

Martha Gellhorn ~ A Furious Footnote In History



Bas Senstius 1957 - 2015

In a man's world she was one of the few women. Whereas her fellow journalists reported the war as if keeping score, she concentrated on the reality behind the statistics. She reported the Spanish Civil War, the Second World War, Vietnam and Panama. What is it that drives her to these hotbeds? An interview (conducted in 1991) with an angry old lady.

In 1983, and far into her seventies, Martha Gellhorn can contain her anger no longer. This time the destinations are Nicaragua and El Salvador. She still shudder at the memory.

'In Central-America was the first time I've ever felt real fear. You couldn't see or hear the danger approaching. Suddenly it was there.' Back at home England's Granta publishes a report of hers on an instance of torture. Described in minute detail from the victim's own account, smuggled out to her under the greatest secrecy - via the Red Cross - by a representative of a human rights organization in San Salvador.

'There are murders committed every day in El Salvador and it's costing the American taxpayer enormous sums of money, for no reason. We support these murderers. This has to be stopped.'

Her war coverage, collected in the book *The Face of War*, and her own choice of her peacetime writings *The View from the Ground*, are the distillations of sixty years of anger and indignation at the state of affairs in the world in general and in her native United States in particular.

'The reason I've been able to travel all over the world and talk to anybody I want, is that I appear to be harmless, unimportant. I don't make notes, it's just like talking to a stranger in the street. If you have a photographer with you or take notes, people notice straight away. They become aware of the situation and tense up, they become cautious, less natural. And, in any case, I wasn't important enough to have a photographer along.'

In the television film *Hemingway* Martha Gellhorn is presented as a fanatical, blonde and ambitious journalist. Fanatical she has never been, blonde she has and if it's ambitious to want to be heard, than she is ambitious. Before she met Hemingway, on holiday in Florida, she had already written a book about unemployment in America in the thirties, entitled *The Trouble I've Seen*. Later she published short stories, ten novels and account of the travels: *Travels with Myself and Another*.

She married Hemingway in 1940, but the marriage wasn't to survive the Second World War.

'I was married to that terrible man for four of five years and am punished daily for that. I don't want to see his name in your article', she decrees with a determined look in her eyes. At eighty-one Gellhorn still shows traces of being the beauty to whom Hemingway dedicated *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.

In the Spring of last year (1990) Bill Buford, Editor-in-Chief of *Granta* receives a telephone call from Martha Gellhorn. This time it's Panama. Her report is rife with distrust of the official American version of events. Distrust also of the American and Panamanian authorities. Five thousand words, one for each of the estimated number of dead. The number of injured is unknown. 'They remain unseen. The Panamanian authorities have admitted that in one night fifteen thousand families were made homeless.'

The invasion of Panama was given the code-name *Just Cause*. Gellhorn laughs scornfully. 'They're so inexperienced, the Americans, they don't realize how incompetent they are, how clumsily they handled the military operation in Panama. All you hear is that our boys are wonderful, there were only twenty-two

American casualties, and that was because they ended up shooting at each other. No, it was a great success, our boys have come home and the news disappears from the front pages within three days. Nobody's interested anymore.'

According to Gellhorn, her article, *The Invasion of Panama*, is the only one that speaks clearly and decisively of the unnecessary damage done and the enormous cruelty perpetrated by the Americans. 'There's no criticism any more in America. With even the best of intentions there's no way that I can describe the reporting there as journalism, it's more like a kind of advertising campaign. What they call 'investigative journalists' nowadays - people who run back and forth asking the right people the right questions - have either died or can't find a publisher. I don't have a regular spot in any publication in the United States either.'

'There's no possibility of getting such a large number of words into print in the English speaking world anywhere other than Granta. It used to be possible in the Atlantic in America but that's gone to hell, I don't even know whether Harper's still exists. In the whole of the United States there's nothing other than the New York Review of Books, which helps support Granta and takes the occasional article. Or the New Yorker. That's the critical voice. A wonderful magazine, the New Yorker. But they'll never publish anything of mine because they write 'cold' there. I can't do that, I'm not a New Yorker journalist.' She doesn't have any explanation for the lack of critical journalism. 'It's probably a result of the Reagan era. That spread a thick layer of glue over everybody's brain.'

It's three in the afternoon and Martha Gellhorn pours whiskey. The writer had lived in Wales, twenty-five kilometers from the outside world, for more than twenty years now, but our conversation takes place in her pied-a-terre in London. 'Luckily they don't deliver the newspaper in Wales. Imagine me getting a newspaper every day and seeing what they're up to, in detail, I'd probably go mad with rage. What I get from Newsweek makes me angry enough already.'

The paradox in her life is that she searches for peace and tranquility yet cannot resist the temptation to take off to the world's worst hotbeds, at every opportunity. From the Spanish Civil War to the invasion of Panama. Lifelong freelance war-correspondent, against her better judgment. 'I find it abnormal that I still get so agitated. You should have stopped with all that at my age, surely?'



Photo: biography.com

In 1938 Gellhorn is in Czechoslovakia, she can no longer remember what she was doing there exactly, 'probably writing and trying to hold off the war'. The day after the Munich Agreement was signed, whereby, in effect, Czechoslovakia was handed over to Hitler, she stormed into the American Embassy in Prague. A new American diplomat, George Kennan, had arrived there three or four days earlier. In his memoirs he describes her as 'an attractive young lady wearing a collegiate American fur coat and tossing, in her indignation, a most magnificent head of golden hair.' It's true that she was furious. 'Why aren't you doing anything?', she demanded of him. Huge numbers of Czechs were fleeing from the Germans as they invaded the Sudetenland. 'Go to hell!', she shouted at him as she left the office, having achieved nothing. At the railway station she witnessed the panic: 'In his memoirs he represents me as some kind of raving lunatic, chasing madly around after false passports. But, in Prague, I saw people throwing themselves in front of trains in desperation.'

'I serve as a kind of footnote in that book. I am too, a footnote in history.'

A year later, in December 1939, she arrives in Helsinki. It turns out to be the day before the Russians invade Finland. She writes: 'The war had come too fast and all the faces and all the eyes looked stunned and unbelieving.' Coldly she writes down what she sees: 'Close to a big filling station a bus lay on its side, already burned out, and beside it in the street was the first dead man I saw in this war.'

Previously, in 1934, she had visited Germany and had met a number of young national-socialists. The encounter was not without consequence. 'I was no longer a pacifist, I had become an anti-fascist.' Back in America she started preparations for her journey to Europe. She meets Hemingway in Key West, Florida, and a relationship begins. She shares not only a passion for swimming, writing and

travel with him, but also indignation about the Spanish Civil War and the attitude of the rest of Europe.

Hemingway persuades Gellhorn to write. The editor of the magazine *Collier's*, Charles Colebaugh, gives her her assignment: Spain. There, for the first time in her life, she comes face to face with war. 'I felt then (and still do) that the Western democracies had two commanding obligations: they must save their honour by assisting a young, attacked fellow democracy, and they must save their skin, by fighting Hitler and Mussolini, at once, in Spain, instead of waiting till later when the cost in human suffering would be unimaginably greater. Arguments were useless during the Spanish War and ever after; the carefully fostered prejudice against the Republic of Spain remains impervious to time and facts.'

In contrast with her male counterparts, who work mostly for newspapers, she is in the fortunate position of being able to take her time. 'Most of the men wrote a kind of sports report, like: "we took such-and-such mountain top, peak 442, and lost this-or-that area.". That what the newspapers wanted to hear, and so that's why they concentrated so much on the precise details, troop movements and that kind of thing. That didn't interest me.'

'I wrote very fast, as I had to; and I was always afraid that I would forget the exact sound, smell, words, gestures which were special to this moment and this place.'

Hemingway's style influences her language, such as the brusque first sentences. 'At first the shells went over; you could hear the thud as they left the Fascist's guns, a sort of groaning cough; then you heard them fluttering toward you.' Or: 'At the end of the day the wind swooped down from the mountains into Madrid and blew the broken glass from the windows of the shelled houses.' And: 'In Barcelona, it was perfect bombing weather.'

It's this kind of keen observation and eye for detail that typify her reports about Spain. Like the one about a major who shows her a rocket containing propaganda material saying: '... and sometimes I write an answer and we send them back. It is quite a discussion.' The longer it goes on, the grimmer her reports become, and she herself the more desperate. But she is never afraid. As she says in the last sentence of her last report from Spain, 'How can I explain that you feel safe at

this war, knowing that the people around you are good people.'

During the Spanish Civil War she gets to know the legendary photographer Robert Capa. 'I was crazy about Capa, he was so brave. As a writer you're far less exposed to danger. There were no telephoto lenses in those days, you had to go right up to the subject. The photographers were defenseless, immediately recognizable to everybody.' They travelled together a great deal and it was Capa who convinced her in her decision to divorce Hemmingway.

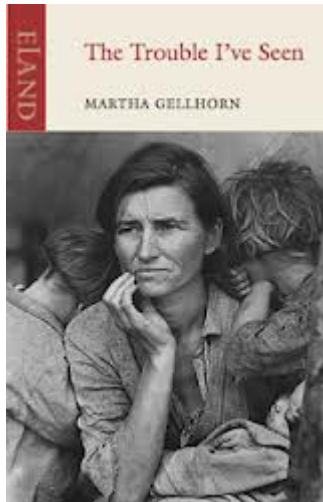
The suggestion that the risks the photographer used to take are comparable to those taken by the cameraman nowadays invokes a burst of anger from her. 'Here I see how the media reacted to the Gulf Crisis and find it disgusting, sickening. It's vanity, conceit, self-importance. It disgusts me. Even the bravest, like Capa in the Spanish Civil War, didn't show off their bravery. They are there of their own free will and the others are there because they have no choice, they have to be there. From the soldiers to the civilians. That's why nowadays the position of the war-correspondent is such a privilege. It's dangerous as you want it to be. It's up to you. It's not your job to be seen, it's your job to see and to pass it on.'

To the question of why Roosevelt didn't show any interest in the fate of the Republicans in Spain, Gellhorn reacts irritably: 'Their hearts were in the right place. Both of them, Franklin and his wife Eleanor, were on the side of the Republicans in Spain. He did explain once how it was that he couldn't do anything: because of the Catholic vote in America. The American Catholics were convinced that all the nuns in Spain were raped every day by the Republicans, and that the Republicans were hard line communists. Don't forget, in those days American politics were isolationist. First and foremost Roosevelt was a politician.'

'I also tried to arrange grain export to Spain, he felt for that too and sent me to see Cordell Hull, who was Secretary of State at the time. In the end they didn't dare to do it, though personally they were in favour. The Catholic church in America was very powerful and well organized. On top of that there was that permanent fear of the 'Red Peril'. The 'red scare' in America began about the day after the Russian Revolution'.

Eventually Franco achieves victory. As she says in *The Face of War*, 'All of us who believed in the Causa of the Republic will mourn the Republic's defeat and the death of its defenders, forever, and will continue to love the land of Spain and the

beautiful people, who are among the noblest and unluckiest on Earth.' During a visit to Spain in 1960 she decides never to return there. Until she hears, on the radio news, of the death of 'that detestable tyrant' on the morning of 20th November 1975. She boards an aeroplane the very same afternoon. 'It was like coming home.'



After the publication of her first book, *The Trouble I've Seen*, she reports to Harry Hopkins, a friend of Roosevelt's and head of the FERA (Federal Emergency Relief Administration), an organization created under the New Deal measures instigated by President Roosevelt. For a whole year she travels about the country writing report after report on the conditions lived in by the unemployed of the time - the thirties - in America.

A few of them appear in *The View from the Ground* under the title *Dear Mr. Hopkins*. After a year's travel she steps into Hopkins' office indignant about the poor treatment of the 'have-nots'. He advises her to go and speak to the Roosevelts. 'She, Eleanor, was an infallible compass, never deviating from her moral standpoint. She always got things just right. She came from a good background and had a perfectly humane attitude towards people who needed help. He was an extremely charming man, witty, and at the same time a wonderfully practical politician. He was a pragmatist, she wasn't.'

At the hands of the FBI Gellhorn loses her job at the FERA, but the president rings her up to offer the White House as a temporary residence. 'The press continually attacked the Roosevelts personally, publicly and politically. The press then was controlled by the Republicans, just as it is nowadays. That still has a certain amount of influence on reporting, to the extent that I think it would be quite difficult to get an article published that was critical of Eisenhower, not that I want to write one, but still.'

'Nowadays the presidency is sacrosanct, the White House a holy place. Not in those days. This grandeur nowadays, they weren't like that at all. Just imagine, Mrs. Roosevelt even drove herself around in a little car to do her shopping. When I lived there, my friends used to come round and visit me, they'd just walk right

in.'

The presidents that occupied the White House after Roosevelt she calls 'cheap proles'. Laughing: 'The Roosevelts had always lived in large houses, they were used to it.'

Her friendship with Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt helped protect her against the terror of the McCarthy era, of that she is convinced. 'An American communist was about as dangerous as a newborn lamb. I don't think that I was really on the blacklist. I was living in Italy with my adopted son at the time. I was accused of heading a communist cell from Portugal.'

'The terminology "left and right" is nonsense. Are you left if you're concerned about the welfare of the homeless, the unemployed, and if it bothers you when institutions are closed down and the patients turned out onto the street? I'd say those sensibilities are what make you human. It's as though being at all concerned for the less fortunate in society means you're left. Until recently it meant that you were an communist, in America. In that case I definitely am a communist because these things do bother me. What you're actually saying is that communists are the only good, caring people in existence. Being right means that to you the only thing that matters is money, a market economy, and tough luck to those who don't make it. So, it's just another word for stupid.'

'Liberal democracy is as much of a joke, too. In America you get a choice of two presidential candidates, neither of whom you want as a president. I still vote, because I believe in it, but I choose the less bad of the two. You know that on their way to the top they've sold their souls to the devil. You know that everybody in Congress needs six million dollars to finance an election campaign. And where do you get that from? And whose interests do you then buy with that money? It's certainly better than a police state, but as E.M. Forster put it: 'Two Cheers For Democracy' Okay, one and a half. Capitalism? One.'

The day before we spoke she had returned from Gozo, an island near Malta, where she had been snorkeling far away from events in the world. 'To tell you the truth I hate just swimming, it's so boring.' Deep-sea diving, on the other hand, is going to far. 'Human being just don't belong under water, it's full of terrifying things. Have you heard of the scorpion fish? It looks just like a stone, but stand on it and you die within seconds.' Gellhorn sticks to snorkeling. 'You should regard my passion for snorkeling as a form of sightseeing. Just looking around, I've

always done that. I like to know what's going on.'

Swimming seems almost like a kind of ritual cleansing for her. As if she'd like to wash away all traces of the misery she has witnessed either directly or via the news. So it was, in 1944, as she dived into the Adriatic while nearby Polish and American troops were battling to drive the Germans back. As she wrote in *The Face of War*: 'We swam around, observing with interest that our artillery was shelling the Germans to the right (...). Then we began to plan what we would do in case the Germans broke through and we were in swimming during this operation. We decided it would be wisest just to go on swimming.'

A month earlier she had locked herself in a lavatory on a hospital ship bound for Europe. Without official papers she wasn't allowed to leave the country, and yet, thanks to her ingenuity, set foot on the French coast on 5th June 1944. Hemingway had stolen her job at Collier's. They had chosen in favour of his fame when, behind his wife's back, he had approached them with a view to reporting D-Day. Hemingway had described her as the bravest woman he had ever met, 'braver, even, than most men'. It can't have been easy for him to write something like that. Their divorce is finalized after the war.



In *The Face of War* Gellhorn criticizes, in retrospect, the attitude of the Western democracies. 'Our own history wasn't exactly what you'd call one hundred percent clean and noble, and you couldn't always back our leaders in all their actions, on the contrary. We'd abandoned Spain and betrayed Czechoslovakia quickly and easily. We small-mindedly refused asylum to Jews and anti-fascists who were fleeing from Hitler in fear of their lives. (...) all disgrace and shameful opportunism.'

In 1949 Gellhorn witnesses Soekarno's murder of Dutch citizens, she is in Java reporting on the tail-end of the war. Then she has had enough. She moves to Mexico, followed by Italy, London and East Africa. She swims, writes novels, travel stories, and reports on the trial of Eichmann for the Atlantic. She refers to her article as the private conscience. 'The private conscience is not only the last protection of the civilized world, it is the one guarantee of the dignity of man.'

In the end, her reason for leaving her fatherland, once and for all, is an undeclared war. 'Vietnam changed my life, because my government and my people were Nazi's.' In 1966 Gellhorn travels to Vietnam for the English newspaper The Guardian. The South Vietnamese authorities order her expulsion after two months. Despite the censorship she imposed upon herself. She wrote only six reports there.

'I was the first person to write about that war as it actually was. Murder. We murdered the people we were supposed to be saving. But to write that with the anger I felt at the time ... I'd immediately have been branded a communist. Nobody would have read it. Or published it. Not even The Guardian. Even here in England nobody was concerned yet. In 1966 there still wasn't any opposition. You had to be extremely careful how you commented on the atrocities being committed in Vietnam. Otherwise they'd have dismissed it as communist propaganda. I wanted people to take notice. I was balanced between two yawning chasms, but I felt I had to be published.'

She doesn't mince words about the stream of literature on Vietnam: 'All the books are written with self-pity. Including the one by Michael Herr, too. The films are the same. All those books are about how terrible it all was for the journalists, how dangerous. Okay, so we were fired on, just like everybody else in a war. For the average reporter it was no problem at all, it was an easy life compared to that of the Vietnamese.'

'Now they're starving in Vietnam and flee the country in small boats, who can blame them? One crater verges on another. The ground is like cement, impossible to plough. Women are still giving birth to monsters as a result of our poison gas. America still manipulates everything to prevent any international aid for them.'

In 1966, totally disillusioned, she goes to stay with her mother to write a novel. 'To avoid a nervous breakdown. ' She tells of speeches, against the war in Vietnam, given by her and a friend in the cellar of a church. 'For an audience of six or seven.' She tries in vain to get back into Vietnam. 'I was the only journalist who wasn't allowed into the country, for the simple reason that it was too soon.' For years she struggles against this blockade. 'Later, after the Tet offensive of '68, you could say whatever you wanted. I was so happy that there were widespread demonstrations held after Tet. I didn't go back to America until 1970.' Only a visit. She decides never to live there again.

“Two things have changed me: the defeat of the republicans in Spain and Dachau.’ She was in Dachau in May 1945, when the German armies surrendered unconditionally to the allies. Prisoners rush to greet the Americans and are electrocuted on the camp fences. Her short report has the effect of a slap in the face. She concludes: ‘Still, Dachau seemed to me the most suitable place in Europe to hear the news of victory. For surely this war was made to abolish Dachau, and all the other places like Dachau, and everything that Dachau stood for, and to abolish it forever.’ That visit was to shape her opinions for the rest of her life as regards her attitude toward Israel.

Gellhorn goes there in 1949, in 1956 and in 1967, she refers to Nasser as a ‘Panarabian Hitler’, is ecstatic over the victory in the Six Day War (‘The Arab armies were fighting for slogans; the Israelis were fighting for the existence of their country.’) and in her articles is not afraid to criticize the United Nations and policy in the refugee camps. ‘UNRWA officials (United Nations Relief and Works Agency) were as much Israel-haters as the Arabs were.’

She hasn’t a single word of praise for the Palestinians’ leader. ‘I don’t trust Arafat one little bit. He’s a multi-millionaire, they all are. Protection money. The Maffia are paid protection money. The PLO are paid protection money. Kuwait paid, Saudi-Arabia paid. They didn’t want to lose the shifty little murderers and so they gave them money. And the PLO leaders keep it themselves, they never give money to the refugee camps. Sorry, but whatever Israel does - and I realize they have a terrible government, every Israeli I know hates the government, but every country has a bad government at one time or another - whatever Israel does to protect itself is fine by me.’

It amazes her that nobody has yet said: ‘Thank God they bombed that nuclear installation in Baghdad in 1981.’

‘That was an extremely difficult and dangerous operation. The Israelis have always made it clear that they’re prepared to talk with moderate Palestinians. And lo and behold! Most of the moderates have been murdered. By the PLO. And I can well imagine that they don’t want to talk with the PLO. Why should the Israelis talk with the PLO? They’ve done more damage to the country than the IRA here. Believe me, the Palestinians are terrified of the same murderers who’ve silenced the moderates. I can’t see a way out either, but I have a very strong suspicion that the Palestinian refugee problem is being carefully nurtured by the

Arabs.'

'In all honesty, I sometimes think the Arabs are hopeless. Insane. Their religion is all wrong, all religions are all wrong but this is the worst. When Sadat visited Israel that was fantastic, but it cost him his life. Whoever's next will have to be more careful.'

She doesn't hold much faith in the diplomatic manoeuvres of King Hussein of Jordan either. In one of her reports on the Six Day War she quotes his last radio speech before the cease-fire: 'Kill the Jews wherever you find them. Kill them with your hands, with your nails and teeth.'

'Saddam Hussein of Iraq has always been a monster, and yet we all supplied him with arms, not only the Soviet Union. The television company CNN has blown the whole thing out of all proportion, made a media show of it all. And for the most uninformed people in the whole world, the Americans, that is. Nothing has ever happened to them, and whatever does happen they're always safe. And all those important men in Washington, like that monster Kissinger, who want to attack at the earliest opportunity. With no idea of what a war is actually like. The media really are failing the public in that area. Patriotic pathos, our boys and our planes, we're ready and we can beat that madman in Baghdad. Instead of being terrified of what's happening there, they're excited by it. Instead of trying to find a diplomatic solution, and applying themselves to that, they picture their tanks rolling across the desert, and they love it. Yet we don't even know whether all the equipment will work in that heat. The boys there are having a lot of trouble getting used to the heat, it's only logical.'

Still it appears that not all the representatives of the media are interested in their own image. 'There's a girl in Amman for the BBC, Kate Adie. She's on screen almost every evening, and what she talks about is worthy of attention. She talks about the tens of thousands of Asian refugees. The Western world hasn't yet shown any interest at all in that. People are dying of malnutrition and disease. She's there and talks about it each evening. Good for her, that's of some use.'

She still has plans. Gellhorn would like to go to Germany. The last time she was there, all her preconceptions were confirmed. 'That appalling characteristic obedience. They obey the authorities. It's a fatal characteristic. That's how you get dictators.'

'Look, I don't believe that even without that idiot woman, Mrs. T., the Conservatives can keep England out of Europe, because one way or another England and France have to stick together to counterbalance German domination. It gives me goose-pimples, it's terrifying. Or perhaps they've decided it's easier to rule the world economically than militarily - that's a proven fact - so than it's up to the other countries to sort out within the EEC. But it scares me, a massive country, an enormous workforce, this enormous partiality to obedience.'

She'd like to go back to Germany to see what's changed. Whether anything has changed, to satisfy her curiosity. But she wonders what journal would be interested in her findings. 'I'm also looking for a warm place to spend the winter, a place where I can snorkel undisturbed. Do you know of anywhere?'

—

First published 1991

Read more:

http://www.marthagellhorn.com/martha_gellhorn.htm

<http://www.theatlantic.com/past/docs/gellhorn.htm>

The Gordon Parks Foundation



Gordon Parks ~ Self Portrait,
ca.1948

Gordon Parks was one of the seminal figures of twentieth century photography. A humanitarian with a deep commitment to social justice, he left behind a body of work that documents many of the most important aspects of American culture from the early 1940s up until his death in 2006, with a focus on race relations, poverty, civil rights, and urban life. In addition, Parks was also a celebrated composer, author, and filmmaker who interacted with many of the most prominent people of his era - from politicians and artists to celebrities and athletes.

Born into poverty and segregation in Kansas in 1912, Parks was drawn to photography as a young man when he saw images of migrant workers published in a magazine. After buying a camera at a pawnshop, he taught himself how to use it and despite his lack of professional training, he found employment with the Farm Security Administration (FSA), which was then chronicling the nation's social conditions. Parks quickly developed a style that would make him one of the most celebrated photographers of his age, allowing him to break the color line in professional photography while creating remarkably expressive images that consistently explored the social and economic impact of racism.

Go to: <http://www.gordonparksfoundation.org/artist>

Great Lakes Of Africa ~ From Problems To Solutions



“People are the problem, People are the solution” the keynote speaker’s concluding words at the first [*Great Lakes of Africa Conference*](#) held in Uganda in May 2017, generated a flurry of nods and agreements. Entebbe hosted over three hundred delegates at the shores of Lake Victoria,

to discuss sustainable solutions for the pressing problems of the African Great Lakes. Spanning across 11 countries (Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia), the African Great Lakes region is large and indispensable as it provides livelihoods to millions. It was interesting to see a variety of stakeholders, including government leaders, regional and basin authorities, inter-governmental organizations, development and funding agencies, non-governmental organizations, community groups and the private sector come together to discuss challenges and solutions for this special region. Presentations made by delegates resounded the problems of pollution, over extraction of natural resources, pressure on natural resources, changes in land use and need for further research in many areas. For me, it echoed some of my thoughts on what I have observed in the Lake Chilwa Basin in southern Malawi. Lake Chilwa, although a smaller lake compared to the giants such as Lake Victoria and Lake Tanganyika, is very important for the millions that live in its basin. And indeed, I have also seen in the Lake Chilwa Basin that people are the cause of its problems and certainly, they are the solution too.

Why people are the problem comes to light when one looks at anthropogenic causes of Lake Basin changes. They include watershed deforestation causing sedimentation in lakes, over abstraction of water for irrigation leading to lowered water levels of lakes, poor solid and sewage waste management leading to eutrophication, use of toxic chemical for agriculture in lake basins and competing land uses leading to reduced land for conservation. Several examples were

presented including the case of Kenya's Lake Turkana which is renowned as the world's largest desert lake. Hydropower development and large-scale irrigation plantations have depleted river inflow into the lake. As a result, the lake level has already fallen two metres, and the local fishing industry has taken a toll. It was chilling to hear at the conference that this lake has been likened to "an African Aral Sea in the making". Nearby, at Lake Victoria, which employs over 1 million people, over the years, impacts of eutrophication and climate change, are threatening its critical ecosystem services. While, Lake Tanganyika has experienced various ecological changes including lake warming and heavy pressure on various fisheries resources. Lake Malawi is also no exception, where degraded habitats, declining fish stocks and agriculture runoff into the lake all threaten livelihoods of those depending on this lake. Almost all presenters accepted that rapid population growth in the region puts tremendous pressure on the natural resources in the ecosystems. Some called for an integrated approach, where women's needs especially that of family planning should be considered and population numbers managed.

The flip side of the coin is how people become the solution in the Great Lakes region. This was narrated by many presenters with examples of success stories across the great lakes region, which was inspirational. I listened to presenters from Birdlife International, who spoke about using the concept of "Altitudinal gradients" within the African Great Lakes Region (AGLR) which have extraordinary Biodiversity and Ecosystem Service Values. The CRAG (Climate Resilient Altitudinal Gradients) approach uses multi-scale landscape units with a minimum altitudinal range of 1,000 meters to come up with a CRAG Intervention Plan (CIP), which is spatially explicit and designed to enhance climate resilience based on the best available scientific and socio-economic evidence. This has helped deal with soil erosion and sedimentation in the rivers and lakes and examples from Kivu-Rusizi Watersheds was provided. Elsewhere in Uganda, Rwanda and Malawi, development of best practices for cage fish farming has helped to increase fish production. While at Lake Tanganyika, Collaborative Fisheries Management (CFM) is bearing fruit and communities are gaining improved awareness on fisheries policies. Successes from Lake Malawi was reported regarding community-managed fish sanctuaries; ecosystem and rights based approach to participatory fisheries management; integrated multiple-technology catchment activities to protect key fish breeding grounds; and improved fish handling and processing techniques, such as Vessel Monitoring

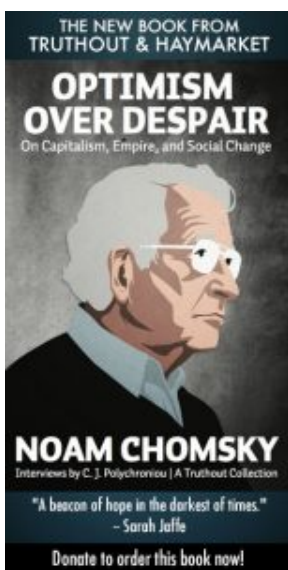
System (VMS) to manage commercial trawlers and reduce conflicts between artisanal and commercial fishermen. Good science is being combined with local knowledge to help communities come up with solutions in a participatory manner was illustrated using several examples from the region. In Ethiopia, Lake Victoria Basin countries and in Malawi, “Population, Health and Environment” (PHE) approach is bearing good results. Breaking siloed approaches and moving towards a more integrated approach was the way forward, according to some presenters.

Zooming in to Lake Chilwa in Malawi, where I had worked for five years, I have seen both sides of the coin where people pose problems and solutions to this fragile ecosystem. Rapid deforestation increasing runoff and soil erosion; increasing demand for agriculture land causing farmers to farm on hill slopes, river banks and wetlands, causing siltation in the lake; disposal of wastes and excessive use of fertilisers and pesticides in the catchments have all contributed to Lake Chilwa’s problems. This results in loss of habitats, poor water quality and decline in provisioning ecosystem services. But the paramount problem that drives majority of the difficulties mentioned is that of population growth. We cannot ignore the aspect of population growth when it comes to managing fragile ecosystems such as those in the Great Lakes region. Africa’s population has grown from 582 million in 1987 to 1.1 billion in 2013 ([World Bank Indicators, 2017](#)). When large populations are dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods, it is no surprise that their activities cause stress to the lake ecosystems. Avoiding to address this reality is detrimental to us. Many presenters converged at a prognosis that for long-term sustainable management in all the lakes necessitates a stronger socio-ecological approach and population growth was mentioned as a factor exacerbating the problems in several countries in this region. In the Lake Chilwa Basin, the PHE approach was found to be more effective and responsive to community needs, rather than sectoral approaches. Consequently, sustainable management of Great Lakes region is not only an environmental issue or socio-economic issue, but also a population issue and we as people need to open our eyes to this reality and together come up with solutions. Let us the people, stand together, for the sake of the millions who depend on the life giving Great Lakes of Africa.

Dr. Deepa Pullanikkatil - Post-Doctoral Research Fellow, Rhodes University, South Africa - Founder, Abundance, Malawi

Go to: <http://www.deepapullanikkatil.com/>

Is Capitalism In Crisis? Latest Trends Of A System Run Amok



To order the book:
see below

Having survived the financial meltdown of 2008, corporate capitalism and the financial masters of the universe have made a triumphant return to their “business as usual” approach: They are now savoring a new era of wealth, even as the rest of the population continues to struggle with income stagnation, job insecurity and unemployment.

This travesty was made possible in large part by the massive US government bailout plan that essentially rescued major banks and financial institutions from bankruptcy with taxpayer money (the total commitment on the part of the government to the bank bailout plan was over \$16 trillion). In the meantime, corporate capitalism has continued running recklessly to the precipice with regard to the environment, as profits take precedence not only over people but over the sustainability of the planet itself.

Capitalism has always been a highly irrational socioeconomic system, but the constant drive for accumulation has especially run amok in the age of high finance, privatization and globalization.

Today, the question that should haunt progressive-minded and radical scholars and activists alike is whether capitalism itself is in crisis, given that the latest trends in the system are working perfectly well for global corporations and the rich, producing new levels of wealth and increasing inequality. For insights into the above questions, I interviewed [David M. Kotz](#), professor of economics at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and author of *The Rise and Fall of Neoliberal Capitalism* (Harvard University Press, 2015).

C.J. Polychroniou: David, corporate capitalism and the masters of the universe have bounced back quite nicely from the global financial crisis of 2008. Is this an indication of the system's resilience, or do we need to think about larger considerations, such as the trajectory of the class struggle in the contemporary world, the role of ideology and the power of the state?

David M. Kotz: The severe phase of the economic and financial crisis ended in the summer of 2009. By then the banks had been bailed out and the Great Recession ended, as production stopped falling and began to rise in North America and Europe. As you say, since then profits have recovered quite well. However, normal capitalist economic expansion has not resumed, but instead, global capitalism has been stuck in stagnation.

Stagnation means no economic growth or very slow economic growth. Stagnation has afflicted most of the developed countries since 2010, with some countries, such as Greece, still in a severe depression. US GDP growth has averaged only 2.1 percent per year since the bottom of the Great Recession in 2009. That is by far the slowest expansion following a recession since the end of World War II. Even mainstream economists, such as Lawrence Summers and Paul Krugman, have recognized that the economy is stuck in a severe stagnation.

In the US, the official unemployment rate has fallen to a low level, but that is due to millions of people being dropped from the official labor force as a result of giving up looking for work after finding none for a long period. Most of the new jobs pay low wages and provide little or no job security. Meanwhile, the rich continue to get still richer.

The long-lasting stagnation has brought stagnating wages and worsening job opportunities. This creates a severe problem for capitalism, even with rising corporate profits and growing wealth for the top 1 percent. This problem has an ideological and a political dimension. While capitalism always brings a high degree of inequality, it is tolerable for those holding the short end of the stick as long as living standards are rising and job opportunities are good for most people. A long period of stagnation delegitimizes the existing system. As growing numbers of people turn against “the system” and the elites who run it, a political crisis develops. The bourgeois democracy that normally acts to stabilize capitalism turns into a source of instability, as anti-establishment parties and candidates start winning elections.

What do you consider to be the latest and most critical trends in the workings of capitalism in the 21st century?

Not only has capitalism failed to bring economic progress in this century, it has brought worsening conditions for the majority. The reason for this is rooted in the transformation of capitalism around 1980, when the post-World War II “regulated capitalism” was rapidly replaced by “neoliberal capitalism.” Regulated capitalism arose mainly because of the serious challenge to capitalism from socialist and communist movements around the world and from the Communist Party-ruled states after World War II. The new regulated capitalism was based on capital-labor compromise. It led to the construction of welfare states, state regulation of business, and trade union-led rising wages and more stable jobs for working people.

In the 1970s, regulated capitalism entered a period of economic crisis indicated by a long decline in the rate of profit in the US and Western Europe. The capitalist classes of the developed countries responded by abandoning the capital-labor compromise, attacking the trade union movement, lifting state regulation of business and banking, and making drastic cuts in the welfare state and in the various forms of social provision. This gave us the neoliberal form of capitalism.

The neoliberal transformation resolved the economic crisis of the 1970s from the viewpoint of capital, as profits began to rise again. That transformation freed the banks from state regulation, setting off the process of financialization. It rewrote the rules of the global system, promoting an increasingly globally integrated world economy.

Neoliberal capitalism gave rise to some 25 years of relatively stable economic conditions after 1980, although economic growth was slower than it had been in the preceding period. Capitalists became much richer, but the promised benefits for the majority never emerged. After 1980, working people's wages and job conditions steadily worsened through 2007. However, as long as the economy expanded at a reasonable rate, it was difficult to challenge neoliberalism. Every form of capitalism eventually enters a phase of structural crisis, and in 2008 the superficial stability of neoliberal capitalism gave way to severe economic and financial crisis, followed by stagnation.

We live in the age of the financialization of the planet, in which financial institutions and markets are expanding. In what ways does financialization increase capitalism's inherent tendencies toward economic dependence, inequality and exploitation?

Starting in the late 1980s, a trend of financialization began, meaning a growing role for financial markets, financial institutions and financial motives in the economy. This is not the first period of financialization in capitalist history — financialization also developed in the late 19th century and in the 1920s. It is an inherent tendency in capitalism, which is released in periods of loose regulation of the financial sector, but it has been halted and even reversed when the state or other institutions have intervened to block or reverse it, as occurred after 1900 and again after the 1930s. Contemporary financialization is a product of deregulation of the financial sector along with the effects of neoliberal ideology and other features of neoliberalism.

Since 2008 the trend in financialization has been mixed. There is an ongoing political struggle over financial regulation in the US. The giant banks have so far faced some restrictions on their ability to engage in highly risky and predatory activities, although other financial institutions continue to pursue such activities. Some major nonfinancial corporations, such as General Electric, have abandoned their financial divisions to concentrate on manufacturing and other non-financial activities.

Whether financialized or not, capitalism itself brings rising exploitation and worsening inequality, unless it is restrained by states, trade unions and other institutions. The financialization of capitalism accentuates the tendency toward rising inequality by promoting new forms of profit-making and generating huge fortunes for unproductive actors, as we have seen in recent decades. The most

important determinant of the trend in inequality is the relative power of capital versus labor. The neoliberal transformation of capitalism empowered capital and weakened labor, which has enabled employers to drive down wages while CEO salaries skyrocketed.

If the degree of financialization stops growing or even declines, inequality would not decline as long as capitalism retains its neoliberal form. Only in a closely regulated form of capitalism, based on capital-labor compromise, has inequality actually declined, as in the post-World War II decades.

Do you think that income and wealth inequality levels pose a legitimization crisis for capitalism in the 21st century? I ask this question in light of the rise and decline of the Occupy movement and other recent efforts to steer contemporary societies toward a more rational and humane social order.

There is indeed a legitimization crisis for the dominant world system at this time, as discussed above. However, there is a political and ideological struggle over how to define the dominant system and the direction of change that is needed. Leftists and socialists understand that the dominant world system is capitalism, and they have targeted the 1 percent, that is, the capitalists. This was evident in the Occupy Movement and other left-wing upsurges around the world since 2010-2011. The growing oppression and suffering has made millions of people, especially the young, receptive to the socialist critique of capitalism.

However, various extreme right-wing groups have also ridden the wave of anger at the discredited ruling class, with greater success than the left at this time. The right-wing response has taken the form of right-wing repressive nationalism, which targets an ill-defined "elite," which it promises to replace. Right-wing nationalism blames the problems of ordinary people on religious, ethnic and national minorities.... It portrays the ruling elite as weak-kneed "liberals" who are afraid to confront the scapegoated groups. It offers a strongman ruler who will vanquish the scapegoated groups and restore an imagined past glory of the nation.

The recent trend of political polarization is not surprising in a period of long-lasting structural crisis of capitalism that takes the form of stagnation. Such a crisis can be resolved in only three ways: One, the emergence of a right-wing nationalist statist regime; two, a period of progressive reform of capitalism based on capital-labor compromise; three, a transition beyond capitalism to socialism.

The last stagnation of capitalism, in the 1920s, gave rise to all three directions of change. Right wing nationalist regimes in the form of fascism arose in Germany, Italy, Spain and Japan. Progressive reform of capitalism took place in France, Scandinavia and the US — and after World War II throughout Western Europe. And a state socialist regime was consolidated in the USSR and new ones arose in East-Central Europe and Asia.

Today, the labor and socialist movements are historically weak. This increases the likelihood of the rise of right-wing nationalist regimes. The Trump presidency is an example. Some view the Trump presidency as one more neoliberal, finance-backed regime, but in my view, this is not the case....

If the labor and socialist movements can grow sufficiently — which is possible under the current conditions of delegitimized capitalism — then the other two directions of change become possible. The growing mass support for Jeremy Corbyn in Britain and for Bernie Sanders in the US illustrates the possibility of a shift toward at least progressive reform of capitalism in the short run and, in the longer run, for socialist transition to eventually move onto the political agenda. Thus, this period holds great dangers, as well as great opportunities, for the left and for social and economic progress.

In discussions among economists today, the economic and social devastation experienced by so many communities here and around the world is attributed either to automation or trade policy and their impact on employment. Is automation or trade policy the real issue, or capitalism itself?

Neither automation nor trade policy is by itself the root of the trends that have wreaked so much destruction on working people and their communities. Capitalism always brings technological change, and the long-run trend in capitalism has been toward increasing global economic interactions. However, in some periods the regulation of capitalism has held the most destructive tendencies at bay by limiting inequality and creating new good jobs that replace those lost to automation and trade. Labor productivity rose faster under postwar regulated capitalism and global trade and investment grew rapidly, but at the same time, a large part of the working class held stable jobs with rising wages in that period, resulting from the power of labor in that form of capitalism.

Under neoliberal capitalism, so far technological change has been slower than it was under regulated capitalism, measured by the growth in labor productivity,

while global economic integration has accelerated. The negative results for working people come from the overwhelming power of capital in this period, which has enabled the capitalists to seize all of the benefits of increased labor productivity, while the largely unregulated global marketplace forces workers of all countries to compete with one another.

Thus, the real cause of the current high level of suffering is neoliberal capitalism. While regulated capitalism is less oppressive to working people, it is a highly contradictory form of capitalism that is bound to be eventually dismantled by the capitalists. Like every form of capitalism, it is based on exploitation of labor, as well as generating many related problems, such as imperialism and the destruction of the natural environment.

Do you foresee capitalism's unquestionable ingenuity eventually providing a solution to climate change, or is the planet doomed without a transition to an economic system that is based on sustainable growth and socialist economics?

There is a sharp debate on the left about whether irreversible global climate change can be averted within capitalism or only through a transition to a post-capitalist system. Those arguing for the former position stress the likelihood that capitalism will not be superseded in time to avert disastrous consequences from rising temperatures, while claiming that strong state action based on popular mobilization can do the job through some combination of incentives and penalties for corporations. They further argue that the promotion of investment in sustainable technologies within capitalism can provide a path to economic progress for working people while containing the rise in global temperatures.

Those who believe climate disaster cannot be averted under capitalism argue that the profitability of the very technologies that are causing global climate change is bound to prevent timely action, as capital uses its power to protect its profits. They claim that neither incentives nor penalties can be effective when confronted with the huge profits to be made by capitalist firms from the use of the atmosphere as a free waste disposal system.

The advantages of a socialist planned economy for overcoming the threat of disastrous global climate change are undeniable. Socially owned enterprises operating in a planned economy could be instructed to pursue climate sustainability as the number one priority, which would be far more effective than trying to restrain profit-seeking enterprises from doing what is most profitable for

them.

Stopping the rise in temperatures short of a tipping point requires a rapid restructuring of the transportation, power and productions systems of the world economy, and economic planning is the best way, and possibly the only way, to carry out such a task. Few economists remember that after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor in 1941, the US government, facing the need to rapidly restructure the peace-time economy to a war economy, suspended the market for the duration and set up a system of central planning. The results were highly successful, soon producing the ships, planes, tanks and other weapons — and food and clothing — needed to win the war, while incidentally finally bringing the Great Depression to an end.

Socialism has many advantages over any form of capitalism. I believe the serious threat to civilization from looming global climate change gives one more reason for the need to replace capitalism with socialism. The building of a strong socialist movement, in this time of opportunity for the left, is an urgent priority. It is essential if we are to defeat the threat of right wing nationalism. It is the only way to build a sustainable economy for the long run.

At the same time, socialists are obligated to contribute to the solution of urgent social problems while we are working for the replacement of capitalism. It is primarily through the process of mass struggles for reform that people are radicalized and come to realize the need for system change. We should support all reforms that can slow the rise in global temperatures, even if only for a time. It is possible to build a movement to replace capitalism and at the same time engage in the struggle to pull capitalism away from the global temperature tipping point.

[Copyright, Truthout](#)

To order the book go to: [C.J. Polychroniou - Optimism Over Despair: Noam Chomsky On Capitalism, Empire, and Social Change](#)

Roel Coutinho ~ Guinea-Bissau And Senegal 1973-1974

In 2016 professor [Roel Coutinho \(on Dutch wikipedia\)](#) MD donated 752 photographs and slides made by him in the course of his medical work in Guinea-Bissau and Senegal in 1973 and 1974, during the final year of the war of independence waged by the [PAIGC](#) (*Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde*) resistance movement against Portugal. The digital images are located in [Category:Guinea-Bissau and Senegal 1973-1974 \(Coutinho Collection\)](#). The physical collection is part of the Library of the African Studies Centre, Leiden (the Netherlands).

The donation includes images of daily life, dance and parties, hospitals, further medical interest, PAIGC soldiers and weapons, open air people's shops and schools, and pictures of the later first President (Luís Cabral) and later first Prime Minister (Francisco Mendes) of Guinea-Bissau. The metadata for this collection were collected and organised including captions in Portuguese by Michele Portatadino, MA African Studies, Leiden University. The photographs were digitized by GMS Digitaliseert in Alblasterdam. Harro Westra did the technological set-up. Hans Muller finalised the upload to Wikimedia Commons using the GLAMwiki Toolset. The project was initiated by Jos Damen and sponsored by the African Studies Centre, Leiden University.



Imam takes care of a leper, Sara



Armed escort carries the wounded to the Senegalese border



Pounding rice, Guinea-Bissau

Ahmet Şık's Defence Statement On The Trial Of Cumhuriyet 24 July 2017



I will start with a quote from the prologue of my book “We walked parallel on these roads”, published in 2014, three years ago. The foreword of this review-research book explaining how the mafia-governing coalition between the AKP and the Gülen community is dispersed begins as follows: “The AKP and Gulen congregation, two forces that turn Turkey into political and social coexistence and continued together with the support of partisans, so-called powerhouse, sewage exploded. The two forces that built the so-called ‘New Turkey’, a Machiavellian understanding that is appropriate to apply any kind of rush to achieve it, AKP and Gulen Congregation split.

Both do not want the democratization of the system and society, they are the foci of power that seeking to conquer the state, they are trying to organize it by making their authority predominant.

These two foci, with an understanding of trying to make the commitment to the authority of the state, which they think they will be the only power to speak in the long run, have accumulated material for destroying each other while fighting

common enemies on the other hand.

The closeness of the day that these materials could be used was apparent from the fact that the stench in the drainage was spreading out over for a long period of time. Threats from media columns, underhanded liquidations, occasionally leaked phone calls, and police-judicial operations based on illegality were the signs that they would be targeted at the constituents of the government after common enemies.

When they were convinced that there were no enemies to be destroyed, they were aiming at each other by holding onto the fight that the state's owner would be. Yes, it was a mess and still it is a mess. Apparently it will be like this for a while. In this battle where ethics and religion are used, the lies that meet the needs of the parties are more prevalent than the truths. So, do not be fooled by the defenses made by them. This war is not for democracy and clean society, nor for peace or civilization as somebody claimed. They just fight for being the owner of the state.

After these lines were published, the war between the AKP and the Gülen congregation worsened. The period of a false history writing process, which started with the Ergenekon investigations in 2007, who took more share on the plundering of the state and the country by the ruling and crime partners, extended to a coup attempt. On 15th July 2016, 250 people were killed in a bloody upheaval.

There is serious doubt that this attempt, which we are forced to believe is the sole responsibility of the Gülen Community, was already known by the government. Despite the fact that over a year has passed and numerous investigations have been launched, suspicions have increased rather than decreased. The July 15 coup d'état, which is required to remain in the dark with many signs, which led us to believe that the needed 'Controlled Chaos' was being yielded, was the most important milestone of the fake historiography that spanned the last 10 years.

The only truth of this fakeness which has been constructed with the words "democratization-civilization" and lies, is the people slaughtered by the coup plotters.

It is worth to ask questions about what is wanted to be left in the dark and saying "Controlled Chaos" to this situation. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who is the target of

the coup attempt, has spilled the beans by expressing his intention while the country was in the middle of a bloodshed, and said “This coup is a blessing from God to us”. We have seen what ‘blessing’ means and have witnessed it together and are still witnessing it. We pass through the dark and increasingly darker days, where those who voiced the truth, those who objected to the crime order, those who demanded their usurped rights, are the voices being muted and strangled.

Read

more: <http://www.pen-international.org/ahmet-siks-defence-statement-on-the-trial-of-cumhuriyet-24-july-2017/>