

Military Resistance 13C8



AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Herat:

**“Outside The City, However, The
Picture Is Different”**

**“There, The Taliban Are As Strong As
They Have Ever Been”**

**“Over The Past Two Months, Some Local
Taliban Have Replaced Their White Flag
With The Black Flag Of Islamic State”**

March 15, 2015 By Margherita Stancati, Wall Street Journal [Excerpts]

HERAT, Afghanistan—A former mujahedeen leader who has emerged as one of President Ashraf Ghani’s most vocal critics rallied thousands of people on Sunday on the outskirts of this city, which has become a hub of opposition sentiment.

Former mujahedeen commanders such as Ismail Khan are talking up their opposition to Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, who came to office in September on a pledge to revive his country's flagging economy.

"Six months have passed, and the government hasn't achieved anything," Mr. Khan, the former minister of water and energy, said in an interview in his marble-covered palace in Herat on Thursday.

"We expected security to improve, and unemployment to be addressed, but this hasn't happened."

In Herat, the list of positions to fill is especially long. Citing corruption and deteriorating security, Mr. Ghani in December fired most provincial officials there, a decision many welcomed at the time.

Now, however, many of those positions—which include the local heads of the education, power and health departments—remain vacant.

"He came, he fired them, but he didn't plan who he would appoint in their place," said Aziz Ahmad Jami, a Herat-based civil-society activist. "I was one of those people who eagerly supported Ashraf Ghani during the election. But he hasn't done anything."

Adding to these grievances is the widespread feeling among Heratis that they are under-represented at the center.

"The central government doesn't care," said Sayed Wahid Qattali, who recently stepped down as the head of Herat's provincial council. "The government has its own internal problems and doesn't have time to think about Herat."

Residents and officials agree that one thing in the province has improved: security in Herat city. Asiluddin Jami, a career civil servant and acting governor of Herat, credited Mr. Ghani for his decision to replace provincial police chiefs and to boost coordination across offices.

Outside the city, however, the picture is different. There, the Taliban are as strong as they have ever been, a local security official and residents said. And over the past two months, some local Taliban have replaced their white flag with the black flag of Islamic State, which is seeking a foothold in Afghanistan.

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FORWARD OBSERVATIONS



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

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

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

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

Frederick Douglass, 1852

The past year – every single day of it – has had its consequences. In the obscure depths of society, an imperceptible molecular process has been occurring irreversibly, like the flow of time, a process of accumulating discontent, bitterness, and revolutionary energy.

-- Leon Trotsky, “Up To The Ninth Of January”

“What’s Wrong With Both The Syriza Leadership Position And That Of The Left Within Syriza Is That They Have

Put The Debt Burden And The Euro On The Front Burner Rather Than Replacing Failed Greek Capitalism At Home As The Top Priority” “Whether Greece Is In Or Out The Euro Will Not Restore Growth And Living Standards If The Capitalist Sector Continues To Dominate In Greece”

February 20, 2015 Michael Roberts Blog [Excerpts]

In this tortuous saga between the leaders of the Eurozone and the new Greek government over repaying its public sector debt and continuing with a Troika-imposed austerity programme, we must remember that the cause of all this mess is the failure of capitalism in Europe and Greece.

Yes, the Syriza government has retreated massively from its original position to cancel or renegotiate the ‘odious’ debt burden and it has given way on some (many?) of the immediate measures it wanted to take on reversing austerity and improving the hugely reduced living standards of Greek households.

But that was inevitable if the government wants to sustain Greek capitalism inside or outside the Eurozone.

Greek capital is the weakest in the spectrum of European capital, where Germany and France are strongest.

They call the tune.

So the real villain of the piece is Capital in the persona of Franco-German capital and their supporters in the governments of the other ‘distressed’ EMU states of Spain, Portugal and Ireland, as well as ‘northern Europe’.

There are many commentators, including those on the Keynesian left, who complain that the Germans are being unreasonable and stupid.

Giving the Greeks some leeway on public spending and reducing the burden of debt would help restore the Greek economy and keep the European project going in the face of increased scepticism from the electorate of Europe and a stagnating and deflating Euro economy.

You see, austerity does not work, so goes the argument

But the Germans are not 'irrational' from the point of view of Capital.

The Austerians reckon that European capitalism will not recover unless the capitalist sector is restored to high profitability and the burden of debt is reduced.

That means neoliberal 'structural' reforms involving primarily decimating the power of labour through anti-trade union laws, increased sacking rights, reducing unemployment benefits and pensions and more privatisations.

Alongside this, there must be cuts in public spending and debt to allow cuts in corporate taxation to raise profitability. Get labour costs down and boost profitability – that's the way out of this depression

That is a rational strategy for Capital.

The Keynesians, on the other hand, reckon that cutting wages and fiscal austerity just slashes 'effective demand', so that more austerity breeds even less growth. In the depth of depression, this argument has some validity, especially in Greece.

But the essence of recovery on a capitalist basis must be a return to profitability and raising wages or spending more on welfare does the opposite

So the German intransigence flows from an ideological belief that fiscal austerity and wage-cutting programmes are essential.

As the Germans are not committed in any way to proper fiscal union in Europe they do not want to make any (or the most minimal) concessions to Syriza.

Moreover, they are backed in this by the venal, corrupt and harsh neoliberal governments still in office in Spain, Portugal and Ireland who have imposed Troika programmes on their people and who would be badly undermined if there are better terms for a leftist government in Greece.

The feeble pro-capitalist social democratic governments of Italy and France, both trying to impose 'structural reforms' on labour, also go along with this.

Unfortunately, propaganda in Germany and the rise of Eurosceptic forces have led the German electorate to believe that the Greeks are lazy, are all on benefits, get huge pensions and are corrupt. Apparently, 66% of Germans asked do not want the Greeks to get any concessions.

Of course, this characterisation of the Greek working class is nonsense.

**“Greeks Work More Hours In A Year Than Any Other Country In Europe –
And More Than Even The Americans Or Brits!”**

Greeks work more hours in a year than any other country in Europe – and more than even the Americans or Brits!

And surprisingly, it is the Germans who are the 'laziest', if measured by hours worked.

Although Greek economy-wide productivity started from a low base when the country joined the Eurozone in 1999, growth in labour productivity since then has been faster than in the strong capitalist economies of Germany or France, Greece up 25% compared to just 10% in Germany.

The reason Germany has been so competitive has not been because the growth in its productivity of labour was so good, but because wages have risen the least, just 22% since 1999 compared to nearly double in Ireland and up two-thirds in Greece.

So while Greeks saw their living standards improve under the euro until the crisis came, they did this by working the longest hours and by being exploited more than any other workforce in Europe.

The biggest gainers from joining the euro were the Greek capitalists. The fruits of increased economic growth and trade went to them disproportionately. The wage share in Greek national income fell nearly 4% pts, a fall only surpassed by Spain and more even than American workers suffered relatively.

In my view, Syriza was correct to say that it wanted to stay in the euro and campaign for removing the debt burden and reversing austerity. To start from the view that Greece must leave the euro and then look at 'reversing austerity' puts the cart before the horse and also runs in the face of the aspirations of Greeks to be 'part of Europe'.

But what is wrong with Syriza's position (in my view) is to see the issue of debt and 'fiscal space' as the main (sole?) issues and have the illusion that the Eurogroup leaders will see it is in their interest to save European capitalism from a serious blow if Greece is thrown out of the euro.

As we now know, Greek finance minister, Yanis Varoufakis, says he aims to save capitalism from the stupid policies of neoliberalism, get some time to recover and then look at socialist measures some way down the road when capitalism is on a better footing

What's wrong with both the Syriza leadership position and that of the left within Syriza is that they have put the debt burden and the euro on the front burner rather than replacing failed Greek capitalism at home as the top priority.

Whether Greece is in or out the euro will not restore growth and living standards if the capitalist sector continues to dominate in Greece.

Greece's public sector debt can never be repaid and should be written off as odious. But the cost of servicing it has fallen to low levels already, so writing it off will not alone kick-start the economy.

The Greek government and its people must seize control of the commanding heights of the economy.


That means public ownership and democratic control of the banks and the major strategic companies; the launch of a public investment programme for jobs and growth and an appeal to solidarity within Europe for the Greek alternative against the neo-liberal governments in the Eurogroup.

That would probably lead to Greece being ousted from the EU, given the current balance of political forces. But at least the Greek people and the rest of Europe would see why the Euro leaders are doing it and also have a clear alternative plan B to implement.

The danger now is that Syriza will agree to a compromise with the EU leaders that 'saves' Greek and Euro capitalism at the expense of little or no improvement in the conditions for the bulk of Greek people.

All that does is postpone the crunch between reversing austerity and the interests of Capital, without a Plan B in the interests of Labour.

DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND OR RELATIVE IN THE MILITARY?



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CLASS WAR REPORTS

Enemy Combatants Attack Virginian Student: “Charged With Non-Forceful Resisting”



Bryan Beaubrun/AP Photo

03.20.15 The Daily Beast [Excerpts]

Martese Johnson himself asked the big question as he was being handcuffed on a sidewalk spattered with his blood.

“How did this happen?”

The official answer was that agents of the Virginia Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) had seen the 20-year-old University of Virginia student being denied entry to the Trinity Irish Pub in Charlottesville.

But that does not explain why the ABC agents chose Johnson in particular.

He surely was not the only person to be turned away from an Irish bar at the edge of a college campus on St. Patrick’s Day.

Yet, he seems to have been the only one who was arrested.

Johnson had never been in trouble with the law and was understandably surprised to find himself suddenly grabbed by the ABC agents who asked him about a fake ID.

He told them he did not have one and reflexively asked them to let go of his arm.

The ABC agents responded by slamming him to the sidewalk like he was a gunman after a shootout, causing a head wound that would require 10 stitches to close.

Johnson repeatedly declared himself to be a legitimate college student.

“I go to UVa! I go to UVa! I go to UVa!” he cried out.

Had circumstances allowed, Johnson also could have truthfully told them that he is an honor student as well as a member of the university’s honor committee. He is widely regarded as one of the top student leaders at UVa, as he had been in his days at Kenwood Academy in his native Chicago six blocks from President Obama’s home.

The ABC agents kept pinning him to the sidewalk. Johnson made clear what he understood to be the actual reason why he had been grabbed and slammed and bloodied and arrested.

“You fucking racists! What the fuck! How did this happen?”

He is African-American, and if his race was not the reason for his arrest, it almost unquestionably had a lot to do with the way he was treated.

Two years ago, some other UVa students—these female and white—emerged from a grocery store with a case of what undercover ABC officers decided was beer but was in fact sparkling water.

ABC had just that month launched what it called “Operation Charlottesville” with the avowed aim of cracking down in the area around the university.

As the students climbed into a car, they were already a little on edge, having just come from a “take back the night” sexual assault awareness event. The car was now suddenly rushed by two agents who began banging on the car’s closed windows, demanding that they open up.

The startled driver, Elizabeth Daly, tried to comply, but the window was electric. She started the car so she could lower it.

Six more ABC agents appeared, frantic, pounding on windows, shouting for her to turn off the ignition. One tried to break the windshield with a flashlight.

Another threw himself over the hood.

Another drew a gun.

The young woman in the passenger seat had been calling 911 on her cellphone for help and was so frightened by the drawn weapon that she dived into the back seat.

Daly was terrified and desperate to escape, but she kept her cool enough to take care not to run any of the agents over.

The car did brush against two of them as she pulled away. You have to think that if the car had been occupied by black males, the ABC agent with the gun might very well have started firing.

Daly drove off. The other young woman kept talking to 911, saying that they were not at all sure the people who had surrounded them were real cops even though some of them seemed to have badges of some kind.

The 911 operator advised them to pull over. Daly did so just as the ABC agents caught up with them.

The other young woman was still on the phone and the recording would no doubt have been filled with shouts and curses and thumping and maybe gunshots had the car's occupants been of another race.

There was none of that. The young woman with the phone handed it to one of the ABC agents, telling him that the 911 operator wanted to speak to them.

The ABC agent confirmed that he and his comrades were indeed who they said they were. He sounded irritated, but nobody slammed the girls to the ground.

Although the ABC agents belatedly realized that the supposed beer was sparkling water, Daly was charged with three felonies for supposedly attempting to run over the ABC agents.

All the charges were soon dropped and Daly filed a law suit. The State of Virginia reportedly settled for \$212,000.

In the aftermath, ABC disciplined two of the agents.

"ABC deeply regrets this terribly unfortunate incident, which we know resulted in anguish and concern not only for those immediately involved, but for the community at large," the then-head of ABC, J. Neal Insley, said in a statement in November 2013.

He went on, "We cannot undo the circumstances surrounding this incident. We can only do our best to learn the lessons of this experience and modify our police, practice and training to ensure that a similar incident does not occur in the future. ABC Enforcement has learned many valuable lessons from the circumstances surrounding this difficult situation."

ABC said that "agents have received and will continue to receive training in how to recognize and react to situations that might require de-escalation or disengagement."

ABC also said, "Through training and other reinforcement, ABC will promote a reasonable common-sense philosophy regarding the correlation between the seriousness for an offense and the agents' response, ensuring that response is proportional to the suspected offense."

Really.

ABC further pledged that its officers would be equipped with body cameras.

None of the three officers who arrested Johnson seemed to be thus equipped. A civilian managed to take a cellphone video of the immediate aftermath of the takedown.

On Wednesday, Johnson addressed a gathering of outraged students. He proved anew how right people are to hold him in such high regard.

“I beg for you guys, regardless of your personal opinions and the way you feel about subjects, to please respect everyone here,” Johnson said. “We are all part of one community and we deserve to respect each other, especially in times like this. Thank you.”

On Thursday afternoon, Johnson stood with his attorney at a press conference.

He had not been charged with possessing a fake ID, which seems to be a confirmation that he had not been carrying one. He had been charged with public intoxication, though he says he was not inebriated and there is nothing to prove otherwise.

He had also been charged with non-forceful resisting, which seems to have consisted of saying he had done nothing to justify the way he was treated.

“I was shocked that my face was slammed into the pavement across the road from my school,” Johnson said in the statement.

The cuts on his head were clearly visible, but his eyes showed another, deeper hurt. He seemed to have reached an answer to the big question he had cried out while bleeding on the sidewalk.

MORE:

“His Face Was Clearly Marked With Cuts And Scrapes, Bruising And A Line Of Surgical Stitches Reaching From Just Above His Hairline To His Forehead”

“Another Cut Was Visible Under His Left Eye” “What The ABC Officers Did Will Stay With Me Forever”



Virginia student Martese Johnson was on hand as fellow Virginia students protested for him on Wednesday. Photograph: Andrew Shurtleff/AP

20 March 2015 by Joanna Walters in New York, The Guardian

Martese Johnson, the young student who suffered a bloody head wound as he was being arrested by alcohol control officers near the University of Virginia on Wednesday, stood beside his mother and his lawyer on Thursday night and issued a statement saying he was “unbowed”, his face clearly showing the injuries he had sustained.

Johnson did not speak and looked subdued. He was wearing a suit and tie, and his face was clearly marked with cuts and scrapes, bruising and a line of surgical stitches reaching from just above his hairline to his forehead.

Another cut was visible under his left eye.

Johnson, 20, was arrested near the Charlottesville campus of UVA, where he is a third-year undergraduate, in the early hours of Wednesday morning in an encounter with enforcement agents from the state alcohol beverage control (ABC) department.

Virginia governor Terry McAuliffe requested a state investigation, which is now underway, and said on Thursday: “We are going to get to the bottom of this and someone is going to have to answer for it.”

Johnson’s attorney Daniel Watkins said on Thursday evening that he plans to fight charges against the student of obstructing justice and public drunkenness “with the utmost vigor”.

Watkins read a statement Johnson had written.

“I trust that the scars on my face and head will one day heal, but the trauma of what the ABC officers did will stay with me forever,” the statement said. Johnson had earlier added in a statement that as he was on the ground, his bloodied head was down, but he was “unbowed”.

Johnson walked away after his statement was delivered, flanked by his lawyer and with his arm around his mother, who had flown in from the family’s hometown of Chicago to be with her son after the incident.

Johnson reportedly showed an Illinois identification card at a bar he was trying to enter around midnight on Tuesday. When ABC officers sought to check whether the ID was genuine, and asked Johnson for his zip code, he gave his mother’s current zip code in Chicago, which was different from the zip code listed on his 2011 identity card, his lawyer said.

Watkins also pointed out that UVA president Teresa Sullivan had also voiced her support for Johnson.

She attended a large rally held on campus on Wednesday night and on Thursday talked about the student body – many of whom have been marching around campus since the incident, chanting “black lives matter” in echo of protests across the US that have burst forth since the shooting death of unarmed black teenager Michael Brown by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, last summer.

African American Activist Who Was At A Rally Against Police Brutality Arrested For “Lynching” “Tried To Stop Arrest Of Protester By Grabbing Him Away From Police” Now Faces Four Years Prison In California

18 March 2015 by Joanna Walters in New York, The Guardian

A young African American activist is facing up to four years in prison on a charge of lynching after being accused of trying to stop the arrest of a fellow protester by grabbing him away from police during a demonstration against police brutality.

The case has prompted grassroots groups and politicians to call for a change in the law in California to separate the kind of incident involving Maile Hampton from a crime that has traditionally been linked to the racially motivated ritual murders of African Americans.

Hampton, 20, will stand before a judge in Sacramento on 9 April to answer a charge of lynching in a case that has sparked protests in city hall and outside the superior court.

“It’s an irony that a woman of color who was at a public rally to shine a light on police brutality is arrested for lynching,” Linda Parisi, Hampton’s lawyer, told the Guardian.

The crime of lynching is typically associated with civil rights era murders but in the US goes back to the 18th century and has also been used to charge vigilantes, typically a white mob, trying to snatch a black person from police custody in order to deliver their own form of unauthorised punishment.

“It was designed to protect primarily people of color from vigilante justice,” Parisi said.

Hampton took part in a demonstration in January organised to oppose a pro-police rally that was being held at the California state capitol in Sacramento.

A scuffle broke out as police accused people in a crowd that included Maile of blocking a roadway, with the confrontation apparently captured on video.

Last month, following an investigation by the Sacramento police department, Maile was arrested, taken into custody and later released on \$100,000 bail, having been charged with lynching.

Parisi said the charge is a felony with a maximum punishment of four years in prison; a more usual charge in a situation like this, such as resisting arrest, would be a misdemeanor.

The mayor of Sacramento, Kevin Johnson, is talking to legislators about trying to change the criminal code.

“I was shocked to learn that in California, removing someone from police custody is defined as ‘lynching’.

“This word has a long and painful history in our nation and it needed to be immediately removed from California law,” he said in a statement to the Sacramento Bee.

A group of demonstrators at a pro-migrant rally organised to oppose an anti-immigration rally in Murrieta in southern California last year were also charged with lynching.

“In my 30 or so years as a lawyer I have not heard of this criminal code being used in this context in modern history until very recently,” Parisi said.

DANGER: CAPITALISTS AT WORK

So Much For That Bullshit About “Socialist” Venezuela Part 1:

Venezuelan Banking Family Bidding For Miami Branch Of Espirito Santo Bank:

**“The Benacerrafs Are One Of
Venezuela’s Oldest Banking
Families”**

**“The Family Patriarch, Salomón Henry
Benacerraf, Was Chairman Of Visa
International Between 1987 And 1994”**

March 17, 2015 by Margot Patrick, Wall Street Journal [Excerpts]. Patricia Kowsmann contributed to this article.

Espírito Santo Bank, the Miami arm of the collapsed Espírito Santo empire, is in advanced negotiations to be bought by Venezuela’s Benacerraf banking family, according to people familiar with the planned purchase.

The one-branch Florida bank was put up for sale in August after Portuguese owner Banco Espírito Santo failed.

It has around \$660 million in assets and a securities arm catering to customers in Venezuela and Brazil.

For nearly four decades, it held a key role in raising funding from wealthy Latin American clients for the Espírito Santo group.

Under the terms of the proposed deal, the Benacerraf family would pay \$10 million in cash and inject up to \$15 million in additional capital to stabilize Espírito Santo Bank after months of turmoil.

The negotiations with the Benacerrafs have been under way for months but hit delays including a rival offer, multiple regulatory investigations and lawsuits at the bank, the people said.

An Espírito Santo Bank spokeswoman declined to comment.

A Benacerraf family representative didn't respond to requests for comment.

Among the hurdles for a sale were continuing investigations into Espírito Santo Bank's anti-money-laundering controls and alleged breaches of the U.S. Bank Secrecy Act, focused around transactions with clients of a Panama affiliate that were previously reported by The Wall Street Journal.

The Miami bank was issued a consent order by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. last month to strengthen its controls, people familiar with the order said.

The Bank of Portugal is also considering a rival offer for Espírito Santo Bank from an investor group, people familiar with the matter said. But that bid is seen as less likely to receive U.S. regulatory approval and involves breaking up the bank, the people said.

Two weeks ago, Benacerraf family representatives met in Miami with Luis Maximo dos Santos, chairman of the "bad bank" that owns Espírito Santo Bank, people familiar with the meeting said.

The Bank of Portugal in August moved most of Banco Espírito Santo's assets into a "good bank" called Novo Banco that is up for sale. The bad bank's assets are being liquidated. A representative for Banco Espírito Santo declined to comment.

The Benacerrafs are one of Venezuela's oldest banking families and were once part-owners of a U.S. bank through a shareholding in Banco Union CA, now part of Venezuelan lender Banesco. The family patriarch, Salomón Henry Benacerraf, was chairman of Visa International between 1987 and 1994, according to filings.

To help facilitate a sale of the Miami arm, which was ordered by the FDIC in August, Espírito Santo has been seeking to settle lawsuits and wrap up the regulatory probes. In December, it agreed to pay \$8 million to resolve a suit by the liquidator of a bankrupt Brazilian bank over alleged money laundering.

MORE:

So Much For That Bullshit About "Socialist" Venezuela

Part 2:

80% Of Venezuelans Say Self-Appointed Dictator Maduro's Variety Of Capitalism "Heading In The Wrong Direction"

He Whines That Because Of Plots By "Some Sectors Of The National Bourgeoisie" He Will "Enact Laws Through The Rest Of This Year"

As He Pleases:

News Flash:

In A Socialist Society, There Is No "National Bourgeoisie"

In A Socialist Society, No One Person Dictates What The Law Is

March 15, 2015 By Kejal Vyas, Wall Street Journal [Excerpts]

CARACAS—Venezuela's National Assembly gave President Nicolás Maduro emergency powers to rule without legislative approval to combat what he called threats of U.S. aggression.

The "Anti-Imperialist Enabling Law" gives Mr. Maduro the ability to enact laws without congressional authorization through the rest of this year.

The leader and his allies, who control the assembly, said the law was needed to act against unspecified threats that Venezuela faces.

"Whether the threat comes from abroad or from home, we want the president to have all of the weapons in his hands to fight it," Diosdado Cabello, the assembly's president and

Venezuela's second-most powerful official, said after the measure was approved Sunday.

Although the president's allies control the legislature, the new powers will allow Mr. Maduro to expedite laws by sidestepping weeks of congressional procedure.

Critics called Sunday's measure a power grab, saying the government was using nationalist sentiment to rally support for the president and distract the nation from mounting economic troubles.

"This new enabling law won't equip hospitals, won't open the 44% of operating rooms that are closed," Henrique Capriles, a leading opposition figure, wrote in his blog. "It also won't increase production, or give incentives for investment, or beat back inflation."

The oil-rich country has the world's highest inflation rate and suffers shortages of basic goods, from milk to cooking oil to car parts. Mr. Maduro's popularity rating has fallen more than 30 points from when he took office nearly two years ago.

"Faced with a situation of economic and social deterioration and waning political support, the government has to appeal to anything that can help it hold on to power," said Luis Alberto Buttó, a historian at Simón Bolívar University in Caracas.

Mr. Maduro will have decree powers through parliamentary elections expected to take place sometime between September and December.

Mr. Maduro's low polling numbers—he has the support of one in five Venezuelans—mean his United Socialist Party faces a tough fight.

The Datanalisis polling company last month found more than 80% of respondents thought the country was heading in the wrong direction.

The assembly granted the president the ability to rule by fiat less than a month after intelligence agents arrested Antonio Ledezma, an opposition leader who is the mayor of this capital city, for allegedly conspiring against Mr. Maduro. Mr. Ledezma, who remains in jail, has denied the charges.

His arrest has stoked fears that the president will use his new authority to crack down further on dissent.

"These are decree powers that are designed to go after those who think differently from Maduro," opposition lawmaker Ángel Medina said during debate in the assembly, as progovernment supporters heckled him.

The new law itself—much like past decrees and other laws passed by the government—is loosely worded, giving little hint of how the president will govern.

But Mr. Maduro's request for the decree powers does outline tough actions against those believed to pose a threat.

"Political, social and economic circumstances created by foreign governments with the complicity of *some* sectors of the national bourgeoisie evidence the

necessity to legislate in a flexible manner to provide the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and its people with judicial defenses against the pernicious effects of meddling in Venezuelan state affairs,” the document says.

David Smilde, a Venezuela-based analyst for the Washington Office on Latin America, a think tank, said he believes the government is frightened by the possibility of antigovernment unrest.

“It’s confronting a really difficult situation,” he said, “and it’s going to get worse before it gets better.”

MORE:

Meet A Member Of Maduro’s Own “Sector Of The National Bourgeoisie”

Comment: T

From Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilmer_Ruperti

Wilmer Ruperti:

“a Venezuelan-born shipping business magnate.

“Since 2003, he has captured a major share of the market in physically exporting oil from Venezuela to the rest of Latin America, and has become **one of** Venezuela’s wealthiest persons”

For more about this slime, see: <http://infodio.com/040214/who/is/wilmer/ruperti>

That said, resistance to Imperial power, and commitment to the right of nations to self-determination, does not depend on what kind of government a small nation has, however rotten it may be.

Building resistance to every effort by Obama to interfere in Venezuela is an elementary duty of the left in the United States.

Failure to do so is a betrayal of our working class brothers and sisters in Venezuela, who already have more than their share of oppression and exploitation by their own capitalists and their government of, by and for the thieving Bolivarian oligarchy, known to Venezuelans as the Boligarchy.

The more command the U.S. Imperial government imposes on their nation, the worse their lives become, and the more difficult it becomes for them to wipe out the Venezuelan class of capitalists, organizing a new society with social ownership of the all the means of production under democratic control from below.

That is what socialism is, not the disastrous deadly farce embodied in Mr. Maduro.

Flat-out resistance to moves against Venezuela by Obama & Co. is in spite of, not because of, the character of the Venezuelan regime.

Nothing justifies failure to resist Imperial power politics, here or anywhere.

Progressive Company Pays Both Men And Women 78% Of What They Should Be Earning

Mar 18, 2015 The Onion

SEATTLE—Stressing the importance of treating all its staff members equally, progressive technology firm Northstar Solutions described to reporters Wednesday its strict policy of paying both male and female workers 78 percent of what they should be earning.

“At Northstar, we’ve always believed that employees who contribute the same level of hard work for the same duties should earn the same meager fraction of a reasonable wage, regardless of whether they’re men or women,” said the company’s founder and CEO, Jack Stargell, who noted that every staff member’s compensation package was routinely reviewed to ensure that personnel with comparable experience and job responsibilities were being equivalently underpaid.

“Sex is simply not a determining factor in how we view our workers; they’re all disposable quantities to us that deserve an identical amount of disrespect and lack of recognition. No exceptions.”

While noting that these gender-equal practices were unorthodox, Stargell added that the company was already seeing clear benefits to its bottom line.

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

**The Sun Always Sets on Deir
Yassin:
“Ruined Stones With No List Of
Names, No Memorial Services, No**

Candles, No Flowers And No Children Of Survivors Coming To See The Horrors” “And No Acknowledgment Of Responsibility By The Perpetrators”



13 March 2015 Paul Eisen Blogspot

Dr Esti Rimmer wrote this after attending the 2001 Deir Yassin commemoration at the Peacock theatre in London. I haven't seen her since but I hope she won't mind my publishing this piece.

The piece, certainly written in kinder times, has on occasions caused some controversy. Some people have found the evoking of her childhood environment by an Israeli Jew somehow offensive. Others have seen the sympathetic publishing of an Israeli voice as itself some kind of treachery.

Others think it's a great piece and does much to bring out the meaning of Deir Yassin.

Anyway, judge for yourself.

By Dr Esti Rimmer

I may be one of the few Israelis who could never forget Deir Yassin for the simple reason that I could see the ruined village from my bedroom window, all through my childhood and growing up years.

Every night before I went to bed I would witness one of those glorious spectacular sunsets over the Jerusalem hills and would see the red fire ball of the sun slowly descend over Deir Yassin. My window was facing west and our apartment block was on the eastern slope of the valley, opposite the village of Deir Yassin.

Our neighbourhood was made up of these new apartment blocks built in the 1950s to house new immigrants and second-generation children of immigrants or refugees of lower-middle class, hard working Israelis. Many teachers, civil servants and nurses lived on those little flats in this new and vibrant community, ironically named Yeffe Nof - "beautiful view".

The stunning view from the windows, which made up for the modesty of the flats and the lack of lifts and central heating in the cold and windy Jerusalem winters, was the view of Deir Yassin.

As children we used to roam those hills, jumping between the beautifully stoned terraces of cultivated land were almond trees, olive trees and apple trees would each year blossom and give their fruits freely to us delighted children. Such an idyllic setting our parents thought to bring us up in as a new generation of children who will fear no persecution and would be able to run around in the hot caressing sun, barefoot and carefree.

However, the questions remained unanswered, who planted the trees and cultivated the valley?

Certainly not our parents who were busy building a new Jerusalem, civil and urban society.

And why was this village left to ruin?

And where were the people?

There was no one to answer these questions, not a teacher, a parent, a youth leader, not a sign, a mark, a stone to tell the story.

From my window, if you stretched your neck further south, you could see the hills on your left. The lower one Mount Hertzel Military Cemetery, the higher one Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial. As children we would visit, every year on Memorial Day - the day before Independence Day, the military cemetery.

Dressed in blue and white we would carry flowers and blue and white flags to put on the brave soldiers' graves. We would sing songs and hear prayers recited, we would see the parents of these soldiers with vacant looks in their eyes, often dry of tears looking at us school children from the same school their sons and daughters went to before they were sent to war.

Somehow, I could always spot the bereaved parents from the rest of the adults. The way they held their bodies, their gestures, awkward, stiff, frozen, as if they were there and not there. Later they would be the parents of my friends and classmates.

And on Holocaust Memorial days, our neat little group of blue and white school children carrying more flowers would march higher up the hill to Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial. There we would come upon that nameless dread, the nightmares after seeing the children's eyes in the photos in the museum, the silence the adults would hush into when someone mentioned the 'camps'.

My father's inability to talk about his perished family drove him to an early grave. My mother used to tell me more about her family, her childhood, her parents' house and wine shop, and the vineyards owned by her grandfather from which the wine was manufactured. All lost, never to be retrieved but not forgotten.

Yet, no one mentioned Deir Yassin to me.

It was as if the village, so prominent in my view, never existed.

Later as a young psychology student, I would visit the mental hospital set up on the hill of Deir Yassin, Kfar Shaul, the village of Saul.

Another naming irony, for which Israelis are so famous. Saul the mad, melancholic king who suffered from the bad spirits giving his name to a place set up to heal the tortured souls who survived the camps.

I would walk along the small cabins of the hospital which housed the fortunate of unfortunate survivors whose souls had long ago been murdered and make feeble attempts at conversation, at some normality and at some possibility of rehabilitation.

And I wondered, did those restless tormented souls know that the safe haven they had come to be healed in and freed from memories of massacres, had seen another massacre, the one that took place in the village around whose destroyed houses their rehabilitation hospital was set up?

I have already come to learn of it from the little that slipped through the walls of silence and to mourn even the loss of the beautiful view of the ruined village, which was later covered up by petrol tanks.

So can anybody forget the view of their childhood, the scene outside their bedroom window, which is etched in their mind's eye? My mother's was fertile hills and grapevines of Transylvania, mine the charred and destroyed village of Deir Yassin.

I grew up in a country established by people who are so good at remembering. The Jewish faith is marked by days of remembrance. It is memory that keeps us as human beings superior to other species.

Yet, my neighbourhood Yeffe-Noff was built on the denial of memory. "Look at the beautiful view" but don't see and don't accept that the children of the old and sick people in the hospital are the ones responsible for uprooting, expelling, exiling, killing, tormenting and humiliating other people's children.

But can we allow ourselves not to open our eyes and see all there is to see in the valley between Yad Vashem, with its lists of names of victims and acknowledgments of responsibility by torturers, and Deir Yassin's ruined stones with no list of names, no memorial services, no candles, no flowers and no children of survivors coming to see the horrors with their trusting and innocent eyes, and no acknowledgment of responsibility by the perpetrators?

If not, the whole of the land of my childhood will be covered with Mount Hertzal like graveyards, the few survivors wandering with their lost souls in the corridors of hospitals.

And the olive and almond and apple trees will give fruit to nobody's children.

MORE:

Deir Yassin Massacre

Wikipedia

The Deir Yassin massacre took place on April 9, 1948, when around 120 fighters from the Zionist paramilitary groups Irgun Zevai Leumi and Lohamei Herut Israel attacked Deir Yassin near Jerusalem, a Palestinian Arab village of roughly 600 people.

Around 107 villagers were killed during and after the battle for the village, including women and children — some were shot, while others died when hand grenades were thrown into their homes.

News of the killings sparked terror among Palestinians, encouraging them to flee from their towns and villages in the face of Jewish troop advances, and it strengthened the resolve of Arab governments to intervene, which they did five weeks later.

Heroic Occupation Forces Attack Palestinian Farmland And Farmers Buildings

3-10-2015 PUC

OCCUPIED JEURSALEM -- Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) demolished steel structures used as livestock barns and razed dozens of agricultural acres in Issawiya town in occupied Jerusalem on Tuesday.

According to Wadi al-Hilweh Information Center, the Israeli army excavators' bulldozed large tracts of agricultural lands, demolished stone walls and steel structures used by local farmers as store houses and livestock barns, and deliberately ruined the dirt roads used by farmers to access their fields.

Muhammad Abu al-Hummus, member of a local follow-up committee, pointed out that the targeted agricultural land is located in an area Israeli authorities have earmarked for a national park, which aims to turn 700 dunums of land in the Palestinian towns of Issawiya and al-Tur into a national park.

He noted that an Israeli planning council suspended the plan.

However, the local Israeli municipality has ignored the plan's suspension.

Heroic Occupation Forces Attack Palestinians At Rachel Corrie Commemoration: Unconscious Activist Arrested; “I Know You Are Trying To Mislead Us! You Will Be Arrested!’ Soldiers Shouted At The Unconscious Palestinian”



Palestinians try to treat an unconscious Palestinian in the village of Qaryut. Soldiers refused him treatment and decided to arrest and remove him in a military jeep. (photo: Activestills.org)

March 16, 2015 Text and photos by: Ahmad Al-Bazz/Activestills.org; +972 Magazine

During an olive planting action to commemorate the 12th anniversary of the death of American activist Rachel Corrie, Israeli forces arrest two Palestinians—one of them while unconscious.

Marking 12 years since the death of Rachel Corrie, activists planted 40 olive trees in the threatened lands of the West Bank village Qaryut, which is surrounded by many Israeli settlements and outposts. Corrie, an American activist, was killed in 2003 by an Israeli military bulldozer in Rafah, Gaza Strip, as she tried to block the demolition of a Palestinian home.

Activists hung pictures of Corrie on the newly planted trees. Pictures of Italian activist Vittorio Arrigoni and the British activist Thomas Hurndall were also hung trees. By the end of the event, Israeli forces arrested two Palestinians—one of them while unconscious.

The activists chose the village of Qaryut to plant trees in order to support the village's protest against the blocking of the main road connecting the village to Road 60, which leads to two main cities in the West Bank, Nablus and Ramallah.

The road was blocked one year ago, forcing villagers to take a different road and making their trip 20 kilometers longer.



Israeli soldiers arrive at the event, attacking and arresting participants. (photo: Activestills.org)

The road was closed dozens of times in the recent years, according to locals.

In the midst of the event, Israeli military jeeps came to the area and clashes with some Palestinian youth erupted. Palestinians threw stones at the soldiers while soldiers fired tear gas. A group of about 10 soldiers came through the village and surrounded the Palestinians. At one point, soldiers started to shoot live bullets in the air in order to repress the activity.

Soldiers tried to arrest many Palestinians but village women managed to protect most of them.

Soldiers decided to arrest an unconscious Palestinian who fell while he was running away. Villagers and activists tried to convince the soldiers to release him and demanded a Palestinian ambulance, but the soldiers refused.

“I know you are trying to mislead us! You will be arrested!” soldiers shouted at the unconscious Palestinian.

The soldiers eventually took him and the other detainee by the military jeep through the mountains, more than 200 meters away from the village.

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

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

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

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

RECEIVED:

“Mowing the Lawn” Understanding Ongoing Israeli Violence in Gaza

Public Meeting March 25:

**245 Sullivan Street | Furman Hall 216
New York University, New York City
6PM Wednesday, March 25**

Facebook Event:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/827560463945717>

“There is no other option but ‘mowing the lawn.’ There is no option for a political solution.”

Israeli military strategist Efraim Inbar on Israeli invasion of Gaza.

This summer, a series of Israeli incursions into the Occupied Palestinian Territory of Gaza killed over two thousand Palestinians, most of whom were civilians. This number includes roughly five hundred children.

Most human rights monitors concluded that Israel perpetrated a number of war crimes during this campaign, including deliberately targeting civilians, infrastructure, medical facilities and shelters. Months later, Gaza is still under a blockade, restricting reconstruction.

People in Gaza continue to die from the lingering effects of the war campaign.

Join us to hear about the ongoing predicament the people of Gaza face from eyewitness

Joe Catron, who was on the ground as a journalist in Gaza during the invasion, and NYU graduate student in history Jihad Abusalim, who grew up in Gaza.

Jihad Abusalim is a PhD Student in History and Hebrew and Judaic Studies at NYU. Born and raised in Gaza, he has worked closely with PalThink for Strategic Studies, Hadaf Center for Human Rights, and the Palestinian Center for Democracy and Conflict Resolution.

Currently, Jihad's academic research focuses on Gaza in the aftermath of the 1948 Nakba (xpulsion).

Joe Catron is a freelance reporter and Palestine solidarity activist.

Joe was present in Gaza during Israel's military offensive this summer, when he joined a group of internationals who tended to Gaza's hospitals and local rescue teams. He lived in Gaza for three and half years.

He has written for Electronic Intifada, Middle East Eye, and is the co-editor of The Prisoners' Diaries: Palestinian Voices from the Israeli Gulag, an anthology of accounts of Palestinian detainees freed during a 2011 prisoner exchange.



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