

the guise of peacekeeping and crisis management, occurs only at a certain stage, primarily to achieve definitive success in the conflict.”

That Putin’s oligarch-state capitalism was already too weakened to carry out such advanced strategy as well as it wanted to in Ukraine, doesn’t mean that the ideas themselves aren’t increasingly organic to our moment. Armies are starting to supplement the role of expensive and scarce jet attack planes with flocks of bomb-carrying less expensive drones. Or recruiting thousands of smartphone-carrying civilians in the battle zone to act as your forward scouts and intelligence agents about enemy movements. Just like the New Afrikan struggle here is spontaneously doing on the battleground of the streets. Europe hasn’t seen such a real-life quick testing war laboratory since the 1936 Spanish Civil War prepped big fascism for WW2. Which suggests, hmm ...

Kersplebedeb: I have seen these developments referred to elsewhere as “fourth generation warfare,” and what you are describing certainly fits what seems to have become the norm over the past half-century. So the contradiction of capitalism surpassing the limitations of its historic nations, and the chaos that ensues from that, would be what is underlying these changes in how conflicts are being waged?

J. Sakai: We have to be careful to hold the lens of capitalist military theory the right way up, since it may seem to help us understand their wars—but is itself a blind alley. Capitalist militaries use terms like “fourth generation” war to systematize their own technical and managerial development. Starting with “first generation warfare,” which to them was the forming of European state armies in the 1600s—who fought in the first rigid formations of soldiers using powered weapons (i.e. muskets and artillery). Today’s “fourth generation warfare” is supposedly characterized by the mixing of regular and irregular forces and tactics, together with the strategic option of waging war directly upon unarmed civilian pop-

The Shape of Things to Come

J. Sakai

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weaponize a wide range of formerly civilian things, such as computer viruses, net browsers, and financial derivative tools. Ditto we can say to mass religions and drug mafias, corporations, and charities—like u.s.-occupied “Iraqistan” used their women’s uplift non-profits as weapons right alongside their men’s criminal ethnic militias, shotgun married by broad-minded Imperial Big Daddy just like that.

Since “the battlefield will be everywhere,” the Chinese theorists predicted wars will not necessarily be declared as such, that there will be no diplomatic, legal, or moral limits at all, that “all the boundaries lying between the two worlds of war and non-war, of military and non-military, will soon be destroyed.”

This directly relates to what we have seen over the past years in Ukraine, visibly starting in a new Russian war plan of gradual conquest by indirection, seen attempted even before Russia’s “half-sandwich” 2014 military occupation of the Crimea and much of Ukraine’s eastern Donbas region. Coming out of the oven unmistakably when Putin’s man Viktor Yanukovich tried to take the Ukrainian Presidency and then suddenly steer their country back into a USSR-type remarriage with Moscow. This was all borrowed wholesale from China’s Unrestricted Warfare by Gen. V. Gerasimov, Putin’s main military strategist and supposedly the chief planner of today’s 2022 invasion. Some articles, even in the mainstream u.s. media such as Time magazine and The New York Times, linked the invasion with these new concepts of unlimited warfare by misdirection:

“Putin’s strategy was one of unclarity, of blurry, gray movements in a fog of ambiguity, none of them rising to the level of war. American strategists sometimes call this the ‘Gerasimov Doctrine,’ after an essay published in 2013 by Valery Vasilyevich Gerasimov, the Russian army’s chief of staff for the last ten years. ‘The emphasis in methods of struggle,’ Gerasimov observed, is on ‘widespread use of political, economic, informational, humanitarian, and other non-military matters ... Overt use of force,’ he advises, ‘often under

tury, two Chinese military officers in an army unit assessing strategy published an extended paper/book on war in the neo-colonial era (although that is not a political term they are allowed to use). Which has again helped update the world's understanding. Peoples Liberation Army colonels Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui's 1999 Unrestricted Warfare gave articulated focus to changes which young capitalist military and intelligence and foreign policy officers had been increasingly debating. It became so significant in the spirited discussions on revolutionizing strategy and tactics among u.s. officers throughout the services, that eventually a branch of the CIA had to arrange its full translation and obscure commercial publication.

A word of caution: the Chinese officers did not discover any new military theory themselves, they were usefully summing up the many post-modern leaps actually going on in everyone's conflicts. Not only the Vietnamese guerrilla victory over "America's" most technologically advanced imperialist military in the world. But also then right back in turn, the CIA's White House men in Brooks Brothers suits inventing and financing a global Islamic religious jihad to foil Russia's attempted colonization of Afghanistan in the 1980s. To mention only the two most stand-out examples besides our own post-modern 9/11.

Their basic theme is that now the rules of warfare have changed, in that there no longer are any rules, at all. That warfare which was formerly given identity by official declarations of war between states, and form by armies of men in distinctive uniforms using lethal specifically military weapons against each other (the countless women and children raped and killed did not count), has broken through all bounds and limitations that used to try and safely divide military activity from civilian activity, war from peace.

The two Chinese officers recognized, in their Unrestricted Warfare, not only how quasi-state actors like the Republican Party or Al-Qaeda (my examples) can wage unorthodox violent conflict to piece together gradual dominance, but that now all combatants can

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i mean, the trash fires of fleeing u.s. troops in “Iraqistan” have hardly cooled, but big capitalism’s rulers appear not to have learned a thing from that world’s-longest-running Hollywood movie. These are truly unprecedented big power capitalist gambles in which all sides later turn out to have lost. Costly conflicts where afterwards they can’t find a winner. Although, even if certain of nothing else, “America” is determined right now to fight to the last Ukrainian. That will certainly teach the world a lesson—only what is it?

Keep in mind that this global class system is gigantic, containing billions of people—and like one of their huge oil tankers can turn only in a wide slow arc. Like in Mexico and Central America, for example, this same turning point of a great downward arc of a falling nation coming apart started decades ago. Into the final cataclysm of the capitalist system’s global fall and crash.

Welcome to the steadily spreading chaos that we all sense as the background of our new times. The societies that are capitalism’s human structure coming apart from the stress of this neo-colonial era’s overriding contradictions. Here we see ruling class interests as well as the autonomic survival reflexes of capitalist societies kicking in: all hands desperately ventilating and pumping chest compressions to aging forms of settlerism and ethnic nationalism. While more and more actors outta all classes are grabbing at pieces of their coming apart nations for themselves before it’s too late. Fighting as well over the long ago installed on/off power switch by which one race or nationality can own or control others.

Kersplebedeb: So nations are breaking down, and as you say various players are “desperately overplaying their own hands in shaky ventures economic and military”—what comes to mind for me is that this has consequences in terms of warfare ...

J. Sakai: When the 19th-century military theorist von Clausewitz said that war was just the continuation of politics by other means, he deepened everyone’s understanding of conflict, from the Pentagon to Chinese peasants. Likewise, at the turn of the 21st cen-

interweaving of the world's populations is the rising ocean, while now under the surface the sinking structures of antique empires and nations are thrashing about as residual dinosaurs. Like in the Covid-19 pandemic reality tv game, in which industrial high-tech nations like "America," China, Great Britain, Russia, and much of the EU couldn't stop dropping and fumbling away any effective public health response.

The more new crisis a capitalist faction is in, the more it wants to have some old nation around it as a safety blanket. Ditto its old races, genders, and religions. That capitalist nation-states across the board increasingly don't work and are breaking down from anyone's standpoint, is the central trick bag in our world's free-falling capitalist plummet.

There are overriding practical reasons for all this, because in endgame system failure not enough is getting repaired or replaced, being obsolete isn't aging out to be improved. It's all happening, the capitalistic living and the dying, coupling and competing in every ancient and newest way possible, but all doing their gig work and sex work in one big crowded room. Citizens hoarding toilet paper but also cryptocurrency, while their imperial state hoards its vintage 1950s-era B-52 bombers, as nations willy-nilly join in essential commodity supply chains together while also trying to rain irrational war and sabotage on each other—it's all the norm for capitalist system dysfunction now.

For what it's worth, my outsider opinion has been that the most conspicuous old capitalist imperial leaders—like the royal Clintons and oligarch Putin and China's potentate Xi Jinping—have been completely unable to cope with their own nations' piling up and up life and death problems. As the world capitalist system's unresolvable contradictions come more and more due. So all the Borises, Vladimirs, and Bidens are desperately overplaying their own hands in shaky ventures economic and military to somehow "win," as their ruling class and maybe even their populace remembers once doing.

Part 1 (An Interview with J. Sakai, conducted from mid-2020)

Kersplebedeb: We've got a lot to discuss! But maybe first some context: Your work is grounded in Marxism, you clearly have some special affection for Mao, and at the same time you have been accused of being an anarchist (amongst other things); how should younger radicals today approach these legacies of politics from the 19th and 20th centuries? What pitfalls should they be looking out for?

J. Sakai: Questions of how to handle inherited ideologies and politics are important now, as a new generation of revs comes onto the torn-up chaos landscape that is our 21st century. It's not so easy to understand as it's supposed to be. And it really is a deeper matter than if you've just joined team New Green Deal or team social democrat. As a whole, hard-won pieces of knowledge that revs put together in past tides of struggle to scrawl out a strategic map, and then hopefully a tactical guide however tentative, are valuable. Thought-provoking, with interesting hints, both positive and negative, of what was really thought about, really tried. Yet are always being erased and forgotten, because they were never written in permanent ink in the first place. No more than we ourselves can be. Were always just for right then, though women and men never thought so. Are always receding deeper into memory, as generations and the world itself turn.

Even if saved in some unchristian holy text, they can only become gradually distant from their once sensuous context of immediate life-and-death class struggle, and thus are often now too faded to be easily read. That previous scientific knowledge, that theory and practice, is so precious for us precisely because it keeps disappearing and has to be constantly repatterned and stitched together all over again.

Every new generation must learn to apply revolutionary science themselves, rediscovering fire all over again. Which is why the scraps of basic scientific theory we can hold onto against the tidal pull are so practically important. And, yas, those pitfalls ...

Knowledge isn't something academic or abstract and made only by some intellectual elite. Michael Reinhoehl died all alone at night in Lacey, Washington, not knowing how to give himself a chance to stay alive against a right-wing u.s. government assassination squad. Yet the revolutionary movement right here has had extensive, painfully learned practical knowledge in living memory on just this bitter-toswallow situation. But it was scattered and lost to him as though it never had been.

i believe that revolutionaries have to take studying and using theory very seriously, the good and the bad of it. On the deepest level, we all need theory to help give understandable order to the waves of disparate cries and mass explosions streaming across our receivers.

But if revolutionary theory can be an invaluable tool, that doesn't mean that any given practitioner using the tool knows what they are doing. That's two very different things. The best roller chest of chrome Snap-On tools is no help if the mechanic working on your car has only an uncertain idea of what the problem is. Or is just faking it, which is infuriating but happens. Left theorists aren't any more scientific than auto mechanics, you know.

Maybe it would be good to see how that "ideas side" of our struggle has worked here. Or hasn't, because failed left theory isn't rare,

ity are needed, shaped, and coordinated in symphony by the same ruling class and its state.

Checking off basics: nation-states are the way by which capitalist classes used to stake out and claim territorial class ownership of a particular human society and its lands as their exclusive property, as against all other rival capitalist classes. While under European feudalism there were shifting-in-shape-and-size aristocratic domains and principalities, but not nation-states as we know them (for instance, the present Normandy coast of France once spent more centuries as a feudal part of England than it has since as part of France).

Nation-states are where special bodies of armed men get uniforms that everyone must recognize as their license to kill and enforce overrule. Back in 1776 "America," the founding foreskins made massively violent racial enslaved labor openly legal and protected in national law and policy, as a necessary gear in the startup motor of its "infant empire's" capital accumulation. Copycatting patriarchy and the iron law of class society that no born woman may own her own body. Now, centuries later, the large but just-wetnursed Chinese "Red" state capitalist ruling class has similarly made its own mass enslaved and semi-enslaved proletariat, only in veiled form, legally and militarily chained for this same desperate cannibal hunger of startup capital accumulation.

Seen that way, a nation is an indispensable capitalist class instrument, encompassing both steering mechanism and hammer, even though as a form it is now outgrown historically by the humanity-wide development of population, production, and culture. i mean, some say there's nothing like Arabic Icelandic hip hop. Or Cambodian queer Southern Californian fiction.

Same with rusted old empires and poisoned oligarch countries, neo-colonial tribes, transitory lumpen states—any old collectivities which don't really fit barrier-leaping humanity anymore, but which addicted ruling classes cannot do without when they need a patch or a fix. It's as if economic and cultural globalization and the

phasis on less expensive and lighter equipment for use in flatland tropical climates. No matter how many “Cat” caps white men wear.

Not that many advantages do not persist from imperialism’s previous configuration. Obviously, the u.s. dollar is the foundation currency for world capitalism, which every national treasury and local hedge fund must have access to. As such, the u.s. still enjoys cowboy leverage in the world financial system—at least for now.

And of course, “America’s” FBI together with its elite special military units awkwardly function as globalization’s makeshift neo-colonial super-duper police. Which is why the u.s. could arrest, move to New York, convict, and imprison the former commanding admiral of the Guinea-Bissau Navy. Which must have fascinated fellow Black inmates in their jail tier. Just as they are doing now with arrested Prime Minister Andrew Fahie, the elected leader of the British Virgin Islands. And former president Juan Orlando Hernandez of Costa Rica, who is also awaiting his u.s. trial. It was only an outraged revolt by the leadership of the Mexican Army that forced the FBI to release their recent chief commanding general from federal jail in New York. Under unique u.s. law, any person in the entire world from the UN Secretary General to Putin’s maid can be arrested for alleged direct or indirect relationship to drug dealing or related money laundering, tried here, and imprisoned. Of course, the u.s. is primarily policing up its satraps and subordinates who run the neo-colonial states of the oppressed periphery.

What we see, once we start looking for it, is that “globalization vs. populist nationalism” may loom large in those publicized clashes that dominate our political news—but cannot be any fundamental contradiction of the system because the capitalist ruling class needs, uses and coordinates, and is behind both sides—both globalization and resurgent nationalism. Any more than you can say that big corporations versus state-incorporated trade unions are a principal class contradiction, when both forms of class activ-

either. This is a hard vagabond science to capture in a bottle. It humbles you—or it had better.

An obvious example—one which i have devoted much of my own work to examining—would be the critical question of the class nature of this type of metropolitan capitalist society, our “America,” and its settler colonial working class as the once-expected big agent of revolutionary change. Or not so.

Through many lifetimes, the main u.s. left here used to always take pride in the white male industrial working class. Which until very recently they had for whatever reason theoretically positioned inside their class strategy as the largest and most important component of the “united multinational working class” in the u.s.a., or some such abstract formulation.

The majority of white workers were always supposed to be busy gaining consciousness of hypothetical basic class solidarity with their Black and Brown brothers and sisters, and with solid trade union work any old racist rust on them would soon be cleansed away. Or so it was always said by the organized left with their “power of positive thinking” theories. Any day now, the working class would be finally unified under its good white male leaders, and would brush aside “prejudice” of all kinds and overthrow the most powerful capitalist empire in the world—or so their useless white left class theory confidently predicted, generation after generation, century after century. But now time has run out. Their clock itself is dead.

It was in its own way a beautiful picture, though, the soothing lullaby a loyal left made up of the privileged could become very fond of, even addicted to.

Generation after generation, the most respected white left intellectuals across the spectrum, however they differed ideologically, echoed this one “revolutionary” class theory. Whether it was the marxist-leninist Herbert Aptheker, the social democrat Michael Harrington, or the 1960s New Left socialist Howard Zinn. The only problem was that this most fundamental class

theory of theirs wasn't in the least bit true. It was a massive fiction, and a corrupt fiction at that. The "internationalism" of revolutionary anti-capitalism's 19th-century founders was only used as a cardboard shield here to hide corrupt oppressor politics.

We know it for a scientific fact, since in 400 years the euro-settler working class has never yet reached a revolutionary thing, and now as a lesser class never will. Much less ever stopped hating New Afrikan, Indigenous, Brown, and Asian workers. Did those respected left theorists forget to tell us that this piece of "Marxist" theory would only work for us once we all died and went to Left heaven?

And now, with the inevitable spread of technology and production overseas, and advanced mechanization at home, the white male working class here is shrinking and desiccating into a distorted husk of its former self. It will never carry out that crackpot white left theory of being anyone's main revolutionary army. Except for our enemy's, perhaps.

It isn't that these popular but badly askew marxist theorists were villains. There are good reasons why they were so respected. Herbert Aptheker's early 20th-century historical work on enslaved revolts was ground-breaking. Mike Harrington foresaw a time when his kind of "democratic socialism" could be a mainstream position for new state reforms to help the very poor. Howard Zinn was a passionate participant in the early anti-Segregation Sit-In protests of the 1960s South, willing to risk his university teaching career in them.

The total misreading of the class nature of the majority of white workers here persisted in the organized left, generation after generation, A to Z, from Communists to anarchists. It can hardly be the individual fault of this single theorist or that one.

The anti-capitalist left in the u.s. empire, started by radical emigrants and left exiles in the 19th century, carried the germ of a completely mistaken idea about the nature of Project America. That new "America" could be a fresh "democratic" society, con-

The universality of identity and outlook that is now natural and needed to make our evolutionary future out of today's global crises, is also always under constant torque to be twisted into new narrowing capitalist forms. Globalization like everything else exists in contradiction and creates its opposites. "America" can hardly be the "lone superpower" of everything, when China's trade and investment in Africa are replacing Britain's and "America's," and when Iran is more powerful politically and militarily in the Middle East than either "America" or Russia. And when the biggest global cultural export of "America" isn't Hollywood anymore but New Afrikan hip hop.

In globalization the capitalist world is becoming more multi-polar but not in the least democratic or egalitarian—and why should it?—and also even more complicated than anyone expected. Like, the natural tendency is for big capitalist industry to concentrate, with duopolies now being seen as the steady end state. Such as Boeing and Airbus in jetliners. But the real trend is much more complex than that.

For instance, we are used to seeing the duopoly of either yellow u.s. Caterpillar or Japan's Komatsu in bulldozers and earth-moving vehicles on construction sites and highway projects in the u.s. as our bus drives by. But that's just here, for us locals. Worldwide is a truer more multi-polar picture. While Caterpillar and Komatsu are indeed the world's No. 1 and No. 2 in market share of heavy construction equipment, white "America's" beloved "Cat" has only a 13% world share. The three leading Chinese companies have a greater share of world sales together than "Cat" and green John Deere, the other major u.s. company, combined. And Swedish and South Korean and Swiss companies are taking real (for them as small countries) market shares of heavy construction machinery, too. One or two percent of the entire global market for an expensive manufactured commodity is not small change anymore.¹⁰ Some companies specialize more in expensive but extra-heavily-built vehicles for Northern cold weather use, while others put more em-

J. Sakai: This Ukraine war certainly might become one critical turning point, though it is too early yet to see its full widening circles of consequences. In one way it is a turning point for us because the u.s. left has more or less been united for this moment, only under Biden's leadership. Confused AOC can be his corporal now, "yessir!" Isn't that the political gut punch people didn't see coming?

When globalized economies became evident in the late 20th century, one of the first premature reactions in bourgeois political analysis was to jump us to the linear conclusion that now separate nations as old news would become unimportant, obsolete, and thus somehow would helplessly fade away. Yet the very reverse happened. Ditto tottering old empires and oligarch/plutocrat monopolies and bureaucrat state capitalism.

Globalization is not some "no speed limits, no traffic laws" economic and cultural free for all, with the fabled "free market" being the sole guide to what anyone can do down and dirty in the scrum. Capitalist globalization needs and is structured around extreme nationalism. How else could they keep the world in order and us under their boot? That's why English is the mandatory language used by all pilots and air traffic controllers in world commercial aviation, just as a survey of the world's leading scientific journals found that all the top 50 such publications were in English. In countries such as Germany, France, and Spain, many more university academic papers are produced in English than in their native languages. Many E.U.-based transnational corporations have quietly adopted English as their mandatory language for all company-wide management communications. (All of which also advantages the U.K. and Canada, Ireland and Jamaica, New Zealand and Australia and so on, of course, keeping alive in diffused form the Anglo-Saxon world of the dead British Empire—but within a globalized capitalism. As Vlad the Invader himself bitterly nags us about over and over.)

structured on an empty stage without any nasty feudal hangovers as in Old Europe. "Democratic" and white from the ground up, they hoped. They didn't get it that this brand-new militarized society with a continent-wide swagger larger than all the nations of Old Europe, was a settler colonial capitalism. A conquest and genocide and occupation society from day one, born to be an "infant empire" for capitalism, as one of the early right-wing white militia leaders named George Washington admitted.

Reading today's headlines, it is hard to really grasp how much the young revolutionaries who founded the anti-capitalist Left in 19th-century still-feudal-tinged Europe saw Project America as the hopeful dawn of a democratic future. Karl Marx himself remarked as a matter of fact that "America" was "the most democratic of nations." (He also observed presciently that its 1776 white power settler revolution marked the "rise of the middle classes.") The young blazing rebel against Czarist despotism and serfdom, future anarchist Mikhail Bakunin, angrily denounced the Confederate States rebellion against the Union, because "they nearly overthrew and destroyed the finest political organization that ever existed in history." (Both Bakunin and Marx always added that the blot of New Afrikan slavery had to be abolished, which they both felt it soon would be.)

Remember that the pioneering anti-capitalist radicals like Proudhon, Marx, Engels, and Bakunin weren't making revolution against the developed capitalism we are so accustomed to. They were part of youthful democratic uprisings against lingering feudalism and its oppressive structures— with democratic capitalist factions as the wavering allies of the new and radicalized urban working class.

Feudalism wasn't just another word for kings and dictatorship. It was a society owned by the landed hereditary aristocracy, with their own twisted class structure and rigidly hierarchical culture. Young Bakunin had wanted to be a reforming educator but placed too low in the examinations to win a position in the Russian state

civil service. As a male member of a minor elite family, he was pledged from birth to compulsory service to his ultimate lord, the Czar. So would-be teacher Bakunin soon found himself in a stiff woolen uniform training for lifelong service ... as an artillery officer, of all things. To the angry Bakunin, that was just a higher rank of serf or indentured servant.

Later in life, when he escaped Siberian penal exile, crossed the Pacific, and landed on the West Coast of “America” on his long way back to Europe, he became famous here. An escaped pro-democracy turncoat Imperial Russian army officer was quite new and glamorous to the literate white public. Bakunin himself was thrilled to be here, where unlike in the Russian Empire any white man could rewrite his identity and status, making his way freely living and working wherever he willed across the conquered continent. Making his own destiny, as settlers just love to say.

In Boston he reunited with his old comrade Louis Agassiz, who had taken part in the German revolution with him in 1848, when Bakunin had been more or less drafted to lead the brave but hopeless military defense of the liberated city of Dresden against the might of the Prussian army. (Marx and Engels and most of young rebellious Europe praised his fight. As did the famed composer Richard Wagner, who supported the democratic revolution, and had to go with the leaders into exile for many years when the end came crashing down.) Agassiz hosted Bakunin in Boston, and helped promote his cause of opposition to Czarist autocracy. Agassiz doubtless was an influence in radical Bakunin’s even filling out an initial application for u.s. citizenship.¹

¹ Mikhail Bakunin was obviously an important revolutionary figure in starting revolutionary anti-capitalism, and although much maligned and dismissed by Marx and Engels in a way that wasn’t truthful, he did lead a life much of which sounds like it was from an adventure novel. Wanted to list and comment on where i had found my facts about his life, so i went back to the suburban public library where i had found and read three biographies of the Russian revolutionary—only to find that all were now unavailable. Asking about them, i was told unofficially

the number of u.s. manufacturing jobs paying over \$20 an hour has decreased by 60%. It is odd but normal now to take in a historic white working-class ex-industrial community that is like half-deserted, where a blue collar family you know is trying to squeeze every adult onto government disability and food stamps. It’s the new “unions.” It’s not just clichés about Appalachia and the upper Midwest “rust belt”—a recent magazine article notes in passing that “Holyoke, Massachusetts, once home to more than 25 paper mills,” is “now one of the poorest places in the state.” Without pausing for any explanation, since it assumes we all get it.³

Today, everyone senses our landscape distorting into what feels like the bulging shape of an incipient “civil war” of some yet unnamed kind. Professors and capitalist writers and mass media use that phrase, which has even been debated in contesting New York Times columns. Is Civil War 2 in the cards being dealt us or not?

The capitalist media is choking on these words, but can’t ever explain them. Because by not grounding political analysis in the u.s. empire’s permanent settler colonialism, we can’t get to the unresolvable contradiction of “America’s” post-modern capitalism. That it needs both old colonialism but in camouflaged form, along with a contentious partial de-settlerization of society (or a tactical step back from outright white master-race rule of the biosphere). Which is all an inescapable part of the bitter jumbled neo-colonial capitalist retreat and rearrangement of all classes old and new—and the resultant neo-colonial wars and civil wars like Uyghur genocide and “Iraqistan”—and now with Ukraine emergency alarms inevitably ringing in all our senses.

Kersplebedeb: We are returning to the theme of globalization vs. nationalism, and the limitations of that framework. In that light, and given that you brought it up, what are we to make of the Ukraine war? Are we at some kind of turning point?

³ Daniel Bergner. “Open Minds.” The New York Times Magazine. May 22, 2022.

tion, some lingered to swell the anarchist IWW into the greatest rural radical labor organization “America” had ever known. In another direction, a surprising one million struggling rural Plains states whites in those years gave up on their loyalty to “America” altogether and moved camp across the border to remake their nationalistic identity as euro-settler Canadians. (Where some say their white settler anti-banking populism became one important seedbed for Canada’s own social-democratic left.)²

Flash forward to more recent history. Even before they became u.s. citizens, early European immigrant “ethnics” such as the Irish had always been counted on to be mass cannon fodder for “America’s” always-outward-moving military. So the fact that modern young white working-class men and boys took up the “FTA” spirit and joined the widespread mutinies against the Vietnam War in the 1960s, was a big shock to the u.s. ruling class.

At the same time, surreal as it may seem today, until the late 1970s a white postal letter carrier or union corporation factory guy could expect to own a home, support a wife and children on his single income, take family vacations—i.e., have some kind of lower middle-class lifestyle. Euro-american settlers got used to that real quick.

So white workers at that time not only expected middleclass incomes in union industries and trades, but increasingly refused to sacrifice themselves in imperialism’s neocolonial invasions abroad. In other words, were of less and less use to the u.s. ruling class.

Little surprise what happened next. Today, now that the u.s. industrial working class has been mostly offshored and local blue collar wages here miniaturized, many white towns and communities that once had a movie theater, maybe a small nearby hospital, restaurants and clothing stores, are often left with none of these. Only a fast food outlet or two and some bars. Since 1979,

² Gabriel Kolko. *Main Currents in Modern American History*. Harper & Row, 1976. Pages 26–29.

Of course, Louis Agassiz was equally famous here himself, as the founder of Harvard’s department of anthropology, and one of this u.s. empire’s foremost early pseudo-scientific “experts” on human races. After the Civil War, he helped justify white public opposition to human rights for New Afrikans. They should have recognized non-enslaved status, but without voting or political rights of any kind ever, Agassiz testified before Congress. Since they were by their basic nature as a race, he said, too “subservient” and inferior to be trusted with any weapon of power in a white man’s society. Just like women, some manly white men in the debate pointed out negatively. Even way back then abolitionists raised a storm of protest to this kind of Hate ideology.

Right now at Harvard today, Black Lives Matter wants to finally take his dead white name off their anthropology department door. It all comes ’round. To say that the original founders of left European anti-capitalism, whose contributions were great, and their exiles and political explorers over here, were also to a conscious degree eurocentric, is only to say the obvious.

In *Settlers*, i tried to quickly skip trace the genetic roots of where the left’s disastrously out-of-the-ballpark class romance with the euro-settler working class here came from. Primarily to show that it’s not a question of individual error, but of understanding that a settler colonial occupation society is not going to create working classes out of itself to fill the roles required in times of revolutionary crisis and change. They are if anything reactionary classes, fulfilling if anything a rearguard and counter-revolutionary role as they demand more and more subsidies.

by one library worker after a computer search that all three were really missing, had probably been stolen. Wasn’t that just like something that would happen to the footloose rebel? And, no, i was told, they were not being replaced, because that was futile since some kinds of books were just always being stolen. Hmm, not sure if that is a good thing or a bad thing, but it is frustrating.

Thus did “America” in real life foreshadow and be the later conscious model for both Hitler’s early 20th-century European fascism and today’s trend of traditional industrial classes in the imperial Western metropolis skewing sideways off the turnpike towards far-rightist political movements. Often glibly labeled in the media as “populist nationalism versus globalization.” Which is too shallow to be actually true.

Kersplebedeb: We’re getting near the end of 2020—it has been quite the year, with the biggest u.s. uprising in my lifetime, and now a chaotic whirlwind of activity and flux, on our side and our enemies’—what do you make of the current situation?

J. Sakai: Think we can scarcely miss what is happening, that right now we live at some turning point. Here the American white right is coming together in now less and less concealed shape, as the popular movement for violent settler colonial rule. To refurbish the lumpy furniture of the white past as our future. While the Trump White House reaches out to become a populist white dictatorship. Just as new George Floyd protests sweep the continent and beyond, city by city, using the name “BLM” or no name at all— simply intense anonymous anger and resistance, pushing angrily back against the lifelong pressure of police terrorism. Marches sometimes edging into night-time crowd attacks on state centers and bourgeois symbols. Contradictions central to actually existing capitalism are growing only sharper, more unresolvable.

Strikingly unlike the 1960s, when whites took part in nonviolent civil rights actions but not in violent so-called “ghetto riots,” now even government buildings have been attacked and cops physically confronted with heavy white participation. A future left is starting to stir, different in its own right from all that which went before. In the 1980s–90s transition between old and new, for the first time the public demonstrations of violent u.s. white supremacist groups were physically challenged not just passively accepted, with young anarchists leading the way for everyone. All the time complaining that they were against all leaders. (A

The European conservative theorist of geopolitics, Friedrich Ratzel (who coined the ethnic nationalist slogan lebensraum made famous by “88”), visiting the u.s. South in 1874, was struck that he saw “no skilled workers, nor a vigorous white working class of any size worth mentioning.” He compared even the largest u.s. Southern cities he visited back then to those large but backward cities of colonized agricultural societies, such as non-industrial Havana or Veracruz, that displayed “an incomplete, half-developed profile.”⁷ That reduced Southern white working class wouldn’t even start to really recover until the 1930s New Deal and the bloodbath industrial bonanza of WW2.

Even the late-19th/early-20th-century political defeat of the precarious small farmers and laborers of the Midwestern Plains in their Populist political uprising, whose presidential candidate was Nebraska’s William Jennings Bryan of “You shall not crucify mankind on a cross of gold” fame, also involved mass white class defeat.

Between 1890 and 1920, some u.s. Plains states of the Grain Belt saw widespread white demotion to tenant farmer status as well as actual large lower class removal, with many white bankrupt small farmers and jobless rural laborers forced on the road. Turned back in their attempted populist revolt by the iron walls of the railroad monopolies that controlled their crop sales, and the Wall Street financial interests that controlled their debt. While in one direc-

Stripped down and perhaps easier to read, the legendary former longtime chairman of the Federal Reserve Board and his co-author, the political editor of *The Economist*, explain the u.s.a. primarily in terms of business investments, profits, and developing the capitalist class economy. Minor things like the rise of the Klan and lynchings, as well as changes in presidential politics, receive only brief lines to help frame the passing times as direct capitalist activity holds center stage. In its own way, a very cold-blooded but telling exposition of how “America” was made into a great-but-nowdeclining economic empire. The blame now, according to the conservative authors, is the “encrusting” suffocation of liberal state benefits like Social Security, which bestow automatic income on the masses without their having to work every day or risk anything. Charming.

violent parent even to its own, and severe conflict and disloyalty between the ruling class and discarded u.s. euro-settler factions has happened before and will go on happening until the end.

Not since the fantasy capitalist Confederacy's total bloody loss in Civil War 1 and then the defeat of the rural Populist protest movement in the Plains states at the turn of the century, have some u.s. white popular classes taken such heavy body blows as in recent history. Although it occurs now in a different and much more difficult setting, that of the decline of u.s. empire within the growing dystopian arc of the capitalist system itself.

Remember, "America's" white classes are only privileged, not sacred or eternal. All too vulnerable their own selves to big capitalism's constantly growing "creative destruction" and ceaseless appetite for rolling everything back into yet greater capital accumulation. That's why they are always ready to jump to the right, to get back more of that settler privilege that they feel is their national birthright. Other versions of the right-wing "Make America Great Again" mass movement have happened before, and have experienced class political progress or defeat—or even in extreme cases, class whiteout. Nor have they themselves always been all that loyal to u.s. imperialism as their nation, when they felt their own desperate interests going in the opposite direction.

The naughty white working class of that Confederate South in the last Civil War, for example, ended up severely reduced in numbers, cut down like no-longer-needed herd animals by the end of the war. 13% of all white military-age men in the South had died in the few years of war, and even many more had been disabled (a year after the War ended, the state of Mississippi had to spend 20% of its revenues on artificial limbs). Some two million white Southerners were forced to migrate West and North looking for new jobs and new Indigenous land to steal to become really white again.¹

¹ Alan Greenspan and Adrian Woolridge. *Capitalism in America: A History*. Penguin Press, 2018. Page 84. This is a different kind of history of "America."

resistance culture here in Babylon needs a sense of radical humor.) And now that moment has gone into the possible future.

And at the same time, more and more "Americans" want some version of a social democratic welfare state, desperately hoping that this imperial way of life can be preserved for them in amber.

We can all get it, that everything has somehow changed in this moment. What's difficult is to comprehend it fully. To catch the inner nature and direction of this transformation as it unfolds.

In the past, some revolutionaries asked, "Can capitalism even survive without colonialism?" Now, in this year 2020, on this terrain, the big answer seems to be clearly "no." We should take this seriously, because the ramifications are perhaps beyond our present imagining.

Not content to just accept his shock award as imperial president, Trump has had to spend four years openly talking, scheming, and precariously inching towards a euro-settler dictatorship. Whether he ever wins Civil War 2 or ends his days in pathetic exile somewhere as the Bonnie Prince Charlie of white races past, Trump has had to tap the one superpower available to him: coming out as the acid hatemoutherd champion of the white race. Promising a return to the good old days of "great" uncompromised white settler colonial ownership of their "America" and all within it. As a perverted papal celebration of his commitment to White Power, Trump has repeatedly taken within his palms the bloody hands of the far right, the neo-fascists; just as the Republican Party itself has done for many years in stealth seg mode, at the inconspicuous grassroots local, district, and county levels.

Again—whether he wins or loses elections, lives or dies— the jinni is finally out of the bottle. Smallville may look the same, but nothing is the same.

After two generations of state-paraded "civil rights" and "equal opportunity" and "integration," the white majority has spoken—it has experienced more "civil rights" than it thought it would ever see, and has come to the conclusion that it wants Hate. It wants

White Power and an impossible return to the life of the post-WW2 u.s. empire at its zenith. Many settler men now want a return to full seg, everything short of chattel slavery. With women as largely servers and reproducers of whiteness; with New Afrikans, Latinos, Indigenous, and Asians recolonized and mostly out of white sight. And only a leader who utters Hate, who calls for mocking and attacking other peoples as less than human, can really satisfy their reality show now, after bitter years of white body blows and white diminishment.

None of his many blunders and lies and nazi-ish hints have cost Trump his core support of something close to a majority of the euro-settler population—especially concentrated among small business owners and those blue collar workers. Again, win or lose, it's a fact he's as popular in the polls with white voters as John F. Kennedy was when he ran for president. After all, if you feel that your superior-but-besieged race is in desperate circumstances, and you only have one superpower champion, you'll rush to defend him all the more when he stumbles.

The other part of North America's neo-colonial contradiction unfolding relentlessly this year was the great tidal wave of Black Lives Matter-labeled protests and campaigns. But how different from the now-classic 1960s rebellions these have been—and in so many ways, both positive and problematic. How right from the start the class contradictions came forward, where the now decaying term “civil rights” no longer has any positive meaning for anyone. But only stands for opposing lies, where both white and Black “Americans” pretend to believe there is some future within sight where they are not enemies.

One part has been the heightened leadership role of New Afrikan women. Starting from the original Ferguson protests in 2014, where inexperienced young Black lesbians were central to the organizing, young leadership and queer leadership has come out. The same new leadership also has more problematic sides, as all things do, much more than just the DeRay McKesson model

Part 2 (Conclusion of an interview emailed back and forth into mid-2022)

Kersplebedeb: We began this exchange in 2020 and are finishing it off in 2022. Biden is now president; you referred in the first part of this interview very much to Trump, but Trump failed to hold on for a second term, and he may not win or even run again in the future ...

J. Sakai: Am always going to focus on a Trump more than a Biden, since he was important in the new white breakout. Not Biden, who everyone knows is just another state manager/politician from the ruling class locker room. Even if our clown Trumpenfuehrer fades away personally like lumpen David Duke did, it's that Trump was the elected white power President of the settler colonial majority, not liberal corporatist Biden.

The fabled liberal future, in which people of color keep growing to be a new numerical majority of color over the white nation, is only an illusion. New Afrikans were a numerical majority in much of the Old South in the post-Civil War 1 Black Reconstruction era, and yet within a generation white settlers were the “majority” in total armed power race dictatorship over them everywhere there. We are simply going through an agonizing replay of that in a neo-colonial Batman costume.

Again, we have to start going beneath the immediate surface of politics into the underlying reality which first forms its coming shape. And as a necessary reminder, capitalism is a dangerously

is still “forever” actively engaged in mini-warfare in dozens and dozens of unknown countries on any given unpublicized day.

In this new neo-colonial period there are no longer clear dividing lines between what is military and what is civilian, between war and peace, commerce and crime, each of which take on the other’s properties. Asymmetrical or surrogate military or financial or cultural actions can always happen every day, to gain some advantage or to disadvantage another within the ceaseless “creative destruction” of capitalism.

Any way it goes, it incidentally settles the left controversy of whether the era of imperialism—which began over a hundred years ago at the end of the 19th century and persisted through two devastating world wars—has been replaced by a fabled era of globalization and peaceful world capitalist unification. We still live—no matter how perilous it seems to us all—in the final capitalist period of imperialism and deep national decadence, and its constant fighting between capitalist entities and powers of all sick shapes and kinds.

That’s just one of many warning signs that this whole “globalization versus right-wing nationalism” thing isn’t what people are assuming it is. It’s not like a real fight, but more like a scripted play of capitalism—with real populations forced to act out its stage directions and lines with our lives.

Nor are the political fistfights ripping apart our own society what we are told they are. To a startling degree, we have been talking about contradictions which are developing in unresolvable ways. That grow only sharper but which cannot be resolved anymore within this actually existing capitalism. The fabric of societies themselves are distorted and are stretched to the breaking point—and then an involuntary tug beyond. Here and now. This is the present moment.

the end for just now

(which was like my father’s Oldsmobile). We’ve watched the living dead—only they don’t know it themselves—emerge both from the hustle and from professional NGO managers and would-be liberal politicians. By odd coincidence, Black zombies are currently “in” with filmmakers.

As usual, the real changes, the long-range mass transformations, are occurring below the choppy policed surface. Whole cities are packing up and moving. Last year, an acquaintance who casually takes in various New Afrikan women’s talk sites remarked to me that the No. 1 subject right then was “Race War”—and that there was both lots of agreement and lots of disagreement, contradictory as that may sound. People are arming up individually, person by person, in an incoming tide, but seem also not finished yet working out what that means.

Also flaring at the edge of vision has been the role of a determined minority of white women in the protest wave. What was particularly visible was their role in less promising places to organize. In the white suburbs and small towns, and even in some klan-friendly white big city neighborhoods. There were over ten demonstrations in predominantly white Chicago suburbs last summer, not just in the city. Mostly small and organized by young white women who were new to this all. In Western Springs, a high school junior organized a demonstration and march through town; fists held high by other young white women her age, a small but brave group declaring to locally “amplify the voices” of the big city Black marches that seemed so far away.

This chemical reaction isn’t a new thing. As every other time that there has been a major wave of Black struggle in the u.s. empire’s long history, a white women’s struggle has taken up its own feminist politics in a synchronous wave, standing ambivalently next to the light of Black Freedom Now. Because many know that every step ahead for the white far right will produce more and more patriarchal ownership over their own bodies and their own futures. The enemy who wants to gradually

reintroduce full colonialism always has to include “their own” women and children. Because women have always secretly been the “first colony.”

This isn't only a homebrewed political war of the settler colonial white right versus today's sudden broad liberal democratic coalition, which involuntarily includes the handcuffed left whether anybody likes it or not. This is that, but is also much larger than that.

Both sides know that we are somehow parts of larger global forces which are clashing all over. In a way somewhat like a World War. Maybe that's what we will become.

The largest transnational corporations and capitalist structural institutions are now also present in our backyards. Signaling away, if only in meaningless hand gestures, their “support” for the BLM protests, and implicitly disavowing anyone's right-wing nationalism. Maneuvering to protect the new world-wide culture of cosmopolitan multiculturalism so necessary for the transnational corporations and financiers working in orbit high above our now-parochial passport nations and politics.

On one level, the tsunami panic of transnational capitalists' attempted simultaneous clumsy warding off of and cooptation of BLM had an instant unpleasant taste all its own. Hilarious mixed with ominous. From the cover of Vogue magazine to the FedEx corporation to Netflix. While Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg declaimed in a preposterous lie, “We stand with the Black community”; just as Amazon improbably posted a “Black Lives Matter” banner on its home page. The CEO of Coca-Cola said that, “Companies like ours must speak up as allies to the Black Lives Matter movement,” while Sprite, which has campaigned to be the soft drink of the world hip hop subculture, announced its “Give Back” program to hand out \$300 million to the New Afrikan community. Reconditioned Democratic Party politicians in flocks and all manner of white executives from coast to coast selfied themselves wearing Black Lives Matter t-shirts. And this was a long hesitant minute after the historic Ford

tional societies and economies no longer corresponding to the lived locations of the old class society that once provided the territory for these capitalist beings in earlier life. If that makes sense.

So when Trump went on his would-be historic tirade or trade war with designated wrestling villain “Kung Flu” China, both sides had an unspoken agreement that many outsized capitalist beings like the Apple corporation or Tesla had to be exempt from the match. Otherwise, that would have merely been a public b.d.s.m. hookup. Since Apple, just for example, may be a world-famous u.s. company, but as we know in its years of global rise its famous iPhones were produced first in its own low-wage, prison-discipline production metropolis in Shenzhen, China, and now also in Shengzhou and other Chinese industrial cities. Where almost all iPhones still come from, manufactured by Apple's large Taiwanese production partner Foxconn corporation (and their even larger silent partner, the Beijing “Red” state capitalist dictatorship)

Both Chinese and u.s. capitalist empires are gaining a lot from this. And if the u.s.a. is Apple's largest national market, China itself is No. 3 right behind the No. 2 multinational EU. With a value this year reaching \$3 trillion and jostling shoulders with Amazon over being the No. 1 corporation in the world, Apple was left to profitably watch the imperialist mud-wrestling match from comfortable Chinese migrant worker-skin seats on the sidelines. It was way too transcontinentally sprawling and too awkwardly shaped, in either side's understanding, to fit inside the ring of their weirdo pointless nationalist trade war.

Will this imperialist flexing and shoving come in some near future to theatrical “conflict,” or even some pointless actual miniature war—in one gender of armed activity or another? It's always possible, since “Red” China has always had plastic container take-out military conflicts with many of its smaller or weaker unhappy neighbors. Russia same same. (As one smartass poet once wrote, “Socialism is not a country whose neighbors curse geography.”) While the u.s. empire itself hasn't won a real war since 1945 but

and other colonial labor from the margins in the making of Canadian capitalism.

Imaginative and reminding us of settler colonialism's reality in a different-appearing setting, Zachary Samuel Gottesman's "The Japanese Settler Unconscious: Goblin Slayer the 'Isekai' frontier," in the online journal *Settler Colonial Studies*, shows how the colonial invasion and conquest mentality that created what we know as Japan, is reenacted over and over again in surrogate form, in a popular Japanese video game set in the usual male fantasy cartoon universe.

As more and more comrades are taking up the investigating and the teaching which strengthens strategic understanding to bring it back into the struggle again.

Kersplebedeb: In terms of understanding the political moment we are in globally, the main contradiction is often described as being between globalized neo-liberalism and right-wing populist nationalism. Above you criticized this view as being overly shallow ...

J. Sakai: Indeed, though certainly that's how journalists and consultants are paid to explain it. So many of us have to follow those loud-speaking establishment guides right now, temporarily while we wait to find out what's going on. That doesn't make it true, though.

Usually contradictions don't only have one outward form, after all. They present their essence in myriad ways, just as a person can wear different clothes. To describe the clothes helps describe the person, but the clothing isn't the person.

It is closer to what's true, to say that the globalized capitalism of the transnational corporations has grown so extremely successful, so vast, that they have begun involuntarily ripping away from and moving above the nations that once birthed them. They no longer fit within them. So nations are in part still ruthlessly needed and in part tossed aside. By no means are they "over"; they are still very necessary but invisibly lessened, coming apart, left with dysfunc-

and Carnegie Foundations' announcement that they were pledging to raise \$100 million for perpetually unspecified Black Lives Matter bribes ... oops, sorry, i mean "activities." Personally, i am waiting for the u.s. army to roll out a new Black Lives Matter heavy tank.

Kersplebedeb: Settlers and your work on this question have been attacked in questionable terms like "racist," "defeatist," "dishonest." Not to mention the truly hallucinatory crackpot dismissals circulating, and the weird role this plays as a negative symbol for various flavors of racist white revanchism. Do you think that the significant white vote—including of the white working class—for Trump will temper such bullshit in left circles?

J. Sakai: That would be nice, but i doubt it. Our settler colonialism is not mainly about some crude distant past that now can be taken for granted as a done deal, as is always implied. It can't be dealt with superficially as only some historified "moral debt," in unequal exchange for an unchanging settler colonial totalitarianism of the land. Settler colonialism here is about our very present conflicted lives and about the unseen future hurtling blindly towards us.

This theoretical controversy over the euro-settler working class, which the white elite-centered left always tried to ignore, dodge, or suppress, particularly since Settlers appeared in 1983, is in one sense now resolved. Now everything factually is crystal clear. (Not that the multitude of left political trolls and bare-ass preachers will stop yelling insults and complete nonsense, since that is all that they have left to do.)

A hidden aspect of this question is that it isn't about the euro-settler working class and its left apologists not being revolutionary enough. That it isn't about the euro-settler left trying to do radical class struggle but falling short. The nature of classes isn't about aspirational metrics of improvement, as in Oprah losing weight or Biden hoping to become more presidential than Obama. It's about the fundamental nature of a class and where it finds itself on the firing line of the actually existing class war.

How can any of this be a surprise, unless you stepped into the pitfall of this false working class theory and were completely detached from “America’s” everyday reality? That as we talk a real majority of the settler colonial working class here in the 21st century are wearing red caps actual or metaphorical, but not with Lenin’s baseball team logo. Voting for far-right hate with worn-out but actually true excuses of forcing “America” into being what it used to be all over again. Even willing to be bloody “deer” hunting buddies with fascism. Which says a lot today.

The euro-settler working class here never hesitated to join the Slave Patrols of the Old South, or their 1776 Revolutionary War counterpart in New England, the white patriotic Committees of Correspondence (which patrolled the night roads to capture and execute New Afrikans trying to escape Northern euro-settler enslavement by reaching the desperate sanctuary of British military lines). Or ever fought against people joining in the local settler colonial men’s gangs and militias to raid and rape and loot and try to kill Indigenous people. The euro-settler working class supported every capitalist war of conquest and expansion, from the startup settler invasion colonies to u.s. imperialism raising itself high above the rest of the capitalist world as the temporary “lone superpower” with military boots of crumbling clay.

The historic u.s. left was always a house built on a foundation of shifting bone fragments and sand, always divided against itself. Trying to live out our beautiful revolutionary dream of replacing the violent exploitation of capitalism with a liberated world which would freely give “to each according to their needs.” But at the same moment a settler left that never was willing to face how half-corrupted it was. With taking as the “normal” their lives in and loyalty to a privileged oppressor society, however up or down one’s individual lot. This had ramifications so severe that it determined everything.

The established left here, whether communist, socialist, or anarchist, has always fought against being exposed as fronting for

So this is a politics that is still an outlaw coming as an outside threat to established reformist oppressor ideology, from the viewpoint of the oppressed. But drawing more attention, as what we’re told is the advanced superior capitalist world grows more dysfunctional all the time. Even the term “settler colonialism” has become widely used within progressive circles here in the u.s., not only in books about race politics but even in daily newspapers and classrooms. As the pulsing umbilical cord becomes so visible between the swelling of the violent white far right and the unacknowledged weight of “America’s” living dead history. As rebels look further over the devastation for deeper answers.

In that vein, a revealing blog post by the Indigenous revolutionary Rowland “Enaemaehkiw” Keshena Robinson, “Fascism and Anti-Fascism: A Decolonial Perspective,” written in the turbulent uncertainty after Trump’s naked settler colonial reappearance in 2016, reappraises white left theory on fascism in the first light of Indigenous decolonization. Confronting this settler colonial empire on the deceptively camouflaged ground of fascism/antifascism.

Just as there are also voices shining more light on new questions raised in today’s recharged white left protest breakouts. Such as Bromma’s 2020 interview: “Decisively breaking with both worker elite mythology and male leftism.” (Incidentally, Bromma’s earlier quick essay, “Notes on Trump,” analyzing what was behind his rise and the alt-right, is one of the most concise, tough-minded explanations of their place in the world capitalist crisis). So there is still more to do, to deal with taking on the hegemony of entrenched settler colonial capitalism here.

Several examples from young scholars are also significant. In the ground-breaking paper, “The Settler Order Framework: Rethinking Canadian Working Class History,” which appeared in the journal *Labour/Le Travail*, Fred Burrill draws the line between the old academic labor history defined as white settler labor and its official capitalist workplace organizations, and the new labor history which opens itself up to the fugitive story of Indigenous

worldwide patriarchal family machinery, as well as bearing the bio-industrial and social reproduction of all necessary labor for the ruling class economy. Taking loving and being loved while in cages to be an eternal suffocating mask supposedly placed on their faces by the false deities “God” and “Nature.”

At the same time, the great history-shaping classes, such as the bourgeoisie, have always been in part self-creating, not just passively accepting some given economic or social roles. But fighting and innovating within the limits of material possibility to enlarge and transform themselves constantly. The long revolution to liberate this great humanity can accept being no less than that. And even more.

The book *Settlers* was written starting in 1975, it started out as just a short informal paper to explore a question of mine in this regard; but the work grew and grew following an unexplored path and ended up taking eight years of research and writing and sending texts in and out of the kamps, editing and rewriting by myself and others into underground publication in 1983 for a small outlaw group. It was raw theory sure enough, underdeveloped and wonderfully new-born to us, but not coming from any campus or its universitariat. It all came illicitly from prisons and poor working-class organizing. From solidarity work with guerrilla liberation fighters. Listening to the root understanding of the world held by African and Indigenous militants already at war for their peoples. *Settlers* then was very basic, theoretically simple, almost raw. Maybe now old but serviceable, like a still-loaded rifle from Wounded Knee.

Radicals have now taken the investigative work of settler colonial theory ranging in different ways beyond that book of labor history, of course. Which would have happened whether or not we had ever had the fortunate chance to do our work (so countless many of the oppressed had just this same insight but were silenced, muffled in blood, trampled under, never had the chance to be heard—it was never our unique idea).

settler colonial domination. It is always being implied by them that real change is dependent on winning over the majority. Which happens to mean a pro-settler white majority here, to no surprise.

Anti-war anti-imperialism, Black Power, Indigenous land and treaty rights, Chicano power, counter-culture youth liberation, radical feminism, gay and queer rights—all the great breakouts that came out of that historic '60s wave were very much minority rebellions far outside the boundaries of majority approval. None of them approved of yet, to tell the truth. Coming from the margins and not the center. Ignored or subtly opposed by the dominant u.s. left of that day as too disruptive, too upsetting, too diversionary to the supposedly main task of building a working-class white majority.

Kersplebedeb: I remember you wrote as much—about change coming from the margins, not the bribed majority—in the interview “When Race Burns Class.” When i first read you explaining that, it was incredibly encouraging, and that idea has stayed with me over the years. Can you give some concrete examples of how this has played out in your lifetime?

J. Sakai: So, one of the spontaneous white shifts of the 1960s was of a sex quietly leaving the left youth movement; here and there, by the ones and twos, hardly noticed at first. Like the earliest trickling in of a tide.

In one of her frank memoirs, the left intellectual Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz relates about her life in the first radical feminist women’s collective, Cell 16 in Boston. In 1969 she went on a road trip with a close male anti-war comrade, who was on a speaking tour of the GI coffeehouses which the movement had started in Southern military base towns. Financing their organizing tour by selling “women’s lib” Cell 16 literature they had piled into the back of their VW “bug” as they went.

Her plan was that while her male comrade would be the official speaker, she would try to informally follow him with an unscheduled talk on the politics of women’s liberation. It had to be

kind of improvised, because anything like women's liberation was strongly opposed in the actual existing left then.

It seemed to start off okay. At one base the coffeeshop filled with an audience of soldiers that was half Latino and Black, which was definitely unusual for anti-war meetings then, and was promising. After one GI half-jokingly asked, "Do we get free pussy if we desert?"—pointing to a then-popular white anti-war poster on the wall, which read "Girls Say Yas To Boys Who Say No"—the male speaker quickly called on Dunbar-Ortiz to answer.

Standing up and turning around from her seat in the audience, she gave it to them straight.

"I said to them that underlying support for the war was institutionalized patriarchy, wherein men were told that they must fight to prove their manhood and that if they didn't change their consciousness about their attitudes towards women, they were supporting the war just as if they were there fighting. I told them that women wanted to be free and equal and not just mothers or sex objects, angels or whores."

"The room fell silent as I spoke in my barely audible voice. When I finished the GIs applauded."

Much more important to her was the discussion the audience had about what she said. "... I had never before heard a group of men seriously discussing male supremacy. I was struck by the irony that these young men—black, white, Latino—from poor, rural, and blue-collar backgrounds were more open to women's liberation than the middle- and upper-class men in the anti-war movement." Where it was commonplace for women trying to raise this question to be shouted down, often shunned, or forced out, even with threats of personal violence.

(Everyone back then, including the white explicitly pacifist "peace movement" and mostly Black non-violent civil rights

topples into higher qualitative change, there occurs a transformation in the basic nature of that class, in that part of reality.

The different classes in capitalism are constantly in the process of change whether their individual members understand it or like it or no. The same with our settler colonialism as a specific form of capitalist hegemony.

This may seem at first more confusing than enlightening, but keeping our bookmark on these ideas, of constant motion and quantitative changes becoming qualitative transformations, helps when we analyze specific aspects of today's political global class war.

What is most important here is to avoid treating class in an alienated way, misunderstanding it as something mechanical, which is an error that left vulgar materialism has always been prone to. As though something called "the economy" forms and reproduces pre-packaged "class" as impersonal products over us, uncontrolled and above ordinary human life. Like it is often implied to young radicals by vulgar Marxist ideologues that they have only to wait around and the greedy profit needs of capitalism will inevitably shape and mass produce capitalism's own "hangman," the pre-packaged takeout proletariat ready-made to do the final revolution. Yeah, about when pigs fly by.

As we have said, capitalist society is never eager to show its real decaying face. And it definitely is far from the first society to mask what are to it really classes, but disguised as races or genders or ethnicities or religions. So that for much of "American" history, the main proletariats or lowest working classes were forced from birth to always wear concealing masks:

The mask of race, as though the sweated bloody commodities of their violently enslaved labors were merely some natural by-products of their New Afrikan or Indigenous subhumanity.

And the mask of gender, as though women giving up their physical bodies and minds were only doing what was biological and "natural" for them. Becoming consumed as lifetime parts in the

the millionaire farmer are more or less true like all capitalist work uniforms, but also front for layers of deeper roles and identities.

Here as much as in any other life-and-death subject, we need a concrete analysis of the concrete situation to analyze any class situation down to its useful conclusions. Class societies like in global capitalism are made out of building blocks of classes, to the overarching structure of a mode of production and distribution. Classes are the collective identities of people bound together by their common roles and interests and lives in economic production and distribution. People fight for advantages within society as classes. Advance or retreat as classes. All the time people leave their old friends or family, but being disloyal to your particular class is so much harder to even think of.

It's important practically to know that there are many different kinds of working classes in the world, not one—just as there are many kinds of capitalist classes. With varying cultures and differing experiences in their class character. Just as there are different types of lumpen: Marx and Engels thought there were in Old European history even lumpen/ aristocracy, not just the usual lumpen/ proletariat. Like in our capitalist Babylon of today's mass affluent classes, we find thrown into our mix relatively so many lumpen/ petty bourgeois as well as lumpen/capitalists (the one example we all know well of that latter is the Trump family). This is something significant to our practice, but rarely nailed down in print.

Capitalist society is not so eager to show its real decaying face, for all its loud media din and racket. We should keep in mind that classes constantly change. No matter how carved in living stone they seem, capitalist class structures are always evolving, sometimes drastically changing shape, morphing as human life itself surprisingly always does. As quantities of change in any particular aspect of reality continue piling up higher and higher, until finally at a nodal point their relentless accumulation forces its remaking into something completely new. When all that quantitative change

groups, silently condoned movement men hitting "their" women, since that was dismissed as merely "personal problems." It was surreal back then going into a left office in New York, and noticing that the receptionist's face was heavy with makeup inadequately covering the bruises—knowing also that her husband was one of the most important protest leaders in "America." Just as rape between "comrades" was banned as a subject except for private gossip. All dismissed merely as common human failings irrelevant to the struggle for liberation, or as something "nothing can be done about," to be hushed up to save the movement from police intervention and embarrassment.)

Next, Dunbar-Ortiz and her friend went on to one of the main bases training new army recruits just before they shipped out to Vietnam. But at that GI coffeehouse they ran head-first into a stone wall: the director, a strong woman with a record of civil rights and anti-war views going back to high school. "Nobody is going to talk to my boys about women's lib," she insisted. And hours of arguments didn't change her mind. "So we left," Dunbar-Ortiz recalls. But a year later, she adds, that stubborn woman would herself leave to become "a full-time women's liberation organizer in the South."²

That's what was slowly happening all over the left with many of the most committed women. Starting with handfuls of white women who had caught the spark from working in the Southern civil rights movement daring to oppose the Klan, radicalized white women were raising the question of their own restricted humanity.

² Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz. *Outlaw Woman. A Memoir of the War Years, 1960-1975.* City Lights Books, 2001. Pages 198–200. Incidentally, during the anti-Vietnam War struggle days i had met both women involved in that political clash of wills at that GI coffeeshop, and had even worked with one. Both were respected in the movement then, and i recall hearing on the anti-war grapevine about their disagreement at that Army base town—and how the one later came out and crossed over to women's liberation work. So Dunbar-Ortiz wasn't just making up that great story.

Even within the very movements putting forth new demands for freedom and justice.

Women had been quietly writing letters and papers about these ideas and sending them to friends, who sent them on into widening circles. In 1968 the first white women's separatist position paper appeared, *Towards a Female Liberation Movement*. Men themselves were being named as the enemy, the sinew and material realization of patriarchy, while women started study groups and consciousness raising groups, women's houses and women's projects outside familiarity and law. This is the well-known and often-told history of a rising which threatened to change absolutely everything, and yet could not grow to fruition within the structures of the modern patriarchal neo-colonialism that eventually reinfected and contained it.

The point here is that to start together for root change, to shake themselves loose to go for liberation from age-old oppression, those women had to get free of their actually existing male left. Had to distance their activities and especially their own women's decision-making. Whether it was the Old Left of marxist parties and small sects, or the New Left of the mass sprawling Students for a Democratic Society and campus-centered anti-war and civil rights struggles, they had to leave. As New Afrikans, Indigenous peoples, Latinos, and other colonially oppressed people had largely left before them.

Fairly openly, rebellious white women were students whose teacher was the constantly transforming Black liberation struggle. White women confronting their own oppression couldn't learn beyond a certain point from their own established settler left, even with all its century of accumulated anti-capitalist theory and teachings. Because that left was itself so corrupted and represented too much of the oppressor mentality that women coming into their own selves had to exclude in order to be free to punch out without reservations. The oppressed learn their most basic lessons from

One night i was amazed to hear him curtly dismiss, as with the back of his hand, E. Franklin Frazier's then controversial study, *Black Bourgeoisie*. Which he said wasn't even social science and shouldn't be read. That book had surprised me—even scared me intellectually—for its cutting dissection of the insular family culture of that era's small Black bourgeoisie and affluent middle class, saying words bordering on the scandalous on topics like the parentally sanctioned customs of their children. Frazier lit up what he regarded as the self-indulgent individualism and consumerism of the "Black bourgeoisie," which he said was only imitating the sickness of white "American" culture. He said that their declared class political strategy, of eventually overcoming Jim Crow by the spread of their small business roles and government positions, was only a self-protective delusion minimizing the deepest evils of the capitalist racism they were caught in. i went up to professor Drake after that class and complained to him: "But wasn't everything Dr. Frazier wrote in his book factually true?" (which we both knew it was). Picking up his briefcase, Drake scowled. "That isn't social science, that is just a man trying to break with his class!" And strode away. (A bit of context against misunderstanding: As fellow rebel Black intellectuals, Frazier and Drake were colleagues and friends.)

This subject of class is so basic, but it's really a sleeper. Like it's so vast, "everything" almost. But "basic" isn't the same as "simple," as so many think. Class is deeper and more complex than we can cover right here, on the run as we are in this interview. We all know your damn love life isn't simple, and raising your kids is too fraught and joyful to be simple, so why the hell should something as all-encompassing as class be the only human thing to be simple? Am going to just lay down some road signs and warnings.

Class identity is real, but its reality is more complex and particular than just rote characteristics or obvious roles. Like the dark blue suits of the corporate manager and the crisp denim overalls of

The surprising strength of the military rebellions was due to how the anger at “Vietnam” had been taken over, overlaid, and deepened by the even more violent and insistent breakout of Black liberation politics becoming part of daily lived culture against imperialism and its settler colonial hegemony. Black liberation in that entire period was the big straw that stirred the drink for everyone who wanted freeing change. It may not be on some other day, but it was then.

So after their shocked post-defeat period of confusion, the capitalist state and its brass went back to work. Replacing part by part, through trial and error gradually remaking their all-important giant military Frankenstein. Of course, as we know from the strange case of America’s “Forever War” against Muslim peoples, no matter how well-equipped and trained, there’s lots that this costumed superpower military can’t do. Like, it doesn’t seem able in the final conclusion to win any wars at all. That’s an important enigma for us to think about.

Kersplebedeb: We will come back to that question, but right now i want to return again to this thread that keeps on coming up in this discussion, of the role of class in what you are describing. Class features centrally in all of your work; for readers of this interview who may not be familiar with your other writings, how should we understand different classes, and why is it important that we develop analyses of them?

J. Sakai: Once, when i was quite young and even more naive than i am now, i was taking inexpensive night classes at a local college with St. Clair Drake (co-author of the unparalleled 1940s study, *Black Metropolis*, and a small legend for having once been an organizer with an armed New Afrikan tenant farmers’ self-defense movement in the segregated terrorist Deep South). Not because i was that interested in studying “introduction to cultural anthropology” or “West African society,” but because i thought just listening to him might open rooms i never knew existed. Which it did.

other oppressed. What is more simple to understand than that for revolutionaries?

Kersplebedeb: Indeed! But i want to stop for a moment: Going back to what you were saying about Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz and her talk at that anti-war GI coffeeshop. How the GIs—“black, white, Latino—from poor, rural, and bluecollar backgrounds”—were questioning politics together. Weren’t young white workers also doing that?

J. Sakai: Sure, but nowhere near enough of them. There were great moments in the 1960s–70s, like sudden lightning strikes and sheets of rain politically, when the longanticipated political and cultural rebellion turning old imperialist “America” upside down and inside out was being embraced by so many people from every area of society. And yas, for some mostly young white working-class people to turn towards left politics was one real but small stream in that torrent.

i’ll never forget anti-war white working-class comrades like young Ed B., a German-American u.s. Marine veteran, a father and a new union construction worker, sitting-in and going to jail with young Black teenagers. Putting his life into their struggle. Nor the militant GI using the pseudonym “Joe Smith,” in the “F—ked Up Fourth” in Vietnam.

Or much more famously, Peggy Terry, who ran for Vice-President with Eldridge Cleaver from the Black Panther Party on the Peace & Freedom Party protest ticket in the 1968 elections (and who never left the poor working-class hillbilly community she came from). Whether Cleaver’s leap into electioneering was a good or bad move (it was heavily criticized then by many Panther Party members, for serious reasons), Terry was trying to follow Black revolutionaries into a new wider breakout of the struggle. She used to say that she first started figuring out about racism when the Ku Klux Klan showed up to try and terrorize her and other workers when they were organizing a union in their Southern factory.

It's important not to romanticize all that, though, or to take it out of its material context in the class war. When cautiously edging into the middle-class and upper-class left, white working-class men and women could be like pepper in the mix. But later, going back to the euro-settler communities and backgrounds they came from, they were too thin and incomplete a layer to have the same influence then in the mass.

They had also—and this is critical to understand—been politically abandoned by the middle-class and upper-class u.s. left. Mistakenly thought that the big revolutionary change would finally come when their white working-class majority soon joined us—and then they were left to go back into their conservative settler communities they knew were not going to do anything like that. It wasn't malice or anything deliberate. That '60s young student left that had spontaneously created itself into a mass dissident subculture didn't know any better. No one had anything better than the worn-out old failed theory about the "united working class" or similar such reformist garbage. There's a big price we pay in the real world, as revs, for corrupted revolutionary theory.

But they left their mark, all of them, though we don't see it.

Kersplebedeb: So much seems to have changed since that time. For one, just the idea of that level of sympathetic organizing within the u.s. military ...

J. Sakai: Indeed. While the lingering public impression of military service is still one of poorly paid enlistees from lower working-class and rural backgrounds taking risks for little reward, like in an old Hollywood movie, the reality is that u.s. imperialism's military is now qualitatively different.

Regrown from gene-altered DNA, the u.s. military today is primarily their world mercenary corps. Today there's no universal draft, which turned out to be a two-edged sword for us, too. Instead, they have an all-volunteer, more selective military that tries to be an elite mercenary global intervention force. With special exotic superhero fighting units which are noticeably advertised as

the big ships. In October 1972, the carrier Kitty Hawk returning to 'Nam was forced to head back home after Black sailors holding a rebellious meeting fought hand to hand for hours all over the ship against Marines sent to stop them. Then the carrier Constellation was forced to return to San Diego after sabotage and growing unrest. Once ashore, sailors mostly white held a demonstration giving the Black Power salute with upraised fists. Many navy ships had their own illicit anti-war newsletters, such as the Kitty Hawk's "Kitty Litter."⁵

As early as June 1971, the end was publicly apparent. That was the month the Armed Forces Journal bluntly admitted: "By every conceivable indicator, our army which now remains in Vietnam is in a state of collapse ... dispirited where not near mutinous."

GI resistance to the Vietnam War was an amazing story of mass illegal and violent resistance to imperialism by the very soldiers supposed to carry out its rule. As such, it momentarily rocked the very stability of the capitalist state. Though it is also an important cautionary tale: for looking back at those military service resisters who were white, once they were demobilized and scattered back into settler communities across the span of the American continent, they as a whole became individualized and lost their political momentum.

⁵ H. Bruce Franklin. *Crash Course. From the Good War to the Forever War.* Rutgers University Press, 2018. Pages 264–267. Franklin was widely followed, envied, admired and resented on the West Coast during the anti-war 1960s. As a controversial Stanford professor, his breakthrough literary criticism which insisted on raising up as important then-banned or marginal genres, such as criminal prison writings and science-fiction, had a wide effect. He was more immediately one of the main radical anti-war activists in the Bay Area. Finally burning out as one purist national leader in the birth of u.s. Maoism, a failed period of his life he later wrote off as a self-delusional fever. He retained his basic anti-capitalist view of u.s. society, though. Much of this memoir of his own capitalist war (he was a frontline air force veteran) and anti-war is shocking material with a positive jolt. Though to be clear, it's not about the u.s. revolutionary left.

of “America” no one was going to play the part of General Custer in the game.⁴

(Unlike when the Viets were earlier fighting not only regular European French draftees but also French colonial troops from North Africa—who the Vietnamese communists had some success encouraging to surrender or desert—GIs might be enthusiastic in sabotaging the war, but weren’t surrendering to anyone. Some GI deserters in Sweden tried to explain it back then to the Vietnamese comrades—the situational difference between South Vietnamese Army puppet troops who fled or surrendered easily, and the wary, much more gnarly GI units themselves—but the Vietnamese representatives in those talks weren’t happy about having to report back to Hanoi some stuff pretty negative and unorthodox by their soviet socialist standards.)

That same “FTA” do-for-yourself spirit, nonetheless, did lead to men replacing an unsatisfactory officer (like too gung-ho or too rule book) by their own informal “any means necessary.” Often grenades rolled under tent flaps late at night. Black soldiers insisted on holding their own marches with banners around camps. More combat companies stopped actually seeking contact—once out of sight they instead relaxed the day away in agreed upon faked “patrol.”

One by one, the critical big aircraft carriers carrying much of the air attack over North Vietnam were delayed and then even knocked out by the military anti-war movement. First the USS Midway, then the Ranger, the Forrestal, and then the Coral Sea, whose enlisted men and some officers not only forced it to return to San Francisco but held a large “SOS— Stop Our Ship” press conference once dockside. There were repeated sabotage fires on

⁴ “FTA,” short for “Fuck The Army,” was the great all-purpose anti-brass graffiti among u.s. Army troops then in the 1960s–70s, with it inked onto the front of many thousands of helmets in ’Nam (not usually taken up in other u.s. services, especially among Marines, who used their own graffiti phrases incorporating the slang dis “The Green Machine”).

almost completely euro-settler in composition. With layers of technology and a shiftier role with which they hope to distance their very costly u.s. soldiers from the point of the spear.

Now you might join the imperialist military to live out single-shooter video games, but more often it’s still to try hands-on, paid while you get an education and a new career. Sure, there’s many young GI households living by payday loans and food stamps, or being ripped off by a car dealer in the neon McRetail strips outside bases—but then again, that’s just blue collar life in “America.”

Things have changed from that old movie cliché, however. 21st-century u.s. military recruits don’t primarily come from the white working class anymore; the majority are now from the middle classes. And there’s a parallel trend: men and women from what are now termed “national security families” tend increasingly to marry persons of the same background, who understand each other’s special values and service careers, not “civilians.” Almost like in their many millions they would be some embryonic new ersatz loyalist ethnic group for imperialism. Like the old armed frontier settler Cossacks became under the bygone expanding Russian empire of the Czars.

As the wife of one former elite Special Operations battalion commander pointed out (in u.s. army terminology, she was officially the unit’s “senior spouse” with serious assigned duties leading other wives, although completely unwaged of course): the average u.s. “warfighter” is better paid than 75% of u.s. civilian government employees with similar experience, and has major other benefits like free health care and PXs comparable to Walmart’s with average prices 30% lower than civilian stores. With a possible paid four years of full tuition and fees for college. By 2020, one million active duty and retired military were using the special “no down payment, low-interest” federal residential mortgages for their home purchases. “Anyone who thinks there’s no such thing

as socialism in America,” she said, “has never spent time on a military base.”³

There’s a good reason this major change was made. “America’s” global imperialism was hit by unexpected roadside bombs in the disastrous defeats of the ’Nam era. Not only trend-setting Vietnamese revolutionary military victory, but even more crucial: unprecedented levels of resistance not just at home but even inside the empire’s armed forces. The 1960s–70s threat of mass military insurrections, including from even white servicemen, led by the outbreak of Black liberation. That was the crisis that made Washington step back to crazy-glue their iron fist back together again.

All it took to create that one rebel GI coffeeshop night when “women’s lib” surprised the audience, was the mass drafting of millions of young men dropped randomly into a demented 1960s Asian land war they knew nothing about and felt they had no stake in.

Involuntarily uprooting even white youth away from their homes, friends, communities, and planned futures. Everything familiar to them. Mashing them into new regimented communities

³ Rosa Brooks. *How Everything Became War and the Military Became Everything*. Simon & Schuster, 2016. Pages 318–320; Alison Bowen. “Easing the Path to Owning A Home.” *Chicago Tribune* November 22, 2020. For poverty problems among young u.s. military families in the time of coronavirus and job losses in off-base civilian communities, see: Jennifer Steinhauer. “For More Military Families, Losing a Job or School Lunch Means a Search for Food Aid.” *New York Times*. December 17, 2020. Unlike most sources used here, this *How Everything Became War* book was an international bestseller that made an unlikely state policy star out of a professor of international law. Rosa Brooks was both a former advisor for Human Rights Watch and once the member of a top secret Pentagon committee which gave the final yes or no to individual u.s. assassinations of young Muslim activists. In her latter role Brooks rose to being a senior counselor to the u.s. Deputy Secretary of Defense for Policy (she still lectures soldiers as an adjunct at the Army’s West Point Modern War Institute). *How Everything Became War* never does explain its title subject, of course, but the book was so popular in the Establishment and warmly recommended by a number of top u.s. generals because it intellectually massages the growing contradictions in “America’s” cancerous militarycivilian relationship, from a soothingly white liberal humanitarian but loyally pro-imperialist viewpoint.

of similarly uprooted and uniformed youth. Sent far away to risk minimum-wage death or permanent disability in meaningless jungle firefights. All inside a big trumpeted war effort the incompetent Washington brass and politicians couldn’t even win at. It wasn’t much of a gamble to sow seeds of political questioning and resistance on that fertile ground.

So the imperial state learned and adapted. Once burnt, twice shy for them, too. It’s actually a good example for us, on a small scale easy to chart, of how late capitalism in its metropolis uses its super-accumulated wealth from all over the world in actual class restructuring at home. Not in any “natural” unmediated way, of course, but by ruling class strategy force-feeding its morphing and reshaping.

As late as the Vietnam War, in the 1970s, the ruling class was still trying to get by with the traditional “citizen-soldier” mass military of temps. Drafted en masse from the working classes, the lower middle classes, and small farming families. To their shock, in ’Nam that broke down utterly. So much so that the Vietnamese communists at the time privately expressed being really disappointed with us young revs over here in “America.” They’d seen drug-using, shoulder boombox carrying, soul and rock playing at top volume, u.s. soldiers clumsily penetrating the jungle, who were child’s play to dodge as hometown guerrillas. The Vietnamese weren’t slow, and had no trouble recognizing many GIs as politically disaffected foreign soldiers who didn’t want to fight.

But under a big North Vietnamese infantry ambush trying to overrun them, the same careless u.s. units might suddenly tighten up and become hedgehogs of automatic weapon and mortar fire. Urgently calling in air support like it was their new religion. “FTA” may have been marked onto countless helmets, but as real kids

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J. Sakai

The Shape of Things to Come

August 2023

”The Shape of Things to Come: Selected Writings And Interviews”

by J. Sakai, published by Kersplebedeb (ISBN: 9781989701218)

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ulations of the enemy, rather than targeting their more dangerous militaries.

How “new” and different this is, certainly sounds pretty questionable to revs, just being polite. i mean, we can test it using one well-established example that we all know about: at Wounded Knee in 1890, the Indigenous women, children, and elderly of the Lakota village (the young men were mostly elsewhere that day) were massacred without any quarter whatsoever, after the majority had disarmed themselves on demand by the invading Union Army cavalry troopers. It was also historic as a first Army enthusiastic field testing of white men’s newly developed u.s. machine guns, which proved highly effective against unarmed women and children trying to hide behind tents. Fleeing Lakota were hunted and ridden down for miles by the victorious u.s. army troopers, a full twenty of whom later received Congressional Medals of Honor to prove that everything that the u.s. military does in its massacres small and large is exceptionally courageous and honorable.

This was one of the last signal battles of the historic eurosettler war to conquer the Plains Indians and Make “America” Great Again. In post-modern military terms, the technological triumph of the u.s. army’s first machine guns and the elaborate propaganda awarding of the highest possible military honors by the “democratically-elected government,” were as important moves as that 7th Cavalry’s invasion of Indigenous lands itself.

So was trying out advanced “weapons of mass destruction” on unarmed civilians enough to qualify that 1890 day as good as “fourth generation warfare”? Or was it the Putinesque use of the “big lie,” and super elaborate propaganda which publicized and played up their own war crimes but successfully blamed the victims for making it all so necessary, that would make it like “fourth generation warfare”? i think the point is evident.

These “generation” terms were coined as abstract generalizations by the u.s. capitalist military to use in their own managerial

theory about capitalist conflict, but they are not accurate about our real world clashes themselves.

And now, since to blab about “fourth generation war” is only like some technocratic jargon to the general public, the u.s. national security community have been instead trying out a more fashionable video game-type term, “hyperwar,” which means exactly the same thing.

We see “hyperwar” trotted out mostly when the housebroken u.s. media is reporting on Putin’s unsavory wars. Obviously, like in Ukraine, where regular Russian army and marine units are sided there with retread veterans and paroled prisoners brought back as the privately uniformed Wagner Group, the more respectable face of an increasing mix of mercenary patch and fill units (such as Donbas Ukrainian town militias and companies of former Syrian army elite soldiers). While Russia uses its military weight advantage to do constant mass artillery and aerial bombardment not only of battlefields but also far beyond, trying to directly wipe out the target society itself. All this might be very striking, but is nothing that the u.s. military and other capitalist militaries haven’t done themselves first, decades or even generations ago (during the long Afghanistan occupation, on most u.s. military bases there “American” mercenaries, politely called “contractors,” often outnumbered regular u.s. troops and aviation forces three or four to one).

Exotic sounding “hyperwar” might stand for some technical capitalist military configuration, but only obscures the actual military change and theory. While WW2, for example, is said by the u.s. capitalist military to mark the time where capitalism’s “second generation war” evolved into the “third generation war” of Nazi blitzkriegs and motorized wars of fast non-linear maneuvering, this is only a narrow technocratic viewpoint. More importantly, to begin with, wars in the capitalist world have distinct and complex political identities and characteristics.

We can gain some perspective by reaching way back in time, to a nodal point of the wave of change that is coming over us right

Like most interviews, this discussion was never researched in the first place. It reflected whatever current news and talk was bouncing off my own thoughts and long memories. When i needed a fact or a name spelled out, like everyone else i just quickly went to the internet pantry. Didn't even think of endnotes, since others could just google things like i did. A few times, it became convenient to use an old book or a clipping file from my bookshelves, but that wasn't much and i didn't worry about it.

That was when i hadn't planned on anything past the present Part 1. But after delays going to press during the pandemic, and my trying to answer continued questioning from my editor, Karl K., led to adding an even longer Part 2—and using specific sources on facts more heavily not simply my memory.

(BTW at the same time, discovered that some of the sources of my facts had up and disappeared themselves. Just ran away into the forest of knowing. i couldn't re-find several internet sources i had earlier used.)

Anyway, my editor has always liked source notes whether endnotes or footnotes, arguing that giving people leads where they can read an author's sources more extensively on their own, is a real help to some readers. Finally, he wore me down and i've tried to note sources if only in incomplete ways, particularly in Part 2. Good luck in the hunt.

now. The 1935–45 Sino-Japanese war involving millions of combatants, eventually took place within and was to “Americans” mixed up with the global World War 2, where all the major imperialist powers divided into two camps, and fought it out at the admission price totaling at least 60 million lives lost to decide which capitalist nations would colonize everyone else, rule or ruin.

The importance to us now of that 1935–45 Sino-Japanese war, is that it was one of the first great neo-colonial wars, and helped usher in the present era of neo-colonial global economics and politics. When people use the term “neocolonialism,” they usually mean only some money-grubbing trick or crime, where a bribed politician helps some corporate giant of the imperialist metropolis ravage the labor and resources of some peripheral nation. It is so much more than that.

Neo-colonialism occupies a final period of capitalism of its own, where colonial empires and great powers fell, and the new freedom of every capitalist entity to forage and ravage disregarding nationalities and borders around the world became what we call globalization. What the all-enveloping effects of today's neo-colonial wars like in Ukraine and Ethiopia are to us, only serves to remind us of the shock wave caused by the Sino-Japanese war of the mid-20th century.

Revs saw the working out of the first successfully developed anti-capitalist revolutionary military practice and theory. The major 1935 Japanese imperialist invasion to make China a wholly owned and occupied Japanese colony, like Korea and Manchuria were then, was defeated in deliberately slowed protracted war by communist guerrilla forces famously represented by Mao Zedong's political-military teachings. Anti-capitalist revolutionaries who consciously took control of time itself. (While in a contrast we are familiar with, the global “lone superpower” u.s. empire in its Muslim “forever war,” was enslaved and hag ridden by time). This is something capitalist conflict analysts rarely explain. Because in struggle politics is in command, not hardware nor techniques.

The ten-year Sino-Japanese war eventually became in part a theatre of global WW2, of course, but in itself it was one of the first great neo-colonial wars. Anti-capitalist revolutionaries understood this major strategic definition, while capitalist thinking worldwide did not, which meant it also didn't usefully understand the war there.

The obvious power of all-out Japanese capitalist invasion initially created a great wave of mass defeatism, even among young Chinese militants. China, after all, was famously derided as "the weak man of Asia." Whose last imperial dynasty had been unable to prevent Western imperialist nations and Japan from occupying China economically and militarily, with parts of the country even being garrisoned and directly governed by foreign capitalists, turning it into the world's largest neo-colony for the West and Japan. While Japan itself, with its battleships and modern mechanized army, had easily defeated the Russian Czarist empire in their decisive war of 1905. Emerging onto the level of a new great capitalist power as apparently overwhelmingly powerful as China was "weak."

The Communist revolutionaries reminded their people that far from being militarily invincible in China, as so many believed back then, the well-equipped Japanese fascist invaders were at an invisible but inescapable structural disadvantage to their ragged grassroots anti-capitalist opponents. As Mao pointed out, China was the greatest neocolonial economic prize in the world. With no imperialist power being in the end willing to let one of their other imperialist rivals swallow it all up for themselves. No matter how much troops and equipment the Japanese fascists poured into China's vast land mass, other imperialist powers would bend the world around to prevent them from being victorious. This bleeding Achilles heel would in protracted struggle combine with revolutionizing the Chinese exploited and oppressed for a new kind of people's warfare, to prove fatal for the arrogant invaders, a skinny young wanted fugitive Mao accurately predicted.

Introduction from "Marginalized Notes / Monday Nov. 28, 2022"

the left's priorities didn't include that at all. Yas, we all know of brave left women earlier in history who spoke out as exceptions. But Butch's point which she later blew her stack about a lot was, why couldn't the anti-capitalist left have made that kind of illegal underground work for women the first priority, the main thrust of reorganizing the culture. Not in the 1960s, which was too late, but starting decades before like in the 1930s say.

Her point was that whether it was a "Jane" or a communal subversive day care and school replacing bourgeois "education," or women's dead-secret armed patrols outside the law, women must sooner or later organize themselves to make or provide and control the heart of what they need in society. "Jane" wasn't just part of a hallway towards a Roe v. Wade, but something alternative and much better, much richer in her eyes. If revs don't understand that lesson, which people's struggle itself repeats for us in various ways and forms over and over, we are trying to climb a stairway but tripping on the first stair. To find the future the oppressed need to liberate us all, we need to move towards the danger. Not easy to do, for sure.

The whole 1960s shakeup against the "American" status quo wasn't only directly fighting the state in terms of antiwar and anti-racism, and cultural rebellions from dope to gender to music. They were heralded by a wave of unafraid outlaw activity of all kinds, including straight-up rude crime both good and evil. That's what we are experiencing right now. Rough change of all kinds is coming, and the left will grow out of that, too

the end

(Not that Mao was omniscient about all warfare, any more than you or i could be. Used to muse about his dire postwar warning that guerrilla warfare in the Philippines could never succeed—since that capitalist neo-colony has generated armed insurgencies of almost every kind over and over for my entire lifetime and might keep trying til they get over. However unpublicized or unnoticed here in the metropolis, just like Mexico has been.)

More important than the system's professionals explaining the development of their capitalist warfare, is understanding the war we are in. Ukraine might be not simply a neocolonial war—which it obviously is—but one of the major wars in the fall of the capitalist world-system. "Twilight" capitalism has forced the world on pain of destruction to learn new ways from it, to imitate it, for in the neo-colonial era it invariably teaches over and over all those it must keep intimate with both in production and systemic violence. New modes of production and conflict which leap over the limitations of old nation-state ways that only yesterday seemed invincible, embody how the retreat of the capitalist world-system puts everything we do and are through the grinding change mechanism of neo-colonialism.

Though this neo-colonial era pretends to do away with oppressor and thus also oppressed nations, it really only accelerates their interpenetration. Which has proven that capitalism cannot survive without colonialism. In a mere lifetime it has hollowed out the meaning of great national armies and industries on one hand, as on the other it drives hundreds of millions out of self-sufficient agriculture, handicraft production, and nature-based communities which functioned for centuries. Increasingly populating its computerized societies with reserve armies of labor that it piously and falsely identifies as some new phenomenon of "useless classes."

In a culture which makes a fetish of what is new, it is easy to forget that global capitalism's basic structures are to the contrary quite old. The two basic drives of the ceaseless accumulation of more and more capital but only to accumulate still more capital,

together with the ceaseless dagger thrusts of “creative destruction,” still compel capitalists and their class system to roll back and forth around the globe to now reconquer and recolonize and rape again the earth every day.

As though the displaced homeless proletariat and lumpen street masses of London and Paris in early 18th and 19th century industrial capitalism were only the harbinger of capitalism’s final shape. For our rulers, even in their new global clothing, have never changed their fundamental structural drives as a class being made up wholly of capital.

Always wiping each other out as entire corporations or entire industries or even whole economic regions in what the noted critical economist Joseph Schumpeter famously named “creative destruction,” calling it the basic inner life cycle of capitalism. As Schumpeter said: “The process of creative destruction is the essential fact about capitalism. It is what capitalism consists in and what every capitalist concern has got to live in.”⁴

While the class structure itself may wear more fashionable clothing, in important ways it is still much as it was centuries ago, except for the foretold wiping away of the peasantry into the global industrial marginalized working class. Only it now envelops the world and the main class sectors have become gigantic in their transcontinental size. The difference in scale changes things, as quantitative change past a critical point becomes qualitative change in its basic nature.

Remember, capitalist classes are never born united and rarely even pretend to be. Capitalist classes are always born with major political-economic internal battles and severe splits of their own. That’s the normal, the ordinary routine of the world. Just as they were born as a top dog class outwardly fighting us—their workers—capitalists are born inwardly fighting each other tooth and nail to the death.

⁴ Greenspan & Woolridge. op cit. Page 14.

But the thing with illegal contacts is that sometimes you can’t locate them for a while or ever again. My comrade Butch had a young friend, not an intellectual but around the left because she was an outcast, too. Very poor and a high school student—and suddenly preg by a guy she didn’t love and with a family that was breaking up and telling her she was on her own. And Butch couldn’t find any resource we knew about, except the CPUSA doctors. Who paradoxically because they had maneuvered within the medical system so successfully, ran into a wall in this case. They were used to on the sly arranging completely legal medical abortions in hospitals—but couldn’t do it with that girl, since as a family-less minor the legal hurdles were too big. She had the kid, then lost the kid since she tried but couldn’t earn enough working crap jobs to support them with no regular child care anyway. Had to drop out of school, and by the laws then she could never return to public school. Salvaging her life alone after such loss was a tough piece of work, and in some ways though she did it, she always moved with the scar of that bitter oppression.

This experience wasn’t uncommon. You are probably wondering why i am giving all these old details? It is to show how control or not over abortion was real and material to women’s practical lives in a threatening way around the left back then. That was the majority experience in society, not a brilliant breakthrough like “Jane.” Which is why the reformist men’s left ducked and dodged it all as too dangerous in all senses of the word, as completely as they could. Here is the first lesson: we don’t ever need a left like that again. It’s too late for that. It is not even openers in the wild card game of replacing capitalism with a liberated human world-system.

For generations, women in and around the left had to deal with the need for their women’s safety—including abortions and the constant haze of men’s violence—completely informally on their own. Their lives and all women’s lives weren’t judged as needing “political” struggle. Whether communist or socialist or anarchist,

Black rebellion and the street drug culture, as Butch did, were less likely to be with that crowd.

That doesn't mean that women not in that know never got knocked up or needed any less abortions. Abortions were a real issue for women in and around the left back then, a need as immediate and personal as a next meal and a place to lay your head and safety from violence. In our stream of young South Side non-Communist Party, non-respectable rebels back then and there, if you needed an abortion people knew of two options (certainly there were more than two around, but illegally dangerous as it was different groupings had different contacts, just like with copping a gun or scoring dope).

One was the "next day" guy. Who had a very small shabby storefront on 63rd street in the "ghetto." He was not any doctor or nurse, just a middle-aged Black man, and for \$80 he would give you a really foul smelling drink you had to take on the spot, and keep it down which was not always easy as it didn't taste any good either. But it worked, women swore, if you went to him no later than the next day after sex.

Usually you were dealing with the need much later than that. For that you needed a real doc, and the one we knew of then was way down south of Chicago near Galesburg. He was an old hostile white country physician, who didn't make any pretense of respecting the women who came to him. It was all about the greenbacks, and for \$400 he would do a quick "D&C" with tools old style (\$400 was real numbers back then, like you could get an okay used Ford or Chevy or Plymouth with it). You had to call him for an appointment first and immediately take the one and only he gave you. His phone number was the real secret, and he questioned you to feel safer that you weren't setting him up. Though he was never nice or "professional." He was doing a profitable crime he loved to scumbag women he despised, and he didn't even try to cover that up. Maneuvering in desperation outside the law isn't as romantic as idealists sometimes like to picture it.

To give one example of changes wrought by the difference in scale: that there are, depending on who counts, loosely 700 to 900 u.s. oligarchs today means that no one on Wall Street or Silicon Valley can be the "gatekeeper" anymore, selectively opening or closing the doors to the large sums of money needed to wage empire-wide political campaigns to wield the state. There's no J.P. Morgan or Rockefellers politically anymore. (Even without factoring in how the internet has transformed new political agitprop and reorganizing.) While journalists have spotlighted a tiny handful of white right-wing big donors such as Rebekah Mercer as the financial support for the Trump right's rise, this reaches the target but isn't in any way hitting the bullseye.

While most u.s. oligarchs are fairly obscure white men keeping a low profile, there is a category we usually don't think of politically that for other reasons is more visible to us: owners of professional sports teams. So looking at the 31 privately-owned NFL teams, at least four oligarch pro football owners are known to be Trump backers. Just as the men of the Ricketts family, which controls TD Ameritrade and owns the Chicago Cubs baseball team, have been hardcore Trump supporters (because their founding father is an open white power racist, the adult children have had to pledge that he is totally stonewalled from any management of their popular sports team).

Although Silicon Valley has used a progressive or even populist sheen as protective coloration, its actual ingrained hostility to people other than affluent white capitalist men has been proven over and over, and a number of its important figures are if anything to the right of Trump. Same same Wall Street and the financial elite. Now that flamboyantly goofy white power Trumpism has seeped into and become the hatchet's edge of the renewed GOP, regular big finance capitalist oligarchs are publicly stepping forward as its special funders. Recently, to prepare for the 2022 GOP election campaigns, Ken Griffin of the large Citadel hedge fund donated \$20 million to the party; as has Stephen Schwarzman, chairman of Black-

stone, the world's largest hedge fund. While banking heir Timothy Mellon and insurance oligarch Patrick Ryan gave \$10 million each. Nor are they the only ones.⁵

If "only" ten percent or so of u.s. oligarchs would support an extended tear-the-house-down takeover by the white far right, that would still be a financial and political power base of close to a hundred u.s. oligarchs.

While cosmopolitan multicultural transnational corporations encompass some of the ruling class, that is significantly less of a Jesus save factor for liberal democratic society than it is home-staged to appear. And as "America" in its overreaching culture promotes more and more frequent mass shootings to be its classier version of the suicide vest bombings of those backward much poorer societies, only lost-in-space liberals and progressives are left defending old government as legitimate.

Kersplebedeb: i am reading Immanuel Wallerstein, about the rise and fall of world systems. But i'm always unsure to what extent it makes sense to trace what is happening today backwards, as opposed to trying to understand it in the context of everything else happening today. Though the past does tend to feel more interesting.

J. Sakai: You remind me, oddly enough, of Malcolm X. Didn't he say, "Of all our studies, we have found history to be the most rewarding"? We always go back to our kitchen window to the past, to better understand. Because back in the past is where our present began, and that past is even now alive as a key part of our present. Everyone knows that.

But in the same way, our own present will be part of the future. We need at least a shaky smartphone photo of this future taking form now—a tentative look at its rough shape and a guide as to where revolutionaries will be at our work fighting in it. For now,

⁵ Shane Goldmacher. "Drop in Small-Dollar Donations Alarms G.O.P." The New York Times. July 27, 2022.

lic statements adding up to nothing, the postwar u.s. imperial left politely ignored the issue in a manly way. Keeping both respectable and legal. It was much more important to them to demand public support for the steelworkers' strike or some such issue, of which the then-existing left had a truckload.

On the surface. Below that, in hidden daily life, the desperate need for and massive illegality and fear around abortions churned lives across the left just as in the larger body of society. If you were wealthy or even just very affluent, of course, no prob. Airplane off to Mexico or many other warm and sunny tourist places for a legal abortion vacation. (One of the fav Mexican doctors for that among progressives was an old radical friend of the great artist Diego Rivera, whose large house and clinic was informally a gallery for his patients of many of Rivera's paintings).

In those old days, the Communist Party, while fading fast, was still the 800-pound gorilla in the room, whose membership and sympathizers even controlled some AFL-CIO unions and were a majority of the anti-capitalist left. Although the Party never said so publicly, women in and around its ranks who got in trouble could on an individual basis quietly find Party doctors who would arrange abortions. Knew women who did that, gratefully.

People today somehow assume that because the women's "Jane" collective was in operation in the 1960s, that women in Chicago had that covered. You only wish. Although "Jane" eventually had done thousands of abortions, as a small secretive and illegal outfit, of course relatively few women in Chicago knew about them even as they edged more and more into the daylight to spread the rebellion. My comrade Butch knew in a casual movement way some of the "Jane" women, but of course didn't know their secret. In part because she was older and in different currents in the left. Women she unknowingly knew who were in "Jane" were like white university student activists, who tended to be straight and to live on the North Side (even if they went to the University of Chicago southside). Those who were less reputable, coming out of the South Side

Not simply crime, but the amount of fearless transgressive activity right now, is more than i've ever seen since the 1960s. It is like a torrent from a fire hydrant that's shoving everything around before it. If anything, the police and capitalist media are frantically trying to downplay it as much as they can. Mostly, it isn't "political" of course—and too much of it is anti-social—but it all definitely stepped up a whole level on the streets after George Floyd. It's the big dance.

In the same way of edging outside the lines, women here after the second disaster knifing *Roe v. Wade* to death by the Supreme Hate Court, were inspired both by the generationchanging novel, *The Handmaid's Tale*, and by the 1960s underground "Jane" women's abortion collective in Chicago, and started small illegal groups to quietly provide medication abortions wherever they are. On their own, desperate women are going around their state laws and using internet resources to illegally "self-manage" abortions. No one is saluting the flag anymore first thing in the morning. (The first great abortion disaster was enacting *Roe v. Wade* itself, which temporarily granted u.s. women abortions only so as to rebind with looser chains their obeisance to the principle that born women may not do anything with their bodies without patriarchal permission.)

The full meaning of "Jane" and the twin abortion disasters remains unspoken even now by the actually-existing left, because too many still don't get it. Or don't want to get it. Let's dial the clock backward to the raw situation we grew up and lived in, where abortion was outlawed and policed and imprisoned and "always" had been. One thing no one ever says, i guess because it is "dirty" talk, is that in those backward, unscientific days in the A-bomb 1940s and polio vaccine 1950s and moon rocket 1960s, is that many, many thousands of women here needed abortions all the time. Always have. This was civilization without "the pill" yet, remember. (As Butch used to say triumphantly when "the pill" arrived: "Freud was wrong—for women, chemistry is destiny!") But except for rare pub-

constructing the outline of the future just using the clues already here in the present for us, if we can pick them out.

This is the anvil where revolutionary theory is being hammered out and tested still glowing hot. It's no secret that capitalism as a planetary system is in severe disjuncture. It's in everyone's conversations and supermarket lines. The other week, was browsing a women's vampires-and-werewolves paperback novel, when my eyes snagged on a line about a future Asian American Methodist bishop counseling a younger knight-wizard with a most non-biblical quotation: "The old world is dying, and the new world struggles to be born: now is the time of monsters." The young knight-wizard replies in her knowing ironic to the older woman: "Although I doubt Antonio Gramsci had our kind of monsters in mind."⁶

i had not expected a real-life 1920s communist anti-fascist prisoner's words foreseeing the raw interregnum awkwardly looming between old industrial capitalism and some new world-system, somehow dropped head-first into this fantasy novel landscape of post-apocalyptic supervillains and heroes (that was the first and last time he or his politics were mentioned there). But the mixing mix started to get more real when i heard that a writer in the pro-Trump conservative journal *American Greatness* had called on white men to now embrace their final metamorphosis for euro-capitalism: "The decent know that they must become ruthless. They must become the stuff of nightmares. The good man must spare not a moment to train, in both body and mind, to become the monster that he may need to become in order to slay the monsters that prey upon the vulnerable."⁷

This country gradually takes on terminal aspects of its modern doppelganger, the desperately dancing for time liberal democratic

⁶ Ilona Andrews. *Blood Heir*. Nancy Yost Literary Agency, Inc, 2021. Page 77.

⁷ David Brooks. "The G.O.P. Is Getting Even Worse." *The New York Times*. April 23, 2021.

German Weimar republic which went all to H (spoiler alert: they really really didn't make it).

For us, "America's" own Civil War 2 can be a reality check, a flashing little warning light. With at last our very own amateur fight night: a comical "Munich Beer Hall Putsch," first-toe-in-the-water, January 6 test coup in the Capitol. Don't forget that between his 2016 triumph and his 2020 defeat, clown Trumpenfuhrer actually gained 1.5 million voters in Democratic sunny California. The whole capitalist system here is now misfiring against itself, parts breaking down one by one, no longer working as the dominant hegemony it once was. Even in the rich garden headquarters society of the imperialist metropolis.

Because the feeling is of crises no longer passing but only kept unresolved, multiplying, our left conversations have taken to peppering phrases with "twilight" and "late" when describing the capitalist system. There's a left cottage industry of intellectuals hesitantly but seriously writing about globalization deepening the crisis of world capitalism now. That so many differing radical theorists have turned their attention here is itself a signal flag. But revs need to search more directly into the gale.

Even if we weren't conscious of it, we have long been steeling ourselves for the demise of the capitalist world-system. Even if explicit revolutionary theory on the end of capitalism has been late coming and incomplete. Many of us from all sides have turned much more to culture than Depression economics in feeling our way into the future. But isn't that always true? As early as 1979, anti-capitalist literary critic H. Bruce Franklin pointed out that science fiction writing was then sampling the theme of the future as an apocalyptic dystopia, mistakenly confusing the end of capitalism for the end of farking everything. As he chipped in about the

Confess, i got nostalgic when i read that. When you read "organized crime" here you are meant to think the Italian mafia or something, but really in these cases it's more likely bands of New Afrikan and Latino kids usually. Back in the day when we were raising kids on not much money, had an older Asian acquaintance who knew and every month or so dropped by with a few bags of produce he had gotten at work. You know, to stretch our food budget. One day he called, said he had arranged to get us a whole big bunch of vegetables and fruit. Only i'd have to come by his job after ten that night with a car, so he could load my trunk with bags of grapefruit and oranges, tomatoes and lettuce, til it looked like a grocery store (which it did).

My friend did the graveyard shift at one of the Union Pacific freight yards, where stuff from California came in (i had worked at a yard, too, but different railroad down on the South Side). i showed up of course, and he showed me around. i asked him if giving us all this stuff was a risk, and he said nobody would even notice or care. Showing me some rail cars that were already half empty.

He explained that you can't speed with a long, zillion-ton train of loaded heavy rail cars without a lot of braking once you get into the city. The risk is too great. So your freight train is going only maybe 5 miles an hour as it very slowly winds through poor neighborhoods getting ready to come to a safe stop in the yards. Bands of teens run alongside the train, trying to break into the cars and climbing in, quickly searching for really good stuff like televisions and jeans. If a rail car had new washing machines they'd gladly try a few of that, too. Good cash stuff on the streets. Which they could ease off to the track side, then if necessary come back with a borrowed truck and vanish with into the night. They only had brief windows of time to get into each rail car and do whatever and jump out. If they ran across oranges or veggies they might take some to sell and a bag or two for mom and the neighbors, but it's not really that valuable to them or to the railroad.

bunking at a place comrades had near their offices. Guess he was right sheepish on top of embarrassed, but Lenin had to apologize. You live and you learn.¹⁹

Late 20th-century globalization reinvented popular piracy of oil tankers and cargo freighters (reaching like 1,000 attacks a year, i believe), but that is overshadowed by what's going on in the streets now. Last winter, business news reported that the commercial losses from urban looters attacking freight trains here were "out of control." As proof, one journalist brought back photos from a Union Pacific rail yard of the mountains of debris left over after the train burglars had gone through everything looking for electronics, brand name clothes, and other choice goods : "... there's looted packages as far as the eye can see. Amazon packages, UPS boxes, unused Covid tests, fishing lures, epi pens. Cargo containers left busted open on trains ..."²⁰ The National Retailers Federation estimated these losses from "'organized crime' groups" as high as \$1 billion a year, and called for much greater rail policing.

¹⁹ Lenin never wrote much about his own life, particularly in the chaotic time when the revolution was going on, so this isn't something i read about (my best friend seized my set of the collected works anyway, when we moved into separate places and divvied up the bookcase). This great story of Lenin getting held up by stick-up guys posing as red guards was told to me by an old trotskyist, as part of the mostly unwritten lore of the marxist-leninist movement. i was young and not in his faction of the left, but he tried to wise me up anyway. He said it came from a French socialist who had gone to Russia to work with Lenin and his communist international and was a first-hand witness. Much later, that French comrade published his own memoir, parts of which were translated into English and circulated in the movement here. Was struck by the story so much that i kept asking questions about it, to get that older comrade to repeat the tale so i could remember it best i could. Can't prove the facts, but in some dusty old sectarian journal or zine from the way past i think it was passed on.

²⁰ Dani Romero. John Schreiber. "LA freight train looting 'out of control' as thieves worsen supply chain bottlenecks." Yahoo/finance Wed, January 19, 2022. 6:47 AM.

mindset of then-leading British SF author J.G. Ballard: "it is easier to imagine the end of the world, than it is the end of capitalism."⁸

This aspect of our imperialist culture sonar sensing the ping of possible real-life existential end game, but too frightened to face it except in a transposed fictional form, has grown to wide screen dimensions. As rampaging zombies destroying everything human became normal fixtures in movies and television. Or flip side, same coin, society threatened/saved by supervillains/heroes who without words or permissions appear to matter-of-factly replace ordinary humans as the only beings who can determine the fate of the world. As Kanye West stalks to grab the microphone from Taylor Swift, while millions of refugee people of color driven from their dying nation-states are trying to overrun and erase with the mass of their "useless" bodies the parking lot border lines of the wealthy Western metropolis. Or so oppressor culture in shock mixes the drinks.

Since every previously existing civilization and stage of history known to people has encountered its end times, the idea that present world capitalism might itself run out of time is not a recognition limited to some obscure fringe. Last year i was reading Irish novelist Sally Rooney's latest bestseller, when i ran aground right into a thick passage. Two main characters are young women who were BFFs at university and afterwards talk frequently though living in different places, by long emails ranging from relationship gossip across to serious intellectual discussions. So one emails the other:

"Your paragraph about time reminded me of something I read online recently. Apparently in the Late Bronze Age, starting about 1,500 years before the Christian era, the Eastern Mediterranean re-

⁸ This quotation is often seen right now, but almost always attributed to the left critic Fredric Jameson. As in it being described as "the famous Jameson quote" on one popular Goodreads page. Not that there's any mystery about H. Bruce Franklin's work, but Jameson is so much more "hip" and "in" right this moment to the shoddy white reformist intellectuals.

gion was characterized by a system of centralized palace governments, which redistributed money and goods through complex and specialized city economies. I read about this on Wikipedia. Trade routes were highly developed at this time and written languages emerged. Expensive luxury goods were produced and traded over huge distances—in the 1980s a single wrecked ship from the period was discovered off the coast of Turkey, carrying Egyptian jewelry, Greek pottery, blackwood from Sudan, Irish copper, pomegranates, ivory. Then, during a seventy-five year period from about 1225 to 1150 BCE, civilization collapsed. The great cities of the Eastern Mediterranean were destroyed or abandoned. Literacy all but died out, and entire writing systems were lost.”

“No one is sure why any of this happened, by the way. Wikipedia suggests a theory called ‘general systems collapse’, whereby ‘centralization, specialization, complexity, and top-heavy political structure’ made Late Bronze Age civilization particularly vulnerable to breakdown. Another of the theories is headlined simply: ‘Climate change’. I think this puts our present civilization in a kind of ominous light, don’t you think? General systems collapse is not something I had ever really thought about as a possibility before. Of course I know in my brain that everything we tell ourselves about human civilization is a lie. But imagine having to find that out in real life.”⁹

That jab in the head caught me by surprise. The novelist, who is a socialist, didn’t have to make up any fictional “general systems collapse” theory—that developed theory on the possible lessons of the fall of Late Bronze Age Eastern Mediterranean societies exists, and the author of one scholarly book on the subject was even interviewed on a National Public Radio blog or something. Our obvious benefit from this idea is that it maybe opens our minds to consid-

⁹ Sally Rooney. *Beautiful World, Where Are You?* Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021. Pages 43–44.

space between capitalism and its successors. The political left and the political right will not be the only players. Radical upsurges are always signaled and then also accompanied by tidal waves of mass crime and outlaw cultural movements, since the oppressed and everyone else held down sense that the old restraints have torn loose. We aren’t the only players on the block, not by far, and in times of change never will be.

The Bolshevik leader Lenin learned that the hard way, luckily to little damage except to his pride and his shoe leather. Working late one night as they often did trying to set up a new regime, Lenin with his bodyguard and a few other comrades drove across the Russian capital in an expropriated nice auto. He had rejected his bodyguard’s suggestion that they just crash in communist apartments near their offices, since he wanted to get home. Driving down a deserted street in the dark without traffic, they came to a revolutionary checkpoint. Young “red” fighters manning the barricade waved down the auto, their rifles aimed at the car and its passengers. The communists were peeved that the young “red” guards didn’t recognize Lenin’s face and were unimpressed with them, and had to haul out their wallets and ID. At which point it turned out that the fighters were not really bolshies after all, but armed bandits—

Soon Lenin and his comrades were walking wearily towards the nearest communist group apartment, as their plush car with the imitation “red” soldiers and their money and their papers and the bodyguard’s pistol all roared off into the distance. Understandably angry, Lenin started telling off his bodyguard. Demanding to know why he hadn’t used his gun to defend them instead of insisting that they surrender. The bodyguard was pretty angry himself, and promptly tore comrade Lenin a new one. Pointing out that his starting a one-pistol gun battle against a gang armed with rifles would have only gotten them killed. And it was his job to keep Lenin alive, not be a western gunman. Further, that it would have made a lot more sense if Lenin hadn’t insisted on the lot of them going all the way across town in deserted streets instead of just

Wall Street or Main Street, “leading” or being the boss is lying as you cover up x and polish up z. The only leader we found to be telling us the truth as fully as he understood it, whether we liked it or not (and largely we didn’t like it), was Malcolm. And he was everyone’s great teacher. Even today, looking out over a world of so many political movements and struggles, i am not seeing more like him. He was usually rebuked by liberal media and intellectuals for not having a detailed program for ending racism in “America” (an idea that today makes me laugh). He would usually say that his belief was that if you could tell people the truth then they would work out what to do. That isn’t the end of our journey, but it certainly has to be the start.

Most things we can’t grasp about the interregnum yet, but there are significant parts we can start with. Particularly about the two contending political forces everyone expects to see—far-right formations including fascism against the new world working class. Two closely related class forces which the present left more or less knows lots of historical-scholarly things about, but in a practical everyday way knows surprisingly little about.

In the interregnum, much of what people say right now won’t matter. Because it will be a new environment with unfamiliar terrain, one that will be constantly impressing us with its own demands. Requiring new people self-selected for that go-round.

Each new historical period ruthlessly requires a different generation of rebels, with different abilities and their own specific character suited for their times. After all, the left generation that fought for the “industrial democracy” of politicized mass unionism worldwide in the 1930s, before plunging into the biggest world war ever, was really not the same as the 1960s youth radicals who smoked dope like “Detroit Red” and jammed a monkey wrench into the whole giant machinery of the Pentagon’s Vietnam War.

Right now we can see the beginning signs of this system’s transition, its breakdown structurally. Most visibly in the old “law and order” which cannot be maintained in the ruleless interregnum

ering how what we know are major problems in capitalism might even be much more.

What is pushing and hurrying us about is the ominous feeling that is lurking just behind everyone’s shoulder now. A feeling that everything is somehow getting worse all the time, and that things only get worse and not better. In many countries, ours included, mass politics seem to be moving down the street towards a semi-fascist or maybe even fascist end, unless looming climate disaster gets us first. And no one seems to have any control over it. Like, no one is at the steering wheel.

It’s as if the world is just sliding downhill towards X, and no matter how wide we try to open our eyes, somehow we can’t encompass or take hold of it all. Even though the foreboding feels so damn big we should be able to see it with our naked eyes from across the solar system. Paradoxically it’s too big for us to see.

Big economy/society “over-complexity” theory seems to make immediate sense—right now in this time of global supply-chain dysfunction, pandemic domino world upset, and unprecedented war and economic reprisals on everyone in general all at once—but is just one of a number of plausible theories explaining a near-term collapse of today’s capitalist world-system. It is by far not even the most popular one right now, incidentally, though that doesn’t make it wrong in my view. The most popular view would be global climate disaster, caused by relentless global warming from industrial capitalist civilization’s greenhouse gas emissions. Even those who single out a different factor as the probable lever in tipping this world-system off into its final crash usually bring in climate disaster as a contributing factor for final system disaster. As the novel’s character does herself in that weighty email.

What i’ve come to personally believe is that because today’s capitalist crisis is so great, so enveloping of the entire system from horizon to horizon, it can be seen as many different crises or events, depending on what point or feature your eyes are focused on. All

are probably real, but as parts of a greater final transformation of the capitalist world-system as a whole.

Not going to go over or even list all the different points of left opinion on the demise of capitalism. That's too big a detour to fit in here. But since my favorite interviewer/editor has raised the question of Immanuel Wallerstein's views on capitalist world-system change, let's use Wallerstein as an example to bounce off how my own views have developed here.

Left historical sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein was the most prominent developer of what is termed world-systems analysis or theory. Have read little of Wallerstein's thick basic writings myself, and certainly don't claim to understand them well enough to advocate *ya* or *no*. World-systems analysis tries to fuse all the varied Western academic fields such as sociology, history, anthropology, economics, astrology, and beyond into one theoryscope, trying to see how world-systems evolve and go through life cycles over long periods of time.¹⁰ Wallerstein believed that every given world historic socio-economic system dies when its growth reaches its furthest limits (a variant away from Marx's historical materialist dictum that every type of historical society dies when it has exhausted its successive class role in further developing the means of production and distribution). And that capitalism's absolute need to always rake in capital accumulation and then double down again on even more capital accumulation has really reached its use-by date. As this world-system has effectively enveloped the entire globe and absorbed every human nation and people within it, and has thus hit its limits as a system.

¹⁰ Immanuel Wallerstein, Randall Collins, Michael Mann, Georgi Derlugian, Craig Calhoun. *Does Capitalism Have a Future?* Oxford University Press, 2013. Pages 57, 65. For a good browse, try his paperback selected works, which include not only some highlights from his world-system theory but also short writings on subjects such as race and ethnicity, the bourgeois as concept and reality, and liberalism: *The Essential Wallerstein*. The New Press, 2000.

what's spontaneously going on all around us anyway, when it's really an unconscious unity around wrong principles. Old slogans used the picture of unity to make people feel strong: "Sisterhood is Powerful," "Black Unity," "The People United Will Never Be Defeated." But these are dead phrases now, not truths but decaying shells."

And notice that she prefaced the chapter with an acid quotation from the notorious 19th-century revolutionary, the Moor: "The weapon of criticism cannot replace the criticism of weapons."

Often we are all asked, "What should we do?" In the long history of the struggle it is not unusual to be thrown back, to have to restart anew it feels like. Even in the most difficult of times, we have to remember what is basic for us because it is the most practical. To tell the truth. To do the serious and difficult work of learning which truth is key, and then telling it to people who are searching for justice. Which is all there is to do, but is a lot harder than people think. If you assume that things like early 1960s nonviolent civil rights militancy were politically simple, you would be wrong. Often we were thrown into despair because despite the wonderful energy, being on the real offensive for the first time in our young lives, and lots of jail time, we couldn't budge the racist system at all. And all our charismatic often brilliant leaders lied to us, all the time. Dr. King used to blow smoke rings at us regularly, until his final political awakening that he needed to personally redirect the struggle here, from opposing "discrimination" to overthrowing the system of capitalism, which he explicitly named as the problem (and, *ya*, his personal breakthrough surprised all of us in the struggle, too). That's when they quickly pushed their red button and had him assassinated.

That was painful to learn, but it was the rock bottom truth. Not that the leaders were all evil, but most of the time they didn't know how to proceed without lying. In a capitalist culture, whether on

and happy. Or so early hopeful radical thinkers from Europe's 19th century, who had never seen socialism or for that matter fascism either, believed.

Our actual dirty world picture has little to do with those old silent movies, and is way more frighteningly complicated and challenging, of course. Capitalism as a world-system has been faltering for some time, but there is no guarantee that an anti-capitalist left of any strength will be there immediately to take over from it. It is possible that capitalism will fall into a chaotic confused landscape. That is what I have been talking about here.

Kersplebedeb: This reminds me of passages in the book *Night-Vision*, by Butch Lee and Red Rover, especially the chapter "The Changer and the Changed." In this new twilight reality, what should we be prepared to do? How should we prepare to intervene?

J. Sakai: *Night-Vision* is a prescient revolutionary writing of the late 20th century, and still perhaps the most unsettling one. In "The Changer & the Changed," Butch Lee wrote with a surgical scalpel, cutting away reformism's scar tissue without painkillers, without compromise:

"But at its essence, the growing chaos of the neo-colonial world order is that many different peoples—armed with conflicting capitalist agendas—have been loosed to fight it out. As transnational capitalism hides behind and backs first one side and then the other—or both—to indirectly use the chaos they see no class interest in containing. "This chaos is itself a deepening contradiction of the system, one that no one can be certain of riding, not even the ruling class. And on this charged terrain, dis-unity and not unity is the changed strategic need of the oppressed. This is hard to grab, since it goes against truisms inherited from colonial times. And we think that dis-unity is

Wallerstein saw this impact accentuating the current downward cycle of a regular "long wave" of the 50-year cycle of capitalist boom and ebb, first charted out by Soviet economist Nikolai Kondratiev. Which has now been finally disrupted in its cycle and is unable to rise up again, due to the lack of any new space or population to expand into and exploit more. This, he believed, has led to the system being "currently in the terminal stage of structural crisis," summing things up this way:

"So, to resume, the modern world-system in which we are living cannot continue because it has moved too far from equilibrium, and no longer permits capitalists to accumulate capital endlessly ... We are consequently living in a structural crisis in which there is a struggle about the successor system. Although the outcome is unpredictable, we can feel sure that one side or the other will win out in the coming decades, and a new reasonably stable world-system (or set of world-systems) will be established."¹¹

There is a generalized timeline being booted about by some serious analysts for the world-system's fall and full eclipse into interregnum. In this regard, Wallerstein and fellow historical sociologist Randall Collins won some academic cred in predicting endgame crisis, because in the 1970s they correctly predicted the fall in that next decade or so of the Soviet Union. And although they developed different views on causation—what will finally trigger the toppling of the capitalist world-system—their timeframes at least were essentially similar. Wallerstein earlier said that he saw the time of capitalist world-system collapse in "terminal transformation" occurring approximately in the 2030–2050 range.

Interestingly, both researchers believed that the accuracy of their individual predictions wasn't going to matter much. Because

¹¹ Wallerstein, Collins, Mann, Derluquian, Calhoun. op cit. Page 35.

both agreed with the widely held view that our world is in a desperate race to stop and then to some degree reverse global warming—the great battle over greenhouse gas emissions and industrial age pollution. Which will calendar-wise soon unleash itself after other contradictions have shot their arrows, and which scientists predict will cause such physical and social destruction that the capitalist world will no longer be functional or usable as a system of social organization in any case. Whatever else most radical analysts who work to reveal capitalist endgame crisis may focus on, many of them also see capitalism's destructive blindness about the environment as bringing down on it the final, most physical, and least escapable fist in the 2050–2100 time period.

We note that Wallerstein believed that today's political struggle isn't actually over the fall of capitalism—which had already become a done deal in its early stages to him, fully in process—but over what future world hegemonic society will come to succeed it. Writing in the years before his death in 2019, he saw the future as “at best a 50–50 chance” between some new more democratic and more egalitarian world-system versus something highly repressive like fascism, which we all know hasn't waited for scholarly validation but is right now racing ahead of us everywhere.

My problem with all that has been that some left intellectuals might agree or not that this analysis or another one could be true, but what “proof” is that anyway? The 64 thousand dollar question applied here is how do we know that a systemic limit on accumulation is really going to finish off the capitalist system in the actually-existing now? Capitalism has gone through periods of no profits and big crisis before—like the 1929 Great Depression, for one—and didn't get that close to croaking. Got into emergency gear, went all crafty, reformed this while killing off that, sprinkled in some wars, and Bob's your uncle their capitalist profits were back. Capitalism has proven itself to be ruthlessly supple, capable of surprise strategies and reinventing itself to survive.

Li feels that the capitalist world-system might be even more vulnerable to collapse right now than many believe, because China as the gigantic center of world industrial production, as well as having become a major financial and consumer economy, is more fragile and teetering-on-the-edge than Westerners understand. And that Chinese events could well trigger and then force a systemic collapse of actually-existing capitalism around the globe. Which reminds us that the struggle is always wider than we think.

As a homemade theoryscope on how capitalist worldsystem breakdown is taking place right now, this has been very incomplete. A quick pencil sketch maybe of parts of its wildly transitioning shape. I had to leave out many, many aspects entirely, just to squeeze this study down to interview size. Somehow rambled into the Mexico thing, which I didn't plan on talking about at all. Was going to explore what has changed so drastically for today's u.s. ruling class—and does the left understand the capitalist ruling class at all? But that got sidetracked totally. So please understand all the limitations here. Think of this as just a kit to jump start the battered family van with.

& Before we go, let's pause around the further question of the interregnum a minute. Perhaps one reason the left has been so reluctant to handle the hot event horizon where world-system capitalism is ending, is that we are so uncertain about how to handle the reality of the interregnum. Where at first anyway the odds aren't with us in Las Vegas. “We're not ready yet!,” lefty thinks to themself. **So I want to talk about it to get used to the idea.**

Once, long ago, there was no interregnum in radical thinking—why Gramsci's pocket parable about the delay in a liberated world and the jack-in-the-box appearance instead of fascism had such an impact on us. Capitalism and anti-capitalism were supposed to be intrinsically counterbalanced in a kind of zero-sum game: as capitalism declined, the radical workers' left that was massively opposing them would grow in parallel measure, rising to take the inevitable hand-over as the natural inheritors of society. All neat

sity, the national average monthly starting pay for college graduates in 2014 was 2,443 Yuan (about 400 u.s. dollars). By comparison, in 2013, the national average monthly pay of migrant workers was 2,609 (about 430 u.s. dollars) ... Since the 1990s, many of China's college graduates have seen their middle class dreams smashed and have undergone a process of proletarianization. To these young people, the promise of a 'free' and prosperous capitalism is no more than empty words." Li ties this to the regrowth of revolutionary politics. "In this context, many intellectuals and college students have been attracted to leftist ideas and become leftist activists."¹⁷

China probably leads the world in the number of labor strikes and protest demonstrations. Li points out that:

"The so-called 'mass incidents' (a term used by the Chinese government to refer to a wide range of social protests including strikes, sit-ins, marches, rallies, and riots) increased from about 8,700 in 1993, 60,000 in 2003, to 120,000 in 2008. It is estimated that in recent years, the annual occurrence of massive incidents has stayed above 100,000. According to the data collected by the Chinese Ministry of Public Security, the cases of various forms of the 'social order' violation increased from 3.2 million in 1995, 11.7 million in 2009, to 13.9 million in 2012. In some large-scale mass incidents, tens of thousands of people participated in riots and occupied local governments for days. Assuming that a mass incident on average involves about 100 people, there would be about 10 million Chinese people who are involved in various social protests each year."¹⁸

¹⁷ Minqi Li. *China and the 21st Century Crisis*. Pluto Press, 2016. Pages 33, 95, 137.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* Page 182.

i mean, u.s. capitalism once way back in the mid-1860s went in just four quick years from having a vast chattel enslaved labor-based economy with millions of cheapestpossible unwaged workers, to suddenly no race-enslaved chattel property at all and the loss to many Southern capitalists of staggering amounts of one-half of their whole capital and business. But overall mister u.s. cap came out of it all bulging muscular. Ready to expand and conquer as never before.

So while i respect world-systems crisis analysis some, ditto other crisis analyses, wasn't sure that these theoretical predictions of capitalist system crash were firm and not jumping off-balance at clues. As our ever hopeful intellectual left has done so often before. (Though if there is a joker in the deck, it is certainly the already onrushing global climate change towards disaster.)

But my thoughts on this shifted gears when i started noticing something that i hadn't been hearing—that capitalism was actually destroying its own nation-states one after another. Some might be rebuilt later or not, but right now they are being gutted and taken down. This is an incalculable event. That's world changing beyond numbers.

To me the question of nations is so pivotal because that is how capitalism as a world-system has organized its societies structurally to do its work, apply its resources, and solve its problems. Nor is it true that in the absence of a functional capitalist nation, we can just jump in and go ahead with our neighbors to cheerfully and communally solve survival problems—check out Haiti for that one—because capitalism as its most bottom-line autonomic reflex will rather arrange to kill us all than let us remake our lives communally. Much of today's world can be explained by that one fact.

i initially ran into this understanding on the job—naturally, where else? When i first went to work at a suburban nursery around 9/11, the guys there provided a whole different learning experience about the world for me. That crew mostly came from

a town in southern Mexico—largely happy young energetic teens and 20s, who came wading across the border or riding the coyote. We worked the garden season outdoors growing and loading into customers' SUVs, April until Christmas (selling fall plants then pumpkins and then Christmas trees and wreaths and all that is cash "plant" business, too). So they earned bucks to send home nine months a year, and then went home themselves to their vil to relax and play soccer every day and lord it up as young dudes who had some bit of u.s. cash for three nice months. Sweet to them.

It was all good until it wasn't. Year by year, their sky gradually darkened. At first the guys used to tell me that they weren't worried, since they had like a Mexican utopian vision. One married father told me that he knew his young son would be okay, since all Mexicans here had endless jobs for life—because for some strange reason in "America" none of the people liked to work (not saying it's true, just what they were saying). So Mexicans would gladly do all the real work. (Hey, in my favorite sushi joint all four sushi chefs are Latino, only the boss and cashier are Asian.) They and the u.s.a. were really only two parts of one body, like heart and lungs, they thought, and sometime soon white people would realize that and end all this border nonsense.

Not only did that dream not happen, instead nightmares, like ICE harassment and crazy white hate, shrunk the livable environment here all around them, while getting back for the start of the work season from Mexico got harder year by year. The coyotes got way more costly and unreliable (or were under more heat from the drug gangs to turn over their merchandise faster). Some guys quit, tired of the fear and figuring it wasn't worth the gamble.

The end finally came when the Mexican government, without an official word, abandoned the area their hometown was in, and big patches of dead state spread over it, like killed-off coral reef zones increasingly spill over the seabed. i mean, the state officials and police were still there and continued riding on top of all the or-

J. Sakai: There are many finally who are making contributions, but i find left political economist Minqi Li helpful because he gives us another angle of vision, since he doesn't share the eurocentric Wall Street, Washington, and London vantage point on the world that is common even in the left, but instead analyzes today's world-system crisis grounded in his China. While he goes vividly into the meaning of the climate disasters predicted by James Hanson, Li also shows how economic class issues are already politicizing and raising up into action masses of Chinese people.

He notes: "In fact, the Chinese economy is already struggling with unsustainable business and local government debt." Since to him the huge bankrupt banks' credit bubble, which is robbing millions and paralyzing the economy, is an assumed fact of Chinese life, just like the Party's ruling dictatorship is. Whether Chinese capitalism's giant bad debt bubble is politically sustainable—is another major question, in fact. In China there are already every day illegal protests of the thousands among millions of ordinary people from all walks of life, robbed of their pensions and life's savings and even homes by the corrupt banking bad debt crisis, which is destabilizing their whole economy.

Minqi Li, who learned from the democracy movement and spent 1990–92 in prison there, also points to the political shock absorber of the mass mirage of a future prosperous capitalist middle-class life, a capitalist narcotic which took over a generation of parents and youth—but that to many has now left only the bitterest aftertaste.

"The dramatic increase in college graduates has led to sharp devaluation of their bargaining power in the job market," Li writes. "In 2010, about a quarter of Chinese college students who graduated that year were unemployed. Many college graduates live in slum-like conditions on the outskirts of China's major cities and are known as 'ant tribes' ... Those college graduates who are 'employed' often have to accept a wage that is no higher than that of an unskilled migrant worker. According to a survey by Beijing Univer-

Kersplebedeb: Which brings us back to the climate catastrophe, and what it might mean for capitalism ...

J. Sakai: Easily the most popular system collapse theory right now, is the spreading climate disaster. This was certainly pushed by James Hansen's increasingly dire messages that the climate crisis is more severe and coming much sooner than even scientists had expected. Before he retired as director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, Hansen pioneered the first long-range computer climate modeling, and was one of the world's leading climatologists. He has been called the "father of global warming."

He long years ago warned that increasing dangerous atmospheric CO2 levels had "become an emergency." Almost 14 years ago Hansen said of the eliminating of all coal consumption worldwide by 2029 as the most realistically achievable first real step in the climate recovery process: "This is our one chance." Since then, the bottom line is that nothing has been done except talk and public relations and increased burning of coal. Elizabeth Kolbert, environmentalist and author of *The Sixth Extinction*, says that in ignoring Hansen's prior warning in time, "the planet will be committed to change on a scale society won't be able to cope with." Or as Hansen said: "if you melt all the ice, sea levels will go up two hundred and fifty feet. So you can't do that without producing a different planet."¹⁶

Most radicals who deal with collapse of the capitalist system, don't predict with the assurance of a Wallerstein or a Collins that it will happen in the range of this date or another. Personally, i have no educated idea whether Wallerstein or Collins are right about their timing of system change. i only am certain that devastating changes beyond what we've ever seen will be happening—and very soon in historical terms.

Kersplebedeb: Are there other writers on this capitalist world-system crisis that you find useful now?

¹⁶ Elizabeth Kolbert. "The Catastrophist." *The New Yorker*. July 27, 2020.

dinary people, but they were no longer in charge. A fickle criminal syndicate was now the actual state. A shadow state.

One of the guys described going home that last winter. All of a sudden on the main highway into town there was a roadblock complete with men with rifles. Their rules were simple: they did whatever they wanted and you obey or they kill you (the police carefully spent the day on the other side of town). If you were unlucky enough to be driving a newish car or truck, they motioned you out and took it, for keeps. You had to give them your dollars and if you had anything nice—like gifts you'd brought back from "America" for your family—they would take those, too. Laying on almost personal tariffs, just like a Trumphenfuhrer, only daylight naked not covered up in misdirection. No misunderstandings allowed there, that afternoon.

So the people in that town had their little society and bare little economy to live within, poorer but at home. But under this lumpen capitaloid shadow state there was erratic informal taxation and threat of killings always, and if you wanted to travel somewhere it was safest to take the bus and not have anything conspicuous with you. You shouldn't just drive around if you could avoid it, that wasn't safe. Those in our workplace up here who decided to stick with their "good" jobs, didn't go home anymore to Mexico each year—too much hassle and risk. They lived here so they had no safe home either place. Yas, Mexican criminal mafia is different but is also morally and functionally equivalent to ICE, the u.s government migration strong-arm agency. Crap = shite. They weren't carefree smiling young guys on a work adventure anymore. Babylon is always so inviting, but in the end it's never fun.

Anyway, you know all this—it's nobody's secret that increasing sections of rural and even small city urban Mexico have been overrun or in part taken over by one drug cartel or criminal mafia or another in waves. It's bigger than the tired out "cops + robbers" or "poor colored people + plenty of crime" stereotypes that capitalist culture loves to stick in our sore heads. Just saying, because

instead of mistakenly thinking i know something, picked up abstractly in the distance from the internet news, hearing it first hand from someone's life is when i started realizing the real, that capitalist nations that people lived in really were being essentially wiped out piece by piece, place by place. Holy crap, i thought. Makes sense on second thought: If the big guys like the u.s.a. and UK and Russia are all busy destroying even their own nations year by year—why not help everyone's neo-colonized peripheral nations come to go dead, too?

Of course, the u.s. empire—the home base of capitalist globalization—has pretty methodically been going around the world slowly, quietly rubbing troublesome nations jack out of existence for some time now. Oh, they still have wellpaid representatives at the UN and on embassy row, and they are still on the little Rand McNally globe maps of the world. They may or may not be rebuilt some day, but right now they no longer exist as functioning societies with actual coherent governments. It isn't just Iraq and Afghanistan. They also did it to Libya and Somalia, and of course u.s.- cursed Haiti and Syria, the refugee exodus capital. Then there's sub-Saharan Africa's rapidly disintegrating nations no longer in the news, to say nothing of Ethiopia. Chinese diplomats brought this up once at an international gathering, the strange coincidence of countries being internally destroyed after the u.s. "helps" them.

We are starting to see that old Latin phrase *interregnum*— the dislocated space in time between two kings or reigns without a rule or particular order. And in coming years we will hear it more and more as the existing capitalist worldsystem is replaced with the uncertain wasteland of struggle over a future gone beyond it. What does that transitory landing zone start to look like? Going to

forcement Agency as well as simultaneously head of Customs and Border Protection) urged the u.s.-designed "Colombia model" on President Calderon, and publicly defended his Mexican protégé's actions then and thereafter.

The truth commission has since uncovered that many of those assassinated in Colombia were not doing anything illegal, of course. Which is why they had to be killed "off the books," as it were. More and more of big capitalism's ruling the world as the crisis deepens seems to be "off the books."

As Mexico's export industries are growing and the affluent middle and upper classes associated with that sector grow wealthier, paradoxically the number of Mexicans in extreme poverty only increases. Populist president Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador has deliberately targeted both ends of the spectrum. Programs used to help poor women and children are now being abolished in favor of subsidy programs giving cash to middle- and even upper-class families. While a long-established program that extended the standard half-day in Mexican schools to include a hot lunch and extra classes has been abolished. Formerly it improved children's learning while providing all-day childcare so that women could find employment. A newspaper article notes: "Today 44 percent of Mexicans—nearly 56 million people— are destitute, according to the most recent government data available."¹⁵

Most ominously, some thousands of communities have in this year's heat wave run out of water. Streams and rivers have dried up in the extreme drought and heat, and groundwaters, in aquifers below the surface, are being exhausted one by one. By Mexican law, factories have priority for water over human consumption. Right now, scarce water is being trucked in to dry neighborhoods and villages every day. This situation has no solution, and is only growing worse.

¹⁵ Maria Abi-Habib and Oscar Lopez. "Plight of Mexico's Poor Worsens, Despite President's Promises." *The New York Times*. July 18, 2022.

be made self-financing by their drug selling, lemonade stands, and community car washes. And it's all "off the books." Can't get better than that.

Although capitalist media and culture never admits it, that is what they already know how to do. Which is why the security apparatus of the u.s. government has always not only used such formations, but has worked in the oppressed zone to create them where they didn't exist. Anywhere the oppressed poor have risen to fight for human rights in the u.s. neo-colonial region of influence in Central America, rightwing mercenary paramilitaries and drug gangs secretly allied to the capitalists and the army have formed to carry out mass killings, assassinations, and cleansing of territory.

In Colombia, a current government-appointed truth commission is trying to finally end the 58-year internal "culture of security," which was taught to Colombian government forces by the CIA, DEA, and u.s. military, and that resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths in a permanent "cycle of violence." The intelligence chief of the Colombian Army Fourth Brigade provided individual targets for a wave of assassinations of alleged leftists carried out by the Medellin drug cartel. While Western oil companies secretly funded right-wing paramilitary units for "protection," doubtless with the informed but secret approval of key u.s. officials. "The consequences of this concerted and largely U.S.-driven approach," the commission concluded, was a "hardening of the conflict in which the civilian population has been the main victim."¹⁴

This is the same Colombian "tough hands" model that was instituted during the Mexican Calderon presidency by the u.s. Drug Enforcement Agency. Excited at reports of the high tolls of political rebels killed, not just by the army but by paramilitaries and the drug cartels as well, Robert Bonner (Bush's chief of the Drug En-

¹⁴ Julie Turkewitz and Genevieve Glatsky. "Soul-Searching Report From Colombia's Truth Commission." *The New York Times*. June 29, 2022; Phil Klay. "America's Ongoing Secret Wars." *The New York Times*. May 29, 2022.

take a specific road, and go into that Mexican crisis in a bit more detail. So grab a seat if you're into this informal map-reading.¹²

This summer, a killing in Mexico made headlines in their news and a little bit in ours. It sheds some negative light, some piercing darkness, which helps define the shape of this. Two old Jesuit Catholic priests, who had dedicated their last years to a small and poor mountain village in Chihuahua state along the border, were shot down along with a local tour guide who was desperately trying to find sanctuary in their church. The murderer is already named by police as a figure in organized crime; he had been set in

¹² After the June 2022 slaying of the two Catholic priests, i took out one of my files of press clippings on the Mexican crisis. While these are separate news stories on different events in the crisis, they really are interconnected, and i urge anyone interested in diving deeper into the situation to simply read them all together. It's like an extended magazine article: Natalie Kittroeff and Oscar Lopez. "Catholic Church Joins Mexico's Critics After Murder of 2 Jesuit Priests." *The New York Times*. June 25, 2022 ; CBS News. July 6, 2022. 10:06 am. "Bishop proposes 'Social Pact' with drug traffickers to tackle violence in Mexico"; Maria Abi-Habib. "In Mexico, Farmers Are Caught in Middle of Drug Cartels Turf War." *The New York Times*. May 5, 2022; David Agren. "Witness testifies that El Chapo paid a \$100 million bribe to ex-Mexican president Peña Nieto." *Washington Post*. January 15, 2019 at 7:34 p.m. EST; Noah Hurowitz. "El Chapo Trial: Witness Alleges Presidential Bribes, Cartel Brutality." *Rolling Stone*. November 21, 2018. 12:54 PM ET; Randal C. Archibold. "In Mexico, a Growing Gap Between Political Class and Calls for Change." *The New York Times*. December 13, 2014; David Karp. "Is the Lime an Endangered Species?" *The New York Times*. May 30, 2014; Jose de Cordoba. "Bloody Struggle Erupts Over Avocado Trade." *The Wall Street Journal*. February 1-2, 2014; Santiago and Jose de Cordoba. "Executive Slaying Sparks New Fears." *The Wall Street Journal*. January 11-12, 2014; Ginger Thompson, Randal C. Archibold and Eric Schmitt. "Hand of U.S. Is Seen in Halting General's Rise." *The New York Times*. February 5, 2013; Mary Anastasia O'Grady. "The Real Victims of Mexico's Drug War." *The Wall Street Journal*. November 12, 2012; Jose de Cordoba. "Trial Exposes Odd Ties in Mexico Drug War." *The Wall Street Journal*. January 7-8, 2012. (contains Mexican Attorney General Office's color map of different drug cartel areas at that time). Look up if you are interested some of the many internet articles on drug cartel officer Jesus Zambada Niebla as well as Bush regime security official Robert Bonner (especially his op ed on Mexico in the *New York Times*).

a rage that day, townspeople said, first kidnapping and disappearing/killing two brothers and burning down their house. Apparently because they and their amateur baseball team had just beat the rival team he had sponsored, as a local personage in a big drug cartel. A Chihuahua environmental activist told reporters simply: "He is a very bloodthirsty man."

Obviously, killing people isn't shocking anymore, but his targets were. Far off in the Vatican, Pope Francis himself said he was "dismayed" by the Jesuits' murders in their own church, and exclaimed on Twitter: "How many killings there are in Mexico!" For his part, the Mexican president said that the killings were "unacceptable." His prosecutors even offered a reward of \$250,000 for information leading to an arrest. So an official big deal. Yawn. Likely the Mexican army troops promptly sent there will someday bring a killer suspect forward in chains for a photo op eventually. Or perhaps by the time you read this some cartel might have disappeared this inconvenient guy. Or likely the story will just vanish from the news for months or years, until a convenient happy ending can be found. It's all very likely.

What isn't likely is the stereotyped criminal gang killings fiction we always get force fed to us. This isn't merely some irrational drug crimie out on a personal "rampage." A senior area analyst for the respected International Crisis Group has pointed out: "There's mounting evidence that a lot of criminal actors are testing the waters to see what they can get away with," particularly in terms of taking over state authority in their regions. A Rector of one Jesuit university observed after the killings that Mexico was "a failed state."

This isn't a one-mafia-baseball-team deal. Other big criminal capitalist bodies, such as the Mexican state and its own neo-colonial sponsor, the u.s. empire, are heavily invested right with them. By the Mexican police's own admission, the alleged Sinaloa gunman had murdered a white u.s. schoolteacher from North Carolina in 2018, but had been allowed to walk around free and

enrich the u.s. imperial economy. Just a truck ride over the border. And their own small but quite affluent Mexican local ruling class sees no need to be taxed to support a military, since it has no traditional enemies as a country except "America" itself. And the Mexican ruling class openly feels that it is the rightful task of the rulers in Washington to defend the neo-colony. So it has just enough official army and navy to protect the capital city and hold the industrial centers and gated luxury reserves for its main capitalist families. All the rest can just go to H and blow away. Mexico being a country is not the same thing as it existing as a functioning nation.

It's interesting here in a grim sense to turn to another page, that the Pentagon has warned Congress and the "American" public that there is a danger of them falling behind Russia and China in the next generation of advanced military weaponry. Which is said to be autonomous gun- and bombcarrying robots flying over or perhaps driving across the battlefield, killing left and right by self-directed AI computer decision-making. That's really scary.

What no one is saying, though, is that they have something like that already, only in less precise but also less expensive flesh form. "America's" forbidden drug cartels and the taboo larger men's criminal street organization culture in Latin America are exactly that. Autonomous and selfaware killing formations of disposable "robots" that capitalists aren't publicly associated with or responsible for, that spread out to gradually cover every town and small city in the countryside. Automatically homing in on and subjecting to lethal investigation any persons trying to cause trouble to the existing social order other than them, whether it be by working against oppression or stopping the destruction of the environment, or anyone for human rights or organizing peasants or workers. Then killing or terrorizing the automatically selected targets into silence.

Best of all from the capitalist viewpoint, these kind of autonomous political killing formations of male "robots" can even

is home to Toyota's most modern manufacturing plant outside Japan."

Sharma warned investors, however, that the picture on the other side of the peso note is not so crisp. Mexico may have the fifteenth-largest economy in the world, but the Mexican state is bluntly not functional:

"One clear sign that a state is falling short is when it cannot even collect taxes, a failure that tends to expose both a general incompetence on the part of administrators and a popular disdain for the state. Mexico, for example, collects taxes equal to about 14 percent of GDP. That is quite low for a middle class country, and the lack of revenue is making it hard for the government to maintain law and order or suppress the corrupting influence of the drug cartels. Mexico spends just 0.6 percent of GDP on the military, the second lowest among large emerging countries ..."¹³

At this point, some might ask, why doesn't Mexico take substantial amounts of money from that flourishing big city industrial export economy and use it to fix the rest of Mexico and drive out the cartels? The actual bourgeois world isn't so straight-forward. And for sure the Mexican capitalist ruling class that controls the state isn't going to heavily tax its own self. They would all rather let the present situation just roll on. Which is why it has. And when and if that part of Mexico gets used up, they expect to just move on to the next disposable plastic part of the neo-colonial periphery.

No, in a zombie-world way, the drug cartels and criminal mafias are capitalist Mexico's real "military," and its real "police" as well.

As a neo-colony of the u.s. empire, Mexico's 130 million people are a giant reserve army of inexpensive labor to backstop and

¹³ Ruchir Sharma. *The Rise and Fall of Nations: Forces of Change in the Post-Crisis World*. W.W. Norton & Co. 2016. Pages 141, 193-194.

completely got away with it. That was the kind of off-side violent transgression that used to be taboo. The next year he was said by local journalists to have killed a Chihuahua state human-rights activist. Again, he is walking around free and publically sponsoring a local sports team, so can be fairly said to have completely gotten away with it. (And, obviously, he has killed many others, if anyone cared.)

So this shooting down of two local priests is a bold step up, but not out of the question at all. Since then, more violent attacks on the Church have occurred. To help consolidate state power, the drug cartel needs to have demonstrated authority with the local population over what kinds of independent social activity are permissible under their rule and what not. Or, as the International Crisis Group analyst said of the Mexican cartels now: "They feel they exercise de facto sovereignty."

Particularly the Sinaloa Cartel, which was visibly among the largest and most powerful cartels, and got that way by almost two decades of covertly working with or for the u.s. government. This is said to have started around 2000 when Humberto Loya, a lawyer who was a top associate and payoff bagman to politicians for then-Sinaloa co-leaders Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman and Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada, agreed to provide the u.s. government with critical information on other drug cartels in return for immunity for their own lumpen "creative destruction" biz. Lawyers in the u.s. for another Sinaloa figure on trial have also sworn to the court that "Indeed the United States government agents aided the leaders of the Sinaloa Cartel."

Of course, when "El Chapo" Guzman repeatedly embarrassed the Mexican government and became a legendary outlaw prison-escapee figure, they and u.s. national security had to hunt him down by making deals paying off rival gangsters. Cartels, just like legit world corporations, are constantly changing and in transformation, swelling, merging, shrinking, and splintering, concentrating into niches, switching names and business focus. Only, in the

lumpen class zone everything happens much faster and with more relentless turnover.

Always the Mexican government tries to maneuver situations where the most publicity-troublesome criminal actors are chased to big fanfare, while other rival criminal groups are left alone to thrive and pay off in the extra space. During the presidencies of Felip Calderon and his successor, the Mexican murder rate actually tripled—while officially 96% of reported crimes got unsolved by the police.

Last winter and spring, “American” shoppers noticed shortages of avocados and then also limes and mangoes— with big price increases—as news came that Mexican drug cartels were trying to move in and take over commercial agriculture exports to the u.s. Governments on both sides of the border and even armed local militias of avocado growers mobilized to take back the towns and highways, which the very violent Jalisco New Generation Cartel defended not only with gunmen but with highway roadblocks and Taliban-style improvised explosive devices on roadsides. Jalisco cartel men even cut off a Mexican army base, which for a while could only be resupplied by air as though it were in remote Afghanistan. Finally, after a long eight-month siege, Mexican army units were able to enter Naranjo de Chila, the Jalisco cartel’s stronghold there. The Jalisco “soldiers” simply abandoned their center in Michoacán state and disappeared away for a while.

They usually act to repress a cartel in an area only when there is very bad publicity and they need to lift up their battered image. So it was noticed locally that the Mexican government with its army and police were driving away the Michoacán state’s then-dominant Jalisco New Generation cartel, but not other crime factions. In effect, the Mexican army infantry were fighting side by side with the un-uniformed “soldiers” of the ambitious Viagras gang of Jalisco’s rival, the United Cartels (who did not give the Mexican and u.s. governments the same public relations headache). By that point, both

capitalist nations, where everything is worn out and dinged and all inadequate anyway. Even more so in a new onrushing age where according to the International Organization for Migration, by 2050 as many as 200 million refugees will be battering down doors seeking shelter just from rising water levels alone (not counting droughts and floods, desertification, firestorms, failing economies, ethnic and religious genocides, invasions and civil wars). And anyway, big capitalism and the big bourgeoisie can’t care that way anymore about whatever place they once came from that’s rotting away no matter what—no one is Saranwrapping their old family condo—since they increasingly are simultaneously both more global and more individualistic in their existence.

We have to get something really reverse to the way most of us are led to understand. Big capitalism gets it that Mexico may be disintegrating just as the u.s.a. is, but from their point of view it is still golden just the way it is. Ruchir Sharma, who manages \$45 billion in investments in the Global South as Chairman of International Business for Rockefeller Capital Management, put it this way:

“In the class of [medium] countries with an average per capita income around \$10,000 and a population over 100 million, Russia is a laggard ... The most dynamic is Mexico, which has also produced ten cities of more than a million people since 1985 ... The flowering of second-tier cities in Mexico is intimately connected to the manufacturing centers producing cars and other exports bound for the United States. Among the fastest growing Mexican cities with populations of more than a million, three are in states on the U.S. border: Tijuana, Juarez, and Mexicali. ... In central Mexico, Queretaro is a jack-of-all-trades, making everything from wine to appliances to trucks, as well as offering services from call centers to logistics ... Aguascalientes

daily functioning—and moved more profitably outward—the empty space has been taken over by lumpen/proletarian economic organizations with the u.s. empire’s tacit agreement. Occupying an important social and economic space, with an improvised and grotesque morphing, partinside and part-outside of capitalism, Mexican crime cartels carry out many billions of dollars in world trade selling not only drugs of many kinds to illicit North American users, not only agricultural products to u.s. supermarkets, but also industrial goods and raw materials to manufacturers of other countries, such as millions of dollars of enriched iron ore directly from their ports to China.

Most important of all, they step in to supplement the old weakening neo-colonial state with a self-funding and autonomous robotic repressive force with capacities beyond what the FBI, Pentagon, the CIA, or the ruling class actors in Mexico City can do in public. Bullet in the head with that avocado, anyone?

In classic class formations, capitalists are largely free riders on their nation-states. Usually very willing, though, to heavily tax the middle and lower classes to support the state structures such as highways and water systems, the police and military, that allow society to function adequately for their capitalism. But back in the day, some capitalists always understood that they could well afford to contribute in special ways, to strengthen what was really their own society’s continued future. Famous capitalists like the steel magnate Andrew Carnegie, the wealthiest man in “America,” helped lead the building of the “American” nation’s public library system. While in another striking case, Julius Rosenwald of Sears Roebuck paid for the designing and building of over 5,000 basic schools to house New Afrikan formal education over fifteen Southern states, whose “seg” governments would only fund white settler children’s school buildings.

There are no longer any Carnegies or Rosenwalds in that old noble patriarch b.s. way, since even oligarchs like Gates and Buffet cannot rescue long-neglected and now rundown whole

had been shooting at and besieging the Jalisco forces and their supporters in the town of Naranjo de Chila for months.

For over a decade, these lumpen economic organizations have episodically taxed the avocado crop in different ways, there being billions of dollars at stake. Now they are pushing once again to take it over, setting a high payoff “tax” of 10% at the packaging plants, in some places even taking over farms altogether. Same with limes now, as well as sometimes mangoes and livestock and timber. David Karp, a former Los Angeles Times journalist on farm markets and researcher on botany at the University of California at Davis, noticing the trends, wrote eight years ago: “Criminal cartels now control, to a shocking extent, the growing and packing of much of the Mexican produce on which United States consumers depend.”

The cartels are not young, and in their own way are beginning to take on the bureaucratic sinews that mature businesses need. They always had not simply “soldiers” but also ship’s captains and mechanics and logistical planning managers. Now government rural health workers are frightened and some are leaving. Doctors and nurses are worried about being drafted into handling the consequences of prolonged battles and possibly being executed if their cartel patients die on them. Already the cartels put up their own sophisticated telecommunications systems with security in rural areas. They get the telecommunications technicians and engineers by simply drafting them; they usually disappear on their way to work, never to be seen again. There was one telling incident when some gunmen stopped a bus and took two telephone company employees away, but they were the wrong guys: phone company, yas, but not technicians—they did consumer phone bill collecting. Their rejected dead bodies were found soon after. This is like watching a raw capitaloid state of its own kind getting formed from scratch before our eyes.

A program director of a Mexican security research agency commented that with “mafias” organized crime is not simply big but has

reached into “a gray zone where you tie legal with illegal, the crime with business and the crime with politics.” Since the cartels “understand that that they have more power than anyone else, the government or the businesses they extort.” In the wake of the killings of the two and still another priest, a Catholic bishop has called for a new “social pact,” which in return for less violence would give the cartels a legitimized voice in deciding Mexico’s major political and social questions.

Former Mexican President Calderon, in a speech at the United Nations, said that his earlier attempt to wage a heavily militarized “Mano Dura” or “tough hand” actual war on Mexican drug traffickers—which brought in the regular Mexican army for the first time—as the Bush administration had planned for him, failed because the massive drug economy in the u.s. creates such unstoppable social and political aftereffects swirling through the Global South: “This allows drug traffickers to create powerful networks and gives them an almost unlimited ability to corrupt; they are capable of buying governments and entire police forces, leaving societies and governments defenseless, particularly in the poorest countries.”

This was clever capitalist propaganda. President Calderon himself is said to have been given \$3 million in cash in suitcases via his national security chief, in return for protecting the Sinaloa cartel—this according to the sensational testimony of former Sinaloa lieutenant Jesus “El Rey” Zambada, a u.s. government witness at the 2018 Brooklyn trial of “El Chapo” Guzman. These payoffs included at least one delivery that “El Rey” Zambada himself took part in. The u.s. Department of Justice is also conceding that Calderon’s political opponent and successor as Mexican president was even more corrupt and involved with the cartels than he was. Or as one Wall Street Journal headline summed it up: “Witness testifies that El Chapo paid a \$100 million bribe to ex-Mexican president Peña Nieto.” So capitalist pro-u.s. state officials and cartel leaders are much more than “frenemies,” because they really do need and ben-

efit from each other even as they still must also play out eroding deadly antagonistic roles in the capitalist system—as though their lives depended on it.

The mega-violent reality fits right into some “The Wire”-type blood drama or “FBI”-type television hoopla. Like the endlessly rebroadcast “tragic” picture here of carelessly dangerous but short-lived violent young men shaped by their intense poverty, caught up in the killing machine of their people’s street criminality. This has the seeming of some raw truth, like a Shakespearian tragedy—but really is only a surface frag of truth. It is high-class nonfiction mixed with high-class fiction, an art form made by wealthy advanced capitalism’s propaganda specialists with real blood and actual poor bodies offered up for verisimilitude.

What was really moving the earth there is even colder, much more implacable. A reality that capitalism can’t let us understand now. Cause at its heart it’s not primarily about bloody melodrama, but about capitalism’s irreplaceable old nations in free fall, damaged with no repair coming, and the u.s. empire and in this example its Mexican neo-colonial subordinates unable to halt or even slow the descent, just throwing in more and more improvised violent stop-gaps as best they can on the fly.

In case nobody noticed, the u.s. imperial Dept. of Justice has a long-term policy of regularly throwing its top Mexican satraps under the bus, always placing the blame for the massive drug trade and spreading criminal lumpen zone on them. Usually not until they leave office, of course. It is a cover story both for the unwillingness of the u.s. ruling class to stop its always-mounting drug addiction business, and for their implicit claim that u.s. imperial gunmen and detectives and military have to always be policing the neocolonial world of people of color in the periphery to protect innocent white communities. As though there were innocent white communities, which is the largest criminal fiction of all.

As over the decades the Mexican capitalist ruling class and their state apparatus have gradually shrunk away from society’s