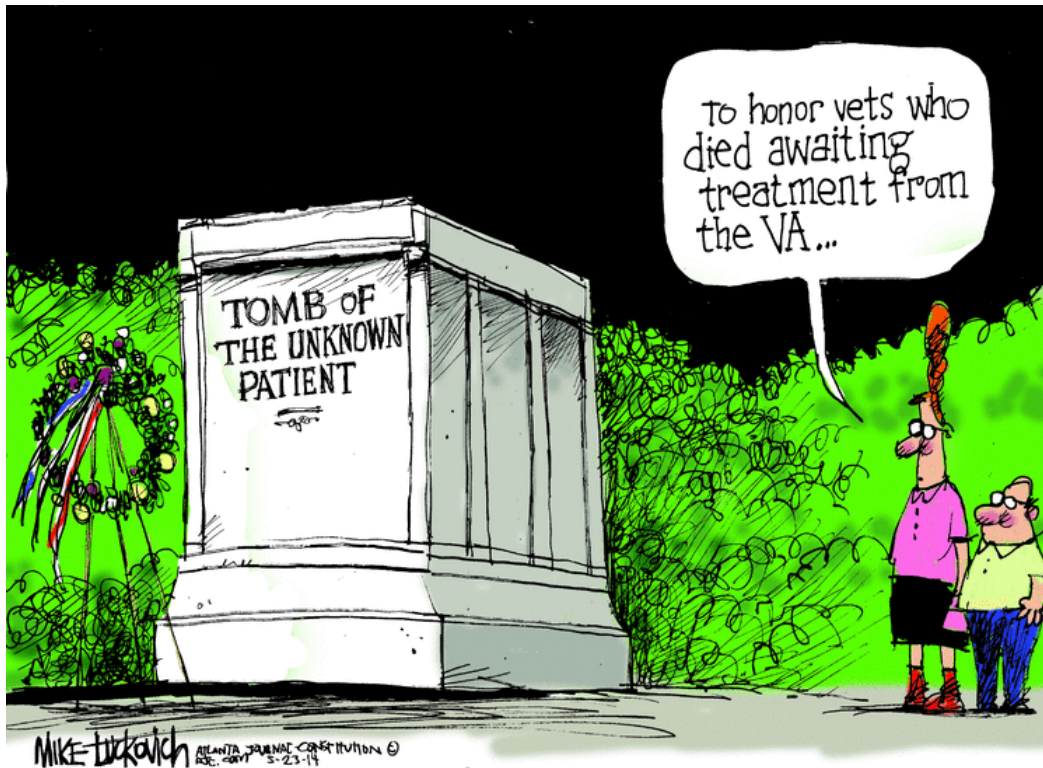


Military Resistance 12E12



[Thanks to SSG N (ret'd) who sent this in with caption. She writes: "I want to see the honor guards marching for this."]

In Memoriam: Soldiers For The Cause

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DwSZgLLqPy8>

**A Grateful Nation Or Just
BOHICA?
"The Great Media Punditry And
Political Pontificators Are All**

**Aflutter Over The VA Fiasco From
Phoenix And Elsewhere”
“The Circus Is Loud And Shrill And
Full Of Sparkly Shiny Hollow
Indignation”
“Where Have All Of You Politicos And
Pundits And So-Called Journalists Been
For The Past Forty Years?”**

19 May 14 by John Cory, Reader Supported News

*They come for you with drum and fife
And all they ask
Is a piece of your life
Just enough for one little war
And one more for your mother
And two for your brother
And then we all fall down*

The great media punditry and political pontificators are all aflutter over the VA fiasco from Phoenix and elsewhere.

John McCain can't run to the microphone fast enough to offer up his two cents while FOX, CNN and MSNBC are in full competitive outrage mode, each seeking to outdo the other with flashing chyrons of righteous fury.

The circus is loud and shrill and full of sparkly shiny hollow indignation.

The America Legion has apparently called for the resignation of Gen. Shinseki as Secretary of Veterans Affairs. The smell of blood and blame is in the water.

I am unimpressed.

I can only say: Are you fucking kidding me?

Where have all of you politicians and pundits and so-called journalists been for the past forty years?

With your America Strong nightly news features and your heartwarming family homecoming surprises at elementary schools, did you just choose to ignore the real

stories of abandoned and ailing veterans because that would harsh your mellow and warm fuzzy patriotism?

Senator McCain and all of you elected representatives of “the people,” how many letters from veterans and families of veterans and spouses of veterans complaining about problems with the VA have your offices received over the last ten years?

How about the last twenty years?

How many veterans have asked for your help over the years?

How many have you responded to directly and actually helped?

How many veterans’ letters have gone unanswered, except maybe for a form letter reply as you then add their name to your mailing list for campaign fund raising?

I have a bitter view of the American Legion from personal experience dating back to the days they, in conjunction with the local VFW organizations where I lived at the time, sought to keep the longhaired-hippie Viet Nam vets from having membership in the one “true veterans of America” brotherhood.

It was a dark time for the VFW and the American Legion back then, and that bitter rejection stayed with many Viet Nam vets. It is one of those poignant ironies in life: the WWII vets rejected and ridiculed Viet Nam vets even more so than all the apocryphal and mostly false tales of name calling and spitting by dirty rotten hippies and their Pinko anti-war protestors.

When it comes to veterans, the press, the public, the politicians, and the pundits, all suffer a wilful amnesia until a new glittery VA crisis arises that offers click-bait headlines on the internet and draws ratings and eyeballs while everyone sputters patriotic mantras and talking points and shouts, “Off with their heads!”

Then they all move on to the next sparkling sexy piece of tabloid infotainment.

That’s what will happen here. You can bet on it.

Don’t believe me?

The May 22, 1970 cover story in Life Magazine: “Our Forgotten Wounded.”

The inside article was written by Charles Child with accompanying photos by Co Rentmeester and was titled: “From Vietnam to a VA Hospital Assignment to Neglect.”

One photo revealed the heartbreak of vets in conditions so crowded they shared a room with trash cans. In another, a quadriplegic veteran lies naked on a bed surrounded by a growing pile of dirty laundry. Rats ran wild through the place. There was a photo of a sign that instructed workers: “Leaky Roof! Move Bed No. 6 when it rains!”

From the article

“Besides the dead, there are the wounded: 275,000 of them to date. A man hit in Vietnam has twice as good a chance of surviving as he did in Korea and World War II—helicopter teams evacuate the wounded faster, often within minutes, support hospitals perform miraculous repairs on injuries that tend to be more devastating than ever before.

“But having been saved by the best field medicine in history and given initial treatment in first-rate military facilities, one out of every seven U.S. servicemen wounded in Vietnam is fated to pass into the bleak backwaters of our Veterans Administration hospitals.

“With 166 separate institutions, the VA hospital system is the biggest in the world. The 800,000 patients it treats in a year, mainly men wounded in earlier wars, range from cardiac to psychiatric cases. It is disgracefully understaffed, with standards far below those of an average community hospital. Many wards remain closed for want of personnel and the rest are strained with overcrowding.

“Facilities for long-term treatment and rehabilitation, indispensable for the kind of paralytic injuries especially common in this war of land mines and boobytraps, are generally inferior. At Miami's VA hospital, while sophisticated new equipment sits idle for lack of trained personnel, patients may wait hours for needed blood transfusions. At the VA's showplace hospital in Washington, D.C. a single registered nurse may minister to as many as 80 patients at a time. At the Wadsworth VA Hospital in Los Angeles, doctors who work there describe ward conditions as “medieval” and “filthy.”

“Veterans Administration Director Donald E. Johnson insists publicly that veterans receive ‘care second to none.’ The evidence is overwhelmingly against him. A five-month inquiry by a Senate subcommittee chaired by California's Alan Cranston has documented gross inadequacies and laid the main blame directly on a series of cutbacks in the VA medical budget. This sum presently amounts to roughly \$1.6 billion a year, somewhat less than the cost of one month's fighting in Vietnam. Additional appropriations of \$122 million for next year await probable congressional approval and could help ease the immediate crisis. But within the next 12 months 16,000 more men from Vietnam are expected to come under the Veterans Administration's care.”

Here is the Disabled American Veterans in 2005:

“The Administration has proposed one of the most tight-fisted, miserly budgets for veterans programs in recent memory, said the 1.2 million member Disabled American Veterans (DAV). Instead of providing adequate funds for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical system, the budget proposes to shift the cost burden onto the backs of veterans, making health care more expensive and even less accessible for millions of America's defenders. ‘The VA medical system has been strained to the breaking point over the years because its appropriation has failed to keep pace with the skyrocketing costs of health care and increased patient loads,’ said National Commander James E. Sursely. ‘As a result VA facilities across the country are cutting staff and limiting services even as the number of veterans seeking care is on the rise’”

As Yogi Berra said, “It's déjà vu all over again.”

Or perhaps we should just say: SOSDD – same old shit different day.

There is always money for weapons, bombers, drones, and war. There is never money enough for the wounded and the weary and those in need of healing.

How can that be?

Before we chop off heads or fire all the top brass or blame Obama and Bush, maybe we should ask ourselves a few questions.

Do we even know how the VA health system works?

How many good people work there? How many bad people? What happens to so-called whistleblowers that expose wrongdoing? What can we do to change "the system," or have we become the system? Does anyone really care? How much do we care?

Do you remember Maude DeVictor?

She was a godsend for veterans suffering from Agent Orange and the effects of dioxin. In the 1986 TV movie *Unnatural Causes*, Maude DeVictor was portrayed by one of my favourite actors, the wonderful Alfre Woodard.

If you haven't seen the movie, I highly recommend it.

John Ritter starred, and his character was a composite of many veterans, including Paul Reutershan, who famously appeared on the Today Show in 1978 and uttered the now infamous: "I died in Vietnam, but I didn't even know it."

Paul Reutershan and many, many others simply died and thus went away, disappeared.

But Maude DeVictor didn't go away. She kept at it and became an expert on Agent Orange and a fierce advocate for suffering veterans even as she was fired from her job at the Chicago VA.

So here we are, forty-plus years down the road and another Veterans fiasco is in the headlines.

Does it matter?

Should I go on?

Should I write a part two of this piece and offer a ride through the VA health system and maybe give you a view through the eyes of a veteran or two? Will that help anyone understand and want to become involved in fixing things?

And should I offer a part three of this little series, to tell you what I see as possible solutions that maybe we all can present to our elected representatives? Maybe create a petition to be passed around and signed and forwarded to Congress and the White House?

***Or should we just move on with a shrug that says nothing's going to change?
Like all abandoned children of war,***

*These wounded and misbegotten
Are left broken and forgotten
The parade is over
The flag has been folded away
Or put up for sale*

*Here's a bumper sticker: Support The Troops!
Have a nice trip
Embrace the suck – Get over it – Move on
Thank-you for your service!
Thanks for my service?
What am I, your goddamned waiter!*

It don't mean nothin'.

—Peace—

MORE:

Memorial Day [2008]

[From GI Special, May 22, 2008]

From: Dennis Serdel
To: GI Special
Sent: May 22, 2008 5:07 PM
Subject: Memorial Day by Dennis

**By Dennis Serdel, Vietnam 1967-68 (one tour) Light Infantry, Americal Div. 11th
Brigade, purple heart, Veterans For Peace 50 Michigan, Vietnam Veterans Against
The War, United Auto Workers GM Retiree, in Perry, Michigan**

Memorial Day

**Depression is crashing down on the Soldier
from clouds in the air reflecting dead heroes
he can't seem to shake anything off
it has seeped into his body and brain
like hounds on the loose chasing enemies
inside himself that won't come out
that can hardly be seen except for Americans
who send him cards and packages that
he doesn't open anymore because he doesn't know
them or his family or himself or anybody anymore
as the dust flies behind his Humvee waiting**

for their death, his death it doesn't
matter anymore, nothing is important
driving into his death he hopes because
he can't take it anymore he needs to be rescued
but helicopters never land
until it is too late everybody dead
except him or everybody is alive
except him as he screams in the air of the desert
but he is only screaming at himself
as the needle goes in and the doctor
tells him not to worry he will be with
his fellow Soldiers in no time, no time at all
but time has stopped there is no history
nothing in the future except for now and dead heroes
between nothingness and nothingness
between half life and half death
he no longer cares about going on living
for what, this ugly world is just evil
the way it takes people, squeezes happiness,
feelings of love out of them, leaving empty cartridges
on a highway in Baghdad motors running
full speed ahead and as he cries to God but God is dead
and the highway he has traveled is bloody
red and black, black and red
a game of dangerous
his family doesn't know him anymore
as he sits on the porch and stares with dead eyes
waiting for someone to give him a gun again.

MORE:

Forfeit Day [Memorial Day 2013]

From: Dennis Serdel
To: Military Resistance Newsletter
Sent: May 25, 2013
Subject: Forfeit Day

Written by Dennis Serdel, Vietnam 1967-68 (one tour) Light Infantry, Americal Div. 11th
Brigade; United Auto Workers GM Retiree

Forfeit Day

**Memories like mouse turds
sweep away**

by mega-mall memorial sales
americans camping eating
hotdogs made from dead soldiers guts
all ground up & sent
as plastic american flags
an eyeball here an asshole there
ground up soldiers devoured
by bright pinky cheeky american
kids who may have a future
of war when they grow older so others
can eat their ground up bodies guts
& welcome checks to parents
that only spend the money
on themselves & salute
the rathole war profiteers
dug in the ground of graves to eat
like worms the meat of dead soldiers
leaving only bloody bones
like a scene from a horror movie
where puffed up gargoyles
sinks their teeth into the fresh
stomachs of the dead soldier fools
who suffered & died from the stress
& rapid fire holes in bodies where
only the heartless ignorant
public of war crash beers
against their teeth & drunkenly
fall down near but not in like fireflies
near hell & only black funeral
volunteers fill up the carcasses
of stomachs eaten out
& faces blown & wrapped against a tree
& american flags
with maggots for their brains
they seek & hide within
the shoulders of the war
where only other soldiers
rip the worm filled flags
of deceit from the anchors
of non-retreat like books
with only blank pages &
movies for the blind
who can not ever preach
the swollen names upon
the cheap government headstones
spelling all the names backwards
like a puzzle never to be
found among the tall grass
& sunken skulls of manmade
treacherous guns firing into the air
dismissing all the gods except pagan

where taps flow through the air.

writing by Dennis Serdel for Military Resistance

MORE:

Supporting The Troops This Memorial Day



Thanks to SSG N (ret'd) who sent this in with caption. She writes: "This just about sums up our 'patriotism."

May 25, 2014 by Sanford Kelson, Veteran & Military Resistance Organization. He writes "The cartoon in MR [above] sparked me to write the below."

Think about the possible unspoken thoughts of soldiers and veterans when people reach out and shake their hands and thank them for their service?

I wonder if some may think: This person doesn't have a clue? If so, that would be wrong, in many cases.

Many of these 'thankful' people, I suspect, are faux supporters of the troops and they do indeed have a clue, more than a mere clue.

Their thanks may be an attempt to avoid a substantive conversation. A hand shake and thanks can be a conversation stopper. What else needs to be discussed? Why would these people want to stop conversations from starting with the troops about their service?

Maybe because they are embarrassed or are ashamed that they support the wars and the troops only so long as they themselves or their children do not have to go and fight.

They support the wars and troops so long as they are being funded with borrowing and not with current tax hikes. They support the wars and the troops because they can continue on unabated in their consumerist culture as encouraged by the Patriot-in-Chief, George W. Bush, who was AWOL during the Vietnam War, and who told Americas upon the start of the Global War on Terror that they could show their support by continuing to shop. They support the troops so long as they may pursue other priorities. Just as Vice President Dick Cheney explained his multiple draft deferments from the Vietnam War, that he publicly supported, by explaining that he had other priorities than fighting a war. The National Vietnam Veterans Foundation reports that 2,709,918 Americans served in Vietnam during the war. Many were drafted. I wonder how many, like Cheney, had other priorities?

Really, I wonder if a considerable portion of the handshaking and thanks is just a way to avoid any substantive discussion of war and thus not publicly suffer any personal shame.

Better to remain in the dark than be exposed to any conversation that would demand action in place of merely uttering the ubiquitous 7 little words: Thank you Very Much For Your Service! These words can be very condescending. Is the real message: Your presence embarrasses me, shames me.

Let's talk about sports or just fade away old soldier? Is it any different from the current politically correct outward silence of one's racism that has replaced the past blunt public expression thereof? How different is it from spitting in the troops' faces?

We know what General Smedley Darling Butler, awardee of two medals of honor during his 33 years in the Marine Corps, would say to anybody who thanked him for his service because he said it in 1938 in bitter reflection on his military career:

"I helped make Mexico and especially Tampico, safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank boys to collect revenues in. I helped in the raping of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefit of Wall Street. The record of racketeering is long. I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers in 1909-12. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for American sugar interests in 1916. I helped make Honduras right for American fruit companies in 1903. In China in 1927 I helped see to it that Standard Oil went its way unmolested. Looking back on it I might have given Al Capone a few hints. The best he could do was to operate his racket in 3 city districts. We marines operated on 3 continents."

How did the troops and veterans respond to Smedley? With great enthusiasm, respect and love. Smedley's list has grown greatly since 1938 as acknowledged by New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman who wrote:

"For globalization to work, America can't be afraid to act like the almighty superpower that it is... The hidden hand of the market will never work without the hidden fist -- McDonald's cannot flourish without McDonnell Douglas, the designer of the F-15. And

the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley's technologies is called the US Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps."

This knowledge, that I started to glean from my mere 3 years of military service, is the reason why, upon being thanked for my service, that I look the well indoctrinated citizen up and down slowly, from head and toe, and then ask: Are you the CEO of a great corporation? The reply has always been, so far, in the negative.

I then declare that this person has nothing to thank me for because my service was to the corporations, service for profits over the lives of our troops and the expressed values of this nation.

I suggest that if people really want to support the troops that they ask about their service in a manner calculated to encourage them to speak honestly.

Ask them where they served, what was it all about, how did they feel, how do they feel now, what do they think. Such opportunities may be therapeutic for the troops. Maybe these types of conversations would help reduce the number of suicides by our service members and veterans that currently total approximately 23 per day.

Maybe another way to thank the troops is to oppose wars of choice, always started with the lie that they are necessary to protect us from foreign devils and to stop them before they get over here. Or maybe another way to support the troops is to reflect carefully and re-evaluate how you, how America, may best Support Our Troops.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS



“At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. Oh had I the ability, and could reach the nation’s ear, I would, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke.

“For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder.

“We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake.”

“The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppose.”

Frederick Douglass, 1852

It would be a fundamental mistake to suppose that the struggle for democracy can divert the proletariat from the socialist revolution, or obscure, or overshadow it, etc. On the contrary, just as socialism cannot be victorious unless it introduces complete democracy, so the proletariat will be unable to prepare for victory over the bourgeoisie unless it wages a many-sided, consistent, and revolutionary struggle for democracy.”

-- V. I. Lenin, Collected Works, 4th English Edition; Vol. 22

Where We Are Now:

**“At A Certain Stage Of Their
Development, The Material
Productive Forces Of Society
Come Into Conflict With The
Property Relations Within The
Framework Of Which They Have
Hitherto Operated”**

**“From Forms Of Development Of The
Productive Forces These Relations
Turn Into Their Fetters”**

“At That Point An Era Of Social Revolution Begins”

Preface To A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, Karl Marx, 1859 [Excerpt]

In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite, necessary relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production corresponding to a determinate stage of the development of their material forces of production.

The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which there arises a legal and political superstructure and to which there correspond definite forms of social consciousness.

The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life-process in general.

It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary it is their social being that determines their consciousness.

At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or – what is merely a legal expression for the same thing – with the property relations within the framework of which they have hitherto operated.

From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters.

At that point an era of social revolution begins.

With the change in the economic foundation, the whole immense superstructure is more slowly or more rapidly transformed.

In considering such transformations it is always necessary to distinguish between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophic – in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out.

Just as one does not judge an individual by what he thinks about himself, so one cannot judge such a period of transformation by its consciousness, but, on the contrary, this consciousness must be explained from the contradictions of material life, from the conflict existing between the social forces of production and the relations of production.

A social order never perishes before all the productive forces for which it is broadly sufficient have been developed, and new superior relations of production never replace older ones before the material conditions for their existence have matured within the womb of the old society.

Mankind thus inevitably sets itself only such tasks as can solve, since closer examination will always show that the task itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution are already present or at least in the process of formation.

Michelle Obama Headlines Jobs Fair For Vets Unemployed Due To Defense Cuts



Photo Credit: OSD

May 10, 2014 By Dick Scuttlebutt, The Duffle Blog

FORT CAMPBELL, Ky. — Headlining a jobs fair and career seminar Friday at Fort Campbell, First Lady Michelle Obama spoke highly of the skills and career prospects of soldiers who will soon be forced to leave the military due to drastic cuts to the defense budget.

“As my husband has said, when you’ve fought for this country around the world, you shouldn’t have to fight for a job when you return home,” said Ms. Obama from the stage, speaking to a crowd of approximately four hundred. “So, since many of you are being forced to leave the Army, we are now announcing new employment initiatives which will benefit not only you and your families, but offer business-friendly tax incentives to corporations which have demonstrated the proper commitment to social justice, the environment, and progressive ideals.”

Ms. Obama was just one of the many attractions at the fair, which also featured speeches by Dr. Jill Biden, 101st Airborne Division commander Maj. Gen. James C. McConville, and a visibly-uncomfortable Medal of Honor recipient Dakota Meyer.

“A great time was had by all, and it was very informative and helpful for all soldiers and spouses who are soon to leave the military,” noted Fort Campbell Transitions Service Manager Alan Picault.

“Ms. Obama’s announcement of new private sector commitments to hire veterans, rewarded by tax incentives from the administration, is fantastic and will go a long way towards giving these guys and gals a hand up,” Picault said. “I know these decorated combat veterans will be happy to start their new lives as delivery drivers, photocopy machine repairmen, WalMart stock boys and bank tellers.”

Col. David “Buck” Dellinger, Fort Campbell garrison commander, nodded emphatically in agreement, eyeing attentive Secret Service agents nearby.

The jobs fair was a cooperative effort between Fort Campbell Transition Service and local and national businesses, to include Capital One, UPS, Xerox, WalMart, Solyndra, Lockheed Martin, ACORN, and Delta Airlines.

DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND OR RELATIVE IN THE MILITARY?



U.S. soldier in Bejjia village Iraq, Feb. 4, 2008. (AP Photo/Maya Alleruzzo)

Forward Military Resistance along, or send us the email address if you wish and we’ll send it regularly with your best wishes. Whether in Afghanistan or at a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to injustices, inside the armed services and at home. Send email requests to address up top or write to: Military Resistance, Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657.

CLASS WAR REPORTS

Fast Food Workers Strike, Protest Across 30 Countries



Fast food workers struck in Milwaukee, walking out with those in 130 other U.S. cities, organizers said. Protests in dozens of other countries joined the chorus of criticism. Photo: Overpass Light Brigade.

May 15, 2014 Julia Kann, Labor Today & May 19, 2014, Elizabeth Schulte, Socialist Worker [Excerpts]

Fast food workers struck in Milwaukee, walking out with those in 130 other U.S. cities, organizers said. Protests in dozens of other countries joined the chorus of criticism. Photo: Overpass Light Brigade.

The call for “\$15 and a union” went up again today, but with a new—and bigger—group of allies.

As striking fast food workers hit picket lines across the U.S., supporters and workers rallied in 30 other countries.

The days of walkouts became global for the first time, with workers and supporters walking the picket lines at fast-food restaurants in cities in Europe, Japan, New Zealand, Brazil and elsewhere.

In Mumbai, India, workers protested despite a police threat to halt the protests.

Fast food workers struck in 130 U.S. cities—some for the first time, including Miami, Orlando, Philadelphia, and Sacramento, organizers said. Some stores were unable to open until managers could be called in to work the abandoned tills and fryers.

The Fight for 15 demonstrations have been largely organized through the Service Employees International Union (SEIU).

While critics of the protests point out that the union--whose members can attest to its undemocratic history--keeps tight control on the public message at many events, these actions have nevertheless provided workers with an opportunity to speak out about their jobs and working conditions.

With drums, horns, and maracas, strikers and supporters gathered in midtown Manhattan, where the strikes started in 2012. Shantel Walker, who works at Papa John's in Brooklyn, said she isn't surprised the tactic is spreading: "Everybody's going through the same problem." She counted out the four bracelets on her wrist: this is her fourth time on strike, she added.

The effort has pushed minimum wage increases in seven states and two cities. Fast food strikes in Seattle marked the start of a winning campaign for hospitality and airport-related workers in the nearby town of SeaTac, and the effort to win a citywide \$15 wage in Seattle proper. In New York City, a paid sick leave bill went into effect in April. But the campaign is also targeting specific employers.

Three class-action lawsuits filed in March alleged widespread wage theft at McDonald's and exposed working conditions at the iconic chain. The lawsuits detail the many ways McDonald's steals wages from workers—some are simply missing money from their paychecks, others are forced to show up and wait, or to work off the clock.

"They pretend they don't know you've clocked out," said Chad Tall, who works at Taco Bell in Brooklyn. He said he's regularly asked to keep working after his shift is up.

According to a 2013 survey of fast-food workers by the group Fast Food Forward in New York City, 84 percent of workers said their employer had committed wage theft of some kind in the past year. This is why protesters dressed as the Hamburglar--"Ready to steal your wages"--or Ronald McDonald in handcuffs are familiar sights on fast-food workers' protests. Sixty-six percent experienced more than one.

In Shock To Old Parties, "People Before Profit" Candidate Elected In West Belfast:

**“People Are Fed Up With The
Status Quo”**

**“They Are Tired Of Seeing Their
Rights Trampled Upon In The
Interests Of Developers, Landlords,
And Low-Wage Corporate
Employers”**

**“Their Patience Is Running Out With A
Political Establishment Committed To
Gutting Our Public Services And
Punishing The Most Vulnerable Of Our
Friends And Neighbours”**

May 24, 2014 People Before Profit via Louis Proyect, Marxism List

Friday's local election results signal a new dawn for politics in West Belfast [Northern Ireland], as People Before Profit candidate Gerry Carroll was elected with the third highest count in Black Mountain ward.

“None of the pundits saw us coming,” Carroll observed after coming less than a hundred votes shy of topping the poll.

“The assumption outside this district is that the two main nationalist parties have the area sewn up. What we have heard on the doors all through this campaign and what has been proven today is that ordinary people are fed up with the status quo.

In the end we managed to take a seat from Sinn Féin, but it could have just as easily have been the SDLP: both have played a shameful role around the Casement Park development, and our vote sends a clear message that residents will not accept a sham process that has been rigged against them at every stage.

“I call on corporate GAA and the Antrim board in particular to come back to the table immediately and begin to repair the damage they have done.”

“Our campaign has been a fight for the soul of West Belfast, and our victory here today is only the beginning.

“This constituency includes some of the most socially deprived wards in the North, and the message from here is loud and clear: ordinary people have had enough.

“They are tired of seeing their rights trampled upon in the interests of developers, landlords, and low-wage corporate employers; they have had enough of the politics of sectarian division, and their patience is running out with a political establishment committed to gutting our public services and punishing the most vulnerable of our friends and neighbours under a regime of austerity and cuts.

“It is time for change and I am committed to leading and lending my support to every fight for the rights of ordinary people in this district and across the city of Belfast.”

“The conditions that brought people out to vote for change in Black Mountain ward exist in every working-class community, and on both sides of the sectarian divide.

“We are proud to have worked side-by-side with people on the Shankill and in the Village in the past, and will seize every opportunity to unite ordinary people against the elite who benefit from our continued division.”

“Across the city working people are struggling to keep their heads above water while our politicians spend millions of our hard-earned rates subsidising low-wage corporate employers.

“Our hospitals are being run down and privatized with the full support of the political establishment and our leisure centre are on the chopping block.

“Many of our young people are unemployed and without hope, while those fortunate enough to have work are stuck on zero-hour contracts and paid less than their counterparts anywhere in these islands.

“Politicians and clerics have built whole careers on whipping up sectarianism, and in recent weeks have acquiesced in or given cover to racist attacks on migrant workers and their families.

People Before Profit is committed to ridding this great city of the burdens of the past, and we know there are tens of thousands of ordinary people across Belfast who share our rage at the status quo and our hopes for a new dawn.

“We look forward to working with them and building a new Belfast that puts people before profit.”

MILITARY RESISTANCE BY EMAIL

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DANGER: CAPITALISTS AT WORK



Venezuela:

“The Government Is Now Referring To The Business Sector As ‘The Productive Sector,’ As Opposed To Calling Them The ‘Parasitic Bourgeoisie’”

“What Maduro Is Attempting Is A Partnership Between The State And Business”

“Revolutionary Socialist Left In Venezuela Argues Maduro Deals Will Only Benefit The Ruling Class”

“No Workers, Workers' Representative Or Representative Of Any Community Organization Was Invited To Join The Negotiations”

Among the outcomes of the negotiations, even as they continue are: increases in prices due to speculation, without extra compensation for employees; more dollars to be made available for business without restrictions; a bigger portion of the petro profits for the bourgeoisie; elements of labor flexibility in the revision to the Ley Orgánica del Trabajo, los Trabajadores y Trabajadoras (Organic Law of Work and Workers); and more state financing and relaxing of contracts for private companies.

May 22, 2014 by Karen Domínguez Burke, Socialist Worker [Excerpts]

THE RIGHT wing didn't cause all the economic problems in Venezuela, but it has definitely exacerbated them -- and used them to their advantage.

Venezuela was hit hard by the worldwide economic crisis.

Many Venezuelan firms enjoy monopolies over the production of basic goods, so when it is time to negotiate with the government over prices, they manufacture scarcity.

Companies in Venezuela also tend to sell relatively few goods for the highest price, rather than the U.S. model of many goods at a low price. Electronic chains DAKA and Cyberlux were found to be selling TV sets and other electronics at 1,000 percent margins (this is not a typo). The government has also found many a stocked warehouse of essentials -- clear evidence of hoarding and price gouging.

The capitalist class's creation of structural shortages in the economy has created a whole range of smaller spin-off operations of middlemen and price fixers.

Some better-off individuals hoard products when they hear there may be a shortage, or they find an item that was scarce in the past, and they stock up, only to turn around and sell it to their poorer neighbors in need, for a high price. In some cases, retail employees buy stocks of goods before they are put on the shelves, in order to resell them later.

Currency exchange restrictions have also driven up inflation.

Since the paperwork to exchange money with the government is so time-consuming, most people and companies exchange on the black market at a 10 percent markup or higher.

It is necessary to examine the actions taken by [President] Maduro in the face of this situation, as well as critiques put forward by sections of the revolutionary left in Venezuela.

Maduro called a “peace conference” in February of this year, hoping to come to some sort of settlement with some sections of the right--in the hopes of calming the country by negotiating with the “soft” right, while marginalizing the “hard” right.

The conference, which began in late February, got a lot of attention in the U.S. financial press, as well as among left-wing analysts. And in Latin America, this was big news, with the beginning of the conference reported on across the region. The talks have continued since February, with the most recent discussion being held on May 15.

The revolutionary socialist left in Venezuela has criticized Maduro, arguing that the peace conference will only benefit the ruling class.

No workers, workers' representative or representative of any community organization was invited to join the negotiations.

On the other hand, Jorge Roig, the head of Fedecamaras, the most important Venezuelan business federation; and billionaire beverage magnate Lorenzo Mendoza, whose international partners include PepsiCo; were both welcomed.

Mendoza used the media buzz around the peace conference to place all the responsibility for the economic crisis on Maduro's shoulders, telling reporters, “Shortages are the result of attacks against industry, expropriations, freezing of prices, and new restrictions on currency purchases.”

Maduro correctly counters with the fact that the right is committing sabotage in order to anger the Venezuelan population, so it will lose confidence in his government. All of this seems to flow directly from the soft coup course laid out in the Strategic Plan for Venezuela referenced above.

Gonzalo Gómez, co-founder of the news site Apporrea.org and a member of the revolutionary group Marea Socialista (Socialist Tide), as well as a delegate to the (United Socialist Party of Venezuela) PSUV founded by Chávez and now led by Maduro, said of the ongoing peace conference:

“Even though the violence is not widespread, and the Guarimbas don't have much support, in the actual conference, there is no real peace either. There, the ‘economic war’ continues with the appearance of ‘consultation’ and ‘consensus,’ with the actors that hide their fist under their sleeves.

“Physical and economic violence are part of the blackmail that has both hands around our collective throat. The violent and moderate/pacifist assumptions (of different sections of the right) don't have to align with their tactics. They have class interests in

common. The different tactics combine in reality, in the service of the same strategy: to put an end to the Bolivarian revolution.”

Gómez and others, such as left wing journalist Heiber Barreto, complain that the government is now referring to the business sector as “the productive sector,” as opposed to calling them the “parasitic bourgeoisie,” as Chávez and Maduro used to label them.

Among the outcomes of the negotiations, even as they continue are: increases in prices due to speculation, without extra compensation for employees; more dollars to be made available for business without restrictions; a bigger portion of the petro profits for the bourgeoisie; elements of labor flexibility in the revision to the Ley Orgánica del Trabajo, los Trabajadores y Trabajadoras (Organic Law of Work and Workers); and more state financing and relaxing of contracts for private companies.

What Maduro is attempting is a partnership between the state and business.

This was articulated in absurdly confused terms by Vice President Jorge Arreaza, when he cited the Hegelian and Marxist dialectic to claim that “it is from within contradictory points of view, in debate, in dissent, where we can advance to achieve the synthesis which allows us to advance, taking steps together.”

Marea Socialista's Gómez's sharply criticized Arreaza's musings:

“‘Synthesis’ and ‘taking steps together’ with capital is simply a caricature of socialism, because this path will only bring us more capitalism...In the peace conference, the stick is in the hands of business; worker-popular participation is just padding and does not set the tone of the discussion. The concessions are in favor of capital, not of labor.

Besides the left, which is trying to push in the direction Gómez outlines, there are also many centrist supporters of Maduro's government, and they could be pulled into further compromises along the lines of those already made in the peace conference negotiations.

That can only help the right, which would like to take away all the gains made under Chávez's government. Government subsidies for food, gas, worker cooperatives, etc., could all be dismantled and privatized. Benefits that are now taken for granted, such as free higher education and health care, would also be sold off to the highest bidder.

The more the right feels emboldened -- whether through the impact of its campaign of violence or through the concessions it wins from Maduro at the negotiating table--the left will feel more weakened and divided.

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

**For Palestinians, Home Is Still
Where The Heart Is:
“In Israel There Are 50 Laws That
Discriminate Against Me, 13 Of Them
Regarding Land Confiscation, They
Can Confiscate Land Any Time”
“We Live In An Apartheid State, It’s Not
Only Undemocratic, It’s Never Been A
Democratic State By Definition”**



Sabri holding the key to his lost home in Allar (Kate Shuttleworth)

14 May 2014 by Kate Shuttleworth, Middle East Eye

BETHLEHEM, West Bank - In his small three room home in Aida refugee camp, Abu Sabri always has his eye on the time.

His single bed facing the front door has a view of the street. On a ledge beside it rests a large clock and two small alarm clocks. Another clock is nailed to the wall above the bed.

The clocks are set an hour behind the actual time and in the presence of the four clocks, it's unclear if time is standing still or if Sabri is braced waiting to run out the door back to his village.

Sabri sits in a white plastic chair next to his bed and places his keffiyeh around his head, fixing it firmly with a black cord in a circle.

Wearing a checked shirt and a dark green waist coat with gold buttons, the 87-year-old man begins to tell his story.

As Sabari sits, he twists his prayer beads and an old key to his former house between his fingers. He says that it has been 66 years since he left his village, Allar, which was near Jerusalem and once had 500 residents.

His whole village fled overnight when they heard horror stories of people in nearby villages being killed and their homes destroyed.

In October 1948, when camps of Jewish fighters set up on hilltops near Allar were asleep, the Palestinians villagers fled. Not one person remained in the village.

"A week later I found out the village still hadn't been targeted so I went back and hid in the caves for 13 days and saw the village being destroyed by the Jewish fighters."

Sabri's memory of Allar is still as vivid as the day he left and his desire to go back is still burning inside him.

"My desire to go back is stronger than those four clocks, my heart wants to go there," he says.

"My emotions are so strong, I feel a really strong love for my house."

Sabri said when he slept at night in his bed in his house in the refugee camp, he dreamt of when he used to milk the cows in Allar and hold fresh grapes in his hands.

"Every night I dream about being there," he says.

It is evident that the 87-year-old continues to feel displaced here in the Aida refugee camp in Bethlehem, even though he has spent most of his life here.

Sabri's wife has died and he has a son and five daughters who live in and around the camp, but it currently seems unlikely they will ever be allowed to return permanently to their ancestral home.

Thursday marks 66 years since the Nakba, or catastrophe in Arabic, when 750,000 Palestinians lost their homes in the war that led to the establishment of the state of Israel.

According to Arab Israeli member of Knesset Hanin Zoabi, the Nakba wasn't just an event, "It's a process".

“Israel has dominated about five million dunums (500,000 hectares) that belonged to the refugees and all of their assets but still it was not enough.”

Zoabi was the first Arab Israeli woman to be elected to the Israeli parliament on an Arab party's list and has often used her position to speak out about the injustice that she feels continues to plague the Palestinians.

“What Israel has continued to do after 1948 is to Judaize the area,” says Zoabi. “I cannot study my identity in schools, it's not just a matter of confiscating land it's about taking my identity and creating for me a new identity.”

Zoabi explains that Israelis, including Arab Israelis, are being prevented from studying the Nakba.

“It is not just my history, it is the Israelis' history - you have to have to have Nakba,” she says. “We demand the Israeli education system would allow us to study our history.”

There has been a lot of misunderstanding about the Nakba as it was not taught in Israel. However, in the late 1980s Israeli historians accessed state archives that had been locked away and began to revisit the controversial period.

The official texts mostly confirmed what Palestinians had always claimed that many were made to leave their homes by force rather than fled.

“We live in an apartheid state, it's not only undemocratic, it's never been a democratic state by definition,” says Zoabi.

“In Israel there are 50 laws that discriminate against me, 13 of them regarding land confiscation, they can confiscate land any time.”

When Zoabi talks about the mentality of the Nakba still being perpetuated, she refers to a current scheme, called the Praver plan, that is being debated by the Israeli government. If approved it would give Israeli authorities the right to forcibly removing Bedouins from their land.

“In Israel there are still 42 unrecognised villages, where else in the world do you hear this term,” says Zoabi.

Just this month, one organisation run by Israeli and Palestinians called Zochrot, Hebrew for remembering, merged the narrative of the Nakba with high-tech app to put Palestine back on the map.

Zochrot have launched an interactive app called “invisible lands” which is a map with images of villages that were destroyed marked by virtual pins. While at first glance the barrage of virtual pins is depressing, the photographs and testimonies offer an acknowledgment to the many refugees.

The interactive map in Hebrew, Arabic and English allows people to locate, visit and interact with the over 400 Palestinian villages destroyed since 1948.

Professor of history at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem Alex Yakobsen explains that many Israelis believe that responsibility for what happened in 1948 must rest with both the Palestinian and the Israeli sides.

Yakobsen says many Israelis believe there needs to be an acknowledgement that Palestinians did not accept a UN vote to partition British-ruled Palestine into separate Arab and Jewish states.

“The other issue here that is not acknowledged is that there are two refugee problems, there are also the Jews who fled Iraq, Yemen and Morocco who lived in large refugee camps in places like Katamon in Jerusalem.”

Many Israelis are at a point where they could acknowledge the harm caused in the Nakba, but even the Israeli left would stop short of taking sole responsibility, Yakobsen says.

But even bridging this rift will prove extremely difficult.



Sabri with his grandson (Kate Shuttleworth)

Back in Aida refugee camp Sabri says he remembers his village being cleared out in just four hours.

“Lots of people in the West don’t know our story - they don’t know what we feel. I’ve been back to the village five times and I start crying when I go back,” he says.

“I have told my story hundreds of times, but I am still here - but like eating this bread [he gestures at bread on his table] telling my story, gives me energy,” he adds.

While his dreams of returning to his home are growing older, like the rusting key he still possesses, his four-year-old grandson Mohammed, sits playing holding a fresh new

silver set of keys to somewhere in the camp, acting as a reminder that time will not stand still.

To check out what life is like under a murderous military occupation commanded by foreign terrorists, go to:

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/Default.aspx> and

<http://www.palestinemonitor.org/list.php?id=ej898ra7yff0ukmf16>

The occupied nation is Palestine. The foreign terrorists call themselves “Israeli.”

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



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