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Unchaining Labor

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Unchaining Labor

The ability to create, sustain, and develop work in a pleasant and profitable environment is the touchstone of success for an economy, a society, and a government. Productive work has been the determinant of happiness, well-being, and satisfaction since the first human rubbed two sticks together and created fire. Now in almost every corner of the globe, stagnation and gluttony have thrown millions out of work. Workers find themselves chained to a system that leaves them unable to control their future.

As an epidemic of joblessness sweeps the West and violent labor unrest courses through many developing nations, this is the moment to explore the nexus of labor, society, and government and determine how to liberate workers from insecure or unsafe work. For our Summer issue, we open, as usual, with The Big Question, asking our panel of experts how we can best create jobs amid global economic uncertainty. Raymond Torres, director of the International Labor Organization's Institute for Labor Studies, sets the stage with his essay proposing solutions to Europe's jobs crisis. Next, our Map Room keeps us in Europe, where Retensa, an employee retention consultant, has documented the costs of worker turnover, captured in a new metric created exclusively for *World Policy Journal*. Then, British economists Philip Brown and Hugh Lauder present their auction theory of labor and ominously "conclude that the globalization of white-collar work imperils the global middle-class. Our Anatomy examines demographic patterns that influence labor in a range of societies. From China, Helen Gao delves into rural villages where a generation of children are being left behind as their parents head to cities for factory work. And finally, we turn to Bangladesh for our Conversation with a remarkable young labor leader, Nazma Akter, whose career in the nation's garment factories began at age 11 and who today is doing her best to balance the economic future of her nation with the well-being of Bangladeshi workers.

For our Portfolio, we travel with award-winning photographer Robert Nickelsberg and writer Judith Matloff to extreme battlefield training inside the Arctic Circle. Next, deep in the Himalayas, a dimly perceived climactic catastrophe is building in the form of GLOFs—fragile glacial lakes on the verge of exploding. Jacques Leslie journeys to the heights of Bhutan to explore these mountain tsunamis. From Tatarstan, Ronan Keenan investigates the extremist Islam creeping into the center of Russia from the North Caucasus. Next, Jonathan Ewing uncovers a welter of fraud, as he probes corrupt gold mines in the Democratic Republic of Congo and their surprising funding source: an under-regulated Swedish stock exchange. Elsewhere in Africa, John Frederick Walker challenges the conventional wisdom on the ivory trade. In Colombia, Sibylla Brodzinsky bears witness to the victims of guerrilla terrorism. Finally, in his Coda, *World Policy Journal* editor David A. Andelman explores the snares of bureaucracy in the second of his multi-part examination of government and the needs of the people.

—The Editors