

We Face a Choice: Tyranny or Revolution

By Chris Hedges

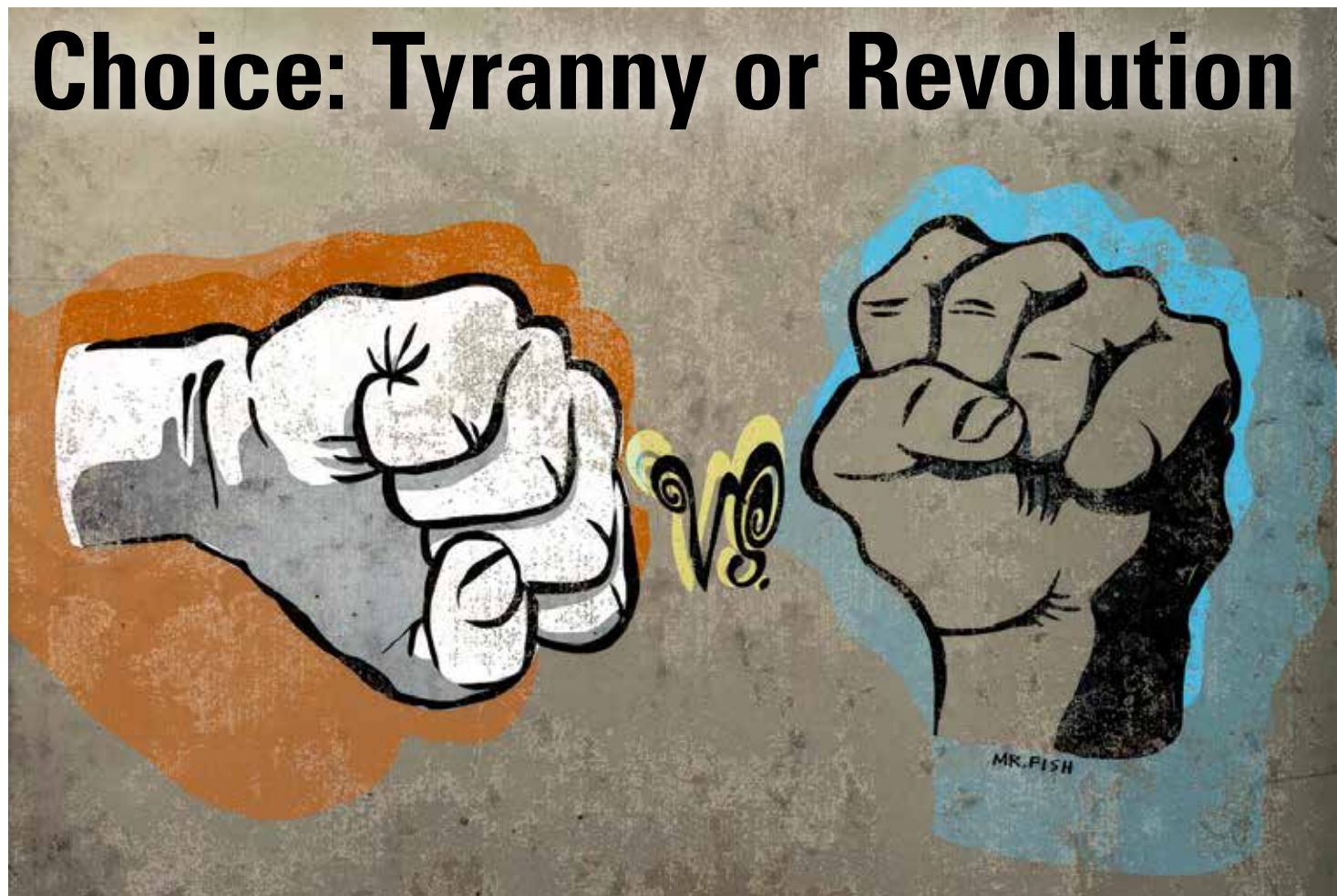
MEXICO CITY—There are two ways to confront global capitalism. There are mass movements, especially strikes, which disrupt commerce and government to force the ruling class to create systems of justice and equality—albeit ones where capitalists retain significant power.

The National Coordinator of Education Workers in Mexico (CNTE)—a grassroots union created in 1979 by dissident teachers—is currently attempting this in Mexico. It announced that if its demands for salary increases and job security are not met it will occupy public spaces and shut down the World Cup soccer matches scheduled to take place later this month in Mexico City.

When the teachers went on strike in the Mexican city of Oaxaca in 2006, following the incarceration and disappearances of union leaders, police fired on the protesters. The community rose up and drove the police out of the city. Oaxaca established an autonomous anarchist commune for several months. Although the commune was ultimately crushed by the Mexican government, the uprising spawned popular assemblies, independent media and empowered indigenous communities.

The second way to destroy capitalism is through the nationalization of industries and banks and the seizure of capitalist assets. This radical route entails, as in the Russian or Cuban revolutions, violence. Capitalists do not part with their monopolies on wealth and power peacefully. They orchestrate severe state and vigilante violence. They install dictators and fascists who abolish civil liberties, carry out mass arrests and criminalize even the most tepid forms of dissent.

Accommodating capitalists and their institutions, even with high taxation, regula-



tion, strong labor laws and a prohibition of monopolies, means living amid a hostile force. It is a matter of time before this hostile force organizes to dismantle the social democratic state as happened in Sweden, Britain and Salvador Allende's Chile.

Liberalism, which Rosa Luxemburg called by its more appropriate name, "opportunism"—is an integral component of capitalism. Liberalism ameliorates capitalism's excesses. But capitalism, Luxemburg argued, is an enemy that can never be appeased. Liberal reforms blunt resistance, but later, when things grow quiet, are revoked. The last century of labor struggles in the United States provides a case study of Luxemburg's observation.

Luxemburg also knew that socialism and imperialism were incompatible. Imperialism, which empowers a war machine designed to enrich arms merchants and global capitalists, is accompanied by a poisonous ideology—what social critic Dwight Macdonald in his 1946 essay "The Root Is Man" calls the "psychosis of permanent war"—which makes socialism impossible.

The psychosis of permanent war results, as it has in the U.S., in the curtailing of civil liberties and punishing economic austerity. Dissent is equated with treason. State power serves the dictates of empire rather than democracy, which devolves into farce, or in our case, a tawdry reality show.

The rollback of the New Deal, the closest

we came to a social democracy, began in the mid-1940s. Cold War anti-communism and corporate opposition converged to make war on organized labor and the New Deal left. This assault culminated in the Second Red Scare.

In 1947, President Harry Truman's Executive Order 9835 launched loyalty investigations that purged the left, including public-sector workers and union allies. That same year, the Taft-Hartley Act directly targeted organized labor by restricting strikes, secondary boycotts and union security agreements and by requiring union officers to sign anti-communist affidavits.

The left fell victim to what the historian *continued on page 3 ...*



General Strike Commemoration march. Photo: Stanley Flanders Arlidge

From the 1926 General Strike to Mamdani on May Day in New York

Why workers keep turning to history

By Laura Flanders

The workers who built Britain's war-planes in 1976 had a problem. Their factory was about to close. Instead of conceding to a "downsizing," they did something radical: they drew up a plan. Not a grievance or a strike notice, a plan; 150 products their hands and minds could make instead of fighter jets: solar panels, kidney dialysis machines, vehicles for people with disabilities, electric buses.

"Socially useful work," they called it. It became known as the Lucas Plan.

Nobody in power listened—with one significant exception. Tony Benn, then Energy Secretary in the Labour government, didn't just listen. He was the one who issued the challenge: if closure is coming, what's your alternative? He gave the workers the prompt that produced the plan and then watched as the Treasury, the corporate interests threaded through a *continued on page 6 ...*

Editorial

Anger and Tears

A polite way to begin would be to acknowledge that a lot of people have a lot of reasons for being angry today ... and I usually would.

But I can't be polite right now. I am so livid fucking OUTRAGED AT THIS GODDAMN SYSTEM!! There aren't fonts and CAPS big enough to scream loud enough. And right this moment here's why.

A couple hours ago I was headed down I-75 South through Toledo to a medical appointment at our local V.A. For four years in my youth I was a hospital corpsman, unloading stretchers with broken bits of humanity off medevac flights for the Great Lakes Naval Hospital.

Today, traffic was moving at the usual 60++ mph ... 18 wheeler in the next lane.. vehicles ahead at the usual freeway distance. From out of absolutely nofucking-where appeared a mother mallard duck and her chicks. How they made it across two lanes of traffic is unfathomable ... but there they were.

In that split second that slows waaay down, I saw that mother duck look back at her babies being thrown into the air and obliterated behind her ... and I ran over her ... felt her bounce beneath my car.

As I swallowed a scream, automatic driving kicked in briefly until I could pull over to stop. No way I could keep going.

Sobbing in the breakdown lane I knew I had to go back to see if anyone survived. Drove to the next exit, circled north, excited again so I could reenter southbound, looking carefully for a pile of feathers ... and quickly found them.

Stopped, got out, walked back in the breakdown lane with 4 lanes of interstate traffic roaring towards me. After 50 feet, I saw something in the litter and dirt that looked like it was a leaf, but I kept walking and by god ... it was a baby duckling.

I picked it up, crying my eyes out and held it to my chest back to the car. Exited 75 and drove home, cradling the peeping ball of fluff.

"Fluff," as the duckling will be known for the next 16 hours until I get it to Nature's Nursery in the morning, is now in a box on our bed, sleeping on a t-shirt with a shot glass of water wedged in a corner, all wrapped in an electric blanket to keep it at the recommended 90 degrees.

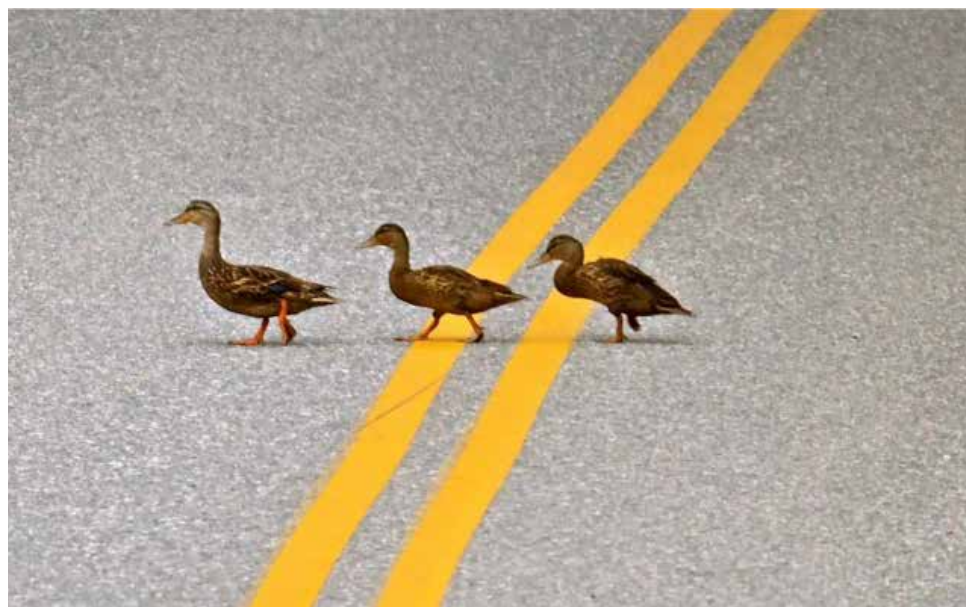
You may well say, "OK, a sad story indeed. But lots of people accidentally run over lots of animals on lots of highways every hour. So why scream at capitalist America?" My friend, I'll tell you why.

That horrid experience killing a mallard mom and seeing her babies blown to bits was one brief example of fear, suffering and death out of thousands on highways today. AND WE ACCEPT IT AS PART OF THE PRICE of hauling our sorry asses from point A to point B, day after day. Just like we accept the millions of slaughtered deer, the smashed raccoons, possums, squirrels, frogs, birds, cats and dogs and all the wounded everybody who crawl away to suffer and die out of sight, around the clock, as part of the price for our national transportation system.

Of course, here in America we're used to it. We shed the occasional tear as we drive ... perhaps. But it's just what happens. It can't be helped.

Billions, I mean BILLIONS of people around the world don't have to mix mobility and mayhem. We do because good old 'Merican capitalism, this time in the Highway Lobby, shoved it down our throats and made us pay for it—with trillions of tax dollars, poisoned air, dead and crippled people and animals. This brief essay isn't going to explain how, but if you truly want to know you'll spend 56 minutes with the documentary *Taken For A Ride* and find out.

Last summer I went to New York City to join the 40-day Veterans & Allies Fast for Gaza. We witnessed daily in front of



the U.S. Mission to the U.N. on First Avenue in Manhattan. Around the country and in a few others, 800 people joined us. We did what we could, but the Empire, McDonnell-Douglas, Boeing, Palantir and the rest of the Madmen Arsonists made damn sure the U.S./Israel genocidal starvation, incineration, dehydration and abomination continued in Palestine, as it does today ... not to mention how many thousands more in Iran and Lebanon. Where hundreds of thousands of mothers have looked back at their babies being blown into the air and obliterated.

While I was in New York, I saw how millions of people can go to work, shop and play without having to drive two tons of toxic waste down a highway every day. It can be done. It works. But it doesn't make enough money for the elites run-

ning the Highway Lobby.

Just as universal health care doesn't make enough money for the insurance industry.

Just as humane, sustainable agriculture doesn't make enough money for Big Ag.

Just as we can't afford humane education to teach young people critical thinking so they can grow to aware citizens and not just working cogs, consumers and taxpayers.

All the while we extort trillions of dollars from our people and levy untold costs on the planet EVERY YEAR to feed the Giant Maw of Militarism.

All of those things anger me, eat at me—and millions of good people—every single day. It's just that today a mother duck and her babies threw it right in my face.

—Mike Ferner

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Photo: Ellen Davidson

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Prayer To The Road Kills

By Doug Rawlings

To those who freeze before our tons of rolled steel and prehensile thumbs

To those instinctual followers of ill-fated paths to home

To those who leave their intestines to glisten in our tail light glow

We ask forgiveness

Forgive us these past 2,000 years of grafting mind to wheel of thinking time was ours to steal



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The Wall Has Deadly Secrets

By Mike Hastie

More Viet Nam veterans have committed suicide than were killed in Viet Nam. This figure keeps going up, because of the many U.S. wars after Viet Nam, which trigger these suicides.

Over 200,000 Viet Nam veterans have died from exposure to Agent Orange. "Countless" Viet Nam veterans have died from alcoholism and drug addiction.

The Pentagon Papers exposed the unfathomable Lies of the American War in Viet Nam.

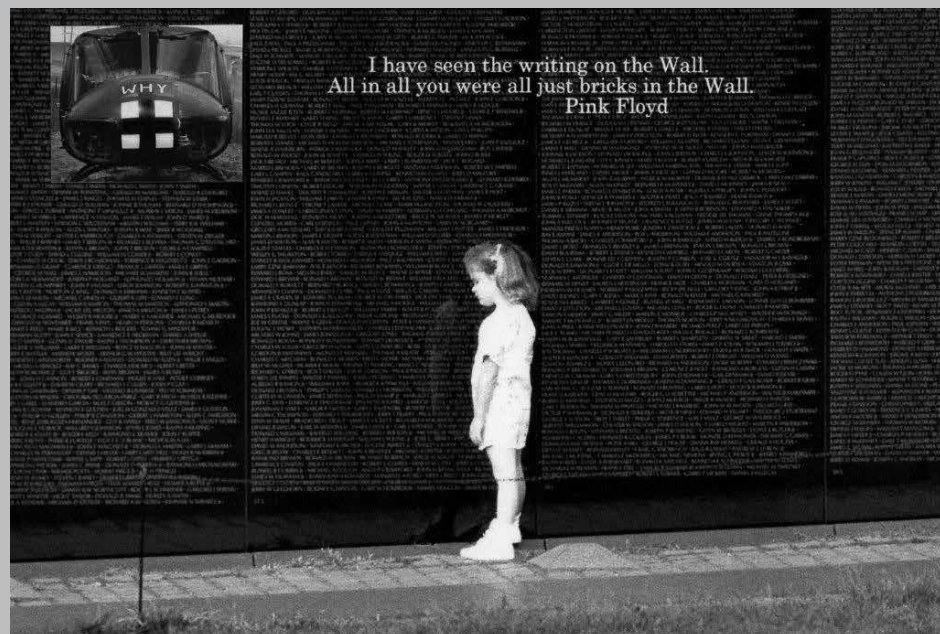
Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, who was considered the architect of the Viet Nam War, stated in his memoir *In Retrospect*, published in 1995: "I knew the War was Unwinnable, and I knew it

as early as 1965." He continued to lie to President Johnson, he lied to Congress, he lied to the press, and he lied to the American people.

Can you imagine how many more thousands of U.S. soldiers had to die in Viet Nam after 1965? Can you imagine how many more millions of Vietnamese had to die after 1965? Can you imagine how many thousands of people had to die in Laos and Cambodia after 1965?

"The Domino Effect" was a driving force behind U.S. engagement in the Viet Nam War. It was a Total Lie of propaganda.

"The Wall is like a character in a play, whose silence makes all the other characters speak."—William Broyles Jr. Viet Nam Veteran



The photograph above was taken by me in 1986. I took several pictures of her before she finally stepped up next to the names, lowered her arms, bowed her head slightly, and closed her eyes. The

helicopter picture was taken by me in Viet Nam.

Mike Hastie was an Army Medic during the American War in Viet Nam.

Tyranny or ...

... continued from page 1

Ellen Schrecker, in "Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America," calls "the most widespread and longest lasting wave of political repression in American history."

"In order to eliminate the alleged threat of domestic Communism, a broad coalition of politicians, bureaucrats, and other anticommunist activists hounded an entire generation of radicals and their associates, destroying lives, careers, and all the institutions that offered a left-wing alternative to mainstream politics and culture," Schrecker writes.

This crusade, she goes on, "used all the power of the state to turn dissent into disloyalty and, in the process, drastically narrowed the spectrum of acceptable political debate."

The witch hunts silenced communists, socialists, anarchists, pacifists and all those who denounced the abuses of empire and capitalism. The "anti-red" actions dealt devastating blows to the political health of the country. The radicals spoke the language of class war. They understood that Wall Street and the billionaire class are the enemy. They offered a broad social vision that allowed even the non-communist left to make sense of the predatory nature of capitalism. But once the radicals were purged, once the liberal class took government-imposed loyalty oaths and collaborated in the witch hunts for phantom communist agents, we were robbed of the ability to make sense of our struggle. We lost our voice. We were integrated into the corporate structures we should have been dismantling.

The ruling class justifies its pillage with the ideology of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism, as David Harvey points out, "had limited effectiveness as an engine for economic growth" but is successful as "a project to restore class dominance." It transfers wealth upwards. It consolidates power in the hands of the billionaire class. It is an updated version of the divine right of kings.

Deindustrialization, turbocharged under

Bill Clinton, sent industries overseas, where workers are paid slave wages and lack benefits. Some thirty million mass layoffs in the U.S. between 1996 and 2023, according to analysis by the Labor Institute, thrust the working class into economic misery. Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair carried out the same assaults in Britain.

Ominously, accompanying this deterioration is the blocking of peaceful avenues for social change, including the Supreme Court's 2010 Citizens United ruling, which effectively turned elections over to the billionaire class.

As social inequality has grown, so has state repression. We stand on the cusp of full-blown authoritarianism and fascism. If the Trump administration succeeds in rigging or invalidating the midterm elections, the last possible exit door within the political system will be slammed shut.

The evisceration of the rule of law at home is accompanied by the evisceration of the rule of law abroad. The U.S. Empire is a rogue state. It issues bellicose threats to

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all who defy it, braying like a wild animal. It carries out "preemptive" wars and imposes sanctions on nations that are defiant. It assassinates and kidnaps foreign leaders. It abducts foreign nationals and transports them to black sites where they are tortured and sometimes murdered. It uses its navy to seize merchant vessels and resell their cargo. It bombs nations in open violation of international law. It funds and arms Israel to carry out genocide. It ignores and humiliates its allies and alienates and enrages most of the global community.

This mounting oppression, advanced but

not begun by Trump, means we face two stark choices. Tyranny or revolution.

I loathe violence, even when it is exercised in the service of what is seen as a just cause. No one escapes its poison. But it is the oppressor, not the oppressed, who determines the mechanisms of resistance.

The numerous revolutions and insurgencies I covered, including in El Salvador, Guatemala, Algeria, Bosnia, Kosovo and Palestine, saw nonviolent protests met with brutal state violence. Resistance movements had no option but to pick up arms.

The nonviolent revolutions I covered in Eastern and Central Europe succeeded not because they were nonviolent, but because the capitalist class benefited from them. The capitalists and oligarchs bought up state industries and assets, as they did after the collapse of the Soviet Union, at prices far below their actual value.

The global capitalists permitted the transition to power by the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa if the ANC abandoned its Freedom Charter, which

configure our societies, so workers are impoverished and shorn of all power while our masters live in unparalleled luxury and opulence.

The inevitable breakdown of the climate will make larger and larger zones, especially in the Global South, uninhabitable. The waves of climate refugees will become a flood. There will, in response, be no limit to the industrial violence used by the ruling global elites to protect their interests.

The genocide in Gaza is an unequivocal message sent from the industrialized nations of the north, which spent billions to sustain Israel's mass slaughter, to a global population that subsists on a few dollars a day:

"We don't care about humanitarian law. We don't care about human rights. Your lives mean nothing to us. We will use any tool, including genocide, to protect our monopoly on wealth and power."

What do we do? How do we resist? Can we halt this descent into madness and mass death?

Those who live in the climate fortresses in the Global North have a material interest in this project, although we are all headed for extinction. Those in the Global North will, I fear, accept a species of totalitarian capitalism in exchange for a degree of security and stability, however temporary.

But this will not be true in the Global South where the ecological crisis and the rule of the global capitalist class pose an existential threat. The Global South will mount insurgencies and revolutions. It will replicate its rebellions of the past, some of which were successful, and some which were crushed.

Revolution, and the possibility of a world freed from the iron grip of global capitalism, will come from these acts of resistance. Let us hope they prevail.

Chris Hedges is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, Presbyterian minister, author, and television host. His books include *America: The Farewell Tour*; *American Fascists: The Christian Right and the War on America*; and *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*.

The Physics of Resistance at Delaney Hall

By Tad Stoermer

We teach our children to admire precisely the kind of protest for which we now arrest people. The men we call the Founders shut down Parliament's courts so they could not sit, forced its stamp distributors to resign their commissions under threat, tore apart the houses of its officials in the streets of Boston, and finally stood in the road at Lexington carrying not placards but flintlocks. Call it the physics of resistance, the plain and unsentimental business of putting your body between abusive power and what it means to do.

The standard history files all of it under the birth of American liberty, a founding virtue, a building block of the national character. And there the reverence stops, because the conduct that made the country is the one thing the country was then organized to keep anyone from using again.

The men who had just won their independence understood the danger of their own example better than anyone, having lived it. What worried them was not a foreign enemy but the next set of Americans who might look at what the Revolution had done and conclude that the lesson was repeatable. A great deal of the energy that went into the Constitution was an answer to that worry. They built a central government strong enough to put down an insurrection before it could find its feet, and they wrote the means of suppression into the document itself. Many of those men had been extremists in their day, radicals by any measure, and they knew it. They had no real objection to extreme measures. Their objection was narrower and more honest than that, and it was this: they objected to extreme measures aimed at the order they had just built.

You can clock the speed of the reversal by Daniel Shays. In 1786 a few thousand farmers in western Massachusetts, veterans of the army that had won the war and most of them being foreclosed, shut down the courts to stop the judgments against them. It was, almost to the gesture, what the patriot resistance had done a dozen years earlier. This time the men who had led the Revolution answered with cannon fire that killed four of the farmers at the Springfield arsenal, and with a privately financed army that ran down the rest, and then they tried the leaders for treason and sentenced them to hang. The rebels had done nothing the patriots had not, and the only thing that had changed in the years between was the order their defiance now threatened.

The same logic is operating in Newark. Inside Delaney Hall, a privately run federal detention center, some three hundred of them have been refusing food for a week over conditions they are held in, conditions that include worms in what they are fed. Outside the gates, their families and the people who have come to stand with them have been blocking the entrances, dragging the barricades down, and forming lines across the exits so the vehicles cannot leave. ICE has answered



Protests erupt at New Jersey immigrant jail in support of hunger-striking detainees.

with pepper spray and batons. The protest that physically gets in the way is, predictably, the one that makes the place harder to run, which is the whole of the physics and the entire reason it is now being called something other than protest.

The Democratic governor of New Jersey, Mikie Sherrill called for the facility to be closed, demanded that its conditions be fixed, asked to inspect it herself, and when she was refused at the door, sent the state Department of Health to try where she could not. By her own account she is fighting the administration that runs the place. And yet, when the protest outside became the kind that actually interferes, she reached

the people who already have their rights and can afford to be patient about everyone else's, the ones who want above all to vote for the adult in the room, the figure who promises to put order ahead of liberty and to keep the temperature down. That instinct was available to the respectable Bostonian in 1765 who thought the Sons of Liberty had gone too far, and to the propertied men of 1787 who slept easier once Shays was put down, and to the Boston gentleman of 1850 who decided that returning a man to slavery was the tolerable price of union. The same instinct is available now.

Consider the zone itself. Sherrill's an-

country would be ground a person could stand on and refuse, the pavement in front of a detention center emphatically included.

Look at the geometry of the boundary and the purpose reads right off it. The person holding a sign at the fence is left alone, because a sign at the fence changes nothing and threatens no one. The person standing in the doorway is removed, because a body in the doorway is the one thing in the entire scene with the power to slow the operation down. Thoreau called that being a counter-friction to stop the machine. So the protest allowed to remain inside the fence is the one that accomplishes nothing, while the protest cleared away is the only one with the power to change the outcome, which is precisely why it has been renamed extremism.

It is an old trick, this turning of the calendar, and it does not require a villain to work. Every patriot now carved into the national memory was an extremist in his moment, and the label came off only because he interfered and, in the end, won. Shays interfered and lost, and so he stays a rebel, his name fixed to a rebellion rather than a revolution.

The people at the gates of Delaney Hall are being sorted into that same category in real time, by a governor who says she wants the place shut down, before anyone can know which way their history will run. And the uncomfortable thing, the thing the people lowering the temperature would prefer no one said out loud, is that the protest we are taught to revere and the protest we are instructed to fear are the same act. The only variable that has ever told them apart is whose order was on the receiving end.

Originally published by Truthout.

Tad Stoermer is a public historian, teacher, and author of A Resistance History of the United States

Every patriot carved into the national memory was an extremist in his moment, and the label came off only because he interfered and, in the end, won. Shays interfered and lost, and so he stays a rebel, his name fixed to a rebellion rather than a revolution.

for Trump's own vocabulary. She described the disruptive demonstrators as national extremist groups, told the ones who had traveled in from elsewhere that they should go home, and reserved her thanks for the protesters who had, in her words, assembled peacefully, which is the polite name for the ones who change nothing.

Calling protesters extremists and outsiders is the safe move, and it has been the safe move in every one of these episodes. It is the loyalist move, the one that signals fidelity to the existing order, and it costs a politician nothing with the people in the middle. It may even help, because the middle is where the comfortable live,

answer to a protest she could no longer ignore was to announce a peaceful, protected protest zone, a fenced enclosure in which people would be permitted to object, and to clear everyone else out of the way with tear gas and mounted police in order to build it.

Set aside the irony of deploying force to establish a space for peaceful expression. The deeper trouble is the premise, because the whole notion of a designated zone for the exercise of a constitutional right is preposterous on its face. The men who shut Parliament's courts did not fight a war to be granted a lot on which to assemble. They fought so that the whole

NJ Activists Arrested Blockading Israel-Bound Weapons Shipment

By Mary Anne Grady Flores

Over 30 activists blockaded the entry point to the Maher Terminals of the Port of Newark-Elizabeth, attempting to prevent a shipment of ammunition and weapons components to Israel by the vessel ZIM Virginia. The activists called for the eviction of the Israeli shipping company Zim Integrated Shipping Services (ZIM) and its Danish competitor, Maersk—the two primary shipping-logistics companies responsible for transporting U.S.-manufactured weapons components to Israel.

Anti-genocide protesters displayed signs and banners reading “ZIM and Maersk Ship Genocide and Ecocide,” “Block the Bombs,” and “Stop Genocide, Ecocide & Deportation,” while obstructing the entrance to the terminal with an R.V. and a truck with a boat hitched to its carriage. Activists fastened themselves to the vehicles and locked themselves to one another using PVC pipes. Almost immediately, Port Authority police attempted to disperse the activists. The blockade lasted for four hours, with ten activists ultimately arrested. The arrestees were released Friday afternoon. All were charged with two crimes in the third degree—Interference with Transportation and Resisting Arrest—and two disorderly persons offenses: Failure to Disperse and Obstructing Administration of Law or Other Governmental Function.

Danny Creamer, one of the arrestees, said: “Weapons companies like Zim and Maersk cannot be allowed to perpetuate and profit from the violence and genocide committed by the United States and its allies. I believe every single person has the responsibility to resist the actions of our government and these corporations, regard-

less of consequence.”

“We blockaded the terminal to stop the U.S. government from violating its own laws by sending weapons to Israel to commit war crimes and genocide” added Mark Colville, another of the arrestees.

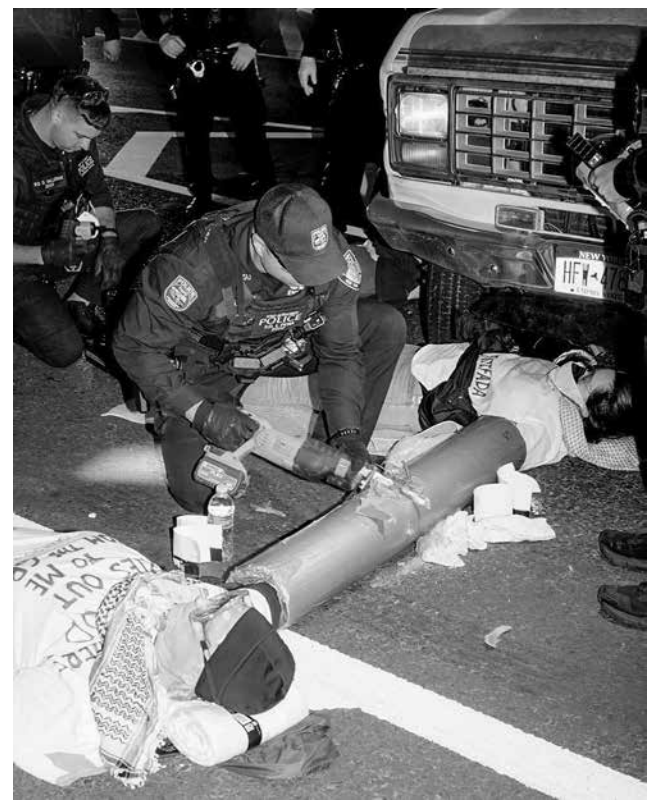
Friday’s action at the marine terminal followed a picket a day earlier at the same location by Port Workers and Communities for Palestine, also protesting the ammunition and weapons shipment to Israel by the vessel ZIM Virginia. Anti-genocide activists previously protested the ZIM Virginia in August 2025—when the vessel was docked in Elizabeth to receive shipments of bullets destined for Israel. Following a successful boycott of the ship by Italian port workers in February 2026, the Virginia returned to New Jersey and was again protested on March 4, 2026.

ZIM left Oakland in 2014 after a campaign of sustained community pressure and protest organized by AROC (Arab Research and Organizing Center) and honored by ILWU (International Longshore and Warehouse Union) Local 10 and didn’t return for seven years. When they finally tried to dock again in 2021, they were turned away.

Operated by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, the Elizabeth Marine Terminal and the neighboring Port Newark together form the principal container shipping complex for goods entering and leaving the New York metropolitan area and the entire Northeast region of the U.S., additionally serving as the largest point of business on the East Coast for both ZIM and Maersk.

A November 2025 report by the Palestinian Youth Movement and Progressive International found that “the vast majority of all U.S. military sea cargo sold to the Israeli Ministry of Defense (IMOD) passes through a single warehouse in Jersey City. Owned by Interglobal Forwarding Services (IFS), this facility handles over 1,000 tons of IDF-bound military cargo every week,” which it transfers to the Port Newark-Elizabeth Marine Terminal complex for transport aboard ZIM and Maersk vessels.

Danish shipping giant Maersk is the second largest shipping company in the world, while ZIM is the tenth largest shipping company as well as the fifth largest company in Israel, and is critical to keeping the Israeli economy afloat. Combined, the companies deliver thousands of tons of military weapons weekly that are directly implicated in what Amnesty International, Human



Rights Watch, the International Association of Genocide Scholars, Israel’s own B’Tselem human rights group, Doctors Without Borders, and the U.N. Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel have all concluded is a genocide in progress in Gaza.

ZIM not only ships military cargo to Israel directly responsible for the killing of Palestinians, Lebanese, and Iranians, but also ferries goods of ancillary use including food for military contractors and components for Israeli surveillance technology. ZIM CEO and President Eli Glickman—a former commanding officer of Shayetet 13, Israel’s equivalent to the U.S.’ Navy SEALs—pledged to deploy all of the company’s vessels, ships, and infrastructure to support and expand Israel’s genocidal military campaign in Gaza.

A number of arms embargo campaigns across the globe have successfully evicted ZIM from ports, but the mass flow of weapons continues largely unimpeded. The largest shipper of weapons and explosives to Israel remains the federal government itself, via Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point in North Carolina and Dover Airport in Delaware.

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Mary Anne Grady Flores is a mother and peace activist in Ithaca, NY, who has spent time in jail for protesting drones.



Rocking Chair Blues

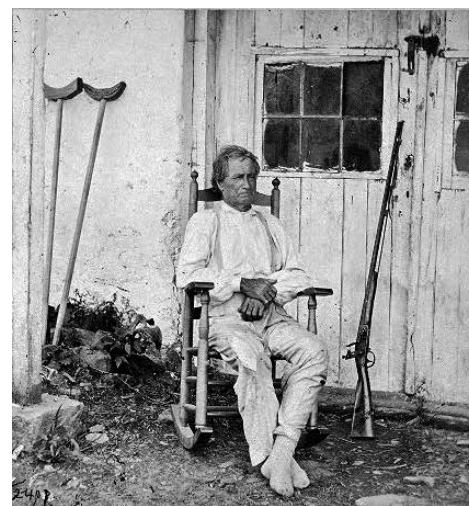
By Doug Rawlings

A veteran of the War of 1812, John Burns was 70 years old when the Rebels came to Gettysburg on July 1, 1863. With the sound of gunfire growing ever louder, Burns took up his flintlock musket and joined the fight. A surprised officer with the Pennsylvania Bucktails directed Burns to the woods near the McPherson Farm where he fought throughout the afternoon with members of the Iron Brigade until he was wounded. Amazingly, the victorious Confederates allowed the wounded Burns to return home unmolested. After the battle, photographer Matthew Brady heard his story and made this photograph of Burns recuperating at his home on Chambersburg Street. When Lincoln came to town to make his Gettysburg Address, it was John Burns he wished to meet. John

Burns died in 1872 and is buried in Gettysburg’s Evergreen Cemetery.

So, I stumble on to a grainy photograph of a Civil War veteran staring into the distance from his rocking chair porch perch and hear the phrase “soldier’s heart” resonating through my head and then lo and behold here comes his grandson after serving in World War One pulling up his rocking chair and copping the same stare -- let’s call that “shell shock” since all he can talk about is those trenches and the artillery and those rounds walking toward him and his buddies and then there’s the soft footsteps of his grandson pulling up a chair after taking on World War Two with its four years of indecision: Europe? Africa? Pacific Ocean? Where? Man, he looked whooped, really tired, suffering from “combat fatigue” I guess, but let’s not dwell on him too long for his grandson just got back from Vietnam and as he pulls

up his chair all he can do is mutter about them damn gooks coming at him day and night and from where? He didn’t know. That dude has got some real trauma issues -- let’s call it “post-traumatic syndrome” as we wait for his grandson to pull up a chair a few years later after storming into Iraqi homes and wandering through the wilds



War veteran John Burns.

of Afghanistan trying hard not to kill innocent civilians but often failing so he’s got some unresolved issues about what’s wrong or right -- let’s call that “moral injury.” And now we’ve got drone pilots and such dropping death into Iran, so we’ve got to figure out a name for that and find a rocking chair for those dudes. In the meantime, though, if we followed the advice of Cheryl Wheeler we might resolve it all -- “just take away the guns.” And, I might add, let’s get rid of the nation state -- why should our grandchildren kill and die for some artificial line drawn in the sand by some warmonger anxious to make a buck or two littering the world with munitions. I’d rather save our rocking chairs for the joy and comfort of family love.

Doug Rawlings is a Vietnam veteran and the author of four collections of poems: Orion Rising, A G.I. Portrait, In the Shadow of the Annamese Mountains, and A Baker’s Dozen (children’s poems). He is a founding member and former poet laureate of Veterans For Peace.

Frank Sinatra, Donald Trump and Joel Jacobson

By Greg Palast

It's kind of embarrassing. Donald J. Trump was my business and character reference for my investigations firm, Union Associates, when, in the 1980s, I applied for government contracts.

But Frank Sinatra put an end to it.

My business partner at the time was the brilliant Joel Jacobson, who was on the New Jersey Gaming Commission. We teamed up to expose white collar crimes and fraud. Don't laugh: the young Donald Trump was seen as an honest, progressive entrepreneur who would help Joel keep the mob out of Atlantic City.

Joel, then decades my senior, was an ace journalist, and union leader who would become New Jersey's first Energy Commissioner. Joel had real balls: He got into a very nasty war with oil companies gouging heating customers. He'd also served as Chairman of the New Jersey

Board of Public Utilities, where he body-blocked electricity rate overcharges—and put a stop to a crazy-ass nuclear industry scheme to build floating nuclear reactors off the Jersey shore! I can't make this up.

Back to Old Blue Eyes. After Sinatra finished a performance at the Trump Casino, he liked to play a few hands of blackjack. Trump and Jacobson watched Sinatra win a hand. Then another. And another.

Sinatra was just a bit too lucky for Joel, who watched Trump's dealer slip cards out of special deck with a wink and a nod from Trump.

"You're out, Frank," Joel told Sinatra.

As Joel recounted it, he had Sinatra escorted from the casino and informed the singer that he will never again perform in the Trump Casino, nor any other casino in Atlantic City. Ever. He was banned for life. (Sinatra claimed he chose not to perform in Jersey after that. But, to quote the

maestro himself, "Fairy tales may come true. ...")

Trump was furious at Jacobson for bouncing his prize talent.

But Jacobson was the toughest son of a bitch you'd ever meet. He stared down death threats from Jersey mobsters as well as gangsters who tried to take over the Teamsters union where he was Trustee.

Our firm was set up to show government how to root out racketeers, corporate conmen, knuckle draggers and other scum balls in the gaming and power industry.

Trump was testing Joel: fix the game for Sinatra and the next thing you know you're fixing the casino industry for Gambino.

Why am I telling you this? Because I want you to know that just one time in Donald Trump's life, someone told him, "You're not getting away with this."

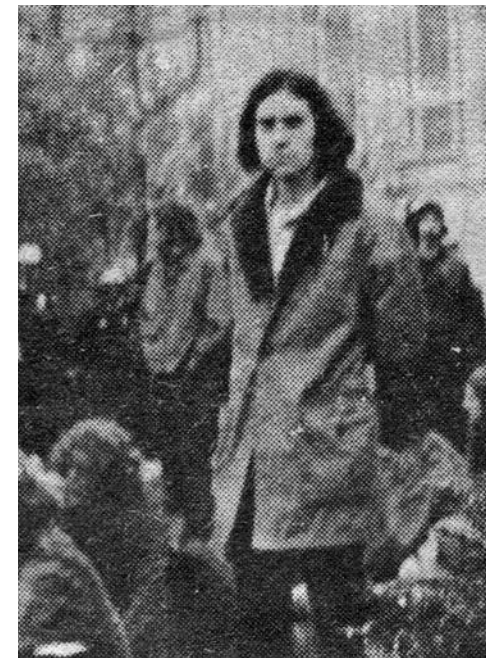
So, if you're applying for a job with Donald Trump, don't use my name, and certainly don't use Joel's.

Joel, who passed away in 1989, left me with these words: Bullies only have the power we give them.

Waist Deep in the Big Muddy

Hope you all had a Happy May Day full of joy and resistance. Here is a photo memory of my happiest May Day ever, when I was arrested on May 1, 1971 in Washington DC. That's me with too much hair staring at the camera while under arrest.

After a night in jail (with 7000 others), a cop wanted me to help him fill out a phony arrest report (phony because he wasn't the guy who arrested me). So he



asked, "What did you do that got you arrested?"

I answered, "Nothing. I was just standing there." Which was true.

So, the cop asked what, then, was I doing in Washington?

"I'm here to overthrow the government!"

And we did. We ended the war in Vietnam.

And now when I read the papers I think of Pete Seeger singing, 55 years ago, "We're waistdeep in the Big Muddy and the big fool says to push on."

Greg Palast is an investigative journalist who has reported for The Guardian, BBC Television, and Rolling Stone. His books include *The Best Democracy Money Can Buy* and *Ballot Bandits*.



General Strike

... continued from previous page

nominally Labour cabinet, and the institutional gravity of government itself, overrode him. The plan was shelved. Many of the workers were eventually let go. Benn spent the rest of his long political life (one of the longest-serving figures in British history), radicalized in part by exactly that experience: being in the room, having power on paper, and losing anyway.

And yet, 50 years later, people are still talking about the Lucas Plan. They're still teaching it, still asking: what if?

The Lucas Plan turns 50. The British General Strike of 1926 turns 100. And on May Day 2026 I stood in the sun, amidst Palestinian flags, and yes, even a hammer-and-sickle flag, and watched New York City's Democratic Socialist mayor take the stage in Washington Square Park and lead the crowd in a chant of "labor strong." Behind him, clear to see and understand, the words "No War. No ICE. No Billionaires." Mamdani is the city's first sitting mayor to address a May Day rally since Fiorello LaGuardia, a man he, again, tipped his rhetorical hat to.

Let that land for a moment. LaGuardia. The 1930s. Nearly a century.

As it happens, also in Washington

Square, standing smiling at Mamdani yesterday, was historian Peter Linebaugh, the author of, among other classics, *The Incomplete, True, Authentic, and Wonderful History of May Day*.

Later, over dinner, he posed a question to the assembled potluck crew: What does it mean that we are here again?

Sitting and crowding around, listening in, were some of the people he was alluding to—media makers, labor organizers, criminal justice reformers, artists, and educators. People organizing across sectors that the old playbooks said were unorganizable; people who those same playbooks told us rarely share a room, let alone a meal together.

Why does it matter that we keep looking back? Because, as Linebaugh teaches, the past keeps showing up, whether or not we invite it.

Updating Capital's Playbook

Capital's memory is long. The playbook used to crush the 1926 General Strike—divide workers by sector, by race, and gender, and nation, to de-legitimize solidarity; use media to frame strikers as threats to the public—is recognizable. It has been updated, not retired. Union-busting consultants charge hundreds of dollars an hour to deploy strategies with

century-old roots. The names change. The logic doesn't.

So workers with long memories aren't being nostalgic. They're being strategic.

The Lucas workers didn't just want to keep their jobs. They wanted to ask a question that cuts to the heart of every labor struggle: Who decides what work is for? Who decides whom that work serves?

That question didn't get answered in 1976. Nor did it get answered in 1926, when half a million British workers walked off the job in solidarity with miners being told to accept wage cuts and longer hours. That strike held for nine days before the national leadership folded. The miners held on for months more. They lost. That's how the history books write it.

But something was learned: about solidarity and betrayal and the difference between a movement and an institution that claims to lead one. About what it means to have an ally inside the system—and the system that ally is up against.

Mamdani's appearance in Washington Square Park was a symbol. Symbols matter—not because they change material conditions on their own, but because they tell us something about what's become possible.

What's possible in 2026 is considerably more than it was 20, or even 10 years ago. That shift didn't come from nowhere. It

came from people who organized when it wasn't popular, who lost campaigns but didn't dissolve their committees, who studied what happened in Birmingham and Detroit and Port Elizabeth and yes, Lucas Aerospace, and who kept asking: what would it look like to actually win?

History isn't a comfort blanket. It's a human-made map, imperfect, incomplete, sometimes misleading. The terrain changes, but the questions the Lucas workers asked, and the General Strike raised about solidarity and power and class, aren't historical curiosities. They're the questions on the table right now, in break rooms and union halls and school halls, and group chats, wherever people are trying to figure out whether this moment is different, and how they are connected to each other if it is.

Here's what I keep coming back to: the Lucas workers were told their plan was impractical. Utopian. Beside the point.

They wrote it down anyway. They made 150 prototypes. They showed it was possible.

Laura Flanders is an English broadcast journalist living in the United States. She presents the weekly, long-form interview show *The Laura Flanders Show*. To receive new posts and support her work, please consider becoming a paid subscriber to her Substack.

Woodstock Company Expands For War Work

By Laurie Kirby

Woodstock, NY, is a tiny town with an outsize global brand. As the town's largest employer approaches its 80th anniversary, we pause for a vignette of a history that somewhat belies the peace-and-love associations.

June 28, 1973: Hippies, tourists and assorted pilgrims graced the Village Green. And the front page of the *Ulster County Townsman* splashed a photo of the president of Woodstock's largest employer, Rotron, proudly receiving a Special Award from Rockwell International, maker of the Minuteman nuclear missile.

"Year after year," the award said, "the Rotron fan has performed on the Minuteman missile program without a single instance of failure."

Next to a model of a Minuteman, the award displayed a replica of the pirate and slaver Sir Francis Drake's ship, likening Rotron's contribution toward keeping a Soviet attack at bay to Drake's turning back the Spanish Armada in 1588.

The early 1970s were a boom time for this mainstay of Woodstock's economy. The Vietnam War and the Cold War were raging—Rotron's Woodstock plant was providing "components critical to the success of nearly every U.S. military missile program," as the company's promotional material proudly stated. "Minuteman, Poseidon, and Spartan all carry the Rotron logo within their shells. Custom-designed Rotron fans are also contained in the Cruise missile and in the Trident [submarine-launched ballistic nuclear missile]."

Six months before Rotron received its Minuteman award, its made-in-Woodstock fans had been busy over Vietnam in the "Christmas Bombings," the largest heavy bombardments by the U.S. since World War II, with heavy civilian casualties. Woodstock's production lines were turning out components for B-52 bombers, B-58s, nuclear-armed F-102 and F-106 fighter aircraft, nuclear submarines, and tanks.

From its earliest days the company concentrated on weapons contracting. In the early 1950s a local paper reported: "The Korean emergency [a euphemism at the time for the Korean War] ... keeps Rotron's business going at full tilt." And another local newspaper shouted: "Woodstock Company Expands For War Work."

Meanwhile (although this only became known in the 1980s) TCE and other highly toxic byproducts of Rotron's weapons production were poisoning the groundwater and wells of neighborhood homes and creating the town's only Superfund site. To this day the poisons remain on site, although supposedly contained, and neighbors can't grow their own vegetables. Two satellite Rotron plants in nearby towns, Olive and Saugerties, also left legacies of toxic spills. A reminder that war is bad for the environment in every phase.

The Afghanistan and Iraq Wars provided another bonanza for Rotron, now owned by Ametek Inc. And business is surely booming just now for the plant, whose production is 80% military.

In 2020 the factory completed another in a series of expansions for more war work, with the aid of \$600,000 of New York State taxpayer money. (Throughout the COVID closures of that year, the factory remained open as an "essential business.")

More recently, the widespread horror at the atrocities in Gaza has focused more attention on companies like Rotron that provide the tools of genocide and apartheid. While information is scarce, we know that Rotron has supplied the Israeli Air Force and Defense Ministry directly as well as selling to Israeli war manufacturers like IAI and Merkava, and has continued since 2023—

and made-in-Woodstock parts are in all those F-35s and F-15s delivering the genocide.

Today, the third generation of Minuteman ICBMs, now made by Boeing, still threaten to annihilate us all—and still depend on crucial made-in-Woodstock components. As do F-16 and F-22 warplanes, Apache and Black Hawk attack helicopters, Bradley and Abrams tanks, warships, drones, rocket launchers, and the vast communications, spying and logistics systems that run modern battlefields.

We don't mean to imply that Woodstock, or Rotron, or Ametek Inc, are unusually evil—on the contrary, we see here a microcosm. The tentacles of the military-industrial complex reach into every congressional district. What if the great skills and the hard work of so many companies' employees had been devoted to peaceful, green, job-creating, infrastructure-strengthening technologies rather than machines of destruction and death? What if the community could help them make that happen?

Rotron is not the only military contractor in the area. The Howmet Fastening Systems plant in nearby Kingston produces, literally, the nuts and bolts (and rivets and fasteners) of aviation. The parent company, Howmet Aerospace, boasts that "If it flies, we're on it." Like Woodstock's Rotron, Howmet was for decades a prominent local employer, now a small branch of a giant corporation. And as with Rotron, we can only find occasional details of its weapons contracting thanks to a few government spare-parts requests that happen to make it into the public domain.

We don't know how much of this particular factory's output is military but at least some of it is. Howmet Kingston is the sole source mentioned in an Oct. 17 "request for quotations" from the Navy's NAVSUP Weapons Systems Support, whose mission is "to provide Navy, Marine Corps, Joint and Allied Forces program and supply support for the weapon systems that keep our Naval forces MISSION READY." The Kingston factory is specified, as is Howmet's Simi Valley facility (How-



met Aerospace's distribution and logistics hub, which is identified only by its CAGE Code, an identifier for government contractors). Howmet will supply 18 counter-sink nose-piece attachments.

DLA [Defense Logistics Agency] Aviation has recently sought parts for the B-2 bomber (in November) and the F-15 aircraft (in December). The Kingston plant is listed as one of a few suppliers for these items, along with other Howmet locations.

Israel makes much use of the F-15 for genocidal purposes. Earlier this year the Trump administration proposed giving Israel some B-2s.

For its role in supplying Israel's genocide, the parent corporation, Howmet Aerospace, has been the target of recent anti-genocide and Palestine solidarity actions in Pittsburgh (the corporate HQ); Orange County, Calif.; and Leicester, UK. The actions highlighted Howmet's contributions to the F-35.

Laurie Kirby is a professor of mathematics at Baruch College of the City University of New York, and a Woodstock musician. He is a member of Woodstock Peace Economy.

Thoughts

By Denny Riley

It is gratifying to turn the bad stuff into art. I mean, I'm not going to get over what happened in Viet Nam so I might as well gather my memories into a package of words and string them together for greatest effect.

Why would I get over it while the exact same bullshit is going on again.



Bob DiTomaso

The President refers to "bombing them back to the stone ages," the secretary of hair gel talks about our battlefield victories while apparently not knowing no flight on a battlefield has occurred.

And I, who spent four years working on targets (I was in a SAC wing that had bombers on alert to drop nukes on both Moscow and Kiev on the same day. I was 19), when I got out, after being in Southeast Asia two times, I thought and said we were going to win the war because we'd bombed everything of consequence. That, however, was the sort of "consequence" Americans of the '60s would think of as consequential. The people of Laos and Viet Nam were sure of themselves, and they had nowhere to go if they let us be victorious. They rode bikes and elephants along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. They lived in the Cu Chi tunnels 20 miles from downtown Saigon. Victory for us was never possible.

Since then, our government has done everyone a big injustice by trying to make Nam something noble, something vets should be proud of. Three years ago in Danang I spoke with the officer in charge of the POW/MIA search. There are no POWs in

Southeast Asia. At that time, three years ago, there were 2,800 MIA.

A person is MIA until something of their anatomy is found and identified. If a plane is blown out of the sky, no parachute, a flaming bird that crashes to an explosion in a mountain jungle, the pilot is MIA.

This happened to a friend of mine. Bob DiTomaso. His plane was seen by four other aircraft going down in the high mountain jungles of Laos. I don't remember when it was I heard the Pentagon listed him MIA, but his family in Buffalo waited for news. His parents and his brothers and sisters were dead when his remains were found and identified. Only a niece and a nephew who'd never seen him were around to get handed the trifold flag. He was a 1st Lt when he went down, but while MIA, every promotion cycle he was promoted up until he was a Lt. Colonel. His niece and nephew were given his accrued pay.

Phew.

Denny Riley is an Air Force veteran of the U.S. war in Vietnam, a writer, and a member of Veterans For Peace.

Original Anti-Zionists All But Forgotten

Molly Crabapple wants to change that.

By Debbie Nathan in *The Forward*

I first met nationally acclaimed artist and journalist Molly Crabapple in 2020 during the dark days of COVID. After discovering that we had both studied Yiddish at YIVO, albeit in different classes, we did a socially distanced fresh-air visit to Mt. Carmel, the Jewish cemetery in Queens where Sholem Aleichem is buried. Many tombstones there are inscribed not in Hebrew but in Yiddish. They include the graves of people who, in life, belonged to the Bund.

Founded in 1897 in Eastern Europe, the Bund was a socialist revolutionary group whose name, translated from Yiddish to English, is General Jewish Labor Union (“bund” is Yiddish for union). By the 1930s, Bundism in Poland, where most Ashkenazic Jews lived, had grown bigger and more politically powerful than Zionism. The group was a tireless promoter of Yiddish as the linguistic and literary underpinning of Jewish peoplehood. Bundists also fiercely opposed Zionism and a Jewish state; they believed in fighting for democracy and inclusion in the countries where Jews already lived.

The organization ended up being destroyed not just by the Nazi Holocaust but also by Stalinism. Except for people like me, who’ve been ensconced in the Yiddish world, it is nearly forgotten today by all but a few academics. But by the time we met, Crabapple was writing a book about the Bund.

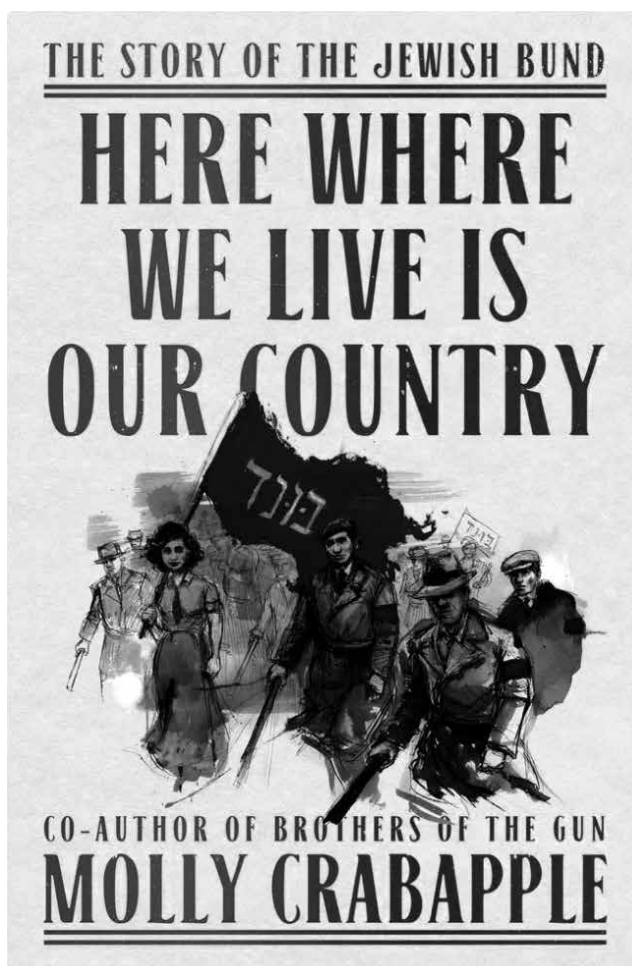
Almost six years later, she has finished it. Titled *Here Where We Live is Our Country*, it is part hefty historical documentation, part loving family memoir, and part literary nonfiction. Thoroughly engaging throughout, it moves back and forth from the author’s lefty-artsy life in contemporary New York City to earthshaking events in vintage Jewish Europe. Crabapple has disinterred the memory of a once-vibrant movement that waned even as its nemesis, Zionism, waxed.

I met her last month in her fifth-floor walkup apartment in Williamsburg to talk about how she made her book. Our conversation is edited for length and clarity.

Here Where We Live devotes significant space to the saga of your great-grandfather, Sam Rothbort. As a young man



Molly Crabapple. Photo: Daniel Efram/
Penguin Random House



in 1904, he immigrated from the Pale of Settlement to New York City, under somewhat murky circumstances that he barely discussed after the move. In America, he made a living as a self-taught artist, including on a dairy farm in the Catskills, an egg farm in Long Island and in a big house near Sheepshead Bay in Brooklyn. But he died over a decade before you were born. When did you first realize he’d been an interesting guy who you wanted to tell the world about?

I was fucking born knowing he was interesting! My mother and my great-aunt and my dad told me about him constantly. I was surrounded by his paintings and stuff that he said. After he died, my great-aunt Ida still lived in his house. As a child, I would visit and it was exactly like when he was alive. I remember the pigments and oils still on the palette in the basement.

How did you find out he’d been in the Bund?

I’d always known he was involved in something illegal before he came to the United States. It was a cool family anecdote. In a book from 1952 that he published about his art, he wrote that as a teenager and young man he hadn’t known much about girls because “I was in the underground.” Another book, a catalogue of his art from a show, said he’d been in the Bund. My mom had a million of those catalogues in a bookcase, and I’d been looking at them since I was 11 or 12 years old. I also saw one of his watercolors, of a woman throwing a rock. He’d titled it “Itka the Bundist Breaking Windows.”

I had very little idea then of what “the Bund” was. But as an adult, one of my bad habits has been that sometimes when I get drunk, I Google things. That might be how I first understood.

From his own unpublished writing, you later found evidence suggesting that Sam might have fled to America at age 22 because he’d joined other Bundists in shooting a Tsarist policeman during a state-encouraged pogrom. You also read the yizkor book for Volkovysk, a town in what is now Belarus. It was Sam’s hometown. He is cited in the book as having helped produce its chapter about the Bund.

Look at this! [She walks me to her bedroom and points to an antique photograph on the wall.] When I was younger I’d always only thought of this as a very cool old picture that my mom had. But this same photo is in the yizkor book! It says it’s the members of the Volkovysk Bund in 1905. It’s Sam’s friends a year after he left for America. Look at this guy in the photo—he’s hot! Which one do you like the best?

The blonde.

Ugh!

I got really obsessed trying to track down these guys.

When I went to the cemetery where my great-grandfather is buried I saw the tombstone of one of them. Later, in a box of family memorabilia, I found a photo of this same person in an old Yiddish news clip about people in New York City who were in the Workmen’s [now Workers] Circle’s Volkovysk branch. I asked the cemetery who was paying to maintain the grave. It was this guy’s grandson. I contacted him and he said his own father was still alive but very old. “Can you just ask him to look at this photo and see if that’s his dad?” I asked. I said I was writing about a revolutionary group. He says, “My grandfather never would have been involved in that! He was a truck driver.” And he hung up.

A group of people walking down a street Description automatically generated

A street scene in Vilna from Molly Crabapple’s ‘Here Where We Live Is Our Country.’ Graphic by Molly Crabapple

Why couldn’t the grandson entertain this history about his grandfather? Why did he not know it?

The Bund was an organization incredibly devoted to Yiddish language and literature. But it was also a socialist revolutionary political party. One thing I’ve noticed about how it has been written about is that certain things are de-emphasized and certain things emphasized. In the 1950s in the U.S. in the McCarthy years, Bundist survivors of the Holocaust were terrified they would be accused of being Communists, and deported. They had no faith that Americans would know the difference between a socialist and a communist. I think that sometimes the Bund’s Yiddishism is emphasized far more than the fact that they were revolutionaries. To focus on linguistic and cultural things is safe. To talk about revolutionaries as internationalists—and as people who always opposed Zionism—is dangerous.

Were you raised Jewish?

My father is Puerto Rican and a Latin American studies professor who’s a Marxist. He told me about Marx’s theory of surplus value when I was 6 years old. I’ve been a leftist in a leftist family all my life! My mother—Sam’s granddaughter—is very strongly culturally Jewish. When I was a child we’d do Hanukkah lights, and she made the best latkes. We were not religious, but I identify strongly as a secular Jew. I studied Yiddish in order to do research for the book. I’m not so good at Yiddish, but I can work my way through a socialist text using a dictionary.

I remember when we were at the cemetery and you were so excited about having just discovered that the political work of some Bundists in Poland was armed self-defense. They fought in militias, with their bodies and with weapons, to protect Jews from murderous pogroms, murderous Communist Party violence against socialists, and, finally, murderous Nazis. You called these militia members “thugs.”

I loved them!

You mentioned their resistance in a piece you wrote in 2018 for the *New York Review of Books* about the organization. I’ve heard that many people were astounded and very happy to learn about this self-defense and to discover the Bund.

Especially young Jews, like in their 20s. They had no idea that Jews had fought back in Europe even before the Holocaust, or they had only vague ideas about the Warsaw Ghetto uprising and that Bundists played a major role in it. It was very meaningful for them.

So much for the idea that only Zionists have been modern Jewish fighters.

Zionists have tried to say that they were the only tough Jews. Which is utterly untrue.

What do you think is most original about your book?

It’s very concerned with the emotional life of being in a movement. I think that sometimes the way that leftist movements are written about is as a series of conferences and decisions that are written down as texts, and people sign onto a resolution because that’s what they are thinking. The writing doesn’t show any awareness of emotional life. The love affairs, the gossip, the beefs that are going on, the thrill of thinking that you can change the world. I was much more concerned with that.

continued on next page ...

Double Occupied

The men the world wants dead

By Eman Mohammed

The cigarette burned down to the filter. He held it until the smoke touched his thumb. He did not flinch. Pain was just another thing to carry. Like the groceries. Like the grief. Like the name he could not say out loud.

This is the first thing they teach you. How to hold the heat without dropping it.

I grew up without a father. I grew up in a house where the walls listened. But there were men who walked through our door. They shook the dust from their shoes. They sat on the plastic chairs. They were not my blood. They were my shelter.

They took me to swim on Fridays and cut fruit into small squares. They passed Eidiya in envelopes that smelled of sweat and orange blossom. They were Palestinian men and Arab men and the men the empire tries to erase before they can teach us how to be soft.

And some of them loved in ways we didn't name. Some of them loved in the dark. Some of them loved in the shadows of the occupation. Double occupied. Once by the soldier at the checkpoint. Once by the silence at the dinner table. Their bodies were borders. Their desires

And some of them loved in the dark. Some of them loved in the shadows of the occupation. Double occupied Their bodies were borders. Their desires were contraband. They carried the weight of the siege and the weight of the closet.

were contraband. They carried the weight of the siege and the weight of the closet. Both are cages and both are designed to break the spine.

The world wants to see them as monsters. The camera zooms in on the stone in the hand and ignores the scars on the back. The news anchor speaks of "conflict" while the bulldozer eats the home. The policy maker speaks of security while the checkpoint steals the time. They paint our men as inherent threats. As violence waiting to happen. They do not see the violence done to them.

Look closer ... see the man who cannot work because the permit was denied. See the father who stands at the crossing while his child sickens in the hospital behind the wall. See the brother who comes home from prison with eyes that do not focus on anything inside the room. See the uncle who drinks tea until his hands stop shaking. See the boy who loves another and knows the ground might swallow him for it.

This is not nature, it's design. Colonization is not just land theft. It is soul theft. It is the systematic breaking of the man so he cannot protect his home. So he cannot hold the child. So he cannot love who he wants. It happens in Gaza. It happens in the streets of Baltimore. It happens on the reservations where the water is poisoned and the men are disappeared into cages.

The system knows. If you break the men, the community must fight harder to survive. It is a calculation. It is a strategy. It is genocide by a thousand cuts. Some cuts are visible. Some are inside the chest.

They are shaped by occupation. They are shaped into oppressors by it sometimes. They are fallible. They are sweet. They are fiercely protective in a place that demands violence for survival. They will risk everything

for a crust of bread. They will throw their bodies between hunger and their children. They will stand in front of the tank so the school bus can pass.

And yes, sometimes the grief has no place to go. Sometimes it turns inward. Sometimes it turns outward. They hurt themselves. And they hurt us. This is not an excuse, it's the diagnosis. A genocidal system does not produce healthy families. It produces broken people who try to love with broken hands.

But Listen, listen to the rhythm of their resistance. It is in the laugh that escapes during the bombardment. It is in the coffee poured for the neighbor who lost everything. It is in the way they teach us to walk without fear even when the sky is falling. They are not machines to be harvested. They are not statistics for a report. They are not collateral damage.

I think of the men who raised me and the men raising children under siege right now. I think of the Black and

Brown mothers praying for sons who might not come home, the Indigenous fathers fighting for water they are told they cannot drink, the unspoken men loving in the ruins. We are connected by the boot on the neck. We are connected by the hand that lifts it.

Their love is a force that saves and wounds in the same breath. It is heavy. It is real. It is the only thing that keeps the world from swallowing us whole.

The water was cold that Friday at the sea. He held my hand until I stopped shivering. Nobody took a picture. We just existed. For a moment, we were free. He let go when I was ready. He walked back toward the shore. Nobody celebrated his leaving. Everyone knew he would return.

Eman Mohammed is a Palestinian photojournalist from Gaza, now in exile in Dublin. "This is my diary during genocide and its aftermath, undiluted, and intentional. It's not written to explain, but to remember."



Eman Mohammed

Molly Crabapple

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And as I worked on the book I quickly realized that I wasn't just writing about the Bund. I was writing a history of the 20th century from the point of view of the defeated. The work was a form of necromancy. I would go to people's graves and take dirt, and light candles in front of it and try to ask them if I could tell their story. At Ponary Forest, [near Vilna, where at least one prominent Bundist leader, a woman, was massacred by the Nazis in World War II and dumped into a mass pit] I went to the bottom with flowers and played Di Shvue [Yiddish for "The Oath," the Bund's anthem] on my phone.

What do you mainly hope that your book will accomplish?

I want leftists to know about something from our shared international history as leftists. I want young Jews to get to know their ancestors.

The Bund was anti-Zionist, of course, and many young American Jews are now also rejecting Zionism.

Yes. A lot of them were sold a bill of goods about their history, and when they reject that bill of goods, there's a big hole in them. They don't have any actual, positive Jewish history. They just have shit they're ashamed of, because they realize [that Zionism] was actually a history of ethnic cleansing and apartheid. One of the things my book does is give them ancestors.

I'm an anti-Zionist. Whenever you have an ethnostate project, it always does unspeakable crimes. If Jewish institutions in America keep conflating Jews here with a state that is doing a livestreamed genocide and is now primarily known for the most heinous shit possible, it's extremely dangerous for us Jews, as a small minority in America.

Some people internationally have been starting new Bund groups. What future do you see in that? And can you imagine Yiddish being resurrected as a secular Jewish language?

It's hard to imagine huge numbers of people adopting Yiddish. But I think about a Jewish literary figure in the 1930s whom Isaac Deutscher quotes in his book *The Non-Jewish Jew*. He said that Yiddish was a dying language. But he didn't mind, because Greek and Latin are dead languages, yet many people study them anyway, to access their linguistic treasures. And God bless everyone who's doing leftist, anti-Zionist organizing and cultural work reclaiming our heritage! But is there a future for the Bund? The thing I've learned both from reading history and being a participant is, you never know what the spark is going to be. So you should always avoid making prognostications.

*Debbie Nathan, who was named one of '7 American Jews Who Fascinated Us' in 2021, is a journalist who has been reporting about immigration for more than 40 years. She has written *Women and other aliens: essays from the U. S.-Mexico border and other books and is the recipient of numerous literary awards.**



The Man Behind the BDS Movement

Interview with Omar Barghouti

By Rami Younis ZNetwork

Omar Barghouti is one of the most infamous names in pro-Israel and Israeli government circles at the moment. Officials have portrayed this Palestinian human rights activist and leader of the BDS movement—which he co-founded a decade ago and now leads—as a threat to the State of Israel. How big of a threat? Well, just last week the country’s best-selling newspaper, Yedioth Ahronot, featured a front-page story about him, dubbing him “Explosive Omar.” And if he and his boycott movement are giving both Zionist officials and their media a panic attack, one can only assume he is doing something right.

“Is this the Renaissance era for BDS?” I ask him in a phone call. He laughs and tells me that there is still much to come.

Yet Barghouti, 51, refuses to respond to his accusers—he maintains a boycott of the Israeli media. He was willing to conduct this rare interview due to my Palestinian identity and under the condition that it be published first in Arabic, on Palestinian website “Bokra”—although it is also being published in English here on +972 Magazine and in Hebrew on Local Call, where I am a blogger. Unified trilingual anti-Zionism at its best, I must add.

Barghouti explains his choice to not speak with the Israeli media and the logic behind the more general call for boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel as a whole: “In every other situation of sustained oppression, human rights groups call for punitive measures against the state and its institutions, not just against a narrow component of the state that is directly con-

nected to the injustice at hand. No one called for banning products of Sudanese companies producing in Darfur in response to the Sudanese regime’s war crimes there. Sudan as a whole was targeted.

“As Archbishop Desmond Tutu once said, Israel is put on a pedestal in the West, and treated as if it were above international law. BDS seeks to end this Israeli exceptionalism and criminal impunity. Israel must be treated like any other state committing similarly egregious crimes.”

The BDS movement was launched on July 9, 2005, when a broad alliance of more than 170 Palestinian political parties, trade unions, refugee networks, NGOs and grassroots associations published an open boycott call to international civil society organizations and people of conscience. It called to “impose broad boycotts and implement divestment initiatives against Israel similar to those applied to South Africa in the apartheid era,” Barghouti says. “Today, the global BDS movement is led by the largest coalition in Palestinian society, the BDS National Committee (BNC).”

BDS: Discussing Difficult Issues in a Fast-Growing Movement

BDS calls for: an end to Israel’s occupation of Palestinian and other Arab territories since 1967, including dismantling the wall and colonies; an end to Israel’s system of racial discrimination against its Palestinian citizens; and respecting the U.N.-sanctioned, fundamental right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes.

“These three basic rights correspond to the three main com-

ponents of the Palestinian people: those in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem; those in the 1948 territory who live under Israeli apartheid, and those in exile,” Barghouti says. He insists that regardless of what shape the political solution to the conflict takes—it must be based on these principles.

The tool that 170 Palestinian civil society organizations chose in their struggle to demand these rights, and to fight the Israeli occupation, is based wholly on a human rights discourse and non-violent action—as opposed to the violence of the occupation itself. For this reason at least, it is important to hear and understand what Barghouti has to say.

You have had a lot of successes in your campaign recently, two examples being Lauryn Hill canceling her show in Israel and Orange threatening to pull its brand from the country. What other success stories can you talk about that did not get as

much media attention?

“The huge Dutch pension fund, PGGM, whose international investments are close to \$200 billion, decided last year to divest from the top five Israeli banks due to their involvement in financing the occupation.

“This was followed by the U.S. Presbyterian Church’s divestment from Caterpillar, HP and Motorola Solutions for their complicity in the occupation, and by Bill Gates’ divestment from G4S, the largest security company in the world, which is involved in Israelis crimes against the Palestinian people. BDS is succeeding in revealing the toxicity of the ‘brand’ Israel.”

Some BDS activists choose to boycott all of Israel, not just companies or bodies profiting directly from the occupation. Why is that?

“The artificial and untenable distinction between Israel and ‘the occupation’ is political and ideological; it is not based on

practical, legal or moral considerations. It is Israel that international law regards as the occupying power, and therefore, is the party responsible for the construction and maintenance of not just the colonial settlements, but also the whole occupation regime.

“Israel is also responsible for what even the U.S. Department of State has criticized as institutional, legal, and societal discrimination against Palestinian citizens of Israel, and such a system fits the U.N. definition of apartheid.”

But Israel’s deepest injustice, Barghouti argues, is the denial of the right of return to Palestinian refugees. Those refugees, uprooted and dispossessed in 1948, comprise 68% of the Palestinian people. They, too, deserve equal human rights, he insists.

A common accusation against the international BDS campaign is that it feeds on antisemitism. What do you say to that?

“BDS is a non-violent human rights movement that seeks freedom, justice and equality for the Palestinian people, based on international law and universal principles of human rights. As such, BDS has consistently and categorically rejected all forms of discrimination and racism, including antisemitism as well as dozens of racist laws in Israel.

“Our non-violent struggle has never been against Jews or Israelis as Jews, but against an unjust regime that enslaves our people with occupation, apartheid and denial of the refugees’ U.N.-stipulated rights. We are proud of the disproportionately high number of Jewish activists in the BDS movement, especially in the U.S.

“Conflating time-honored, human-rights-based boycotts of Israel’s violations of international law with anti-Jewish racism is not



only false, it is a racist attempt to put all Jews into one basket and to implicate them in Israel's crimes against the Palestinians.

"Israel's charge of racism against the BDS movement is akin to the Ku Klux Klan accusing Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks of racism! It is so blatantly propagandistic."

How do you identify an individual, organization or any other entity to target? And once you've identified them, how do you proceed from there?

"The three general criteria that the Palestinian BNC recommends in selecting strategic targets are: first, the level of complicity—focusing on companies and products that are most clearly and directly involved in Israel's human rights violations and easiest to explain to a wide audience.

"Second, cross-movement alliance possibility: prioritizing companies or products that enable the creation of broad, cross-struggle alliances. For example, the campaign to stop contracts with the Israeli water company, Mekorot, engages a wide spectrum of environmental and anti-privatization campaigns.

"And third, the potential for success: a BDS campaign should have a realistic chance of success, beyond simply raising awareness, such as persuading an international company or institution to end support for an Israeli company."

A couple of months back I hosted a public discussion with Barghouti in front of 400 Palestinian citizens of Israel in the city of Ara'ra. Before we began, I asked members of the audience to raise their hands if they had ever heard of the BDS movement. Only 20 people did. I looked at Barghouti; he was smiling. He knew what I was about to ask. I remind him of that moment now. (A note going forward, the terms '48 region and '48 Palestinians refer to the area inside Israel's pre-1967 borders and Palestinian citizens of Israel, respectively.)

"The Oslo accords disenfranchised Palestinians in the 1948 region, causing a serious rift," he explains. "On the contrary, the BDS movement insists on the right of all Palestinians to exercise self-determination as a unified people and as such, insists on the rights of all Palestinians, including '48 Palestinians. Major groups within '48 were part of the launch of BDS in 2005, but the movement has not done enough to raise awareness there.

"Also, the struggle to decolonize our minds is an uphill struggle in the '48 region, as the process of 'Israelization,' or col-

onization of our minds, has been entrenched over the last seven decades. An essential part of what the BDS movement does on a daily basis is shattering despair and nourishing hope and conviction that we, the oppressed, are capable of ending oppression."

More and more companies are likely to pull out of Israel in the coming years as a result of BDS efforts, and that would be a success for the movement. However, what do you say to Palestinian citizens in Israel who might face layoffs or other economic consequences as a result of multi-national companies leaving the Israeli market?

"Israel's regime of oppression, not the resistance to occupation and apartheid, is responsible for this and every other consequence of this resistance to oppression.

tually prevent support for BDS. It only makes it illegal to publicly advocate for boycotting Israel or any Israeli institution. Any Jewish or Palestinian citizen of Israel who wishes to support the BDS movement can publicly declare his or her support without violating the law—so long as they do not directly call for any boycott.

(Editor's note: Israel's anti-boycott law does not criminalize calling for boycotts of Israel or its institutions, but it does allow private citizens to sue anybody who makes such a public boycott call for monetary damages.)

"There are ways to circumvent this repressive law. For instance, I can present why Company X is complicit in violations of international law and then say, 'I myself am boycotting this company's products, but because of

the Palestinian Football Association was able to threaten Israel with expulsion from international sporting tournaments, and eventually forced it to alter its policies that effect Palestinian soccer. I want to understand how Barghouti feels about this—and the PA itself.

"BDS is a grassroots and civil society human rights movement that is entirely independent of the official Palestinian structures and any government," he emphasizes. "It played a critical role in the campaign to expel Israel from FIFA, and most observers recognize that role. Palestine solidarity activists, almost all of whom are BDS supporters, have been struggling for months to raise awareness about Israel's violations of Palestinian athletes' rights in the context of its overall

involved in Israel's crimes we are not asking for anything heroic. We are merely asking those organizations to fulfill a profound moral obligation. This is the compelling, ethical logic of BDS, and this is a main factor behind the movement's impressive growth over the last decade.

"The BDS movement is reaching a tipping point mainly because its strategy works—it works well—and because Israel has shifted to the fanatic right with fascist elements in government, dropping the last mask of its deceptive 'democracy.' Perhaps our most important achievement is uniting Palestinians from across the political and ideological spectrums on a human rights platform and behind a non-violent form of resistance that is anchored in international law."



"Those who claim that BDS hurts Palestinians are not just making unfounded and unethical claims that fail to understand how resistance is always costly at first. They are also patronizing in telling Palestinians that they understand our interests better than we do. We reject this colonial attitude completely. Nothing hurts the Palestinian people, whether in '67, '48 or in exile, as much as Israel's racist and colonial oppression does."

As a Palestinian citizen of Israel who can't support BDS publicly due to restricting laws, I feel I can't really join your non-violent popular movement. How can local activists still support you?

"This is a misunderstanding of the draconian and anti-democratic Israeli anti-BDS law. As bad as it is, the law does not ac-

the repressive anti-boycott law. I am not allowed to call on you to boycott it too.' That way I am indirectly calling for the boycott without breaching the law.

"But ultimately, we need widespread civil disobedience against this and all other draconian Israeli laws, as was done in the U.S. civil rights movement and the South African anti-apartheid movement. Unethical and unjust laws should never be obeyed. People of conscience should collectively and actively disobey them and eventually repeal them."

Another recent success for the BDS campaign, which made headlines in Israel and worldwide, was—surprisingly—not organized by Barghouti and the BNC, but by the Palestinian Authority. As a member of FIFA,

occupation and oppression.

"The fact that Palestinian officials led the public effort in this regard was our Achilles' heel because the Palestinian Authority is chained with the humiliating Oslo agreement and is not designed to resist Israel's regime of oppression in any meaningful and strategic way."

The BDS movement is getting more and more popular. Where do you see the movement going in both the near and far future?

"We are going mainstream. That is our challenge. We are not begging for charity; we are appealing for effective solidarity. As Martin Luther King Jr. once said, boycott on a basic level entails 'withdrawing cooperation from an evil system.' When we ask institutions and organizations to divest from companies

Judging from the victories BDS appears to be racking up recently it seems that finally, this strategy based on a rationale of sustained and escalating pressure on Israel in all fields—academic, cultural, economic and military—is starting to have a real and serious effect. Or as Omar Barghouti puts it, "we are not there yet, but we are reaching our South Africa moment."

This article was originally published by +972 Magazine.

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The Meal That Carried Me Back to Gaza

By Reem Sleem

When I first entered Ayloul Palestinian Restaurant in Mansoura City, Egypt, I saw the Palestinian flag and felt that I had finally found a refuge—a place I belonged to, one that embraced me in my exile. Yet at the same time, a reel of horrific war memories passed through my mind, and hesitation overtook me for a moment.

I felt like a frightened child who had come upon a soothing presence. I had forgotten what safety felt like throughout the past two years I spent in exile, far from my homeland.

The place enveloped me in iconic images of Palestine: a map of Palestine with all its cities hanging on the wall, a large mirror in the shape of the map, images of the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque, and photos of distinctive Palestinian dishes displayed along the walls and on the menu. Each day of the week was dedicated to a special dish. I went on a Tuesday to sample the daily special: maftoul.

When I took my first bite, the flavor of pumpkin and chickpeas transported me back to days in Gaza when I used to gather with my cousins at my grandmother's house around a large plate of maftoul.

With every bite, I felt warmth and longing, and gentle memories flowed through my mind.

I lost my home, my friends, my food, my university and my dreams—so how could I return? I now try to compensate for my loss in this restaurant.

I was curious to learn about the story of the restaurant and the woman who ran it. I had many questions. I firmly believe that suffering can trigger creative responses. So I decided to meet the owner, Azza Saeed Safi, to uncover the story.

Azza grew up in Jabalia and came to Egypt four years ago to pursue her master's and doctoral degrees at Mansoura University. Her father was a well-known businessman in Gaza; the family name was associated with a telecommunications company and they also owned a gas station. The Israeli army bombed it all to ashes.

During the active genocide, Azza lost 15 members of her family and relatives on the very same day she graduated with her master's degree. She called her family repeatedly to share her joy, but no one answered. Later, one of her friends in Gaza sent her a condolence message, and that was how she learned the news.

Her grief is etched on her face, making her look older than her 33 years.

Despite her grief and the difficult circumstances she faced in Egypt, Azza decided to open a restaurant in late November 2025, making use of her exceptional skills in Palestinian cooking. She designed her menu around the concept of a daily special that she prepared herself. She named her restaurant Ayloul (September), the month of the olive harvest. The olive harvest is a symbol of the resilience of the Palestinian people.

I asked her how the restaurant opening felt. "It was a beautiful and sad moment at the same time. It is a painful feeling to open a project alone while your family is far away, suffering in Gaza. It's hard to feel joy when the lump in your heart is still there."

Her customers come from a variety of nationalities. In addition to Palestinians and Egyptians, many Syrians, Jordanians, and Iraqis come for meals. Most of her customers are non-Egyptian students who found a place that embraced them and eased their loneliness.

One Palestinian customer told her: "You brought us back to my home in Gaza. I feel as though I am eating my mother's food."

Azza tells me that by opening the restaurant, she has reclaimed a part of her homeland. She feels as though she is in Gaza whenever she enters it—especially when she sees the positive reactions of customers—like a mother embracing them tenderly through her cooking.

Meeting Azza and hearing her story made me realize that someone who has lost something can give generously and lovingly to others, turning their loss into a gift for others.



Ayloul serves healing Palestinian food. Photo: Reem Sleem

I left the restaurant grateful for the intimate moments it gifted me. My anxiety was gone, as if a wounded part of me had been healed. I carried with me a container of hummus as a gift from Azza and promised her that I would visit again very soon.

A vague hope lingered within me—that the war would end, that I would return to eat maftoul in my grandmother's kitchen with the decorated plates, to drink mint tea with her fresh date cakes and look at the olive trees outside her window, and to lis-

ten with enjoyment to her entertaining stories that combined heritage and history.

Originally published by We Are Not Numbers, wearenotnumbers.org.

Reem Sleem is a student at Al-Azhar University in Cairo. We Are Not Numbers empowers emerging Palestinian writers to bring the people and places behind news statistics to life, humanizing the Palestinian experience. It provides the world with direct access to Palestinian narratives.

Seventy-Eight Years Ago

On May 15, Palestinians commemorate the Nakba, also known as the Palestinian Catastrophe, when the Palestinian homeland and society were destroyed in 1948 and most Palestinians were permanently displaced.

Below are remarks from April Guardi, president of Mid-Hudson Valley Veterans For Peace, at a rally marking Nakba Day in Middletown, N.Y., May 15.

So here we are—the third Nakba Day since the genocidal onslaught upon Gaza and the ethnic cleansing of the Occupied West Bank and now Southern Lebanon.

Seventy-eight years ago, the settler-colonial project of Israel was established, and the Palestinian state of despair, homelessness, terror, and daily suffering began. Al-Nakba, the catastrophe—born out of the unholy trinity of British colonialism, white supremacy, and capitalism. Through Zionist terrorism, it resulted in the ethnic cleansing of nearly 750,000 indigenous people and the destruction of more than 500 Palestinian villages and towns.

And we continue to witness the crimes today, supported financially, militarily, and diplomatically by Western, primarily U.S. imperialism-serving war profiteers. It is sustained by a combination of state terrorism through violence, racial and ethnic persecution, checkpoints, house demolitions, displacement, expulsion, imprisonment, land theft, rape, torture, including of children, and collective punishment—

all to ethnically cleanse non-Jewish inhabitants existing under a system of apartheid that denies Palestinians equal rights as testified to by those living there and in the diaspora, such as Michel Moushabeck, who writes about this extensively.

Our shameful AIPAC bought-off politicians like to say, "Oh—it's complicated." The reality is not complicated. To quote Moushabeck, "It is not an age-old religious feud. It is not a conflict by extremists on both sides. It is part of the Zionist endgame of establishing a Greater Israel, a territory extending from the Nile in Egypt to the Euphrates River in Iraq. It did not start on Oct. 7; it is not about Hamas or Hezbollah; and it may not end with the occupation of southern Lebanon, parts of Syria, or the U.S.-Israeli aggression against Iran."

So here we are in Middletown, NY, once again showing up for Palestine. Why do we show up? We show up for Nakba Day because it is about resisting erasure as described by Moushabeck; it is about reminding the world that Palestinians are determined to keep their struggle alive despite what we have been witnessing in real time—the most egregious expressions of settler colonialism in the modern era for land and material gain. We show up for Nakba Day and stand with Palestinians as it serves as an important reminder that until there is an end to the occupation—until Palestinians get justice, freedom, self-determination and human rights; and until Israel adheres to international law, we know, as Moushabeck con-

cludes, there can be no hope for peace and no hope for global stability. As we can see from the U.S.-Israeli war of aggression on Iran, we know that whatever the ruling class is allowed to do to and test on Palestinians and others will affect all of us here. The billionaire ruling class is willing to use those same weapons of oppression on all of us.

So we will keep showing up, we will continue to support BDS, we will continue to use our voices to spread the messages of Palestine on the ground and in the diaspora. We know that what we've done so far has indeed created change. Support for Zionism is dying. People are waking up. We've been showing up louder and stronger and it's working! If it wasn't, the Zionist entities wouldn't be spending hundreds of millions of dollars on propaganda to sway public opinion and counter what we've all been witnessing on independent media platforms that legacy media censors and refuses to cover.

In its death throes though, it will lash out with even more erratic violence and impunity before it meets its demise—but don't give up hope. Remember that this is a marathon and mark my words, Zionism someday will be remembered in the same shameful way as other fascist regimes who embraced white supremacy and racial domination. It's just a matter of time—so we must keep the pressure on and never give up.

From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free!

April Guardi is a U.S. Army veteran and public health professional recognized for her extensive career in health systems data management, human services, and military medical administration.

Cuba Is Not a Failed State: It Is a Besieged State

That Washington continues to intensify its six-decade campaign against the Cuban Revolution is a testament to the island's resilience

By Roger D. Harris and Sara Flounders

May Day is the most important public celebration in Cuba. This year, which marked the 100th anniversary of Fidel Castro's birth carried special significance in light of heightened U.S. aggression. Over 5 million Cubans reportedly mobilized island-wide under the slogan of *la patria se defiende* (the homeland must be defended). The largest demonstration took place in Havana in front of the U.S. Embassy.

The symbolism of International Workers' Day was not lost on the White House. President Trump chose that day, May 1, to impose yet more sanctions on top of the already draconian illegal measures immiserating Cuba.

The world's leading imperial power falsely claims that Cuba poses "threats to United States national security." Secretary of State Marco Rubio subsequently announced additional measures to "defend" the U.S. homeland from its peaceful neighbor.

Jill Clark-Gollub with the Americas Without Sanctions Campaign explains the underlying reason for Washington's animosity: "Cuba is sanctioned for the crime of being a good example." A small, formerly colonized country, Cuba simply claims its sovereign right to determine its own destiny without foreign interference.

That Washington continues to intensify its six-decade campaign against the Cuban Revolution testifies to the island's resilience and strength.

Responsible Statecraft describes U.S. policy as "bent on breaking the island." The Guardian reports "an epidemic of flies, rats, waste and foul odors." A New York Times opinion piece by U.S. representatives Pramila Jayapal and Jonathan L. Jackson found "shocking" conditions in Cuba.

These accounts sympathetically portray Cuban hardship but largely overlook Cuban social achievements.

In 1976, Cuban voters ratified a constitutional referendum with a reported 97% approval rate and high voter turnout, which formally defined Cuba as a socialist state. Last year in the United States, the House of Representa-

but added that "the main cause of our problems is the genocidal blockade."

Directly addressing Washington—"gentlemen of manipulation and lies"—Díaz-Canel proclaimed: "Cuba is not a failed state; Cuba is a besieged state."

Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez condemned Washington's "genocidal intention." Cubans view their economic difficulties, shortages, and infrastructure problems as the direct and cumulative result of decades of coercive measures designed to suffocate the country.

CEPR documents a dramatic increase in infant mortality—rising to 9.9 per 1,000 live births, attributable to deteriorating living conditions caused by the U.S. economic war. Yet Cuba's infant mortality rate remains among the lowest in the region: Panama (11), Dominican Republic (16), El Salvador (12), Honduras (15), Guatemala (20), Jamaica (12), Haiti (45-50). And even lower than for Af-



rican Americans in the U.S. (10.9). This reflects the demonstrated success of Cuba's social medicine model, even under the most challenging of circumstances.

Among Cuba's public health achievements are its international medical brigades, excellence in advanced research, effective response to the pandemic, service to underserved populations, south-south cooperation initiatives, and the world's highest doctor-to-patient ratios.

The Cuban socialist model has also produced notable successes in sports and public education.

Writing from Cuba, Carlos Fernandez de Cossio defended the country's accomplishments over the past decade despite the "intense economic war," including:

- sustaining the national electrical system while expanding renewable energy
- strengthening telecommunications and expanding internet access
- supporting vulnerable populations through food cultivation
- improving water infrastructure in underserved communities
- developing COVID vaccines and other medicines
- expanding domestic industry including the assembly of electric vehicles

For a small, natural resource-poor island, Cuba has achieved so much with so little and under such extraordinarily adverse conditions. The nation asks only that the jackboot of imperialism be lifted so that it may truly flourish.

Which is the failed state?

In contrast and despite enormous national wealth, the U.S. is experiencing record levels of homelessness. Millions remain uninsured in the only high-income industrial country without universal health coverage. Maternal and infant mortality rates are significantly worse than in comparable nations. Life expectancy has declined, while the infrastructure continues to deteriorate.

The so-called land of the free has unparalleled levels of gun violence and one of the world's highest incarceration rates. Ironically, the U.S. accuses Cuba of holding political prisoners while itself detaining captives at Guantánamo—on occupied Cuban soil—where due process has been widely denied and torture documented.

The U.S. exhibits some of the highest levels of wealth inequality among peer states, producing extreme disparities in political power. Even The Wall Street Journal acknowledges that the bottom 50% holds only 2.5% of the nation's wealth. In a country where "political spending"—paying off politicians—is protected as free speech by the highest court, half the population is effectively disenfranchised.

Cuba enjoys broad international backing. The U.N. General Assembly has repeatedly and overwhelmingly condemned Washington's blockade for more than three

Cuba has achieved so much with so little and under such extraordinarily adverse conditions. The nation asks only that the jackboot of imperialism be lifted.

tives passed a resolution "denouncing the horrors of socialism" by a lopsided bipartisan margin of 285-98.

Capitalism itself, however, has never been subject to a democratic vote of the American people. Perhaps for good reason: recent polls show a growing popularity for socialism, especially among the youth.

Shortly before May Day, President Miguel Díaz-Canel addressed the Cuban nation: "The socialist character of our revolution is not a phrase from the past; it is the shield of the present and the guarantee of the future." With characteristic Cuban humility, he acknowledged "our own mistakes in this process of social construction"

decades. Pontiffs since John Paul II in 1998 have denounced the blockade.

On May 14, CIA Director John Ratcliffe made an unprecedented visit to Cuba presumably to deliver a mafia-style ultimatum. That same day, Cuba's energy minister reportedly announced on state television: "We have absolutely no fuel oil ... no more reserves." Multiple major news outlets report Washington is preparing to indict former Cuban president Raúl Castro.

Ominously, U.S. military flights off the coast of Cuba are "surging," raising concerns of an imminent U.S. military action. The signals are similar to the lead-ups to the recent U.S. "interventions" in Venezuela and Iran.

Black Studies professor Isaac Saney describes the Cuban Revolution as "both a symbolic and a concrete anchor in the struggle for a more just world." He warns: "This is precisely why Cuba must not fall. The crushing of the Cuban Revolution would embolden imperial aggression everywhere. It would reinforce the doctrine that no country, however principled its aspirations, can defy the dictates of global capital and survive." Because of its resilient achievements under powerful sanctions, Cuba has and will continue to prevail.

Roger D. Harris is a founding member of the Venezuela Solidarity Network and is active with the Task Force on the Americas and the SanctionsKill Campaign.

Sara Flounders is with the United National Anti-war Coalition (UNAC) and the SanctionsKill! Campaign.

Workers, Students, and Indigenous Movements Shut Down Bolivia

For weeks, the nation of Bolivia has been in a state of full-on revolt.

In response to neoliberal reforms by the recently elected right-wing government led by President Rodrigo Paz, unions have launched a general strike, peasants and Indigenous peoples have set up dozens of roadblocks throughout the country, and massive marches have been held in La Paz. These are just a few expressions of a much broader social discontent, which has brought the country to a halt and stoked mass resistance to the larger project of U.S.-aligned, right-wing attacks on workers and social movements in Latin America.

Joseph Bouchard, a social scientist and journalist currently in La Paz as a visiting fellow at the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés, explained the diverse character of the movement. “It’s sort of a grouping of different social movements and groups that represent the wide spectrum within the Bolivian left,” Bouchard told Truthout. “You have teachers unions and workers unions. You have mining unions. You have just regular people joining who are not necessarily part of any movement. You have an Indigenous federation who used to be part of an anti-dictatorship movement in the 1980s. You have [former president Evo Morales’s] people ... And so you have really all these groups that together add up to sort of the largest representation of the Bolivian left, disaffected voters, organized groups, disorganized groups.”

While the diversity of the movement brings a wide range of demands, one of the most popular is for President Paz to resign, with some sectors of the movement arguing that the country should maintain a general strike indefinitely until Paz has been ousted. The level of outrage is especially profound considering that Paz has only been in office for six months.

How to Lose a Populace in Six Months

In October 2025, Bolivia elected right-wing populist Rodrigo Paz, ending 20 years of government by the left-wing MAS (Movement to Socialism) party founded by former president Evo Morales. Paz, running on a campaign of “capitalism for all,” promised to address economic hardships plaguing the country. His campaign also benefited from the implosion of MAS, which was experiencing intense infighting.

Despite appealing to the economic concerns of the Bolivian people and positioning himself as more of a centrist than the country’s established (and much more extreme) right, once elected Paz wasted no time in carrying out attacks on the country’s workers and poor. One of his first moves was to eliminate a tax on large fortunes. He has also proposed education policies that teachers have criticized as privatization-oriented measures.

Two policies in particular have incited the outrage now rocking the country: Law 1720, a land privatization law which many see as a move to hand over Indigenous lands to agribusiness and other



large-scale landowners, and Supreme Decree 5503, which eliminated state fuel subsidies, practically doubling the consumer cost of fuel overnight. Along with the rising fuel costs, Paz’s government has further angered Bolivians by importing low quality fuel, or “junk fuel,” as the people call it, which has reportedly damaged people’s vehicles, imposing repair costs many cannot afford.

It did not take long for the outrage to

blockades which have been in the roads, but 30 minutes after they left, the blockades were rebuilt with even more people.”

The student ... mentioned that arrests and violence have been common in the crackdown on protests.

The protests in Bolivia are not merely a national issue. They have implications for a regional strategy in which the United States is relying on far-right allies in Latin America to advance U.S. inter-

‘You can vote for a government and then decide you’re unhappy with what they’re doing if you feel like they’re betraying their promises or not fulfilling what they voted for.’

spread. Bolivia had already seen significant protests in December 2025, just a month into Paz’s presidency, but these were halted due to negotiations between the government and the country’s largest union federation, Central Obrera Boliviana (COB). Despite these negotiations the Paz administration continued advancing neoliberal reforms, further fueling outrage and forcing COB and other unions, including teachers unions, to call strikes at the start of May. Around the same time, rural Indigenous communities embarked on a long march to the capital, while other peasant and Indigenous communities erected blockades across major roads.

On May 26 the country’s Chamber of Deputies voted to repeal restrictions on the use of military force against protesters. Even before the vote, the state had deployed militarized forces against protesters. This repression has only further radicalized the movement, with some protesters using dynamite, rocks, and slingshots to defend themselves against the military. Reports emerging on social media confirm this as well.

A history student at the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés who spoke with Truthout described the repressive climate that the protesters are braving.

“Especially police, they have been repressing the movement with chemical agents, rubber bullets, and so on,” she told Truthout. “[The military] tried to stop the

ests. These interests are expressed clearly in Trump’s 2025 National Security Strategy. It states, “The goal is for our partner nations to build up their domestic economies, while an economically stronger and more sophisticated Western Hemisphere becomes an increasingly attractive market for American commerce and investment.”

The protests in Bolivia have implications for a regional strategy in which the United States is relying on far-right allies in Latin America to advance U.S. interests.

Paz has closely aligned Bolivia with the United States, joining the recently formed Shield of the Americas, a military alliance composed mostly of right-wing governments with the stated mission of fighting cartels. On May 21, the alliance issued a joint statement condemning the protests in Bolivia, alleging that the protesters are being led by “criminals and drug traffickers.”

Under the Trump administration, allegations of drug trafficking have been used to justify a wide range of interventionist and militaristic policies including the attack on Venezuela and kidnapping of President Nicolás Maduro, the establishment of a seemingly permanent military occupation along the U.S.-Mexico border, illegal and deadly strikes on boats in the Caribbean, and a growing military campaign in Ecuador that has resulted in the bombing of a civilian farm in a rural village.

Bouchard argued that the U.S. response

to the protests is a rejection of Latin American sovereignty.

“You can vote for a government and then decide you’re unhappy with what they’re doing if you feel like they’re betraying their promises or not fulfilling what they voted for,” Bouchard said. “This is how democracy works. U.S. government and right-wing allies in Latin America are basically saying that no protests are ever legitimate; if you vote for a government you’re basically supposed to accept whatever they do after.”

Several of the Latin American governments who signed the Shield of the Americas statement are likely observing the protests in Bolivia with concern that their own populations could draw inspiration from them.

The same week that Bolivian trade unions launched their general strike, Argentina and Chile saw massive student-led demonstrations against attacks on public education. Both Argentine President Javier Milei and Chilean President José Antonio Kast have been pushing their own neoliberal reforms similar to those carried out by Paz.

“They know that they can bring down governments ... They’ve done it before many times. These tactics work and they can get concessions.”

Even in Brazil, which is currently governed by the left-wing government of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, university students and municipal teachers in São Paulo have been on strike and held combative marches against austerity pushed by the state’s far right governor. While the protests in Brazil, Argentina, and Chile have not reached anywhere near the level of widespread anger expressed in Bolivia, they demonstrate a regional trend in which workers, students, and broader communities are beginning to rise up against economic strain and far right movements.

The history student who spoke with Truthout said that there are many in the movement in Bolivia who understand that their uprising poses a challenge to far more than just Paz’s agenda.

“[Protesters] mention Milei, they mention the genocide [in Gaza],” she said. “That internationalist connection to U.S. imperialism and Israel, it’s there. You just can’t hide it.”

Bouchard said that the Bolivian people understand their country’s history, and this informs how radical the movement has become and how much more radical it can get.

“They know that they can bring down governments,” Bouchard said. “They’ve done it before many times. These tactics work and they can get concessions. They know that the Paz government is quite weak, and if they use these tactics like they’ve done before they can win.”

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Jane Fonda Joins Indigenous-Led Effort to Protect the Amazon

By Amazon Frontlines

Lago Agrio, Ecuador—Amazon Frontlines is honored to announce that acclaimed actor, lifelong activist, and Academy Award winner Jane Fonda has joined the organization as an Honorary Board Member—marking a powerful new chapter in the global movement to defend the Amazon rainforest and the Indigenous peoples who have safeguarded it for generations.

Fonda's decision follows a recent visit to the Ecuadorian Amazon, where she met with Indigenous leaders resisting oil drilling, mining, and deforestation. The experience deepened her commitment to amplifying their leadership at a critical moment for the planet.

"I have marched for peace, for justice, and now I stand with Indigenous Peoples for the Amazon," said Fonda. "The Amazon is not for sale—not to oil companies, not to miners, not to loggers. It is the beating heart of the planet, and defending it is the responsibility of us all."

Scientists warn the Amazon is approaching a tipping point: if 20–25% of the forest is destroyed, it could collapse into a dry savannah, releasing cat-

astrophic levels of carbon and accelerating global climate breakdown. More than 15% has already been lost.

The announcement comes amid intensifying global pressure to expand fossil fuel production. Following recent disruptions to global oil supply, governments and investors are increasingly turning to the Amazon as a new frontier for extraction—accelerating plans across the region. In Ecuador, proposed oil expansion overlaps with Indigenous territories across the southern Amazon, raising serious concerns about human rights, irreversible ecological harm, and the dismantling of constitutional safeguards. Indigenous leaders warn these decisions are moving forward without genuine consent, placing entire ways of life at risk.

"Jane's commitment comes at a decisive moment for the Amazon and our climate," said Mitch Anderson, executive director and cofounder of Amazon Frontlines. "For more than a decade, we have worked alongside Indigenous peoples to defend their lands and rights, and we have seen the power of alliances—when frontline leadership is matched with global solidarity. Jane brings not only her voice, but her deep integrity, her ability to mobilize millions, and



A delegation from Alianza Ceibo, Amazon Frontlines, representatives of other Amazonian nationalities, and activist Jane Fonda, on a tour about the damage caused by oil extraction in the Amazon. Michelle Gachet via Amazon Frontlines

her willingness to listen and act. That is exactly what this moment demands."

For Indigenous leaders, her commitment reflects a growing global recognition that their struggle is inseparable from the future of the planet.

"Our fight in the Amazon is a fight for life—for our peoples, and for the Earth," said Nemonte Nenquimo, co-founder of Amazon Frontlines and a leader of the Warani Nation. "We are defending the forest not only for ourselves, but for all humanity. When allies like Jane stand with us, it shows the world that we are not alone, and that together, we can protect what remains

and build a different future."

Founded in 2014, Amazon Frontlines works in partnership with Indigenous nations across the Upper Amazon to secure land rights, defend human rights, and protect rainforest territories from industrial extraction. Together with its Indigenous partner, the Ceibo Alliance, it supports Indigenous-led strategies that combine organizing, territorial defense, legal advocacy, and technologies such as GPS mapping and drone surveillance. This work has contributed to major climate victories, including halting oil and mining projects threatening millions of acres of primary rainforest, advancing Indigenous sovereignty, and earning international recognition, such as the Hilton Humanitarian Prize, U.N. Equator Prize and the 2020 and 2022 Goldman Environmental Prize.

Indigenous territories remain the most effective barrier against deforestation and a proven climate solution—yet they face escalating threats from extractive industries. Fonda's appointment reflects a broader push to build alliances across cultures and borders to confront the climate crisis.

"The science is clear—we cannot expand fossil fuel extraction and still have a livable future," Fonda added. "What I saw in the Amazon changed me. The leadership of Indigenous peoples offers a path forward. Now it's up to all of us to listen, to stand with them, and to act."

Amazon Frontlines is calling on governments to uphold Indigenous rights, on financial institutions to divest from destructive industries, and on people around the world to take action—supporting frontline communities, amplifying their voices, and helping stop new oil expansion in the Amazon.

Amazon Frontlines is a nonprofit organization that works alongside Indigenous peoples to defend their rights to land, life, and cultural survival in the Amazon rainforest. Through long-term partnerships, the organization supports Indigenous-led solutions to protect biodiversity, uphold human rights, and confront the climate crisis at its roots.

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Labor Unions Celebrate World Court Ruling Enshrining the Right to Strike

By Marjorie Cohn

The right to strike is under attack throughout the world, including in the United States. Labor strikes are currently forbidden or restricted in the majority of countries.

Now, in a landmark 43-page advisory opinion issued May 21, the International Court of Justice (ICJ, or World Court) has determined that the right to strike is protected under the International Labour Or-

ganization's (ILO) Convention No. 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise.

"At a moment when workers' organizations face sustained attacks around the world, this opinion reaffirms that the freedom to withhold one's labor is not a privilege granted by the powerful, but a fundamental human right grounded in international law," AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler said in a statement.

The ILO is the United Nations agency

that sets global labor standards. It has 187 member states and has adopted 191 conventions since its founding in 1919. The ILO considers Convention No. 87 to be one of its 11 fundamental conventions.

In 2023, the ILO asked the ICJ to settle an internal dispute about whether Convention No. 87 gives workers the right to strike, which is not specifically addressed in the convention. Although advisory opinions of the ICJ are not legally binding, many courts accept them as authoritative legal decisions.

The ICJ ruled in its 10-4 opinion that a strike "is one of the main activities engaged in and tools used by workers and their organizations to promote their interests and improve conditions of labour, thereby ensuring the effective exercise of the freedom of association protected under Convention No. 87."

The Court found "that protection of the right to strike is encompassed in the protection of the freedom of association provided for in Convention No. 87."

In reaching that conclusion, the Court considered provisions in two 1996 Covenants that contain relevant rules of international law regarding the right to strike. Both refer to Convention No. 87.

Article 8, paragraph 1 (d) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) expressly



Los Angeles Garment Workers Strike (1933)

Blind Eyes at the U.N. While the U.S. Bombs for Nonproliferation

By John LaForge

There is deadly irony in the juxtaposition of Trump's "anti-nuclear war" on Iran, and the ongoing U.N. Review Conference for the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, or NPT RevCon.

The decision to initiate a war of aggression against Iran killing thousands of civilians was made (among other public pretenses) in order to prevent Iran's allegedly intended future construction of a nuclear weapon.

The 1970 NPT prohibits the development of nuclear weapons or the transfer of nuclear weapons among or between nations that ratify the treaty. The NPT has slowed the spread of such weapons, while pushing the spread of nuclear reactors. The U.S., Iran, and 187 other U.N. member states are parties to the NPT.

Iran's civil nuclear program is lawful under NPT rules, and its representatives were in New York attending the RevCon in May. Still, one after another U.N. member representative used their "general debate" time to attack Iran for its processing of uranium and Russia for its invasion of Ukraine, but not the United States for its unprovoked, internationally illegal war on Iran.

No friend or military ally of the United States except Israel was consulted or in-



Mourners dig graves during funeral of children killed in an airstrike on a primary school in Minab, Iran, Photo: @araghchi/X

formed about the U.S.'s Feb. 28 Middle East blitzkrieg—with plenty of reason. Trump's war of distraction would never have been supported much less joined by U.S. allies because: 1) Iran's nuclear facilities were "totally obliterated" in June 2025 by U.S. Air Force and Navy bombardments; and 2) the International Atomic Energy Agency—the U.N. body that oversees compliance with the NPT—has reported since 2025 that it has found no evidence of an ongoing Iranian nuclear weapons program.

The catastrophically ill-advised and criminal U.S. war on Iran had to be launched by surprise, without NATO, or U.N. or U.S. authorization, because the White House's justifications were so easily debunked, and because the NPT is already working to stop the spread of nuclear arsenals.

During the first days of the NPT RevCon, member states spoke with a shocking and confounding display of double standards, with one after another condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and Iran's alleged violations of NPT inspection rules, but not one criticizing the U.S. attack on Iran, its Jan. 3 bombing of Venezuela, or its June 2025 bombardment of Iran's nuclear facilities. Argentina, for example, said, "This Review Conference is taking place against a backdrop that we cannot ignore ... the nuclear program of the Islamic Republic of Iran," while the Nordic States together singled out Russia, saying its "war of aggression against Ukraine is a blatant violation of international law, including the U.N. Charter." The U.S. war on Iran was evidently aggression non grata.

The nuclear weapons states' 56-year-long violation of the NPT's Article VI—requiring good-faith efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons—was often bemoaned, but the U.S., U.K., Russian, Chinese, and French violators were never called out by name. (North Korea, India, Israel, and Pakistan have nuclear weapons but have not joined the NPT.) Likewise, open, ongoing U.S. violations of the treaty's Articles I and II—which forbid the U.S. transfer of nuclear weapons to non-nuclear States Parties including Germany, Italy, Holland, and Belgium—were ignored, while the European Union delegate said, "The EU condemns in the strongest possible way Russia's ... announced deployment of nuclear weapons in the territory of Belarus."

Comically, a few ministers openly excused the U.S.'s Article I and II violations—its stationing of B61 thermonuclear gravity bombs at six air bases in Europe—as when the representative of the Nordic States, asserted that "NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements are fully consistent with the NPT." The 110-member Non-Aligned States Parties Group politely pushed back and condemned the practice, noting without naming names, "The Group reiterates its deep concern over ... practices that run contrary to the principles and objectives of the Treaty such as ... nuclear weapons sharing arrangements."

The most brazenly selective and myopic presentation was the "Joint Statement on Russia's Aggression Against Ukraine" signed by 43 NPT States Parties. The paper said, "Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is a blatant violation of international law, including the U.N. Charter." Every use of the word "Russia" in the text could have been replaced with "the U.S." and still made perfect sense. The letter endorsed Ukraine's but not Iran's "independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity"; Ukraine's but not Iran's "inherent right to self-defense" in accordance with the U.N. Charter "against Russia's," but not the U.S.'s "ongoing illegal war of aggression." The paper acknowledged the critical danger of attacking nuclear sites and condemned Russia, but not the U.S., both of whom continue to put "nuclear facilities at risk." The group did manage to generally denounce "indiscriminate attacks that have resulted in civilian deaths and destruction of critical infrastructure." Yet, the 43 states urged the General Assembly "to condemn Russia's irresponsible nuclear rhetoric," but not Trump's mindless threat to bomb Iran "back to the stone ages" or his genocidal outburst that, "a whole civilization will die tonight, never to be brought back again."

For U.N. member states to ignore U.S. government violations of the U.N. Charter and the Laws of War is evidence of not just hypocrisy and double standards, but a submissiveness reminiscent of the groveling fear of state terrors of 1930s. More than just Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez and Pope Leo XIV have to stand up to the megalomaniacal madman of the hour.

John LaForge is codirector of Nuke-watch, a peace and environmental justice group in Wisconsin, and is co-editor with Arianne Peterson of Nuclear Heartland, Revised: A Guide to the 450 Land-Based Missiles of the United States.

Destroy Nuclear Weapons or the World Will End

By Edward Horgan

Are European and other leaders leading humanity towards World War III? Professor Jeffrey Sachs sent an open letter to German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, saying that Germany is leading Europe toward World War III. The risk of a third world war occurring has never been greater. Conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East could be the sparks that initiate a global war. Russia has the largest

number of nuclear weapons and is being threatened by NATO expansion up to its northern, western and southern borders.

Nuclear armed states try to justify their possession of nuclear weapons as a deterrent against attacks by hostile states. This is a flawed strategy. The atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was an unjustified war crime to demonstrate that the U.S. was the most powerful country in 1945. The USSR successfully tested its first atomic bomb in 1949

and at least nine other states now possess nuclear weapons. The proliferation of nuclear weapons not only endangers all of humanity but endangers the states that possess nuclear weapons. The likelihood is that most nuclear states would use nuclear weapons pre-emptively if they feel seriously threatened. There is little point in a nuclear armed state waiting to use its nuclear weapons until after its opponent has first used them against their country.

Several nuclear powers are increasing their stocks of nuclear weapons. France has announced a change in its nuclear policy from just protecting France to extending the French 'nuclear umbrella' to cover several other European countries, thereby increasing the risk of Mutually Assured Destruction (M.A.D). Separately, the U.S. and Israel are increasing their military cooperation while committing crimes against humanity against the peoples of Palestine, Iran and Lebanon. Too many irrational leaders are now in charge of far too many nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons must be decommissioned and eliminated before humanity is exterminated.

Dr. Edward Horgan, a former Army commandant, served with U.N. peace-keeping missions in Cyprus and the Middle East in the 1970s. He is a Shannon-watch peace campaigner, international secretary of the Irish Peace and Neutrality Alliance, founder and coordinator of Veterans For Peace Ireland, and the founder of The Veterans Global Peace Network.



Right to Strike

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protects the right to strike, if it is exercised in conformity with domestic laws.

Article 22, paragraph 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) provides for the right to freedom of association. The ICJ noted that for more than 25 years, the Human Rights Committee—which monitors the implementation of the ICCPR—has considered the right to strike to be encompassed in the protection of freedom of association.

Due to the high degree of overlap between the states parties to the ICESCR and ICCPR, and Convention No. 87, the ICJ determined there was a common understanding among them on the right to strike. The Court thus concluded “that an interpretation taking into account the relevant rules of international law contained in the ICESCR and the ICCPR indicates that the protection of the right to strike is encompassed in the protection of the freedom of association provided by Convention No. 87.”

No Right to Organize Without the Right to Strike

“For generations, working people have understood a simple truth: The freedom to join a union means nothing if you cannot withhold your labor when bosses refuse to listen. Now, the world’s highest court has affirmed that truth,” said Jeffrey Vogt, director of the International Lawyers Assisting Workers (ILAW) Network, which issued the call for the ILO referral of this case to the ICJ.

The ICJ decision “affirms decades of judicial precedent and what workers around the world know: there is no right to organize and bargain collectively without the right to strike,” Shuler said in her statement. “When workers are barred from taking collective action on the job, they cannot defend their rights and demand the workplace conditions and contracts they are owed. The freedom to join a union becomes an empty formality.”

“This is an important day for the Inter-

nationalisation of trade union activity, and the use of dismissals, injunctions, and damages claims to deter collective action.”

Legal restrictions on the right to strike are increasing. In 2022, strikes were outlawed or stringently restricted in 129 of the 148 countries tallied by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), one of the six organizations with consultative status at the ILO Governing Body.

The ITUC, which represents 191 million workers in 169 countries and territories, is dedicated to trade union democracy and independence. It has regional organizations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The ICJ decision “is important not only for workers and trade unions, but also for governments and responsible businesses,” ITUC stressed.



Workers leave duties to join the Great Railroad Strike of 1922.

This decision “will serve as a powerful interpretive tool before national constitutional and labour courts, before regional human rights bodies, and before the ILO’s own supervisory bodies,” ILAW noted. “It strengthens the hand of every worker and union challenging strike bans, broad essential-services designations, criminal sanctions against strikers, prohibitions on solidarity and political strikes, and the dismissal and blacklisting of workers who exercise this right.”

In October, 18 countries and five international organizations, including the

groups would contest the right to strike country by country, focusing first on nations with compliant courts, weak civil societies and ineffective media.”

Jeffrey Vogt worked with the legal team of the ITUC on the briefs and oral arguments presented to the ICJ. Vogt’s co-authored book, *The Right to Strike in International Law*, provided a legal roadmap for the case.

Vogt told Truthout that “the written view of the U.S. (under the Biden administration) was to support the right to strike, albeit on narrower grounds than what we had argued. When the Trump administration came in, they withdrew the Biden era brief but fortunately did not appear for oral arguments and take a contrary view.”

“The decision deals with the right to strike in the abstract—does the conven-

tion protect it—but does not go into the modalities,” Vogt added. The Court wrote that its “conclusion that the right to strike is protected by Convention No. 87 does not entail any determination on the precise content, scope, or conditions for the exercise of that right.”

“That was a conscious decision,” Vogt noted. “We did not want the court to attempt to define the scope, especially since we believe that is the proper role of the ILO supervisory system.” Vogt said that “the ICJ gave ‘great weight’ to the views of the supervisory system, which is helpful.” And although “the ILO has supported secondary strikes,” in which workers strike in solidarity with other workers at a different employer, the ICJ decision didn’t opine on that specific issue.

“The right to withhold one’s labor, inherent in the right to strike, belongs to all workers, but it has been restricted,” Jeanne Mirer, a labor lawyer in private practice working with the International Commission for Labor Rights, told Truthout. “Many unions have agreed never to strike while a collective bargaining agreement is in effect.”

Most private sector workers in the U.S. have the right to strike under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA). Employees, including international and undocumented workers, cannot be fired or disciplined for participating in a lawful strike.

“Those exempted from the NLRA, such as agricultural and domestic workers, are not restricted in the right to strike but have no protections against discharge if they strike and do not have the power

to prevent such retaliation,” Mirer added.

Some states have their own laws granting protection to domestic workers and 14 states guarantee farmworkers collective bargaining rights.

Railroad and airline workers are not covered by the NLRA, but they come under the Railway Labor Act, which has several limitations on the right to strike.

In recent years, Congress and the courts have narrowed the definition of “protected concerted activity” under the NLRA. Union membership is dropping. Nevertheless, strike actions in the U.S. increased by almost 50% in 2022, according to the Economic Policy Institute.

In 2023, the U.S. Supreme Court weakened the legal protections for striking in *Glacier Northwest, Inc. v. International Brotherhood of Teamsters*, making it easier for employers to sue unions in state courts. Only Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson dissented, writing, “The right to strike is fundamental to American labor law.” She noted:

Workers are not indentured servants, bound to continue laboring until any planned work stoppage would be as painless as possible for their masters. They are employees whose collective and peaceful decision to withhold their labor is protected by the [National Labor Relations Act] even if economic injury results.

The NLRA’s protections for private sector workers don’t extend to public sector employees. “Public employees in the United States have been restricted in many ways from striking,” Mirer said.

Federal workers are legally prohibited from striking. Thirty-six states prohibit public sector workers from striking. Three other states that haven’t addressed the issue would likely outlaw public sector strikes as well. In the 12 states where strikes are not per se unlawful, various preconditions must be met before workers can engage in strikes.

The World Federation of Trade Unions, which played a decisive role in the creation of Convention No. 87 in 1948, applauded the ICJ’s decision:

[I]t is clear that the existence of a class-oriented and militant trade union movement is the essential, decisive, and irreplaceable factor to ensure that the right to strike, as well as conventions, collective bargaining, labor laws, and workers’ achievements, are not merely empty words on paper but are implemented in practice. The WFTU reiterates its call for struggle in every country, sector, and workplace to safeguard the sacred right to strike in practice.

“It is up to workers and their organizations to build on the ICJ decision to ensure the right to strike can be an effective tool to build worker power,” Mirer said.

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‘For generations, working people have understood a simple truth: The freedom to join a union means nothing if you cannot withhold your labor when bosses refuse to listen. Now, the world’s highest court has affirmed that truth.’

national Labor Organization [ILO], and for its continued relevance in the world of work. However, the significance of this opinion extends well beyond the institutional context in Geneva,” the ILAW Network wrote in a statement.

The ICJ advisory opinion came “at a moment of acute pressure on the international labour rights system,” ILAW stated. “Across the world, the right to strike is under sustained attack—through restrictive legislation, expansive judicial interpretation of essential services, the crimi-

ILO, presented oral testimony before the ICJ, and other nations filed written contributions. The majority of participants supported the right to strike, which is guaranteed in most European countries.

Harold Koh, who represented the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) before the ICJ, told the judges that the case would “affect the real rights of tens of millions of working people around the world.” If the Court ruled that the Convention didn’t protect the right to strike, Koh warned, “National employer

Open Letter to German Chancellor Friedrich Merz



Germany plans military expansion after decades of downsizing.

Economist and diplomat Jeffrey Sachs calls on Merz to begin immediate talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin about peace in Europe.

Chancellor Merz,

When I wrote an open letter to you a half year ago, I urged Germany to pursue diplomacy with Russia rather than the normalization of war. Six months later, the situation in Europe is dramatically worse. Europe and Russia are slipping into open war. And in that drift, Chancellor, your responsibility is singular. No European leader—not in Paris, not in Warsaw, not in Rome—holds the position that Germany holds, or has the power that you personally hold, to interrupt this catastrophe. Will you try for peace?

You yourself, with Prime Minister Meloni and President Macron, called in January 2026 for Europe to restart relations with Russia and described Russia as “a European country.” Yet you did not pursue diplomacy. With the future of Europe at stake, this is an extraordinary abdication of leadership. Have you, in your months as Chancellor, attempted one substantive dialogue with President Putin? Has your foreign minister attempted one substantive dialogue with Foreign Minister Lavrov? Real conversations, the kind that ended the Cold War. The answer, as far as the public record reveals, is no. Not once. And not for want of recognizing the urgency.

The past days have brought a dangerous acceleration that should focus every European mind. Both capitals are now under sustained attack: Ukrainian long-range drones have struck deep into Moscow, including civilian sites; Russian missile and drone strikes against Kyiv have greatly intensified. Ukrainian drones have crossed into the airspace of the Baltic states, raising the immediate prospect of an incident that could pull Europe directly into the war. A horrific Ukrainian strike on a boys’ school in Lugansk has further eroded what little remains of restraint. And on May 25, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, acting on instructions from President Putin, formally notified the United States Secretary of State that the Russian Armed Forces are now launching “systematic and sustained strikes” on facilities and decision-making centers in Kyiv, and the Russian Foreign Ministry has advised that the United States and other countries “ensure the evacuation of their diplomatic personnel and other citizens from the capital of Ukraine.” That message is the prologue to a major escalation. Diplomacy is more urgent than ever.

The way to defend Ukraine is not continued slaughter, but peace on terms that are agreeable to all parties. Instead, we face escalation, with more deaths, more de-

struction, and the real prospect of a war that expands beyond Ukraine. By calling for ever more weapons, ever greater war-fighting capacity, and ever louder demonstrations of “resolve,” and by signaling that Germany is preparing for war rather than working to end it, you have allowed Berlin to become an accelerant rather than a brake to a European-wide war.

Germany’s Responsibility: Six Particulars

Germany bears profound responsibility for the situation it now confronts. Before German policy can be reset toward peace, Germany’s record must be confronted honestly. I set out below six serious failures of German foreign policy vis-à-vis Russia since German reunification in 1990.

First—the 2+4 Treaty and NATO’s eastward expansion. On 12 September 1990, in Moscow, Germany signed the Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany—the “2+4 Treaty”—that completed German reunification. That treaty was secured because Mikhail Gorbachev was given solemn assurances, by Hans-Dietrich Genscher, by Helmut Kohl, by James Baker, and by other Western leaders, that NATO would not move eastward. The declassified record—including the now-public memoranda assembled by the National Security Archive of George Washington University—is unambiguous: those assurances were given and were clearly meant at the time to apply beyond the territory of the former GDR to Eastern Europe. These assurances were reaffirmed through 1990 and 1991.

The 2+4 Treaty restricts the placement of NATO troops in the former GDR, and recalls the principles of the Helsinki Final Act, which emphasizes that no nation’s security should come at the expense of another’s. Does any serious person believe that the Soviet Union cared about Western troops on the territory of the former GDR but was indifferent to NATO armies in Warsaw, Vilnius, or Kyiv? Of course not.

The matter of NATO enlargement was discussed in detail and explicit assurances of non-enlargement to the East were given by Germany to the Soviet leaders—and then were broken. Germany was the principal beneficiary of those assurances, which were the quid pro quo for Germany’s reunification. Yet as early as 1993, German leaders began to promote the violation of those assurances.

Second—Chancellor Merkel’s own testimony. In her memoirs, Angela Merkel writes with striking candor that she understood at the time of the 2008 Bucharest Summit that inviting Ukraine and Georgia into NATO would be tantamount to a declaration of war on Russia. She knew Russia’s red line. And yet she gave in to American pressure, accepting the compromise communiqué that Ukraine and Georgia “will become” NATO

members. That single sentence set in motion the catastrophes of 2014 and 2022. Merkel’s later candor is a gift to her successors: she has told you, plainly and in her own words, what was understood at the time. Germany should not now pretend otherwise.

Third—the betrayal of the February 21, 2014 agreement. On 21 February 2014, in Kyiv, Germany’s then-Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, together with his Polish and French counterparts, brokered an agreement between President Yanukovich and the opposition. The agreement provided for a return to the 2004 constitution, the formation of a national-unity government, and early presidential elections. President Putin was consulted; the agreement was confirmed. It was a serious diplomatic achievement under conditions of intense violence. Yet within twenty-four hours Yanukovich was forcibly overthrown by a violent coup. Germany did not insist on the agreement it had just guaranteed. Instead, following the U.S. lead, Germany backed the new government, as if there had been no agreement in place. That decision persuaded Moscow that Western signatures could not be trusted.

Fourth—Minsk II. In February 2015, Chancellor Merkel personally negotiated Minsk II in the Normandy Format and pledged Germany’s political backing through the Declaration of Support adopted in Minsk on 12 February 2015. For seven years, the key political provision—autonomy for the Donbas regions within a sovereign Ukraine—was never implemented by Kyiv. Germany did not press Kyiv to implement the autonomy provision it had championed—and Merkel later acknowledged that the agreement had been used as a holding action to allow Ukraine to rearm. President Hollande said the same. The guarantee, in other words, was not a guarantee at all. It was a stratagem—once again at Washington’s behest. Once again, the message to Moscow was that Western signatures cannot be trusted.

Fifth—Nord Stream. On 7 February 2022, in the East Room of the White House, President Biden announced—with then-Chancellor Olaf Scholz standing beside him—that “if Russia invades ... then there will be no longer a Nord Stream 2. We will bring an end to it.” Asked how, he replied, “I promise you, we will be able to do that.” The pipelines were destroyed seven months later in an act of sabotage in the Baltic Sea. The available evidence—investigative reporting in the United States and Germany, the trail followed by the German federal prosecutor, and the public statements of former officials—points overwhelmingly to a joint Ukrainian-American operation. The German government has long known this. And yet Germany has permitted the public blame to fall on Russia, against the direct evi-

Angela Merkel writes with striking candor that she understood at the time of the 2008 Bucharest Summit that inviting Ukraine and Georgia into NATO would be tantamount to a declaration of war on Russia.

dence, while an act of industrial sabotage against the German economy has gone unprosecuted and unanswered.

Sixth—the April 2022 Istanbul agreement that was within reach. Just weeks after Russia’s invasion in February 2022, Russian and Ukrainian negotiators converged in Istanbul on the terms of a peace agreement: Ukrainian neutrality outside NATO, multilateral security guarantees, agreed troop limits, and the political resolution of the Donbas and Crimea questions over time. The agreement was within days of signature. Former Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, one of the media-

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tors, has confirmed publicly that the deal was close and that the West—the United States and the United Kingdom in particular—moved to block it. Prime Minister Boris Johnson's mission to Kyiv in April 2022 to instruct Ukraine not to sign is a matter of public record. Hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian and Russian lives, and the wider European order, have paid the price for that U.S.-UK intervention. Germany has not raised its voice on this—even though Germany, more than any other European state, has borne the economic consequences.

Your first concern must be peace. Yesterday's message from Moscow tells us how late the hour is. But there is a second catastrophe unfolding alongside the first: the willful destruction of the German economy, with Berlin as both author and victim.

Germany's industrial economy was built on trade with Russia. The destruction of Nord Stream and the subsequent severance of Germany's trade relations with Russia have left Germany buying natural gas from the United States at prices several times higher than the Russian pipeline gas it replaced. This is industrial suicide. Germany's chemical sector, its steel sector, its glass industry, its energy-intensive manufacturers—the very foundations of the Mittelstand*—are losing international competitiveness day by day. Skilled jobs are draining out of the German economy. And the German taxpayer and the German consumer are making a transfer of national wealth from Germany to American gas producers at a scale unprecedented in postwar Europe.

On top of this, the German government is now pledging an enormous defence build-up—hundreds of billions of euros over the coming decade—to arm for a war that diplomacy can easily prevent. This is a profound misallocation of national resources. The fundamental challenge facing Germany in this decade is competitiveness in the digital age. Every euro spent on tanks, missiles, and artillery shells is a euro not spent on Germany's AI capacity, its chip-design and chip-fabrication capability, its energy infrastructure, and the high-speed digital networks that Germany needs to remain a top global economy.

The hard reality, Mr. Chancellor, is that there is no security to be bought with these arms that diplomacy cannot buy at a tiny fraction of the cost, and there is no prosperity to be had without the digital and energy investments that this arms buildup will crowd out.

My Appeal

Chancellor Merz, more than any other European leader, the question of whether Europe descends into general war, or returns to negotiation, and to economic sanity, rests with you. The hour is very late. Yesterday's formal message from Moscow to Washington says so explicitly. Please open a dialogue with President Putin. Please send your foreign minister to Moscow or invite Russia's Foreign Minister to Berlin. Please reopen the OSCE** channels that Germany has allowed to atrophy. Please tell Kyiv to cease its strikes on civilian targets.

Most importantly, please tell the German public the truth: that a negotiated peace based on Ukrainian neutrality is the realistic path out of catastrophe, and that restoring a normal economic relationship with Russia is the realistic path out of Germany's industrial decline.

The terms of an acceptable agreement that Germany could propose are clear. The fighting would stop on an armistice line. All sides would renounce any future resort to violence on the question of borders. Ukraine would restore its neutrality, and NATO would permanently renounce further eastward enlargement.

Europe and Russia would restore economic relations and would stop the warmongering. The OSCE would once again become the central forum for European security, with the fundamental precept that European security is indivisible, not based on military blocs dividing Europe. Alongside this peace, Germany would redirect its national resources toward the digital, AI, semiconductor, and energy investments that Germany's eco-

omic future demands.

History will record what you do in the weeks ahead, and what you fail to do. So will the German public. So will the peoples of Russia, Ukraine, and Europe generally. It's time for diplomacy, Mr. Chancellor. The choice is yours to make.

Respectfully,

Jeffrey D. Sachs

University Professor of Columbia University

* The Mittelstand refers to the collection of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that form the backbone of the German economy. Representing about 99% of all German companies, these businesses are celebrated globally for their family ownership, specialized niche dominance, long-term focus, and deep roots in local communities.

** OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe)



Assault on Democracy

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ences of union members, offers an opportunity to muster political support for solutions that are not partisan.

With progressive groups trying to organize and mobilize more rebellious veterans, and MAGA with veteran leaders like J.D. Vance and Pete Hegseth, competing to be the next Trump, there is no lack of conflicting opinions among vets. But Early and Gordon offer many ways for the progressives to organize while improving the lives of vets no matter their political color.

They also do us a great service by resurrecting the remarkable right-to-left transformation of Smedley Darlington Butler (1881-1940), the son of a U.S. congressman who spent his military career as a fighter for U.S. imperialism. To preserve and enhance U.S. corporate interests, he led invasions of Haiti, the Dominican Republic, the Philippines, Mexico, and China. As he put it:

"I spent thirty-three years and four months in active service as a member of our country's most agile military force—the Marine Corps. I served in all commissioned ranks from a second lieutenant to Major-General. And during that period, I spent most of my time being a high-class muscle man for Big Business, for Wall Street, and for the bankers. In short I was a racketeer for capitalism."

Do any of today's soldiers see Trump's oil grab in Venezuela, threats to Greenland and Cuba, and the assault on Iran through a similar lens?

Even if most do not, Early and Gordon note that the military has at least one value that is key to progressive change: solidarity. Soldiers can't succeed without watching out for each other. Solidarity does not mean the coming together of those who agree. Rather it is all about overcoming the differences that divide us so that powerful collective activity can take place. They also point

out the staff of the Veterans Administration "fosters a unique institutional culture of empathy and solidarity between patients and providers that has no counterpart anywhere else in the U.S. healthcare system."

Perhaps this partially explains why many veterans are drawn to labor unions, where solidarity is the core value.

I wish that Early/Gordon had written a little more about how best to mobilize veterans politically. While their ideas about abolishing the Electoral College and expanding voting rights while limiting the power of big money in elections are all on point, I suspect that veterans as a whole are much like working people: many have given up on the Democratic Party and have no political home, and no path to enduring political power. Or have they embraced MAGA and realized it isn't for them either?

Can the Democrats be sufficiently reformed to overcome that alienation? Can they give up their commitment to the war machine and again become fighters for working-class justice and fairness, which includes policies that adequately support veterans while preventing the never-ending march to war? Or does something new need to be constructed outside of the two parties, as veteran Dan Osborn is doing in Nebraska?

That difficult question may decide whether veterans end up defending democracy or going along with those who are undermining it.

Early and Gordon have written an important book that is well worth reading for their stories about all manner of life and policies involving veterans, how they've fought for better lives for their families and how the government has sometimes worked with them, but often worked against them. Most importantly, it will get you thinking deeply about those who have served our country and how their experiences inform who we are and what we can be.

Les Leopold's latest book is The Billionaires Have Two Parties, We Need One Of Our Own: How Working People Can Build Independent Political Power.

Responding to the Assault on Democracy

Courage or Complicity? How Veterans are Responding to the Assault on Democracy
By Steve Early and Suzanne Gordon

By Les Leopold

Back in the 1960s, Cold War liberals and antiwar activists debated whether the United States was an imperial power or a global force for peace. Each side had its arguments, but for many that debate ended with the Vietnam War as the U.S. killed more than a million Vietnamese and 50,000 of its own soldiers to defend a French colony against national liberation. And lost.

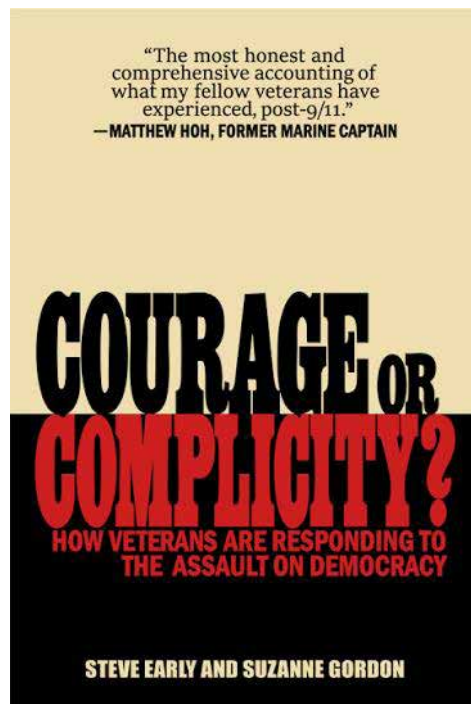
Since WWII we have been constantly at war. It is shocking when you list them all:

Major Wars and Large-Scale Conflicts

Korean War: 1950–1953
Vietnam War: U.S. escalation 1965–1973 (overall 1955–1975)
Gulf War: 1990–1991
War in Afghanistan: 2001–2021
Iraq War: 2003–2011 (follow-on operations 2011–present)

Medium-Scale Wars and Sustained Campaigns

Lebanon Crisis: 1958
Lebanon Civil War intervention: 1982–1984
Invasion of Grenada: 1983
Invasion of Panama: 1989–1990
Bosnian War NATO intervention: 1995
Kosovo War: 1999
Libya intervention: 2011



War against ISIS: 2014–present

Covert Wars, Proxy Wars and Major Support

CIA operations in Guatemala: 1954
Bay of Pigs Invasion: 1961
Laotian Civil War: 1960–1975
Cambodian Campaign: 1970–1973
Angolan Civil War: 1975–1991
Nicaraguan Contra War: 1981–1990
Salvadoran Civil War: 1980–1992
Soviet-Afghan War U.S. involvement: 1979–1989

Smaller Interventions and Military Actions

Dominican Republic intervention: 1965–1966

Mayaguez incident: 1975
Operation El Dorado Canyon: 1986
Tanker War: 1987–1988
Somalia intervention: 1992–1994
Haiti intervention: 1994–1995
Afghanistan missile strikes: 1998
Yemen drone campaign: 2002–present
Pakistan drone strikes: 2004–2018
Syria intervention: 2014–present

Ongoing Military Presence (with Combat Risk)

Afghanistan (NATO/ISAF follow-on): 2001–2021
Sinai Peninsula (Multinational Force & Observers): 1982–present
Horn of Africa/Sahel operations: 2000s–present

All these wars have meant that over the years the U.S. military has hired many, mostly working class, men and women to be the human side of the fighting machine and to staff the operations necessary to support it. With an ongoing force of 1.3M working for the military in recent years, that has meant that today there are a lot of U.S. veterans (about 15.8 million), and a lot of programs that serve them. Veterans are everywhere and Steve Early and Suzanne Gordon, in *Courage or Complicity? How Veterans are Responding to the Assault on Democracy*, describe the ways their experiences shape our democracy, and how they might help decide if we will even have one that can endure.

On the one hand they see a conservative drift, as many veterans transition from military service to the police, to ICE, and to security services. About 60% of veter-

ans who voted in 2016 voted for Donald Trump, while 54% backed him in 2020, a decline the authors note, triggered by female and gay soldiers rejecting MAGA. On the other, they note, that many of our strongest working-class political candidates and labor leaders are former vets. Will these more progressive leaders help shape our future? Or will conservative vets? Probably, it will be both.

Early and Gordon, both of whom have backgrounds in health policy, show how veterans of all political stripes are generally ignored by our government leaders. Their past sacrifices are conveniently pushed aside or forgotten when other matters press for attention. This has put the Veterans Administration under continual assault, plagued, despite its customary high customer satisfaction scores, by threats to its funding and staffing shortages. Recent Republican aspirations to privatize the VA are, the authors say, an important wake-up call for vets to stand up and fight for their model single-payer system.

Many veterans suffer in civilian life, facing severe medical problems after leaving the services, with others suffering mentally from PTSD and other chronic issues. Veteran suicide rates are much higher than for those who didn't serve. Too many vets end up in jail or on the street. Early and Gordon cover a wealth of the issues facing veterans and discuss the groups and programs designed to provide services and coordinate help for them. They point out that these issues have no ideology, and the shared experiences of veterans, like the shared work experi-

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On Houses

By Kahlil Gibran

Then a mason came forth and said,
Speak to us of Houses.
And he answered and said:
Build of your imaginings a bower in the wilderness ere you build a house within the city walls.
For even as you have home-comings in your twilight, so has the wanderer in you, the ever distant and alone.
Your house is your larger body.
It grows in the sun and sleeps in the stillness of the night; and it is not dreamless. Does not your house dream? and dreaming, leave the city for a grove or hill-top?

Would that I could gather your houses into my hand, and like a sower scatter them in forest and meadow.
Would the valleys were your streets, and the green paths your alleys, that you might seek one another through vineyards, and come with the fragrance of the earth in your garments.
But these things are not yet to be. In their fear your forefathers gathered you too near together. And that fear

shall endure a little longer. A little longer shall your city walls separate your hearths from your fields.

And tell me, people of Orphalese, what have you in these houses? And what is it you guard with fastened doors? Have you peace, the quiet urge that reveals your power?
Have you remembrances, the glimmering arches that span the summits of the mind?
Have you beauty, that leads the heart from things fashioned of wood and stone to the holy mountain?
Tell me, have you these in your houses? Or have you only comfort, and the lust for comfort, that stealthy thing that enters the house a guest, and then becomes a host, and then a master?

Ay, and it becomes a tamer, and with hook and scourge makes puppets of your larger desires.
Though its hands are silken, its heart is of iron.
It lulls you to sleep only to stand by your bed and jeer at the dignity of the flesh. It makes mock of your sound senses, and lays them in thistledown like fragile vessels.
Verily the lust for comfort murders the passion of the soul, and then walks grinning in the funeral.



Young Khalil Gibran.

But you, children of space, you restless in rest, you shall not be trapped nor tamed.
Your house shall be not an anchor but a mast.
It shall not be a glistening film that covers a wound, but an eyelid that guards the eye.
You shall not fold your wings that you may pass through doors, nor bend your heads that they strike not against a ceiling, nor fear to breathe lest walls

should crack and fall down.
You shall not dwell in tombs made by the dead for the living.
And though of magnificence and splendour, your house shall not hold your secret nor shelter your longing.
For that which is boundless in you abides in the mansion of the sky, whose door is the morning mist, and whose windows are the songs and the silences of night.

From *The Prophet* (Knopf, 1923).