Ontario M5T 1R5



Quebec trade unionists: See p.30 for coverage of Quebec politics.

## new★ SOCIALIST

IDEAS FOR RADICAL CHANGE

### SUBSCRIBE TODAY

	CANADA	US
1 year	\$20	\$25
2 years	\$35 (save \$5)	\$45 (save \$5)
3 years	\$50 (save \$10)	\$65 (save \$10)
Supporting	Add \$20	

INSTITUTIONAL & OVERSEAS INTERNATIONAL \$50/year

ALL PRICES IN CANADIAN DOLLARS

SEND CHEQUES TO: **NEW SOCIALIST**  
Box 167, 253 College Street  
Toronto, Ontario M5T 1R5

[www.newsocialist.org](http://www.newsocialist.org)

The NSG works with the Quebec organization  
GAUCHE SOCIALISTE

**MONTREAL** montreal@lagauche.com  
**QUEBEC CITY** quebec@lagauche.com  
and the **OUTAOUAIS** hull@lagauche.com

**GAUCHE SOCIALISTE**  
CP 52131, Succ, St-Fidele, Québec G1L 5A4  
[www.lagauche.com](http://www.lagauche.com)

The **NEW SOCIALIST GROUP** is an organization of activists working to renew socialism from below as part of today's struggles. Our socialism is revolutionary and democratic, committed to working-class self-emancipation, internationalism and opposition to all forms of oppression. We reject bureaucratic and authoritarian notions of socialism and look instead to the radical tradition of socialism from below, which believes that liberation can only be achieved through the activity and mobilization of the oppressed themselves. Ideas need to be put into action. If you like what you read, get in touch with us.

Glascow  
memorial  
to the  
International  
Brigades that  
fought in the  
Spanish Civil  
War,  
1936-1939

# new★ SOCIALIST

SUBSCRIBE TODAY

	CANADA	U.S.
1 year	\$20	\$25
2 years	\$35 (save \$5)	\$45 (save \$5)
3 years	\$50 (save \$10)	\$65 (save \$10)

Send cheques to: **New Socialist**  
Box 167, 253 College Street  
Toronto, Ontario M5T 1R5

Supporting: Add \$20  
Institutional and overseas international: \$50 per year  
All prices in Canadian dollars



BETTER TO DIE ON YOUR FEET THAN LIVE FOR EVER ON YOUR KNEES Dolores Ibaruri (La Paslonaria)

www.newsocialist.org