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**A CENTURY OF REVOLUTIONS:
Past and Futures of Radical Transformations**

Tariq Ali:

“The Broken Ladder: The Global Left Fifty Years After 1968”

Touraj Atabaki:

“Remembrance of Revolution Past:

Recollections of Revolt and Labour in the Aftermath of the Soviet Union’s Collapse”

The rise and fall of the Soviet Union was one of the most transformative periods of the twentieth century. While revisiting the emergence of the revolution might not add a great deal to our understanding of its fall, an account of its collapse, by contrast, might furnish questions for a novel navigation of this historic revolution in the aftermath of the centenary. The odyssey from present to past, tracking the genealogy of a historical episode surely is not a linear one, but rather might be characterized as an uneven and combined process. This paper, in examining the absence of the Soviet working class during the period that led to the fall of the Soviet Union, revisits the Bolsheviks’ view on the labor movement during the early years of the revolution, 1917-1922.

Touraj Atabaki is Honorary Research Fellow at the International Institute of Social History. He studied first theoretical physics and then history in Birkbeck College, University of London and then had his PhD in 1991 from University of Utrecht. Atabaki worked at Utrecht University, University of Amsterdam and Leiden University where he held the Chair of Social History of the Middle East and Central Asia. Atabaki’s earlier research interest encompassed historiography, ethnic studies and the practice of authoritarianism in Iran, the Ottoman/Turkey and everyday Stalinism in the Soviet Central Asia and the Caucasus. However, in the last ten years his research interest has focused more on the labor history and the history of work and has coordinated a project on the hundred years’ social history of labor in the Iranian oil industry, funded by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research. He has written extensively on the nineteenth-twentieth century history of Iran, Turkey, the Caucasus and Central Asia. For Atabaki’s reach and publication see:

<https://socialhistory.org/en/staff/touraj-atabaki>

Asef Bayat:

“Understanding the Arab Revolutions”

Six years ago, the outbreak of the Arab uprisings created an unprecedented optimism about the future of democracy in the Arab world. But today, a strong sense of pessimism and despair surround the trajectory of these uprisings. Why did the Arab revolutions experience such trajectories? How do we understand the nature of the Arab Spring? My presentation attempts to historicize the Arab revolutions comparing them with those of the 1970s notably the Iranian revolution of 1979. I suggest that what transpired in the Tunisia, Egypt or Yemen in 2011 were not revolutions in the sense of their 20th Century counterparts, but ‘refo-lution’, that is, revolutionary movements that emerged to compel the incumbent regimes to reform themselves. I discuss why this was so, and what it meant for the outcome of these revolutions.

Asef Bayat, the Catherine & Bruce Bastian Professor of Global and Transnational Studies, teaches Sociology and Middle East at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Before joining Illinois, he taught at the American University in Cairo for many years, and served as the director of the International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM) holding the Chair of Society and Culture of the Modern Middle East at Leiden University,

The Netherlands. His research areas range from social movements and social change, to religion and public life, Islam and modernity, urban space and politics, and contemporary Middle East. His recent books include *Being Young and Muslim: Cultural Politics in the Global South and North* (with Linda Herrera) (Oxford University Press, 2010); *Post-Islamism: The Changing Faces of Political Islam* (Oxford University Press, 2013); *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East* (Stanford University Press, 2013. 2nd edition), and *Revolution without Revolutionaries: Making Sense of the Arab Spring* (Stanford University Press, 2017).

**George Ciccariello-Maher:
“The Cunning of Decolonization”**

What is decolonial cunning? The element of surprise that inheres when the colonized subject springs forth from nonbeing. This strategic advantage draws, negatively, upon the blind spot to which the colonizer subjects himself and, positively, upon the second sight enjoyed by the wretched of the earth. This paper brings decolonial revolutionary Frantz Fanon into conversation with recent Venezuelan history in order to flesh out the contours of this cunning.

George Ciccariello-Maher is a writer, organizer, and currently Visiting Scholar at the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics, having taught previously at Drexel University, San Quentin State Prison, and the Venezuelan School of Planning in Caracas. He is co-editor of the Duke University Press series *Radical Américas* and author of three books: *We Created Chávez: A People's History of the Venezuelan Revolution* (Duke, 2013); *Building the Commune: Radical Democracy in Venezuela* (Verso, 2016); and *Decolonizing Dialectics* (Duke, 2017).

**Linda Herrera:
“Alain Badiou on the Egyptian Revolution, Seven Years On: A Short Film and Discussion”**

The seven-year anniversary of the 25 January Egyptian Revolution, an event that captured global attention and inspired countless movements, provides an opportune moment to reflect on the state of contemporary politics. French philosopher Alain Badiou was among the first major intellectual figures to theorize the Egyptian and Tunisian uprisings and articulate their historical significance in his book, *The Rebirth of History: Times of Riots and Uprisings* (Verso, 2012). In this short film by Professor Herrera, Badiou poses questions about the changing nature of politics and organization, the meaning of revolution today, and notions of failure and success.

Linda Herrera is professor in the department of Education Policy, Organization and Leadership, UIUC, and Director of the Global Studies in Education program. She is a social anthropologist with regional expertise in North Africa and West Asia. Her research examines questions around education and critical democracy, the sociology of generations, international development policy and youth, global youth movements, and pathways to citizenship and livelihoods in an age of social media, precarity and mass migrations.

**Michele Louro:
“India and the Anti-imperialist World from the ‘Internationalist Moment’ to the Age of Bandung”**

Anti-imperialist mobilizations were transformative to anticolonial activists in the interwar years who came to situate their local struggles in relation to the world. Anti-imperialism inspired stalwarts of anticolonial resistance and future heads of state like India's Jawaharlal Nehru, Indonesia's Sukarno, and Kenya's Jomo Kenyatta. This paper traces the history of global anti-imperialism in the interwar years and its connection to Indian anti-colonialism. It focuses in particular on the League against Imperialism (LAI), an institution that coordinated a global struggle against imperialist and capitalist powers. India played a central role in the construction of the LAI, and Nehru served as the movement's official spokesman in India and on the institution's executive committee, 1927-1930. This paper considers the appeal of anti-imperialism to Nehru and his role as intermediary between India and the anti-imperialist world. I argue that anti-imperialism, as Nehru and many of his interwar comrades came to conceptualize it, introduced an alternative and rival mode for thinking about the world, one that contested the fundamental basis of European power in the 1920s and 1930s. Finally, the paper considers the legacies of anti-imperialist internationalism on Nehru's third world leadership during the era of decolonization and specifically the Bandung Conference (1955).

Michele L. Louro is an Associate Professor of History at Salem State University. She received her Ph.D. from Temple University and is broadly trained in the fields of modern South Asian history, British imperial history, international history, and world history. Her first book, *Comrades against Imperialism: Nehru, India and Interwar Internationalism* (Cambridge University Press), is set between the world wars and recovers the debates, introduces the personalities, and reveals the ideas that seeded Jawaharlal Nehru's political vision for India and the wider world. Louro is author to essays on this topic that appear in several journals including the *Journal of Contemporary History* (forthcoming), *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* (2013), and *Third Frame: Literature, Culture and Society* (2009), as well as an essay in the edited volume, *The Internationalist Moment: South Asia, Worlds and Worldviews* (2014). Louro is currently working on two projects. The first is an edited volume, *The League Against Imperialism as Global Phenomenon: Anti-Colonial Solidarities Across the Interwar and Early Cold War World*, and the second is a co-authored monograph on the global history of the Meerut Conspiracy Case in India, 1929-1934. Louro also serves as the Treasurer of the World History Association and is the Managing Editor of the *Journal of World History*.

Giuseppina Mecchia:

“Thinking Today's Politics of Language with Paolo Virno and Christian Marazzi”

The language faculty has been theorized by Paolo Virno, among other contemporary philosophers, as an inherent aspect of the human species shaping all processes of individuation and socialization. Virno draws on a long philosophical tradition but also on 20th and 21st century psychological and biological data. Christian Marazzi has presented a reflection on language more tied to contemporary technological and economic social determinations. From language-based forms of production on the factory floors in the 1950s, to the contemporary semiotic ordering of all financial processes and information-based technologies, Marazzi analyzes the ways language is captured and redistributed by the contemporary models of capitalist accumulation. Both Virno and Marazzi find the political motivation for their research in a shared militant history in the Italian Autonomia movements, and more importantly in their continued intellectual activism in the face of today's forms of capitalist command and exploitation. My paper presents the implications of their research and the resonances to be found in their work.

Giuseppina Mecchia is Associate Professor of French and Italian at the University of Pittsburgh. She has translated, introduced and commented several books from the Italian autonomist and post-operaist tradition, most notably by Franco Berardi 'Bifo', Christian Marazzi, Antonio Negri and Paolo Virno. She has published widely on the intersection between politics, philosophy and esthetics in the works of French and Italian modern and contemporary writers and philosophers, including Stendhal, Marcel Proust, Elsa Morante, Leonardo Sciascia, Jacques Ranciere and Michel Houellebecq.

Munyaradzi Nyakudya:

“The disjuncture between liberation and governance in Southern Africa: Unpacking the Dynamics of Transformation in ZANU PF”

This paper examines the disjuncture between liberating a country through a guerrilla insurrection and then governing the country after 90 years of colonial rule and a debilitating 15-year armed liberation struggle. Using empirical evidence, archival and secondary sources, and deploying Veronique Dudouet's (2009) structural dynamics concept, the paper argues that ZANU PF's failure to transform itself from a guerrilla movement to a governing party has had serious ramifications for both the party and the nation at large. In particular, the nature of civil-military relations forged between the nationalist politicians and the military supremos of the guerrilla army during the liberation struggle has had a huge impact on the manner in which ZANU PF has governed Zimbabwe. The failure of ZANU PF to adopt a new political culture different from the war-time emphasis on violent coercion has seen a conflation between party and government, which has seriously impinged on both the democratization imperatives in the country and the stability of ZANU PF itself. The party remained stuck in the past and embarked on a self-destruction trajectory largely characterized by intolerance and suppression of dissenting voices both from within and outside the party. The paper unpacks these initiatives and explains why they were largely unsuccessful. Instead, what took center stage were the politics of patronage, characterized by institutionalized corruption, a personality cult (with roots in the liberation war), and a sense of entitlement to the country's leadership. The military became systematically politicized while both politics and the economy were militarized. However, as

Robert Mugabe, the party and national President, aged, and jostling for power in the party intensified, the army ultimately led a power take-over that has resulted in calls for renewing ZANU PF through radical transformation. The question is, how feasible is that under the so-called 'new dispensation'?

Munyaradzi Nyakudya lectures in the Department of History at the University of Zimbabwe. He has a special passion for transformative research. In that endeavor, he has several publications on Zimbabwe's liberation struggle and post-colonial socio-political and economic dynamics in the country.

**Sunit Singh:
"The Eternal Return of 1848"**

With the 170th anniversary of the revolutions of 1848 fast approaching, we might consider what differentiates 1848 from what came before, the French Revolution of 1789, the Paris Commune of 1870, and the October Revolution of 1917? What about 1848 made it a historical touchstone for would-be revolutionaries and the socialists of the Second International in the era before World War I? If the ambivalent result of the defeat of the 1848 revolutions, in Marx's words, was the rise Bonapartism, How has the legacy of 1848 complicated the battle of, rather than for, democracy? The object of this talk is to zero in on 1848 as an originary moment for Marxism and to examine the question of the relation of the bourgeois democratic revolution to the struggle for socialism. Sidestepping the challenge that 1848 offers, in favor of commemorating the apparent success of 1789 and 1917, has shaped the view of the 20th century as progressive rather than regressive. And yet the desiderata articulated by Marx and Engels in their classic text of 1848, the Communist Manifesto, remain unrealized, despite all the revolutions since.

Sunit Singh recently completed his dissertation on the influence of socialist internationalism on Indian radicals before and after World War I. He is a historian of modern South Asia and studies the history of the Left more globally. His writings span a range of diverse interests and include works on Frantz Fanon's vision of an interracial future, Nietzsche's untimeliness, the legacy of Subaltern Studies, and religious revivalism in colonial-era Punjab. He presently teaches in the College at the University of Chicago.

**Yiching Wu:
"How Mao's Last Revolution Really Began: Toward a Conjunctural and Nonlinear History"**

Why and how Mao Zedong initiated a great upheaval during the last years of his rule remains perhaps the single greatest puzzle in the crisis-ridden history of the People's Republic China. Conventional scholarly literature on how Mao's last revolutionary endeavor began has stressed the centrality of the Chairman's political agency or ideological vision. However critical or dismissive of Mao's extravagant personality cult has been, scholars have tended to inadvertently reproduce key features of contemporary Chinese hagiography within their own analytical frameworks, foregrounding Mao at the center of historical narratives as if all history could be explained by being traced back to a single very powerful individual. And, the major events leading up to the Cultural Revolution have been construed to form parts of a lineal progression of Machiavellian moves by Mao and his close associates, and thus reduced to the Supreme Leader's preconceived intent and instrumental action. In this presentation I will reconsider the opening episode of the Cultural Revolution, with the aim of developing an understanding of how the great turmoil began in ways less dependent on teleological and Mao-centered premises and more sensitive to processual contexts and path-dependent contingencies.

Bio: Yiching Wu is Associate Professor of East Asian Studies and Director of the David Chu Program in Contemporary Asian Studies at the University of Toronto. With a PhD in anthropology at the University of Chicago, his research focuses on the history and politics of the People's Republic of China during the Mao era, in particular the history and memory of the Cultural Revolution decade. His book, *The Cultural Revolution at the Margins: Chinese Socialism in Crisis* (Harvard University Press, 2014), was the recipient of the President's Book Award from the Social Science History Association, and the finalist of the Wallace K. Ferguson Prize (for non-Canadian history) from the Canadian Historical Association. He is currently working on a new book that reconsiders the origins, preludes, and beginning of the Cultural Revolution.