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The turn away from class politics was perhaps the most defining shift in the neoliberal era's political culture, and we will be reaping its bitter fruit for years to come.

There are few better examples of this change than the Left in India, and its complement, the rise of the Hindu chauvinist Bharatiya Janata Party as the most potent political force on the subcontinent. Where India's political culture once revolved around secular and progressive forces, it is now almost completely mired in the language of religion and ethnicity. In this issue, Achin Vanaik examines this transformation and the ascent of the BJP in a searching review of Christophe Jaffrelot's important new book, *Modi's India*.

Of course, the epicenter of the turn away from class politics has been the United States, and there is no sphere in which it is more evident than in discussions of race. It is now a virtual orthodoxy among progressives that racial domination is unmoored from economic processes, and any attempt to locate it in material inequality is vigorously denounced. Jeff Goodwin returns to a classic analysis of racial domination, W. E. B. Du Bois's *Black Reconstruction*, and shows that this great work was a relentless, penetrating account of the economic foundations of black subordination — the unraveling of postbellum Reconstruction was not because of an unchanging, unyielding racist ethos in the white population but was driven by economic forces, from both above and below. As Goodwin shows, the book is not only a classic study of revolution and counterrevolution, it embodies the very approach

that many race theorists insist cannot comprehend the oppression of black Americans.

The work of Michel Foucault played a central role in displacing the political economy that Du Bois practiced. In their recent book, *The Last Man Takes LSD: Foucault and the End of Revolution*, Mitchell Dean and Daniel Zamora show in some detail how both Foucault's work and the man himself were oddly comfortable with the turn to neoliberalism. In a lively review of their book, Bryan D. Palmer commends the authors for their lucid critique and warns that the highly individualized, inward turn of the Foucauldian opus offers little for overturning the neoliberal hegemony.

While Vanaik and Goodwin seek to understand the decline of class politics, René Rojas examines its surprising revival in Chile. Rojas shows that the recent election of Gabriel Boric as president is a departure from other progressive victories in Latin America in the recent past. Not only is Boric riding the crest of a massive popular upsurge, but it's one in which strategically placed workers have played a central role. So while the pink tide was hamstrung by its reliance on a social base that had little economic leverage, Boric can draw upon a base that wields considerable influence. And on the other side, Chilean capital is not only somewhat disorganized but economically weakened, giving Boric an opening to push through a new accumulation model — if he can manage his coalition.

While optimism is warranted in the Chilean case, things are much bleaker in Yemen. Like much of the surrounding region, Yemen seemed poised a decade ago to benefit from the Arab Spring; but like its compatriots, Yemen's spring turned to a winter rather rapidly as it descended once again into violence and external intervention. As we go to press, an uneasy peace has been brokered by the United Nations. In an interview with Daniel Finn, Helen Lackner examines the roots of the Yemeni conflict and the prospects for a lasting settlement.

Finally, Herman Rosenfeld presents a critique of Matt Vidal's measured endorsement of lean production in the previous Catalyst issue. Rosenfeld sees no reason to accept Vidal's description of lean management as a potentially neutral model of labor coordination. In response, he suggests that the road to labor's revitalization still goes through the traditional routes of independent union power and an adversarial stance toward management.

ABSTRACT

Chile's 2019 uprising, and the resurgent movements that preceded it, toppled the country's post-authoritarian neoliberal regime. But installing an egalitarian development model will require transforming the ruling class's flagging accumulation strategies. Given business's vulnerability and growing labor capacities, Gabriel Boric's recently elected government has an unprecedented opportunity to lead a novel road to insurgent social democratic regime change.

Chile's Resurgent Left

René Rojas

Political developments in Chile have burst open an extraordinary window for systemic reforms. The country's furious 2019 rebellion, the concession of a constituent process by a defeated political class, and, most recently, the triumph of radicals in November's elections all augur the emergence of a novel left project for the Global South. In his inaugural speech, President Gabriel Boric, head of the new Broad Front–Communist Party Apruebo Dignidad government, emphasized the centrality of non-market principles of equality and solidarity, the imminence of generous social provision, and the indispensability of mass movements, all while cautioning patience on the long road to change ahead of working and poor Chileans. Expecting the establishment of a new democracy that

promotes egalitarian and sustainable post-neoliberal development is reasonable considering the country's recent record of popular mobilization and the deep crisis of the party system in charge of post-authoritarian market orthodoxy. But the consolidation of an insurgent social democracy is far from guaranteed. Chile's new radicals face daunting challenges in their campaign to install a more just social and political order. Democratic regime change from below is not merely inaugurated; it is forged through prolonged battles that not only defeat the parties of elites but reshape their interests and calculations for class reproduction.

This essay analyzes the key features that gave rise to the country's new reform regime and evaluates its potential for sustaining itself *over* the resistance of elites. Compared to the two main types of reform regime in Latin America that have emerged since the 1990s — the pink tide and progressive neoliberalism — Chile's new radicals enjoy significant advantages. On one hand, the new regime confronts a particularly weakened ruling class. Economic elites' loss of strategic initiative, along with the disintegration of their partisan vehicles of representation, leave them susceptible to the imposition of alternative accumulation strategies by a revamped state. On the other hand, the social forces behind Apruebo Dignidad's rise formed in ways that should enhance the new government's disciplinary power. Somewhat paradoxically, relatively uneven popular militancy amid steadily expanding industrial leverage opens an opportunity for the new left in power to avoid the commodity-clientelism trap while capitalizing on labor's capacity to steer the state toward more advanced and egalitarian growth strategies.

Following a brief review of the major reform regimes in Latin America that preceded Chile's new left, this essay describes two core dimensions shaping its rise: a disintegrating governing party system and surging popular mobilization. To underscore

the distinctive promise of Chile's new government, it compares these salient features of the emergence of the country's radicals to the key conditions that promoted the installation of the region's antecedent reform regimes. The essay next outlines the current crisis of Chilean business's prevailing reproduction strategies to make the case that an exceptional path to insurgent social democratic regime change has opened in Chile. Considering the vulnerability of the country's ruling class, it argues that reformers are in a position to impose new accumulation strategies onto elites by wielding bolstered state institutions from above and harnessing the growing power of labor from below.

Despite the advantageous circumstances, it remains too early to determine whether the country's new radicals will fulfill the promise of the conjuncture. Yet although it is premature to declare triumphantly that "neoliberalism was born in Chile [and now] it will die there," a non-clientelistic social democratic political force in the state, buttressed by a revitalized working-class movement, is poised to forge a novel twenty-first-century road to socialism.[1]

RESURGENCE OF PROTEST AND THE DECAY OF DEMOCRATIC NEOLIBERALISM

Chile's 2019 popular rebellion, its constituent process, and Boric's election put an end to the country's post-authoritarian free-market order. These events signal the potential emergence of a third reform current under Latin America's neoliberal period. The first reform governments to appear in the post-developmentalist era were the pro-market progressives that came to power following democratic transitions in the Southern Cone. Center-left neoliberals emerged

1 Carolina Pérez Dattari, "Neoliberalism Was Born in Chile. Now It Will Die There," openDemocracy, January 31, 2022.

as dominant forces, first in Chile during the 1990s and then a decade afterward in Brazil. Progressive neoliberals consolidated new systems of democratic rule and stabilized the pro-business market regimes in these countries. Starting around 2000, a second wave of reformers arose in the region after the adoption of neoliberal policies by formerly corporatist regimes provoked mass insurgency and the disintegration of governing party systems. In Argentina, Bolivia, and Venezuela, pink tide reformers took over following the collapse of neoliberal experiments, establishing new regimes that aimed to restore social and democratic rights for working masses. Ultimately, both reform regimes — progressive neoliberalism and the pink tide — came under assault and failed.[2] The decline of Chile's progressive neoliberal regime gave way to the rise of Apruebo Dignidad.

Unlike neoliberalism in pink tide countries, the pro-market turn in Brazil and Chile enjoyed extended success. Widely considered both an economic miracle and a democratization success story, neoliberalism in Chile featured prolonged growth and steady reductions in poverty for roughly two decades. A Socialist and Christian Democratic coalition known as the Concertación governed in partnership with a liberal center right and oversaw a near-total absence of popular collective action. After almost twenty years of mostly unchallenged rule, however, progressive-liberal political supremacy and social stability began to fray. Chile's neoliberal regime was first challenged over a decade ago with the revival of mass mobilization and labor militancy. When high school students took to the streets and miners shook the copper industry with a wave of wildcat strikes in 2006–7, progressive

2 For my characterizations of the pink tide and progressive neoliberalism in the region, as well as accounts of their failures, see René Rojas, "The Latin American Left's Shifting Tides," *Catalyst* 2, no. 2 (Summer 2018); and René Rojas, "The End of Progressive Neoliberalism," *Catalyst* 4, no. 2 (Summer 2020).

neoliberalism entered a process of general unraveling. The collapse accelerated after 2011, when mass protest escalated and opened a new phase of more coordinated mobilization, which finally exploded with the momentous mass insurgency of October 2019 known as the *estallido social*.

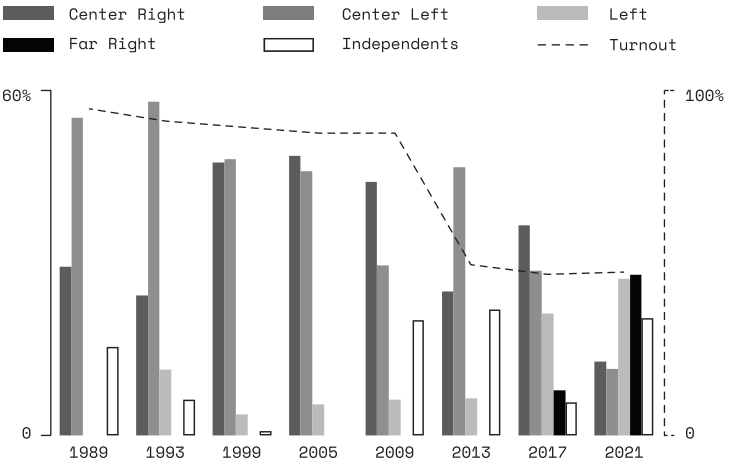
The Disintegration of the Neoliberal Regime

The collapse of Chile's pro-market order can be measured by tracking the breakdown of its ruling party system, on one side, and the resurgence and growing leverage of mass protest, on the other. Progressive neoliberalism's crumbling edifice is apparent in the disintegration of Chile's dominant post-authoritarian coalitions. Over nearly three decades of dominance, the center left and center right went from being the leading and virtually exclusive governing forces to mere fragments of a more dispersed and realigning partisan system. Particularly following the 2011–12 cycle of protest, the dual bloc ruling arrangement not only lost its uncontested grip on power, but its key components also rapidly fractured and lost prominence to rivals coalescing outside their coalitional orbits.

The decay, fragmentation of, and challenges to the dominant neoliberal coalitions are evident in the results of presidential and parliamentary elections since the return to democracy (Figures 1 and 2). In the four presidential elections after the transition, spanning the first fifteen years of the regime, the leading blocs won between 82 and 95 percent of votes. The dominance of the progressive Concertación and the right-wing Alianza consolidated during the 1999–2000 and 2005–6 campaigns, after independent and left-wing challenges were defeated and the coalitions reached parity and near-absolute control of balloting.[3] From that

3 The 1999–2000 and 2005–6 elections also witnessed the loss of the center

Figure 1. **Presidential Election Results (% First Round Votes)**



point forward, however, the ruling blocs declined, first steadily and then abruptly, unable to regain their supremacy and prevent the emergence of alternatives. As turnout plummeted, their first-round support fell from 75 percent of total ballots in 2009 to 65 percent in 2017. Then, in last year's presidential elections, the once-lordly coalitions failed to even make the runoffs, together mustering less than one-quarter of all votes. During this phase of irreversible decay, independents increasingly encroached on their previously guaranteed shares. Support for outside challengers eventually coalesced around the new radical left and a rising hard right that backed the 2021 first-round winner, José Antonio Kast.[4]

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left's overarching supremacy, leading to its barely eking out second-round victories. This largely reflects the generalized frustration with the pro-market democratic transition it marshaled. At the same time, anti-neoliberal alternatives had yet to appear. As a result, the center left would go on to lose the following elections in a runoff, and both parties would alternate in power thereafter.

4 For an analysis of last year's elections, see René Rojas, "Tomorrow, the Chilean

Figure 2. **Lower House Election Results**

	1989	1993	1997	2001	2005	2009	2013	2017	2021*	2021
CCP									0.5	0.7
Repub.									1.0	**11.2**
UDI	9.2	12.1	14.5	**25.2**	21.6	21.3	19.0	16.0	**7.8**	10.6
RN	18.3	16.3	16.8	13.8	12.8	20.2	14.9	**17.8**	7.3	11.0
Evopoli								4.3	4.5	3.5
C-R Ind.	6.1		5.0	5.3	4.9	3.7	2.6	0.7		0.4
PDG										8.5
PRO							3.8	3.3	0.6	0.7
CD	**26.0**	**27.2**	23.0	18.9	**29.7**	16.6	14.2	10.3	3.7	4.2
SP/PPD	11.5	23.8	**23.6**	22.7	22.8	**23.1**	**22.7**	15.9	7.4	9.3
PR	3.8	3.0	3.1	4.1	2.4	3.6	3.6	3.6	1.2	1.8
C-L Ind.	10.1	1.5	0.8	2.2	0.8		2.3	0.4	1.2	2.0
CP		5.0	6.9	5.2	2.2		4.1	4.6	5.0	7.4
Left Ind.	5.3	2.8	0.6	1.1	3.8	4.9	6.1	13.4	4.5	10.1
RD								5.7	6.0	4.1
CS									3.2	4.5

*Constituent Assembly Elections

Left Coalition	Center-Left Coalition	Swing Independents	Center-Right Coalition	Far-Right Coalition

Source for Figures 1 and 2: Servicio Electoral de Chile.

Like presidential campaigns, Chile's parliamentary races show the degree to which the once-formidable coalitions have lost relevance. Lower chamber elections in particular reflect their precipitous weakening and fragmentation after two decades of uncontested rule. As illustrated in Figure 2, through 2013, the dominant coalitions enjoyed full control of parliament. Together, they commanded between 80 percent (2013) and 95 percent

Left Has to Do More Than Stop the Far Right," *Jacobin*, December 18, 2021.

(2005) of all lower house representation. As separate blocs, they won up to 55 percent of votes, failing only once to reach 30 percent in the seven elections prior to 2017. What's more, until then, the dominant coalitions consistently fielded the largest parliamentary party (highlighted in bold), with either the Christian Democrats (CD) or Socialists (SP/PPD) from the Concertación, or the Alianza's conservative Unión Demócrata Independiente (UDI), establishing themselves as congressional pillars with up to 30 percent of all votes.

By the 2017 general elections, however, the stability of the major blocs had eroded substantially. Not only did their shared totals decline, none of their constituent parties achieved anchor status, as they had before. After the 2017 elections, the Alianza's Renovación Nacional topped all parties with just 18 percent, while the Socialists and CDs, the latter now outside the former Concertación, fell to 16 and 10 percent respectively. By 2021, in the constituent elections, neither bloc surpassed one-fifth of all votes, and none of the parties achieved even 8 percent. In short, the coalitions that ruled Chile's neoliberal regime were reduced to shadows of their former dominance.

As they declined, new alternatives consolidated. In 2017, the new independent radicals that first emerged with 6 percent of the 2013 vote formalized the Frente Amplio (FA) coalition, achieving nearly one-fifth of lower house ballots. By last year's elections, when the FA entered its alliance with the CP, Chile's new left garnered over one-quarter of lower chamber votes, placing it above both decaying coalitions.[5] Other challengers also eclipsed

5 This 25.8 percent figure (versus the center right's 25.4 percent and the center left's 17.2 percent) includes the Green Party (Partido Ecologista Verde, PEV), which won nearly 5 percent of all votes and took two representatives. The PEV abandoned the FA in 2019, but its parliamentarians are largely expected to vote with Apruebo Dignidad. I have not included in tallies for the Dignidad Ahora coalition two less predictable parties that left the FA that also received 5 percent of votes

the diminished parties of the old blocs, most prominently Kast's Republican Party and the chameleonic Partido de la Gente. Once characterized by the dual-bloc supremacy of the neoliberal political class, Chile's congress now features a fragmented and multipolar arrangement. In sum, the old party system has completely lost its ability to govern; if its component parties survive, they will be subordinate to the programs and strategies of the new radical left in power, a new authoritarian right that leads the largest party in congress, and an unpredictable swing party.

The partisan arrangement that governed Chile since 1990 is finished. The ruling coalitions that confidently alternated in office and appeared unassailable just over a decade ago are battered and defeated. The institutional reform underway in the constitutional convention further contributes to the general dissolution of the old governing order. The pivotal factor in the disintegration of Chile's neoliberal regime, however, is the epochal resurgence of mass protest.

The Resurgence of Mass Protest

After nearly two decades of popular quiescence, Chile's working classes reawakened and launched waves of increasingly disruptive mobilization. By now, the trajectory of the country's student movement is well-known.[6] It produced Boric himself as a leading activist and young parliamentarian, and the organizations that headed the movement account for three of his cabinet members. More importantly, two rounds of mass student takeovers and

and placed three candidates in congress.

6 See, for instance, Juan Fernández-Labbé, "La Protesta Social en Chile (2006–2011)," *GIGAPP Estudios Working Papers* 2, no. 27 (2013); Indira Palacios-Valladares, "Internal Movement Transformation and the Diffusion of Student Protest in Chile," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 49, no. 3 (2017); Indira Palacios Valladares and Gabriel Ondetti, "Student Protest and the Nueva Mayoría Reforms in Chile," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 38, no. 5 (2019).

marches opened a cycle of disruptive popular sector insurgency that culminated in the *estallido* that finally overturned the post-authoritarian neoliberal regime.

It began with high school students taking on the Concertación's government, led by Socialist president Michelle Bachelet, in 2006. Many of the same young activists went on to lead the second and far more potent 2011–12 campaign to reform Chile's liberalized and sharply tiered education system during center-right Sebastián Piñera's first term. In their original upheaval, secondary students organized thirty-five mass actions in the campaign's first year, mobilizing up to twenty million cumulative protesters.[7] The campaign spread, and although the intensity of marches ebbed, by 2008, student groups and school councils had held nearly fifty days of action.[8] Three years later, the relaunched movement expanded by an order of magnitude. In 2011, university students held 125 major protests, mobilizing up to fifty million cumulative participants. At its height, the movement called over twenty actions per month. Mobilization grew, and not only in quantitative terms. Chile's youth adopted more disorderly tactics, like choking the main streets of Santiago and other major cities. Over 220 actions employed noninstitutional means, as opposed to just sixteen that pursued formal institutional channels. Another 194 directly confronted state authorities.[9] In sum, beginning in 2006, student protest expanded in both scope and disruptive intensity. It played a key role in undermining the stability and legitimacy of Chile's democratic neoliberal order, under both progressive and right-wing governments.

Others followed suit. In addition to the indigenous Mapuche conflict, which grew steadily over the 2000s and was waged

7 Palacio-Valladares, "Internal Movement Transformation," 594.

8 Fernández-Labbé, "La Protesta Social en Chile," 11.

9 Fernández-Labbé, "La Protesta Social en Chile," 20.

primarily to recover land and other communal resources, two mass campaigns deserve special mention: the pensioners' and feminist movements. Encouraged by the student rebellions, protests generalized across the country. Some were organized by mortgage debtors, others by neighborhoods and towns irreparably polluted by local industry, and still others by remote areas and provinces neglected by the central state. Yet unlike localized debt relief, ecological "sacrifice zone," and regional anti-centralization insurgencies, young women and the elderly built and sustained massively disruptive nationwide movements. By the latter years of the decade, they mobilized millions of members and sympathizers in days of action that paralyzed the country. Together with student associations, pensioners and women's collectives were the precursors and the basic infrastructural building blocks of the great rebellion. Although the rebellion exploded spontaneously and was originally fueled by the rage and frustration of marginalized informal sectors, its mass predecessors laid the groundwork for its expansion, breadth, and endurance.

When the *estallido* erupted, confrontations with authorities and forceful occupations and destruction of property and infrastructure spread at lightning speed. After student networks took over and shut down Santiago's subway system on October 18, daily violent disturbances rose to an average of over forty for a whole month, peaking around sixty early in the rebellion.[10] Around that time, protesters mobilized a historic 1.2 million marchers in the capital alone. Even after the November 15 Agreement for Social Peace and a New Constitution was brokered by key FA figures, opening the way for the plebiscite and constituent assembly elections, unrest continued, averaging more than thirty daily disruptive actions

10 Alejandro Corvalán and Diego Pardow, "Protesta social, violencia y cambio constitucional," *CIPER Académico*, October 14, 2020.

Figure 3. **Total Yearly Strikes**

Source: Francisca Gutiérrez et al., "Informe Huelgas Laborales en Chile 2019," Centro de Estudios de Conflicto y Cohesión Social, 2020.

for another two weeks. By then, protests were cohering organizationally and programmatically as national-level coordinating bodies began shaping unified demands and leading full-blown general strikes.[11]

The decomposition of democratic neoliberalism was not only driven by expanding popular sector organization and mobilization. Although the post-authoritarian regime finally buckled under pressure from the increasing breadth and disruptiveness of popular protest, it had been progressively weakened by a renewed upswing and development of the labor movement. Crucially, worker militance grew not only in scale; it also deployed increasing structural power. As labor actions resurged, they were particularly effective in industries of strategic importance for Chilean elites. Further, as strikes spread across sectors, increasing proportions

11 See "Convocan a otra masiva jornada de manifestaciones en Plaza Italia para este lunes," *El Mostrador*, November 4, 2019; Rodrigo Fuentes, "Masiva participación en paro nacional marca cuarta semana de protestas en todo el país," Radio Universidad de Chile, November 12, 2019.

of unpredictable wildcat campaigns amplified workers' leverage.[12]

As Figure 3 depicts, worker stoppages increased sharply from the mid-2000s to the late 2010s. Beginning in 2005, when the post-authoritarian neoliberal regime's dominance was at its zenith and labor had sunk to its nadir, workers initiated a long-term strike wave that peaked in 2016. During that span, yearly strikes more than doubled to over 450 stoppages in 2016. Strikes dwindled during the ensuing two years but rebounded strongly in 2019 as the rebellion spread to worksites. Over the key years of industrial escalation, the total number of workers shutting production down multiplied more than sixfold. Though the largest share of striking workers were public sector employees who walked out in 2014 and 2015, the number of striking private sector workers expanded from 25,000 to roughly 150,000. As total strikes and their duration multiplied, they imposed staggering costs on business and the state. In 2005, strikes cost Chile's economy just under 100,000 worker-days. By 2010, employers endured 335,000 lost worker-days, and by 2016, industry suffered another 606,000.[13]

Burgeoning organization and union density gave a significant impetus to the prolonged strike wave. Between 2000 and 2013, for instance, the number of active unions expanded by 50 percent. More importantly, during these key years, union density recovered from the free fall that took hold after redemocratization. The number of unionized workers increased by 62 percent to nearly one million so that, by 2019, one-fifth of all Chilean workers were unionized. Still, the decade-plus strike wave was not simply the

12 The analysis in the remainder of this section relies heavily on data from Francisca Gutiérrez et al.,"Informe Huelgas Laborales en Chile 2019," Centro de Estudios de Conflicto y Cohesión Social, October 2020. The figures are taken from the same report.

13 See Chile's Labor Ministry, Dirección del Trabajo statistical series, available at dt.gob.cl/portal/1629/w3-propertyvalue-76577.html#articulos_periodo_group_pvid_27482.

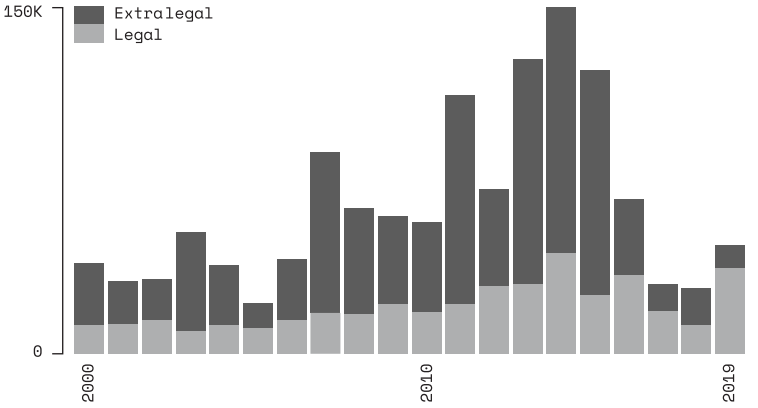
product of formal organization. Rather, wildcat activity contributed centrally — to the point that illegal stoppages themselves emerged as crucial promoters of growing unionization. As shown in Figure 4, most industrial action during the multiyear cycle of militancy consisted of extralegal stoppages. The volatile wildcat dimension of Chile's revitalized labor movement added to its growing capacity to threaten profits and economic stability.

Perhaps the largest contributor to the power of labor militancy was its sectoral composition. The mobilizations were centered in the strategic industries on which the state depends for its revenue. In particular, strikes launched by subcontracted and informalized miners and service employees in copper fueled the first phase of labor insurgency. The second phase, rebounding after 2010, involved a more diverse array of sectors, including entire branches of public administration. Yet once again, copper miners, many now formally unionized, played a decisive role and were increasingly joined by longshoremen and transportation workers. In each case, wildcats remained the norm. After a lull, copper strikes began regaining national prominence in 2014. That year, miners struck fifteen times, with strikes averaging over 1,500 lost worker-days. The following year, militancy in copper erupted on an expanded scale, as twenty strikes averaged 36,250 lost worker-days. That same year, dock, transportation, and warehouse workers struck forty-seven times, causing a total of 183,200 lost worker-days.[14] As miners, truckers, and dockworkers impaired business's ability to extract mineral, move it to port, and ship it to international markets, they imposed severe costs on economic elites and ruling authorities.[15] Labor's structural power laid the

14 Gutiérrez et al., "Informe Huelgas Laborales 2016," Centro de Estudios de Conflicto y Cohesión Social, July 2017.

15 In 2017, for instance, wildcat strikes in Escondida, the largest copper pit in the world, led to a loss of $1 billion and drove BHP, the largest copper producer in

Figure 4. **Number of Striking Private Sector Workers by Type of Stoppage**



Source: Gutiérrez et al., "Informe Huelgas Laborales en Chile 2019."

foundations for expanding associational capacity across sectors. As insurgency by unions in strategic industries mounted, workers increasingly coordinated nationwide campaigns. After having attempted just one general strike in the first twenty years of democratic neoliberalism, the protracted strike wave gave the national labor confederation Central Unitaria de Trabajadores (CUT) the confidence to flex working-class clout with more systemic objectives. Following CUT's more tenuous endorsements of national strikes called by students in 2011 and 2013, it launched its own general stoppage in 2016, two in 2018, and then five more in 2019. By the great rebellion, CUT was in a prominent position to direct massive protests involving all working and popular classes.

the world, to declare a force majeure when it was unable to deliver on its shipment contracts. See David Stringer and Mark Burton, "BHP Said to Declare Force Majeure on Copper from Escondida," BQ Prime, February 10, 2017.

Without question, Chilean workers' escalating deployment of their structural leverage contributed centrally to the decay of the post-authoritarian governing regime.

CHILE'S NEW LEFT IN REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

The resurgence of protest and the disintegration of post-authoritarian neoliberalism's governing party system has led many from both left and mainstream quarters to view Boric's watershed election as a resurrected pink tide, rallying after years of right-wing neo-authoritarian triumphs.[16] Others are far less sanguine, insisting that the Apruebo Dignidad government represents overall continuity with the center left it succeeded.[17] The trajectory of Chile's anti-neoliberal radicals, however, differs from the rise of both the progressive neoliberals it supplanted and the pink tide presently faltering in neighboring countries along two crucial dimensions. Chilean radicals' path to power stands out with regard to the cohesion and stability of governing arrangements, on one hand, and the levels and nature of mass mobilization, on the other. The distinctive emergence of the FA-CP alliance along these axes has created opportunities for reformers to forge new relations with both business and working classes. Considering how these factors will influence the emerging regime's capacity to marshal a new development path, it is useful to first review how they played out in the progressive neoliberal and pink tide

16 See, for instance, Thea Riofrancos and David Adler, "Gabriel Boric and Latin America's New Pink Tide," *New Statesman*, March 11, 2022; and "How Chile's New President Can Avoid the Mistakes of Past Leftist Leaders," *Economist*, March 11, 2022.

17 For an example of this type of ultraleft claim, see Mauricio Saavedra, "Chile's election: Boric and Pseudo-left Offer No Defense Against Threat of Fascism," World Socialist Web Site, December 3, 2021; and Olivia Campos, "Chile: el gabinete de Boric," *Prensa Obrera*, February 2, 2022. Others make more measured predictions of an inevitable slide to the center by Chile's new left in power: Jeffery R. Webber, "Those Who Are Poor, Die Poor," *Spectre*, December 28, 2021.

cases. Generally speaking, these earlier reform regimes can be classified by their nearly orthogonal characteristics along these two central dimensions.

The region's toppled progressive neoliberals featured broad popular demobilization and the consolidation of oligarchic, pro-market party systems. They rose to prominence in the 1990s and 2000s during periods of growing popular grievances and uncertainty regarding the sustainability of democratic governance. In Chile, the center-left Concertación stepped into its founding role as major partner governing the country's post-dictatorship market order. In Brazil, Lula's Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) ascended as a linchpin dealmaker that steadied the fractious, transactional arrangements that took shape after the military left power. Although progressive neoliberals significantly reduced poverty through increased social expenditures, they adopted as their raison d'être the stable management of an ongoing liberalization. To facilitate continuing growth, they transformed themselves into vehicles for corporate interests, while they actively dismantled organizations of workers, peasants, and the poor along with their former channels of partisan influence. What resulted were extended periods of working-class quiescence and business control of ruling power-sharing arrangements with rival pro-business parties and coalitions.

The pink tide's path to power largely inverts the dynamics of progressive neoliberalism's emergence. Pink tide reformers were propelled by paroxysms of popular protest, as governing institutions and parties abruptly collapsed. Populist reformers in Argentina, Bolivia, and Venezuela were thrust into power just as their governing systems crumbled under the weight of expanding crises of legitimacy. As former corporatists drove their working-class backers into mass impoverishment, institutions of popular interest intermediation collapsed. Marginalized

constituents pushed into informality refashioned withered associational bonds and resources to mount waves of increasingly militant protests that buried teetering party systems. Whereas progressive neoliberals consolidated nascent market political orders by partnering with existing elite forces, pink tide reformers installed new regimes amid dissolving systems of elite representation. Like progressive neoliberals, pink tide governments took advantage of high commodity prices to funnel income and services to sectors made dispensable by liberalization. Unlike the Concertación in Chile and the PT in Brazil, however, neo-Peronists, MASistas, and Chavistas governed not as parties of capital but rather by mobilizing militant support from informal masses. Yet because neoliberalism had depleted the industrial working class, populists in Argentina, Bolivia, and Venezuela fell into the commodity-clientelism trap. Absent a base with the strategic leverage required to challenge the primary, free-trade growth model, the pink tide governed by securing mass backing among patronage-funded and hierarchically organized constituents. In sum, whereas neoliberal progressives ruled by consolidating oligarchic institutions of partisan representation, pink tide rule rested on mobilizing popular bases through clientelism.

The emergence of the Frente Amplio–Communist Party (FA-CP) alliance exhibits features that characterized neoliberal progressives and pink tide reformers alike, but with important modifications. Its rise can be situated in intermediate locations along the key axes of ruling institutions' stability and mass movement formation. First, the new radical coalition developed under the party system that progressive neoliberals consolidated in the post-authoritarian period. While governing institutions underwent a process of decomposition as Chile's new left cohered, they had not suddenly disintegrated, as they did in the pink tide. Likewise, cycles of mass mobilization certainly boosted Chilean

anti-neoliberals' path to power. But unlike in the pink tide, Chile's protracted insurgency did not directly propel Apruebo Dignidad into power. These differences are of major consequence.

Because the decomposition of Chile's neoliberal governing institutions was not absolute, and because the FA-CP coalition cohered through a protracted process within the old regime, the stage is set for ongoing battles inside the state between radicals and forces regrouping to preserve core aspects of the old order. Without the dominance that pink tide reformers enjoyed when elite forces collapsed, Chile's new left lacks the unrestricted wherewithal necessary to steer changes in the absence of institutionalized elite opposition. Boric's government thus faces a more extended period during which it must consolidate its own alliance and confront surviving and realigning elites. Attempts to reconfigure the old power-sharing coalitions are instructive. A pro-market Right realigning around runoff candidate Kast, aiming to constitute the largest bloc in congress and obstruct foundational reforms in the constituent assembly, reveals the enduring influence of *ancien régime* forces. Similarly, remnants of the formerly dominant progressive neoliberal coalition have swung into a tacit alliance with the FA-CP coalition. The consistency with which the new left caucuses with Socialists in the assembly and Boric's tapping of several progressive neoliberals reflect the extent to which the old and newly emerging governing institutions will become an arena of anti-neoliberal contention. In the post-authoritarian scenario, pro-market progressives negotiated settlements with elites that stabilized market democracies; today's Left faces a tough struggle *against* elites to reshape a post-neoliberal order.

Also distinguishing the arrival of Chile's new left is its relation to social movements. Unlike pink tide countries, where intensifying protest directly fostered reform parties that then rode these

disruptive waves to power, the FA-CP alliance emerged more tentatively. Since the mid-2000s, Apruebo Dignidad's component forces have woven reciprocal yet independent links to one another and to mass organizations. This holds for both its new and traditional wings. Throughout the 2010s, widespread student mobilizations, teachers' strikes, and feminist days of action engendered the new generation of radicals that went on to found the FA.[18] Yet its partisan and militant components have continued to develop, with considerable tension, along separate logics and in different realms of struggle. As alluded to above, the FA formed prior to the 2017 elections with the explicit, if hotly contested, aim of fighting for control of state institutions. The Communists, meanwhile, developed similarly close yet shifting relations with expanding movements, among students but particularly in labor. The party offered pivotal support and guidance for powerful miners' and dockworkers' campaigns between 2006 and 2015. But dissidents in its orbit continually challenged its leadership of locals, sectoral unions, and the central confederation. At the same time, the party established separate power bases in parliament and local government, culminating in its triumph in Santiago's mayoral election in 2021.

Further, the FA and CP did not come to power via immediate popular pressure. They converged only after exploring distinct reform strategies, the former initially opting to join the center-left alliance from 2013 to 2017, while the latter pursued steadfast independence from the neoliberal political class. The clearest example of the disjointedness among radical partisan forces and between these and social movements surfaced after Boric and his

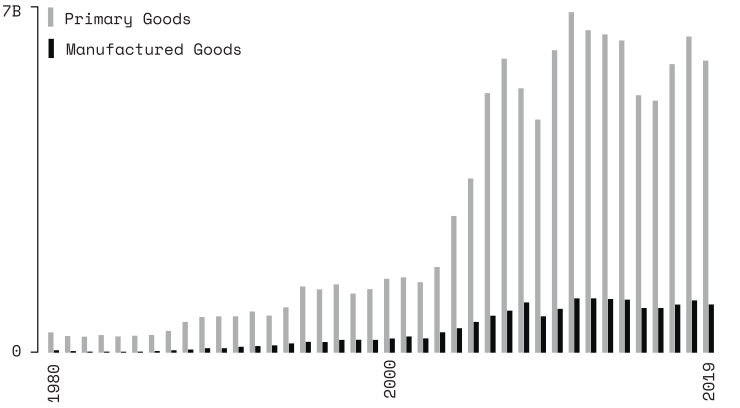
18 The formation of the FA itself was wracked with tension, undergoing several mutations along the way. It finally settled into an alliance rooted primarily in Boric's heterogeneous Convergencia Social and Jackson's more moderate Revolución Democrática.

erstwhile fellow student leader and current cabinet chief, Giorgio Jackson, brokered the agreement that produced the constituent plebiscite. With the rebellion still raging, the CP, together with most movement organizations, denounced the November 2019 settlement. Only once the potential for transformative reforms became clear and campaigning in favor of a constituent convention was underway did the FA and CP, with the wavering backing of mass movements, launch Apruebo Dignidad. In sum, the alliance and the movements with which it aligns are still in formation. As discussed below, the absence of organic ties and political synchrony between the new government and their mass backers means the new left will need to hammer out and lead a relatively autonomous program for change. Their still-undefined interdependence also means upcoming fights for reform will involve struggles to forge an effective strategy for insurgent regime change.

CAPITALIST REPRODUCTION IN CRISIS

While mass protest backed by increasing structural leverage was vital for dislodging the post-authoritarian governing system and bringing the new left to power, it alone cannot guarantee a shift to the alternative growth model needed to underpin a new egalitarian order. To complete an insurgent social democratic regime change, radicals must compel elites to pursue novel profit-seeking avenues in new and transformed branches of industry. In sum, for Chile's new left to be successful in erecting governing institutions that deepen the representation of laboring classes' interests and extend these into heretofore undemocratic social and economic realms, it must find ways to transform business elites' core interests. Despite a willingness to tolerate meaningful political change, elites have shown no serious inclination to pursue new growth strategies. The main challenge facing Chile's new radicals involves

Figure 5. **Value of Exports (in Billions USD)**



Source: CEPASTAT Statistics and Indicators, "Total exports of goods FOB, by product group: primary products," and "Total exports of goods FOB, by product group: manufactured products."

further developing the capacity to pressure the ruling class into a new economic strategy.

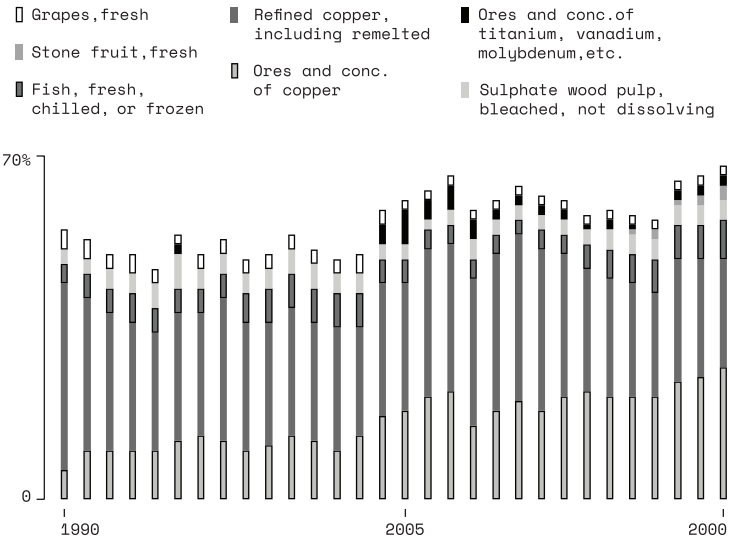
After decades of complacency, the Chilean business community has trapped itself in a faltering accumulation model, lacking both internal leadership to open new pathways to profits and reliable partisan vehicles to guide it back to vigorous expansion. The FA-CP alliance must therefore find a way to impose a substantially different accumulation model onto a corporate elite that finds itself fully unprepared to embrace a more dynamic growth path. Democratic neoliberalism in Chile funneled business interests into a narrow and homogeneous range of activities, with few prospects for diversification and sectoral innovation. What makes Apruebo Dignidad's radical regime change plausible in the face of elite myopia is the dissolution of business representation following a decade of stagnation and years of popular disruption.

The current impasse in Chile's business community is largely the product of thirty years of progressive neoliberals' servile advancement of its interests. From 1990 to 2017, the center-left Concertación was too successful in creating a friendly business climate. Privatization, weakened regulation, total dominance over labor relations, and near-complete liberty in disposing of returns gave business free reign to pursue the quickest profits possible. Following rounds of trade liberalization and the dismantling of state-led development efforts, rising business groups and international firms pumped capital into branches that enjoyed natural competitive advantages. With effortless profits flowing from commodity sectors controlled by Chile's new oligarchic conglomerates, virtually no incentive compelled them to upgrade or diversify production.

As Figure 5 shows, total exports expanded geometrically once progressive neoliberals took over. More significantly, the expansion in export earnings rested overwhelmingly on primary goods, multiplying tenfold to nearly $70 billion USD during the Concertación's first twenty years in office. Over the same span, Chilean capitalists abandoned meaningful investments in competitive industry, as manufactured goods remained the same negligible fraction of all exports. What's more, even commodity exports became increasingly uniform. During the same period, rather than diversify its trade portfolio, Chilean conglomerates and allied multinationals increasingly dedicated themselves to two main lines in global markets. As illustrated in Figure 6, raw copper ores and processed copper came to account for half of all exports by 2010; fish settled at the third spot, generating about one-twelfth of export value. In short, Latin America's neoliberal paradigm was built on a rote business strategy of chasing easy profits in undynamic branches that merely trailed global commodity demand.

The devotion of business to natural commodity exports intensified further during the 2000s when global copper prices initiated

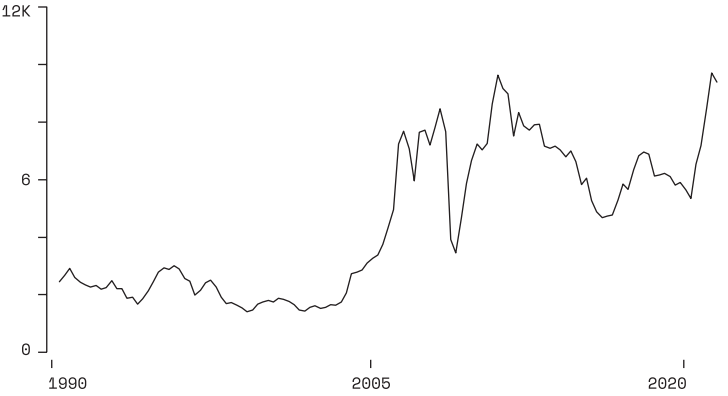
Figure 6**. Leading Exports (% of Total)**



Source: CEPASTAT Statistics and Indicators, "Chile: Exports of the 10 leading products (SITC, rev. 1), by their percentage share each year."

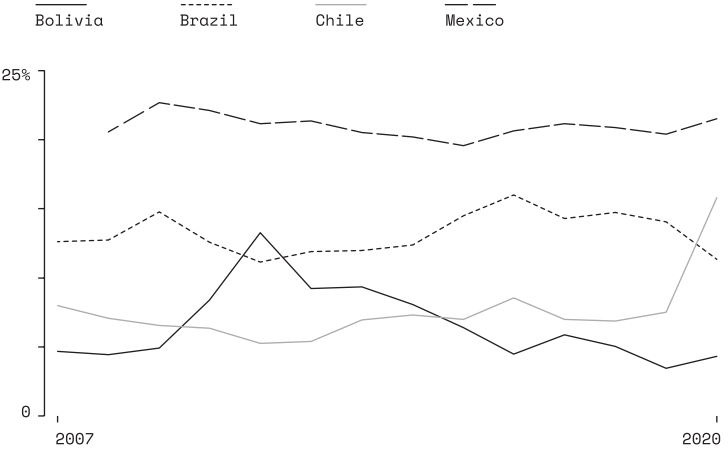
a sharp surge, fueled by Chinese industrialization and US wars in the Middle East. In the decade after 2002, copper prices grew by 600 percent. Reacting to the chance to cash in on astronomical rents, capital began a steady shift to extracting and shipping out ores, to the detriment of even minimally processed mineral. During that period, raw copper's share of all exports more than doubled. In subsequent years, once global copper markets recovered and stabilized following the Great Recession, unrefined ores overtook processed mineral, emerging as the top export earner before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Chilean business's overriding priority has been the increase and maintenance of the highest possible levels of extraction. Since 2002, mine production grew by 1.25 million metric tons, an increase of roughly 25 percent.

Figure 7. **Global Copper Prices (in Thousands USD per Metric Ton)**



Source: Federal Reserve Economic Data, "Global price of copper, US dollars per metric ton, quarterly, not seasonally adjusted."

Figure 8. **High-Technology Exports (% of Manufactured Exports)**



Source: World Bank Open Data Economic Indicators and Statistics, "High-technology exports (% of manufactured exports)."

Unlike investments in direct commodity extraction, Chilean capitalists neglected outlays for industrial processing of commodities and other manufacturing activities. Almost no effort, by any section of business and in any branch, was undertaken to develop more dynamic and competitive exports. High-tech goods hovered between 5 and 9 percent of manufactured exports, representing less than one-hundredth of all exports. By comparison, high-tech products account for one-fifth of Mexican exports; even Bolivia momentarily managed to place more advanced industrial goods globally (see Figure 8). Unsurprisingly, the value added that Chilean industry contributed to overall output plunged by nearly 40 percent, from roughly 18 to just 10 percent. Industrial value added as a share of GDP has stagnated at that low level since 2008. Throughout, however, the business class has remained unconcerned.

Chile's acclaimed capitalists found little reason to fret as long as profitability soared and growth continued apace. But around 2010, post-recession Chinese deceleration, along with de-escalating campaigns in the Middle East, lowered copper demand and prices. To counter shortfalls, business boosted investment, expanding capital formation by an average of roughly 15 percent of total output in 2010 and 2011.[19] But compulsive investment in commodities failed to reverse (and may have even contributed to) falling profit rates.[20] Cornered into a downward spiral and unable to restore profitability, Chile's oligarchs halted investment, producing four consecutive years of declining growth through 2014. While some may attribute shrinking private investment to business

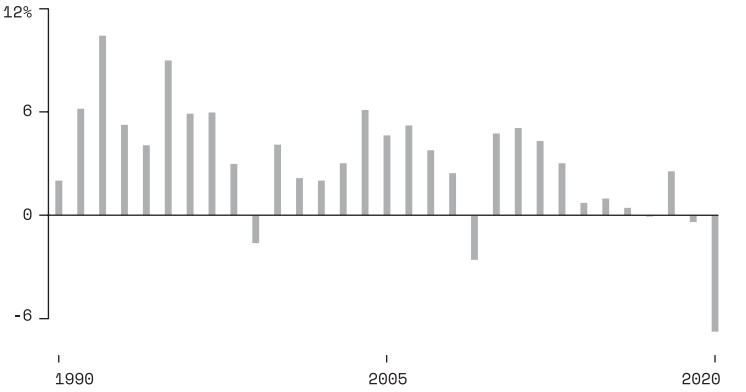
19 World Bank Open Data Economic Indicators and Statistics, data.worldbank.org.

20 Gonzalo Durán and Michael Stanton, "The Chilean Economy, an Analysis of the Dynamics of Profits, Investments and Production: A Marxist approach," *Capital & Class* (November 2021).

resistance to reforms promised by Michelle Bachelet's second administration (2014–17), disinvestment by economic elites began rising during the second half of her center-right predecessor's term. Fixed capital formation posted negative growth rates under Bachelet, yet it was already contracting dramatically, reaching a mere 3 percent of GDP during the final year of Sebastián Piñera's first government. Hooked on easy extractive money, the poster boys of Latin America's neoliberal miracle had led themselves into a downslide that they could not escape on their own.

Worse still for the business class, its agents in the state offered no solutions. Chile's political class, the most business-friendly governing cadre in the region, failed to resolve capitalists' predicament for two main reasons. The first mirrors the same orientation that engulfed elites. Like their patrons, state managers followed a single-minded dedication to natural commodities. Having abandoned all institutions and measures for planning and intervening in markets, they lacked alternative growth promotion schemes in their policy repertoire. In their three-time alternation from 2006 to 2017, each time Bachelet's center left and Piñera's center right succeeded each other, they pledged to preserve the fundamental tenets of Chile's economic model. At most, they campaigned on raising tax revenue to fund an expansion of means-tested programs. Never did either coalition consider universal programs that would decommodify entire portions of social provision, nor did they raise the possibility of state-led development. And at every juncture, leading sectors of business acceded, enthusiastically backing the narrow and limited reforms announced by each new team managing the state. In 2010, investment rates rebounded dramatically following a short-lived contraction; in 2014, business relented again and reversed its restraint. The last time elites regained an appetite for investment was in 2018–19, in response to Piñera's second government's regressive tax reform. Yet even

Figure 9. **GDP Per Capita Growth Rate (% Annual, Measured in Constant USD)**



Source: World Bank Open Data Economic Indicators and Statistics, "Rate of growth of Total Annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita at constant prices in dollars."

then, fixed capital formation just barely cracked 5 percent expansions, a shadow of the bullish 1990s and 2000s investment rates. In sum, despite its unwavering devotion, nothing the state tried worked at getting business out of its slump.

The second factor inhibiting a state-directed recovery in profits was the impact of the intensifying threat of disruption from protest. To maintain the basic stability required for renewed investment and growth, state managers could not ignore expanding capacities for popular mobilization. With a new growth strategy off the agenda, another route to restoring business confidence might have been a return to the levels of exploitation of the 1980s and 1990s. Reinstating extreme exploitation rates could be achieved via two avenues: first and directly, by increasing management's power at sites of production; and second and indirectly, by reducing the social wage and forcing workers into accepting lower pay. But growing collective action by laboring sectors made these options

untenable. As mentioned above, the profitability crisis arrived after years of revived labor insurgency and in the midst of escalating student, retiree, and women's disruptions. That is, workers had waged successful fights for workplace rights and protections and improved wages and conditions. And popular sectors mobilized rounds of struggles for more spending for education, health care, and pensions. Just when the political class felt obligated to tend to capital's needs, it understood that doing so would intensify protest and further shake the most basic foundations for stable business reproduction.

Caught between its masters' interests and disruptive demands from below, the state proved incapable of leading business out of its impasse. It mostly wavered between staying the neoliberal course and making the least costly concessions to workers and the poor. Indeed, the last time one of the ruling coalitions attempted to spur investment came when Piñera cut corporate taxes. What ensued was the violent and protracted rebellion that eventually brought Boric to power.

PROSPECTS FOR TRANSFORMING BUSINESS REPRODUCTION STRATEGIES

For Chile's new radicals to be successful, they must accomplish what neoliberal progressives were unwilling to do and what pink tide reformers could not. In other words, if Apruebo Dignidad is to deliver on its reform platform, it must forcefully alter the ruling class's accumulation model and then compel it to adhere to a new reproduction strategy. The ruling class's lack of direction and compromised representation in the state should give Boric significant latitude to take on recalcitrant elites. Further, the unfinished state of the coalition's governing arrangements and its undefined links to mass movements could facilitate forging fresh political instruments for confronting elites independently and resolutely.

Having reached power at a time when capitalist profit strategies are in disarray, Chile's radicals find themselves in a novel position to combine an insurgent road to radical democratization with a from-above project to discipline business. For such a pincer movement to enjoy any success, Apruebo Dignidad must avoid key failures of both progressive neoliberalism and pink tide populism.

The FA-CP government must prioritize transforming the nature of the state by dispensing with progressives' unwavering commitment to pro-business governing institutions. As suggested above, a central flaw of the Concertación, like the PT in Brazil, was its aim to pair modest redistribution with pro-market governance. Its unwillingness to adopt interventionist measures and steer investments toward an upgraded growth trajectory ultimately doomed it to fail. Even when business reproduction strategies fell into crisis, Chile's progressive neoliberals rejected any form of dirigisme. Center left and center right alike avoided the task of building state capacity to plan and conduct development. Both ruling coalitions remained parties of business at the head of a neoliberal state.

To reverse course, Chile's radicals must push hard to erect a developmental state as the party of toiling masses. Leading the effort to install new developmentalism as an insurgent popular party involves severe challenges. In its previous iteration, developmentalism emerged as an elite project. Because it advanced their interests, rising industrialists actively supported the state's program of modernization and diversification. When the state created planning agencies and began directing investments toward infant sectors, reform parties did not confront unified elite opposition. Because reformers enjoyed the cooperation of business, they never faced daunting challenges in recrafting the state itself. Adopting developmentalism today requires building new types of institutions against the unflinching, knee-jerk antagonism of elites.

Facing hostile majorities in congress, Boric's administration must wage a political battle to redraw key state apparatuses in the constituent assembly, where his coalition commands more influence. In this respect, the Apruebo coalition should champion not only thorough democratization of political institutions and universal social provision; it should give special attention to rebuilding economic governance rules and bureaucracies. Democratizing economic institutions will mean recasting the state as an apparatus to promote growth for collective well-being. That is, Chile's new radicals must ensure the new constitution grants the state planning and investment capabilities.

Backed by its remaining representatives in congress and the convention, elites have already initiated an obstruction campaign. As the convention opened deliberations on the state's prerogatives over markets, resources, and returns, business attitudes quickly shifted from cooperation to opposition. This became clear as discussions turned to public ownership of mineral deposits and control of extraction. When delegates introduced nationalization and the supremacy of national legislation over the jurisdiction of multilateral institutions, business leaders immediately raised red flags, and financial executives began sowing doubt.[21] As long as the convention and the new government confined reforms to identitarian demands like defining Chile as a plurinational state or granting gender parity in representation, business enthusiastically acceded. Elites even made plain a willingness to accept higher tax burdens and increased spending on targeted social programs, as long as the new government pledged to promote growth under reigning sectoral arrangements. But when the issue of public control over rents and social surplus was raised, business came

21 See, for instance, "Andrónico Luksic hace presente 'preocupación' por trabajo de la Convención en carta dirigida a accionistas de CCU," *El Mostrador*, March 22, 2022.

together in opposition to reform. Fortunately, Chile's radicals possess advantages that, if adroitly deployed, can counter business recalcitrance, if not neutralize it altogether.

The main advantages held by Boric's coalition are rooted in business's crisis of reproduction. The predicament itself stems from two key problems plaguing economic elites. The first relates to business's reluctance to resume robust investment. Because capital outlays slowed to a crawl after 2015, elites will have difficulty wielding the main mechanism that confers overriding influence over the state and policymaking. Simply, the threat of an investment strike has lost much of its bite. Since 2019, unrest, the COVID-19 pandemic, and patchy relief efforts have further reduced efficacy of withholding outlays. Under normal circumstances, prolonged disinvestment might compel government officials to abandon proposed reforms. Particularly in a recession, the need to spur growth typically drives state managers to cave to elite extortion. Indeed, during his campaign and since his election, Boric signaled repeatedly his commitment to stability and to restoring growth. But Chile finds itself in an exceptional juncture that affords the state uncommon leverage over business. It places the state in a position to withstand elite threats and feasibly impose its will. If Chile's new radicals win the political battle to build new interventionist institutions, these can exert meaningful influence over business profit calculations.

The favorable balance tilting leverage toward the state in turn is rooted in the breakdown of partisan mechanisms for business interest representation. The dissolution of the partisan channels of influence that previously ensured the prevalence of elite preferences has left business more vulnerable to state discipline. As discussed above, throughout the post-authoritarian period, elites relied excessively on the state to generate conditions for profitability. Business never managed to devise and direct an

independent investment strategy. Its dependence on the state for achieving any sort of expansion resulted in a loss of class initiative when both ruling political forces proved incapable of reversing falling profits. Further, their accelerated disintegration as the dominant coalitions left business adrift, without traditional representation in the state. Not only did its former political agents lack the ability to restore profitability, the political dominance needed to carry out any such pro-business program had crumbled to boot. In crucial ways, therefore, Chile's business class remains dependent on state sponsorship if it is to return to the heady profitability of the 1990s and 2000s. Thus, while elites will surely aim to undermine efforts to overhaul the state, some segments may also be compelled to submit if newly empowered developmental apparatuses lay out dynamic opportunities for growth.

Chile's tumultuous juncture thus provides an exceptional opportunity to add a from-above dimension to the radical from-below democratization blueprint. If popular insurgency alone fell short of restructuring elite reproduction calculations, revamped state institutions may infuse potent disciplinary functions for transforming profit strategies. But the work of mass movements is far from finished. Without ongoing mass insurgency, state planning and authority will lack coercive capacity. For the synergistic combination of from-above and from-below radical democratic reform to stand a chance, the left forces in power must reshape their links to working-class collective action.

If Apruebo Dignidad's effectiveness entails eschewing progressive neoliberals' passive management of the state, success also requires harnessing pressure from below yet circumventing the harmful forms of popular sector incorporation adopted by the pink tide. The uneven and relatively underdeveloped nature of Chile's mass movements may facilitate more constructive integration into a governing alliance that is still finding its footing in the state. To

wit, the relations between popular mobilization and radicals in office must advance along two delicate and interrelated avenues. First, social movements should enter and take their place in the Communist Party and the FA's parties — mainly Boric's Convergencia Social and Jackson's Revolución Democrática — turning them into genuine parties of Chile's toiling sectors. Integrating into the government's partisan infrastructure will encourage grassroots activists and movement militants to play a role in shaping the Left's broader reform program and to lend their disruptive leverage to its fulfillment. Second, this more balanced method of partisan incorporation should guard against pressures to rely on the clientelist schemes that characterized the pink tide. By transforming the governing alliance into the party of Chile's working class and poor, movement capacities can be harnessed to discipline elites rather than to extract sectional concessions and simply preserve the Left's power.

Just as the present juncture offers a chance to refashion state institutions, Chile today presents the opportunity to restructure the Apruebo coalition and its linkages to social movements. While the parties in government remain largely composed of middle layers without a mass base, the poor and working masses lack parties of their own. Chile's new radicals must design organizational tactics that preserve and amplify independent mass militance yet foment it from within their rising parties. In carrying out this organizational rearrangement that avoids the clientelism that took root in the pink tide, Chile's new radicals must look to Salvador Allende's Popular Unity as a model. Pink tide populists, largely owing to the far-reaching and overwhelming levels of mass militance, chose to incorporate mass movements as grassroots support machines rather than active partisan structures. By toppling the old party systems and sweeping reformers into power, movements could make vigorous demands on new left governments whose

positions in power were directly beholden to protest movements. A transactional dynamic took hold, whereby reformers distributed commodity rents to their grassroots backers in exchange for continued mobilization — on the streets, to defend them from elite attacks, and in the voting booths, to keep them in office. With the Russian invasion of Ukraine pushing up global copper prices, Boric's government will no doubt be tempted to appease grassroots demands by redistributing mineral rents through increased social spending.[22] Following this path will thwart the transformation of Apruebo into the organizational vehicle through which masses compete for state power and push Chile's left into the clientelism that trapped the pink tide.

The Popular Unity coalition reached power, by contrast, after weaving tight and reciprocal ties between party institutions and mass organizations, both labor and civil society, over decades. Allende began melding his coalition for his first 1952 run, yet he only won the presidency in 1970. In the interim, not only did the Socialist-Communist alliance solidify; the expanding organizational resources of unions, peasant councils, student groups, and housing activists shaped the Popular Unity politics of socialist transformation and were in turn drawn into its parties' strategy for power. The mutual development of mass movements and partisan structures suffered setbacks and only bore fruit after tactical trial and error during a long uphill climb.

Despite strong pressures militating in the direction of pink tide clientelism, Boric's government is positioned to elude patronage-oiled quid pro quos. As described above, FA-CP influence within state institutions grew more gradually, beginning well prior to the rebellion. Since then, it expanded its power, albeit

22 "Mario Marcel por precio del cobre: 'Hay que ver el balance de esas cosas,'" Radio Universidad de Chile, March 7, 2022.

unevenly, thanks to its own partisan maneuvering, often against the demands of mass movements. On the other side, mobilized sectors, despite their impressive resurgence and incipient levels of coordination, never cohered behind rising reformers as they did during upsurges in Venezuela and Bolivia in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Ironically, the less cohesive emergence of Chile's new partisan radicals, on the one hand, and of its mass protest, on the other, afford the possibility to integrate movement activists into left parties as they continue to hammer out governing arrangements. But Chile's new radicals face an enormous disadvantage compared to the UP. They do not have the luxury of building relationships to mass movements over decades of development and prior to attaining power. The imperative for Boric's coalition to achieve similar links in record time and while in government is surely the Chilean new left's most troubling Achilles' heel.

Still, if the FA-CP government swiftly carries out a more constructive incorporation of social movements — one that preserves from-below insurgency while integrating it as a partisan force pursuing strategic aims — it may open a path toward an egalitarian post-neoliberal regime. This window for social-democratic reform exists thanks to the composition of Chile's mass insurgency. Simply, the elevated incidence of labor struggles traced above could prove decisive. In contrast to pink tide countries, prolonged protest leading up to the *estallido* comprised significant levels of industrial insurgency. Whereas mass protest in Argentina, Bolivia, and Venezuela was overwhelmingly carried out by militant informal layers and other marginalized groups, strategic working-class action accompanied and reinforced popular sectors' mobilization in Chile throughout their decade-long upsurge. Substantial industrial insurgency amid uneven social movement protest should promote the installation of a post-neoliberal regime in two key ways.

First, an active labor movement would mobilize and deepen new radicals' commitment to a program of structural change. Though much is made of manufacturing, mining, and transport workers' narrow pursuit of their own interests at the expense of less secure sections of the working class, militant industrial protest tends to expand the scope of reform, even when actions focus on improvements demanded by and for its membership alone. Although claims that so-called labor aristocrats make gains at the expense of more peripheral layers are dubious, cases in which skilled employees positioned in strategic industries fight for their exclusive benefits are not uncommon. Yet even when workers in valuable branches of production challenge management to improve wages and working conditions at their worksites alone, such confrontations reverberate more widely. Advances in dynamic industries and firms exert pressures to raise wage floors and enhance conditions across the board. Sustained workers' struggles in advanced sectors in particular tend to ripple through diverse firms and labor market segments by elevating standards. As a result, sympathetic governing parties' approach to these conflicts extend beyond the worksite or branch in question and tend to address broader sectoral and labor market transformations. That is, persistent industrial workers' mobilization, however limited the demands behind it, promotes more systemic state responses. Rather than responding to pressure to redistribute targeted revenues to low-income students, to slum dwellers, to impoverished pensioners, or for the programs of radical women's collectives, waves of industrial battles compel reform governments to directly confront the power and strategies of the business class.

Besides reinforcing reformers' commitment to a program of structural change, industrial insurgency serves a second crucial function that amounts to the fulcrum of the entire post-neoliberal reform agenda. Sustained worker action in strategic sectors arms

leftists in government with the muscle required to overcome elite resistance. Strike campaigns in mining, ports, and other strategic industries would supply Chile's new radicals unparalleled social power in the daunting struggle to transform business reproduction strategies. Relative to the disturbances that protest by informal sectors, students, and feminist collectives can generate, disruptions caused by strikes and occupations of production sites confer more potent leverage, for they directly hit the ruling class's ability to produce and make profits. Mass popular action can shut down streets and at times may even paralyze entire towns and cities. These disruptions certainly impose costs onto governing parties and politicians and may compel them to respond to the immediate demands posed. As averred above, in response, authorities scramble to meet protesters' demands in order to clear the streets or public buildings and restore stability. Of course, social movements will not always accept narrow sectional settlements, and mass mobilizations may insist on broader reforms. Their achievement, however, requires popular sector movements to impose costs at a level and intensity that compels elites to consider systemwide concessions. Movements cannot raise disruption to that magnitude without relentless mass protest that makes society ungovernable. Typically, sustaining disruptive mobilization at a scale that compels ruling elites to give in is too burdensome. Precarious groups like informal workers and elderly retirees find it exceedingly taxing to launch round after round of generalized protest; they have neither the resources nor the organizational infrastructure to coordinate ongoing actions and replenish large-scale participation. Chile's 2019 *estallido* offers a clear illustration. Despite efforts, movement organizations failed to replicate October 25's historic outpouring of millions. Accordingly, while urban unrest extracted the momentous concession of a constituent plebiscite, it could not force elites into a post-neoliberal development path.

Barring insurrection, the key weapon that Chile's new radicals can wield effectively in their confrontation with business is industrial insurgency. Renewed mining and transport stoppages offer Boric the intimidatory might that elites cannot dismiss — or wait out — when negotiating either workers' demands or the state's alternative development blueprints. Over the past decade, mining corporations and shipping interests felt confident that their profit models could continue mostly intact after making concessions to sectoral unions. Yet if from-above challenges are linked to sustained industrial rebellions, a return to business as usual is less likely. Of course, even — or perhaps especially — in a context of languishing investment and disintegrated partisan representation, corporate captains will predictably double down, expecting workers to relent first and the government to capitulate as the whole investor class closes ranks, threatening an economic shutdown. Even here, workers in strategic industries offer the only hope of staring down business resistance. Unlike informal sectors, for instance, organized labor, particularly the powerful miners' and dockworkers' unions, possess the organizational resources to sustain protest. The strike waves beginning in 2007 built up precisely this capacity.

CONCLUSION

After decades of irrelevance, radicals in Chile finds themselves in an unprecedented position. They lead an uncertain yet promising political process that stands to forge a new path to insurgent social democracy. Unlike its neoliberal progressive predecessors, Apruebo Dignidad's overriding mission is not an accommodation with business. In that respect, it shares the pink tide's primary commitment to more substantive and participatory democracy, and to the social rights and economic well-being of the country's working masses. More importantly, it possesses the capacity to

push elites to adopt accumulation strategies that can sustainably accomplish these egalitarian commitments. As described above, the favorable position of Chile's new radicals rests on an exceptional confluence of factors: the vulnerability of the ruling class, on one side, and the potential to deploy a new interventionist state machinery and to discipline business by harnessing the growing leverage of labor, on the other.

But the weakness of the business community alongside new governing institutions backed by industrial militancy are no guarantee that, having toppled the post-authoritarian neoliberal regime, Apruebo Dignidad will achieve a novel twenty-first-century form of democratic socialism. The stakes involved and the magnitude of the challenge may dissuade the Boric government from pursuing the struggle for a new development model entirely. For the thousands of activists and militants formed over a decade of mass mobilizations, the central responsibility at hand includes not only keeping Boric committed to social movement demands but finding productive ways to remain decisively involved in shaping the new government's agenda and disciplined methods for advancing a viable transformation strategy.

Apruebo Dignidad's possible reluctance to join a battle against the ruling class is hardly the only obstacle to pushing forward a post-neoliberal regime. Chile's radical cadre face their own significant barriers to fulfilling the momentous tasks before them. For one, the new generations of activists have no training in or proximate examples of the strategic mobilizations and interventions required of them. Lamentably, but understandably, they have built their campaigns around sectional and identitarian demands. Very few have experience in developing class-wide programs and mobilizations. What's more, the FA-CP alliance still lacks the organic composition that could offset social movements' narrowness and inexperience. Apruebo Dignidad, unfortunately, has yet to form

close links to new militant unions and labor organizers that could more feasibly pursue strategic struggles against elites' profit strategies. Before Allende's Popular Unity won power, the coalition had built deep association relations and programmatic affinities with an expanding workers' movement over decades. Already in office, Chile's new radicals do not have the luxury of forging such ties with labor over an extended period of time.

The main risk for Boric is that, as the new left embarks on the lengthy process of incorporating revitalized unions, Chile's social movement activists will insist on making the type of abstruse demands that do not resonate with the majority of poor and toiling masses or that only appeal to their narrow needs. If Boric's government fails to integrate insurgents into core struggles against elites' faltering strategies of reproduction, wider working-class bases might succumb to clientelist dealings or, worse still, end up alienated from the reform program altogether. Falling confidence in the constituent assembly already signals growing frustration with the new left's myopia. Following this rudderless and narrow path would give the ruling class an unforgivable gift: a decisive respite, allowing it to recover programmatically and organizationally. It would take generations for Chile's radicals to overcome such strategic failure.

But windows for emancipatory change are always small, improbable, and shrinking. Because the moment before them will vanish quickly, Chile's new radicals must commune with leading industrial insurgents and seize the opportunity immediately.

ABSTRACT

W. E. B. Du Bois's *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860–1880* is one of the greatest modern studies of revolution and counterrevolution. While it deserves its place alongside the classics, it is also an extraordinary example of a materialist and class analysis of race under capitalism. In recent years, the latter aspect of the book has been obscured and even denied. This essay seeks to restore Du Bois's great work to its rightful place on both counts.

Black Reconstruction as Class War

Jeff Goodwin

W. E. B. Du Bois's magnum opus, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860–1880*, published in 1935, is one of the greatest scholarly studies of revolution and counterrevolution.[1] It deserves a place on one's bookshelf next to other modern classics, including Leon Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution*, C. L. R. James's *The Black Jacobins*, Georges Lefebvre's *The Coming of the French Revolution*, and Karl Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. Scholars of revolutions, unfortunately, have not usually considered the US Civil War to be one of the great social revolutions of the modern era, akin to the French, Russian, and Chinese revolutions.

1 W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860–1880* (New York: Atheneum, 1992 [1935]).

Many readers, in fact, view Du Bois's book much more narrowly, as a response to white-supremacist histories of the Reconstruction era (1865–76) and, more particularly, a defense of the role of African American politicians — and the black voters who elected them — in the Southern state governments of that time. Du Bois does present such a defense, but *Black Reconstruction* offers much, much more than this.

Black Reconstruction is not only a towering work of history but also a work firmly embedded in the Marxist tradition. Du Bois reinterprets the Civil War as a social and political revolution "from below" — a workers' revolution — that brought about the overthrow of both slavery and the Confederate state, thereby opening a door to interracial democracy in the South. The book then reinterprets the subsequent overthrow of this democracy as a class-based counterrevolution that destroyed the possibility of freedom for half the Southern working class and imposed a "dictatorship of capital" that brought about "an exploitation of labor unparalleled in modern times."[2]

But why should one read *Black Reconstruction* in the twenty-first century? In short, because Du Bois is writing about issues that remain of tremendous political importance, including the nature of racial oppression and the racism of white workers. Unlike most contemporary analysts of race, moreover, Du Bois approaches these issues from the perspective of political economy. He rejects an approach to racial oppression that starts with prejudice, discrimination, or culture, trying instead to dig beneath these and understand how they are rooted in the material interests of different classes. Instead of insisting on the separation of race from class, as so many liberals do, Du Bois insists on their intimate connection.[3]

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2 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, 630.

3 See Touré F. Reed, *Toward Freedom: The Case Against Race Reductionism*

Black Reconstruction is rightly famous for stressing the collective agency of enslaved people in winning their own freedom and for its impassioned rebuttal of racist historiography. What has been less emphasized is the way in which Du Bois very explicitly rejects analyses of the Civil War and Reconstruction that emphasize race and racism as the primary drivers of historical events. Racism certainly played a hugely important role in that era, Du Bois argues, but it was a product of — and usually disguised — another, more powerful force: capitalism. More specifically, Du Bois argues in *Black Reconstruction* that two characteristic features of capitalism — capitalists' competition for labor and workers' competition for jobs — are the root cause of conflicts that seem to be driven by racism.

This perspective on Du Bois's masterpiece runs counter to some influential interpretations of his work. Not surprisingly, there is resistance in some quarters to stating plainly that *Black Reconstruction* is a work of Marxism. Many people who come to *Black Reconstruction* for the first time are not expecting to read a Marxist text. They have most likely read Du Bois's earlier collection of essays, *The Souls of Black Folk*, which precedes his turn to Marxism by three decades.[4] While a number of authors do recognize Du Bois's Marxism,[5] many others deny that *Black Reconstruction* or his subsequent writings are Marxist. In 1983,

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(New York: Verso, 2020), chapter 1.

4 W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1903). The best study of Du Bois's thought prior to his Marxist turn is Adolph L. Reed Jr, *W. E. B. Du Bois and American Political Thought: Fabianism and the Color Line* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

5 See, e.g., Bill V. Mullen, *Un-American: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Century of World Revolution* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2015); Bill V. Mullen, *W. E. B. Du Bois: Revolutionary Across the Color Line* (London: Pluto Press, 2016); Andrew J. Douglas, *W. E. B. Du Bois and the Critique of the Competitive Society* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2019); and Reiland Rabaka, *Du Bois: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2021), esp. chapter 5.

for example, Cedric Robinson described Du Bois as a "sympathetic critic of Marxism."[6] Gerald Horne's 1986 book examines in great detail Du Bois's involvement in leftist (mainly Communist) causes after World War II, but he never offers an opinion as to whether Du Bois was a Marxist.[7] And Manning Marable's book on Du Bois, published just a few months later, portrays him as a "radical democrat" — although Marable later suggested that Du Bois might usefully be viewed as part of the "Western Marxist" tradition.[8]

More recently, a group of "Du Boisian" sociologists recognizes that Du Bois integrates some elements of Marxist thinking into his worldview. But according to these writers, not only is Du Bois *not* a Marxist but his ideas clearly transcend Marx's. Marx gave theoretical primacy to class, they say, whereas Du Bois grasped the "intersectionality" of class and race, emphasizing their connections while giving theoretical primacy, by implication, to neither.[9] According to these writers, this theoretical move allowed Du Bois, unlike Marx and his followers, they claim, to understand colonialism, the ways in which race "fractures" class consciousness, and racial oppression generally.[10]

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6 Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 207, 228.

7 Gerald Horne, *Black and Red: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Afro-American Response to the Cold War, 1944–1963* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1985). More recently, however, Horne has emphasized the Marxist character of *Black Reconstruction*. Gerald Horne, "Abolition Democracy," *Nation*, May 3, 2022.

8 Manning Marable, *W. E. B. Du Bois: Black Radical Democrat* (Boston: Twayne, 1986); Manning Marable, "Reconstructing the Radical Du Bois," *Souls* 7, no. 3–4 (2005), 21.

9 José Itzigsohn and Karida L. Brown, *The Sociology of W. E. B. Du Bois: Racialized Modernity and the Global Color Line* (New York: New York University Press, 2020), 80–2, 219. This claim about Du Bois's alleged "intersectionality" stands in some tension with the authors' claim that Du Bois centers race and racism, as opposed to class, in his work (e.g., 1).

10 Itzigsohn and Brown, *The Sociology of W. E. B. Du Bois*, 65–7. See also Aldon Morris, Michael Schwartz, and José Itzigsohn, "Racism, Colonialism, and Moder-

In this essay, I argue that these "Du Boisians" and others who deny Du Bois's Marxism are wrong. Du Bois actually *does* give theoretical primacy to capitalism. In both *Black Reconstruction* and his subsequent writings, Du Bois repeatedly emphasizes how racial oppression is a product of capitalism. Time and again, furthermore, Du Bois takes issue with what we would today call "race reductionism," that is, attempts to explain historical events primarily in terms of race. His rejection of race reductionism only deepened in the years after *Black Reconstruction*'s publication.

After 1935, in short, "Du Boisianism" is Marxism. Du Bois's failure lay not in the fact that he embraced a Marxist orientation but that he came to uncritically support Soviet authoritarianism. This was perhaps the greatest tragedy, in my view, of Du Bois's long life. But the main point of this essay is to show that, despite all efforts to ignore or deny his Marxism, *Black Reconstruction* stands as a brilliant work of class analysis.

BLACK RECONSTRUCTION IN AMERICA

Du Bois's turn toward Marxism occurred rather late in his life, shortly before the publication of *Black Reconstruction*. His trip to the Soviet Union in 1926, months before Joseph Stalin's consolidation of power, certainly pushed him in this direction. "Never before in life," writes his biographer David Levering Lewis, "had he been as stirred as he would be by two months in Russia."[11] Du Bois traveled more than two thousand miles across the Soviet Union, "finding everywhere … signs of a new egalitarian social order that until then he had only dreamt might be possible."[12] "I

nity: The Sociology of W. E. B. Du Bois," in Seth Abrutyn and Omar Lizardo, eds., *Handbook of Classical Sociological Theory* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2021).

11 David Levering Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality and the American Century, 1919–1963* (New York: Henry Holt, 2000), 200.

12 Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality*, 203.

may be partially deceived and half-informed," Du Bois wrote at the time. "But if what I have seen with my own eyes and heard with my ears in Russia is Bolshevism, I am a Bolshevik."[13] (Du Bois would visit the Soviet Union again in 1936, 1949, and 1958.)

Du Bois later wrote that his trip to the Soviet Union led him to question "our American Negro belief that the right to vote would give us work and decent wage," or would abolish illiteracy or "decrease our sickness and crime."[14] Only a revolution, by implication, could attain these ends. Du Bois also now believed that "letting a few of our capitalists share with whites in the exploitation of our masses, would never be a solution of our problem."[15] Black liberation was impossible, in sum, so long as the United States remained a capitalist society, and "black capitalism" was a dead end.

Du Bois had been broadly familiar with Marxist ideas since his graduate student days at Harvard and in Berlin. But it was not until 1933, in the midst of the greatest crisis of capitalism in world history, that Du Bois began conscientiously to study Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Vladimir Lenin. He was then sixty-five years old. As Lewis writes, Du Bois fell hard for Marxist analysis:

> Like so many intellectuals in the thirties who broadcast Marxism as a verifiable science of society, the Atlanta professor was mesmerized by dialectical materialism. Calling Marx the "greatest figure in the science of modern industry," Du Bois seemed to rediscover with the avidity of a gifted graduate student the thinker who Frank Taussing, his Harvard

13 W. E. B. Du Bois in Herbert Aptheker, ed., *Writings in Periodicals Edited by W. E. B. Du Bois: Selections from* The Crisis*, Vol. 2: 1926–1934* (Millwood, NY: Kraus-Thomson, 1983), 452.

14 W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Autobiography of W. E. B. Du Bois* (New York: International Publishers, 1968), 290.

15 Du Bois, *The Autobiography*, 290.

economics professor, had smugly ignored. Marx made history make sense — or more sense, Du Bois came to believe, than all other analytical systems.[16]

Du Bois was prodded to master Marxist theory by the rise of a group of so-called Young Turks within the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the civil rights organization he helped found. These young scholar-activists, including Abram Harris, Ralph Bunche, and E. Franklin Frazier (all members or soon-to-be members of the Howard University faculty) "were attempting to shift the Negro intelligentsia's focus on race to an analysis of the economics of class."[17] All were convinced that a powerful interracial labor movement was necessary to smash racial oppression, and they were critical of the NAACP for its lack of an economic program. Members of this group would offer advice to Du Bois about which texts were essential for him to read. Harris's book, *The Black Worker: The Negro and the Labor Movement*, coauthored with Sterling Spero, proved particularly influential; it was no coincidence that Du Bois titled the first chapter of *Black Reconstruction* "The Black Worker."[18] (I discuss the precise significance of this below.)

Although he would later grow close to the pro-Soviet Communist Party, Du Bois's guides to Marxist theory in the early 1930s also included two anti-Stalinist leftists. One was Benjamin Stolberg, a journalist who later served on the Dewey Commission (officially

16 Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality*, 306.

17 Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality*, 320. See Jonathan Scott Holloway, *Confronting the Veil: Abram Harris Jr., E. Franklin Frazier, and Ralph Bunche, 1919–1941* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Eben Miller, *Born Along the Color Line: The 1933 Amenia Conference and the Rise of a National Civil Rights Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

18 Sterling D. Spero and Abram L. Harris, *The Black Worker: The Negro and the Labor Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931).

the Commission of Inquiry Into the Charges Made Against Leon Trotsky in the Moscow Trials), which was named after its chairman, the philosopher John Dewey. The other was a young leftist by the name of Will Herberg. Herberg was a Jewish Russian immigrant who flunked out of the City College of New York, joined the Communist Party, and was expelled along with others associated with Jay Lovestone for opposing Stalin's foreign policy at the time. The Lovestonites, however, were ardent defenders of the Soviet Union. Herberg brought Marx's writings on the Civil War to Du Bois's attention, as well as Herberg's own Marxist pamphlet on the Civil War and Reconstruction, "The Heritage of the Civil War," which Du Bois would quote and cite in *Black Reconstruction*.[19]

Du Bois takes up a great many issues in *Black Reconstruction*, but the book mainly attempts to answer three broad questions: First, how did the Civil War become a revolution that overthrew slavery and brought democracy to the South? Second, what were the nature and main achievements of the Reconstruction state governments in the South? Finally, how are we to understand the counterrevolution that overthrew democracy and brought about a kind of semi-slavery for Southern blacks?

The Civil War and the "General Strike"

The opening chapters of *Black Reconstruction* are not about Reconstruction at all. They deal with the antebellum period, workers (white and black), the nature of slavery, and the Civil War. These chapters make many important arguments and claims, none more important than the idea that enslaved people freed themselves

19 Will Herberg, *The Heritage of the Civil War* (New York: Workers Age Publishing, 1932). See also Matt Nichter, "Du Bois's Marxist Mentor: Will Herberg and the Making of *Black Reconstruction in America*," paper presented at the 14th annual Historical Materialism Conference, London, 2017; Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 327, 618, 717.

during the Civil War through an extensive and prolonged "general strike." This strike, like all strikes, was an instance of class struggle that involved the withholding of labor by one class of people, the workers or "direct producers," from the owning or ruling class. As in other great revolutions, the opportunity for this class struggle from below was created by inter-elite conflicts that erupted into war.[20]

Du Bois insists that "slave workers" (as he calls them) should be seen as an integral part of the interracial working class in America, not as a group set apart by separate and distinct interests. It was the tragic error of Northern workers and the Northern labor movement — and an error of subsequent analysts who are blind to class — not to comprehend this. Thus, Du Bois titles the first chapter of his book "The Black Worker," not "The Black Slave" or "The Enslaved." And the second chapter is called "The White Worker." Of course, Du Bois is keenly aware of the difference between enslaved labor and free wage labor. "No matter how degraded the factory hand," he writes, "he is not real estate."[21] But Du Bois wants to emphasize, in Marxian fashion, that these two groups of workers, despite their different circumstances and despite their racial difference, share the same basic material interests. This was true, moreover, both before and after the Civil War.

But white workers failed to see their common interests with slave workers. "[W]hite labor," writes Du Bois, "while it attempted no denial but even expressed faint sympathy, saw in [the] fugitive slave and in the millions of slaves behind him, willing and eager to work for less than current wage, competition for their own jobs." It

20 See Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Barrington Moore Jr, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), esp. chapter 3, "The American Civil War: The Last Capitalist Revolution."

21 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 10.

was this competition for jobs that fueled white racism. However, "What [the white workers] failed to comprehend," writes Du Bois, "was that the black man enslaved was an even more formidable and fatal competitor than the black man free."[22]

There thus arose, Du Bois relates, not one but two labor movements in antebellum America, one to free the slave workers of the South and the other to improve the wages and working conditions of the mainly immigrant working class in the North. The union of these two movements, Du Bois points out, would have been "irresistible." But it was "almost impossible," he writes, for white labor leaders to understand this:

> They had their particularistic grievances and one of these was the competition of free Negro labor. Beyond this they could easily vision a new and tremendous competition of black workers after all the slaves became free. What they did not see nor understand was that this competition was present and would continue and would be emphasized if the Negro continued as a slave worker.[23]

This explains why white workers kept their distance from the abolitionist movement, which, for its part, failed to "realize the plight of the white laborer, especially the semi-skilled and unskilled worker."[24] This division within the US working class, of course, weakened both labor movements.

The general strike during the Civil War took the form of slave workers fleeing the plantations for the front lines and encampments of the Union Army. Du Bois estimates that five hundred thousand of the South's four million enslaved blacks fled the

22 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 20.

23 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 21.

24 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 21.

plantations. These families and individuals typically worked on behalf of the Union Army as long as the war lasted; eventually, some two hundred thousand were armed and fought for the Union against the Confederacy. The general strike was thus a double blow to the South: the withdrawal of labor disrupted and weakened the Southern economy and war effort — cotton production in particular declined precipitously — and the labor made available to the Union Army strengthened the North's military might. "Without the military help of the black freedmen," Du Bois argues, quoting no less an authority than Abraham Lincoln, "the war against the South could not have been won."[25]

Du Bois points out that this general strike "was followed by the disaffection of the poor whites," who saw "with anger that the big slaveholders were escaping military service; that it was a 'rich man's war and the poor man's fight.'"[26] The exemption from military service of men who owned twenty or more slave workers was galling, "and the wholesale withdrawal of the slaveholding class from actual fighting which this rule made possible, gave rise to intense and growing dissatisfaction."[27] Du Bois also notes the poor whites' "fear and jealousy of Negroes" in the advancing Northern army: "If the Negro was to be free where would the poor white be? Why should he fight against the blacks and his victorious friends? The poor white not only began to desert and run away; but thousands followed the Negro into the Northern camps."[28] In 1864 alone, according to Du Bois, one hundred thousand poor whites deserted the Confederate Army.[29]

25 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 716.

26 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 80–1.

27 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 81.

28 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 81.

29 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 117.

Where does racism fit into Du Bois's analysis of slavery? His discussion of racism in the antebellum period is classically materialist: racism did not produce slavery; slavery produced, and continuously reproduced, racism. The planters' need for cheap labor — and the extraordinary wealth it produced — was its root cause. Slaveowners could not increase the productivity of their plantations by giving more resources to slave workers, or educating them, or teaching them skills, as this would undermine the very institution.[30] Due to competition with other planters, moreover, the slaveowner "was forced, unless willing to take lower profits, continually to beat down the cost of his slave labor."[31] In this context, racism was "found, invented and proved" in order to justify the horrors (and inefficiencies) of slavery. This is how Du Bois puts it:

> If the leaders of the South, while keeping the consumer in mind, had turned more thoughtfully to the problem of the American producer, and had guided the production of cotton and food so as to take every advantage of new machinery and modern methods in agriculture, they might have moved forward with manufacture and been able to secure an approximately large amount of profit. … But in order to maintain its income without sacrifice or exertion, the South fell back on a doctrine of racial differences which it asserted made higher intelligence and increased efficiency impossible for Negro labor. Wishing such an excuse for lazy indulgence, the planter easily found, invented and proved it. His subservient religious leaders reverted to the "Curse of Canaan"; his pseudo-scientists gathered and supplemented all available doctrines of race inferiority; his scattered schools and pedantic periodicals repeated these legends, until for the average planter born after 1840 it was impossible not

30 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 38–40.

31 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 41.

> to believe that all valid laws in psychology, economics and politics stopped with the Negro race.[32]

"The espousal of the doctrine of Negro inferiority by the South," Du Bois concludes, "was primarily because of economic motives and the interconnected political urge necessary to support slave industry."[33] (Du Bois has more to say about the racism of white workers, which I examine below.)

Du Bois's explanation of the Union's victory in the Civil War also highlights the efforts of English workers to prevent their government from recognizing the Confederacy and entering the war against the Union. "Monster meetings" of workers in London and Manchester in 1863 had a real impact, in Du Bois's estimation. "Karl Marx," he writes, "testified that this meeting [in St. James' Hall, London, in March 1863] … kept Lord Palmerston [the prime minister] from declaring war against the United States."[34] Du Bois quotes the text of a speech, written by Marx, which was read at a subsequent demonstration in London, a text addressed and sent to President Lincoln:

> Sir: We who offer this address are Englishmen and workingmen. We prize as our dearest inheritance, bought for us by the blood of our fathers, the liberty we enjoy — the liberty of free labor on a free soil. … We rejoiced, sir, in your election to the Presidency, as a splendid proof that the principles of

32 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 38–9.

33 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 39. The Trinidadian Marxist Eric Williams, a student of C. L. R. James, makes a similar argument in his classic 1944 book, *Capitalism and Slavery*: "Here, then, is the origin of Negro slavery. The reason was economic, not racial; it had to do not with the color of the laborer, but the cheapness of the labor. … [The planter] would have gone to the moon, if necessary, for labor. Africa was nearer than the moon, nearer too than the more populous countries of India and China. But their turn was to come." Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994 [1944]), 19–20.

34 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 89.

> universal freedom and equality were rising to the ascendant. We regarded with abhorrence the conspiracy and rebellion by which it was sought at once to overthrow the supremacy of a government based upon the most popular suffrage in the world, and to perpetuate the hateful inequalities of race.[35]

These English workers embraced just the type of interracial working-class solidarity that Du Bois would come to see, seventy years later, as essential for the eradication of racial oppression and for the liberation of workers of all colors.

The slave workers' general strike destroyed slavery directly but also indirectly, by inducing Lincoln to issue the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863. It also proved decisive for the Union defeat of the Confederacy. The result was thus a social as well as a political revolution. With the eradication of personal servitude, democracy became, for the first time, a real possibility in the South. Along with Du Bois, accordingly, we have every right to consider the Civil War truly epochal: "Its issue has vitally affected the course of human progress. To the student of history it ranks along with the conquests of Alexander; the incursions of the Barbarians; the Crusades; the discovery of America, and the American Revolution."[36] For Du Bois, "the emancipation of the laboring class in half the nation [is] a revolution comparable to the upheavals in France in the past, and in Russia, Spain, India and China today."[37]

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35 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 89–90. On the relationship between Marx and Lincoln, see Robin Blackburn, *An Unfinished Revolution: Karl Marx and Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Verso, 2011).

36 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 120, quoting General T. J. Morgan.

37 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 708.

Reconstruction: An "Extraordinary Marxist Experiment"

For a dozen years following the Civil War, the Union Army occupied the South, and African American men could vote and run for political office. During these years, African Americans elected a large number of black and progressive white representatives to state governments across the South. Sixteen African Americans also served in the US Congress during these years, including two senators. For white elites, the Reconstruction era was a disaster. They would eventually create and distribute an image and historiography of Reconstruction that vilified both black representatives and black voters as ignorant, greedy, corrupt, and vengeful, truly unworthy of suffrage or indeed of any rights that whites were bound to respect.

The truth, as Du Bois shows in several chapters in *Black Reconstruction*, was quite different from this narrative. He believed that democracy, defended by federal troops, had allowed the working class to come to power in the South — fifty years before the Russian Revolution. Du Bois was tempted to describe this as a "dictatorship of the proletariat," although he eventually decided to use the phrase "dictatorship of labor":

> [A]mong Negroes, and particularly in the South, there was being put into force one of the most extraordinary experiments of Marxism that the world, before the Russian revolution, had seen. That is, backed by the military power of the United States, a dictatorship of labor was to be attempted and those who were leading the Negro race in this vast experiment were emphasizing the necessity of the political power and organization backed by protective military power.[38]

38 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 358. For Marxists, a class dictatorship — the social and political domination of a particular class — does not refer to an au-

Several interlocutors dissuaded Du Bois from using the term "dictatorship of the proletariat." As he explained at the start of a chapter titled "The Black Proletariat in South Carolina":

> I first called this chapter "The Dictatorship of the Black Proletariat in South Carolina," but it has been brought to my attention that this would not be correct since universal suffrage does not lead to a real dictatorship until workers use their votes consciously to rid themselves of the dominion of private capital.[39]

According to Du Bois, there were some indications of this intent among blacks in South Carolina, "but it was always coupled with the idea of that day, that the only real escape for a laborer was himself to own capital."[40] Indeed, most of the former slave workers wanted land of their own to work. Du Bois presumably used the phrase "dictatorship of labor" to signal that the Reconstruction governments were elected and supported by propertyless blacks and some poor whites — and that the officials so elected represented the interests of these workers.

Du Bois insists that Reconstruction cannot be understood in race-centered terms — that is, as a struggle between the black and white races, fueled by racism. Rather, Reconstruction was a conflict among classes that were struggling to find new ways of surviving after the demise of the slave economy. "Reconstruction," as Du Bois puts it,

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thoritarian or autocratic form of government. A class dictatorship is compatible with democratic forms of government. See Hal Draper, *The "Dictatorship of the Proletariat" From Marx to Lenin* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1987), chapter 1.

39 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 381. Benjamin Stolberg was among those who objected to Du Bois's use of the phrase "dictatorship of the proletariat." Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality*, 363, 373.

40 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 381.

> was not simply a fight between the white and black races in the South or between master and ex-slave. It was much more subtle; it involved more than this. There have been repeated and continued attempts to paint this era as an interlude of petty politics or nightmare of race hate instead of viewing it slowly and broadly as a tremendous series of efforts to earn a living in new and untried ways, to achieve economic security and to restore fatal losses of capital and investment.[41]

For Du Bois, the key actors of the Reconstruction era were workers (still divided by race, as before the war, into separate movements) and capitalists (divided into two main fractions). Reconstruction encompassed, first of all,

> a vast labor movement of ignorant, earnest, and bewildered black men whose faces had been ground in the mud by their three awful centuries of degradation and who now staggered forward blindly in blood and tears amid petty division, hate and hurt, and surrounded by every disaster of war and industrial upheaval.[42]

Second,

> Reconstruction was a vast labor movement of ignorant, muddled and bewildered white men who had been disinherited of land and labor and fought a long battle with sheer subsistence, hanging on the edge of poverty, eating clay and chasing slaves and now lurching up to manhood.[43]

41 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 346.

42 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 346–7.

43 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 347.

Third,

> Reconstruction was the turn of white Northern migration southward to new and sudden economic opportunity which followed the disaster and dislocation of war, and an attempt to organize capital and labor on a new pattern and build a new economy.[44]

Du Bois is here referring to the Northern capitalists, both large and petty, who moved to the South in search of riches after the war — the "carpetbagger capitalists," as he calls them. "Finally," writes Du Bois,

> Reconstruction was a desperate effort of a dislodged, maimed, impoverished and ruined oligarchy and monopoly to restore an anachronism in economic organization by force, fraud and slander, in defiance of law and order, and in the face of a great labor movement of white and black, and in bitter strife with a new capitalism and a new political framework.[45]

This, of course, is the formerly slave-owning planter class. Du Bois attributes the turmoil, corruption, and violence of the Reconstruction era to the "fierce fight" among these classes and class fractions for control over the "capitalist state."[46]

What were the key achievements of the "dictatorships of labor" in the South while they lasted? The fact that African Americans enjoyed a modicum of civil and political rights during this era is of course tremendously important. For the first time in its history, universal manhood suffrage prevailed in the United States. For Du Bois, perhaps the most important achievements of Reconstruction were the public schools and black colleges that were founded in

44 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 347.

45 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 347.

46 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 610.

this era. (Du Bois himself attended one of these colleges, Fisk, a mere decade after Reconstruction.) He devotes an entire chapter ("Founding the Public School") to this development, arguing that these schools were nothing less than "the salvation of the South and the Negro."[47]

For Du Bois, interestingly, these schools played an important moderating role. "Without them," he writes, "there can be no doubt that the Negro would have rushed into revolt and vengeance and played into the hands of those determined to crush him."[48] Du Bois also praises the new schools (and the black church) for creating "a little group of trained leadership." He credits these leaders, and their political moderation, with preventing the reestablishment of chattel slavery after Reconstruction:

> Had it not been for the Negro school and college, the Negro would, to all intents and purposes, have been driven back to slavery. His economic foothold in land and capital was too slight in ten years of turmoil to effect any defense or stability. His reconstruction leadership had come from Negroes educated in the North, and white politicians, capitalists and philanthropic teachers. The counterrevolution of 1876 drove most of these, save the teachers, away. But already, through establishing public schools and private colleges, and by organizing the Negro church, the Negro had acquired enough leadership and knowledge to thwart the worst designs of the new slave drivers.[49]

These leaders, Du Bois suggests, "avoided the mistake of trying to meet force by force." He praises their resilience and patience in

47 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 667.

48 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 667.

49 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 667.

the face of violent provocation: "They bent to the storm of beating, lynching and murder, and kept their souls in spite of public and private insult of every description."[50]

Nevertheless, Du Bois emphasizes that the main economic demand of the freedmen was never attained during Reconstruction: the extensive redistribution of land, including the big plantations, to the formerly enslaved. The typical freedman, according to Du Bois, had "but one clear economic ideal and that was his demand for land, his demand that the great plantations be subdivided and given to him as his right." Du Bois writes that this demand was "perfectly fair and natural" and "ought to have been an integral part of Emancipation." He points out that French, German, and Russian serfs and peasants were, "on emancipation," given "definite rights in the land." "Only the American Negro slave was emancipated without such rights and in the end this spelled for him the continuation of slavery."[51] More specifically, the absence of land reform in the South opened the door to a counterrevolution that would transform the propertyless freedmen into semi-slaves — indebted sharecroppers, convict laborers, and the like.

Du Bois casts some blame for the absence of land reform upon the same black leaders whose moderation he otherwise praises. "The Negro's own black leadership was naturally of many sorts," according to Du Bois:

> Some, like the whites, were petty bourgeois, seeking to climb to wealth; others were educated men, helping to develop a new nation without regard to mere race lines, while a third group were idealists, trying to uplift the Negro race and put them on a par with the whites. But how was this to be accomplished? In the minds of very few of them was there any clear and distinct

50 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 667.

51 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 667.

> plan for the development of a laboring class into a position of power and mastery over the modern industrial state. And in this lack of vision, they were not singular in America.[52]

Du Bois seems to be suggesting here that the weakness of socialist ideology among black leaders and Americans generally is responsible for "this lack of vision." That said, the petty-bourgeois background of so many black leaders raises serious doubts about Du Bois's characterization of the Reconstruction governments as "dictatorships of labor." In fact, as Eric Foner points out, most black politicians during Reconstruction were conservative or silent on the issue of land redistribution.[53] On this particular issue, Du Bois's analysis should have been more materialist than it was.

The Counterrevolution of Property

Du Bois was arguably even more concerned in *Black Reconstruction* with explaining the counterrevolution that overthrew Reconstruction than he was with celebrating its achievements. Hundreds of pages of the book discuss this issue, including two of the book's final chapters, namely, "Counter-revolution of Property" (chapter 14) and "Back Toward Slavery" (chapter 16). One of the key themes of these chapters is that this counterrevolution was brought about by a class (the planters) for economic reasons, not by a race (whites) for reasons of racial animus or racial ideology. This was truly, Du Bois emphasizes, a counterrevolution of *property*.

Du Bois writes that "the overthrow of Reconstruction was in essence a revolution inspired by property, and not a race war."[54]

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52 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 612.

53 Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863–1877* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1988), 117. Foner's book generally supports the key claims of *Black Reconstruction*.

54 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 622.

Elsewhere he adds, "It was not, then, race and culture calling out of the South in 1876; it was property and privilege, shrieking to its kind, and privilege and property heard and recognized the voice of its own."[55] This was a *bourgeois* counterrevolution against the "dictatorships of labor." This is how Du Bois summarizes this counterrevolution, otherwise known as the Compromise of 1876, which included the withdrawal of federal troops from the South:

> The bargain of 1876 was essentially an understanding by which the Federal Government ceased to sustain the right to vote of half of the laboring population of the South, and left capital as represented by the old planter class, the new Northern capitalist, and the capitalist that began to rise out of the poor whites, with a control of labor greater than in any modern industrial state in civilized lands. Out of that there has arisen in the South an exploitation of labor unparalleled in modern times, with a government in which all pretense at party alignment or regard for universal suffrage is given up. The methods of government have gone uncriticized, and elections are by secret understanding and manipulation; the dictatorship of capital in the South is complete.[56]

"The dictatorship of capital in the South is complete" — not a dictatorship of an undifferentiated white race. In fact, Du Bois argues,

> The new dictatorship became a manipulation of the white labor vote which followed the lines of similar control in the North, while it proceeded to deprive the black voter by violence and force of any vote at all. The rivalry of these two classes of labor and their competition neutralized the labor vote in the South.[57]

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55 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 630.

56 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 630.

57 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 630.

The dictatorship of capital, in sum, brought about the oppression and disenfranchisement of black workers, in part to win the support of white workers. But while white workers kept the right to vote, they had little more political power than blacks. The outcome of the counterrevolution of 1876 was thus the racial oppression of black workers; the destruction of democracy; a divided working class; and the "unparalleled" exploitation of labor, black and white. Indeed, capital in the South enjoyed, in Du Bois's words, "a control of labor greater than in any modern industrial state in civilized lands."[58] Without civil and political rights, moreover, many black workers were eventually reduced to the status of semi-slaves, tied to planters by debt and violence. The planters would remain the politically dominant class in the South until their power was finally broken by the Civil Rights Movement.[59]

This brings us to the question of white working-class racism. Why did white workers support the dictatorship of capital and the oppression of black workers? Du Bois viewed such racism as extremely powerful and extensive, so much so that he sometimes doubted whether working-class solidarity and socialism were in any way realistic in the United States. In fact, Du Bois wrote *Black Reconstruction* during a period when he was unusually pessimistic about the possibility of interracial solidarity. The year before *Black Reconstruction* was published, Du Bois penned an infamous editorial in *The Crisis*, the magazine he long edited, which called for the voluntary self-segregation of African Americans.[60] The editorial stirred up a firestorm of criticism within the strongly integrationist (and interracial) NAACP.

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58 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 630.

59 See Jack M. Bloom, *Class, Race, and the Civil Rights Movement*, second edition (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2019).

60 Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality*, 335f.

But self-segregation was never a principle or ultimate end for Du Bois. It was a tactic — and one he gradually abandoned during the 1940s. Similarly, Du Bois never concluded in *Black Reconstruction*, or in any of his subsequent writings, that interracial working-class solidarity was impossible. It was just, at specific times and for specific reasons, very difficult to achieve. For Du Bois, white working-class racism was above all a puzzle that needed to be solved, not a permanent state of affairs. It troubled him because he was convinced that neither capitalism nor the racial oppression it produced could be overthrown if racism prevented the unification of white and black workers. And Du Bois was clear in *Black Reconstruction* that his ultimate goal was to unify "slaves black, brown, yellow and white, under a dictatorship of the proletariat."[61] There was no other road, as he saw it, to either the emancipation of labor or the overthrow of racial oppression.

As it happened, white workers in the South generally supported the overthrow of Reconstruction and the oppression of blacks. They generally supported, that is, the bourgeois counterrevolution of property that established a dictatorship of capital. What explains this paradox? Why would a group of workers who would have been stronger had they united with another group of workers instead support their exploiters in the oppression of that other group? Throughout *Black Reconstruction*, Du Bois emphasizes that white working-class animosity toward blacks stems from competition over jobs. Capitalism everywhere pits workers against one another, such that workers view others as competitors, even enemies. Capitalism creates a kind of war of all against all as workers scramble to find jobs and keep them. Of course, this war allows capitalists to keep wages low. For Du Bois, white working-class racism evolved out of their fear that capitalists would replace them with black

61 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 635.

workers, including newly emancipated workers, who were willing to work for lower wages. It was this same fear of competition, Du Bois argued, that had led to the formation of two labor movements in the antebellum period.

The fear of unemployment, according to Du Bois, was particularly strong before the creation of the modern welfare state. And so white workers used what power they had to exclude blacks from the labor market. Hence white demands that blacks be banished from certain occupations or workplaces; hence the exclusion of blacks from craft unions; hence white violence against black coworkers and strikebreakers. Racism could be "found, invented and proved" in order to justify these practices, in the same way that slaveowners had earlier "found, invented and proved" racism to justify theirs. Here is Du Bois explaining the violence of whites against African Americans:

> Total depravity, human hate and *Schadenfreude*, do not explain fully the mob spirit in America. Before the wide eyes of the mob is ever the Shape of Fear. Back of the writhing, yelling, cruel-eyed demons who break, destroy, maim and lynch and burn at the stake, is a knot, large or small, of normal human beings, and these human beings at heart are desperately afraid of something. Of what? Of many things, but usually of losing their jobs, being declassed, degraded, or actually disgraced; of losing their hopes, their savings, their plans for their children; of the actual pangs of hunger, of dirt, of crime. And of all this, most ubiquitous in modern industrial society is that fear of unemployment.[62]

White workers, in short, believed that it was better to be exploited than not to be exploited (i.e., unemployed). They feared

62 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 678.

unemployment, which meant no wages, more than they feared low wages. And so white workers sided with people who were offering jobs and looked like them instead of with darker people who shared their plight. This was an understandable decision but an error nonetheless. White workers as well as black suffered — and continue to suffer — from their lack of solidarity.

Du Bois also emphasizes that the planter class was ever prepared to encourage and aggravate the animosity between white and black workers. "They lied about the Negroes," he writes, and "accused them of theft, crime, moral enormities and laughable grotesqueries." The planters' purpose was to forestall "the danger of a united Southern labor movement by appealing to the fear and hate of white labor and offering them alliance and leisure."[63] The planters, Du Bois writes, encouraged white workers "to ridicule Negroes and beat them, kill and burn their bodies" and "even gave the poor whites their daughters in marriage, and raised a new oligarchy on the tottering, depleted foundations of the old."[64]

Du Bois very briefly presents another explanation for white working-class racism — in the post-Reconstruction era — that has become the focus of much attention. His discussion of this spans only a few paragraphs, but it is sometimes discussed as if it were the very core of *Black Reconstruction*. And it is the source of the most popular catchphrase of the book — although Du Bois himself never used the phrase — namely, "the wages of whiteness."[65]

Du Bois suggests that white workers in the South — but not blacks — received "a sort of public and psychological wage" as a

63 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 633.

64 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 633.

65 This phrase has been popularized by David R. Roediger's book, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991).

supplement to the low wages paid by their employers.[66] Of what did this wage consist? Du Bois points out that white workers could enter public parks, send their children to "the best schools," and apply for jobs in police departments. Blacks could do none of these things. White workers could also walk public streets without being accosted or assaulted; blacks could not. In addition, white workers had the right to vote, and while this did not result in any real political power, the courts treated them with leniency because they were dependent on white votes. Blacks could not vote, so the courts treated them harshly.[67]

Du Bois is mainly alluding here to the civil and political rights of white workers, and to the exercise of those rights. Calling these rights a "psychological" wage, however, is confusing: These rights were real and enforceable; they did not just exist in the heads or minds of white workers. In any event, "the wages of whiteness" turn out to consist primarily of the civil and political rights enjoyed by white workers but denied to blacks following Reconstruction. White workers had certain rights in addition to low wages; black workers had no rights and even lower wages. This is a useful shorthand description of the Jim Crow era.

Du Bois also includes "public deference and titles of courtesy" in the extra "wage" that white workers but not black were given. White workers had a certain status (at least among other whites) that blacks did not. And Du Bois notes that newspapers flattered the poor whites while ignoring or ridiculing blacks. Here again, these things were not just in the minds of white workers, so calling them "psychological" is odd. In any event, "the wages of whiteness" refers to the rights and status enjoyed by white workers in addition to their low wages.

66 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 700.

67 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 700–1.

The question is, how do these "wages" explain racism? They *describe* a racist society, but how do they *produce* racial hatred or violence? Du Bois does not say much about this, but he implies that white workers felt compelled to resist any effort to extend to black workers the same rights and deference they received:

> [White] laborers … would rather have low wages upon which they could eke out an existence than see colored labor with a decent wage. White labor saw in every advance of Negroes a threat to their racial prerogatives, so that in many districts Negroes were afraid to build decent homes or dress well, or own carriages, bicycles or automobiles, because of possible retaliation on the part of the whites. Thus every problem of labor advance in the South was skillfully turned by demagogues into a matter of inter-racial jealousy.[68]

If blacks enjoyed the same rights and social esteem as white workers, Du Bois seems to say, white workers could no longer claim to be superior to them or to anyone else in society — and that, by implication, was presumably intolerable to whites, even if it meant "eking out an existence."

Du Bois thus presents two explanations for the racism of white workers: white workers become racists to justify their efforts to prevent black workers from replacing them at work, and they become racists to justify their efforts to prevent blacks from enjoying the same rights and status they enjoy. There is undoubtedly some truth to both these arguments. But it is also obvious to Du Bois that neither adequately explains why white workers could not or would not come to see that a united front with black workers against capitalists would result in higher wages, greater rights, and a higher status for themselves as well as for black workers.

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68 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 701.

This failure of vision, Du Bois understood, is not inevitable.

In fact, Du Bois clearly did not believe that his two explanations worked in all times and places. As noted earlier, Du Bois held out hope in *Black Reconstruction* for the emancipation of "slaves black, brown, yellow and white, under a dictatorship of the proletariat."[69] As we shall see, he would later praise certain trade unions for building interracial solidarity, and he would advise radical black youth that the liberation of both blacks and whites depended upon their mutual cooperation and friendship. Du Bois never developed a simple formula or technique for bringing about working-class solidarity. Of course, no such formula or technique exists. But *Black Reconstruction* reminds us why workers' solidarity is so important, and Du Bois would preach the gospel of interracial solidarity for the rest of his days. He later wrote that *Black Reconstruction* marks a break with his earlier "provincial racialism" and was an attempt "to envisage the broader problems of work and income as affecting all men regardless of color or nationality."[70]

AFTER *BLACK RECONSTRUCTION*

Du Bois would remain a committed socialist and Marxist until his death in 1963. *Black Reconstruction*, in other words, was just one part — the most extraordinary part, no doubt — of a larger body of Marxist work written by Du Bois. Unfortunately, Du Bois also became a Stalinist, and he would articulate a view of socialism that was deeply problematic. A brief review of some of Du Bois's key writings after 1935 demonstrates that *Black Reconstruction* was by no means a unique or unusual foray into Marxist theory.

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69 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 635.

70 W. E. B. Du Bois, *In Battle for Peace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007 [1952]), 125.

In 1940, Du Bois published an autobiography, *Dusk of Dawn*.[71] He was then seventy-two years old. (A second autobiography was published posthumously in the United States in 1968.[72]) Near the end of this volume, Du Bois presents a "Basic American Negro Creed" that he originally wrote in 1936, as an appendix to an essay in which, among other things, he declared his belief in Marxism.[73] "We believe," the creed states, "in the ultimate triumph of some form of Socialism the world over; that is, common ownership and control of the means of production and equality of income." Toward this end, the creed advocates that "Negro workers should join the labor movement and affiliate with such trade unions as welcome them and treat them fairly. We believe that workers' Councils organized by Negroes for interracial understanding should strive to fight race prejudice in the working class." And the creed calls "for vesting the ultimate power of the state in the hands of the workers."[74] Working-class solidarity, interracial unionism, the fight against racism, common ownership of the means of production, and workers' control of the state — this is Du Bois's program for black workers and, indeed, for working people around the globe.

Several years later, during World War II, Du Bois would become preoccupied, and not for the first time, with the question of colonialism. A longtime advocate of pan-Africanism, Du Bois rightly worried that colonialism would endure long after World War

71 W. E. B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007 [1940]).

72 Du Bois, *The Autobiography*.

73 Du Bois, "The Negro and Social Reconstruction," in Aptheker, *Against Racism*. As Du Bois explains in *Dusk of Dawn*, this creed was too radical for the group of educators who commissioned it, including Alain Locke, the so-called dean of the Harlem Renaissance, so "The Negro and Social Reconstruction" was rejected (and never published during his lifetime). Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 319–22.

74 Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 160.

II, despite the high-minded phrases and promises of European leaders during the war. Shortly after presiding at the Fifth Pan-African Conference in Manchester, England, Du Bois summarized his views about the capitalist basis of colonialism and the color line in his book *Color and Democracy*. "Not until we face the fact," writes Du Bois, "that colonies are a method of investment yielding unusual [i.e., large] returns, or expected to do so, will we realize that the colonial system is part of the battle between capital and labor in the modern economy."[75]

Du Bois goes on to criticize the race-centered view of imperialism when he presents his own alternative perspective:

> It happens, not for biological or historical reasons, that most of the inhabitants of colonies today have colored skins. This does not make them one group or race or even allied biological groups or races. In fact these colored people vary vastly in physique, history, and cultural experience. The one thing that unites them today in the world's thought is their poverty, ignorance, and disease, which renders them all, in different degrees, unresisting victims of modern capitalistic exploitation. On this foundation the modern "Color Line" has been built, with all its superstitions and pseudo-science. And it is this complex today which more than anything else excuses the suppression of democracy, not only in Asia and Africa, but in Europe and the Americas. Hitler seized on "negroid" characteristics to accuse the French of inferiority. Britain points to miscegenation with colored races to prove democracy impossible in South America. But it is left to the greatest modern democracy, the United States, to defend human slavery and caste, and even defeat democratic government in its own boundaries, ostensibly

75 Du Bois, *The World and Africa & Color and Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007 [1945]), 275.

> because of an inferior race, but really in order to make profits out of cheap labor, both black and white.[76]

Racism, in other words, is the "ostensible" motivation behind — and a justification for — slavery, caste, and colonialism. But this is a fig leaf — or "camouflage," as Du Bois wrote in *Black Reconstruction*.[77] The actual motivation is the accumulation of profits by means of cheap labor. Herein, for Du Bois, is the secret of "white supremacy": the capitalist imperative to exploit labor is achieved by creating a color line that oppresses workers of color and deceives white workers into believing they are superior to them, thereby dividing and cheapening *all* labor.

Following World War II, Du Bois entered into the orbit of the pro-Soviet Communist Party of the United States, a group from which he had long kept his distance for a variety of reasons, despite his enthusiasm for the Soviet Union. In October 1946, Du Bois was invited to speak in Columbia, South Carolina, to delegates of the Southern Negro Youth Congress, a group founded by the Communist Party. (Paul Robeson and the novelist Howard Fast spoke to the group the night before Du Bois's speech.) In his address, "Behold the Land," Du Bois advises the delegates:

> Slowly but surely the working people of the South, white and black, must come to remember that their emancipation depends upon their mutual cooperation; upon their acquaintanceship with each other; upon their friendship; upon their social intermingling. Unless this happens each is going to be made the football to break the heads and hearts of the other.

76 Du Bois, *Color and Democracy*, 293.

77 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 535 (see also 428, 674).

Du Bois goes on to say:

> The oil and sulphur; the coal and iron; the cotton and corn; the lumber and cattle belong to you the workers, black and white, and not to the thieves who hold them and use them to enslave you. They can be rescued and restored to the people if you have the guts to strive for the real right to vote, the right to real education, the right to happiness and health and the total abolition of the father of these scourges of mankind, poverty.[78]

Du Bois then speaks of the white workers, the "poor whites," of the South. He has become much less pessimistic about the possibility of interracial solidarity than he was a decade earlier:

> It may seem like a failing fight when the newspapers ignore you; when every effort is made by white people in the South to count you out of citizenship and to act as though you did not exist as human beings while all the time they are profiting by your labor, gleaning wealth from your sacrifices and trying to build a nation and a civilization upon your degradation. You must remember that despite all this, you have allies, and allies even in the white South. First and greatest of these possible allies are the white working classes about you, the poor whites whom you have been taught to despise and who in turn have learned to fear and hate you. This must not deter you from efforts to make them understand, because in the past, in their ignorance and suffering, they have been led foolishly to look upon you as the cause of most of their distress.[79]

This attitude, Du Bois suggests, "has been deliberately cultivated ever since emancipation."[80] He insists that the color line between

78 W. E. B. Du Bois, "Behold the Land," *Freedomways* 4, no. 1 (Winter 1964), 9, 13.

79 Du Bois, "Behold the Land," 9.

80 Du Bois, "Behold the Land," 9.

black and white workers must be broken, a division deliberately fostered by capitalists and their political servants. This was an idea to which Du Bois returned again and again during his final decades, an idea that goes back at least to his 1920 essay "On Work and Wealth."[81]

As we have seen, Du Bois encouraged black workers to join trade unions in his 1936 "creed." In the following years, Du Bois continued to see trade unions, especially the industrial unions of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), as the best hope for creating interracial working-class solidarity in the United States. In a 1948 essay, Du Bois writes, "Probably the greatest and most effective effort toward interracial understanding among the working masses has come about through the trade unions."[82] The CIO's efforts had brought about "an astonishing spread of interracial tolerance and understanding. Probably no movement in the last 30 years," he wrote, "has been so successful in softening race prejudice among the masses."[83]

In this same 1948 text, Du Bois reiterates his belief that racism and imperialism — and wars of liberation — are primarily generated by capitalists and their pursuit of profits:

> [T]he American Negro is part of a world situation. Negroes are in a quasi-colonial status. They belong to the lower classes of the world. These classes are, have been, and are going to be for a long time exploited by the more powerful groups and nations in the world for the benefit of those groups. The real problem

81 See W. E. B. Du Bois, *Darkwater: Voices From Within the Veil* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1920), 55, where he notes "the deliberate effort to divert the thoughts of men, and particularly of workingmen, into channels of race hatred against blacks."

82 W. E. B. Du Bois, "Race Relations in the United States, 1917–1947," *Phylon* 9, no. 3 (1948), 236.

83 Du Bois, "Race Relations," 236.

> before the United States is whether we are really beginning to reason about this world-wide feeling of class dominance with its resultant wars: wars for rivalry for the sharing of the spoils of exploitation, and wars against exploitation.[84]

It is telling that Du Bois describes imperialism and colonialism here in terms of exploitation and class dominance and not in terms of national or racial oppression. Of course, Du Bois fully understands that colonialism entails national and racial oppression, but its primary cause is the capitalist's search for cheap labor.

At the height of McCarthyism in the United States, in 1950, Du Bois drafted a book-length manuscript called "Russia and America: An Interpretation." His publisher refused to print it because it was too pro-Soviet and too critical of the United States. Incredibly, it has still not been published.[85] One important section of this book — the whole of which is too long to adequately summarize here — argues that the Soviet Union is more democratic than the United States because Soviet citizens are able to discuss, debate, and decide "matters of vital interest to the people, that is, work and wage and living conditions — matters not simply of interest, but of personal knowledge and experience." For Du Bois, clearly, this is the core meaning of socialist democracy:

> Everybody wants to talk about these matters; everyone attends meetings twice or three times a week; they discuss the local industries; the water supply, the schools and the man or woman

84 Du Bois, "Race Relations," 245.

85 Du Bois's manuscript is available online at ia801704.us.archive.org/2/items/du-bois-russia-and-america-1950/Du%20Bois%20Russia%20and%20America,%201950%20.pdf. Mullen, *Un-American*, 85–95, provides an overview of the book. Mullen remarks upon "the nearly complete blindness of 'Russia and America' to [the] disasters of Soviet history": "It is not just the gulags and purges that are missing from his account of the Soviet state but also the alliance with Hitler, the seizure of the Balkans, the repression of dissidents, and Stalin's colonization of Eastern Europe after 1945" (94).

> best fitted to represent their thought and decision in the county meetings. If the delegate selected does not act and vote as they wish, they recall him and substitute another.[86]

"It is a mistake," Du Bois concludes, "to think democracy has been throttled in the Soviet Republics." He likens local soviets to New England town meetings, a venue in which ordinary people "come together to talk, propose, argue, and to decide; to elect a delegate to a higher Soviet which in turn elects to one still higher and so on to the Supreme Soviet. Here is pure and effective democracy," Du Bois suggests, "such as has almost disappeared from the United States."[87] In the United States, in fact, "our election of the president, appointment of judges, representation in the Senate and inequality of electoral districts show the legal restraints on democracy; while extralegally but by common consent are disfranchisement of Negroes and the poor, the use of money in elections, and the well-paid lobbyists of Big Business in our legislatures, not to mention the press and periodical monopoly."[88] Du Bois concludes,

> It is with the greatest difficulty that the American electorate gets a chance to express its mind or receive the truth upon which to make up its mind; or secure sanctions by which it may make its legislators carry out the popular will. In both Great Britain and France, and in pre-war Germany and Italy, and certainly in the United States, the will of the people has long been thwarted by wealth, privilege, and ignorance.[89]

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86 W. E. B. Du Bois, "Russia and America: An Interpretation," unpublished (1950), 270.

87 Du Bois, "Russia and America," 267. Du Bois fails to mention that organized opposition to the ruling Communist Party would get one arrested, or worse.

88 Du Bois, "Russia and America," 268A.

89 Du Bois, "Russia and America," 268A.

In 1952, Du Bois began teaching at the interracial Jefferson School of Social Science in Manhattan, which was devoted to workers' education. The school was established by the Communist Party to educate working-class people and to train class-conscious militants. Du Bois taught courses on imperialism, the slave trade, Africa, pan-Africanism, and Reconstruction. (The writer Lorraine Hansberry was in his first class.) The course on Reconstruction argued that the socialist revolution requires interracial solidarity against capitalists.[90] Du Bois taught at the Jefferson School until 1956, when it was forced to close.

Du Bois's politics were never closer to the Communist Party's during these years, and, as we have seen, his enthusiasm for the Soviet Union continued unabated. In 1953, Du Bois penned a paean to Stalin — with the obligatory insults to Trotsky — following the death of the Soviet leader.[91] Du Bois justified the Soviet dictatorship as necessary until such time as Soviet workers were "more intelligent, more experienced and in less danger from interference from without."[92] It was just such alleged interference, moreover, that led Du Bois to support the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956. Not surprisingly, he vehemently denied that socialism must be democratic, although that was certainly his ideal.[93]

Du Bois's vision of socialism is problematic, to say the least. It was based in part on his long-standing belief that smarter and better educated people — the "talented tenth," as he called them — had a responsibility to lead "ignorant" and uneducated people, who were not capable of governing themselves. Du Bois saw Stalin (and

90 Denise Lynn, "When W. E. B. Du Bois Went to the Masses," *Jacobin*, December 27, 2019.

91 W. E. B. Du Bois, "On Stalin," *National Guardian*, March 16, 1953.

92 W. E. B. Du Bois, "Socialism and Democracy: A Debate," *American Socialist* 4, no. 1 (1957), 8.

93 Du Bois, "Socialism and Democracy," 6.

later Mao Zedong) as educated and experienced leaders who were selflessly pulling — or perhaps dragging — masses of ignorant peasants into the twentieth century. Their noble ends allegedly justified their often-brutal methods. This kind of elitism erupts, incidentally, in a little-noted passage in *Black Reconstruction* in which Du Bois states that it would have been "best" (even if politically impractical) if there had been a property qualification for voting after the Civil War and only a "gradual enfranchisement" of black workers, pending the establishment of public schools throughout the South.[94]

Du Bois drafted a second autobiography in 1958–9 and slightly revised it in 1960. *The Autobiography of W. E. B. Du Bois* was edited by his friend Herbert Aptheker, a longtime Communist Party activist whom Du Bois had befriended after the war and whom he would appoint as his literary executor. Shortened versions of *The Autobiography* were published in the Soviet Union in 1962 and shortly later, posthumously, in China and East Germany. It was finally published in the United States in 1968. In this text, Du Bois again expresses his Marxist beliefs and distances himself from his earlier "racialism" or race-centered views. "I believe in the dictum of Karl Marx," he writes, "that the economic foundation of a nation is widely decisive for its politics, its art and its culture."[95] Du Bois adds that as a young man, "What I wanted was the same economic opportunities that white Americans had. Beyond this I was not thinking":

> I … did not realize what wretched exploitation white Americans and white workers of all sorts faced and had faced in the

94 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 619. On this issue, see Paul M. Heideman, "Black Marxism Off the Color Line: W. E. B. Du Bois and Oliver Cromwell Cox as Democratic Theorists," in Christopher Phelps and Robin Vandome, eds., *Marxism and America: New Appraisals* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021), 144–69.

95 Du Bois, *The Autobiography*, 290.

> past, and would face in years to come. Although a student of social progress, I did not know the labor development in the United States. I was bitter at lynching, but not moved by the treatment of white miners in Colorado or Montana. I never sang the songs of Joe Hill, and the terrible strike at Lawrence, Massachusetts, did not stir me, because I knew that factory strikers like these would not let a Negro work beside them or live in the same town. It was hard for me to outgrow this mental isolation, and to see that the plight of the white workers was fundamentally the same as that of the black, *even if the white worker helped enslave the black*.[96]

A group of workers who would have been empowered by uniting with another group of workers instead helped to oppress that other group. This is the tragedy — and the puzzle — of the American labor movement of Du Bois's time. But Du Bois's earlier racialism, he implies, not only blinded him to the exploitation of workers of all races but thereby prevented him from understanding the true nature of the racial oppression of blacks.

Du Bois also speaks in *The Autobiography* about the type of society he desires: "I believe in communism," he writes. "I mean by communism, a planned way of life in the production of wealth and work designed for building a state whose object is the highest welfare of its people and not merely the profit of a part." Du Bois adds that "all men should be employed according to their ability and that wealth and services should be distributed according to need. Once I thought that these ends could be attained under capitalism," Du Bois notes, but "After earnest observation I now believe that private ownership of capital and free enterprise are

96 Du Bois, *The Autobiography*, 305, emphasis added. Du Bois's "mental isolation" would seem to refer to the "provincial racialism" he wrote about in 1952.

leading the world to disaster."[97] Du Bois adds that democratic government in the United States "has almost ceased to function," noting that one-quarter of adults are disenfranchised and half do not vote. "We are ruled by those who control wealth and who by that power buy or coerce public opinion."[98]

Du Bois settled in Ghana in 1961 to work on a projected multivolume *Encyclopedia Africana*. He died there in 1963 at the age of ninety-five. Before he left the United States, Du Bois applied for membership in the Communist Party of the United States, to which he had been close since World War II. Du Bois's last major speech in the United States addressed, not surprisingly, the topic of "Socialism and the American Negro." It was delivered in May 1960 at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. Folkways Records produced a vinyl recording of the speech that same year.

In this speech, Du Bois reiterated his belief that "there is no doubt that the world of the twenty-first century will be overwhelmingly communistic."[99] He also offered some interesting critical reflections, from a Marxist perspective, on the Civil Rights Movement, which was by then in full swing. (The student sit-in movement began in February 1960 and spread across the South in a matter of weeks.) Du Bois's thoughts are worth quoting at length:

> The legal fight led by the NAACP has been an astonishing success. But its very success shows the limitations of law, and law enforcement, unless it has an economic program; unless the mass of Negro people have not simply legal rights, but have such rights to work and wage that enable them to live decently. Here in the United States we have had a stirring, in the Negro

97 Du Bois, *The Autobiography*, 57.

98 Du Bois, *The Autobiography*, 57.

99 W. E. B. Du Bois, "Socialism and the American Negro: May 1960," in *Against Racism*, 307.

> population, which emphasized these facts. … The experience in Montgomery, the extraordinary uprising of students, all over the south and beginning in the north, shows an awareness of our situation which is most encouraging. But it still does not reach the center of the problem. *And that center is not simply the right of Americans to spend their money as they wish and according to law, but the chance for American Negroes to have money to spend, because of employment in which they can make a decent wage*. What then is the next step? It is for American Negroes in increasing numbers, and more and more widely, to insist upon the legal rights which are already theirs, and to add to that increasingly a socialistic form of government, an insistence upon the welfare state, which denies the further carrying out of industry for the profit of those corporations which monopolize wealth and power.[100]

Martin Luther King Jr — who also became a socialist, like Du Bois — would say much the same thing about the necessity of decent wages for blacks just a few years later, demanding, among other things, a guaranteed income for all.[101] And like Du Bois, King became a strong advocate of multiracial trade unionism and working-class solidarity as the best means to end poverty and racism.[102]

CONCLUSION

Du Bois's turn to socialism and Marxism did not entail any lessening of his interest in or disgust with racism and the color line.

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100 Du Bois, "Socialism and the American Negro," 307, 312, emphasis added.

101 Martin Luther King Jr, *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), 172–4.

102 Michael K. Honey, *To the Promised Land: Martin Luther King and the Fight for Economic Justice* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2019).

Du Bois was committed to destroying racial oppression *before* he became a Marxist, and he remained just as committed to destroying racial oppression *after* he became a Marxist. Du Bois became an unapologetic Marxist and a committed socialist, in fact, not in spite of his hatred of racial oppression, but precisely because of that hatred. He was driven and attracted to Marxism and socialism by his quest to understand racial oppression and the best strategy to destroy it. Of course, his understanding of both racism and how we might subvert it changed radically once he became a Marxist and a socialist. This change is missed by scholars who assume that Du Bois's ideas were essentially fixed around the time he wrote *The Souls of Black Folk*.

Du Bois came to believe that the exploitation of the labor of black, brown, and "yellow" workers was the main foundation of and motivation for racial oppression around the globe and that the liberation of people of color, accordingly — *all* people of color, and not just workers — required the elimination of this exploitation, that is, socialism. Du Bois also looked at the "color line" differently after he became a Marxist. For the socialist Du Bois, the color line was problematic because it divided workers as well as races and thereby rendered working-class solidarity and socialist revolution — and the eradication of racial oppression as he now understood it — more difficult.

Du Bois deserves to be remembered as an eloquent critic of capitalism and its ineluctable consequences: racial oppression, colonialism, imperialism, war, poverty, and gross inequality, political as well as economic. Du Bois saw a clear relationship between capitalism and racial oppression, namely, cause and effect. He ranks among the most astute Marxists who have addressed the question of racial oppression, an incredibly rich tradition that includes such luminaries as Hubert Harrison, Claude McKay, José Carlos Mariátegui, Max Shachtman, C. L. R. James, Eric Williams,

Harry Haywood, Herbert Aptheker, Oliver Cromwell Cox, Claudia Jones, Frantz Fanon, Walter Rodney, Harold Wolpe, Neville Alexander, Angela Davis, Manning Marable, Stuart Hall, Adolph Reed, and Barbara Fields, among many others. We need to recognize and credit not only the Marxist Du Bois but this entire pantheon of Marxist theorists of race. Du Bois did not transcend this tradition, as some have implied. He was at the heart of it.

At his best, Du Bois could also be an eloquent advocate for democratic socialism — for multiracial working-class solidarity, for workers' control of the state and economy, and for an economy based on human needs. It is true that Du Bois's elitist vision of socialism was deeply flawed, and his apologetics for Stalin's dictatorship and authoritarian socialism are indefensible and detract from his legacy. Yet many of his contemporary acolytes deny the Marxist Du Bois, portraying him as a race-centered theorist or an "intersectionalist." He was neither. *Black Reconstruction in America*, I have shown, is a brilliant Marxist study that explains racial oppression and racism as products of capitalism. Denying Du Bois's Marxism results in a distorted view of Du Bois's life and ideas, including, ironically, his analysis of racial oppression and how we might destroy it.

ABSTRACT

In Yemen, hopes of a 2011 protest movement during the Arab Spring gave way to civil war and a brutal Saudi-led invasion. Thousands have been killed, and millions are close to starvation. A peace agreement could help Yemenis recover the frustrated hopes of the 2011 uprising — if Saudi Arabia stops demanding victory for its allies.

INTERVIEW
BY DANIEL FINN

Yemen in Purgatory

An Interview With Helen Lackner

Daniel Finn: For the last thirty years, Yemen has been formally united in a single state, although the conflict of the last decade has broken up that political unity in practice. Previously, however, Yemen had been divided into two states. What were the origins of that divide?

Helen Lackner: Yemen, within its current official borders, had never existed as a single state in the past, and I think that's worth remembering when trying to analyze the current situation. Way back, you had a number of different states that covered different parts of the country. More recently, in the nineteenth century,

you had Ottoman rule in what were roughly the borders of what became the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR), or North Yemen. After the British arrived in 1839, they gradually took control, to a large extent and not necessarily that closely, of what later became the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY), or South Yemen.

In the Ottoman period, what later became the YAR was ruled primarily by a Zaidi imam. That person was a member of a social group that considers themselves descendants of the prophet Muhammad. In Yemen, they are called sayyid; in other countries, they're called Hashemites or ashraf. This is particularly relevant if one looks now at the situation with the Houthis.

You had two states in the nineteenth century and until the middle of the twentieth century. One was ruled by an imam on a theocratic basis. Further south, after the British arrived, you had their colony in Aden and the Eastern and Western Protectorates, which were largely left to their own chaotic devices. There was much more chaos in the Western Protectorate than in the Eastern one, where you had semistates operating. That was basically the situation up to the early 1960s.

DF: What factors lay behind the republican military coup in 1962? Why was it followed by civil war and by the intervention of foreign powers in North Yemen?

HL: The military coup is known in Yemen as the revolution rather than as a coup, although, objectively, it was a coup. But it was generally described by most people in the country and is perceived today as the overthrow of the imamate and the beginning of a republic. It came about after decades of frustration against the imam.

The imams ruled very autocratically and oppressively — particularly the penultimate one, Ahmad bin Yahya. There had been

a large number of uprisings, the most famous being the ones in 1948 and 1955, when groups of educated elites opposed the imam and tried to overthrow him militarily. They were very severely repressed: a lot of heads were cut off and put on display to the public in various locations.

You had a regime that many describe as retrograde and comparable to the one that existed in Oman prior to 1970. The characteristics of that regime included heavy taxation throughout the country, which made life difficult for the population at large, and very limited investment in any of the modern aspects of life that people were interested in, such as health and education. The imam had also sent a number of officers for training to Iraq. They came back with Arab nationalist ideology, and therefore with anti-monarchical sentiments that made them ready to get rid of the imam.

Ahmad bin Yahya died in his bed. His successor, his son Muhammad al-Badr, was quite progressive in certain senses and was expected to operate much more within an Arab nationalist framework, but he was in power for barely ten days before he was overthrown. The reason it became a civil war was that the revolutionaries failed to kill him. He escaped and went north, where he rallied tribespeople and was supported by the Saudi regime and others to fight back.

The revolutionaries were immediately supported by the Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser, who sent significant numbers of troops to Yemen. At times, there were up to seventy thousand Egyptians in the country, as well as a lot of administrators and political advisers who were really more than advisers. It was a civil war but with significant international involvement, just like the civil war today.

The Egyptians supported the republican side, while the Saudis and the British supported the monarchist side. The British were a

bit less open about their involvement, but you could call it an open secret. They sent some Special Air Service (SAS) units, and there was even some Israeli support for the monarchists.

The civil war had basically reached a stalemate by late 1967 or early 1968. After Nasser withdrew his troops, there was an attempt by the royalists to take over the city of Sana'a, with a seventy-day siege that remains very famous in the memories of Yemenis. But that siege failed to oust the republicans. In 1967–9, there was a process whereby the most extreme royalists were defeated or marginalized, while on the other hand, the left wing of the republican movement was also marginalized. In some cases, people were killed.

That made possible the deal that was reached in 1970. Those who signed it agreed to retain the republic. However, it was a "republic" of right-wing republicans and the less extreme supporters of the imamate. None of the imam's family were allowed to come back, but at the same time, the left wing of the movement was also eliminated.

DF: How did Ali Abdullah Saleh come to be the leader of North Yemen by the end of the 1970s?

HL: Ali Abdullah Saleh was an army officer from a small tribe called the Sanhan, a minor branch of the most important tribal confederation in Yemen, the Hashid. In 1977–8, three Yemeni presidents were assassinated, including two in the North. The first was Ibrahim al-Hamdi, who is still remembered and revered all over the country as the great hope of Yemenis. He was assassinated in October 1977, just as he was about to go to Aden to sign a unity agreement with the president of the South, Salim Rubai Ali, known as Salmine.

After al-Hamdi's assassination, another officer, Ahmad al-Ghashmi, became president in Sana'a. He in turn was

assassinated in June 1978, supposedly by an envoy from Salmine. There's some debate about whether that is really what happened — that is to say, the identity of his assassin is clear, because they died together, but whether it was on Salmine's orders is another question. In any case, the southern leaders used that as an opportunity to kill Salmine, and that's how Yemen lost three presidents by the end of June 1978.

At that point, several maneuvers took place in Sana'a. I suspect that Saleh was appointed as president on the assumption that he would essentially take orders from various figures. When I first went to Sana'a in 1980, throughout that period and for many years afterward, all of us expected there would be a coup tomorrow morning. We expected to wake up and find that Saleh had been assassinated.

The saying was that nobody would sell him a life insurance policy for a million dollars, because it would have to be paid so quickly. History has shown, of course, that this was a mistaken assumption. He lasted for thirty-three years as president.

DF: What was the nature of the struggle against British colonial rule in Aden in the 1960s? And what was the outcome of that struggle?

HL: Aden was a different situation. After the revolution in Sana'a in 1962, there was an incentive for the southern nationalists to seriously challenge British colonial rule. There had been challenges to British rule throughout the period, of greater or lesser significance. But they were very localized: southern Yemeni society was already very fragmented at that time.

After 1962, you had the influence of Nasserism, on the one hand, as well as the rise of the trade union movement in Aden, on the other. The unions were a very important element of left-wing

politics in that region that had been emerging since the early to mid-1950s. Ever since the refinery had been built, there was a strong trade union movement in Aden.

A number of people who had been sent to study at the American University of Beirut came back very much influenced by the Movement of Arab Nationalists (MAN), established in 1958. The MAN was the ancestor of many left-wing movements in the Arab world, such as the two main Palestinian left-wing organizations, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), as well as the movement in Oman, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arabian Gulf (PFLOAG).

You had the combination of two movements, one primarily rural, which was connected with the MAN, and one urban, which stemmed from the trade union movement. That is why you ended up with a struggle as much between two rival liberation movements as against the British: the Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen (FLOSY), which was aligned with the trade unions and very Nasserist in its political orientation, and the National Liberation Front (NLF). The NLF included MAN people, as well as those who had an even clearer left-wing ideology, and others who had a more tribal approach. It was a much more diverse movement than FLOSY.

Before Britain left, in the summer of 1967, there was more fighting going on between these two groups than between either of them and the British. The NLF effectively defeated FLOSY in August of that year, which is one of the reasons why the British negotiated independence with the NLF rather than with FLOSY.

Another reason was that FLOSY was, in British eyes and in reality, closely associated with Nasserism, and the British in that period considered Nasser to be barely an improvement on the devil. A third factor was that they knew extremely little about the

NLF. When you read documents or memoirs that British officials have written on the period, they often recognize that they basically had no idea what the NLF was.

DF: After the British withdrawal, why did South Yemen come under the rule of the NLF and then become the only Arab country with a formal commitment to Soviet-style Marxism? Behind the rhetoric, what did that system actually mean for the people over whom it ruled?

HL: The second part of your question is the easier one. What it meant for the people was a very reasonable standard of living — indeed, a standard of living above and beyond the financial capacities of the state, given its economic circumstances and limited natural resources. It is important to remember that the two main economic resources of that part of Yemen were the Aden port, whose activities collapsed with the closure of the Suez Canal after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, and the British base, which of course closed when the British left.

One of the major assets of the PDRY regime was its ability to provide good education, health services, infrastructure, and jobs throughout the country. Most people had incomes that were not particularly fantastic but that were sufficient to maintain their families, thanks to food subsidies and other basic supports.

That's the aspect of the regime that people look back on even today as containing elements of "the good old days." Others now look back at the British colonial period as "the good old days." But the PDRY is certainly remembered positively by those who remember it, and by their children and now grandchildren, for having provided adequate living standards without corruption and without major differentials. That was true in both urban and rural areas — the majority of people were rural, even in that

period — despite the fact that the agrarian reform and the rural systems were not entirely satisfactory by any standards.

As to the first part of the question: Why did it become the only country committed to Marxism in any shape or form? They didn't call it Marxism, by the way — they called it "scientific socialism." You have to look at the whole historical period that you're dealing with. We're talking about the 1970s and the 1980s, after the formal end of the Sino-Soviet dispute. We're also talking about the remains of the impact of the Cultural Revolution in China. There had been a strong influence from China early on: the debates within the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP) reflected those problems.

I think it's largely because of the overall international situation that this was possible. From 1967 onward, you saw the defeat of Nasserism and Arab nationalism, at a time when Ba'athism in Iraq and Syria was also largely discredited for those who had any familiarity with those regimes. Therefore, the forms of socialism that appeared to offer a possible or reasonable future were Eastern European, Chinese, or Cuban. There was a big Cuban medical mission in Aden — the Cubans trained and developed the medical school there. That had a strong impact ideologically.

We have to remember as well that we were in the context of the Cold War, and the Soviet Union thus found it very convenient to have access to Aden as a naval position and to have a kind of foothold in the region, particularly since the rest of the Arabian Peninsula was run by autocratic monarchies, as it is today. Although that's not the complete answer, I think the factors that I've mentioned contributed significantly to it.

DF: Why did the ruling party in South Yemen then descend into quite bloody power struggles between rival factions in the 1970s and '80s?

HL: The short answer is, I wish I knew! I lived there for five years, which is a significant percentage of the time that the regime existed. It's one of the things that I would ask leaders when I came across them. The main question I kept asking them, which I never got an answer to, was: Why were they using external models rather than developing their own Marxist analysis based on the social and economic realities of the country?

The factionalism at an early stage clearly had a connection with what I've just talked about. For example, of the top leaders, Salmine was considered to be a populist following the Chinese line, whereas Abdul Fattah Ismail was seen as a sort of bureaucrat following a very straightforward Soviet bureaucratic approach. Ali Nasir Muhammad was seen as an in-between pragmatist. You could say that these differences between them were one element.

Many people say that it was merely a tribal struggle. I don't accept that. What happened in 1986, which was the bloodiest of all the struggles, deteriorated and did become a tribal struggle. After the initial fighting on January 13, people were attacked and killed because of their identity cards and where they came from. It degenerated into a tribal struggle, or a regional struggle, but that's not what it was at first.

The 1986 struggle, in my view, was initially nothing more than a power struggle: "I want to be in your seat." A few months after it happened, I went back to Yemen. I had just published my book on the PDRY a few months earlier in October 1985, and many people wanted me to write an analysis of the events of 1986 for an Arabic edition, although that never happened. I spent a month traveling around both the PDRY and Sana'a, where the defeated faction had taken refuge, interviewing as many leaders as I could get hold of and taking piles and piles of notes, which I still have.

I had a number of questions for them: What are your differences in foreign policy? What are your differences with respect to

social policies, economic policies, and particularly rural policies? The answers eventually made pages of nonsense. My conclusion was that the only thing they were fighting about was getting the top seat. That's certainly true for 1986.

The earlier power struggle in 1969 was a much more straightforward left-right clash over different policies. The one in 1978 was mainly perceived to be an anti-populist move, against those who were pro-Chinese, with the success of the more directly pro-Soviet side. I'm not sure to what extent that answers the question, but I certainly thought at the time, and I still think today, that these struggles were largely counterproductive.

Another element one has to remember is the support and sponsorship for opposition to the PDRY regime from the Saudis, the British, and all kinds of sources, who clearly egged them on. The regime had to contend with armed incursions and fighting enemies across the board, including the people who had been defeated when British colonialism ended, and then later after the struggles in 1969, 1978, and 1986.

They certainly had real enemies, and it was obvious that these enemies would use both direct and indirect means to foster division and dissent among the leadership. But they could have responded to those provocations by having more of a united front, which obviously they didn't do.

DF: How did unification come about between the two parts of Yemen in the early 1990s? What kind of system took shape in the new state after unification?

HL: Unification took place in 1990 as a result of several factors. Yemeni unity had long been the most popular political slogan among the official ones in both parts of the country. In Yemeni schools every morning, the children would stand up and declaim

the standard national slogans. Of the three elements, Yemeni unity was the most popular; the other two were "defense of the Yemeni revolution" and "implementation of the Five-Year Plan." That was very ingrained.

People also tended to have relatives in the other part of the country. An enormous number of South Yemenis migrated to work in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states via the North, because the YAR had a special agreement with the Saudis, which meant that its citizens didn't have to go through the usual regulations for foreign workers and could come and go as they wished and work without a sponsor. Going in with a North Yemeni passport was very convenient for anybody, so many southerners went to Sana'a to claim a YAR passport, which was allowed.

There is, in my view, a Yemeni nation, even though there are differences between somebody from the far east and somebody from the far north. There are certain common features that most Yemenis share. For decades, when people talked about Arab unity, I considered it a joke — I never thought it could happen — whereas I always felt that Yemeni unity was a real possibility, because there was this cultural and historical connection of people within the country from one end of it to the other — including a few bits that are currently *not* part of it.

Of course, there were a number of political elements. On the one hand, internally, both the PDRY and the YAR were going into crises. By that time, Ali Abdullah Saleh had been in power for ten years. His regime was consolidating, and it was causing considerable dissatisfaction among the people. Oil income had only just started in 1986–7. There was an uprising in a central region against his regime. Saleh had his problems to deal with.

The PDRY regime after 1986 was basically discredited for the population, because the January 13 struggle was perceived by everybody as nothing more than a murderous power struggle,

during which at least five thousand people were killed. There had been massive emigration of the succession of defeated factions since 1969. That regime failed to reestablish credibility among the population, despite a number of very positive efforts that it made — for example, allowing much more freedom of expression and allowing other parties to exist.

One of the things that triggered unity was the discovery of oil at a particular location, which was on the border between both the Yemeni states and Saudi Arabia. It was perceived, I think rightly, that if the two Yemens started fighting each other on this one, the Saudis would just take the lot. Forming a unified state was certainly a better option.

Saleh was in favor of it. He thought — and I think history has proved him right — that he would manipulate it and be the stronger element. At the time of unification, you had about nine million Yemenis from the YAR and about two million from the PDRY, so the balance of population was very much in favor of the northern element.

There's still a lot of debate today about what the unity agreement was, because the Yemeni Socialist Party believed that they had agreed on a federal system, and that their then leader, Ali Salem al Beidh, had been tricked by Saleh to go for full unity. That is the widespread story, and it may be true — I have no idea.

Unity was greeted at the time by Yemenis everywhere with great enthusiasm, as it was something that people had aspired to: being able to travel around freely, and for the southerners to be able to access the material goods available in the North. A lot of people had two main hopes for unity that are still worth recalling.

Qat, as you may know, is a mild drug that is widely consumed in Yemen. In the PDRY, there were regulations, according to which it could only be consumed on weekends and holidays. In the YAR, it was permitted all the time and had spread enormously — and

it has spread even more since then. Many people in both parts of Yemen were hoping that the southern rules on qat would be imposed throughout the country.

Another element that many women were certainly hoping for was that the PDRY's family law would prevail. That gave women a much better position. It officially granted them full rights, by comparison with the situation in the YAR.

Of course, what happened was the opposite. Sana'a's qat laws spread to all of Yemen, and you now see people chewing afternoon and night, everywhere in the country. The family law of the North was imposed. Southern women, and indeed women throughout Yemen, found that their circumstances deteriorated considerably after that.

There was a brief civil war in 1994, when some southerners tried to reassert their independence. They were militarily defeated by Saleh's forces, with support not only from a number of Islamists and "Afghans," as they were known — people who had come back from the jihad in Afghanistan — but also from those who had been defeated in 1986. That is relevant today when you look at the situation with respect to the Southern Transitional Council and southern separatism, as the pro-Saleh forces included the man who later became Saleh's successor as president, Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi, who had been on the losing side in 1986.

After 1994, the regime that Saleh had been operating in the YAR spread throughout Yemen. That was a regime where you had formal democracy and the presence of other parties, but decisions were essentially made by a small military clique, and benefits accrued to a similarly small clique of kleptocrats. That caused a lot of dissatisfaction, of course, in the South. It wasn't particularly appreciated in the North, either, but they were used to it.

DF: What would you say were the main factors behind the uprising that eventually ousted Saleh from 2011 onward? How much do you think Yemen had in common with other Arab countries that ousted their own rulers at the same time?

HL: The points I've just made about frustration at Saleh's type of rule were certainly major elements that led to the uprising. That frustration was particularly the result of increased poverty throughout the country.

I saw poverty in Yemen in the early 2000s that I had seen in places like Pakistan or West Africa and never thought I would see in Yemen. That was because there were no jobs, the population was increasing by 3 percent every year while resources were not, and the kleptocrats were grabbing everything they could, leaving very little for anybody else. You saw more people in poverty, begging in the streets, every year.

You had rising political tensions. Saleh's divide-and-rule policy affected everybody, but it was very much focused on the far north, where the Houthi movement emerged. Between 2004 and 2010, there were six wars between the Houthis and the Saleh regime. In the South, it emerged in late 2006 through the southern separatist movement, which started among the thousands of military officers and security people who had been dismissed after 1994 and were left without any income.

Corruption made people angry everywhere. Young people were perhaps getting educated but not finding any jobs. In 2009–10, Saleh tried to change the constitution so that he would be able to stand for election yet again, and he was preparing his son to inherit the presidency.

This brings us to the other half of your question. Saleh was hoping to end up with a "republican monarchy," following the model that Hafez al-Assad had successfully implemented in Syria and

that Hosni Mubarak failed to implement in Egypt, which involved passing on power to their sons. In other aspects, too, the frustration in Yemen was very similar to that in other countries: economic problems, poverty, lack of democracy and freedom.

You did have much more freedom in Yemen in terms of saying what you wanted. Saleh had realized that you could let people speak and say what they wanted, so long as they didn't have any influence. That was not the case in Syria, for example, and less so in Egypt and Tunisia. But in terms of economic, social, and political demands, I think it was largely the same everywhere. Similar demands were also made in Algeria and Sudan ten years later.

DF: From that moment of opening or hope, however tentative, in 2011 and 2012, how did the country then descend into civil war? What role did outside powers have to play in what happened?

HL: In 2011, Saleh was forced out of power. The Yemeni military split. A number of Saleh's supporters joined the protest movement, including a major military unit. You then had a series of military confrontations between the Saleh loyalists and the supposed supporters of the revolution.

This led to international intervention. There was a group of states called the Friends of Yemen, composed of most major states in the world and including the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members. They supported what was known as the GCC initiative, which later, after November 2011, became the GCC agreement.

Its terms included the departure of Saleh from the presidency. However, because Saleh remained politically strong, he was neither forced out of the country nor forced out of its politics. He retained control of the General People's Congress, which was his political

creation and which remains one of the major political institutions or parties in the country.

The GCC agreement created a transitional state that was supposed to last for two years. Its president was Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi, who had been Saleh's vice president. He was elected in an unopposed, uncontested election. Hadi's background was in the PDRY, as a leading member of the faction that was defeated in the 1986 conflict, so he became the first southern president of Yemen.

From 2012 to 2014, there was supposed to be a transitional state, which would include a number of elements: a government of national unity, security sector reform, and something called the National Dialogue Conference, which was designed to bring about a new constitution, if necessary, and solve the fundamental political problems of the country. These initiatives all failed.

The government of national unity had 50 percent representation for Saleh's supporters. The other 50 percent was meant to be shared between the formal political opposition in parliament, composed of the Islah party, which is a combination of northern tribespeople and Islamists, and a whole range of other parties, including the Ba'athists, the socialists, and the Nasserists, plus what were known as the new forces emerging from the uprising — youth, women, and civil society.

This government gained the reputation of being the most corrupt one that had ever existed in Yemen. It was paralyzed in terms of doing anything. The security sector reform failed, for a host of reasons, but particularly because it was unable to transform the loyalty of the main security units away from Saleh to the state. The National Dialogue Conference failed for another host of reasons. It was badly managed by the United Nations. It had nine working parties to address various questions, including the Houthis, the southern issue, and the new form the state should take. They couldn't agree on any of the major issues.

During this conference, which lasted for eleven months in 2013–14, the Houthis increased their control in their home area and expanded into other, surrounding areas. They were also beginning to build an alliance with Saleh: he had previously been their number-one enemy, but the Houthis and Saleh both opposed federalism, which was one of the main proposals of the transitional regime, and they opposed that regime's existence. They had a common enemy, so they got together and drove out the government in early 2015. They worked together in an alliance that became increasingly tense until the Houthis killed Saleh in December 2017.

The full-scale war really started in 2015. Primarily, this war is an internal Yemeni conflict between a whole range of different factions, with different social groups and regional aspects involved. The international role is an additional, worsening factor. The direct intervention of Saudi Arabia and the coalition of ten states that it led — of whom only two were really significant, the Saudis themselves and the United Arab Emirates — merely worsened the level of killings and the dire humanitarian situation.

DF: Do you see any cause for tentative optimism about whether the conflict can be resolved and the country can move back to a more peaceful and stable situation?

HL: A deal between the Houthis and their opponents is possible, on the proviso that there is a significant change to the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2216 of April 14, 2015, which has been the determining UN element for action in Yemen. It effectively demands complete Houthi surrender.

Between 2015, when that resolution was voted through, and today, the Houthis have been gaining ground. They now control 70 percent of the country's population, and they have a functioning

government in the area they control. It may be a horrible government. It may be highly oppressive. It may be fundamentalist. But it's operational.

On the other hand, the people who are against them, and particularly the internationally recognized government, are increasingly weak. That government has barely any footing in the country at all. It only represents a small group of the people opposing the Houthis.

A deal between the Houthis and the Saudis, who the Houthis consider to be the main party to negotiate with, is possible, because the Saudis have essentially lost this war after seven years. It's costing them a lot of money, and it's also caused them enormous reputational damage, along with other factors, such as the assassination of Jamal Khashoggi. I think Mohammed bin Salman is ready for a deal.

The question is whether a deal can be achieved with the Houthis. They are kind of stuck with their current offensive, but they've been making slow progress, and there are certainly factions among them who want to pursue it, while other factions might want to reach an agreement. But a deal of that nature is possible.

Even if there is a deal, all the other issues will remain, from the separatist movement in the South to the divisions among the southern separatists themselves and the various political factions in the North. Those conflicts will go on until there is an entirely new approach to politics in Yemen, starting at the grassroots, which would help develop a new political class who are not a bunch of self-interested thieves.

We must also remember that Yemen is in the Arabian Peninsula, and the Saudis will continue to have massive influence. The Emiratis have also been building up their influence, which is by no means a positive one. There is an Iranian influence on the Houthis, although it is not determining in the sense that many people tend to claim it is. External involvement in one form or

another will continue, even if there is a formal end to the fighting.

As well as this, the country's economy has completely collapsed, so there will be a massive need for financial support for reconstruction. I fear the prospect of neoliberal policies, of Western consultancy firms using Saudi and Emirati funds to promote their own interests and to create development programs that would turn Yemen into an imitation, low-quality version of the worst of the Emirates — I'm talking about the poor Emirates, not Dubai and Abu Dhabi. That is not a prospect to be relished.

DF: The new UN special envoy for Yemen, Hans Grundberg, announced a two-month truce agreement on April 1. How did this agreement come about, and what are its long-term implications for Yemen?

HL: As the first successful attempt to halt the fighting in Yemen for six years, the truce is clearly a significant event in itself. It also involves some important measures that will improve living conditions for the Yemeni people. One likely reason for the truce was a belated recognition by leaders on all sides that no breakthrough was possible in the military stalemate in the Marib region.

Marib is of particular importance as the internationally recognized government's (IRG) last real stronghold. Two years of Houthi offensives have failed to dislodge IRG forces despite extremely heavy loss of life. In late 2021, when the Houthis appeared to be on the verge of success, the coalition showed its determination to defend Marib by bringing in reinforcements from elsewhere in Yemen.

A second reason has been the growing frustration of international actors — the Saudis and Emiratis in particular — at the failure of their Yemeni partners to function as a unit and seriously seek a solution. There was a very limited response to the

UN Humanitarian Response Plan's appeal in early March, which raised less than a third of the amount it had been seeking. Third, Grundberg displayed skill and determination in his role as envoy after his appointment in August 2021, initiating a process of discussions with the different parties. Hopefully these discussions will bear fruit in the coming period.

In a separate development, the Gulf Cooperation Council organized what was presented as a ten-day intra-Yemeni dialogue in Riyadh. Predictably, the Houthis refused to take part in a meeting convened in the capital of the state responsible for launching the air war in Yemen. It became a meeting of the anti-Houthi forces, whose various factions are mutually hostile if not actually engaged in military conflict with one another.

Although it was expected to produce some changes in the leadership of the IRG, the outcome was a surprise and had little to do with the actual meeting. On April 7, Hadi announced his own withdrawal and that of his vice president, to be replaced by a presidential leadership council (PLC) of eight men (and no women). He read from a prepared script in a way that was reminiscent of the Lebanese premier Saad Hariri's forced resignation in 2017, also under Saudi pressure.

The PLC is tasked with negotiating peace with the Houthis, among other things. This body, imposed by the Saudi and Emirati regimes without having consulted with Yemenis themselves, is composed of individuals whose enmity is notorious. It has now met in Aden, but it remains to be seen whether it will be able to operate effectively and fulfill its responsibilities.

Grundberg is proceeding with wide consultations of the relevant Yemeni parties. The UN envoy will probably try to expand participation in the talks to improve the gender balance and include influential figures from civil society. This is essential if a genuinely sustainable peace is to be achieved, responding to the needs of

Yemenis for rights, opportunities, and acceptable living standards. Whether the newly established PLC will facilitate Grundberg's tasks or complicate them is an open question.

An agreement to end the fighting now seems more likely, as most leaders recognize that the current stalemate is unlikely to be breached. However, it will take a lot more than negotiations between the current factions to achieve a sustainable peace and a government focused on addressing the problems of the population at large. Those problems are enormous, with more than 80 percent of the population below the poverty line and seven years of destruction of Yemen's infrastructure, both physical and social.

ABSTRACT

Matt Vidal's framing of lean production as a neutral technology that provides openings for worker empowerment and participation is mistaken. It is a production system that bolsters the cost-reduction capacities of capitalist employers through an obsessive and competitive regime of intensifying work. As such, it encourages workers to compete against one another and increases their dependence on employers.

Lean Production Is Not a Solution

Herman Rosenfeld

Matt Vidal's recent *Catalyst* article "The Politics of Lean Production"[1] is a reminder of a disturbing trend among labor leaders and certain segments of the Left: the tendency to address current weakness and defeats by clinging to the coattails of management and employer programs — and projects seeking to enhance the latter's competitive interests — rather than taking on the difficult task of building worker power in workplaces and communities.

Any serious socialist analysis of the labor movement teaches a simple but powerful lesson: seeking a false sense of security, power, and respect through cosponsoring corporate workplace

1 Matt Vidal, "The Politics of Lean Production," *Catalyst* 5, no. 4 (Winter 2022).

transformation programs and partnership projects, and hoping that concessions will provide job security, reinforces the weaknesses of union and left movements. These gambits only make us more vulnerable to work intensification, ongoing concessions, multitier workforces, and job losses. Rather than helping us to build working-class solidarity across employers and between private and public sectors, these efforts reinforce our dependence on the market success of individual employers.

Confronting work intensity, the lack of free time, poverty wages, job insecurity, and a diminishing belief that unions and workers can collectively address the realities of workplaces today requires something else. Such efforts demand a movement that represents the independent interests of workers and catalyzes forms of collective resistance, solidarity, and intelligent bargaining while soberly assessing openings, constraints, and political approaches to limit the power of private competition.

It is in this spirit that it was dismaying to find calls to embrace lean production as a road to worker power in the last issue of *Catalyst*. Vidal contends that lean production can be made to function in the interests of worker participation and workplace democracy, and, moreover, that work intensification and job loss are not key characteristics of lean production but rather the result of managerial prerogatives that harm the "efficiency and productivity" of enterprises in certain situations. Vidal argues that unions can work with managers to make lean production and corporate competitiveness beneficial for everyone. This argument couldn't be further from the truth.

LEAN PRODUCTION AS NEUTRAL TECHNOLOGY

At the core of Vidal's analysis is his presentation of lean production as an essentially neutral technology — a technology similar to computers or machine tools that is autonomous from its class

origin and can be used for the benefit of workers and unions. He says, "lean production should be understood as a general (i.e., not specifically capitalist) development in the forces of production; and [I] present evidence that deskilling, work intensification, and anti-unionism are particular capitalist strategies that are not inherent to lean production."[2] According to Vidal, the essence of lean production is not necessarily about work intensification but about forms of efficiency and productivity that workers can play a role in implementing, making their employers more competitive:

> The primary addition of lean management in this regard is the set of practices that make *demand-driven*, *flow production* possible. Specific practices developed by Toyota — *kanban* control for demand-driven, flow production; small lot sizes; quick changeover — combine with process ("value-stream") mapping to facilitate the reduction of buffers, hence short breaks for rest and recuperation. But whether these tools are used to intensify the work to unreasonable or dangerous levels is a function of managerial strategy, which is shaped by competitive pressures, incentives, and management logics within particular organizations or sectors.[3]

So, Vidal continues, it's only in particular circumstances that lean production will drive management to intensify work. In others, there are openings for workers and employers to collaborate to make the workplace more efficient and productive, not only without harming the interests of workers but while enriching their work experience and leading to more power.

The description of lean management as neutral or, for that matter, as a "technology" is erroneous. It is a production system,

2 Vidal, "The Politics of Lean Production," 41.

3 Vidal, "The Politics of Lean Production," 55–56.

developed for the particular purpose of making capital more competitive. Lean production was originally created by Japanese auto producers to enable them to adapt to an environment of short production runs and small markets, and to take advantage of unions that had been shorn of their militancy, independence, and adversarialism. Lean management put a premium on keeping and protecting scarce financial and material resources, thus minimizing cost. It reengineered work so that it was steady, intense, and driven by a logic of never-ending effort to shave seconds off tasks, as well as a methodological obsession with finding and identifying elements that add value — and those that do not. In lean production, the notion of value is not neutral. Anything that doesn't add value is defined as "waste" and must be incrementally eliminated through continuous analysis. This is the essence of *kaizen*.

Waste includes the precious seconds a worker has to rest between tasks, activities that don't result in the direct transformation of the product or service to increase value, and skills that are not immediately necessary for the flow of the product or service. The result is constant and regular attacks on worker skill and autonomy. Value analysis, moreover, is not static but is — in a word afficionados of lean production love — "dynamic" and has no end point or limit. Takeji Kadota, director and principal consultant of the Japanese Management Association in Tokyo, wrote in 1970, "We disregard the conventional concept of 'a fair day's work' or the significance of 100% performance."[4] And, as the Toyota Production System Manual notes, "every minute has sixty seconds."[5] Those are seconds that can be marshaled in service of producing value-added activity. (Many employers, in fact, use computerized

4 Takeji Kadota, "Performance Analysis and Control" (Tokyo: Asian Productivity Organization, 1970), 106.

5 Cited in Canadian Auto Workers, "Taking on Lean Production," 1991.

forms of standard data that measure work elements down to hundredths of a second.) Compounding this is lean production's focus on functional and numerical flexibility. Under lean management, the number of workers can and must be adjusted to the immediate needs of cost reduction, whether through layoffs, doing the same amount of work with fewer workers, or hiring more workers at different rates of pay, benefits, and job security.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF LEAN PRODUCTION — AND ITS EFFECTS

Lean production and its characteristic features are now used worldwide. This dissemination is partly a result of the defeat of the unions and political movements that challenged it, such as Canadian Auto Workers/Unifor and the Swedish Trade Union Confederation. This universalization of lean production can be seen in the ubiquity of lean-driven worldwide corporations such as Walmart and the logistics giant Amazon. It is tied to neoliberal globalization and capital mobility. Constantly reducing labor costs through work intensification is critical to disciplining workers through the power of competition — as an ideology as well as a material weapon.

Vidal's contention that lean production's drive to intensify work is characteristic only of workplaces in highly competitive sectors with low profit margins, such as auto assembly, is wrong. In the context of neoliberalism, all industries are subject to the imperatives of intense competition — and there are no sectors that are immune to this feature of lean production. In other words, lean management's use as a tool to reduce costs and intensify work is not a product of "particular circumstances" but of the current stage of capitalism.

Indeed, almost all forms of private enterprise are enmeshed in a hypercompetitive environment of cost reduction, driven by the

ever-present threat of losing market share and investment and facing workplace closure.

In this context, lean production, and the obsessive pursuit of waste elimination in the actual labor of workers, is part and parcel of capital's drive to cut costs in an environment of competition. Lean management is not the *cause* of the transformation of work in this manner but a tool in the arsenal of capital. And this tool has real-world implications beyond the assembly line.

Lean production's obsession with eliminating buffers through "just-in-time" inventory processes has been applied to hospitals, for example, among other health care institutions. Running without adequate reserves of space, materials, medicines, health care workers, and personal protective equipment was a way of adapting to ongoing budget cuts and saving money. It became one of the pivotal reasons that the medical systems and hospitals of the United States and Canada lacked necessary beds, people, and other resources to respond to the dramatic rise in patients during the COVID-19 crisis. The incredible stress and burnout of health care workers and first responders was partly the result of lean practices — ironic for a system that touts its flexibility.

The entire structure of supply chains — sourcing manufacturing components to the lowest-cost producers around the globe — works in tandem with lean production. The breakdown of those supply chains, most recently in the production of computer chips and manufacturing components, remains a challenge as the pandemic continues to reappear in key sourcing spaces like China.

Lean production elements are increasingly being applied in the public sector as well in the face of austerity-driven state budgets cuts. Government institutions, from social services, planning, and regulatory agencies to everyday operations at state, municipal, and federal levels, are increasingly ordered to match private sector levels of efficiency and cost reduction. Competition between

elements of the state administration, as well as with private sector service corporations, is used to discipline public sector workers and reduce the time and resources needed to serve the needs of the public.

CONTROL, DISCIPLINE, EMPOWERMENT, AND RESISTANCE

Vidal claims that lean production creates openings for workers to shape "productivity and efficiency" in ways that do not impinge on the quality of their work experience, health and safety, and material outcomes. Indeed, he references unions' workplace goals, such as work satisfaction, workplace democracy, and that ultimately slippery concept, "empowerment."But the essay provides little in the way of evidence demonstrating workers having actual power to shape work, products, services, or material outcomes. Productivity, in the context of competitiveness, can only mean replacing workers with technology, more output per worker, fewer workers, and a dedication to constantly reducing costs. Lean production will always seek to accomplish these outcomes — outcomes that are not necessarily the same as the goals of workers or unions — through the waste reduction mantra of constant cost identification and shaving off seconds through reengineered work. But the ways that workers "participate" in these processes are not neutral and are not merely a reflection of happy workers being liberated from nasty managers.

Workers and unions can't really stop management's implementation of lean production programs and processes. They have little choice in the matter — employers implement their proprietary (or consultant-outsourced) production systems.

Workers and unions may comply with company-imposed rules and procedures, but the forms and degree of their compliance depend on a number of factors: whether the work reorganization

is simply imposed by managers and industrial engineers or if the changes involve worker and union participation. In the latter case, they also depend on the kind and level of union and worker participation. The union could be involved in selling or cosponsoring those changes, or it can lead challenges to the process through collective bargaining or other forms of shop floor resistance.

There are no pure forms of despotic impositions of lean production, where changes are imposed with no effort to explain the necessity of making the workplace more competitive, or without appealing to the normal desire of most workers to put in a good day's work and produce a decent product or service. And there are no pure forms of voluntary appeals for workers to engage in the process of work reorganization, without workers being made aware of the pressures of competition and what might happen if the labor process isn't productive enough while they are being offered "empowerment" or participation opportunities.

Given the intensely competitive environment, along with the dreary prospect of lower-paid and less secure forms of gig work available, lean production combines despotic and voluntary approaches. The threat of workplace closure and moving work to lower-cost competitors within the same company, country, or around the world is always present. It is a shadow hanging over workers everywhere, and there is little reference to this reality in Vidal's essay.

What is really at issue isn't compliance but *forms* of compliance, promises of empowerment and participation, along with forms and levels of resistance — none of which are meaningfully explored in Vidal's essay.

On the flip side is the question of worker resistance and how it fits into lean production. Resistance to increased work intensity is always a feature of lean management (and any regime of work intensification), but the levels and forms of resistance are also

related to the type of company program and the role of a union. Individual workers are always looking to find time for rest and ways of performing tasks that allow for small breaks.

There is little sense in this essay of how worker resistance happens — either among individuals or in collective forms — and of how the mix between compliance, active participation, and resistance develops.

In both the theoretical sections of the article and the surveys and worker interviews, it is easy to see common patterns: workers are engaged in carrying out unskilled or semi-skilled tasks in ways that reduce waiting or rest times. The jobs are steady and allow more output in ways that maintain the "flow" that is so prized in the lean production universe. Tending more than one machine and allowing for process time is not a sign of increased skill but of more output per worker. It would seem that the workplaces Vidal sampled include many that are in the early stages of undergoing lean management and many that are now either out of business (maybe they didn't lean enough) or have broken the joint programs with the union because management preferred the more "despotic" approach.

In these survey reports, we hear little about resistance and a great deal about the embrace of the company's processes — along with rather thin promises and experiences with empowerment.

COMPLIANCE AND RESISTANCE WITH AN INDEPENDENT UNION

The work done by the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) in the 1980s, '90s, and the first decade of the twenty-first century pointed in a very different direction from the one described by Vidal. The CAW's approach to lean production involved forms of resistance that functioned within the framework of management-imposed institutional constraints.

At many CAW plants, workers combined compliance, resistance, and empowerment in the sense of wanting to have some input into their work, although the forms of the latter can be much different than what Vidal proposes. What became immediately clear from speaking to workers is that the particular mix of these components and the ongoing struggles around work intensification are shaped by the workplace institutions formed by management and the union in its resistance and recognition of its limitations.

There was a pathbreaking two-year study at the joint GM-Suzuki plant called CAMI Assembly that combined surveys every six months, job studies, and interviews with managers and union representatives. CAMI had assembly line members working in groups, engaged in the *kaizen* process and all the bells and whistles of lean production.

Workers were hired through a rigorous series of interviews that measured each applicant's capacity to make decisions but also their beliefs about working in teams, worker empowerment, making the company the most competitive, and principles identified with CAMI. In other words, they were selected partly because of their acceptance of the mantra of lean production and its promises. Many were thrilled with the pledge of having some power over their jobs and the workplace.

The workplace was divided into teams, although it had the layout of a typical assembly line. Workers were able to stop the line if there was a defect or quality problem. The teams met often and discussed production problems. Workers were encouraged to make improvement suggestions and received monetary rewards for those that were accepted.

The findings, which are detailed in *Just Another Car Factory?*, demonstrate how management mixed a promise of "empowerment"

with a constant effort to engineer the teams to find ways of intensifying work and facilitating "efficiency."[6]

But things turned out differently than management expected. The workers, increasingly fed up with the insufferable work intensification outcomes, helped to build a strong independent union and challenged the propaganda about competitiveness and common interests with the employer. Essentially, they used the leadership and educational role of a union, along with their communication and analytical abilities — developed in part through the collective processes of working in their teams and across teams — to build unique forms of resistance.

The following is an example of how one team engaged in the process of struggling to reappropriate team members' own time from the company, analyzing each of their jobs to see how they could gain an extra team member. They made important but limited gains — always subject to further ongoing struggle with the company — using a different form of empowerment, one that challenges rather than embraces lean production. This process was captured in the CAW's film *Working Lean* and quoted in the book. A member of a team who is a union leader and activist describes this ongoing struggle:

> They kaizened their area … to create a floater among the team. The guy was moving around, helping everybody, unpackaging stuff, and then the company turned around and started taking the person away when there were head count problems. The team busted their ass to create the position within the team to make it a little easier for themselves. And then as soon as they did it, the company started fucking them by taking it away

6 James Rhinehart, Christopher Huxley, and David Robertson, *Just Another Car Factory? Lean Production and Its Discontents* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press: 1997.

all the time. And the team exercised its right to refuse unsafe work a couple of times as a result of that.[7]

In the above instance, the refusals succeeded in getting the floater returned to the team. There are, in fact, more profound examples of what having some power in the workplace might mean. Swedish trade unionists pioneered forms of group work in Volvo's Uddevalla plant in the 1990s that allowed small groups of workers to assemble an entire vehicle with a cycle time up to seven hours. It was only possible to develop this project in the face of high unionization and extremely low unemployment levels. Essentially, the union was able to pressure the employer to experiment. When neoliberal globalization hit Sweden and unemployment rose, capital mobility was instituted, and competition became intense, the project was dropped.

THE MYTH OF PROGRESSIVE COMPETITIVENESS

One of the claims made in the 1990s by many social democratic politicians and theorists, corporate consultants, and union advocates about partnership with employers was that there was a form of competitiveness that would enhance the role and interests of workers as well as capital. On the political level, it was argued that enhanced education, training, and state aid could attract a mythical, putative "high-road" investment, supporting well-paid unionized workers producing goods in a democratic workplace.

Of course, this promise never materialized — whether with the decline of the vaunted Mittelstand in Germany, or in Italy's Emilio-Romagna, or anywhere in the United States and Canada. Cost competitiveness became the rule, as lean production replaced

7 Rhinehart, Huxley, and Robertson, *Just Another Car Factory?*, 153.

whatever supposedly skill-rich production systems may or may not have really existed.

The promise of attaining competitive success through highly trained workers with high pay, secure work, and dignity in partnership with sympathetic employers (or even with worker ownership) was, in reality, little more than work intensification, attacks on job security, workplace closures, outsourcing to cheaper suppliers, and the creation of multitiered workforces.

Vidal argues that lean production "principles and practices put a premium on cognitive labor and the tacit knowledge of workers. My working hypothesis," he says, "is that a high-involvement approach to lean production, with substantive, widespread participation of workers in problem-solving and decision-making, is the technical frontier."[8]

But the reality is different there as well. The question is, "What problems are workers invited to 'solve,' and what constitutes them being 'solved'?" Given the nature of the production process, competition, capital mobility, and the tools of lean production, the answer is obvious: it is engaging workers in the process of figuring out (using their tacit knowledge) *how* to intensify their work and reduce and eliminate the numbers and security of the workforce.

INVOLVING THE UNION

One of the elements of Vidal's argument is that unions can play a constructive role in facilitating and negotiating worker empowerment and participation in lean production. Of course, as the bargaining agent and collective organization of workers, unions can't simply stand by and allow management to reorganize the workplace without intervening in some way. But there are different ways of negotiating worker interests and developing independent

8 Vidal, "The Politics of Lean Production," 37.

demands in dealing with lean production, some of which I will discuss below. The approach suggested in Vidal's essay, however, is different. One of the authorities he relies on is material from Andy Banks and Jack Metzgar's 1980s work at the Midwest Center for Labour Research.[9] Summarizing their arguments from a 1989 pamphlet, Vidal writes that "Unions should make the case that by prioritizing work intensification and failing to substantively empower labor, capitalist management is harming organizational efficiency. Union comanagement of lean systems would improve organizational performance."[10] He then proposes a set of principles for a joint-union management project around lean production. The principles include:

a) "Unions should adopt cost reduction as a goal ... a basis for overlapping interests and partnership" with the union, which can "articulate its own approach to cost reduction" that doesn't involve "labor cost cutting and exclusively short-term considerations";

b) "Management must acknowledge that the union aims to gain influence over ... all areas of the company";

c) "Management must accept that ... programs and practices should advance traditional union goals of increased job security, increased wages and benefits, and improved working conditions";

d) Independent union coordinators;

e) An organizing model to support the union's goals.[11]

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9 Andy Banks and Jack Metzgar, "Participating in Management: Union Organizing on a New Terrain," *Labor Research Review* 1, no. 14 (1989): 12.

10 Vidal, "The Politics of Lean Production," 38.

11 Vidal, "The Politics of Lean Production," 56.

This model undermines the key strengths and power of unions and ends up selling management's lean production goals. The vision assumes that a successful capitalist enterprise — in terms of profit and competitiveness — is a goal of a union. It is not. Certainly, unions are dependent on the relative success of a given employer or sector, but the goal of an independent union is not to *enhance* that dependence but to *limit* it through solidarity across sectors and the working class, not by strengthening the employer's competitive position.

Adopting cost reduction as a goal means endorsing the inevitable pull of competition. There is no "progressive" way of engaging in competitive cost reduction. By making that your goal, you have already given up the fight for workers. Influencing management at different levels could mean challenging them or it could mean pressuring them to be more effective at what you have both adopted as your goal: cost reduction. It is almost as if Vidal is making a distinction between "bad" management that is not adequately reducing costs and "good" management that is doing it effectively, which the union will support and advocate for. But, like Jane Slaughter and Mike Parker wrote in the already cited *Labor Research Review* pamphlet in response to Banks and Metzgar, this is not the role of a union.[12]

At the end of the day, it is impossible to carve out work organization as exempt from cost reduction, and it is naive to think this is possible within the parameters of competitive capitalism. Management can recognize the traditional goals of unions, but they see them as costs — which they are — and will never prioritize them. Having an independent union coordinator means nothing. Most problematic is the way Banks and Metzgar (and Vidal) define

12 Mike Parker and Jane Slaughter, "Dealing With Good Management," *Labor Research Review* 1, no. 14 (1989): 73.

an "organizing model." Unbelievably, they believe it means organizing workers to lobby with shareholders and communities or use militant tactics to embarrass ineffective managers and push for more effective ways of cutting costs![13]

The CAW's programs to challenge lean production in the 1990s and 2000s were much different. The union's goal wasn't to help management cut costs. Realizing that it couldn't stop lean production from coming into workplaces, CAW had a multipronged strategy of bargaining limitations on management's agenda. One could characterize this as a form of cooperation, but it occurred through bargaining and started from a very different place than the one articulated by Vidal, Banks and Metzgar, and others like them. It included:

- Clear statements of the union's goals and interests, as part of any bargained agreement;
- Having management pay for members' union education — independent of the employer — about the nature and goals of lean production and ways of challenging efforts to intensify work;
- Acknowledging that there is a difference between "team concept," which is an effort to pressure workers to intensify work, and working in teams or small groups. With an independent union agenda and presence, teamwork can be made to facilitate workers' ability to use collective efforts to limit intensification, improve working conditions, and push for adequate staffing to limit peer pressure. This is what unions did at CAMI and Mazda's Flat Rock plant in Michigan (in the latter case, United Auto Workers);Bargaining pilot projects in specific locations inside the workplace, with limited time frames

13 Banks and Metzgar, "Participating in Management," 44–5.

and clearly understood ground rules;Closely analyzing and monitoring planned management programs and bargaining limits to management power;

- Identifying jobs that are particularly intense and difficult and negotiating ways of improving them;Realizing that a "militant refusal" of any compromise is usually not possible — but if the union educates the membership and provides space for the rank and file to challenge management's unilateral power to impose work intensification, power can be built over time.

This program was facilitated by a larger union education program on challenging the team concept, lean production, and efforts to get the workers to buy into the principles of competitiveness. The educational component emphasized that competitiveness isn't something to embrace but rather must be recognized as a constraint. Unions are sometimes forced to make compromises that they wouldn't voluntarily make.

A successful union strategy also requires limiting and building beyond dependence on employers' competitiveness, through collective action to learn what our limits are and how to push them forward, and to bring workers into political projects that curb employer power.

The union's insistence on its independent principles and set of demands is essential when bargaining agreements on how to handle lean production. Whether agreements work for an extended time or the employer decides to refuse to deal with the union, bargaining provides a way for workers and unions to deal with these situations and allows them to move forward.

CONCLUSION

In the end, Vidal summarizes his long-term goal: to build a partnership with capital that redefines efficiency in ways that exclude forms of cost savings that "negatively impact worker health and safety" and the environment:

> Rather than fighting productivity and efficiency as inherently bad for labor, unions should politicize them and offer a vision for achieving flexibility and continuous improvement via a high-involvement approach with institutionalized forms of worker participation — supported by their own performance analyses and proposals for process improvements, and backed by social movements and militant tactics.[14]

As a socialist and a Marxist with decades of work in the union movement, I couldn't disagree more with this kind of effort to bolster capitalist employers. It is the very antithesis of a healthy, independent, and class-struggle-oriented approach for the trade union movement. Instead, it strengthens the forces that encourage workers to compete against one another, increases workers' dependence on their employers, and confuses and compromises clear thinking and the kind of analysis necessary to challenge employers.

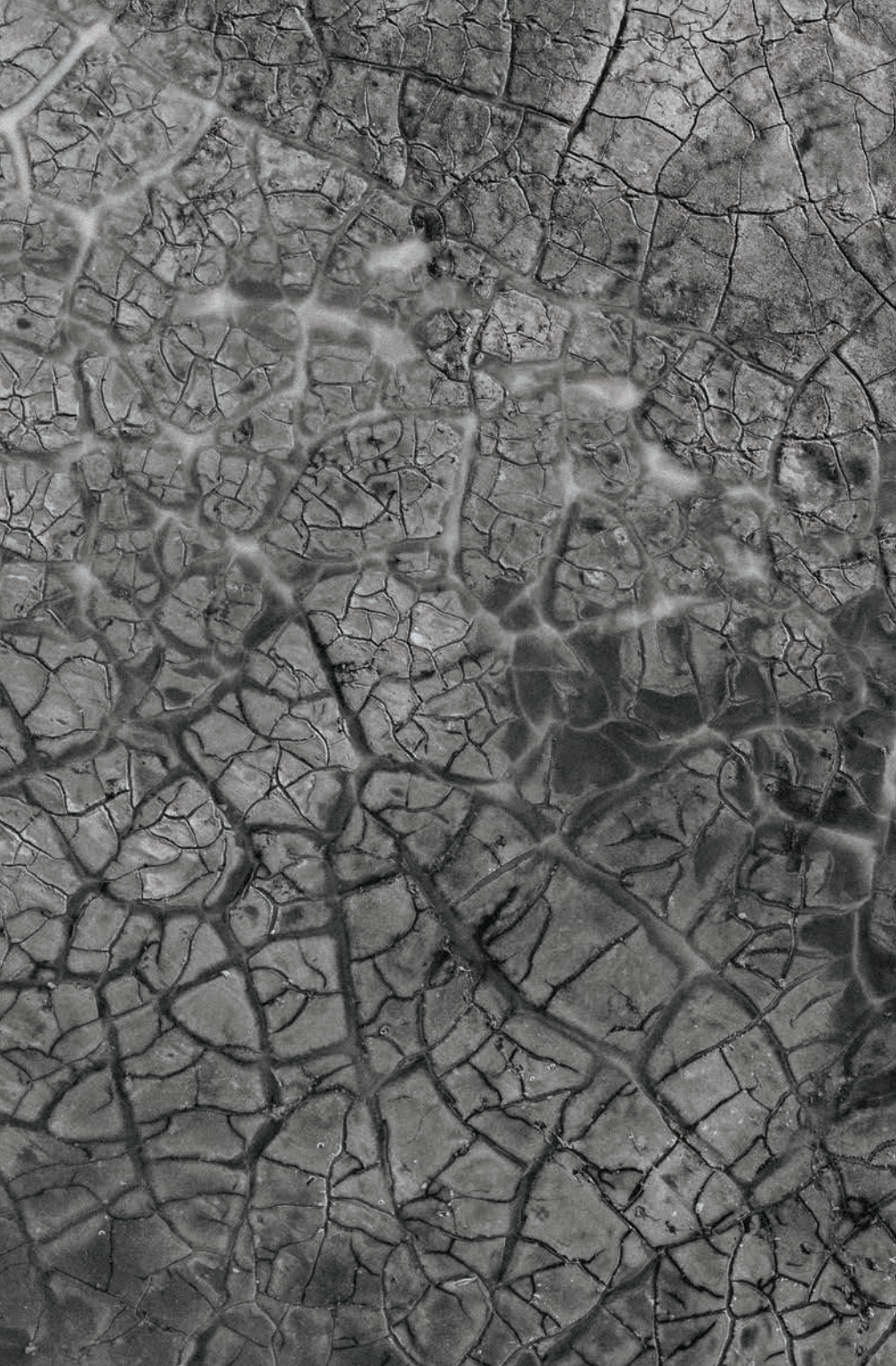
There is nothing here about dramatically increasing the social wage, eliminating tiering of the workforce, lessening workers' ties to the boss, bringing key sectors into public ownership, limiting capital mobility, or producing carbon-free goods that could serve social uses, such as mass transit and integrating into a larger planned economic project. This might introduce real possibilities for different worker roles in every stage of the process, keeping the interests of the class as a whole in mind. Vidal's vision is about

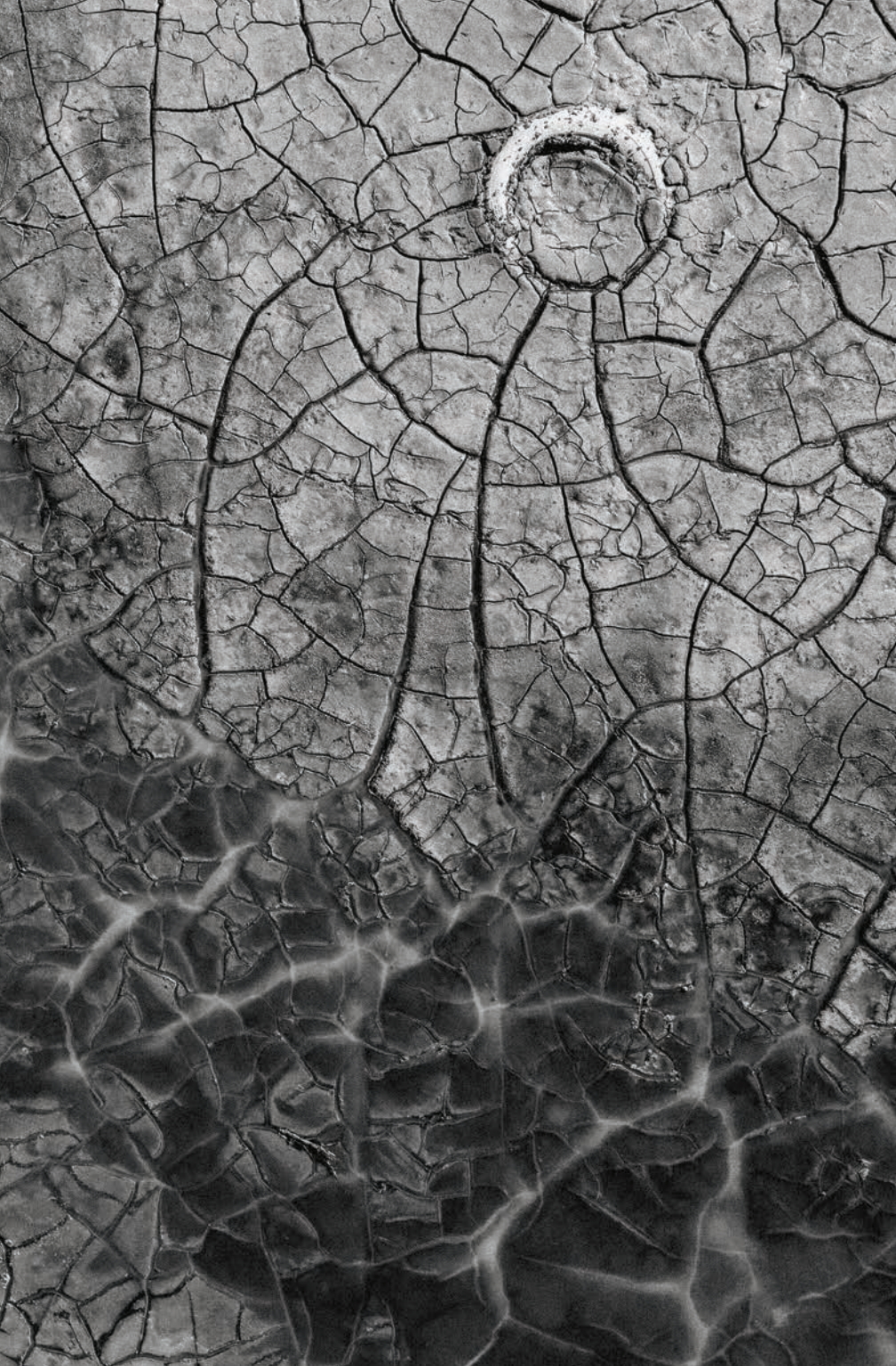
14 Vidal, "The Politics of Lean Production," 69.

making neoliberal capitalism work for a group of workers — hardly the future that socialists hope to build.

I close with a proverb popular with auto management in the '90s. It is still being used:

> Every morning in Africa, a gazelle awakens. He has only one thought on his mind: to be able to run faster than the fastest lion. If he cannot, he will be eaten.
>
> Every morning in Africa, a lion awakens. He has only one thought on his mind: to be able to run faster than the slowest gazelle. If he cannot, he will die of hunger.
>
> Whether you choose to be a gazelle or a lion is of no consequence. It is enough to know that, with the rising of the sun, you must run. And you must run faster than you did yesterday, or you will die.





ABSTRACT

Mitchell Dean and Daniel Zamora's mischievously mistitled *The Last Man Takes LSD: Foucault and the End of Revolution* explores Michel Foucault's last years (1975–84) and his focus on the "care of the self." In the resulting search for a "left governmentality," Foucault reached something of a rapprochement with neoliberalism, licensing a politics that championed diversity while backing away from confronting state power and addressing the material consequences of ongoing capitalist crises.

Foucault's Bad Trip

Bryan D. Palmer

In a 1978 interview with an Italian Communist Party journalist, Michel Foucault reiterated his sense that power was diffuse. Focusing on the supposed conventional structures of its deployment did not interest him. Duccio Trombadori challenged Foucault, asking if he was not backing away from the responsibility of politically challenging institutions, parties, and states imposing new disciplines and enforcing measures reverberating throughout the social order. Foucault was having none of it. The accumulation of capital, ideologies marshaled in its interests, and the authority of the state were, to Foucault, less momentous than what he considered broader and more pervasive practices central to the configuration of civil society. The late 1970s marked, for Foucault,

a governance predicament. Everything Foucault thought about this crisis convinced him it was necessary to reevaluate much and widen debate. Foucault demanded the need to dispense with certain protocols of "struggle," in which "acting out a 'war' against an ideological adversary" would be replaced with a supposedly better approach: one that acknowledged that those with whom one disagreed might simply be mistaken or, possibly, misunderstood.[1]

The interview with Trombadori anticipated a new and controversial study of Foucault in his last years, from 1975 to 1984. A collaborative effort by a pillar of Foucauldian governmentality studies, Mitchell Dean, and an edgy scholar of contemporary political life, Daniel Zamora, the somewhat mischievously mistitled *The Last Man Takes LSD: Foucault and the End of Revolution* is an elaboration of where the influential French philosopher went intellectually after his 1978 interview and what took him there.[2] Foucault, in these years, experimented a great deal. Shifting his intellectual focus to subjectivity and the self, Foucault reached a surprising, if tentative, rapprochement with neoliberal theorists of the capitalist marketplace. As the French philosopher consorted, metaphorically, with Milton Friedman, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was surveying the intellectual scene he influenced so profoundly before his death in 1984. The CIA concluded, "the New Right can point to kudos from Michel Foucault."[3] How Foucault, the left-wing activist and militant opponent of power's dissemination, looked to neoliberalism for guidance in his quest

1 Michel Foucault, *Remarks on Marx: Conversations With Duccio Trombadori* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1991), 154–81.

2 Mitchell Dean and Daniel Zamora, *The Last Man Takes LSD: Foucault and the End of Revolution* (New York and London: Verso, 2021).

3 Office of European Analysis, "France: Defection of the Leftist Intellectuals," Directorate of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency (1985), 14, quoted in Dean and Zamora, *The Last Man Takes LSD*, 237.

for a left governmentality is the story of Dean and Zamora's book. They are adamant that Foucault's turn to subjectivity and the self, coupled with his openness to neoliberalism's promise to extricate the state from its onerous, ineffective, and costly intrusions into individual lives, resulted in disastrous implications for the Left and its capacity to wage struggles in the current age of austerity.

Dean and Zamora see in Foucault's turn toward the transformation of subjectivity a downplaying of the centrality of the state and a dismissal of class politics. Foucault's method, in their view, privileges "limit-experiences," such as might be achieved through mind-altering drugs, totalizing spiritually induced commitments, sadomasochism, and even brushes with, or actual, death. For Foucault, "the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and the ordeal [*épreuve*] of their possible transcendence."[4]

Dean and Zamora add little to our knowledge of just what Foucault's personal experimentation with LSD and other drugs, his time in the leather bars of San Francisco and New York, and his association of death with pleasure meant to him or how they reconfigured his thought. Those drawn to this book because of its title and possessing a primary interest in these issues are perhaps better served looking elsewhere. James Miller's *The Passion of Michel Foucault* goes into far more detail on such matters. Praised for addressing Foucault's sexual life as a legitimate subject of inquiry, that book has also been pilloried for supposedly pathologizing certain practices, failing to acknowledge them as

4 Dean and Zamora, *The Last Man Takes LSD*, 231, 234–5, 114–19. In their critique of Foucault's experimental approach to "limit-experiences," Dean and Zamora are extending lines of questioning and critique broached in James Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault* (New York: Anchor/Doubleday, 1993), 259–79, which concludes with the quote ending this paragraph, from the 1983 statement, Michel Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?," in Paul Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 50.

"techniques of resistance," and portraying them luridly. Miller's account, like that of Dean and Zamora, suggests that Foucault contributed to neoliberalism's resurgence in France during the 1980s.[5]

If they are not alone in staking out this interpretive ground, Dean and Zamora are, however, the most pointed in criticizing how this turn to the theorists of the capitalist marketplace relates to resistance in the here and now. Foucault's fixation on the "care of the self," they conclude, systematically occludes much that demands confrontation. In its anti-statist and anti-bureaucratic approach, Foucault's late-in-life perspectives on civil society, social movements, and identity politics have done more to weaken the Left than strengthen it.[6] Surveying the carnage flowing in neoliberalism's wake, and the distressing immobilization and ineffectiveness of a Left incapacitated in the fragmentations of particularity, Dean and Zamora regard Foucault as the author of much of this unfortunate state of affairs. "Blame Foucault," is Dean and Zamora's graffiti-like punctuation mark on the wall, proclaiming "the end of the revolution."[7]

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5 Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault*, 315. It may well be that Dean and Zamora, aware of the controversy arising from Miller's account, are rightly and respectfully shy of entering into fuller discussion of dimensions of Foucault's "limit-experiences." For a lengthy critique of Miller, see David M. Halpern, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), esp. 9–10, 126–85. On the California scene that Foucault was clearly drawn to, and especially the taking of LSD at Death Valley that Dean and Zamora appropriate for their title, see Simeon Wade, *Foucault in California (A True Story — Wherein the Great French Philosopher Drops Acid in the Valley of Death)* (Berkeley, CA: Heyday, 2019). Comments on Foucault and neoliberalism are now extensive. Among this proliferating literature, see an early collection of essays, Andrew Barry, Thomas Osborne, and Nikolas Rose, eds., *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-Liberalism, and Rationalities of Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996) and Mitchell Dean, "Foucault, Ewald, Neoliberalism, and the Left," in Daniel Zamora and Michael C. Behrent, eds., *Foucault and Neoliberalism* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2016), 85–113.

6 Dean and Zamora, *The Last Man Takes LSD*, 234–5.

7 This is evident in *The Last Man Takes LSD*, but it is more baldly stated in Mitch-

The Foucault that Dean and Zamora address was in the process of a tortuous rethinking. He moved in the 1975–1984 years from studies of objectification to an analytics of self-identification. Concerned less and less with the punitive aspects of institutions that animated earlier studies of madness and the prison, Foucault was intrigued by a reading of German "ordoliberalism," especially the writings of Friedrich Hayek and Ludwig von Mises, and the related American neoliberalism of the Chicago School, in which Milton Friedman and a reverential student, Gary Becker, figured centrally. Disillusioned by the red-tape morass of the capitalist welfare state, and antagonistic to the infringements on freedom that actually existing socialism and its apparent theoretical progenitor, Marxism, were ostensibly responsible for, Foucault, it seemed, took the neoliberal theorists at their word. He turned increasingly to the notion that twentieth-century theorists of possessive individualism and the governance of the marketplace offered the value of a grand negation: "*not* to be governed."

Long interested in criminalization, Foucault was especially attracted to the views of Becker, a third-generation Chicago School neoliberal economist, who suggested that criminals committed illegal acts out of choice, investing in an action, expecting to profit from it, and accepting the risk of loss. This kind of approach aligned with Foucault's long-standing appreciation of and opposition to the ways in which power constrained subjectivity, labeling transgressive behavior in ways that explained it as a consequence of individual failings. Freedom, of the kind Foucault imagined was decisive, might be realized in noninterference, a politics of the everyday best achieved by the withering away of pastoral governance and the institutional state that, through Christianity or

ell Dean and Daniel Zamora, "Today, the Self Is the Battlefield of Politics. Blame Michel Foucault," *Guardian*, June 15, 2021. See also Daniel Zamora, "Can We Criticize Foucault?" *Jacobin*, December 10, 2014.

active carceral agencies, so restrained the self over centuries by constructing "ethical uniformity." *Homo economicus* at least opened the door to the possibility that, at the interface of individuality and governance, there was the opportunity of being, in the language of Becker and others, an "entrepreneur of the self."[8]

This coincided with Foucault's later-life fixation on styles of thinking and interventions that he bargained would transcend conventional socialist politics, jump-starting the possibilities of self-transformation. If neoliberalism could contribute to this outcome, so be it. Foucault was, in the end, consumed with the necessity not of remaking society but of reimagining and reconstructing the self. "Don't forget to invent your life," he would counsel. In a 1982 interview, Foucault insisted, "The main interest in life and work is to become someone else that you were not in the beginning."[9]

This forced a reconsideration and rewriting of his multivolume study of sexuality's history, as Foucault explained in the long-delayed publication of the project's second installment, *The Use of Pleasure*. The introduction to that book outlined his shift into a concern about how individuals confronted themselves as subjects of sexuality.[10] Foucault's historical domain was now that of desiring

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8 The above paragraphs draw on Dean and Zamora, *The Last Man Takes LSD*, 145, 163; Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault*, 310–12; and, for a discussion of Hayek and governmentality, Mitchell Dean, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society* (London: Sage, 1999), esp. 155–8. On Hayek, Von Mises, Becker, and, of course, Friedman, see Daniel Stedman Jones, *Masters of the Universe: Hayek, Friedman, and the Birth of Neoliberal Politics* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012).

9 Dean and Zamora, *The Last Man Takes LSD*, 120–1, 236, 196, 170; Michel Foucault, "Truth, Power, and Self," in Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton, eds., *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar With Michel Foucault* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 9.

10 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 2: The Use of Pleasure* (New York: Vintage, 1990), 3–13.

humanity. Not unlike Friedrich Nietzsche, Foucault somewhat "flamboyantly considered his passions as events occurring simultaneously in the history of his spirit and in the history of thought generally." The self necessarily wrote the self.[11]

Foucault's interpretive shift displaced the logic of resistance into the inventive process of self-affirmation. Embracing the autonomous making of selves was congruent with neoliberalism's imperative that governing less was governing more economically. Minorities and those living difference at its most "deviant" would seemingly flourish, allowed to construct themselves, rather than being made by expert knowledges and constituted authorities. Foucault envisioned a dismantling of the edifice of domination, present since early Christianity. Subjugation would be replaced by "a certain decisive will not to be governed."[12]

In lectures in the late 1970s, Foucault expounded on the high price exacted by the state's attempts to extend its power, costs that were not only economic. In the posthumously published notes that constitute *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979*, Foucault addressed schematically "the way in which attempts have, since the eighteenth century, been made to rationalise the problems posed for governmental practice by phenomena characteristic of a group of living beings constituted as a population: health, hygiene, natality, longevity, races."[13] He was drawn to mid-twentieth-century neoliberalism's vacating much of the territory of orthodox states' traditional fixation on discipline.

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11 Dean and Zamora, *The Last Man Takes LSD*, 121. The description of Nietzsche, which I take to be applicable to Foucault as well, appears in Edward W. Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), 290.

12 Dean and Zamora, *The Last Man Takes LSD*, 158–60; Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault*, 304.

13 Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 218; quoted in David Macey, *The Lives of Michel Foucault* (New York: Pantheon, 1993), 358.

This constituted, at least theoretically, a massive withdrawal of the apparatus of identifying, standardizing, and ranking populations. Neoliberalism, Foucault believed, professed less interest in hounding homosexuals, waging war against drugs, monitoring the "promiscuous" and the "perverse," and prohibiting birth control than its predecessors. The market could do its job; such matters would sort themselves out through private choices. Heralded as a potentially new relation between governors and the governed, neoliberalism offered welcomed possibilities for a thinker such as Foucault.[14]

The seductions of neoliberalism took on added life as Foucault and many others, deeply disappointed in and suspicious of the pseudo-socialist government of François Mitterrand, began to sketch out a conception of left governmentality. He thought it necessary to defer to the ideological edifice that the neoliberals insisted constituted a new truth, justified by the apparent realities of the market. Yet Foucault's attraction to the likes of Hayek exhibited an astonishing myopia with respect to neoliberalism's reactionary essence. This was more than evident in the late 1970s, with the Hayek-edited book *Capitalism and the Historians* serving as a prologue to how the economics of less government might actually play out in regime change in Chile, redefining and restraining the legal rights of workers in the collective bargaining process, or devastating assaults on the poor.[15] As Mitchell Dean suggests in an earlier essay, in slaying the hydra of state intervention into the self, Foucault's embrace of neoliberalism created "a cold monster" in his abandonment of the economics of inequality mediated

14 Dean and Zamora, *The Last Man Takes LSD*, 65, 158–60.

15 F. A. Hayek, ed., *Capitalism and the Historians* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954).

through finance, debt, exploitation, money, and value.[16] This left the self constantly prey to capital, a ruthless entity ordered by concern with profit and accumulation.[17]

As it turned out, neoliberalism offered far less in the way of positive advances, and a great deal more in the spheres of negative dismantling of rights and material well-being, than Foucault anticipated. He gambled badly on a song that serenaded a chimera of new chances for the self. They never materialized. What was lost in neoliberalism's triumphs have proven devastating as living standards and conditions of routine existence for many of the world's peoples worsen. Generations have suffered and will continue to do so because of neoliberalism's freeing up of capital's capacities to exploit humanity and its habitat. A partial list of the consequences include: climate change's devastating aftermath; a debilitating inequality, evident in the widening gap between rich and poor; the decimation of workers' rights and the assaults upon and forced retreats of a fundamental institution of defense, the trade union; whittling away at the welfare state and its many provisions, from pensions to payouts to the poor; precarity, insecurity, and the relentless shrinking of the package of survival's necessities; the assault on minorities of color and women; and the devastating impact of a capitalist-induced global health care crisis arising from the worst pandemic in a century.

A rogue neoliberalism, in Dean and Zamora's designation, now governs. It draws on a political economy that assumes the trappings of a theology. The market, the economy, the purification of the nation from foreign, ethnic, and racial contaminants — these seem immune to revision by financial crises, inequality,

16 Dean, "Foucault, Ewald, Neoliberalism, and the Left," in Zamora and Behrent, eds., *Foucault and Neoliberalism*, 107.

17 Dean and Zamora, *The Last Man Takes LSD*, 55, 158–60, 213–14; Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 296–308.

and rapacity. At the same time, this ideology goes into overdrive to validate a lifestyle politics and liberal-progressive identities that often claim to oppose it. A resulting theatrical, performative neoliberal populism unravels at the pinnacle of state power in the likes of Donald Trump, Boris Johnson, and Jair Bolsonaro. What is unleashed is not so much the self but a barrage of austerity-driven nationalisms, as Zamora has recently chronicled.[18] The quest for a "left governmentality" has been an "ultimate failure," notwithstanding "a mandatory, almost religious obeisance to the values of 'diversity'" that reorder much of public discourse and everyday life.[19]

Foucault's rejection of revolution, socialism, and Marx lies at the analytic heart of this politic, both anti-statist and anti-materialist. His reception of neoliberalism was nurtured in a long history of intellectual and political movement away from earlier writing. *The History of Madness*, a monumental achievement of analysis, recovery, and repudiation, and *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* were fundamentally materialist texts, ordered, in Didier Eribon's description, by "a confrontation between exclusion and access to speech, pathologization and protest, subjugation and revolt."[20] They contextualized experience with opening chapters, as in *The Birth of the Clinic*, on "Spaces and Classes," and resistance was never far from the surface of analytic discoveries. Echoes of such books could be discerned in Foucault's 1972–73 Collège de France lectures on "The Punitive

18 Daniel Zamora, "The Culture Wars Come to France," *Catalyst* 5, no. 3 (Fall 2021), 89–112.

19 Dean and Zamora, *The Last Man Takes LSD*, 200–3, 222.

20 Michel Foucault, *The History of Madness* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006); Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* (London: Tavistock, 1963); Didier Eribon, *Returning to Reims* (London: Penguin, 2013), 214.

Society," and in publications like *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, but so, too, were there obvious departures.[21]

With the publication of Foucault's *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, Marx was written off contemptuously and revolutionary possibility dismissed as of no consequence. Marxism, according to Foucault's categorical caricature, stood condemned for its comfortable adaptation to its own context, in which it failed, according to Foucault's dubious assertion, to introduce any fundamental discontinuity. Antiquated and rightly confined to the nineteenth century, where it belonged and from which it would never meaningfully escape, Marxism was relegated by Foucault to an existence in the submerged past. It was "like a fish in water: that is, it is unable to breathe anywhere else."[22] Enough said!

As disillusionment with the militancy of May 1968 settled into the '70s and the defeat of class-struggle politics registered in many quarters, France's left capitulated in concession, a pattern prevailing in many of the countries of the advanced capitalist west. But precisely because Soviet-aligned, Stalinized communism exercised such a hegemonic hold in France, the rejection of Marxism was perhaps more vehement. Foucault and many others came to the conclusion that the notion of an alternative socialist governmentality, counterposed to capitalist technologies of rule, was the ugliest kind of utopianism, leading inevitably to the repressions of the police state. In a laudatory 1977 *Le Nouvel Observateur* review

21 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Pantheon, 1975); Michel Foucault, *The Punitive Society: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1972–1973* (New York: Picador, 2015). I offer a brief discussion of Foucault's shifts, prior to his turn to governmentality, in Bryan D. Palmer, *Descent Into Discourse: The Reification of Language and the Writing of Social History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 25–8.

22 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Tavistock, 1970), 261–2.

of a book by his student André Glucksmann, Foucault embraced the apostasy of the "New Philosophers," a contingent of ex-Communists turned anti-Marxists that he played a role in encouraging if not fomenting. Stalinism, declared Foucault simplistically, was not simply an "error." Its descent into a Solzhenitsyn Gulag was a monstrosity that no "Marxism-truth/Marxism text" could explain away in its "theory of history."[23] Marx obviously bore a stigma akin to original sin. Yet years later, in 1983, this kind of cavalier insistence that it was too late to resurrect anything from Marx was at least partly deflected by Foucault. He acknowledged, "It is clear, even if one admits that Marx will disappear for now, that he will reappear one day."[24]

The same could be said for Foucault, including the ambiguity as to what his return might entail. In a debate with Noam Chomsky in 1971, Foucault made it clear that class inequality, imposed by violence, constantly eroded democracy.[25] To challenge this was the responsibility of an intellectual, and in a 1978 interview published by the Center of Iranian Writers, Foucault stated unequivocally that his interpretive experimentation constituted "strategic analyses … meaningful only in relation to strategies."[26] This is a Foucault

23 Michel Foucault, "La grande colère des faits," *Le Nouvel Observateur*, May 9, 1977, 84–6, quoted and contextualized in Macey, *The Lives of Michel Foucault,* 387.

24 Dean and Zamora, *The Last Man Takes LSD*, 30, 172. On Foucault and the "New Philosophy" of Glucksmann, Bernard-Henri Lévy, and others, see, among many possible commentaries, Michael Scott Christofferson, "Foucault and the New Philosophy: Why Foucault Endorsed André Glucksmann's *The Master Thinkers*," and Michael C. Behrent, "Liberalism Without Humanism: Michel Foucault and the Free-Market Creed, 1976–1979," in Zamora and Behrent, *Foucault and Neoliberalism*, 6–62; Michel Foucault, "Critical Theory/Intellectual History," in Lawrence D. Kritzman, ed., *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977–1984* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 45.

25 Noam Chomsky and Michel Foucault, *The Chomsky-Foucault Debate: On Human Nature* (New York and London: The New Press, 2006), 36–9.

26 "Dialogue Between Michel Foucault and Baqir Parham," in Janet Afary and Kevin B. Anderson, *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution: Gender and the Seductions*

worth remembering and recovering. It is also a Foucault that would soon be repudiated by Foucault himself, who proclaimed, "My ethics are 'antistrategic.'"[27]

Foucault's capacity to reverse himself meant that, for all the bravado of his rejections, he was never entirely distanced from Marx. In Tunisia, during the pro-Palestinian demonstrations at the time of the Arab-Israeli war of June 1967, and again in Iran more than a decade later, Foucault ran headlong into the Marxism of student militants. He was galvanized by them and their energies and sacrifices. To be sure, Iran presented Foucault with the chance to strike a blow at Marx, yet he found himself having to return to him: "People always quote Marx and the opium of the people," he noted with disdain, pointing out that the sentence in Marx immediately preceding that disparaging remark was never mentioned. That passage in Marx suggested that "religion is the spirit of a world without spirit." And so Foucault concluded, "Let us say, therefore, that Islam, in the year 1978, was not the opium of the people precisely because it was the spirit of a world without spirit."[28]

As Dean and Zamora show, however, drawing on a detailed study by Janet Afary and Kevin B. Anderson, Foucault's enthusiasm for the mullah-led revolt against the shah was both a distancing

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of Islamism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 189.

27 Michel Foucault, "Is It Useless to Revolt?" in Afary and Anderson, *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution*, 267.

28 Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault*, 58; Macey, *The Lives of Michel Foucault*, 204; Foucault's discussion with Claire Brière and Pierre Blanchet, "Iran: The Spirit of a World Without Spirit," in Afary and Anderson, *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution*, 255. The full quoted passage from Marx is perhaps less open to Foucault's interpretation than might appear at first blush. Marx placed the accent on religion's consolations in a world of pain, those comforts being, however, compensatory in an illusory way. See, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law," in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, Volume 3: 1843–1844* (New York: International, 1976), 175.

from revolution *and* an entirely misguided support for a religious leadership that would, upon assuming power, ensconce itself as well as engage in the very kinds of repression Foucault always considered repugnant.[29] By the time of the Iranian events of 1978 and 1979, Foucault's disgust with Stalinism was extended to a rejection of Marx and Marxism and, finally, to a refusal of revolution itself, evident in his attraction to François Furet's reinterpretation of the French Revolution. Furet, yet another ex-Marxist railing against the "Leninist jargon-mongers," presented the events unleashed in 1789 as a resolution of "the eighteenth century's great dilemma, that of conceptualising society in terms of the individual."[30] This kind of analytic posture was sure to resonate with Foucault's sensibilities in the late 1970s.

Dean and Zamora suggest that the Iranian Revolution and the government it demanded in 1978–9 constituted nothing less in Foucault's view than a repudiation of the European paradigm of revolution dominant for two centuries. He was captivated by the totalizing nature of the campaign against the shah, the willingness of Iranians to die to secure his removal. All social classes, claimed Foucault, rejected the shah as an imperialist puppet, the sovereign of secularism, monarch of modernization, and planner of profitable industrialization. They were united against a well-armed regime, all the while in touch with what the West had long forgotten, political spirituality.[31]

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29 Dean and Zamora, *The Last Man Takes LSD*, 126; Foucault, "Iran: The Spirit of a World without Spirit," in Afary and Anderson, *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution*, 252.

30 François Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 27, 130.

31 Dean and Zamora, *The Last Man Takes LSD*, 126–38. Afary and Anderson's *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution* contains a lengthy appendix reprinting Foucault's journalism on the Iranian Revolution, including critical rejoinders from Iranian dissidents and feminists. Among Foucault's statements are: "The Shah

This was the triumph of a new and exciting subjectivity, what Miller and Dean and Zamora suggest Foucault believed was a transformative "liturgy of suffering and death" mobilized to recast society.[32] Iranians, riding the tide of a "collective will," struggled to realize a utopian ideal. Liberties would be respected to the extent that their exercise harmed no one, leading Foucault, perhaps, to surmise, against those who sagely if futilely counseled him otherwise, that there might well be a greater acceptance of homosexual acts. Difference, as between men and women, Foucault also suggested, would be recognized as natural, yet there would be no need for inequality. Most tellingly, wrote Foucault, each person would stand up and hold accountable those governing, something that "socialism had not taken up any better (that being the least one can say) than capitalism." The self, in the promise of Islam, found something of a savior, at least in Foucault's hopeful view. Inconsequential misgivings aside, Foucault went all in on the Iranian uprising, on Ruhollah Khomeini's leadership, and on what a society in the throes of sacrifice might achieve. He suggested that the spirituality of the Iranians had much to teach the French, whom he could already hear laughing at his pronouncements. "I know they are wrong," he was quick to retort.[33]

It was Foucault who was in error. He was deadly wrong, and not alone. Much of the Western left jumped on the clearly hobbled bandwagon of the Iranian Revolution. Many Iranians, some of them forced into exile, knew better. They grasped that a choice

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Is a Hundred Years Behind the Times," 194–8; "Tehran: Faith Against the Shah," 198–203; "A Revolt With Bare Hands," 210–13.

32 Dean and Zamora, *The Last Man Takes LSD*, 133.

33 Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault*, 307–9; Foucault, "What Are the Iranians Dreaming About?" and "The Mythical Leader of the Iranian Revolt," in Afary and Anderson, eds., *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution*, 143, 203–9, 220–3; Macey, *The Lives of Michel Foucault*, 410.

between the shah's torture machine, SAVAK (Intelligence and Security Organization of the Country), set up with the support of the CIA and Mossad, and Khomeini's religious fanaticism, with its brutalizing traditions of Islamic law "justice," in which "hands and heads fall, for thieves and lovers," was no answer. Maxime Rodinson would later conclude that Foucault succumbed to a banal and vulgar understanding of spiritual virtue, his uncritical stand failing to question the foundations of a dissident fideism. This lapse in political judgment, Rodinson insisted, was occasioned by Foucault's perspective on power, which privileged a "constellation … of micro-powers." Foucault's response to the ugly and brutal repression rolled out in the early days of the Khomeini regime was tepid at best. In an open letter to the prime minister of the newly established Islamic government in April 1979, Foucault's criticism was understated: "the trials taking place today in Iran do not fail to cause concern," he wrote. Even granting a possible lack of complete knowledge of the extent of the regime's repression, this was an inadequate response to the state's sixteen executions related to sexual violations of sharia in the two months preceding Foucault's communication. Refusing revolution in a resurrection of spirituality as the mobilization of a transformative "political will" did not augur well for the prospects of the Left, for women, or for what Foucault referred to as "abnormal" minorities.[34]

Neither did Foucault's turn to subjectivity, most evident in his rethinking of sexuality. This both eased him into proximity with neoliberalism and the possibility of left governmentality and furthered his focus on "the relation of self to self" and "ways of life,"

34 Afary and Anderson's *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution* contains extensive discussion of Iranian feminist and dissident critique of Foucault and reprints a number of salient documents, 209–10, 223–38, 241–5, 267–77, quoting 276, and on executions, 162. Foucault's final statements are in "Open Letter to Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan" and "Is It Useless to Revolt?" 260–7.

with their varied "limit-experiences" as modes of resistance to power. Foucault grappled with what he called desexualization, an attempt to curtail how the state, through legislation and criminalization, specified sexuality as a defining feature of the body. A year after the publication of *The History of Sexuality* in 1976, Foucault offered a number of public comments on rape and the age of consent, established in France at the time as twenty-one for homosexuals and sixteen for heterosexuals. Foucault's reflections were a categorical rejection of criminal sanctions regarding sexual conduct. He insisted that sexuality should be subject to legislative intervention in no circumstances. Rape, he indicated during one radio broadcast, should be punished for what it was: physical violence. He further floated the idea that it might best be removed from the penal code, relegated to a matter of civil responsibility, with restitution through the payment of damages. His rationale for such a position, which he acknowledged women might find objectionable (they decidedly did), was that rape was "nothing more than an act of aggression: that there is no difference, in principle, between sticking one's fist into someone's face or one's penis into their genitalia." (He would later verbally walk back this unfortunate characterization.) As to the issue of age of consent, Foucault argued against *any* imposition of barriers, declaring simply that, "it could be that the child, with his own sexuality, may have desired the adult."[35]

All this was cut from the same interpretive cloth as passages in *The History of Sexuality* where Foucault described an 1867 incident in which a "simple-minded" village farmhand, Charles-Joseph Jouy, was brought before the authorities. His crime was that of

35 These reflections are well known and detailed in many sources. See, for instance, Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault*, 256–7; Macey, *The Lives of Michel Foucault*, 374–5. For the full interview in which Foucault's quoted statement is situated, see Kritzman, ed., *Politics, Philosophy, Culture.*

seeking out and receiving the masturbatory caresses of a young girl. Foucault accepts this as a commonplace and "inconsequential" instance of "bucolic pleasures." Jouy's transgressions paled in comparison to the powers of the police and the judiciary, and the interrogations of doctors and other experts, who ended up confining the pathetic laborer to a hospital for the rest of his life — but not before he had been made into an object of medical knowledge. This was precisely the kind of historical "event" on which Foucault excelled at scaffolding his analytics. It signaled the arrival of an apparatus of repression. Foucault thought the threat of what he considered a new regime of sexual monitoring a danger far more serious than anything arising from sexual acts between adults and children, or the dilemmas of consent. With such views, we are back with neoliberalism's promise of less governance as best governance.[36]

The problem with this refusal of any state-juridical order that might infringe upon the sexual was that it was tone-deaf to the extent that sexuality was indeed a site of the uses and abuses of power. Just as Foucault seemed almost willfully resistant to hearing the arguments of Iranian dissidents that an Islamic government was destined to be a repressive regime, he seemed unable to appreciate many uncomfortable sexual realities. His articulation of a program of desexualization was seemingly unconcerned with the differentiations that structured the relations of men, women, and children and how age, gender, and sexuality fit within this unequal grid. Foucault's discussion of rape, as if it were the equivalent of a knock on the noggin and could be compensated with cash in a civil settlement, put all women at risk of being violated as long as they could be reimbursed for having been wronged.

36 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage, 1980), 31–2.

Money not only talked, it licensed. In this economy of reparations, women would also invariably be placed before tribunals of power, reliving, in different contexts, their subjugation. As legitimate as it was to point to significant flaws in the enforcement of the age of consent, and as undoubtedly repugnant as were legal distinctions that differentiated homosexual and heterosexual acts in terms of the capacity of individuals to agree to participate in them, there were power imbalances in adult-child relations, as well as developmental differences that demanded consideration. As Linda Martín Alcoff points out, in a convincing critique of Foucault's positions:

> A truly transformative future would be one in which children could be, for the first time, free from the economy of adult sexual desire and adult sexual demands. Only this future will be truly new and unknown, and the sexuality of children that emerges from it, and that we indeed have no way to predict, will be determined then and only then by children themselves.[37]

Neoliberalism, and a supposedly left governmentality's attractions to the possibility of realizing an "entrepreneurship of the self," was a far cry from such a liberating transformation. It led not in the direction of challenging power but in wrestling from it a space that, in Nietzsche's words (always attractive to Foucault), allowed the giving of style "to one's character — a great and rare art! It is practiced by those who survey all the strengths and weaknesses of their nature and then fit them into an artistic plan until every one of them appears as art and reason and even weakness delights the eye."[38] Foucault's view, one that he imagined neoliberalism might

37 Linda Martín Alcoff, "Dangerous Pleasures: Foucault and the Politics of Pedophilia," in Susan J. Hekman, ed., *Feminist Interpretations of Michel Foucault* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 99–135, quote from 133.

38 Quoted in Macey, *The Lives of Michel Foucault*, 458.

nurture, was that, "*We* have the power. … *we* shouldn't give it up."[39]

Dean and Zamora see this as an inadequate politics for our time, and they are right to do so. We all have some power, of course, but there are always others with more and different and more powerful powers, as the homeless teenager sleeping under the viaduct will certainly tell you; as George Floyd would undoubtedly confirm, were he still alive; and as the woman assembly-line worker thrown out of employment as her job is deindustrialized might well lament. As neoliberal capitalist states plunge deeper and deeper into undeniable crisis, they necessarily exercise their power. This is wielded not in sustaining beleaguered populations in an ever more miserly marketplace but in stripping them of entitlements where they can and seriously curtailing and monitoring them when that is not possible. The ideology of this forum of exchange and accumulation, *Homo economicus*, demands new and more intensive control *as well as* aggressive austerity measures. If Foucault posed the choice for the Left as "between the dark arts and heavy hand of totalitarianism and the enlightened and light techniques of economic liberalism," this shibboleth's tired history had long been exposed as politically bankrupt.[40] Dean and Zamora refuse to concede that it is all that remains on offer.

Resistance to neoliberalism has not and cannot come from the power of the self. Rather, it is realized in campaigns, struggles, and movements of the dispossessed. Among them are the youthful *gilets jaunes* and trade union and socialist lefts, with their adherence to tenets of solidarity rooted in the revolutionary traditions of liberty, equality, fraternity, *and* peace, land, and bread. The yellow vest protesters galvanized hundreds of thousands in clashes with

39 See, for instance, Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault*, 353, and his reliance on a memoir, Philip Horvitz, "Don't Cry for Me Academia," *Jimmy & Lucy's House of "K"* 2 (August 1984), 78–80.

40 Dean and Zamora, *The Last Man Takes LSD*, 212.

constituted authority over oil prices, fuel taxes, the wealth tax, the minimum wage, services for rural areas, government transparency and accountability, housing, state-ordered cutbacks, and a host of other issues. Oppositions in the street were met, between 2017 and 2020, with the violence of the neoliberal state. When the General Confederation of Labour (CGT) launched a wave of Christmas and New Year's strikes in 2019–20, there were those in Foucault's more conservative trade union center of choice, the French Democratic Confederation of Labour (CFDT), who chose the path of compromise talks with the state rather than confrontation and mobilization. Foucault's close associate and longtime assistant, François Ewald, condemned the CGT's militance as yet another instance of the French penchant for a nostalgic combativity. Strikes against neoliberal policy, he suggested, were bound to fail. History itself was on the move, and neoliberalism its inevitable engine. This was the sad end point of Foucault's final intellectual experimentation.[41]

This is a tragedy, and one that is all the more poignant precisely because it was self-inflicted. Dean and Zamora rightly accentuate that Foucault's turn to neoliberalism's possibilities inevitably produced antipathy to confronting the state. The need to defend what past struggles wrested from governing power and the capitalism it sustains was acutely constrained. In accommodating neoliberalism, Foucault's thinking from 1975 to 1984 mitigates against the collective mobilization of intelligent, informed, and intransigent protest. Such militant opposition is the only way neoliberalism's destructive consequences can be challenged, and new spaces of redress demanded of and secured from the state, allowing for advance to be pried from capital's always tightly reluctant grip.

41 The above two paragraphs draw on Dean and Zamora, *The Last Man Takes LSD*, esp. 184–8, 212.

Foucault has much to atone for. But he was less the architect of this trajectory of our times than an expression of a widespread malaise that Stalinism and social democracy generated and that capitalist disciplines worked overtime to reinforce. It was in the conjuncture of the failures of actually existing Stalinist socialism, coincident with the capitalist state's campaign of repression against the ultraleft and incorporation of social democracy, that Foucault and so many other intellectuals took up the analytic weaponry they would use against Marxism. All this was socially constructed in the vise grip of Stalinophobia. In the easy hits upon this politically stationary and ideologically repugnant bull's-eye, grounded in Cold War stasis on the one hand and the internal degeneration of the Soviet experience of revolution on the other, Foucault found the certitude, unreliable as it was, that allowed him a provisional rapprochement with capitalism. It is this capitalism that ultimately constitutes and orchestrates power in the twenty-first century, constituting and reconstituting societies, states, and selves.

Neoliberalism proved an ironic intervention. It championed the need to remove from *political* governance so much of what was not judged to be *economic,* but which nonetheless constituted pivotal realms of the *political economy* of capitalism and its tortured history. This was something that the Foucault of the 1960s and early 1970s was capable of writing about insightfully, unburdened as he then was by neoliberalism's bad trip.

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ABSTRACT

Christophe Jaffrelot's new book *Modi's India* provides a detailed account of how, under Modi's helmsmanship, India is becoming a "de facto Hindu Rashtra" whose democratic characteristics are under attack as never before. While the economy is seen as a serious weak spot, Jaffrelot dubiously pins much of his hopes on a "reinvention" of the Congress Party to counter the ongoing Hindutva project.

India's Ethnic Democracy

Achin Vanaik

Modi's India, by Christophe Jaffrelot, is a big book of some 640 pages (nearly 150 of which are detailed reference notes) that is both extremely comprehensive and deliberately restrictive. It focuses on how the rise of Hindu nationalism, particularly as embodied by Narendra Modi and his policies, is reshaping the character of India's turbulent democracy. Foreign policy matters do not feature — the references to Pakistan are only to cite how actions on Indian soil by terrorists based across the border have helped to promote Hindutva popularity at home. China gets no mention in the book's index, despite its mid-2020 territorial incursions. Nor is there any attempt at assessing in any depth the general state of the economy or its neoliberal character. What we get is one

chapter ("Welfare or Well-Being?") dealing with the economic performance (and nonperformance) of Modi's first term as premier. Statistics about the rising inequality of wealth holdings and the burgeoning of dollar millionaires (rising from 34,000 to 759,000 between 2000 and 2019) are given, but explaining them would mean providing a wider analysis of the iniquities of neoliberalism across Indian National Congress and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) administrations.[1] Jaffrelot prefers to limit himself here to the Modi years, and the main thrust of the chapter is to show how Modi enhances his personal political appeal above and below. He assuages the material interests of the upper classes (through crony capitalism and more) while certain welfare schemes are aimed at appealing to the sense of dignity of the underclass, even if their actual implementation is limited and poor. These are significant absences, and they affect Jaffrelot's understanding of India and his vision of how Hindutva could be successfully combated.

For what the book does offer, we have much reason to be appreciative. Jaffrelot has long been and still is a tireless, thoughtful, and deeply informed observer and analyst of the Indian political scene. This text is the latest installment following three earlier studies (two authored, one coedited) since 2010 tracing the trajectory of change in the Indian polity caused by Hindu nationalism's rise. Their very titles reveal the evolution in the overarching theoretical prism of Jaffrelot himself! His 2010 book, *Religion, Caste, and Politics in India* juxtaposed the two processes he then thought central, namely the "plebianization of the polity," i.e., lower caste political-electoral assertion, and, as a counter, the rise of Hindu nationalism.[2] His 2015 book was *Saffron "Modernity" in India:*

1 Christophe Jaffrelot, *Modi's India: Hindu Nationalism and the Rise of Ethnic Democracy* (Princeton University Press, 2021), 144.

2 Christophe Jaffrelot, *Religion, Caste, and Politics in India* (Delhi: Primus Books, 2010).

Narendra Modi and His Experiment with Gujarat, followed by the 2019 coedited volume *Majoritarian State*, which first claimed India was now an "ethnic democracy" or a "de facto Hindu Rashtra."[3] *Modi's India* explores this new reality in greater depth and suggests a possible further transition to becoming a "de jure ethnic democracy" with an authoritarian Hindu "deep state."

That a dangerous dynamic of expanding Hindutva dominance is at work is real and has been pointed out earlier by those on the Indian left and far left. But it is the inestimable merit of this book that, unlike any other single text, it fleshes out in great detail the policy measures, the sequence of events, and the nodal points of transition in this ongoing process. In November 2021, Jaffrelot gave two oral presentations of his book, first at Princeton University and later in an interview with the Indian journalist Barkha Dutt, which makes easier the task of accurately summing up the author's main arguments and intentions. We can start from here — but first, an important reservation. The term "ethnic democracy" is borrowed from the Israeli scholar Sammy Smooha, who uses it to characterize Israel.[4] However useful this can be as an approximate characterization of India, it is a shameful misrepresentation of Israel, which is a settler-colonial apartheid state and thus unique in today's postcolonial era, whereas the term "ethnic democracy" has been constructed to serve as a generic category to which a range of "illiberal democracies" can be said to belong.

The introduction (titled "The Three Ages of India's Democracy") provides the longer historical sweep in which this book is situated.

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3 Christophe Jaffrelot, *Saffron "Modernity" in India: Narendra Modi and His Experiment With Gujarat* (London: Hurst, 2015); Angana P. Chatterji, Thomas Blom Hansen, and Christophe Jaffrelot, eds., *Majoritarian State: How Hindu Nationalism Is Changing India* (London: Hurst, 2019).

4 Sammy Smooha, "Ethnic Democracy: Israel as an Archetype," *Israel Studies* 2, no. 2 (1997).

The period from independence to roughly the late 1980s is termed "conservative democracy," since Congress rule was dependent on upper caste notables (including dominant Shudra groups), especially in the countryside. Then comes the period of "democratization of democracy," or, in another favored phrase, the "Silent Revolution," meaning the accelerated political-electoral assertion of not just Dalit sections but of the majority population of OBCs ("Other Backward Classes," the officialese for the intermediate castes that form a slim majority of the population), for whom 27 percent of reservations were finally conceded in government jobs and educational institutions, much to the anger of the upper castes. Hence the "revenge of the elite" and the rise of its vanguard, the BJP. The third age, that of "ethnic democracy," emerged when the BJP under Modi achieved a majority in the 2014 polls, which was further consolidated after the 2019 election victory.

Jaffrelot sees Modi as central to this emergence. Since his rise began well before 2014, this also must be accounted for. So the book is structured around another triptych, with its three parts (each carrying three or four chapters and a summary conclusion) centered around a dominant theme. The first part is all about the interlacing of Hindutva with populism — a "national populism" — made possible not only, but above all, by Modi's charisma! The second part is on how India's "de facto ethnic democracy" has come about through practices such as history rewriting, cow protection, cultural stigmatization, legal harassment, intimidation, and violence against Muslims, Christians, and liberal and left opponents. Together these practices help to create a Sangh version of a "Hinduized" parallel power structure in society. Finally, the third part's overarching theme is "electoral authoritarianism," or how the trappings of electoral competition can remain in the future but encased within a society and state that may become so strongly authoritarian that a meaningful democracy can no longer be said to exist.

A PERSONALIZED POPULISM

Part I of *Modi's India* starts with references to the likes of the Arya Samaj and Vivekananda as Hindu socioreligious reformers who helped to construct, in the pre-independence period, the idea of a long-standing territorialized and spiritualized Hindu essence posited against a colonizing and materially advanced West — a project no doubt helped by European Orientalist studies of the ancient past. Jaffrelot sees Hindu nationalism proper, embodied by the ideologue Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS, or National Volunteer Corps), and Hindu Mahasabha organizations, as being born in *reaction* to the rise of pan-Islamism in India, the Khilafat movement (1919–24). That this may well be a highly contestable claim displacing attention from the more important lines of continuity from the Hinduized cultural nationalist stirrings of the nineteenth century is ignored, and the text jumps to the post-independence political scene. The rise of the RSS (the parent body of the Sangh Parivar or wider "Family of Associates"), the cultural wing Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP, or World Hindu Council), and the electoral party Jan Sangh (which later changed its name to the BJP), are briefly sketched.

The Ayodhya movement of the mid-'80s onward is mentioned in the context that it helped propel the BJP from two seats in 1984 to eighty-nine in the 1989 general elections — but not that it was the biggest and most sustained mass movement in post-1947 India, comparable to, if not exceeding, any of the campaigns in the National Movement era. Similarly, in the brief account of the BJP's electoral rise and formation of a coalition government between 1998 and 2004, we hear nothing about how the premiership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee might have laid the ground for a wider transformation in society or of its preparatory work in implanting pro-Hindutva personnel in state apparatuses. Surprisingly, there

is no mention whatsoever of the Pokhran-II nuclear tests, although this act was a decisive break with the past, inaugurating a new and much more belligerent conception of Indian nationalism in keeping with what the Sangh had always wanted. That all other bourgeois parties would soon enough come to accept this nuclearization as irreversible and desirable showed how much ground Hindutva had made. Yet Jaffrelot names this 1998–2004 period as one of "BJP's Forced Moderation," no doubt to more dramatically highlight the significance of the Modi factor.

The spotlight then shifts to Gujarat, where Modi was anointed chief minister in October 2001. In late February 2002 was the infamous and brutal anti-Muslim pogrom. Far from apologizing, Modi castigated the negative media uproar nationally and globally as an insult to "Gujarati pride." He easily won the state elections held at the end of that year and the two thereafter, reigning till 2014, when he became the BJP's prime ministerial candidate. Jaffrelot perceptively points out that in these Gujarat years, Modi broke in one key respect from the RSS tradition by calculatedly seeking to project himself as a "national-populist hero" whose public stature could render him beyond the control of the RSS, even as he remained unshakably committed to its vicious ideology and aim to create a Hindu Rashtra. It was in this phase of his political career that Modi developed the methods of communication, style, and content of public messaging, as well as the moneyed connections and select bureaucratic personnel, that he would later bring to the central government.

Thus is charisma constructed. To maintain direct hero-to-people contact, apart from systematic use of social media and radio along with a deluge of public hoardings bearing his image, Modi has constantly attended mass rallies, usually sharing the dais with Hindu holy men from various sects. No prime minister has ever been so obsessed with making his presence felt in

electoral campaigns, not just at the national but at state and even lower levels. In his Gujarat years and during the 2014 campaign, Modi's entourage projected holograms elsewhere. All this required money and the cultivation of favored capitalists who would be duly rewarded economically. In any case, the Vajpayee years had already seen the BJP's decisive shift toward neoliberal policies and away from older shibboleths about pursuing economic nationalism.

The sustained and continuous inculcation of Hindutva beliefs has been left to the routinized activities in society, especially but not only in BJP-ruled states of the RSS, VHP, its lumpen vigilante force the Bajrang Dal (comprising unemployed young men), and other Sangh affiliates — and also to a host of Hindu groups that have sprung up outside the Sangh but share its ideology of hatred. Modi's aim is to simultaneously promote a sense of Hindu vulnerability and a promise of resolution by the great strongman who, by caste and family background, is also a man of the people. To successfully cultivate the politics of fear, anger, grievance, and hatred among Hindus against Christians and particularly Muslims, the key campaigns — correctly cited by Jaffrelot — are on banning cow slaughter and restraining interfaith marriages, conversions to Christianity or Islam, and Muslim property and land expansion. All this is accompanied by low-intensity or microlevel routinized vigilante violence that is not punished even as terrorism is identified as natural to Islam and Muslims.

A DE FACTO ETHNIC DEMOCRACY

Part II of the book covers Modi's first term of office. The focus is on the actions (separate and collaborative) of Hindutva forces in civil society and those by BJP governments both nationally and in the states that hasten the forward march toward a de facto Hindu Rashtra. Ideological homogenization is obviously central to the Hindutva project, so the Modi government embarked on

changing the character of government-controlled educational institutions at the central and state levels. This was to be done through favored appointments at the highest administrative levels, followed by faculty appointments, graduate and post-graduate. A particular target was the country's premier social science institution, Jawaharlal Nehru University, an important source of liberal and left scholars. Curriculum changes were also made — more easily at the pre-university high school board level, which decides the syllabi content that applies to public and private schools, but with some success at the university level as well. BJP-affiliated unions of college teachers and students (the ABVP student union is the largest in the country, with over three million members and around 20,000 branches in some 35,000 institutions of higher learning) have become stronger, behaving with greater impunity and aggression against rival organizations. The RSS's Vidhya Bharati schools network (comprising some 12,000 schools, making it the largest such private chain) has rewritten its history curriculum to claim that Aryans were indigenous to India, that the Hindu epics (*Mahabharata* and *Ramayana)* also provide real history, that the "Muslim invasions" were the darkest era, and that the roles of Mohandas Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru in the National Movement are exaggerated.

On the ground, Hindutva forces have carried out mass campaigns against cow slaughter and beef possession, and between 2014 and 2017, there were legal injunctions in this regard in the BJP-ruled states of Maharashtra, Haryana, Gujarat, and Uttar Pradesh. There was pressure against voluntary conversions to Christianity (churches have been attacked) and Islam and against Muslim men marrying Hindu women (called "love jihad"), while "reconversion" to Hinduism was lauded and strongly promoted, also through pressure tactics. Muslims are kept out of mixed neighborhoods as part of a policy of promoting their ghettoization. Their public prayers

are restricted when not locally banned, while public expressions of Hindu religiosity are given freer reign. All this is part of what Jaffrelot correctly calls "Hinduizing the public space."[5] To make these efforts really successful, they are accompanied at times by vigilante violence, which also erupts in unrelated actions against locally targeted Muslims, hence the emergence of lynch mobs and small groups carrying out beatings and killings. This is not just the work of groups and members of the Sangh Parivar but of a host of other Hindu groups. Nevertheless, it is the bodies affiliated with the Sangh, notably the Bajrang Dal, whose members wield clubs, knives, trishuls, and even guns, that are the primary culprits.

Jaffrelot has done a real service in highlighting the rise of this "Indian-style vigilantism," and he warns that because their actions are for the most part accepted and even covered up by local administrations and the police, they comprise the "making of an unofficial Hindu state" from below.[6]

A FURTHER DEGENERATION

It is in the third part of the book that Jaffrelot turns his attention to the systematic hollowing out of state institutions since Modi came to power; to the suborning of private media outlets (print, TV, and digital); and to the 2019 elections and more generally what he calls "electoral authoritarianism," which combines electoral competition and the possible change of party administrations with the consolidation of a vigilante state. In his words, "During Modi's second term, the government of India has transitioned from a predominantly Hindu nationalist vigilantism-based agenda to a more Hindu statist authoritarianism-oriented one."[7] What seems

5 Jaffrelot, *Modi's India*, 160–74.

6 Jaffrelot, *Modi's India*, 211, 233.

7 Jaffrelot, *Modi's India*, 404.

to have caused this shift, in his perception, is not just that the always-available repertoire of highly undemocratic and repressive preventive detention laws have been further strengthened and used more frequently, ruthlessly, and indiscriminately but that they have been accompanied by two new unconstitutional breakthrough legislations not overthrown by the Supreme Court. One was the revocation of Article 370 soon after Modi's second term began, which had given the only Muslim majority state, Jammu and Kashmir, a special autonomy status. The other was the passage of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), whereby religious discrimination was embodied in a law pertaining to citizenship for the first time. The CAA has fast-tracked Indian citizenship for non-Muslims from the three neighboring Muslim-majority countries, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh — who, simply by virtue of being non-Muslims, are defined as "persecuted" minorities. This lays the ground for a future state-by-state census-like survey (not yet carried out) of the country's population to see who has the necessary documents to prove their residential Indian status, failing which they can be interned, perhaps expelled, or otherwise punished. Non-Muslims would be able to avail themselves of the new loophole provided by the CAA claiming that they do not have the required documents because they fled persecution. Rounding out this final part of the book is the last chapter on the "social marginalization … institutional exclusion and judicial obliteration" of Indian Muslims.[8]

From the beginning, the Modi government set its eyes on controlling as much as possible the central investigative agencies and the Supreme Court — the most powerful among democracies, which has repeatedly overturned, for better and worse, lower court decisions. This has enabled the framing of false charges by

8 Jaffrelot, *Modi's India*, 406.

the agencies and even imprisonment of secular and political dissenters, as well as new laws that violate the letter and spirit of the constitution, namely the revocation of Article 370 and the passage of the CAA. Appointments of judges to the Supreme Court and high courts in the states are supposed to be the sole prerogative of the Supreme Court collegium, comprising the chief justice and the four senior-most judges. Instead, the government has largely managed to get its own way with appointments and in certain key judgments. The reasons for this closer relationship with the top judges are threefold: there is greater ideological alignment; there are post-retirement rewards offered; and judges' individual or family forms of corruption, past and present, provide leverage to the government.

The most egregious example of the Supreme Court's capitulation to Hindutva was the shameful judgment of November 2019 by a five-member constitutional bench that handed over the land on which the Babri Masjid had been demolished in Ayodhya in 1992 to its Hindu claimants for the eventual building of a Ram temple. This effectively sanctified the biggest and most sustained yet politically ugliest mass campaign after independence that, more than any single other factor, propelled the forces of Hindutva to national prominence. Jaffrelot devotes some thirteen pages to the history of judgments concerning this Ayodhya issue, and he is spot-on when he says, "The officialization of Hindu hegemony over the Indian state under Narendra Modi reached its culmination in the Ayodhya affair."[9] But there is a curious yet revealing omission on his part. There is no mention, let alone a severe indictment, of the Indian National Congress that quietly accepted this verdict. The Congress Party, while complaining that the manner by which Article 370 was revoked was unconstitutional, no longer talks of restoring it if it

9 Jaffrelot, *Modi's India*, 437.

comes to power. Here, too, in the pages covering this annulment, there is no reference to this Congress shift toward acceptance of the new common sense being forged by the BJP/Sangh.

Regarding the fourth estate, Modi, unlike any previous prime minister, has never held a public press conference where he can be openly questioned; only rare interviews with select journalists have been given. Critical journalists as well as certain news sources are intimidated and legally harassed through additional raids and financial penalties, thus promoting fear and self-censorship, along with rewards for the "faithful." Even Facebook has for a time allowed hate trolling by the BJP IT setups (far superior to those of all the other parties put together) that flood social media platforms with communal messages, knowing that the Election Commission (EC) has often decided that acquiescence is the better part of valor. Neither the EC nor the Supreme Court has rejected the new electoral bonds system, whereby individual and corporate donations to parties above a low Rs. 2000 cash limit must be routed through the State Bank of India. This renders opaque to all but the government what should be public knowledge. An obvious consequence of this scheme is that big-time donors will think twice before supporting non-BJP parties.

But vote counting — apart from manipulations at the margin — has so far been basically fair. The BJP wants the credibility provided by electoral outcomes that are seen, nationally and internationally, to be honest. They have enough reason to be satisfied with their ideological hold in the Hindi heartland, their enormous money power, their unparalleled vote-mobilizing machinery of individual booth monitoring teams, and their massive door-to-door campaigning, all allied with social media bombardment by over a million WhatsApp group volunteers. To be sure, the BJP has also done its caste arithmetic, and the party targets its images and messages accordingly. Citing research by Oliver Heath from 2009 to

2019, Jaffrelot says the key finding is that the higher the percentage of Hindu voters in a constituency, the larger the BJP vote is.[10]

The last chapter of *Modi's India* is on how Muslim presence in the police, armed forces, and parliament are not just below their total percentage in the population (14.25 percent) but that the gap has increased over time.[11] Like black people in the United States, the proportion of Muslims in prisons is higher than their percentage in the total population. Immediately after Partition, Muslims in the armed forces fell from 32 percent to 2 percent and have remained there. In 1950, Muslims made up less than 5 percent of police forces and more than 10 percent of the country. In 2016, less than 3 percent of police in India were Muslim. In the civil services, 8 percent of exam candidates are Muslim. In the Lok Sabha, the BJP has no Muslim MP, while all other parties nominate fewer than 10 percent Muslim candidates, with a considerably lower proportion getting elected.

In his final summary of the book, Jaffrelot has broken from what was, for much too long anyway, the dominant view among liberals. This was the "moderation thesis" articulated by Bruce Graham, among others: India's ethnic, class, caste, and regional diversities pull all political parties toward a bourgeois centrism and a politics of advocating "something for everybody."[12] But now that the fulcrum has been pulled so much further to the right, this conceptualization, Jaffrelot says, is less appropriate than the "religious polarisation thesis." Tariq Ali, seeing this shift of mainstream politics as a global phenomenon and laying much greater

10 Oliver Heath, "Communal Realignment and Support for the BJP, 2009–2019," *Contemporary South Asia* 28, no. 2 (2020), cited in Jaffrelot, *Modi's India*, 343.

11 Jaffrelot, *Modi's India*, 406–420.

12 Bruce Graham, *Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics: The Origins and Development of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

emphasis on the neoliberal turn everywhere as a root cause, coined a more generic term of description: "the extreme centre."[13] Since the opposition parties in India are weak and there appears to be an absence of alternatives, Jaffrelot worries that Hindutva has become a "hegemonic discourse" and that a further transition to authoritarianism (India is increasingly an authoritarian surveillance state) is a real danger.[14]

Jaffrelot's last-page lament is that an electoral defeat of the BJP is necessary but "may not be sufficient" to "puncture" the BJP/Sangh's growing hegemony. He gives two reasons for this pessimism and for minimizing the importance of elections. First, in a final footnote, he refers to the concluding sentence of his 1996 book, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics*, regarding the deep implantation of RSS and its offshoots in society.[15] The second reason appears in the concluding sentence of this book, where he says that the "deep state" captured by the Sangh means the personal Modi factor — so important for elections — may not be around, but Hindutva will remain. In the overall structure and content of this book, these are really throwaway remarks.

Had Jaffrelot made these two points his starting assumptions, the "may not" would have been replaced by a "will not," and he would have had to write a different book, giving different explanatory weights to his chosen set of factors and processes. Let us be clear: this book should be on the shelf of every serious observer of the Indian scene — such is its wealth of information and its

13 Tariq Ali, *The Extreme Centre: A Warning* (London: Verso Books, 2015).

14 Jaffrelot's key concept for grappling with the BJP/Sangh is not so much hegemony as populism, for which the term "elite" is more central than "class." For a study of "India's Two Hegemonies," comparing that of the earlier Congress Party and today's BJP/Sangh, see my article of the same name: Achin Vanaik, "India's Two Hegemonies," *New Left Review* 112 (July/August 2018).

15 Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalism Movement and Indian Politics: 1925 to the 1990s* (London: Hurst & Co., 1996).

analytical strengths when it comes to explaining the lead-up to and aftermath of key events in the Modi era, as well as the purposes and consequences of specific government policies and actions. In short, *Modi's India* is an indispensable reference work. However, the deficiencies in its overall framework are real and costly when it comes to assessing what needs to be done and who the key collective actors are that can fight to not just "tame" the forces of Hindutva or replace it in national government for some hopefully prolonged period but that are committed to decisively destroying its power and influence. Nothing less is needed.

A DIFFERENT FRAMEWORK

From the late 1970s onward, a new system of capital accumulation emerged and then spread globally: economic neoliberalism (a term Jaffrelot does not use). This economically rightward turn was transnational, but, operating as it did in a system of multiple nation-states, it could only be stabilized through the emergence of nationally specific forms of right-wing politics and ideology. It is no coincidence that it is from this period onward that we see the rise in the advanced and developing world of scapegoating forms of culturally exclusivist politics centered, singly or in combination, on ethnicity, race, religion, and nation. There is also a much more complex and wider, indeed partly global, array of forces that now interact in newly complex ways to shape and influence the lives of ordinary working people everywhere. These causal and conditioning factors — their sources and workings — are largely obscured and rendered more invisible, making the much narrower temporal and spatial framework of a lived experience incapable of comprehending, let alone hoping to control, the vast array of forces that now shape and constrain ordinary lives. Faced with such deep uncertainty and psychic disorientation, many cling to identities that are seemingly unchangeable and permanent, namely those

ascribed from birth, of ethnicity, race, and religion. Congress governments (1984–89 and 1991–96) were the principal architects of this economic turn, which subsequent governments (including the Vajpayee regimes of 1998–2004) accepted. Again, the Congress Party is responsible for the foreign policy shift toward a strategic relationship with the United States and Israel (reinforced ideologically by Vajpayee and Modi). The silence of *Modi's India* (not even a capsule account) on the historical role of the Congress Party in paving the way and promoting the rise of the Sangh is not unconnected to Jaffrelot's unwillingness to look beyond Congress as the only potential savior of the future.

Another failing of the book that must be highlighted is that the longevity and forward march of Hindutva forces — its depth of social implantation and spread after 1947, despite ups and downs — is not given its proper due. The most important reason for this is the original triptych that frames the book, in which the rise of Hindutva is declared a reaction to the "Silent Revolution" — which is supposed to be the period from the late '80s through the '90s and fading in the new century wherein the Scheduled Castes (SC, officialese for the Dalit untouchables) and OBCs became more "Hinduized."[16] This periodization has led to an exaggeration of the importance of lower caste assertion and its democratizing character, and to a corresponding underestimation of the power of the Sangh Parivar, whose political-electoral rise really dates to the mid-1970s, with its involvement in the JP Movement — not to mention its expanding influence in the pores of civil society — dramatically enhanced by the Ram Janmabhoomi campaign from the mid-'80s onward. It had already established a significant social (though not electoral) base between 1947 and the mid-'70s,

16 Christophe Jaffrelot, *India's Silent Revolution: The Rise of the Lower Castes in North India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

after which the RSS began to take the acquisition of state power much more seriously. The period of the Silent Revolution can with more accuracy be seen as one when the most important political change was the advance of Hindutva, whose comparatively greater strength is revealed by the final denouement: fairly rapid acceptance by the BJP of caste reservation politics (whose benefits were mostly to the upper subcastes), while substantial sections of SCs and OBCs have become "Hindutvaized." This absorption is duly noted by Jaffrelot, but — given the importance he attaches to what he and others have claimed to be no less than the "second democratic revolution" — the reason for it is not adequately explained.

If the Congress Party has been left off the hook, so, too, have the other opposition secular parties. It was in the 1990s that the BJP became the second national counterpart electorally to Congress. In 1996, the BJP was ostracized by opposition parties and could not form a coalition government, resigning after thirteen days. Just two years later, it was no longer the communal untouchable and formed a coalition government called the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), which was repeated in the 1999 general election. Mention has already been made of the acquisition of nuclear weapons, which, even before the Chinese acquisition, was part of the old Jan Sangh agenda in keeping with Savarkar's dictum of how to make a strong India by uniting Hindus: "Hinduise all politics and militarise Hindudom."[17] In 2002, after the Gujarat pogrom, not a single coalition partner from the Vajpayee-led government decided to break away, even as many shed crocodile tears for Muslims. The message was clear to their own bases: having some small share of national power overrides principles of secularism and even basic moral decency. Jaffrelot takes no note of all this

17 Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, "Message on the Eve of 59th Birthday," May 25, 1941, Advocatetanmoy Law Library.

and is mistaken when he writes that in 2014, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) of Andhra Pradesh and the Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) of Bihar "returned to the NDA — having left it in protest over the pogrom in Gujarat in 2002."[18] At that time, the TDP was not in the NDA and was giving outside support; and the LJP, formed in 2000, was not a part of the NDA.

The absence of any serious reference to the global neoliberal turn diminishes the culpability of the Congress Party for what subsequently emerged. Jaffrelot's preference for the Congress Party can be discerned in the book, but it is in his other journalistic writings that it comes out most strongly, particularly in his July 2020 interview with *India Today* magazine, in which he says that the Congress will need to "reinvent itself if India remains a democracy."[19] Since his book warns that the polity may well transit to a state of affairs that cannot truly be so described, it would be just as well to consider options other than a revival of Congress. However, he does not do so. Jaffrelot's horizon of the desirable does not go beyond a strongly social democratic capitalist liberal democracy that has never in any meaningful sense existed in India but that he believes only the Congress Party, leading other democratic and secular forces, can hope to deliver. Though in his writings he has cited the "soft Hindutva" behavior of Congress at times, in the interview he claims, quite astonishingly, that despite many of its party bosses having communal and conservative views, "secularism and a social-democratic agenda have generally prevailed at the top."[20] Further, he claims that the 2019 Congress

18 Jaffrelot, *Modi's India*, 101.

19 "The Congress May Be Able to Reinvent Itself If India Remains a Democracy: Christophe Jaffrelot," *India Today*, July 25, 2020.

20 Christophe Jaffrelot, "The Fate of Secularism in India," in Milan Vaishnav, ed., *The BJP in Power: Indian Democracy and Religious Nationalism*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2019.

manifesto expressed just such a vision, which is frankly ridiculous. Neither the BJP nor the Congress governments has gone beyond the expression and occasional practice of a compensatory form of neoliberalism.

Jaffrelot's unbalanced bias toward the Congress Party is also revealed in the way he dismisses the new Aam Aadmi Party (AAP, or Common Man's Party) and the main left parliamentary group Communist Party of India–Marxist (CPM). The AAP is said to be a more "saffronized" party than Congress, when its record, in its very short existence, cannot remotely compare with the criminal communal history of the latter, under whose watch took place the Nellie massacre of 1983, the anti-Sikh pogrom of 1984, large-scale brutalities of Muslims in Kashmir, and other riots in which the majority of casualties have been Muslims. The Congress Party steadily evolved into a soft Hindutva force, while the AAP has decided from the beginning that there is no option but to accept a soft Hindutva posture — which, of course, is bad enough. The CPM is dismissed as an undemocratic cadre-based party when it is, by its program and stands taken in domestic affairs, unlike today's Congress Party, still recognizably a social democratic party that is moving rightward. Jaffrelot elsewhere commends the Manmohan Singh Congress government (2004–2009) for bringing in the world's largest NREGA (national rural employment guarantee act) but omits to mention that this would not have been possible without the support of the mainstream left and civil society movements that actually formulated the whole scheme.

Despite his recognition of the party's failings — "factionalism, lack of ideological commitment and lack of discipline" — Congress remains, Jaffrelot says, the only national-level alternative and historically has shown itself resilient and able to make comebacks.[21]

21 "The Congress May Be Able to Reinvent Itself," *India Today*.

It can no longer be the "catchall" party of old in today's times and should, for a start, bring in and promote youth from plebian backgrounds and establish internal democracy through competitive elections to party posts at all levels, he argues. Above all, Congress must become a social movement party as it was in the national liberation struggle.

This is a forlorn and futile hope. On achieving independence, Congress quickly shed its movement character and reverted to being primarily a party based on vote mobilizing via rural notables — themselves, as Jaffrelot recognizes, conservative and even communal. Congress enjoyed a hegemony for two decades until the late 1960s. But this was not based, as in the case of the Sangh, on the grassroots activism of ideologically committed and disciplined cadres — but rather on the postcolonial virtues of some improvement in mass living standards and the existence of a liberal democracy, weak but new and real enough.[22] What Jaffrelot does not register is that, by the late 1980s and early 1990s, Congress had transmogrified from a bourgeois centrist force to an uglier and much smaller, thoroughly right-wing power pursuing neoliberal economics, with no agenda of even a social liberalism kind. But, like the other bourgeois parties, it is, of course, qualitatively different from the far-right BJP/Sangh.

What is the way forward? The struggle to protect and extend democratic principles and practices against their systematic erosion must continue, and issue- and sector-based tactical alliances among all willing parties, forces, and progressive movements, including bourgeois parties, is one part of the story. In the ongoing battle of ideas, there needs to be a forthright defense of secularism and an open and unrelenting hostility to the discourse of Hindutva, not a posture of "soft Hindutva" aiming to cater to

22 Vanaik, "India's Two Hegemonies."

the existing consciousness of potential voters. Caste oppression remains an important terrain of struggle, but it would be well to remember that if in rural India the near-majority of Dalits are landless laborers and desperate job-seeking migrants, the large majority of the landless and such migrants are not Dalits. Cross-caste class unities remain the key. Most liberal observers, including Jaffrelot, recognize that the real weak spot in the reign of Hindutva is the failings of the economy. The job situation — not enough, dismally paid, and unsafe — is one dimension; health care and social security systems that are a public disgrace is another. It is not just that basic needs for the majority are unmet but, worse, that India has the largest number of undernourished and malnourished people of any country in the world. This obscene state of affairs exists amid soaring inequalities of income and wealth that automatically translate into inequalities of class power that are deeply detrimental to democracy.

Breaking away from neoliberalism is the necessary but not sufficient condition for defeating the forces of Hindutva. Here one cannot look to the existing bourgeois parties. What is required is a vision and effort beyond the ken of liberals and liberalism. The very size and diversity of India continues to be the most important objective factor resisting the ambitions of Hindutva, but the subjective factor is missing. Many, including this writer, will look to the construction of a newer, stronger, and more democratic anti-Stalinist, anti-capitalist, socialist constellation of left forces. This, in conjunction with the array of progressive social movements that exist and will surface from time to time, can become the principal motor that can be relied upon to move away from Hindutva, no matter how long it takes. Is this less or more realistic than the perspective Jaffrelot offers? Time will be the judge.

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