

# New Masses

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## ***New Masses***

Publication of the Arts & Culture Commission  
of the Party of Communists USA  
Volume 1, 2021

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## Table of Contents

### **In Defense of the Hollywood Ten: “Casualties of the Cold War”**

Yulian Wrobel

3

### **On the History and Significance of “The Internationale”**

Zechariah Cobb

9

### **First Farewell, and Many Happy Returns: An Interview with Peggy Seeger**

G. L. Worker

13

### **A Jewish Homeland in the Soviet Union**

David Chakofsky

21

### **Sports Parallel the Worst Aspects of Capitalism**

Ryan Poffenbarger

25





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# HOLLYWOOD 10 CHARGED WITH CONTEMPT

House Rejects  
Trumbo Dodge  
of Red Question

## In Defense of the Hollywood Ten: “Casualties of the Cold War”

by Yulian Wrobel

U.N. PEACE APPEAL  
ADOPTED, REPLACING  
“ARMONGER” BAN



Communist Gets 50-6 Vote  
Soviet Resolution is  
Amended, Defeated

John Howard Lawson, Adrian Scott, Dalton Trumbo, Edward Dmytryk, Herbert Biberman, Alvah Bessie, Ring Lardner Jr., Albert Maltz, Lester Cole, and Samuel Ornitz. These ten individuals known as the “Hollywood Ten” are significant insofar as they were the first victims of a systematic Hollywood blacklist: a byproduct of McCarthyism, or a desperate fear-mongering campaign involving political gangsterism and trumped up charges. But what was the explanation for this sudden Red Scare renaissance? Why all of a sudden did the U.S. make it a national priority to root out and silence potential communists and their sympathizers? We shall now examine the background in hopes of providing adequate context.

In the wake of the Soviet victory over fascism during the Great Patriotic War (WWII), the United States was faced with an alarming scenario: a growing world anti-imperialist and anti-colonial movement coupled with perceived internal threats such as the Communist Party USA & Soviet espionage. But, as was well-evident to the progressive forces around the world at this time, the United States had every intention of continuing the imperialistic work of the Nazis to continue waging a relentless struggle against the “Red Menace.” One need not look further than the fact that hordes of

fascist collaborators and even prominent leaders freely defected to the U.S. after the war and were very successfully incorporated into organizations such as the CIA to engage in subversive efforts against liberatory forces around the world during the Cold War. In any event, the fact of the matter is that from a strategic point of view, these fascists & their collaborators were in fact very experienced at creating anticommunist propaganda. Such was the atmosphere in which propaganda against and domestic terror inflicted upon communists & communist sympathizers intensified, most poignantly demonstrated by the Hollywood blacklist beginning in the late 1940s.

Now concerning the “Hollywood Ten” proper: in the autumn of 1947, these ten individuals—ranging from 34 to 60 years old, all of whom had families and comprised a group of accomplished and renowned screenwriters, novelists, directors, producers, and much more—were subpoenaed to appear before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). The hearing was run by none other than Congressman J. Parnell Thomas (R - NJ): a ruthless, bombastic anticommunist who had little patience for the testimonies of the Ten, and who explicitly expressed favoritism for the anticommunist witnesses (the irony is that Thomas later on ended up in the same



## In Defense of the Hollywood Ten: "Casualties of the Cold War"

prison as Lardner Jr. & Cole upon being convicted on fraud charges!). Due to the Congressman's corrupt and morally devoid-behavior during this "legal lynching," the Ten were declared to be in contempt of Congress for refusing to the following two main questions: 1) "Are you a member of the Screenwriter's Guild"1 and 2) "Are you now, or have you ever been, a member of the Communist Party?". In refusing to answer, the logic was to challenge the right of the HUAC to ask such questions because, as one of the men pointed out at the hearing, it was tantamount to having an election official tear open one's secret ballot at the voting booth to see for whom they voted.



The Hollywood Ten at court

Nevertheless, the men were found guilty and appealed the decision to the higher courts only to find that this appeal was refused to be heard on April 10, 1950 by the Supreme Court, thereby cementing the prospect of a 1-year prison sentence which all these men with personal petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion or force citizens to confess by word or act their faith therein."

Though, this kind of treatment of



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of communists is not abnormal; in fact, it can be argued that the instance of the Hollywood blacklistings was merely the standard procedure of "you're damned if you do, damned if you don't" unapologetically exposed in a public setting; President Truman even went so far as boasting on April 24, 1950 about how his administration convicted citizens of contempt for refusing to testify before. For this reason it remains of utmost importance that we do not forget the heroic actions of these men when they were the first to face head-on the repressive apparatus of the State merely for potentially having a certain ideology while being involved in our country's entertainment industry. If they answered "yes" to any of the questions, they most likely would have been immediately blacklisted, their names plastered all over red-baiting publications such as Counterattack, and their careers instantly destroyed. Furthermore, they would be asked to inform on their other comrades, since there surely must have been other individuals in the film industry with such an ideology. On the other hand, if they answered "no," it is probable that the Committee would assume perjury and invite other anticommunist witnesses willing to testify (no matter their reliability) thus producing basically the same outcome.



## In Defense of the Hollywood Ten: "Casualties of the Cold War"

But it's also important to emphasize that the plight of the Hollywood Ten was merely a microcosm of the anticommunist fear-mongering and repression campaigns that were sure to come in the 1950s in order to demonstrate the U.S.'s unequivocal opposition to the Soviet Union. As Comrade Herbert Biberman so wisely said: "Loyalty oaths and loyalty boards, and nobody is loyal who criticizes the bi-partisan foreign policy. Thought control entering the university campuses. Educators being fired. Film studies enlisting in the Cold War. Labor leaders being framed on perjured testimony. Lawyers sent to prison for defending their clients. The reputation, career, and liberty of any citizen at the mercy of the professional stool pigeon." In more ways than one, Biberman was correct; 9 of the Hollywood Ten (with the exception of Edward Dmytryk who betrayed his comrades and informed on them and others, daring to defend this decision in his later memoirs) after serving their prison sentences found their careers utterly destroyed. Of those who had the privilege to return to the film industry, they had to use the "front" strategy of using pseudonyms or the names of friends who posed as the actual writers in order to simply continue their work. Furthermore, these men were just the first ones to bear the brunt of the blacklist: what followed from 1947–1951 in particular was one of the most ruthless and mask-off campaigns of State repression of communists & communist sympathizers (oftentimes not even either of those categories!) within the entertainment industry that literally encompassed several

hundreds of people. Among these sorry souls were well-known individuals such as Paul Robeson, Pete Seeger, Leonard Bernstein, Arthur Miller ... multiple pages could be filled with such people, some of whom even appeared on the "Red Channels" list in the aforementioned Counterattack anticommunist magazine.



Ring Lardner, Jr. — One of the *Hollywood Ten*

To summarize, though, listen to Dalton Trumbo: "When we were asked 'Are you, or have you ever been, a member of the Communist Party?', the Committee was really preparing to ask, 'Are you now, or have you ever been, in favor of peace?'" The Hollywood Ten affair marks a time which should never be forgotten in this country's history: a time when the contradictions inherent to imperialism and monopoly capitalism desperately manifested at home, preying upon the very citizens of this country. Why? Because the ruling class was scared; scared of the fact that proletarian internationalism was winning amongst the oppressed peoples around the world, and even more afraid of this beautiful solidarity taking place domestically. Let us strive to never forget these comrades, as well as all the other wrongfully interrogated and abused individuals who had to suffer through this horrendous witch hunt.





## Epilogue

Excerpt from Mumia Abu-Jamal's 2002 article "Anti-American or Anti-Imperialist?"

"Decades ago, the U.S. Congress appropriated to itself the task of defining what 'Anti-Americanism' meant and established the infamous HUAC (for the House on Un-American Activities Committee). This group waged ideological war on Communists, socialists, and anyone who tried to organize social change in the repressive status quo of the United States. People barely remember the rednecks who sat on the side of the government, and who imperiously condemned those who came before them, but Paul Robeson, Dr. W.E. B. DuBois, and the Hollywood 10 (actors and writers who were black listed during the period) are remembered with something akin to reverence.

Who were the 'real Americans'? The rednecks and racists who stormed and raged and lorded it over those activists and artists? I stand with Robeson. I stand with DuBois. I would rather pitch my tent with the artists of the Hollywood Ten, who stood for the right to create work that reflected the truths about this society, rather than with the racists and segregationist politicians who stood for silence in the face of repression.





Artwork by Jess S.





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# On the History and Significance of “The Internationale”

by Zechariah Cobb



As new and young comrades enter the sphere of leftist politics, many quickly become familiar with the classic “L’Internationale”, or “The Internationale” in English. This song has served the communist movement as a unifying melody, stressing the international relevance to the class struggle.

Born from the struggle of the Paris Commune, this song has been used by socialist and communist parties everywhere across the globe. It proclaims a vision of a wondrous revolution, one in which the downtrodden and starving refuse to be servile under class oppression, and with this revolution, a future that is equal, fair, and just to all, not simply a small minority of the population. It was chosen to be the anthem of the First, Second, and Third International, and from 1918 to 1944, and was, for a time, even the state anthem for the Soviet Union. Even after the Soviet Union’s adoption of a new state anthem, it continued to be sung at other occasions, such as the party congresses. It remains an embraced song in countries like the PRC, DPRK, Cuba, Vietnam, and all other communist parties around the world. To promote the class struggle as an international cause, the song has been translated into numerous languages, a song to unify all against the capitalist class.

For the modern youth of society, this song echoes the importance of international solidarity and cooperation in order to reach the goals of a socialist and, eventually communist, society. Every capitalist society on earth subjects its youth to the toils and struggles of proletarian subjugation, and further it subjects the youth of the global south to devastation in its efforts to pillage the resources and labor it has to offer. The strength of our youth comes in numbers, and the proletarian class overwhelmingly



L’Internationale graphic from late 19th century



## On the History and Significance of "The Internationale"



Eugène Pottier, author of L'Internationale

outweighs that of the capitalist bourgeois class. If the youth stands up and together simultaneously, the capitalist class will have little choice but to accept our long-deserved demands of proletarian liberation. In our international struggle, a strike against one is a strike against all, and therefore solidarity and support for our comrades the world over is essential in our movement. The working-class revolution, as the song entails, is the final conflict, and the working class shall become the human race, allowing no parasitic classes to take further advantage of others. Through our revolution, we will make a new world, free from the traditions of old, no longer binding us as the song further entails. But this can only come about if we are to act as a unifying unit, one that is willing to show support and solidarity for a people we have and may never meet face to face. Further, the song describes the importance of deciding how we go about said revolution, and thoughtfulness is necessary for a successful revolution. Without it, we shall not inherit what is rightfully ours.

The lyrics to this anthem are as insightful as they are empowering, as it describes a world of people who will no longer listen to the demands of their oppressors, willing to stand up and fight for a truly righteous and socialist society. The following are transcriptions of the song written in English by Charles Hope Kerr in the early 20th century. This song was performed in 1933 by Marc Blitzstein and the Singers and can be found online. Though many have drastically changed the lyrics as of late to "keep up with the times", this version maintains the original sentiment that is not attained in more recent versions.



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## On the History and Significance of "The Internationale"

Arise, ye prisoners of starvation!  
Arise, ye wretched of the earth!  
For justice thunders condemnation:  
A better world's in birth!  
No more tradition's chains shall bind us;  
Arise, ye slaves, no more in thrall!  
The earth shall rise on new foundations:  
We have been nought, we shall be all!

Chorus

'Tis the final conflict;  
Let each stand in his place.  
The International working class  
Shall be the human race!  
(repeat)

We want no condescending saviors  
To rule us from a judgment hall;  
We workers ask not for their favors;  
Let us consult for all.  
To make the thief disgorge his booty  
To free the spirit from its cell,  
We must ourselves decide our duty,  
We must decide and do it well.

Chorus

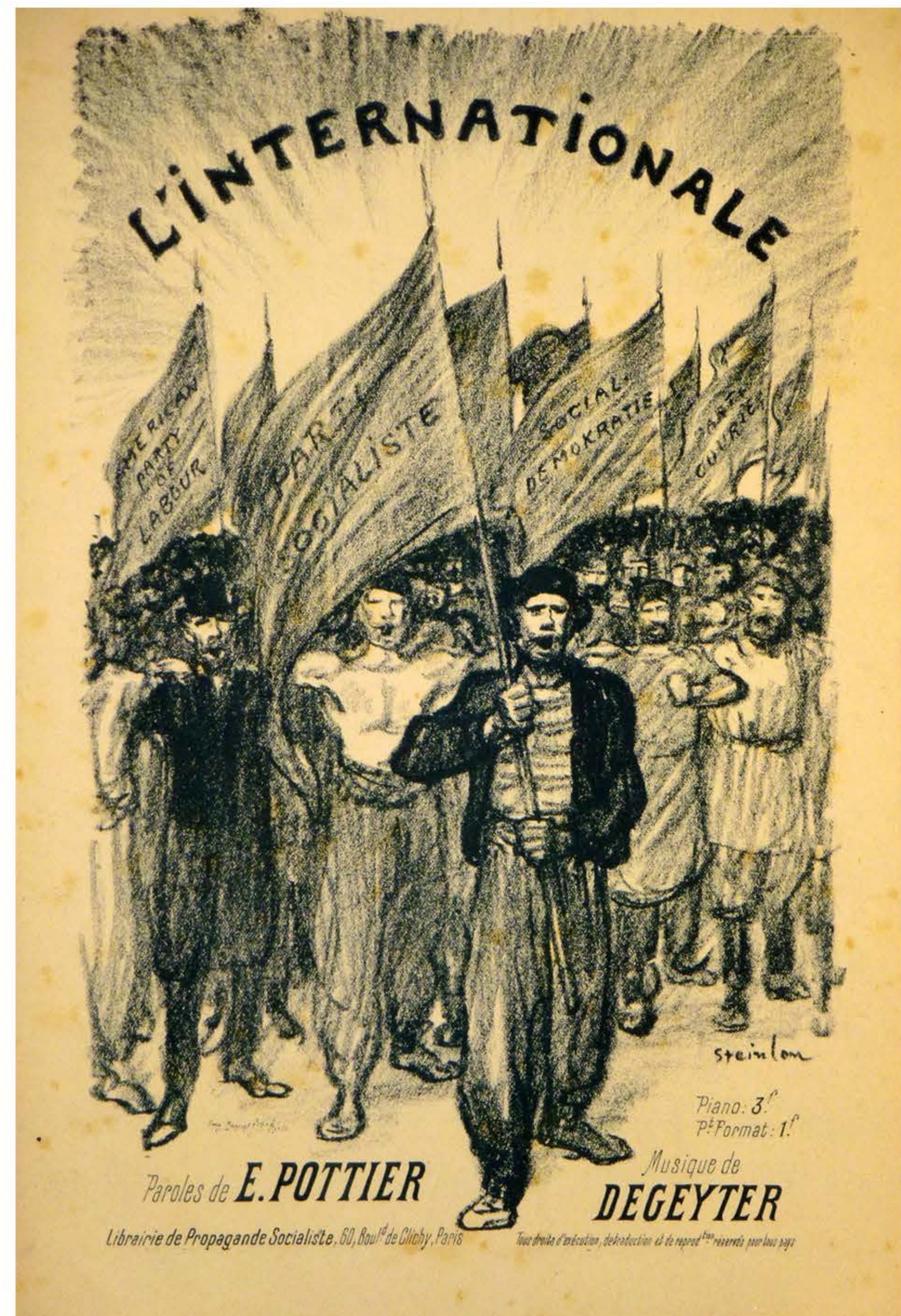
Toilers from shops and fields united,  
The union we of all who work:  
The earth belongs to us, the workers,  
No room here for the shirk.  
How many on our flesh have fattened!  
But if the noisome birds of prey  
Shall vanish from the sky some morning,  
The blessed sunlight still will stay.

Chorus

## Lyrics for The Internationale



Charles Hope Kerr — translator of L'Internationale







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# First Farewell, and Many Happy Returns: An Interview with Peggy Seeger

by G. L. Worker



As part of our inaugural issue, New Masses set out to write stories about revolutionary folk singers and songwriters, what they did, and what they can teach us. We had the pleasure of sitting down with music legend and long-time activist Peggy Seeger to discuss her newest album, *First Farewell*, as well as her recent work and advice for the rising generation.

*Note: This transcript has been edited for length and clarity.*

## Interview with Peggy Seeger

**New Masses:** Had you planned to release your new album [*First Farewell*] last year to coincide with your tour? Or was this more of a pandemic project?

**Peggy Seeger:** Oh, this was not a pandemic project. It was meant to actually go with the tour because for my previous three, four or five years of touring, we had another album of new songs called *Everything Changes*. So, yes, this was meant to go with the tour and then everything was canceled. Everything my son's work was canceled. My managers kept me going. And there's lots of people who are interested in the album. It's a different album from any other than I've done different in a lot of ways, you know.

**NM:** The songs that I heard from the definitely seem different than some of the stuff you've done before, I'm excited about it. Speaking of pandemic projects, you started making weekly YouTube videos during the lockdown. Tell me about that. Is it something you'd like to keep doing after things ease up a bit?

**PS:** I don't know, I don't think I do it very well. I began it to keep myself going, and because some friends said, well, why don't you do it? And it's taken me a long time to get any way of doing it because, well, it's a long story. But the album was not made to



Peggy Seeger with a banjo



happen during the pandemic. It was actually made in pretty much two thousand nineteen about July till about early two thousand twenty. And it was called First Farewell kind of tongue in cheek. My brother Mike ...every year for the last four or five years of their [The New Lost City Ramblers] rambling together as a group, they had an annual farewell concert. And I love the contradiction in that. So, it's an album that is very emotional. It plays a lot on the state that I'm in now. I've been in lockdown ... for nearly a year now, nearly a year. I broke out of it yesterday to do a showdown in London and it felt very, very strange. But the album itself... was not written in lockdown. It was written — some of the songs — with my son Callum, some of them one with my son Neil, two with my daughter in law, Kate Saint John. ... The other six by myself and looking into where I am in life and feeling a real empathy with everybody who's now in the same boat. In more ways than one, there are huge crises... The most important, in my view, is climate change. Human beings are going to come and go. We're going to be swept off the earth in hordes, but climate change, I don't think I don't think the human race has really grasped what it's going to be like. And that's your generation, your time, and it's a good time to be old and to be on your way out, because it is so frightening. But I don't write songs that directly talk about it. One of the songs... [is called] "Lubrication." And of course, immediately people say, oh, OK, lubrication, we know about that. And then it turns out to be about climate change. The lubrication of the

tectonic plates and we're removing the gas in the air and the oil and the plates are just clanking together, so it's looking at things slightly different and there aren't any should songs. It's just trying to see each issue as related to everything else, and a lot of the reading that I'm doing recently is tying down the way the whole world works, the way nature works... it's like a living, breathing being. And it runs itself, it knows how to do it, and they say no man, no woman can handle their life as well as a tree can. Or the planet, we just mess everything up. So, I don't say that on the album, but just pointing out I've been here eighty-five and a half years. And you do see things differently at 85, you definitely do.



Peggy with Paul Robeson, London 1960

**NM:** That kind of ties into my next question about the songs from the new album. In your New Year's Eve video, you played "How I Long for Peace," and here again just recently you released "The Invisible Woman." Is this going to be an album of more contemporary original songs or a little bit of everything?



**PS:** Original all ... they're not folk songs; there's two or three of them that sound as if they might be like folk songs, but I don't think they ever will be. Although this one, there may be some hope for it. I wrote it 15 years ago. And I wrote it to a different tune, "Wild Mountain Thyme." I don't know if you know that. "Will ye go, Lassie, go?" That's really true. But then I didn't want to use that tune. So, I made another tune that is kind of reminiscent of it. And essentially, it's a political statement in five verses ... It's like a folk song, in a way. And people don't want to be told what to do. We all have to come into each of these battles at our own level and then move up intensity and purpose. But the point is to come in at some point. So, I say sit down, disrupt, do anything, whatever you can, whatever is at your level of understanding, your level of energy. But do something.



Peggy with brothers, Mike and Pete

**NM:** Yeah, that's a good way to think about it. You recently also performed, "Song of Choice" for BBC Scotland, and it's really as timely now as it was when you wrote it, especially after the attempted coup in Washington, D.C. in January. In your experience, what's the best way for artists to fight reaction? Or as Woody Guthrie might ask, how many fascists has your banjo killed?

**PS:** Well, he [Woody Guthrie] and Pete [Seeger], during the Depression, they lived closer to the actual physical battles and music was used quite a lot at that time because of Pete and Woody, and Cisco Houston, and the whole communist movement. They used songs and they made songs. That's not the way it is now ... For some reason, when they have a strike, they think singing "here we go, here we go," is enough. We need songs, but people don't learn them anymore ... But then maybe they never did. The old leftists, when everybody stands up at a strike meeting or at one of the meetings of the leftist parties, they'll stand up and they'll sing the chorus of *The International* and then they'll kind of limp through the first verse and that's it. They just don't know the rest of it, so maybe what we need is songs that people listen to that have choruses. It's hard to know what to do right now and you never know, there's surprises. When I saw the Million Women March in Washington [in 2016], there was a group of women singing all six verses of my song, "Reclaim the Night." ... It's virtually a political theory, a political statement saying, "this relates to this, relates to this, relates to this." And they — all six of them sang it perfectly ... They were just marching and singing it together. So, what to write for ... That is the business. It is also big, Gabriel. It's hard to energize ourselves because it is so big. At present I'm involved in trying to save two little green fields ... in the village where I live. This is an iconic village because its church goes back to the 1100s and it still has an intact high street. And in the last 70



## First Farewell, and Many Happy Returns: An Interview with Peggy Seeger

years, it has donated 10 of its green fields to housing projects. And now they want the last two fields that are in the middle of the village. The committee that I'm working with, they are absolutely fantastic because there's a lot of loopholes in what the council has done and they're picking at ... every single little inconsistency or illegal thing [the village government] has done. People have won these battles. They have actually won. They've saved their green fields. They've saved their national forest. And it makes you feel good to do something ... When you look at the entire complete ecological systems that are in both of those fields. I mean, we have badgers living there. We have foxes and deer living there. We have the entire underground communication systems of trees and grass and all of that. We have trees talking to each other in the wind overhead because that's what they do. They talk to each other, trees do.

**NM:** There's a lot of issues like that here in West Virginia with the coal mines. They just don't know when to quit, but they stopped the pipeline. Thank God, for now.

**PS:** Yeah, so anyway, a song or a poem. And memorable slogans, I think are important, memorable things, poems that the average person can understand. Because poetry is like music, there's music that the average person just can't understand ... It's good stuff. But it's not something that you can grab hold of and take to a demonstration or sing for pleasure or speak for pleasure ... it should be spoken out loud; poetry should be

like songs. You can't "think" songs.

**NM:** The way we talk about it in communist circles is you can't have theory without practice and being involved in the material struggle with people, you know, otherwise you're just thinking things. It doesn't connect to reality. I think art is the same way.

**PS:** I wrote a song about the West Virginia mine disaster you know. I don't know if you've heard it, it's called "Buffalo Holler."

**NM:** I think I've heard the name of the song. I don't know that I've heard [it].

**PS:** This was one that there was a fellow named Paul Knighton who lived down there. He was a union organizer. And he said, "you've made songs out of people's words. If I recorded somebody here, would you make a song out of her words?" Well, I did. That's what it is.

**NM:** Oh, that does sound really awesome. I'll have to listen to it now. Have you read Muriel Rukeyser's, *The Book of the Dead*?

**PS:** No, I haven't.



First Farewell available at Bandcamp and [peggyseeger.com](http://peggyseeger.com)



**NM:** Well, she was a poet. I think she wrote it back in the nineteen thirties and forties. She went to West Virginia and it was like it was sort of a documentary, sort of a book of poetry. And she interviewed survivors of the Hawk's Nest tunnel disaster... made a record in poetry of the corruption of the bosses and like what they did to the workers, knowingly exposing them to toxic chemicals. Well, speaking of activism and art, you've seen and done a lot in your time in worker's movements. Just how long have you been involved in political action and what are you most proud to have been a part of and why?

**PS:** Well, I've been on more marches than I've had Sunday dinners, I've actually been on the front line once inadvertently and I lost a tooth and glasses and got a fractured wrist. I've seen what the police do... I haven't been a physical activist... I was with the Greenham Common, I was down there a lot, but that was... I won't say "gentle" because we weren't handled easily, nicely. But it took 15 years to get cruise missiles out of there. And it was grindingly pouring cold, wet, and we were harassed by an awful lot of men and by the police. Some of us went to jail because of it. But for the most part, I have been a songwriter. My song for Greenham Common is one of the anthems there. I have trouble referring to myself as an activist. To me, an activist is Nelson Mandela, you know, and Molly Jackson. It's the ones who go the whole length. But I've never been a shouter, Billy Bragg is fantastic at it. And I don't have the common touch. I can't stand up in a demonstration and really rally people; it's

just not what I feel I can do. I don't have a strong voice. But as I said before, I think probably my strength is because of my songs. "I'm Gonna be an Engineer," apparently, has energized a huge number of women to become engineers. And they write to me and say that that was my story. I mean, I never wanted to be an engineer. I just wrote the song, you know. So I consider that my function is to write songs and things, hopefully that people can sing on picket lines. I try to write songs of different types. I got involved in fighting nuclear power, so I wrote five songs about nuclear power to sing at different types of get-togethers. Because you can't go to a group of fence sitters and sing a song that was meant for the far left, it doesn't work. **You have to tailor your song sometimes as to who is going to be listening** ... If I'm unique in any way, it's the fact that I had classical music education. And I had an excellent music education in Anglo-American songs. I missed the stuff in between. The pop songs and ... the hip hop, and the ska, and the Bob Marley; I missed all of that. I love it, but I never wrote anything for it. That was for other people to write. And because I've got these two parameters of music and I try to write different songs, different styles. I have managed to do that a reasonable amount. And you'll find different styles on this album. They're quite different.

**NM:** I think we've seen that just in the difference between "The Invisible Woman" and "How I Long for Peace." They both have kind of a different approach. "The Invisible Woman" sounds like a marching song to me.



**PS:** I wrote that with my son, Neil. He said he felt invisible at sixty-one and it turned out he felt invisible to younger women.

**NM:** That's so funny. Speaking of what's going on these days, what's the most promising trend in recent activism or political movements in general? What gives you hope? Are there artists or musicians that are getting involved now that inspire you?

**PS:** There are small groups. I don't think there's one central group or one central publication that'll help us. There are not a lot of songs being written for sit-downs, although Extinction Rebellion, I think is fantastic. They've actually brought the city of London to a dead stop ... when they occupied Waterloo Bridge for three days. And the police were very careful with them because a lot of them were middle class kids and they don't treat them like they did the miners during the miners' strike. Our union movement is more or less dead. Margaret Thatcher sold some of the teachers off, and the printers off, and the miners off, and the steel workers off, and sold away a huge amount of our industry to abroad. [It gives me] hope when the younger people are doing what they're doing, and I think a lot of that is due to Greta Thunberg, David Attenborough. They're the two that are there at the two different sections, the different parameters of the climate change action and it's really important that everybody does something on their home turf. And God knows there's enough.



Peggy and Guy Carawan, Bolshoi Theatre, Moscow 1957

**NM:** Well, we've talked about this a little bit already, but I guess for the sake of the question, do you have any advice for young comrades who are getting involved in the class-climate-gender struggle for the first time? And what's important to keep in mind when times get tough?

**PS:** Oh, gosh. Well, you need other people. There is a time that comes when you will have to work on your own, but you need other people ... Find something close to home. Look into where you are, your core is actually what it is you're most interested in. Because if it's only a secondary interest or an academic interest, well, that's not going far. I think one has to have knowledge and passion. Because, the fate of the Earth is



paramount. It's unbelievable what is going to happen and people in far flung countries are realizing it now when the water rises and they have to move all of their people to another island ... And, in a way, you have to be a step ahead. People are already beginning to move away from the coast here because it's where most of our big cities are ... New York is talking about building a seawall. What? Are they nuts? You won't be able to build a seawall against what's coming; it's just not possible. And we don't think well enough in advance. I do think that the human race never learns. I do.

**NM:** You know, we might just have to learn how to adapt as best we can to a new dark age. I don't know that we can prevent it, but just try to survive in as good a way as possible.

**PS:** If there was advice, I'd say learn to grow vegetables. I've tried and I'm lousy at it, really dreadful. And eating locally... and learning where the herbs are and what the things that grow in the fields that you can eat... nature has given us everything we need. It's all out there, you know.

**NM:** Looks like we've got to the last question. Last but not least, where can we buy your new album, First Farewell? And where are you most looking forward to going on your upcoming tour?

**PS:** You can get the album from Bandcamp. And you can either buy a physical one, which I will send out from here signed, or you can

buy a digital [copy]. You might want to go to the website [PeggySeeger.com](http://PeggySeeger.com) and put yourself on the mailing list ... I'll send out [a newsletter] about once a month saying, I'm doing this, I'm doing that ... And where would I like most to go? So far, I like every place that I go. I just like being there. I've been asked to go there, so obviously they want what I have. I've gotten to a point where I'm not looked on necessarily as a folk singer anymore. I'm an entertainer who happens to sing folk songs, and who sings contemporary songs. I appeal more to older people than I do to the younger ones. And by older, I mean kind of over forty-five. But some people will turn out; women will turn up most. A lot of women say, "I heard you back in 1961, that was in Stroud, and it was in a church hall. And I remember you sang such and such." And to me, that's amazing. And nearly every place that we go, there are marvelous people that come up and talk at the merch table. And I'm always the last one to leave, I wait till the last person leaves. Every place is a treat the same way as every morning is a treat that I'm still around to wake up.



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Artwork by Antoine Lourdin

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# A Jewish Homeland in the Soviet Union

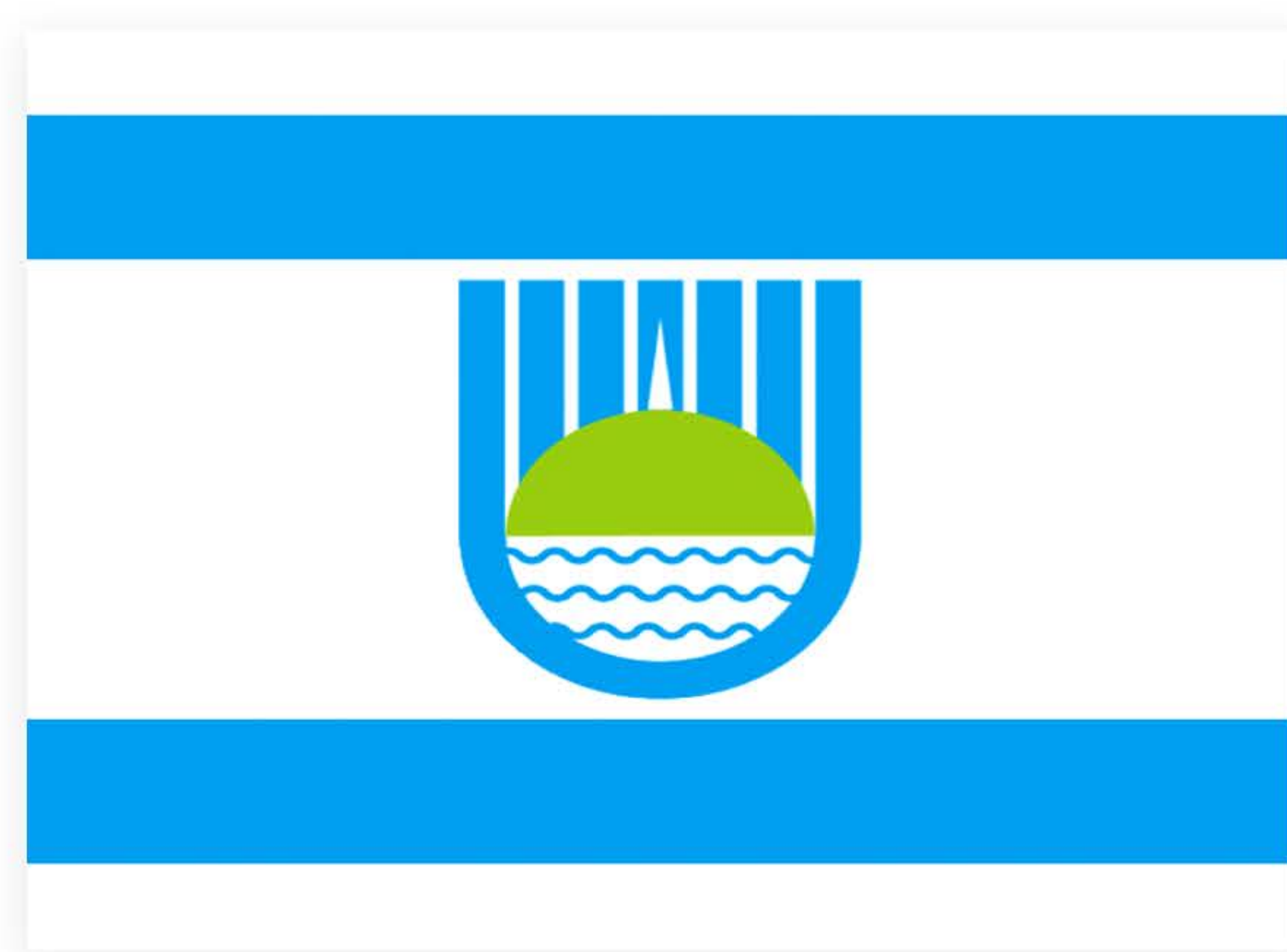
by David Chakofsky



In the far-eastern region of Russia, there exists a city that was built for the Jewish people by the Soviet Union. It lies about 200 kilometers North of the Amur River, which divides Russia from Northeastern China, and 200 kilometers West from Khabarovsk, a major industrial city in Russia. The very concept of Birobidzhan is curious, forming a new Jewish homeland thousands of miles away from the land of Israel, in a land that had no historic or cultural relevance to the Jewish people, proved to be quite a challenge for the Soviets.

To understand the founding of Birobidzhan, we must first discuss the history of the Jewish people in Russia at large. Under the Tsarist regime, Jews were forced to live in the Westernmost region of the Russian Empire, today comprising Belarus, Lithuania, Moldova, Ukraine, Poland, Latvia, and Western parts of the Russian Federation, which was called the "Pale of Settlement". Jews were allowed permanent residency here, but outside of this region Jews were forbidden from temporary or permanent residence. In this region, Jews faced pogroms, violent riots that killed thousands of Jews, egged on by the Tsar and his government. Outside of the Pale of Settlement Jews were not treated any better. Travel was restricted to only certain

merchants, university educated Jews, or Jews who converted from Judaism. Antisemitism was rampant through the Empire, and Tsar Nicholas II's secret police fanned the flames by creating a faux document called The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, which is still to this day used as a blueprint for antisemitic conspiracy theories by fascists. Safe to say, life in Tsarist Russia was hard for the Jewish people, and out of this adversity two major groups emerged: the Zionists and the Bundists.



Flag of Birobidzhan Autonomous Oblast

The Zionist movement has existed throughout the history of diaspora Jews, but as a modern ideology wasn't fully developed until a Austro-Hungarian Jew named Theodor Herzl came along. Herzl led the movement to turn Palestine into a Jewish state, with the clear intent of colonizing a land that was already lived on. Many Jews were persuaded by this *aliyah*, or a return to



the land of Israel, a holy ritual that was supposed to occur after the return of the Messiah. Other Jews, however, were not so convinced by the Zionist movement. The General Jewish Labour Bund in Lithuania, Poland and Russia was a secular Jewish socialist movement that was formed initially in the Russian Empire. The Bund, as they were known, stood for Jewish autonomy, but did not agree with the Zionists' opinion that a return to Israel was necessary and would in fact continue the cycle of oppression that they were currently facing in Tsarist Russia. Instead of appealing to the bourgeoisie interests of land-owning Jews, the Bund focused on the Jewish working class. They stood for Jewish autonomy instead of assimilation, fighting for the right to continue their cultural practices. By 1906, the Bund had 40,000 members making it the largest socialist party in the Russian Empire at the time.

In 1917 the Great October Socialist Revolution happened. After the Bolsheviks took power the "Declaration of Rights of the Peoples of Russia" was adopted and abolished exploitation of man by man and restrictions regarding who could live where were eliminated. Various programs were started to integrate the Jewish population into the new socialist Soviet life, while maintaining their Jewish culture. Schools that taught in Yiddish were opened, antisemitism was made illegal and punishable with death, and the perpetrators of the mass pogroms were punished. However, there were still some that yearned for a place of their own. A committee named

the Komzet, or Committee for the Settlement of Toiling Jews on the Land, was tasked with helping the former residents of the Pale of Settlement transition from their isolated shtetls (predominantly Jewish towns) to being proud Soviet-Jews who fought for socialism. On March 28, 1928 the Soviet government announced that *The COMERD* is assured that the Amur Valley and the contiguous region in the Far East is designated as free soil for Jewish workers". With this decree, a place that Jews could call home was created, with the intent of Jewish autonomy being realized once conditions were right; "When the expected results, following the colonization of Jewish workers in this region, are realized..., the building of a Jewish administered national unity in the territory of this region shall be carried out."



An election poster of the General Jewish Labour Bund hung in Kiev in 1917.  
Heading: "Where we live, there is our country!"  
Center: "Vote List 9, Bund."  
Bottom: "A democratic republic! Full national and political rights for Jews!"



## A Jewish Homeland in the Soviet Union

By 1930, only two years after its creation, 12,000 Jews lived in Birobidzhan. In 1934, the region reached such a high level of agricultural and industrial development that the Jewish Autonomous Region was created. It encompassed Birobidzhan and the territory around it, almost equivalent to the size of Belgium. Despite being established as a Jewish region, the Amur Cossacks lived there as well alongside Koreans, and Russians. The culture of Birobidzhan was decidedly Jewish, with Yiddish being the main spoken language, two Jewish theatres were built (one for professionals and one for amateur actors), and a daily paper printed in Yiddish. The region also had a bounty of natural resources. Fish lived in the region's rivers, two thousand species of flowers grew there for quality honey, various mineral resources like coal, iron, and even marble (which was used to build the Moscow subway) existed in the earth there. Hunters could find wild game and collective farms were established. Birobidzhan's proximity to the Trans-Siberian Railway gave its inhabitants access to other major cities in the region like Khabarovsk and Vladivostok.

Today, Birobidzhan still exists inside the Jewish Autonomous Oblast of the Russian Federation. It has a population around 75,000 as of 2010. Sadly, not as many Jews moved there as did to Israel, much to do with the West's view of the Soviet Union as antisemitic and the desire for a Western aligned nation in the Middle East. The official language of Birobidzhan remains Yiddish, but it's reputation as a new Jewish

homeland is long gone and forgotten by most. I would like to end with some lyrics from a Yiddish song called "Oy Ir Narishe Tsienistn/Oh You Foolish Little Zionists."

*Oh, you foolish little Zionists*

*With your utopian mentality,*

*You'd better go down to the factory*

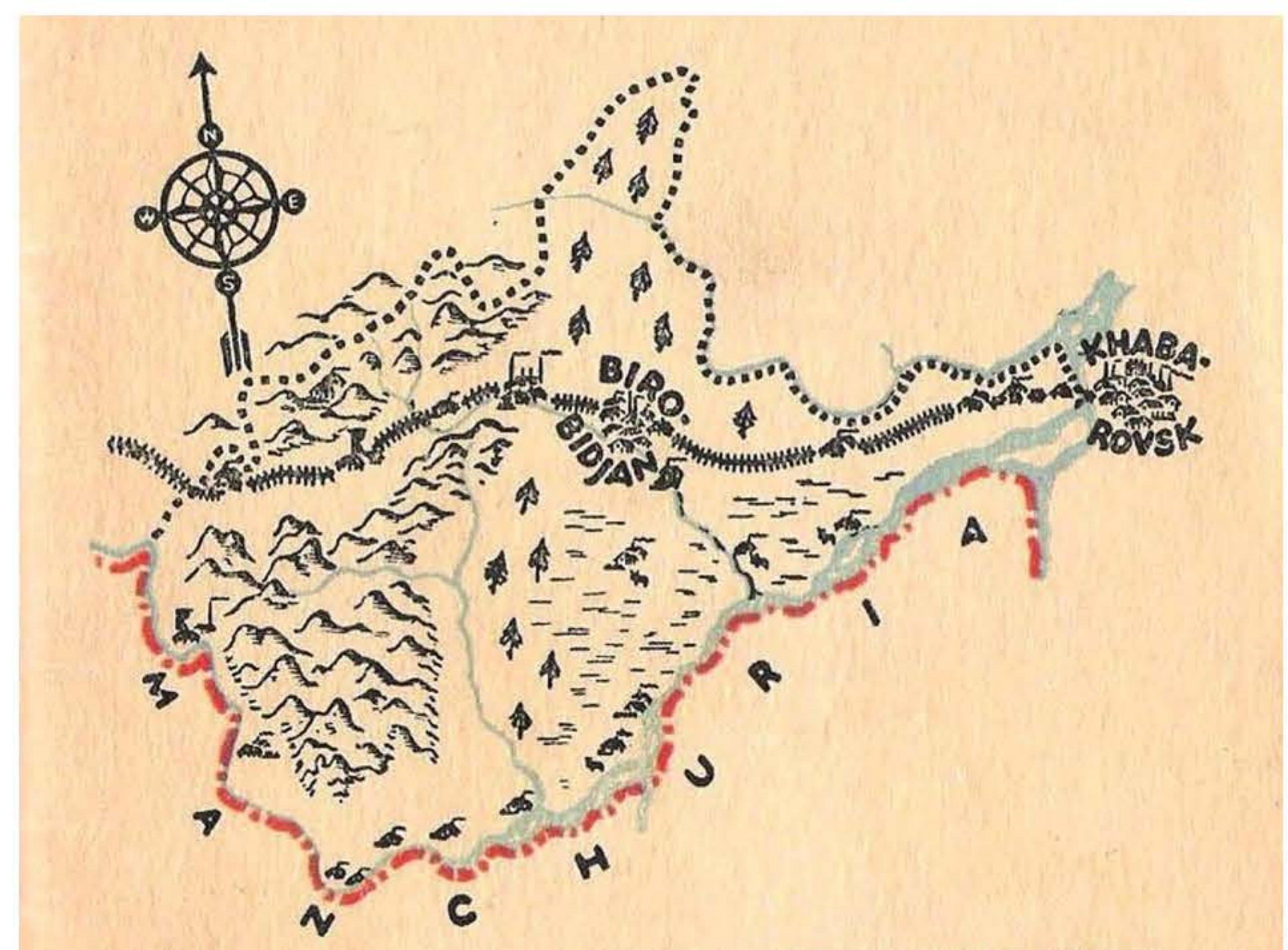
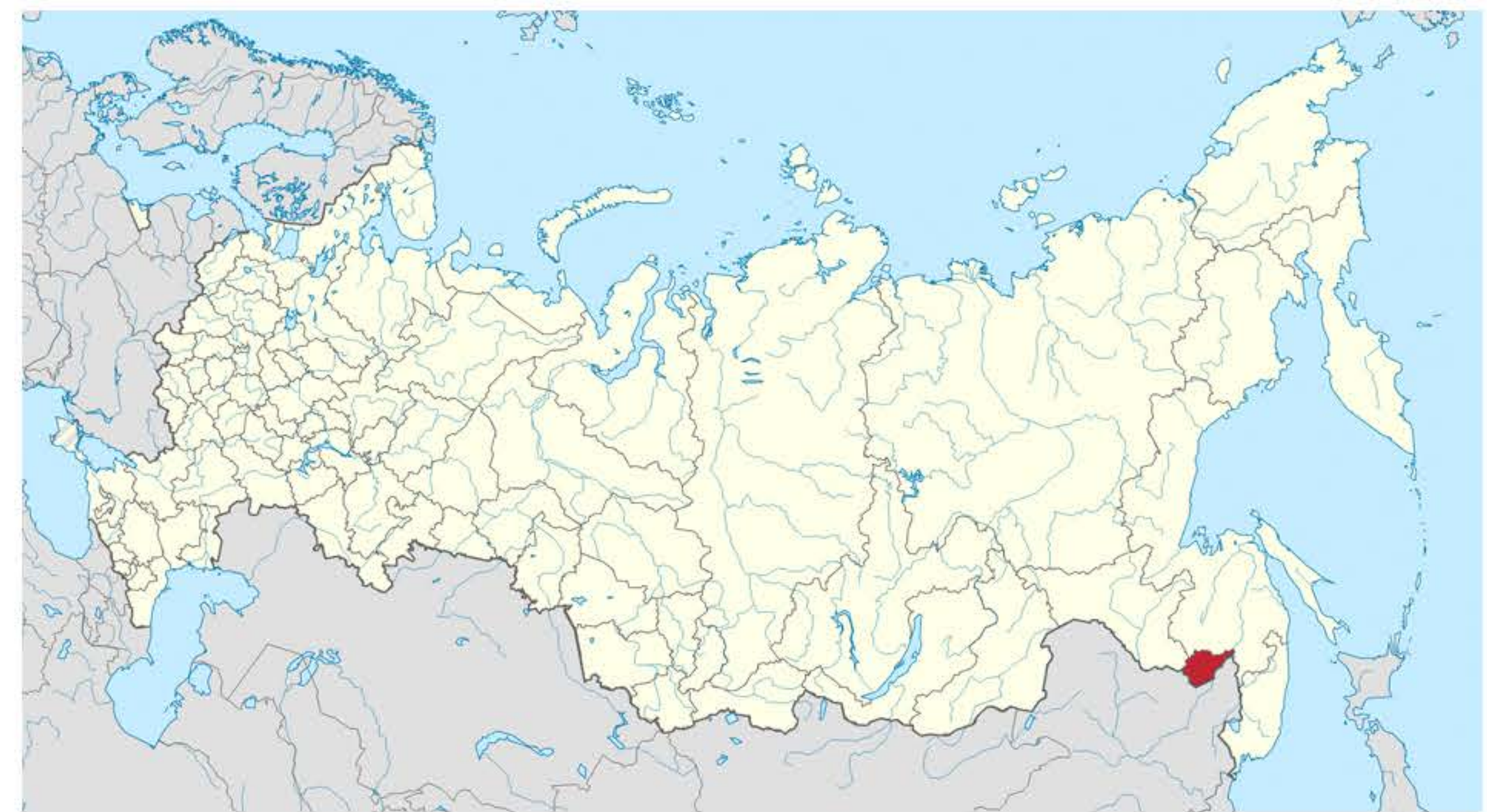
*And learn the worker's reality!*

*You want to take us to Jerusalem*

*So we can die as a nation*

*We'd rather stay in the Diaspora*

*And fight for our liberation!*

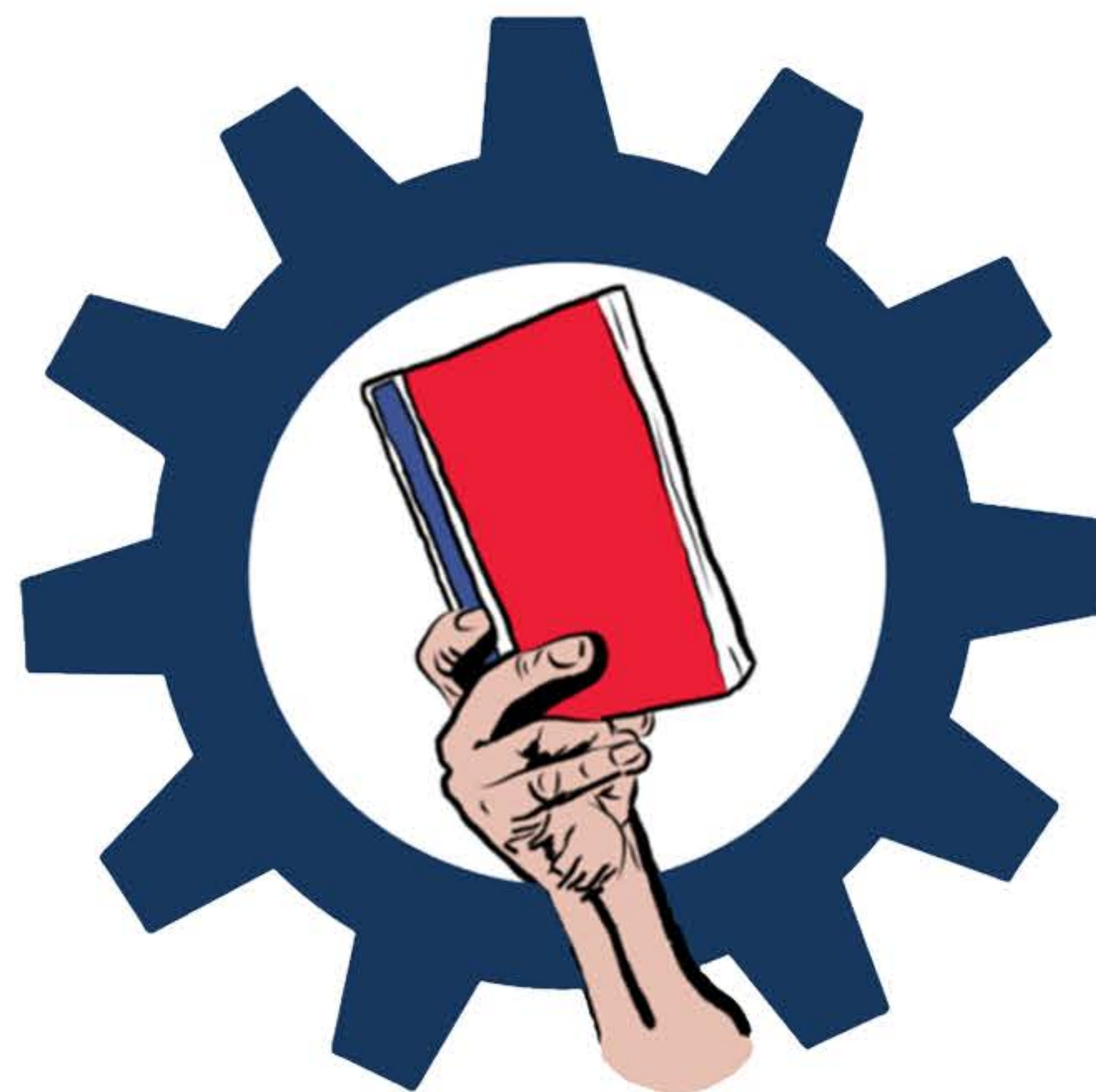






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# Sports Parallel the Worst Aspects of Capitalism

by Ryan Poffenbarger



The now former president of the Seattle Mariners, Kevin Mather, was recently caught manipulating the service time of players. This is done in order to decrease the pay owed, particularly to younger players, while also preventing other teams from signing them. As reported by CBS sports this practice is widespread but very difficult to prove in most instances. Not only are abusive practices such as this rampant in American professional sports but they also parallel issues within capitalism at large.

Just like any other capitalist business the way that sports team owners make money is through taking the surplus value generated by the workers. The American professional sports industry is valued at nearly 100 billion dollars, showing that the amount of surplus money on the table is quite large. For the NFL in particular the average value of a team, according to Forbes, was 2.86 billion dollars as of 2019. This was an 11% increase from the previous year and double the average from 2014. The increase was significantly higher than how much wages had increased for players and team staffs per year. In regard to player salaries the average in 2014 was 2.1 million dollars which grew to 2.7 million dollars by 2019, a growth of 29%, or slightly under 6% per year. Similarly, the salary cap for the NFL rose

from 102 million dollars in 2006 to 155 million in 2016 or about 5% growth per year in that time.

Stadium employees have been facing similar problems to American workers at large with real wages staying fairly constant despite the rapidly rising productivity and profits. The stadium workers earn on average about twice the minimum wage, roughly 14 dollars an hour, and since the minimum wage hasn't changed since 2009 the wages of stadium employees have barely grown in that time despite the huge growth in value of teams. Recently, the coronavirus pandemic has resulted in massive layoffs of stadium employees and led to some NBA players volunteering parts of their salaries in order to help the workers that the owners wouldn't.

Sports teams make far more money from television and sponsorship deals than they do from ticket sales and merchandise. For instance, in 2014 the Green Bay Packers made almost twice as much from the television and sponsorship deals than they did from tickets and merchandise. This was made possible in large part from two government policies: the Sport Broadcasting act of 1961 and the Telecommunications act of 1996. These policies heavily deregulated how sports are broadcast with many exemptions from



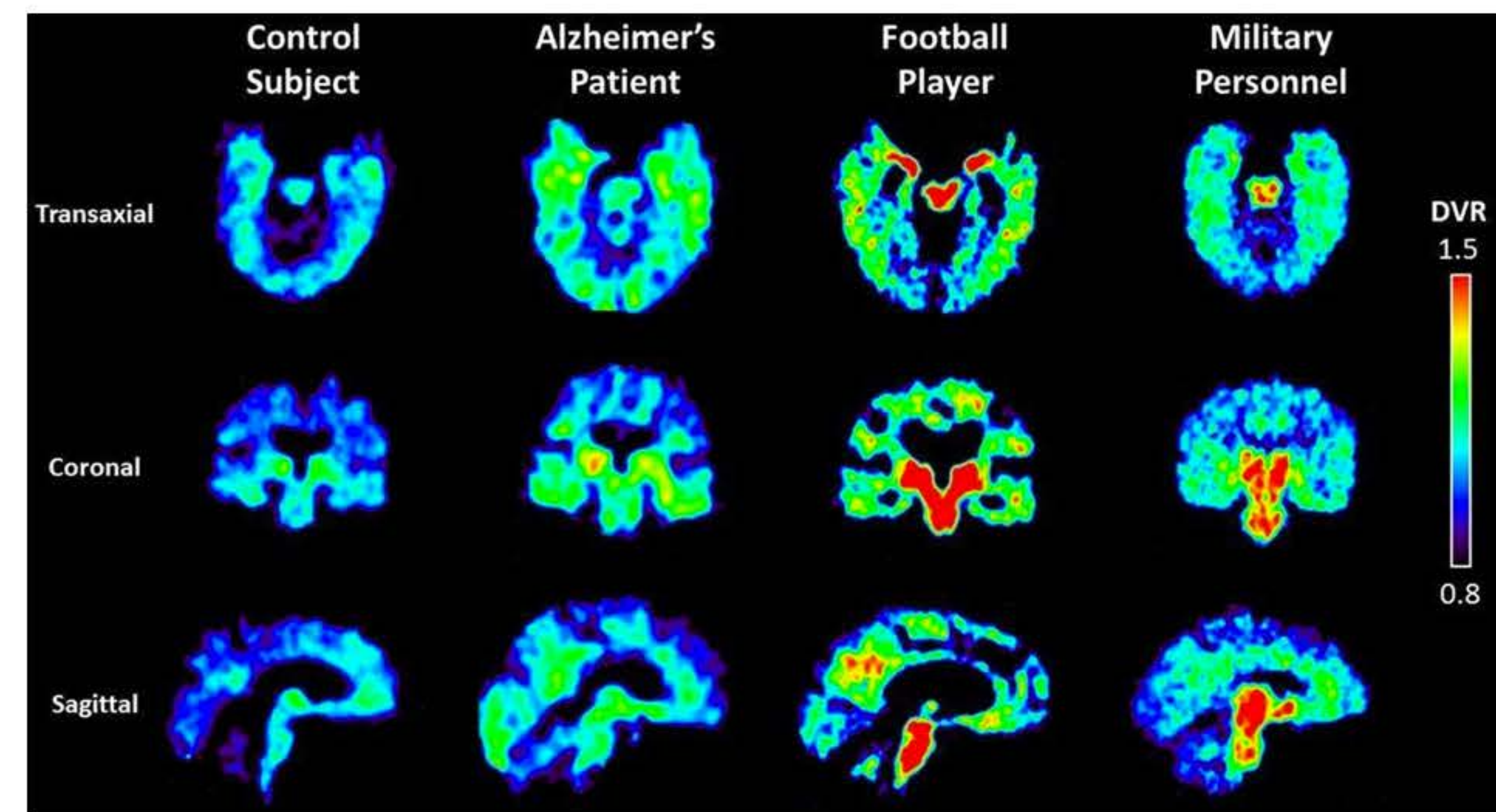
## Sports Parallel the Worst Aspects of Capitalism

anti-trust and tax laws.

The way the NFL handles this television and sponsorship money is that it is split evenly amongst the 32 teams in the league for the regular season. In the playoffs the money is split between the teams participating in each round. Similarly, NFL players also get paid evenly for playoff games in amounts that are significantly less than the average players make in the regular season per game with 27,000 dollars per player for the first round up to 118,000 dollars per player for the Super Bowl winners. What this means is that the team owners have significantly more incentive for their team to make, and do well in, the playoffs than the players do.

American workplaces are known for being very weak in terms of accommodation for injuries and illness. The workers get their insurance coverage through their employer far more than any other source and the vast majority of them are under covered in terms of insurance. On top of this, American workplaces are some of the worst in the world when it comes to time off with being the only country in the developed world without paid maternity and paternity leave and American workers are very likely to be fired over sick days. Unfortunately, professional sports leagues are also often terrible when it comes to health accommodations. The most notorious example of this is the WWE who refuse to give their wrestlers health insurance and also are very stringent about docking the athletes' pay for fights missed due to injury but the WWE are far from the only example

of this sort of anti-worker behavior.



UCLA researchers are using a radioactive tracer

Tackle football is one of the most violent sports on earth, yet the NFL spent years sweeping long term health issues that result from it under the rug. The most key example of this is the story of former Pittsburgh Steelers player, and NFL Hall of Fame member, Mike Webster, as featured in the Frontline PBS film "League of Denial." Documents from 1999 show that the NFL knew about the long-term brain damage problems associated with the game yet from 2003 to 2009 the league funded papers denying the dangers. More egregiously for years Monday Night Football games would start with a stylized animation of two helmets slamming into each other; causing an explosion. In a 2019 interview with the radio show "The Breakfast Club" NBA All-Star player Andre Iguodala stated that when he was out with an injury his team, the Golden State Warriors, went so far as to tell the media that he was suffering from a minor bone bruise in an attempt to pressure him to come back to playing faster despite him actually having a fractured leg. Iguodala also pointed out that the coaches were constantly putting pressure on injured



## Sports Parallel the Worst Aspects of Capitalism

players to come back before they were healthy, including one of the league's most popular players, Kevin Durant, who famously tore his Achilles in the NBA finals after coming back early from a different leg injury. Along with this, just like in traditional workplaces the players are incentivized to rush back from injuries with the significantly reduced pay for missed games in the contracts of almost every player.

Professional sports in America are not only exploitative towards employees but fans and cities as well. This is most clearly demonstrated through stadiums. For instance, the current stadium of the San Francisco 49ers, Levi's Stadium, cost 1.3 billion dollars. 154 million of this came directly from the city and another 850 million of this came from a loan the city took out from a group of banks, the majority of which being held by Goldman Sachs. The government also provided a huge tax reduction for the team which was financed with an increased tax on local hotels. When cities are unwilling to meet these massive demands, they are met with animosity from the team owners who often gaslight the city and fanbase before leaving. The Raiders, Rams, and Chargers have all relocated in the last decade with very angry fanbases left in their wake.



Raiders' Allegiant Stadium in Las Vegas, Nevada

Infamously, when the Cleveland Browns left for Baltimore after the 1995 season, fans at the team's last home game were incredibly angry, tearing apart the stadium that their tax dollars had paid for the majority of, including stealing seats from the stands and starting fires. A very similar situation to this happens with traditional corporate business on a regular basis such as Amazon recently having cities bid for where to build their new headquarters through offering massive subsidies and tax breaks to the company. Along with this, teams such as the Tampa Bay Rays have decreased the seating capacity in order to raise ticket prices with the new scarcity, which is a practice that is common across most industries in order to maximize profits.

Professional sports in America parallel some of the worst aspects of capitalism. This rears its ugly head through exploiting the players, team employees, and cities that they rely on. Teams regularly work athletes to the point of destroying their bodies while trying as hard as they can to avoid paying wages or any liability for the injuries. Further, the leagues and teams benefit greatly from government deregulation, subsidies, and tax breaks in order to maximize profit at the expense of the masses. None of these issues are specific to professional sports as companies outside of sports regularly use these same tactics. These tactics are most blatantly shown through, but are not limited to, paying employees far less than the value they create, constantly fighting to avoid providing for employees who are sick



## Sports Parallel the Worst Aspects of Capitalism

or injured, and forcing the hand of cities to either sacrifice jobs or massively cut taxes for the companies while providing a huge amount of the capital costs. Sports are a wonderful thing that is very valuable for both social bonding and fitness alike, but capitalism has made professional sports toxic towards fans and employees. The economics of professional sports in America, and the broader economy that it represents, need to be drastically changed in order to stop the damage that they currently do to the working people of this country.



Fans of Italian club, A.S. Livorno Calcio, who are known for their pro-communist views and banners.



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**“Guernica” by Pablo Picasso, 1937**

*Pablo Picasso was a lifelong member of the communist parties of Spain and France until the day he died.*





*To new beginnings...*

A continuation of the former New Masses magazine of the early 20th century

