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THE RED VINE



Journal of the Red Party

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The Class Struggle in Haiti

by Gabriel Pierre

In my last article, I concluded by noting the U.S.-sponsored coup against left-populist President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and the beginning of the country's occupation by MINUSTAH, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. Well-meaning but naive liberals and leftists often believe that the United Nations is an inherently progressive force on the global stage; that as a "community of nations" it is less susceptible to the profit-seeking adventures and cynical power plays of the U.S. government. Hence, for instance, continual calls from sincere activists in the anti-war movement to limit American military operations abroad to those that enjoy UN backing and the anti-war movement's political disarmament in cases like Libya where the imperial adventure is under a "multi-lateral" banner.

In Haiti, the UN Stabilization Mission was (and remains) essentially a fig leaf for the goal of advancing American economic interests. Former U.S. Ambassador Janet Sanderson described¹ MINUSTAH in 2008 as "an indispensable tool in realizing core USG policy interests in Haiti," citing the country's "security vulnerabilities and fundamental institutional weaknesses" as

reasons for its existence (she doesn't mention her government's role in shaping those same vulnerabilities and weaknesses.)

The earthquake of 2010 hit on the occupation's sixth year. If ever there was a time for MINUSTAH to flex its humanitarian muscles and show the Haitian people what international cooperation could accomplish, this would have been it. The situation was dire. A [magnitude] 7.0 earthquake would be a serious situation anywhere, but it was absolutely devastating in a poverty-stricken country filled with ill-prepared infrastructure. The earthquake's arrival and immediate aftermath killed 230,000 people, injured 300,000 more and left one and a half million homeless.

Instead, MINUSTAH proved itself only as a hostile and alien force over the country. Its troops reintroduced cholera - in a country that had formerly eradicated the disease inside its borders - through contaminating water, leading to over six thousand deaths and 440,000 infections. A U.S. court ruled last year that the UN would not be held liable for the resulting loss of life. Its tragically misnamed peacekeepers repressed the street protests that followed, just as they acted as a repressive force in the recent protests against

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Michel Martelly's government.

On the economic front, the US-MINUSTAH justification for its existence is feeble. A black hole of corruption², both legal and illegal, has seen billions of dollars in foreign aid and charitable contributions either go unaccounted for or funneled into the coffers of multinational corporations. When Haitian legislators moved to raise the minimum wage from 31 cents an hour to 61 - still inhumanly low - the Obama Administration leaned on the government to block it at the behest of Hanes and Levi-Strauss, two companies among many that rely on slave wages for production³.

Slave wages plus enough political stability to suit business purposes - that's the end goal of imperialism in Haiti, but it is an elusive one. Whenever more than three-fourths of the population lives in poverty (and half in extreme poverty - less than \$1 a day), social decay will be a permanent feature... or worse, from a ruling-class perspective, the threat of popular revolt. Already the discontent with the *status quo* is there; ex-president René Preval himself conceded that "if the Haitian people were asked if they wanted the UN forces to leave, they would say yes."

Splits and Struggle

It's in this context that the class struggle in Haiti takes place - through, on the one side, rolling battles over wages and conditions, and on the other side through a political struggle with the U.N.-backed government of Michel Martelly, under whose reign corruption is institutionalized and democratic rights trampled.

On February 2-3, transport workers in Port-au-Prince flexed their muscles in a fuel strike, calling for the government to lower the cost of gasoline in light of its unaffordability and the global fall in costs. The next week, a two-day general strike brought the economy to a standstill, aiming for a further reduction in the fuel price beyond the essentially token amount agreed after the drivers' strike and, of course, the resignation of Martelly's government. Disputes between unions and employers in the country's many sweatshops are also ongoing. At this point, any localized dispute threatens to gravitate toward a generalized opposition to the existing order.

Not all oppositions are equal. The "official" opposition is the Movement of the Democratic Patriotic Opposition (MOPOD), an umbrella of various bourgeois parties and currents. It has little to offer the Haitian masses except statements of moral indignation and cosmetic changes upon getting into power. Martelly refuses to

call immediate elections that are years overdue. He now rules by decree with one third of the Senate empty, all Chamber of Deputies (lower house) seats vacant and municipal offices whose elections have been postponed since 2011.

Despite this the MOPD - at the insistence of the U.S. Ambassador - accepted the formation of Martelly's Provisional Electoral Council, recently formed as a sop to quell the growing mass discontent (an ineffective and unconstitutional sop is still a sop.) Executive control over the electoral process means more undemocratic maneuvers and exclusions, as was the case in 2010 when Fanmi Lavalas was barred from running.

Clearly the official opposition has no teeth, but Lavalas has not been able - or rather, *willing* - to provide a revolutionary leadership either. It's still a hugely popular party and would likely win a free and fair elections; its activists have been at the forefront of the anti-government protests. But in spite of being shunned by the capitalist parties, the Lavalas leadership positions itself as the establishment's left-wing outlier. Its leadership is now composed of *bona fide* members of the bourgeoisie and former right-wing politicians / coup supporters. The party's left wing was dealt a blow in 2013 when charismatic and outspoken anti-



imperialist legislators, Deputy Arnel Bélizaire and Senator Moïse Jean-Charles, were expelled. Former President Aristide remains completely silent and has in fact withdrawn from politics altogether - with his neutrality giving *de facto* support to the Right, whether that is his intention or not. Lavalas's rightward drift is shown, among other things, by their wavering on the demand for Martelly's resignation (party spokespeople sometimes claim this is not a prerequisite for free elections) and fudging the question of the occupation. FL leader Doctor Maryse Narcisse, the expected nominee for this year's presidential elections, brags to the media that her party is now one of "moderate opposition."

Running into a wall with Lavalas, a combative minority has looked elsewhere to find an organizational expression. Former Senator Jean-Charles founded a new organization, the Platform of Dessalines' Children

(PPD), referencing the national hero and leader of the 1791 revolution Jean-Jacques Dessalines. Information about PPD is scarce, but more significant in my view is the KOD - Kodinasyon Desalines or Dessalines Coordination. The KOD was formed in 2013 when multiple popular organizations broke away from Lavalas after its purge of the two leftist parliamentarians and its inclusion of old coup supporters. Rejecting the "dialogue" process between Martelly, the U.S., and the MOPOD as well as FL's craven attempts to be accepted as a "respectable" partner, KOD leader Oxygene David had this to say at its founding conference:

"For some time, militants from several popular organizations, who have been meeting to analyze the political situation, foresaw this terrible development that has led us into this dangerous crossroads.

For months now, we have been observing this convergence of traitors taking shape. We have to prepare ourselves for struggle. We have to establish a true fighting organization through which we can struggle, a true popular party, not only to take part in elections, but to fight for the interests of the Haitian people with discipline and principles.

The Dessalines Coordination (KOD) is a progressive Dessalinien organization for the national liberation of the Haitian people. KOD declares that the Macouto-bourgeois dialogue being held at the El Rancho Hotel will not do anything for the nation. It is simply a new maneuver by the government of President Martelly and Prime Minister Laurent Lamothe, along with several opportunist mercenary political parties beholden to the imperialists in complicity with the Catholic Church, to throw sand in the people's eyes and sink the masses even deeper into exploitation and poverty.

*KOD has come to speak to you, Haitian people, above all our brothers and sisters who are life-long unemployed; workers who are struggling for 500 gourdes [\$11.35 per day minimum wage]; peasants who get no fertilizer nor financial assistance from the government, but instead are robbed by officials; our students who are suffering around the country who can't find any support; and teachers' unions which are on strike today. KOD salutes all of you, KOD understands your battles, KOD supports your demands, but we have to all stand up together to solve the nation's problems."*⁴

Since its launch, KOD has concentrated its agitation around two key slogans: immediate withdrawal of MINUSTAH, immediate ejection of the Martelly government from power, and installation of a Provisional Government to coordinate free elections. Essentially the Dessalines Coordination is the most politically advanced formation in the country, despite its quasi-Maoist line that a post-Martelly provisional authority would be drawn from "all sectors of society." Here is a relatively strong political force that self-

identifies as a workers' and peasants' party, one that recognizes the interwoven threads between the state and the "macouto-bourgeois."⁵ Another high-profile split from Fanmi Lavalas could see KOD strengthened further. Alternatively, when the presidential elections finally do occur (and if FL isn't excluded again) then Dr. Narcisse's pathological centrism should provoke further dissent in the ranks that lead to a steady trickle of drop-outs - although this kind of "split" is more likely to result in dissent petering out than channeling in a constructive direction.

International Dimension

Haiti's problems can't be solved within its own borders alone. Even if the occupation was withdrawn and the state helmed by Martelly was replaced by a provisional government - or, better, by the state power of the working class - these steps would not liberate Haiti. The economic form of imperialist domination - ie, Haiti's position as a poor, underdeveloped source of super-exploited labor within the *global* division of labor - would remain. Haitian capitalism has not responded kindly to past efforts to make it more humane, and it goes without saying that building socialism in one third of the island of Hispaniola is a fantasy.

This is not to say that the Haitian masses shouldn't fight.

Quite the contrary. In addition to the economic and political struggle at home, a thoroughly internationalist orientation is needed. To an extent this is already the case. The far-left usual suspects are mostly absent from Haiti, with the exception of a small Trotskyist group aligned to the French Lutte Ouvrière.⁶ But Fanmi Lavalas has a presence in U.S. Haitian immigrant communities, and the militant class-struggle union Batay Ouvriye (Worker Struggle) has links to the international solidarity movement in general.

Naturally, the revolutionary left in the U.S., France and Canada is involved in (and often the lynchpin of) Haiti solidarity campaigns, mainly around anti-occupation agitation, wage issues and debt amnesty / reparations. On top of this, Latin American revolutionaries have an unexpected task: agitation against their own governments' complicity and involvement in the occupation. Bolivia's Evo Morales, Uruguay's Pepe Mujica and Brazil's Dilma Rousseff - all leading "broad-left" governments - all participate in MINUSTAH. Brazil and Uruguay provide the largest and second largest contingents of occupation troops, respectively.

Fernando Moyano had this to say about the situation:

"On the one hand, in common with other leftist Latin

American governments participating in MINUSTAH, the government in Uruguay has not broken with imperialism. It and other soft-left governments in Latin America today, including Brazil and Argentina, are still beholden to capitalism. One expression of this is their participation in the occupation of Haiti. Even Bolivia and Ecuador have participated in MINUSTAH, although with smaller forces compared to others. Ecuador has recently withdrawn from the force, but its military base in Haiti was transferred to the authoritarian government of Haitian President Michel Martelly, and in 2013, Ecuador provided training to some 40 Haitian paramilitaries, whom Haitians fear will form the nucleus of a revived Haitian army. The reviled, human rights-violating former army was disbanded in 1995 by the pacifist president of the day, Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

*B r a z i l ,
Argentina, Chile and
Uruguay have played
major roles in*

MINUSTAH. Chile joined with the United States, Canada and France in landing troops in March 2004 to consolidate the violent overthrow of Aristide, then serving his second, elected term as president. Brazil uses these missions to train its troops in military control of its civilian population. For several years, the Brazilian army has militarily occupied the favelas (poor districts) of Rio de Janeiro. The World Cup tournament of 2014 prompted the extension of that occupation to other cities in Brazil.”⁷

State repression wielded in capital’s interests abroad will inevitably be directed to serve capital’s interests at home: it is, as Malcolm X would say, chickens coming home to roost. The working class in the Americas has a concrete material interest in helping the Haitian working class liberate itself. We need to develop but ultimately go *beyond* campaigns of international solidarity organized around purely defensive slogans. In the era of decaying capitalism there can be no “national road” to socialism and freedom for the vast majority, in Haiti or elsewhere.

A united front of revolutionary socialists in Latin

and North America could bring Haiti solidarity work to a higher level, both in aid for Haitian immigrants and in building anti-occupation sentiment in the occupying powers. But it could also do much more than that, if armed with a hemispheric, rather than national, vision of a new society.

Notes:

1. <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2008/10/08PORTAUPRINCE1381.html>
2. <http://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2015/01/20/hait-j20.html>
3. <http://www.businessinsider.com/wikileaks-haiti-minimum-wage-the-nation-2011-6>
4. <http://haiti-liberte.com/archives/volume7-31/The%20Dessalines%20Coordination.asp>
5. A portmanteau of bourgeois and the “Tonton Macoutes” described in my previous article. The term refers to the fusion of Haitian capital and big landlords, who sponsored the Macoute death squads.
6. American readers may be more familiar with Lutte Ouvrière’s U.S. affiliate, The Spark.
7. <http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/29011-uruguay-in-haiti-the-poorest-president-of-a-mercenary-army#>

Is an American Syriza in the Cards?

Editorial by the Red Party Central Committee

Readers of this paper will likely already be aware that on January 25th, snap elections in crisis-ridden Greece unseated the conservative-lead government in favor of the Coalition of the Radical Left (Syriza by its Greek initials), which went on the next day to take on the governmental reins as the majority party in coalition with the right-wing nationalist Independent Greeks (Anel.) Ripples of Syriza's electoral victory have been felt across Europe and beyond, with a number of socialists in the United States now wondering whether we can build a "coalition of the radical left" at home. For many American radicals, all too aware of the left's dire state brought on by its disunity and sect methods of organization, Syriza represents - along with its Spanish sister party Podemos - something of a model to be emulated.

Of course, now that Syriza as a party of government in a peripheral capitalist economy - and an isolated one at that - has begun to govern in the interests of capital (note the humiliating interim deal agreed by Athens and the absurdity of Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras and Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis touting it as a "victory"), the fanfare for Syriza abroad has become much more muted. But it is still present, and to a certain extent it's a positive thing. Surely no one could fault any working-class militant for trying to find a way out of the sectarian blind alley that the socialist left finds itself in.

Mass Roots

But there are serious limits to the idea that Syriza can be turned into a model and exported abroad - even if we accept that this is a good idea to begin with, which as we will discuss below, is far from clear. For one thing, Syriza's origins lie in a split from the "official communist" movement, namely the Communist Party of Greece (KKE.) The KKE was (and still is) a *mass* party, with its own

trade unions and noticeable influence in strategic sections of the working class. When the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia heralded the end of the "Prague Spring", international official communism split along pro- and anti-Soviet lines, the latter gaining the label "Eurocommunist." In Greece the Eurocommunist split called itself the KKE-Interior. Though much smaller than its rival, it was able to hit the ground running because it originated in a formation with real social weight.

In the late '80s the KKE-Interior split again, with the right-wing faction Greek Left forming a coalition with the Communist Party and others called Synaspismos (Coalition of the Left and Progress.) The coalition crashed and burned after forming a government with the conservative party, but the Eurocommunists kept the name.¹ It gradually picked up social movement activists, small far-left groups and social democrats unsatisfied with Pasok until, in 2004, it became the largest component of a political project regrouping Trotskyist, Maoist, Green, feminist, left-nationalist, left-social democratic and eurocommunist organizations and individuals - Syriza.

This process couldn't be replicated in the United States, which hasn't had a mass communist party for more than half a century. Neither is there a social democratic / labor party that could provide the institutional muscle for a left split which scattered left-wingers could cohere around. That Syriza was able to catapult from being a small minority (4.6% of the vote and 14 MPs in 2009)² to governing party in such a short time is a testament to Greece's deep-rooted traditions of working class militancy, spanning nearly a hundred years - the memory of the Communist-lead anti-Nazi resistance and the Greek Civil War not least among them. The same goes for Spain, where after their civil war the underground workers' organizations where the vanguard of

resistance to the fascist dictatorship that finally fell in 1975. Class-consciousness in the U.S. is nowhere near as widespread.

In any case, the *kind* of unity espoused by Syriza is a unity based on fudging principles - a lowest-common-denominator form of politics that's alien to Marxism. Syriza's policy drifted to the right even before it took office, with the Thessaloniki Program³ to the right of their overall platform. In power they have watered their politics down further.⁴ All this is a natural consequence of an approach built on illusions: either the nationalist illusion that an island of socialism can be built in Greece alone or the reformist illusion that maneuvering within the existing European Union framework can deliver any kind of positive anti-capitalist transformation, even incrementally.

In terms of policy, the Syriza government could be described as a form of Right-Eurocommunism in power. It sees alliances with bourgeois parties (the coalition with Anel) and managing capitalism in one country as a path to socialism - a very long path. A common defense of this line of thinking states that managing capitalism is all that's possible at the current time, given that the majority of the population is not in favor of socialist revolution. But that is precisely the problem. A workers party *should not* take power on the basis of reformism. Or, put another way, a workers party should not accept bourgeois constitutionalism and adapt itself to it. The constitutions of capitalist states, with their "checks and balances" against democracy, are designed to prevent changes that threaten ruling class interests. Better to remain in opposition, with the revolutionary program intact (and the ability to build up further support on that basis), than sign on to the impossible task of reconciling the working class's interests with the property-owners.

Direct Democracy Illusion

The "broad left" parties are often not any more democratic in their internal affairs than a

standard "Leninist" sect. Prime Minister Tsipras and his cabinet have flouted Syriza's party democracy. The state of affairs is the reverse of what a workers' party should be; elected representatives must be controlled by the party, not the other way around.

As for Podemos, its form of democracy is not as deep as it might appear at first look. "Direct democracy" seems ideal on the surface, especially given the way Pablo Iglesias and his supporters abroad emphasize the role of the Internet in empowering the rank and file. But *using* online structures to play a supporting role in party democracy is a different thing from fetishizing it.

Podemos's membership is atomized by the party infrastructure, making it malleable in the hands of party officials.⁵ Since anyone can sign up online in just a few minutes without paying dues or accepting a political program as the basis for action, the party is vulnerable to demagoguery and dishonest maneuvers at the top. The Technical Team that organized the first Citizen Assembly (party congress) was quickly elected without a serious amount of discussion before opting to do away with elected delegates at the assembly itself - thus, political debate took place in an isolated form online rather than face-to-face in branches, where nuance and compromise are part of the process.

At the Citizen Assembly, Iglesias's faction pushed through its proposals on the basis that members had to vote for them all together at once - all or nothing, a thoroughly undemocratic method that, like most referendums, reduces the masses' role to that of a rubber stamp. One of the new policies was a ban on "double militancy" (dual membership in Podemos and another party or party-like organization) for office holders. The Trotskyist group that was instrumental in *founding* Podemos is now therefore ineligible to hold leading positions in it.⁶

What Kind of Unity?

(cont'd. on next page)

Unfortunately, revolutionaries who build parties with the stated aim of balancing between reform and revolutionaries are mistaken to believe that such parties are a stepping stone to a revolutionary party. Instead, these "halfway houses" lead in the opposite direction. That was the case for the Brazilian Workers Party, whose ascendance to power in a "popular front" with the center-right led to purges or housebreaking for its revolutionary elements. Italy's Rifondazione Comunista (Communist Refoundation) crashed and burned after joining a bourgeois coalition government and implementing austerity.

So if not an American Syriza or Podemos, then what? Certainly the *impulse* toward left unity felt by many comrades, the recognition that the existing alphabet soup sect landscape is not up to the tasks facing us, is a development that shouldn't be ignored. We maintain that the best, most durable and most fruitful form of unity is a single party organized around a Marxist program. Granted, if such a party was born today (or, more realistically, concrete steps were taken in that direction), it would not have a short-term prospect of becoming a mass formation. But it *would* regroup thousands of active, dedicated working-class activists and organizers under one banner - allowing the Marxist left to impact events in a much broader way than the sects can in their isolated, mutually competitive existence today. Sending a serious signal for principled unity would also serve as a pole of attraction for thousands of unaffiliated activists and former sect members rejoining the movement.

It's worth restating what we mean when we speak of a "Marxist program" or a "revolutionary party." To us, these concepts are based around three fundamental principles: internationalism in word and deed, working-class political independence and extreme democracy. Committing to proletarian internationalism places the class struggle in the U.S. into its context as part of the world proletariat - in the modern epoch there is no major question that can be solved within the borders of any single country. Political independence is fairly self-explanatory, and

includes *electoral* independence from the Democratic Party.

As for extreme democracy, this goes for both the state and the workers' movement. A radically democratic state is the only way the working class can rule, as seen in the Paris and St. Louis Communes, the 1919 Seattle General Strike Committee and the early Soviet Republic. A struggle for extreme democracy in our movement includes not only the trade unions but the party itself. Real democratic centralism, based not on bureaucratic fiat but winning confidence and publicly airing opposing views, is the only guarantor of united action and majority rule.

This isn't to say that, if a movement toward a broad left / reformist party did emerge, revolutionaries should stand aloof from it - although such a movement is unlikely to emerge in the short term. But a *bona fide* party would be in a far better position to intervene in such a development than small communist groups advocating sub-revolutionary politics and hiding their Marxism for fear of alienating people "out there." At the present time, we believe that the best organizational form to begin this process is a Socialist Alliance to run in the 2016 Congressional elections.⁷ An electoral front is not a party, but a democratic convention to hash out a common platform and select candidates provides an opportunity to overcome our movement's extreme disunity on a principled basis. For our part, the Red Party's own modest efforts will be directed toward reaching out to organizations and individuals to put this proposal into action.

Notes

1. "Syriza in the spotlight", <http://weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/915/syriza-in-the-spotlight/>
2. <http://www.electionresources.org/gr/vouli.php?election=2009>
3. http://www.syriza.gr/article/id/59907/SYRIZA---THE-THESSALONIKI-PROGRAMME.html#_VQW4H4dLr0c
4. "Austerity in the colours of Syriza", <http://weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1047/austerity-in-the-colours-of-syriza/>
5. "Exposing the Podemos fraud", <http://www.revleft.com/vb/blog.php?b=19183>
6. "Izquierda Anticapitalista on the decisions of the Podemos Citizens' Assembly", <http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article3713>
7. "For a Socialist Alliance in 2016!", <http://red-party.com/for-a-socialist-alliance-in-2016/>

Echoes of the Modoc War

by David Smithers

In the United States, with its peculiar origin of being both a settler-colonial state and a first rate imperialist power, the class struggle has taken place not only in its "pure" form but also through conflict between the state and the indigenous peoples whose lands and wealth it usurped. The struggle between U.S. imperialism and the American Indian nations has come in various shapes, from political clientelism to coercive assimilation to military conquest. The Modoc War of 1872-73 was, like the name implies, part of the military phase.

General Edward Canby got his cross. Chief Kintpuash (or "Captain Jack"), leader of the insurgent Modoc bands, got hanged - and his head in a pickle jar for his trouble. General Canby had been an American Civil War veteran, a career officer. Kintpuash was the leader of a band of followers, including women and children who left the Klamath Indian Reservation to make their way back to the home from which they were expelled. General Canby was now a peace negotiator as the army had failed to kill or dislodge the Indians from the lava beds where Captain Jack's forces organized guerilla attacks. Even artillery power couldn't do the trick.

On the reservation, Indians were the responsibility of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Christian / progressive do-gooders. Off, they were the military's responsibility. Captain Jack shot Canby, who then became a martyr. Jack, the Modoc chief, was a two-faced Red Judas. A criminal.

The press blamed the frontier whites as bad influences on the indigenous people, but as things dragged on the reading public grew less sympathetic. The violence against the Native Americans became redemptive for the Euro-American settlers. The prolonged resistance and evasion by the men, women and children became criminal acts. Kintpuash's forces were whittled down, through both combat and surrenders.

The Gilded Age press, popular novels, and stage became a marketplace of the facts and the meanings of the Modoc War. How it was remembered and to be remembered. Auto tourism and anniversary celebrations served the distorted view, even during the latter days of multiculturalism. The guilt is equal, right? Yet the war is not over. The war is primarily a class war, seen through a racialized lens.

The Klamath Basin straddling the two states of Oregon and California is a great trough in the southern Cascade

Range, 100 miles long and 25 miles wide, dotted with marshes, lakes, rivers and streams. It has been hydrologically altered with dams and draining of wetlands. The Modoc and Klamath lived in the southern and northern sectors, respectively. In the north, the Klamath relied heavily on fish and waterfowl. In the south, the Modoc also fished, but also gathering and hunting. In the winter they, in their various villages, with their own leaders and shaman, lived in partly subterranean earth covered lodges or simpler mat covered houses. In the summer, domed pole and matted housing or a brush lean-to would do. Community religious events took place in the sweat houses, used by both genders.¹

Henry E. Fritz wrote in 1959 that the 'peace policy' of President Grant's administration (1869-1877) was one phase of a Protestant crusade which reached a climax with the passage of legislation looking to the solution of the American Indian problem in the West. It was established through Protestant influence in order to clear the Great Plains (extended to the Pacific Region) for white settlement and to undertake Indian assimilation in a period when public opinion was against legislative reform favoring "the Indian."²



The dialectical factors contributing to the changed Indian policy included an exhausted post Civil War nation, attempting to reduce the military burden even though the veteran postbellum generals wanted to but could not deal with the indigenous once and for all, Euro-American settlers who considered the Indians a nuisance at best, and life for the natives becoming ever more desperate. This was the setting for the church and state mission.

The Treaty of 1864 moved the Modoc to the Klamath territory, which became a reservation combining tribes. This tenuous relationship was a great motivation for the train of events leading to the Modoc War. On June 17, 2014 the present day Modoc leader's comments on a federal water bill reflects the tensions even today:³

"I too wish to say we (The Modoc Nation) do not support this agreement. That we support our Brothers and Sisters of the Hoopa Valley Tribe. We have sent a resolution to Congress before on this

issue have sent letters to all the Senators, Congressmen, Governor(s) involved. It would seem that our voices fall on deaf ears. It would also seem this is an illegal deal from the get-go. A little past history to explain who we are, in June of 2010 we, the Modoc tribe of Oregon and California exercised our rights as a Federally Recognized Tribe, Adopted our own Constitution and Voted in our own Government. We did this since the Klamath Tribes would not represent or protect our Culture, Values, Homelands, way of life. The Government in the Klamath Tribes was flawed from the beginning since there was no way for a fair vote to ever take place. The Klamath's outnumber the Modoc 10 to 1...

This is what caused the Modoc War, our leader Captain Jack tried to stay on the

Reservation but found that the Modocs were not supported or protected. This never really changed [...] This agreement (which we have never agreed to) takes away our Rights as a Tribe. Why would we agree to this? Why would we want land in Klamath territory? Why would we give up everything for the Klamaths?"

Historical Studies

Boyd Cochran is assistant professor of history at York University and author of *Remembering the Modoc War: Redemptive Violence and the Making of American Innocence* (University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill 2014.) Cochran says: "Historical narratives are always social, political, and cultural constructions, but...materialistic way of remembering the past, I seek to uncover the... influence of capitalism on what we call history." (p21)

The short story is that Captain Jack and his band left the reservation to go back home and exercise their water use rights to Tule Lake, which was much larger then. It is a sacred area to the Modoc; the war and the national monument area is a painful memory for them since. The US Army was sent after them. They were dislodged from villages along the Lost River which feeds the lake, with army and settler losses. The band of men, women and children took shelter in the caves, on the south shore, and held out for months, including during peace talks. One of which ended in the killing of Edward Canby by Captain Jack.

“Long overshadowed in the nation’s historical memory by events such as the Sand Creek Massacre, the death of Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer at the Battle of Greasy Grass, and the Massacre at Wounded Knee, the Modoc War [in Klamath Basin] was in

fact one of the most important conflicts of nineteenth-century American expansion... consumed the the nation’s attention for months... by intractable negotiations between the federal government and the Modocs and by intense newspaper coverage with only periodic incidents of violence.” (p3)

The truth is history. But what we know is historiography and modern monuments and celebrations with roots from the very beginning in 1872. National and world events and concerns folded in the contemporary perception of the war.

Echoes of the Modoc War extend as far forward in time as 2003. The author of these lines set his Google Alerts to “Modoc War”. In early March 2003, John C. Yoo, a University of California law professor, wrote a legal opinion on request from the Department of Justice

in support of the war on terror and so-called enhanced interrogation techniques. His eighty-one page memorandum became available to the public in April 2008. Yoo relied on U.S. Attorney general George H. William’s 1873 opinion regarding the Modoc Indian prisoners . The opinion had provided the legal justification for trying the Modocs by a military tribunal. Cochran observed, “one hundred thirty years later, Yoo resurrected this legal theory to support his expansive articulation of executive power and maintain American innocence in the Global War on terror.” (p77)

Notes:

1. Encyclopedia Britannica, 1976 edition.
2. The Making of Grant’s “Peace Policy”, <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/Chronicles/v037/vo37p411.pdf>
3. indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2014/06/01/new-klamath-water-bill-has-one-opponent-hoopa-valley-tribe-155108

Party Update

Did you miss us in February? We experienced some production problems, but we’re back at it now, and with a lengthened March issue as compensation. You may also notice the new naming scheme on the front page, with this issue saying “March-April.” This isn’t a change in the production

schedule, but a shift to the middle of the month as the formal release time for each issue.

Also worth mentioning: next month will mark *The Red Vine*’s first anniversary. We have a special issue in mind for April, so stay tuned!

#EFFYOURBEAUTYSTANDARDS

by Mari Pierre-Antoine

On January 22nd, 2015 American plus-size model Tess Holliday announced that she had been signed with MiLK Model Management in the United Kingdom. Holliday is the first model of her size - at 5'5" and size 22 clothing - to be signed with a major modeling agency. Typically plus size models come in a very narrow variety with an average height of 5'8" or taller and never wearing larger than a size 16/18. Holliday is also one of the founders of #effyourbeautystandards; a Tumblr blog and hashtag that promotes women of all sizes and encourages them to wear what they want. You want to wear bikinis and sleeveless shirts? Go ahead!

"I want YOU to join the movement by wearing whatever the fuck you want- stop hiding your body because society tells you to."

While Holliday was elated at the news of becoming the first model of her size to be signed with a major modeling agency, many people felt otherwise:

"Just to be real; nobody wants to see cellulite on themselves, let alone a "model" [...] Has the meaning of "model" changed!?"

This is just one of the many comments made online about the success of Holliday - one of the "nicer" comments actually; most are frothing-at-the-mouth levels of rage and slurs. As for the statement above, the meaning of "model" has indeed changed a little. We currently live in a society where young girls and boys are raised to feel inadequate if they don't look a certain way. Some of the most notorious models and celebrities that walk runways and act are driven to extreme measures to keep up with industry standards. Any time a woman in Hollywood gains a few pounds she automatically becomes a spectacle for people to question, poke and criticize. Many tabloids flaunt front covers that either shame celebrities for gaining weight or praise them for losing weight and advertise how you too can shed "20lbs in two weeks." Honest! Never mind that losing that much weight in such a short amount of time (even if the promise wasn't bullshit, which it is) would in most scenarios be highly unhealthy.

People have made comments saying that Holliday is "glorifying obesity" by being confident and loving who she is as a person - physically and mentally. Why is Tess and the plus size community receiving so

much hate for simply loving who they are? Americans sink billions of dollars into a abusive beauty industry that profits off of people believing they're naturally ugly. These attitudes don't come from nowhere; they have to be maintained and promoted to keep beauty industry profits the windfall that they are. We are bombarded with images of people that are anywhere from 10-30% underweight and masked in layers of makeup. The weight loss industry profits from this as well, seeing as we are constantly being told that we're not thin enough. Americans spend around \$60 billion a year¹ on weight loss products, gym memberships, *et cetera*. - cynically preying on desperate people. Capitalists don't care if you like yourself or if you're happy with who you are. As long as you consume what's being sold to you businesses stays happy.

Tess Holiday defies that in her own way, but as long as we live under a capitalist economy that produces for profit, not human need or - God forbid - human fulfillment, its cultural standards will remain the dominant ones. That's the real "unhealthy lifestyle."

Notes

1. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/08/business/us-charges-4-companies-with-deception-in-weight-loss-products.html?_r=0

Venezuela in the Crosshairs

by Gabriel Pierre

Last Monday, President Obama announced a new wave of economic sanctions against Venezuela on the grounds that it is an “extraordinary threat to national security.” The executive order is nominally aimed at seven top Venezuelan state officials, whose U.S.-held assets are to be frozen and their entry into the country prohibited. Though clearly not as damaging as the sanctions imposed on Iran or the economic strangling of Iraq in the ‘90s that triggered a massive humanitarian disaster¹, it’s important to remember that sanctions are an economic form of warfare. The new executive order comes after an earlier round of sanctions passed at the end of last year, part of an overall strategy of isolating and delegitimizing the rebellious Latin American government. Who says the Monroe Doctrine is dead?

The idea that American policy is motivated by pious concern for human rights is a joke. Hands off Venezuela!, the solidarity organization headed by the International Marxist Tendency pointed this out in a recent statement carried by the IMT’s American affiliate:²

“Throughout its history the USA has been involved in countless

interventions in foreign countries in order to depose governments they did not like and to support and defend brutal dictatorships. More recently, in Latin America Washington has been involved in successful and failed coups in Bolivia (2008), Honduras (2009), and Paraguay (2012).

In Colombia and Mexico, the government of the United States has no problem in supporting governments which are responsible for horrific violations of human rights, corruption, linked to drug cartels, etc. No Executive Orders in these cases. They are not considered “a threat to national security.”

How can President Obama even talk about human rights and democratic institutions when barely six weeks ago he headed a high level delegation to Saudi Arabia to attend the funeral of this country's ruthless despot and described him as “one of our closest allies”?

How can the President of the US describe Venezuela as an “extraordinary threat to US national security” when the United States was directly involved in the coup which overthrew the democratically elected government of President Hugo Chávez in April 2002? The US has not ceased to fund and support opposition groups in Venezuela that have been involved in attempts to remove by force the democratically elected government of the country. Washington has not ceased in its constant interference against the democratic will of the Venezuelan people. Who is a threat to whom?”

In truth, the Venezuelan government - though it’s no workers’ state or socialist republic, contrary to what some of its more naive leftist supporters may think or wish was true - is *more* democratic than the United States, in the sense that there is more political space for the working class to flex its muscles. This isn’t to say that the government headed by Maduro (and Hugo Chavez before him) is a stranger to repression. But the state didn’t

brutally repress the 2014 protests. The affluent, mostly middle class student protesters cried “totalitarianism” in a country where most media is privately-owned and supporting the *opposition*, which is given free rein to agitate and organize economic sabotage³. Most violent actions were committed by the protesters, not state forces, while the foreign capitalist media widely circulated outright lies about the situation without a second thought.⁴



Overall though, Venezuela today is in some ways like a third-world incarnation of social democracy; think British Labour circa 1945 or Sweden in its social democratic heyday. Venezuela’s poor masses have benefited significantly from oil-financed programs redistributing wealth from the top of society to the bottom as the country has “eradicated illiteracy, massively extended free health care and education, substantially reduced poverty and unemployment [and] built affordable housing for hundreds of thousands of families.”² A welfare state and some grassroots consultatory councils aren’t socialism, but the gains won by the workers would be thrown back significantly if U.S. regime change efforts succeed, either by economic pressures that increase instability or directly via a sponsored *coup d’etat*. Unfortunately, objective economic conditions and the bureaucratic-reformist character

of the governing United Socialist Party of Venezuela favor the growth of reactionary sentiment in the petty-bourgeoisie and the bureaucratized state apparatus. In the Chavista camp, Bonapartist / caudillo or “strongman” tendencies are being *strengthened* with the Venezuelan legislature’s passing of an “Enabling Law” giving President Maduro broad authority to manage the situation. Rule by decree is inimical to the kind of collective politics that advance working class interests.

Naturally, socialists oppose these acts of aggression (and their ideological facilitator in the major media distortions) on anti-imperialist grounds, which means opposing the political establishment that commits them. Sadly there are sections of the socialist left that want to have it both ways. Take the Communist Party USA as a case study. A March 12 article⁵ on *People’s World* by Emile

Schepers says all the right things about the reasons for U.S. aggression, but spectacularly fails to draw the basic conclusion that an effective anti-imperialist politics in this country can’t be built without independence *from the imperialist politicians* themselves. After all, since the Obama administration and the majority-Republican Congress are working essentially hand-in-glove when it comes to Venezuela, doesn’t this weaken the CPUSA line that the Democratic Party is needed as part of a “broad people’s alliance” acting as a bulwark against “ultra-right” aggression? Comrade Schepers even admits that Washington’s tensions with Venezuela stem in part from the latter’s support for trade blocs like Mercosur that rival the proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) quietly championed by the President - and those free trade deals don’t exactly have a sterling pro-worker reputation, whether in North or South America.

But all the right-on observations in the world have no teeth while they’re tied to a perspective of loyalty to an imperialist party.

Notes

1. <http://www.thenation.com/article/hard-look-iraq-sanctions?page=0.0>
2. <http://socialistappeal.org/resources/1552-venezuela-a-threat-to-us-national-security.html>
3. <http://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/11252>
4. <http://fair.org/blog/2014/02/27/nyt-corrects-venezuela-tv-falsehood/>
5. <http://www.peoplesworld.org/u-s-escalates-tensions-with-venezuela/>

WHAT WE STAND FOR

The Red Party is a U.S. political organization that fights for working class unity in a single socialist party-movement. A united organization, based on a Marxist program, would turn politics as we know it upside down, injecting the labor and social movements with a renewed sense of confidence and strength.

* A united workers' party-movement would combine political action with economic and social action, including running socialist candidates for office, protests, strikes, co-operatives and mutual aid societies.

* Our organization has the word party in its name, but we recognize that in the world-historic sense there is no revolutionary party in the U.S. today. Instead we have a fractured array of competing sects organized on a bureaucratic basis. Their work is hampered by hyper-activism with little to no long-term strategy, lack of internal democracy and lack of deep roots in the working class. The Red Party organizes day-to-day resistance against injustices spawned by capitalism within the context of strengthening working class organization and building support for socialism.

* Marxists operate through democratic centralism. Through ongoing debate we

seek to achieve unity in action and a common world outlook. As long as they support agreed actions, members have the right to speak openly and form factions to advance their views.

* Marxists oppose all imperialist wars and interventions, from Iraq to Syria, but recognize that ending war permanently means ending capitalism.

* Marxists are internationalists. We strive for the closest unity of the working class and oppressed peoples everywhere. We oppose nationalism in all its forms. We advocate a new revolutionary workers' International. Without an International (a world party), the struggle against Capital is weakened. Capital organizes across borders; so too must we.

* Marxists support industrial unions (organizing workers by industry) rather than the more narrow trade union structure. We support the highest possible level of pan-American union coordination for workers' rights. Bureaucratic leadership and class collaboration, particularly support for the Democratic Party, in the unions must be replaced with democratic revitalization and class independence.

* Marxists are champions of the oppressed. Women's oppression, racism, national oppression and LGBT/QI

oppression are just as much working class questions as are higher pay, union rights and struggles for quality health, housing and education. Marxists demand self-determination for American Indian nations, Hawaii, Puerto Rico and all other territories.

* World capitalism, based on exploitation and a reckless quest for profit, is increasingly putting the future of humanity at risk through war and climate change. World capitalism must give way to world socialism - a society based on freedom, solidarity and a radical extension of democracy.

* Marxists oppose Stalinism, a system of bureaucratic dictatorship that rules in the name of socialism the same way the capitalist class claims to rule in the name of liberty.

* Socialism itself is the first stage of the global transition to communism - a society where war, exploitation, money, classes and states exist only as museum pieces. Communism is the negation of class society and provides the maximum individual and collective freedom.

If you agree with these principles, join the Red Party!

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